



# General Assembly

Seventy-fourth session

**9**<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting  
Friday, 27 September 2019, 9 a.m.  
New York

Official Records

*President:* Mr. Muhammad-Bande ..... (Nigeria)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. García Moritán (Argentina), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

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

## Address by Mr. Paramasivum Pillay Vyapoory, President of the Republic of Mauritius

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

*Mr. Paramasivum Pillay Vyapoory, President of the Republic of Mauritius, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

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

**President Vyapoory:** It is a matter of great pride for Africa to see Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande presiding over the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. We wish him a very successful tenure and assure him of the full support of Mauritius as he steers the work of the Assembly. We also extend our congratulations to Secretary-General António Guterres and the outgoing President of the General Assembly, Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, on their leadership, hard work and dedication during the past year.

We commend the judicious choice of the theme “Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty

eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion” for this year’s session. This is indeed a critical year for sustainable development and climate action. Climate change continues to disrupt national economies and affect lives; economic growth is slow and uneven; income inequality is on the rise; achieving quality education is still beyond our reach; and official development assistance and humanitarian aid to those most in need, especially in the least developed countries and small island developing States (SIDS), are on the decline. No substantial progress has been achieved in building peace, justice and strong institutions.

To compound an already troubling situation, emerging issues — such as new conflicts, rising tensions among major global Powers, the rise of extremism, the migration and refugee crisis and the flip side of technology — are further undermining our ability to live up to our pledge and make significant progress in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. The devastating effects of Cyclone Idai in Southern Africa and Hurricane Dorian in the Bahamas, the desolation left in the wake of wildfires in California, the sweltering heat of the hottest months that we have recently recorded on all continents and the latest ice cap melts in Greenland all point to an alarmingly dangerous and desolate future for our planet.

While the poor and vulnerable are the hardest hit, no single country is immune from the devastation and havoc that rising temperatures and global warming are creating in the lives and livelihoods of communities. Millions of people are already at risk of being pushed into poverty by 2030 as a direct consequence of climate

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change. In its latest report, *Global Warming of 1.5°C*, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change gives us an apocalyptic picture that compels us to act now. Last week's worldwide demonstrations by young people calling for action now cannot fall on deaf ears. We must renew and strengthen our commitment to limiting global warming to 1.5°C. To that end, we need to considerably increase the financial resources we allocate to it and live up to the Paris pledges.

In Mauritius, the Government has embarked on the development of low-carbon-emission transport and will soon be launching a light rail transit system, in addition to implementing a massive greening programme to enhance our carbon-sinking capacity. We also intend to double our use of renewable energy by 2030.

Small island developing States are particularly threatened by the dangerously intensifying impacts of climate change. The mid-term review of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway has clearly demonstrated that its implementation faces similar hurdles to those confronting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the most important of which are funding and means of implementation.

More responsive and targeted partnerships are essential to addressing the specific problems that SIDS face in achieving tangible and measurable outcomes. SIDS like Mauritius that through their own efforts have reached middle-income-country status now face new challenges in accessing concessionary financing and grants. To make that situation worse, our efforts to diversify our economy and develop our international competitiveness in areas such as financial services are often frustrated by an uneven playing field in which we have to deal with arbitrary classifications, despite our strict adherence to international rules and norms. Unsurprisingly, unless we address those issues upfront, countries like Mauritius will fall victim to the middle-income-country trap.

Beyond goodwill and expressions of support, we need focused action to achieve the targets set in the 2030 Agenda for ensuring inclusion and opportunities for all so that no one is left behind. Despite our limitations, Mauritius is very much on track to achieve most of the targets of the 2030 Agenda, particularly in the areas of poverty eradication, gender equality and quality education.

Exclusion in all its forms hinders development and often sets countries on unsustainable paths

of development, plagued by social and economic instability. Global economic growth is uneven and often fails to reach the regions that need it most, which conceals the stark reality that inequality within and among States is widening. We need to urgently address those challenges and overcome perceptions that economic benefits are unfairly distributed. We must provide a level playing field across borders. Developed and developing countries alike must address the deep-rooted causes of inequalities among States, such as the dynamic of financial flows among them, their uneven exposure to climate change and the very unequal way that they stand to benefit from technology.

The health of our oceans continues to deteriorate at an alarming rate. Progress towards the conservation of the world's oceans has been too slow. Ocean acidification and unsustainable fishing pose major threats to our oceans and marine resources. Mauritius is committed to making its contribution by enforcing a ban on plastics, instituting sustainable fishery policies and other related measures. We are also deeply committed to the process towards the development of an international legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction.

Piracy, drug smuggling, human trafficking, marine pollution and the pillaging of marine resources remain issues of serious concern in our part of the Indian Ocean. Those threats have reached alarming proportions and, if left unattended, pose serious security risks to the stability of the region and beyond. As Chair of the Indian Ocean Commission, Mauritius has convened ministerial-level meetings over the past two years to reflect on ways and means to collectively address the growing maritime threats in the region. This year we also hosted the meeting of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia, which is at the forefront of combating piracy in the Indian Ocean. Maritime security in the western Indian Ocean is not only a regional challenge, it also has far wider ramifications that require national and regional commitment, together with the support of the international community. Mauritius continues to be engaged with the countries of the region and the international community in that regard.

Fighting radicalism, violent extremism and terrorism by developing effective counter-narratives requires cooperation and proper coordination among all Member States. That can be achieved

only through multilateralism. The interdependence of the work of countering terrorism and promoting sustainable development is increasingly recognized. Terrorism and extremism feed on grievances and exploit development challenges such as inequality, poverty and marginalization. By building resilient and inclusive societies, we can withstand terrorist ideologies and those who espouse them. The Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force has an extremely important role to play in providing technical assistance and capacity-building to Member States in order to strengthen their ability to prevent and counter terrorism.

Global security has not been as fragile as it is now since the end of the Cold War. The potential for violent conflict is palpable amid rising tensions in many regions, particularly in the Middle East. The escalation of tensions on economic and trade issues, withdrawal from international treaties, the increased weaponization of outer space and cyberspace and the proliferation of arms have further accentuated the risks to global security. This new normal threatens the world's ability to find global solutions to problems at a time when the world most needs unity and collective action.

Our continent, Africa, has made considerable strides in the areas of governance, peace and security, which are prerequisites for sustainable development. A peaceful and secure Africa is fundamental to a peaceful and secure world. The launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area in July represented a major step towards the realization of a vision for an integrated, prosperous and people-centred Africa. The success of that project can be guaranteed only by addressing the causes of conflict in the region. We therefore appeal to the international community to step up its efforts in that regard.

The Israeli-Palestinian peace process is agonizingly stalled. The prospects for realizing the legitimate Palestinian aspirations for sovereignty and statehood are becoming more distant. The suffering of the Palestinian people is further exacerbated by the expansion of settlements, the demolition of their houses, the closure of key crossings and a decrease in humanitarian aid. Yet giving up hope for a resolution to that protracted conflict should never be an option. A peaceful future in the Middle East rests on the possibility of a two-State solution. We appeal to the United Nations and other major players to step up their efforts in supporting a negotiated, just, comprehensive and long-lasting two-State solution.

We welcome the progress achieved in intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform, which have laid the foundations for fulfilling their mandate. We call for redoubled efforts in intergovernmental negotiations to advance reform of the Security Council and make it more representative and reflective of the realities of our time.

The General Assembly has always played a central role in addressing decolonization. It is to its credit that a large number of colonies gained their independence as a result of its continued action. Regrettably, however, that work is not complete. Some remnants of colonization that need to end still persist.

One such example is Mauritius, which suffered an unlawful excision of its territory before its independence in 1968. In an advisory opinion on *Legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos archipelago from Mauritius in 1965* (A/73/773) rendered pursuant to the request of the General Assembly in resolution 71/292, the International Court of Justice found that the Chagos archipelago was an integral part of Mauritius at the time of its detachment and that in view of its unlawful excision, the decolonization process of Mauritius was not lawfully completed upon its accession to independence. The Court also concluded that the United Kingdom's administration of the Chagos archipelago is an unlawful act of a continuing character and should be brought to an end as rapidly as possible.

The General Assembly promptly adopted resolution 73/295 on 22 May by an overwhelming majority. It gives practical effect to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and demands that the United Kingdom withdraw its colonial administration from the Chagos archipelago unconditionally within a period of no more than six months. The resolution also recognizes the right of return of the former inhabitants of the Chagos archipelago, who were forcibly removed by the United Kingdom, a point to which Mauritius is strongly committed.

We therefore expect that given its commitment to the rule of law and respect for the International Court of Justice and the United Nations, the United Kingdom will give effect to the findings of the advisory opinion and withdraw its administration from the Chagos archipelago unconditionally by 22 November, as requested by the General Assembly. We also look forward to the report of the Secretary-General on the overall implementation of resolution 73/295.

Mauritius is deeply grateful to all Member States for the overwhelming support they gave to the resolution. It is testimony to the great importance that Member States attach to the need to complete the decolonization of Mauritius and their respect for international institutions, including the International Court of Justice, and for the rule of law in international relations. We look forward to Member States' continued support and cooperation with the United Nations so that our decolonization can be rapidly completed and a programme for the resettlement in the Chagos archipelago of Mauritian nationals, in particular those of Chagossian origin, can be implemented by Mauritius.

With regard to the island of Tromelin, which also forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius, we call for a speedy resolution of the dispute over the island, in the spirit of friendship that has always characterized the relationship between Mauritius and France.

We are living in an increasingly complex environment. The challenges confronting humankind require greater collaboration, coordination and commitment. A principled and effective multilateral system offers a unique platform for tackling global and local challenges that seem to be growing in scale and complexity. The celebration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations next year should be an opportunity for us to reaffirm our strong commitment to the United Nations ideals and the entrenched principles of the Charter of the United Nations of sovereign equality, respect for the territorial integrity of States and non-interference in the internal affairs of Member States.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that we all have a role to play. Young people, women, the private sector, civil society and developed and developing countries alike must come together to address our common concerns.

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

*Mr. Paramasivum Pillay Vyapoory, President of the Republic of Mauritius, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

## **Agenda item 8 (continued)**

### **General debate**

#### **Address by Mr. Muhammad Jusuf Kalla, Vice-President of the Republic of Indonesia**

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

*Mr. Muhammad Jusuf Kalla, Vice-President of the Republic of Indonesia, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Muhammad Jusuf Kalla, Vice-President of the Republic of Indonesia, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

**Mr. Kalla** (Indonesia) (*spoke in Indonesian; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): I would like to congratulate Ambassador Tijjani Muhammad-Bande on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. Indonesia stands ready to contribute to the success of the Assembly at this session. I would also like to extend my appreciation to Ms. Maria Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, who presided over and led the seventy-third session. On this occasion, I would like to convey five points.

First, I want to underline the importance of multilateralism, which is closely related to the theme of this year's session. The United Nations is a result of multilateralism. The success of its mission will be determined by how the Organization is able to strengthen multilateralism to achieve global peace and prosperity. We live in a world of increasingly complex and serious challenges. At times like this, we must all unite and stand together to strengthen multilateralism. No country, big or small, will be able to solve those challenges alone.

For that, we have to work together. We must share our responsibilities. That is what multilateralism is all about, and that is its essence. For more than seven decades, multilateralism has saved us from the tragedy of a world war. It has also delivered economic prosperity and unprecedented technological advances to the world. Indonesia believes that the world will become more stable, peaceful and prosperous by upholding multilateral values. We also believe that only by reinforcing multilateralism can the United Nations fulfil its obligations to maintain world peace and

security, realize development and protect the human rights of all.

Secondly, I want to convey the importance of maintaining world peace. Seventy-four years ago, we agreed to establish the United Nations because we wanted to achieve world peace. Here let me cite the opening of the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations:

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

War and conflict have always brought misery to humankind, in particular women and children. War and conflict have destroyed years of development, ruined infrastructure and disrupted economic activity, education and the provision of health care. In short, war and conflict will destroy our hope of achieving all of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

We are all concerned about the ongoing wars and conflicts in the world. Old ones remain unresolved, while new ones are arising, including in the Middle East. The attacks that have wrecked civilian facilities and infrastructure in the Middle East not only threaten peace and stability in the region, they also steal the hopes and futures of the communities affected, particularly women and children. Peace in the Middle East will be possible only if we resolve the issue of Palestine. We will not give up on a settlement to the conflict based on a two-State solution, and the international community must unite to find that solution. At the same time, I also urge the establishment of a united Palestine. Unity is the basis of the Palestinian struggle. Without unity, the struggle will only drain our energy and will never be won.

When we talk about peace it is important to be grateful for our peacekeepers. Indonesia pays a lot of attention to its peacekeeping forces. Among other things, that commitment was realized when we became one of the largest personnel contributors to United Nations peacekeeping forces. The challenges that our peacekeepers face are becoming ever more complex. They must therefore be well prepared in order to properly perform their task. Deployment preparation should be better managed, including by ensuring that peacekeepers master soft skills.

We also see the need to strengthen female peacekeepers. Indonesia therefore supports efforts to

improve women's involvement in peacekeeping forces. Indonesia is actively contributing to tackling the issue of women and peace and security. This year, for the first time, we hosted regional training on women and peace and security in order to strengthen the role of women in the peace and mediation process. Women are agents of peace. Indonesia is also active in providing capacity-building to women, including female refugees in Palestine and Afghanistan.

Thirdly, I want to convey the importance of strengthening regionalism and sustainable regionalism. The stability, peace and prosperity of regions are the building blocks for achieving world peace. We must therefore strengthen our regional institutions. For more than five decades, Indonesia, along with other countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), has cultivated a culture of dialogue, cooperation and peaceful settlement of disputes in South-East Asia. We want to reinforce and expand this culture, including within the Indo-Pacific region. ASEAN wants to see a peaceful, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific region. In that context, ASEAN leaders adopted the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific in June. The Outlook will be a guideline for ASEAN to develop cooperation with countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

Fourthly, I want to highlight the importance of working together to achieve the SDGs by 2030. Our hard-earned peace will not be sustainable without improvement in global development. We have only 11 years left to achieve the SDGs. Although we have been making headway on some goals, we still have plenty of work to do. Many countries have a limited capacity to achieve the SDGs in areas such as education, health and women's empowerment, for example. Global partnerships must therefore be reinforced.

Indonesia is striving hard to achieve the SDGs. The expansion of access to education and universal health care continues, particularly for those affected by poverty. Infrastructure development in rural and suburban areas has multiplied. We have to support those afflicted by poverty and the less advantaged. Thankfully, signs of improvement have been apparent. Last year, for example, poverty figures dropped to single digits for the first time in Indonesian history. We have also experienced a narrowing in inequality; our assessment on the Gini index of income inequality is down from 0.414 to just 0.384. A total of 223 million Indonesian have access to national health insurance and

approximately 18 million school-age children receive financial student assistance.

Indonesia does not work solely for the good of Indonesia. We continue to strengthen our development partnerships with friendly countries, including in Asia and Africa. This year Indonesia held two events aimed at strengthening development partnerships with the Pacific region, the Indonesia-South Pacific Forum, in Jakarta, and the Pacific Exposition, in Auckland. Those events ushered in a new era of Indonesian partnerships with countries in the Pacific, which we refer to as the Pacific elevation. Going forward, the partnership between Indonesia and the Pacific will be more strategic and structured.

Indonesia is also strengthening its development partnership with Africa. After holding the Indonesia-Africa Forum last year, this year Indonesia is focusing on infrastructure cooperation through the Indonesia-Africa Infrastructure Dialogue. With their various challenges and characteristics, Indonesia is willing to advance and grow together with friendly nations in the Pacific and Africa.

The fifth and final point that I would like to raise is the importance of upholding the Charter of the United Nations. The principles and values of the Charter must be respected by every country. As we mark the seventy-fourth anniversary of the United Nations, Indonesia is concerned about the fact that many Charter commitments remain unimplemented or even breached by Member States, such as the commitment to respecting the sovereignty of other countries. Respect for sovereignty is a fundamental commitment and the principle that underpins relations among nations. It must and should be respected. Indonesia's foreign policy position is clear. While Indonesia will always respect the sovereignty of other countries, it also expects other countries to respect its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Relationships among nations must be based on mutual respect.

Finally, I am putting forward Indonesia's candidacy for the Human Rights Council for the 2020-2022 period. As one of the founding countries of the Human Rights Council, Indonesia is deeply committed to promoting and advancing human rights through dialogue and international cooperation. We are working actively to strengthen ASEAN's human rights mechanisms through the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights. In the Organization of Islamic Cooperation,

Indonesia is also actively encouraging the strengthening of the Independent Permanent Commission for Human Rights. By championing the motto "a true partner for democracy, development and social justice", Indonesia wants to be a true partner in advancing and protecting human rights for all.

In closing, I would like to once again emphasize that today we need a commitment to the values of multilateralism more than ever. Indonesia is firmly convinced that many countries still cherish that belief. Let us build a global coalition in support of multilateralism for a more peaceful, stable and prosperous world. Indonesia is ready to lead and become part of such a coalition. To cite a famous African proverb, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

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

*Mr. Muhammad Jusuf Kalla, Vice-President of the Republic of Indonesia, was escorted from the rostrum.*

**Address by Mr. Thomas Motsoahae Thabane, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho**

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

*Mr. Thomas Motsoahae Thabane, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Thomas Motsoahae Thabane, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

**Mr. Thabane** (Lesotho): At the outset, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande on his well-deserved election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. I assure him of my delegation's full support and cooperation during his tenure in office.

Seventy years ago, when the world was under the shadow of the ominous threat of extinction, perceptive men and women from 50 countries, representing all the

continents of the world, appended their signatures to the Charter of the United Nations in the clear determination to save the world from the follies of the leaders of the time. Those visionary individuals envisioned a world of peace, justice and equitable relations among nations. They dreamt of a world characterized by freedom, socioeconomic development, respect for human rights and international law.

Today we can all attest to the strides that the United Nations has made in pursuit of those goals. Indeed, the Secretary-General, in his report on the work of the Organization at the current international juncture, aptly captures the progress that the United Nations has made so far when he says,

“The Organization, and its ethos of international cooperation, have yielded great and wide-ranging benefits to humankind, lifting millions out of poverty, upholding human rights and helping to forge peace in troubled lands” (*A/74/I, para. 1*).

Despite those laudable achievements of our beloved Organization, challenges remain on the path towards assuring humankind a bright, prosperous, dignified and secure future. We are seeing signs that hegemonic positions and unipolarity are once again emerging in the international political landscape. Climate change, the problem of refugees and migration, armed conflict and violence, internal displacement, a lack of respect for human rights, terrorism and many other challenges continue to transcend our borders. It is in that context that we hail the relevance of our theme for this general debate, “Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion”.

In the space of one week, we have held four summits seeking to address the most pertinent issues facing the world right now — climate change, universal health coverage, sustainable development and financing for development. The experiences that we shared in the summits and the ideas that we exchanged should propel us to adopt policies and put in place measures in our respective countries that are responsive to the needs of our people.

With regard to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Lesotho has demonstrated commitment to their implementation by operationalizing the Goals through its recently adopted second national strategic development plan for the period from 2019 to 2023. The plan also emphasizes the importance of pursuing

sustainable inclusive growth and creating decent jobs as the most effective route for poverty reduction. In that context, the Government recently launched a job and investment summit aimed at fostering private investment and creating new job opportunities for over 30,000 Basothos, with a particular focus on young people, women, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

It should also be recalled that Lesotho was among the 47 countries that underwent voluntary national reviews during the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. In our review, we recognized that the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires the implementation of priority programmes under various SDGs that have a combined impact on every aspect of unemployment and poverty reduction. We also attach importance to an all-inclusive approach and the participation of all citizens in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

We also recognize the need for quality education that fully responds to the needs of our country. In that regard, the Government of Lesotho is taking steps to raise the quality of basic education with a view to bestowing the Basotho with a strong foundation for skills development and an enhanced ability to participate more productively in the economic space.

We must nevertheless underscore the fact that the achievement of the SDGs will elude us if the least developed countries do not receive the assistance they need. The commitments made in that connection must be fulfilled. We must take concerted measures over the next 10 years to foster stronger partnerships at the national, regional and, of course, global levels and ensure that no one is left behind as we guide our countries towards the 2030 milestone. Collaboration with development partners, financial institutions and the private sector, among others, is critical.

With regard to climate change, Lesotho is aware of its serious vulnerability to the challenges it faces due to its location, size and topography. As a result, our Government has made a commitment to building resilience to the effects of climate change by reducing greenhouse-gas emissions by 2030 by 10 per cent using internal resources, and by 25 per cent using external resources. At the same time, we call for international assistance in our adaptation efforts in the area of capacity-building and the provision of adequate resources, in line with existing commitments under

the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

We also call on Member States to ratify the Paris Agreement and fulfil their obligations under it. And we urge those who are contemplating withdrawing from the Paris Agreement to refrain from doing so so that at this defining moment we do not spoil the benefits of our collective action. It is time for all countries — developed or developing, rich or poor — to join hands and take bold climate action to save Mother Earth.

Indeed, we would be remiss if we did not commend the Secretary-General for his tireless drive to foster action beyond words. We particularly applaud his inclusion of young people in the global discussions on climate-action initiatives. It is my firm belief that this is a step in the right direction towards enabling them to be the drivers of climate action, since they are the generation that will be affected the most in the long run.

In my address to the Assembly at its seventy-third session (see A/73/PV.13), I underscored the fact that peace, security and socioeconomic development will remain elusive if our countries do not implement the necessary legal and institutional reforms. The archaic laws and institutions inherited from our colonial masters, which are far removed from the realities of the twenty-first century, must be done away with now. Our journey towards national reform in Lesotho is nearing fruition. We will be concluding the process of national dialogue on the Lesotho we want next month. Parliament will also soon conclude the process of enacting legislation and creating a national reform authority with the necessary remit to implement reform.

Without the invaluable support of the Southern African Development Community, the Peacebuilding Commission and the European Union, the strides that we have made so far would not have been possible. We are eternally grateful to those partners. We are confident that they will continue to undertake this journey with us, including through the implementation phase. Attaining the goal of establishing transparent, efficient and accountable institutions that are free of corruption and just laws that are responsive to the needs of our people is within sight. We hope to become a beacon of inspiration for others to also undertake legal and institutional reforms with a view to finding lasting solutions to their problems.

Threats to international peace and security persist, while conflicts continue to erupt in different parts of

the world, putting the capacity of the international conflict-resolution machinery to a severe test. Lesotho underscores the imperative for prioritizing coordinated, sustained and inclusive conflict-prevention measures. It is in that connection that we reiterate our call for a reform of the Security Council with a view to making it representative, transparent and truly accountable. True reform of the Security Council must be modelled along the lines of the African common position, as enshrined in the Ezulwini Consensus and Sirte Declaration. That is the only way we see the possibility of the historical injustice done to Africa and the suffering it endured being reversed. We therefore pray that negotiations on this very important subject will take place during this session.

As the Security Council remains paralysed in critical situations, the threat of the use of nuclear weapons continues to haunt us. The security situation on the Korean peninsula does not give us comfort. The launching of different types of missiles, in total disregard of Security Council resolutions, puts an unnecessary strain on relations among States and flies in the face of our Charter obligations. I appeal to all Member States to join hands in ensuring a safer planet that is free of weapons of mass destruction and nuclear weapons.

However, a sense of hope is emerging. The ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons has gathered momentum, despite some elements of opposition. We are hopeful that significant progress in nuclear disarmament will be made in the near future.

In the midst of those developments, we cannot ignore the plight of migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons as a result of terrorism and ongoing conflict in Africa, the Middle East and other parts of the world. Many undertake dangerous journeys across oceans in search of havens and countless people lose their lives in the process. While we thank the individual European countries that have opened their doors to migrants fleeing to their territory, we also call on the European Union to come up with a comprehensive strategy to resolve the crisis with us. At the same time, we must strengthen our counter-terrorism efforts through collective measures in order to put an end to the terrorist scourge that is indiscriminately causing great damage to property and resulting in a massive loss of innocent lives.

The United Nations was founded by peace-loving nations in the conviction that the nations of the world should be able to cooperate to resolve conflicts peacefully. That abiding conviction of our forebears must be reasserted as we build the United Nations of the future. The United Nations of the twenty-first century should be able to give humankind hope for a world of peace and total eradication of poverty.

It should be the United Nations that stands with the marginalized and oppressed. It should be the United Nations that takes bold steps in addressing the question of Palestine and protecting the viability of a two-State solution, with Palestine and Israel coexisting side by side in peace and within internationally recognized secure borders. Our United Nations should be the Organization that protects the sovereignty of its Member States and prevents interference in the affairs of other States, and it should not be indifferent to the plight of the people of Western Sahara, who have yearned for independence for decades to no avail.

Our United Nations should guarantee and protect the Cuban people's right to freedom of trade and navigation and oppose unwarranted sanctions, such as those on Zimbabwe, which have resulted in the collective punishment of innocent Zimbabweans. I appeal to all members to rally behind Zimbabwe and call for an end to the sanctions that have for so long mutilated its economy and the livelihood of ordinary Zimbabweans.

As I conclude my statement, I want to underscore that it is not our rhetoric delivered from this rostrum that will change the global socioeconomic, political and security trajectory but rather our willingness to put our words into action that will usher the world out of ongoing misery. We are not at the helm of our countries by chance. Almighty God has allowed us to lead the world at this time for a purpose. Let us therefore all remain faithful, in the true spirit of multilateralism, to the principles underpinning the Organization — principles that envision a truly representative and effective United Nations that can be a torchbearer.

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

*Mr. Thomas Motsoahae Thabane, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho, was escorted from the rostrum.*

### **Address by Mr. Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of the Republic of India**

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

*Mr. Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of the Republic of India, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of the Republic of India, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

**Mr. Modi** (India) (*spoke in Hindi; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): It is a great honour for me to address the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session on behalf of 1.3 billion Indians. It is also a very special occasion because this year, the entire world is celebrating 150 years since the birth of Mahatma Gandhi. His message of truth and non-violence is still very relevant for us today for peace, development and progress in the world.

This year we witnessed the holding of the world's biggest election in the world's biggest democracy. The largest number of voters ever voted my Government into power for a second term, with an even stronger mandate than before. It is thanks to that mandate that I am once again standing here before the Assembly.

However, the message that my Government's mandate conveys has an even greater, wider and more inspiring significance. When a developing country is able to successfully implement the world's biggest sanitation campaign as part of the Clean India mission, building more than 110 million toilets in just five years for its people, its achievements and outcomes constitute an inspirational message for the entire world. When a developing country successfully runs the world's biggest health insurance scheme, giving 500 million people access to annual health coverage worth 500,000 rupees at no cost to them, the achievements and response systems that result from that scheme show the world a new path.

When a developing country successfully runs the world's biggest financial inclusion scheme, opening more than 370 million bank accounts for those in poverty in just five years, the systems that result from that scheme build confidence in those affected by poverty across the entire world. When a developing country launches the world's biggest digital-identification programme

for its citizens, giving them a biometric identity that ensures their rights and saves approximately \$20 billion by reducing corruption, the modern systems that result from that programme give the world new hope.

As I entered this building, I noticed the call on one of its entrance walls to make the United Nations free of single-use plastic. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that, as I am addressing members today, a very large campaign is being initiated across the entire country to make India free of single-use plastic. In the next five years, in addition to promoting water conservation, we are going to ensure a water supply to 150 million homes and build more than 125,000 kilometres of new roads. By 2022, when India celebrates its seventy-fifth independence day, we plan to have built 20 million houses for the poor. While the world has set itself the target of eradicating tuberculosis by 2030, in India we are working towards eradicating it by 2025.

The question that arises is how we have been able to achieve all that. How is it that such rapid changes are occurring in India? India is a great culture that is thousands of years old, has its own vibrant traditions and has encompassed universal dreams. Our values and culture see divinity in every being and strive for the welfare of all. The very core of our approach is therefore public welfare through public participation, not just for India but for the entire world. That is the reason why we draw inspiration from our motto, “Collective efforts for the growth of all, with everyone’s trust” — a motto that is also not confined to the borders of India.

Our endeavours are neither an expression nor an act of pity nor a pretence. They are inspired by a sense of duty and duty alone and are all focused on 1.3 billion Indians. However, the dreams that those efforts are trying to fulfil are the same dreams nurtured by the entire world, by every country and every society. The efforts are ours, but their fruits are for all and the entire world to enjoy. That conviction of mine grows stronger every day, when I think of those countries that, just like India, are striving for development, each in their own way. When I hear about their joys and sorrows and when I learn their dreams, my resolve to develop my country at a faster pace becomes even stronger, so that India’s experience can also be beneficial to those countries.

Approximately 3,000 years ago, a great poet of India, Kariyan Pungun-dra-naar, wrote in Tamil, the most ancient language in the world, “We belong to all places and to everyone”. That sense of belonging

beyond borders is unique to India. Over the past five years, India has worked to strengthen its centuries-old great tradition of fraternity among nations and working for the welfare of the world, which is indeed in line with the key objectives of the United Nations. The issues that India raises and the kinds of new global platforms that India has come forward to build seek collective efforts to address serious global challenges and issues.

If we take a historical and per-capita emission perspective, India’s contribution to global warming is very low. At the same time, India is also one of the leading nations when it comes to taking steps to address the issue. On the one hand, we are working to achieve the target of 450 gigawatts of renewable energy; on the other hand, we have also taken the initiative to create the International Solar Alliance. One of the effects of global warming is the increasing number and severity of natural disasters, which are also appearing in new areas and in new forms, in response to which India initiated the formation of the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure. I invite all countries to join the coalition, which will help to build infrastructure that can withstand natural disasters.

Of all the soldiers from all countries who have made the supreme sacrifice for United Nations peacekeeping missions, India has given the most. We belong to a country that has given the world Buddha’s message of peace, not war. That is why our voice rings out with seriousness and outrage against terrorism in order to alert the world to that evil. We believe it is one of our biggest challenges, not for one single country but for the entire world and humankind. The lack of unanimity among us on the issue of terrorism undermines the very principles that were the basis for the creation of the United Nations. For the sake of humankind, I therefore firmly believe that it is absolutely imperative that the world unite and stand as one against terrorism.

The face of the world is changing today. Modern technology in the twenty-first century is bringing about sweeping changes in our social and personal lives, the economy, security, connectivity and international relations. In such a situation, a fragmented world is in no one’s interests. Neither do we have the option to confine ourselves within our own borders. In this new era, we will have to give new direction and strength to multilateralism and the United Nations.

The great spiritual guru Swami Vivekananda delivered a message to the world 125 years ago during

the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago. His message was one of harmony and peace, not dissension. Today the message from the world's largest democracy to the international community remains the same. It is a message of harmony and peace.

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

*Mr. Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of the Republic of India, was escorted from the rostrum.*

**Address by Mr. Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister of the Republic of Singapore**

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

*Mr. Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister of the Republic of Singapore, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister of the Republic of Singapore, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

**Mr. Lee** (Singapore): As we approach the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations next year, it is timely to reflect on the role of the United Nations and the relevance of multilateralism.

The open and integrated international order that emerged after the Cold War has benefited all countries. Multilateral institutions, systems and laws are critical to the survival of small countries such as Singapore. They give us a stake in the global commons and a means to defend and advance our interests. A rules-based system imposes responsibilities on all countries and creates a stable environment for all. That is why Singapore is a staunch advocate of the United Nations, international law and the multilateral system.

The world is now going through a complex transition. The strategic balance is shifting. More countries are keen to enhance their international roles and are competing fiercely for influence. At the same time, the global consensus on the benefits of globalization has eroded and support for multilateralism has declined. In many countries, nationalist, isolationist and protectionist sentiments have intensified and have reshaped domestic politics, giving rise to inward-

looking and nativist policies. The result is a more polarized world.

Continuing along that path will lead to an even more fragmented and unstable world. And yet, despite the increased friction and greater potential for conflict, countries have, in fact, become much more interconnected. Actions by one country are having a greater and faster impact on others, the consequences of which may eventually rebound. In such a world, a multilateral approach is not an option but rather a necessity in order for countries to deal with complex global problems, including poverty eradication, pandemics and climate change. Those are some of the themes of this year's General Assembly debate.

Sustainable development has become a priority for all countries. We all face common challenges — creating jobs, raising standards of living and eradicating poverty. However, it is very difficult for any country to develop and progress on its own. Growth requires trade, investment and technology and all those activities depend on working with others, within an open and orderly international framework of rules.

That has been how many countries have progressed in the past 70 years since the Second World War. Developed countries opened up their own markets and benefited in return from access to new markets in the developing world for their industrial products, such as aircraft, electronic devices and machine tools. China's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001 presaged two decades of dramatic economic growth, which lifted more than 850 million people out of poverty. India, too, has grown steadily since the 1990s, as its economy has gradually liberalized and become more integrated with those of its partners. Before that, other smaller economies in East and South-East Asia, including Singapore, travelled that same path.

Many developing countries in Africa and Latin America are now making the same journey. However, if global markets become less open and conditions for trade and investment more uncertain and disorderly, their progress will become much harder. Traditionally, developed countries help developing countries with foreign aid and technical assistance, but a much more effective way to help them is for developed countries to keep trade and markets open so that developing countries become more productive and can raise their standards of living on their own, providing good jobs at

home and eliminating the pressure on their populations to emigrate to seek better lives elsewhere.

Today there is strong pushback against an open and integrated global economy. The view that globalization and free trade have worsened inequality has grown. However, the truth is that globalization and free trade have improved the lives of billions of people around the world, and not only those living in poor countries. Indeed, there have been winners and losers in every country and not all countries have succeeded in balancing the benefits and costs of globalization domestically. In those cases, the international system often becomes their scapegoat. However, a fragmented world with less growth and prosperity will create fewer jobs and make everyone's prospects even dimmer. Worse, closed global markets will create tension and instability in the international system.

That does not mean that multilateralism is working perfectly — far from it. The post-war multilateral institutions have serious weaknesses. For example, the World Trade Organization has found it increasingly difficult to reach meaningful trade agreements, since any deal requires full consensus among its 164 member countries, which have widely differing interests and philosophies. Furthermore, the WTO's rules were designed for an agriculture- and manufacturing-based world economy, and we now need new and better rules for services, particularly digital services and intellectual property. Still, the solution should be to reform those institutions rather than to bypass or dispense with them without first putting in place a better solution.

However, countries cannot afford to wait indefinitely for such reforms. Meanwhile, new regional mechanisms and frameworks for cooperation are either emerging or have developed. For instance, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership will lower barriers and raise standards for trade in goods and services. In the area of finance, the Chiang Mai Initiative helps Asian countries to manage short-term liquidity problems via a multilateral currency-swap arrangement and complements support from the International Monetary Fund. Those are practical ways for countries to work together to help one another through the vagaries of the global economy.

Infrastructure development is another area that is ripe for regional cooperation. All over Asia, the demand for infrastructure far outstrips supply. Most of the time,

Governments cannot fund all the infrastructure they need and international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, do not have enough resources to go around. That is why new initiatives, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the United States Better Utilization of Investments Leading to Development Act, have a role and are welcomed by many countries.

Those regional or plurilateral arrangements may be second best to multilateral ones, but in an imperfect world they address real needs and help us to make progress step by step. The key is to keep those arrangements open and inclusive, so that they can overlap and complement one another and allow other countries to join when they are ready. We need to avoid creating rival economic blocs or a bifurcated global economy that forces countries to choose sides and undermines the international order. Multilateral cooperation is also essential for dealing with wicked global problems. Those are problems that no single country can solve alone, but that if not tackled will have disastrous consequences for all countries.

One salient example is climate change. That is an issue with which our young people are seized, and rightfully so, because it is about their future and their lifetimes. This week, hundreds of thousands of young people demonstrated peacefully all over the world, including in Singapore, to demand climate action from their leaders. We have a responsibility to them to act and they deserve our full support.

For its part, Singapore takes climate change very seriously. Climate change is an existential issue for us. Like other low-lying island States, we are most vulnerable to rising sea levels. However, we will also suffer from climate change's other effects, whether those are new diseases, more extreme weather events, food shortages, forced migration or even wars. Being so small, Singapore contributes only 0.11 per cent of global carbon dioxide emissions. Furthermore, we are disadvantaged in alternative energy, with limited sources of renewables other than solar energy. Nevertheless, we are committed to doing our full share under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change to reduce emissions and mitigate global warming. We have implemented significant measures in that regard, including a carbon tax, which is the first in South-East Asia and is applied economy-wide with no exemptions.

We are working with the United Nations to offer technical assistance to other countries. We will collaborate with partners to improve our understanding of climate change and its impact through research and institutions, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Specialized Meteorological Centre, which is based in Singapore. We will also contribute to the efforts of international organizations such as the International Civil Aviation Organization and the International Maritime Organization to reduce emissions. In that regard, I would like to commend the Secretary-General for convening the Climate Action Summit this week. It was both timely and necessary.

Most importantly, we have to inculcate in our populations the mindset that each one of us has a responsibility to live sustainably and in harmony with the environment. We are under no illusions that the Paris Agreement target of 1.5°C global warming or less will be easy to achieve. Moreover, even if we do achieve that, the problem will not be completely solved, as such action will only slow down the rise in sea levels and will not stop it. However, we must try our best and over time all countries will have to do more to mitigate climate change. At the same time, we must be serious about preparing early to adapt to climate change. Adaptation efforts will be costly, but they are an essential investment for protecting not just our coastlines but also our communities, our future and our very existence. It is the responsibility of our generation to leave future generations with a habitable planet, both through mitigation and adaptation.

Adapting multilateralism for today's world calls for new approaches that are open, inclusive and transparent. As Member States, we all have to work together to find solutions to global problems and build support for multilateral institutions among our peoples. A rules-based multilateral system is still far preferable to any other way to secure peace and prosperity and solve global problems. I call on fellow Member States to support the multilateral approach, push harder against the tide and demonstrate leadership in that endeavour.

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

*Mr. Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister of the Republic of Singapore, was escorted from the rostrum.*

### **Address by Mr. Marjan Šarec, Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia**

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

*Mr. Marjan Šarec, Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted to the rostrum.*

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

**Mr. Šarec** (Slovenia): It is a distinct honour for me to address the General Assembly, a unique global forum in which all States have an equal voice. The purpose of our annual debates each September is to assess the state of the world, identify trends and global challenges and exchange ideas on possible solutions.

The world order is clearly in transition and international organizations are trying to follow accordingly. However, in trying to adjust to some of the shifting paradigms, it would be a grave mistake to abandon the fundamental principles that have guided us for the past three quarters of a century. They are the sovereign equality of all States, collective security, the progressive development of international law, the fulfilment of obligations in good faith, the peaceful resolution of disputes, friendly cooperation among States and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Respecting those fundamental principles under the umbrella of the United Nations prevents us from sliding into a state of global chaos and war.

We live in an integrated world, one in which we all have a stake in each other's success. Our commitment to multilateralism derives from our values and strong conviction that global issues can only be tackled collectively. Nationalism and populism produce catchy formulas with immediate appeal. However, finding genuine solutions to our problems tends to be complex and challenging and requires a broader consensus. That is precisely why we are here to look for solutions to global and regional problems through dialogue and with mutual respect and respect for diversity.

This week, the vast majority of Member States once again reaffirmed their support for multilateralism. I want to add Slovenia's voice to that call for effective multilateralism, specifically focusing on three particular areas — the rule of law and human rights,

climate change and the Sustainable Development Goals, and the challenges related to new technologies.

Regarding international law and the universality of human rights and fundamental freedoms, we must constantly bear in mind that, if the system is to work, every State must abide by and defend the rules-based order, as embodied in the Charter of the United Nations. Respecting international law is not a matter of opportunism or political will; it is a legal obligation and the *sine qua non* of the international system. It is therefore imperative to push back against attempts to undermine international law. Respect for international commitments and the implementation of international judicial decisions is fundamental.

Over the past seven decades, the protection of human rights has seen remarkable progress. However, that progress should never be taken for granted, and we have to resist all attempts to weaken the existing protections. That is one of the greatest assets we can and must pass down to our children. However, we must not only create opportunities for the young, but also adequately address the ageing of many societies and the rights of the elderly. Slovenia will continue to support the idea of a dedicated international legal instrument on the rights of older persons.

The shrinking space for human rights activists around the world is alarming. All human rights belong to all people. Any identity-based discrimination and violence is utterly unacceptable. I say this while also looking ahead to next year's twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The important advances made in gender equality and the empowerment of women must be protected. Sexual and reproductive health and rights are among the cornerstones of gender equality. We must not forget that women's potential is still underutilized in too many countries.

Gross human rights violations tend to be early indicators of emerging conflict. A swift and firm response to large-scale human rights violations is therefore vital to preventing crises from developing into full-fledged conflicts. I call on the members of the Security Council to uphold the code of conduct regarding situations involving mass atrocities and to refrain from using the veto in such situations.

Slovenia is committed to conflict prevention and mediation. Prevention reduces human suffering. We have seen it work. When we take action early and stand united,

we save lives. My country is determined to contribute to prevention efforts, in particular by supporting the human rights pillar of the United Nations, international criminal justice and the peaceful resolution of disputes. More specifically, Slovenia will continue to support stability in the Western Balkans and their European integration. While supporting the prospects of those countries for European Union membership, we actively encourage regional cooperation and reconciliation and promote youth cooperation.

Due to their strong deterrent effect, ensuring justice and accountability for violations of international humanitarian and human rights law is important from an ethical, legal and practical perspective. As a member of the Secretary-General's Circle of Leadership on preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations, I call for concerted action to end sexual exploitation and abuse across the United Nations system. Prevention and justice for survivors must be our first priority in that context.

To assist States in holding perpetrators accountable, Slovenia, together with several other countries, has put forward an initiative to negotiate a multilateral treaty for mutual legal assistance and extradition for domestic prosecution of the most serious international crimes. We thank all 69 States that have expressed their support for the initiative so far. We sincerely hope to obtain further support in the months leading up to the treaty negotiations, which begin next spring.

I would also particularly like to address climate change, and especially sustainable development. The climate crisis is evolving faster than predicted. In passing several planetary milestones, we have already taken away some of the resources that belong to future generations. The unprecedented mobilization of young people on a global scale, demanding immediate action, followed by the Secretary-General's initiative to convene the Climate Action Summit, has finally generated a sense of urgency. The twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held later this year in Chile, will be of critical relevance to humankind and our planet. We owe it to our children not to become sidetracked from the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

We must recognize the right to a healthy living environment. Climate change is a case in point of the importance of effective multilateralism. The

depletion of natural resources, especially water, perpetuates inequalities and the risk of conflict. It is also forcing us to rethink our current economic models and make them sustainable. The circular economic model, whereby resources are reduced, reused and recycled, is inextricably linked to the implementation of the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The transition to a sustainable and green economy is a strategic priority for Slovenia. We will continue to support the implementation of the Paris Agreement. In that context, we will pay special attention to the sustainable use and management of natural resources, especially water, the promotion of a circular economy and the preservation and protection of biodiversity. In addition, Slovenia will continue to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda with a sense of urgency. We will present the progress we have made over the past four years in our second voluntary review at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in 2020.

We need to make every effort to eliminate all forms of poverty and inequality, promote peaceful and inclusive societies and mitigate the root causes of migration in developing countries. The issue of mass migration is not a new challenge and cannot be simply resolved overnight. It is an issue that should be addressed responsibly from the point of view of human rights and solidarity, with a clear focus on prevention, by appropriately addressing the situation at its root.

We cannot hold this important yearly discussion without acknowledging the significance of new technologies. Technological advancement brings people across the world closer to one another, and to a greater extent than ever imagined. It provides immense benefits in terms of increased productivity and a higher quality of life but also entails new risks for countries and individuals. People are increasingly reaping the benefits of artificial intelligence. According to estimates, as much as 80 per cent of future work will be done using artificial intelligence. It is bound to deeply affect various facets of our daily lives and fundamentally transform our societies.

We need to be better prepared for the challenge of algocracy, including by regulating the impact of artificial intelligence on human rights protection. I am particularly pleased to announce the proposal to set up, with UNESCO's backing, Europe's first

international artificial-intelligence research centre in Slovenia's capital of Ljubljana. The aim of the centre will be to provide an open environment, focusing on the governance and policies surrounding artificial intelligence. In that respect, I sincerely hope to be able to count on the Assembly's valuable support at the upcoming UNESCO General Conference in November.

I believe that at this critical time we must move forward in pursuit of our ideas and ideals, not abandon them. We need to give expression to our best hopes, not our deepest fears. We have to provide leadership that is strong enough to recognize that nations share common interests and people share universal principles and ideas in our common humanity.

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

*Mr. Marjan Šarec, Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted from the rostrum.*

#### **Address by Mr. Imran Khan, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan**

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

*Mr. Imran Khan, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Imran Khan, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

**Mr. Khan** (Pakistan): I feel honoured to represent my country at today's forum of world leaders, where we have a chance to discuss the problems that the world is facing. I want to talk about many problems, but I will focus on just four today. I came to this forum despite the difficulties in my country and the challenges facing it. Indeed, I would not have come at all, but I feel that there are some very urgent problems that the world must address.

I will first talk about climate change. So many leaders have already discussed it, but I feel that there is a lack of seriousness. Perhaps some world leaders who could do a lot do not realize the urgency of the situation.

We have many ideas, but, as someone has said, ideas without funding are mere hallucinations.

I will start with my own country, Pakistan. Our country is among the 10 nations of the world most affected by climate change. As we are primarily an agricultural country, we depend on our rivers, and 80 per cent of the water in our rivers comes from glaciers — glaciers that are in India as well as in Pakistan. Eighty per cent of the water in the Ganges and other Indian rivers comes from the Himalayan, Karakoram and Hindu Kush glaciers, which are melting at quite a rapid pace. We have already detected 5,000 glacial lakes in our mountains. If that continues and nothing is done, we fear that humans will face a huge catastrophe. In my country, when my party came to power, we planted 1 billion trees over five years in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. We have now set ourselves a target of reaching 10 billion trees in Pakistan, with the goal of helping to counter the effects of global warming.

However, one country cannot do everything. This has to be a combined global effort. My optimism comes from the fact that the Almighty has endowed humans with great powers. We can do anything, provided that our survival instinct is stirred up. I really hope that the United Nations can take the lead and put more emphasis on this issue. Richer countries, the countries that are mainly responsible for greenhouse-gas emissions, must be pushed to do more, because our country contributes a minuscule amount to greenhouse gas emissions. The United Nations must lead on this issue.

The second issue I wish to mention is even more critical. Every year, billions of dollars leave poor countries for rich countries. Billions of dollars are siphoned off by the developing world's ruling elite and find their way into Western bank accounts, offshore accounts, tax havens and expensive properties hidden behind companies bought in Western capitals. That is devastating the developing world and causing further poverty and death. It is impoverishing the developing world. The divide between rich and poor countries is growing because of it. Money-laundering that results from money leaving poor countries for rich countries is not treated the same way that drug money and terror financing are, for instance. Terror financing and drug money are taken more seriously than the fact that poor countries are being plundered by their elites.

I took charge of our Government one year ago. In the 10 years preceding that, my country's total debt quadrupled. The debt we had accumulated in 60 years quadrupled in just 10 years. As a result, half of the total revenue that we collected in one year went into debt servicing. How are we going to spend money on our 220 million citizens when half of our money is going into debt servicing as a result of our country being plundered by a ruling elite who could easily withdraw that money? Moreover, when we do locate properties in Western capitals that have been bought with money made through corruption and money-laundering by corrupt leaders, those finances are nearly impossible to retrieve. If we retrieved that money it could be spent on our citizens, but it is very difficult.

Laws protect those criminals. We do not have millions of dollars to spend on expensive lawyers. We need help from rich countries, and it is critical that such countries show political will. They cannot allow this to happen. How can poor countries spend money on human development, which the United Nations calls for as part of the Sustainable Development Goals? How will we do that when our countries are so easily drained of finances?

So unless rich countries intend to build walls to stop economic refugees, as we are currently seeing, they must take action now. There must be a deterrent. The corrupt ruling elite should not be able to easily take money from us and park it in foreign bank accounts and properties abroad. I have also never understood how tax havens are allowed to exist. Why should rich people not pay taxes? Why are secret accounts in tax havens legal? The world is changing and its population is growing. Sooner or later there will be a crisis if the poor get poorer and the rich get richer. That is my second point, and I hope that the United Nations takes the lead on that matter by involving the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. Those institutions must find a way to stop the plunder of the developing world.

My third point is Islamophobia. There are 1.3 billion Muslims in the world, and millions of Muslims live in European countries and the United States as minorities. Since 9/11, Islamophobia has grown at an alarming pace. Human communities live together and should foster understanding among one another, but Islamophobia is creating a division. Muslim women who wear hijabs are now seen as an issue in some countries, with the hijab being depicted as a weapon.

Women are permitted to take off their clothes in some countries, but are not allowed to put on more. How can that happen? The reason is Islamophobia, which started after 9/11, because certain Western leaders equated terrorism with Islam, talking of Islamic terrorism and radical Islam. What is radical Islam? There is only one Islam, the Islam we follow of the Prophet Muhammad. There is no other Islam.

What message do the terms “radical Islam” and “Islamic terrorism” send to people in the West, and why does Islamophobia exist? How can people in New York, the Midwestern United States and European capitals distinguish between moderate and radical Muslims? Terrorism has nothing to do with any religion. The terms “Islamic terrorism” and “Islamic radicalism”, which are used by leaders, sadly, are the main reasons for Islamophobia and have caused pain among Muslims. We in Muslim countries experience Islamophobia when travelling abroad, and it is getting worse. May I also say that Islamophobia is marginalizing Muslim communities in European countries, and we all know that marginalization leads to radicalization. Some of the people who became militants in Syria and other countries were from marginalized Muslim communities. My point here is that we must address the issue.

I am sad to say that we Muslim leaders have not addressed the issue either. After 9/11, when the war against radical Islam began, leaders did not try to explain to the West that there was no such thing as radical Islam. There are radicals, moderates and liberals in all human communities — whether they are Christian, Jewish or anything else — but Islam itself is not radical. Neither is Judaism nor Christianity nor Hinduism. No religion preaches radicalism. The bases of all religions are compassion and justice, which differentiate us from the animal kingdom. However, unfortunately, the Muslim leadership was so scared of being called radical Muslims that leaders all labelled themselves as moderates. Pakistan was in the eye of the storm, and our Government coined the phrase “enlightened moderation”. No one knew what it meant, but everyone started wearing Western suits, calling themselves moderates and speaking English, even if they were barely proficient. No one had a clue what it meant, because we in the Muslim world did not explain to the West that there is no such thing as radical Islam.

One of the reasons that Islam was supposed to be equated with terrorism following 9/11 was suicide attacks. All sorts of theories appeared, because the 9/11

bombers were suicide attackers. One such theory was that Muslims carried out such attacks because they would be greeted by virgins in heaven. What about female suicide attackers? It was bizarre, and no one explained the truth. As a result, suicide attacks became associated with Islam. No one pointed out that before 9/11, the majority of suicide attacks in the world were perpetrated by the Tamil Tigers, who were Hindus. No one blamed Hinduism, and quite rightly. What has Hinduism got to do with what desperate people were doing in Sri Lanka? We have all seen films about the Japanese kamikaze pilots who carried out suicide attacks towards the end of the Second World War, and we did not blame their religion. Nevertheless, here we were trying to prove that we were moderates instead of explaining the truth to the West.

The most important thing I want to say here today with regard to Islamophobia is this. I know how the misunderstanding about Islam came about, because I have spent a lot of time in England playing sport professionally. I therefore know how the Western mind works and how the West views religion. One of the reasons for Islamophobia was a book published in 1989 that maligned, insulted and ridiculed our Prophet Muhammad, and there was a reaction in the Muslim world. The West could not understand what the problem was, because, in the West — and I know this, because I have spent so much time there — religion is perceived completely differently. Westerners do not view religion as we do. Islam was labelled as an intolerant religion that was against freedom of expression, and it took a real beating. That happened 30 years ago, and I still remember it as a watershed. Every two or three years, someone would malign our Prophet — may peace be upon him — and Muslims would react, which led to Islam being labelled an intolerant religion.

In more recent years, I again blame a certain group of people in the West who deliberately provoked the current phenomenon, while being aware of the impact it would have. However, the majority of Westerners did not understand. Again, that is where the Muslim leadership let Muslims down. We should have explained to them what our Prophet means to us, which I will now try to explain in the space of one minute.

Our Prophet was the witness to the divine book, the holy Qur'an. The holy Qur'an is the book of guidance for Muslims and the Prophet's life was the perfect example of the Qur'an's guidance. He therefore represents the ideal that we all wish to attain. The Prophet created

the first Islamic State in Medina, which was the basis for the Muslim civilization that would become the predominant civilization for the next 700 years.

What was that State? I hear such strange things about Islam — for example, that it is against women and minorities. The first State of Islam, in Medina, was the first welfare State. It took responsibility for the weak, widows, orphans, the poor and the handicapped. It taxed the rich and spent the money on the poor. The State announced that all human beings were children of Adam and hence equal, whatever the colour of their skin. The whole system depended on slavery, as Western societies did for many years, and the Prophet announced that one of the greatest deeds was to free a slave. However, because society was so dependent on slavery, he declared that they must at least be treated as equal members of the family. As a result, something occurred in the Muslim world that has yet to occur in any other civilization: slave dynasties appeared and slaves became kings. Mamluk slaves ruled Egypt and there were slave dynasties in India.

The Assembly has heard that Islam is supposedly against minorities, so let me just make this issue clear. The Prophet announced that all were free to practice their religion. It was a sacred duty to protect the places of worship of all religions. He declared that every person was equal in the eyes of the law, regardless of their religion or colour. I always quote the incredible case of the fourth Caliph, the Head of State of Medina, who lost a court case to a Jewish citizen, which demonstrates that first, no one was above the law, and secondly, that a Jewish citizen was regarded as an equal citizen. When a Muslim society is unjust to its minorities it is therefore going against the religion of Islam and our Prophet.

It is important to understand that the Prophet lives in our hearts. When he is ridiculed or insulted, we feel that pain. As human beings, we understand one thing, which is that the pain of the heart is far more hurtful than physical pain. That is why Muslims react to such allegations. I have always thought that, if I ever stood at this rostrum, I would try to explain that concept to the international community, in particular the Western community. Having lived in the Western community, I saw that Westerners were not aware of that fact. When I first went to England as a teenager, I learned of a comedy film about Jesus Christ. Such a thing would be unthinkable in a Muslim society. Human communities must therefore be sensitive towards the causes of each other's pain. In the West, the Holocaust is quite rightly

treated with sensitivity, because it causes the Jewish community pain. All we ask is that freedom of speech not be used to insult the holy Prophet and cause us pain.

My fourth point is the most critical and the reason why I came here. It is about what is happening in Kashmir. Before I continue, I wish to make one thing clear. When we came to power, my first priority was to make Pakistan a country that would do its best to foster peace. We joined the United States' war on terror after 2001, and Pakistan experienced one of its worst periods, in which 70,000 Pakistanis died and our economy shrank by more than \$150 billion. I opposed the war, because Pakistan had joined Western countries in the 1980s in Afghanistan's struggle for freedom against the Soviets. The mujahidin groups involved in guerrilla warfare were trained by the Pakistani army and funded by Western countries, particularly the United States. Those groups waged a struggle for freedom in Afghanistan. The Soviets called them terrorists, but we called them freedom fighters. In 1989, the Soviets retreated, the Americans packed up and left, and those groups remained in Pakistan.

Come 9/11, Pakistan joined the United States in the war on terror. I opposed joining the war because we had repeatedly told the West that "jihad" meant fighting for freedom against foreign occupation. Having joined forces with the United States, which had occupied Afghanistan, we were then supposed to declare that jihad did not signify a struggle for freedom but that it should instead be equated with terrorism. I therefore tried to tell the Government of the time to remain neutral, in order to enable it to keep the upper hand and remain in control. I told the Government that if it joined the United States, it would become an accomplice and be attacked, which is what happened. They turned against us. We lived through a nightmare. Seventy thousand people were killed in a war that we had nothing to do with. No Pakistani was involved in 9/11. The Taliban and Al-Qaida were in Afghanistan. We had nothing to do with it, but we lost 70,000 Pakistanis.

When we came to power, we therefore decided to disband what was left of those groups, a decision taken not just by us but by all Pakistani political parties. Unfortunately, the decision was not implemented until we came to power and dismantled whatever was left of those groups. I know that India continues to make accusations that such groups remain active. I would like the United Nations to send observers to see for themselves what we have done. No Pakistani

Government would have dared to do that because it would have created strife. But we decided that there would be no militant organizations in Pakistan. All of that background is necessary for what I will go on to explain.

My Government also started to mend fences. I invited the Afghan President to our country and we have developed a relationship with Afghanistan. We had problems with Iran; we mended fences there. That brings me to India. Allow me to give some background about my relationship with India. Cricket is a passion of our subcontinent and, thanks to the sport, I had a great following in India, I have friends in India and I love going to India.

Therefore, when my party came to power, the first thing we did was to immediately reach out to India. I spoke to Prime Minister Modi and told him that our countries had similar problems — climate change and poverty. I told him that we should get together, resolve our differences through trade and build a relationship based on trust. Mr. Modi told me that Pakistan had perpetrated terrorist attacks in India. I replied that we too had problems with terrorist attacks instigated by India in Balochistan, having caught a spy, Kulbhushan Jadhav, who admitted to the sabotage going on in Karachi and Balochistan. We asked India to leave that behind us and let us move forward, saying that our main priority should be our people, given that the highest number of poor people in the world live on the Indian subcontinent.

Unfortunately, we made no headway. Our Foreign Ministers were supposed to meet to discuss the issue at last year's session of the General Assembly, but India cancelled the meeting. We understood that their election was coming up and so believed that the ultranationalist party did not wish to cosy up to Pakistan. We therefore decided to wait until the elections were over. Meanwhile, a 20-year-old Kashmiri man — who, according to his father, was radicalized by the security forces in Kashmir — blew himself up on an Indian convoy. India immediately blamed us. I spoke to the Indian public on television and said that if the country gave us any proof, we would immediately take action, as we had clamped down on such groups. Rather than send us proof, they sent jets to bomb us. We retaliated; two of their planes were shot down and one pilot bailed out in Pakistan. We immediately returned the pilot, saying that we did not want any escalation.

Rather than take that as a peace gesture, Mr. Modi's election campaign focused almost entirely on how he had taught Pakistan a lesson by killing 350 of its terrorists, which is a complete lie. All that India killed was approximately 10 of our trees, which was indeed quite painful, given our reforestation efforts. In his election campaign, Mr. Modi used phrases such as "This is just a trailer; the movie is about to start", and "I went to Pakistan and taught them a lesson". That was his election campaign.

We acknowledged the fact that we politicians make such statements to win elections and we would be able to resume normal relations after the elections. The moment the elections ended, we approached India and received no response. However, we then discovered that it was trying to put us on the Financial Action Task Force blacklist as a way of bankrupting us. That is when we realized that India had an agenda, which became clear on 5 August when it breached 11 Security Council resolutions stating that Kashmir is a disputed territory and that the people of Kashmir have a right to self-determination. It also breached a similar accord on resolving differences bilaterally and revoked article 370 of the Indian Constitution, giving Kashmir special status. It also deployed a further 180,000 troops in the region, with the total number of security forces in Kashmir now at 900,000. Moreover, it imposed a curfew on the 8 million people of Kashmir.

I want to briefly help the Assembly understand how anyone can do something like that. To do that, however, I must explain Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. Mr. Narendra Modi is a lifetime member of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, an organization inspired by Adolf Hitler and Mussolini that was founded in 1925 based on a belief in racial purity and racial superiority. Like the Nazis, its members believed they were an Aryan race. All of that can be verified. We live in an information revolution, so anyone can google what I am saying. It is very important for me, however, to explain this to Assembly members so that they know what is happening in India. Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh believed in the ethnic cleansing of Muslims in India. At one point, it believed that the Hindu race was racially superior. It also harboured hatred for Muslims and Christians because it believed that the golden age of the Hindu civilization had come to an end as a result of Muslim rule centuries back, and subsequently of British rule in India. It therefore harboured feelings of racial superiority and a hatred of Muslims and Christians.

That was all openly stated. All one needs to do is google the founding fathers of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Golwalkar and Savarkar, and they will find out the truth. That ideology of hatred is what murdered the great Mahatma Gandhi in 1948. It was that ideology of hatred that inspired Narendra Modi to film a programme in 2002 against Muslims in Gujarat, where he was Chief Minister. He allowed the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh goons — who are inspired by Hitler's Brown Shirts and actually wear brown shirts — to carry out a three-day assault. The Congress Home Minister declared in a statement that terrorists were being trained in Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh camps. Those terrorists butchered 2,000 Muslims and rendered 150,000 homeless. For that reason, Narendra Modi was not allowed to travel to the United States.

It is essential that the Assembly understand that background before I explain what sort of mind would lay siege to 8 million people with 900,000 troops. Women, children and sick people are locked up like animals. In fact, from what I know about England, if 8 million animals were locked up, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals would have made a lot of noise about it. However, those individuals are human beings.

What comes with the illusion of a superior Aryan race and racial superiority is arrogance. The two go together. It is arrogance that leads people to make mistakes and do stupid things — cruel things like those perpetrated by Narendra Modi. That is sheer arrogance. It is arrogance that has blinded him to what will happen when the curfew is lifted. Has he thought about that? It has not been thought through. What is he going to do when he lifts the curfew? Does he think that the people of Kashmir will quietly accept the status quo because India has changed the Constitution and stripped them of their special status? Will they accept that?

In the past 30 years 100,000 Kashmiris have died because they were denied the right to self-determination bestowed on them by the United Nations. One hundred thousand have died and 11,000 women have been raped. There are two United Nations human rights reports on this. The world has done nothing, because India is a huge market of 1.2 billion people. Sadly, the material world prevails over human life. But that has serious consequences. I again repeat, that is why I am here. What is going to happen when the curfew is lifted will be a bloodbath. People will come out onto the street and be greeted by 900,000 troops, who are not

there, as Narendra Modi says, for the prosperity and development of Kashmir. What will those 900,000 troops do when people come out of their homes? There will be a bloodbath. Has he thought through what he will do then?

Has anyone thought about what to do when a bloodbath occurs? What kind of impact will that have on the people of Kashmir? What will they think after being boxed away in their houses and treated worse than animals? They have no rights. All of their political leaders have been arrested and taken out of Kashmir; even pro-India Kashmiri leaders have been removed. Thirteen thousand boys have been picked up and taken to unspecified locations. What will the people of Kashmir do when the curfew is lifted? They will pour out onto the streets. And what will the soldiers do? They will shoot them. They have already used pellet guns to blind young boys during the past five years of oppression in Kashmir. Kashmiris will therefore become further radicalized.

There will be another Pulwama. When it happens — guess what? — India will blame us. It is already blaming us. It is saying that everything is happening because of Pakistan. Its Army Chief of Staff said that there were 500 terrorists lined up on the border ready to cross. Why would Pakistan send 500 terrorists when there are 900,000 troops there? What impact are they going to make? What would they do? Do we not know that the moment a terrorist attack occurs, all that will happen is further cruelty and oppression for the people of Kashmir? The 900,000 troops would simply have a reason to further crush the people of Kashmir. The Indian Government would have an excuse to say that Pakistan is a terrorist State and to invoke the mantra of “Islamic terrorism”.

The moment the catchphrase “Islamic terrorism” is used, the whole world turns away, no one talks about human rights and people are given licence to do whatever they want. That is what is happening in Kashmir because the phrase “Islamic terrorism” keeps being used. That is what is happening right now. What benefit do we gain from further increasing the cruelty inflicted on the people of Kashmir? Why would we want that? Yet there is no other narrative left for India because, no matter what happens when the curfew is lifted, Pakistan will be blamed. There is always the danger of another Pulwama. They might come and bomb us again, and then another cycle will start.

What does Narendra Modi think? What are the 180 million Muslims in India thinking right now? Are they not watching the Kashmiris, stuck inside for 55 days now? Are they not watching? What do my fellow members of the General Assembly think? Do members not think that Muslims will be radicalized in India? I am talking about 180 million people. When they get radicalized, somewhere down the line there will be an incident in India and we will be blamed again. I am warning everybody present right now that, again, we will be blamed.

What about the 1.3 billion Muslims who are watching? They know that what is happening in Kashmir is only happening because there are Kashmiri Muslims. It is not happening to Kashmiri Hindus. Muslims know that what is happening is because of their religion. So what do my fellow leaders think they are thinking? What would the Jewish community think if 8,000 Jews — let alone 8 million — were stuck in the same way? What would Europeans think? What do we think? What do we think any human community, whose members are stuck in the way Kashmiris are, would think? Are we children of a lesser God? Does such a situation not cause us pain? This is what will happen next — someone among the 1.3 billion Muslims will pick up arms.

I know we have been brought up watching western films — seeing the classic narrative of the good, decent guy who does not get justice, and so decides to pick up a gun and start seeking justice himself. For example, there is one particularly famous film set in New York called *Death Wish*. The main character gets mugged and his wife is killed. He cannot get justice, so he picks up a gun and goes around shooting muggers, and the whole cinema cheers him on. With that in mind, what do members of the Assembly think Muslims are thinking right now? If there is a bloodbath, Muslims will become radicalized — not because of Islam, but because they will see that there is no justice when it comes to Muslims. In Myanmar, almost a million Rohingya Muslims were wiped out as a result of ethnic cleansing. What was the response of the world community? So what do members of the Assembly think would be the response of the 1.3 billion Muslims?

I picture myself in Kashmir. I have been in lockdown for 55 days. I have heard about the rapes and about the Indian army soldiers going into homes. Would I want to live through such humiliation? Would I want to live like that? I would pick up a gun. The situation is forcing

people into radicalization. When people lose the will to live, what is there to live for? That is the crux of the issue. If the international community can let that happen to human beings, it is actually radicalizing people.

I therefore repeat that now is one of the most critical times. There will be a reaction. Pakistan will be blamed. Two nuclear-armed countries will come face to face, as they did in February. Yet the United Nations has a responsibility to stop us from heading in that direction. That is precisely why the United Nations came into being in 1945. It is supposed to stop such things from happening. I feel as if we are back in the Munich of 1939 and Czechoslovakia has just been taken — annexed. What is the world community going to do? Is it going to appease a market of 1.35 billion? Or is it going to stand up for justice and humanity? If things go wrong, the world will hope for the best, but it should be prepared for the worst. If a conventional war breaks out between the two countries, anything could happen.

But let us suppose a country seven times smaller than its neighbour is faced with the choice of either surrendering or fighting to the death for its freedom — what will we do? I ask myself that question, and my belief is that there is no God but God. We will fight. And when a nuclear-armed country fights to the end, there will be consequences that reach far beyond its borders. There will be consequences for the world, which is why I repeat that I am here to send out a warning. It is not a threat. It is a reasonable concern about where we are headed.

I have come here to tell the United Nations that it must act. This is a test for the United Nations. It was the United Nations that guaranteed the people of Kashmir the right to self-determination. They are suffering because of that right and now is the time to do something. Unlike 1939, it is not the time to appease. It is the time to take action. The number one action must be for India to lift the inhumane curfew that has lasted for 55 days. It must free all political prisoners, especially those 13,000 boys who have been detained. Their parents do not know where they have been disappeared to. Then, the world community must give the people of Kashmir the right to self-determination.

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

*Mr. Imran Khan, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was escorted from the rostrum.*

**Address by Mr. Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic**

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

*Mr. Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.*

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

**Mr. Mitsotakis** (Greece): Allow me first to congratulate Ambassador Muhammad-Bande on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session.

It is a great pleasure for me to address the General Assembly for the first time as the leader of the people who first developed the values that most of the modern world embraces — democracy, individual rights and equal justice under law.

For the past decade, however, the story of the Greek people has suffered a series of misfortunes that have tested the will and mettle of our nation. But we struggled and persevered and this past summer we opened a new chapter in our enduring saga that will show once again what we are made of as a people and as a nation.

In national elections last July, Greek voters gave my New Democracy Party the support to form a strong majority Government and the mandate to chart a new course for our country that will build a more productive, more prosperous society, able to offer our people new opportunities to realize their dreams and fulfil their destinies. We moved quickly to carry out that mandate. In less than three months, we ended capital controls, initiated measures to spur privatization and attract investment, and passed legislation to cut taxes, open markets and reduce red tape. And we are just getting started.

A new day has dawned in Greece, warmed by the clear light of reason and buoyed by the winds of change and hope. As we move to steer our country away from the storms that buffeted it for a decade towards calm seas and bright horizons, we remain extremely mindful

of our place in the volatile region where we live, our role in the European Union (EU), whose ideals we inspired, and our responsibilities to the fragile world that we all inhabit.

Given the multitude of today's challenges and perils, the role of the United Nations must constantly evolve and diversify in order to remain relevant and to promote freedom, prosperity and peace in troubled regions. Greece fully supports the Secretary-General's efforts to lead the reforms needed to make the United Nations more effective.

It is indeed time for the United Nations to enhance its ability to engage in preventive diplomacy, provide humanitarian assistance and lead both peacemaking and peacekeeping missions, as well as rebuild shattered nations once conflicts are resolved. And it is crucial to do it all with greater transparency, efficiency and accountability.

I believe that we would all agree that no matter how many peacemaking or peacekeeping operations are deployed in conflict areas, at the end of the day peace and security cannot prevail in the absence of development and inclusive growth. Greece remains strongly committed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to the long-term vision of a climate-neutral European Union economy by 2050.

To achieve those goals, the Greek Government has made addressing climate change a core component of its agenda. That is not just a defensive strategy to protect our forests from wildfires and our beaches from erosion and rising sea levels. It is about leveraging our unique natural environment and cultural heritage as a comparative advantage that will lead to new sustainable growth.

To do so, we plan to adopt a new, ambitious national strategy for energy, environment and climate before the end of this year. We will ban single-use plastics across the country by the end of 2021. We will close all our lignite power plants by the end of 2028. We will press forward with initiatives to protect our intangible cultural heritage from the impact of adverse climate conditions. We will follow up on the international summit on the impact of climate change on cultural heritage, which took place in Athens in June, by calling for a high-level meeting next year to continue and expand on the work that begun at the Athens conference.

For Greece, sustainable development and prosperity are also linked to the effective management of one of today's main challenges, the refugee crisis. Situated at the external borders of the European Union, and therefore at the forefront of the migration and refugee crisis for several years now, Greece continues to be confronted with the largest migrant and refugee flows to Europe since the Second World War.

We rank among the top four EU member States in asylum applications and have one of the highest ratios of asylum seekers per capita. Despite the disproportionate burden and the resulting tremendous pressure on our reception and asylum systems, we have managed to save thousands of lives at sea. We are deploying enormous efforts and resources, to the best of our abilities, in order to host refugees and migrants in a humane and decent way, respecting the human rights and human dignity of both refugees and migrants arriving in our country.

However, we are reaching the limits of our ability to address this problem. Entry countries cannot and should not bear the burden of the migratory pressure on their own. Refugee and migration management is a European challenge that calls for collective action, a comprehensive approach and broad solutions, always based on the fair sharing of responsibility, not xenophobic agendas.

We need to state the obvious to our European partners, which is that Greece cannot bear alone the burden of massive movements of people fleeing wars and oppression or simply seeking a better future, as has recently been the case. For these people, Greece is not their final destination. They come to Europe through the European Union's external borders, which happen to be our borders. Their plight cannot be turned into a weapon in the service of political goals by anyone, anywhere.

The agreement between the European Union and Turkey must be respected and Turkey must do much more to fulfil its part of the bargain. The recent drastic increase in the number of migrants crossing the Aegean Sea is unacceptable. Europe should continue supporting Turkey financially, recognizing that millions of refugees currently live in Turkey.

At the same time, the European Union must move fast to adopt new common rules for asylum seekers that apply to all countries. No European nation can be a member of the Schengen area and benefit from the free movement of people while at the same time refusing to

participate in burden-sharing arrangements regarding the migration crisis. Solidarity is not a one-way street.

The situation in the Middle East and North Africa is a source of deep concern and should be addressed by the international community in a comprehensive manner. It is tragic that eight years after the eruption of the Syrian crisis, the country continues to be a battlefield, for regional and international differences as well as domestic ones, with repercussions felt by all, but first and foremost by the unhappy Syrian people. Greece sees no alternative to a political solution. We fully support the inclusive political dialogue in Geneva under United Nations auspices that will produce a framework agreement based on Security Council resolution 2254 (2015) and that will not only enable Syrian refugees to return to their homeland but will also provide a basis for starting the reconstruction of this ravaged country.

On Libya, it is imperative to establish the security conditions that will allow the country to heal. As one of Libya's neighbours, Greece attaches particular importance to the international efforts to stabilize the country. We fully support the United Nations Action Plan for Libya and the recently announced three-part programme of action, and believe that they constitute a solid road map for achieving progress.

As a country that enjoys both longstanding ties to the Arab world and excellent relations with Israel, which Greece first recognized when my father was Prime Minister almost 30 years ago, we believe that the Middle East peace process must remain alive and lead to a two-State solution, in the hope that one day the area can become a promised land for all its people.

It is often said that geography is destiny. Nevertheless, it is our responsibility to shape our own destiny. Although my country is situated close to an extremely turbulent region, it remains a pillar of stability that actively promotes peace, security and cooperation. Along with the Republic of Cyprus, Greece has established constructive trilateral cooperation schemes with Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine. Consistent with its role as a stabilizing force in a region confronted with grave challenges, Greece remains fully committed to the principle of good-neighbourly relations with all its neighbours.

However, no tangible progress in relations between two neighbouring countries can be achieved without full respect for international law, including the law of the sea, and full respect for international

treaties. Actions that persistently challenge Greece's sovereignty and sovereign rights, in the sea and in the air, undermine the important principle of good-neighbourly relations, contravene international law and seriously impede efforts aimed at achieving mutually beneficial relationships.

Forty-five years have passed since the illegal Turkish invasion and occupation of more than a third of the Republic of Cyprus. An agreed, comprehensive and viable solution in accordance with Security Council resolutions should put an end to this injustice. We welcome President Anastasiades's and Turkish Cypriot leader Akıncı's efforts to agree on the terms of reference for resuming the negotiations to resolve the Cyprus question. It is up to them to decide what is good for their communities, and they do not need any foreign tutelage. As President Anastasiades repeated in this Hall yesterday (see A/74/PV.7), the only acceptable solution is the evolution of the Republic of Cyprus into a bizonal, bicomunal federation with political equality, a single sovereignty, a single international legal representation and a single citizenship. Greece stands ready to resume negotiations for the termination of the outdated, totally anachronistic 1960 system of guarantees and unilateral rights of intervention and for the withdrawal of the Turkish occupation troops from the island.

However, Turkey's illegal drilling activities in the eastern Mediterranean, particularly within Cyprus's exclusive economic zone and territorial waters, violate international law. They blatantly undermine ongoing efforts being made under United Nations auspices to restart the Cyprus negotiations and dangerously escalate tensions in the eastern Mediterranean. Gunboat diplomacy has no place in the twenty-first century. It belongs in the nineteenth. Furthermore, recent Turkish actions and statements concerning the opening of Varosha under Turkish-Cypriot administration are in blatant violation of relevant Security Council resolutions, which call for the return of all legal inhabitants to Varosha under United Nations administration.

With respect to our neighbours to the north, Greece will continue to support the efforts of all the countries of the Western Balkans to join the European Union, as long as they fully respect their international obligations to the European Union and to their neighbours. Greece is playing a vital role in the economic development of the entire Balkans region, thanks to trade opportunities provided by its ports in Piraeus and Thessaloniki, as well

as its position as one of the most important investors in South-Eastern Europe. And we will continue to do so more intensively in future.

Let me conclude by making the following observation. We naturally think of the United Nations whenever we are confronted with difficult problems. All too often we are quick to criticize the United Nations if it comes up short in handling them. But for those who are caught in the middle of wars and revolutions, the United Nations is the only bulwark of safety they can count on, and to the millions of refugees around the world to whom it provides food and shelter, it is their only beacon of hope. I therefore wish to conclude my first appearance before the General Assembly by saluting the United Nations for the conflicts it has resolved, the suffering it has diminished and the pain it has eased all over the world.

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

*Mr. Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.*

**Address by Mr. Andrew Holness, Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Economic Growth and Job Creation of Jamaica**

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Economic Growth and Job Creation of Jamaica.

*Mr. Andrew Holness, Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Economic Growth and Job Creation of Jamaica, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Andrew Holness, Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Economic Growth and Job Creation of Jamaica, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

**Mr. Holness** (Jamaica): I extend my most heartfelt congratulations to Mr. Muhammad-Bande on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session and assure him of Jamaica's full support in the work ahead. I also want to convey our deepest appreciation to Her Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés for so ably guiding our work during the previous session.

The United Nations is a critical tool for building a world of peace, security and development. These are the hallmarks of multilateral collaborative activities of which we can all be justly proud. No individual country can fulfil the development aspirations of its people without working in partnership with others. We are therefore grateful to the Secretary-General, his team and all who have been the drivers behind the many successful United Nations initiatives.

At the same time, our global space is facing unprecedented risks, including deepening geopolitical conflicts, heightened trade tensions, terrorist attacks and security threats. There is also growing religious intolerance, increasing xenophobic behaviour and, not least, the devastating effects of climate change. Sadly, we are witnessing these phenomena against the backdrop of fears of a global recession. I therefore very much welcome the theme chosen for the General Assembly's general debate this year, "Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion". Now is indeed the time to redirect our focus and enable our countries to reverse these negative trends.

Jamaica is pursuing several policy and legislative measures designed to create a more cohesive society and a more resilient economy. Our major goals are the promotion of inclusive sustainable growth, economic opportunities, a peaceful society, social harmony and citizen security. We are working to make this a reality for every Jamaican. Greater investment in human capital will undoubtedly yield exponential returns for national development. Empowerment of our people will facilitate participation in the growth and development of Jamaica, our region and the broader international community.

Special attention must be given to the most vulnerable in society to ensure that no one is left behind. We have therefore increased the budgetary allocation to the Jamaica Social Protection Strategy programme, which encompasses wider social and income-security imperatives associated with a range of vulnerabilities. In 2017, we revised our national poverty-reduction programme aimed at reducing the national poverty rate to below 10 per cent by 2030. We are working to ensure that persons living with disabilities, the elderly, women, children and young people are part of an inclusive, resilient and prosperous society.

We have made significant advances with universal enrolment at the pre-primary, primary and secondary levels of education through a strategic and integrated programme of education and training. As part of this endeavour, we are increasing emphasis on science, innovation and technology, and we are committed to creating a labour force adaptable to the new and emerging demands of the global workplace.

We have also launched the Housing, Opportunity, Production and Employment (HOPE) programme, which enables unattached young people to access training in life skills, character development and employment. Over the last three years, more than 26,000 young people have benefited from and have become ambassadors of HOPE. In addition to cutting youth unemployment in half over the past three years, Jamaica achieved a record-low unemployment rate of 7.8 per cent, 18 consecutive quarters of economic growth, low and stable inflation and a reduction in our ratio of debt to gross domestic product from 147 per cent to 95 per cent.

I have shared the foregoing indicators of Jamaica's steady economic performance while fully acknowledging that the successes are not solely dependent on a strengthened domestic fiscal-responsibility framework but also on an enabling global economic and financial environment. Jamaica is determined to achieve economic independence and social equity by working collaboratively with our bilateral and multilateral partners.

A major challenge for Jamaica is crime and security, particularly in terms of its impact on our economic development goals. Despite the strong programmes that are in place to get guns off the street and our investments in improved border-control systems and other forms of security investments, on our own we do not have the capacity to stem the flow of illegal arms trafficking. Transnational, regional and multilateral action are needed if we are to effectively tackle the malignant links between organized crime, the illegal drug trade and the illicit proliferation and trafficking of small arms. We therefore not only rely on the support of our neighbouring countries, but we also look to the United Nations to continue to play a pivotal role in supporting peace and security at all levels, including with respect to the proliferation of conventional weapons.

The growing geopolitical challenges and risks of global economic instability are of concern. The

situation is especially worrisome for small developing countries like Jamaica that are already susceptible to external shocks. Instability and insecurity affect foreign direct investment and have implications for gross domestic product growth, revenue, employment and public spending.

Yesterday's High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development as well as the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development remind us of the pressing need for us to mobilize increased capital. Sustained progress is not achievable without the requisite quantity and quality of public and private investment to close the financing gap for climate action and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is for this reason that Jamaica and Canada continue to spearhead initiatives through the Group of Friends of SDG Financing and to work with partners such as Denmark on the Closing the Investment Gap Initiative so as to attract greater investment in sustainable infrastructure.

Jamaica also welcomes India's offer to establish and host the Coalition for Disaster-Resilient Infrastructure to provide a framework to ensure that all future infrastructure is resilient in the face of disasters. We encourage coordination and cohesion in emerging initiatives so as to maximize the impact of our efforts.

I am also compelled to reiterate the special challenges faced by such highly indebted middle-income countries as Jamaica and our Caribbean neighbours. Although we are poised for economic transition, our potential is seriously constrained by having to choose between high external-debt repayment and catalytic growth spending. Furthermore, the current policies that govern access to concessional-financing windows do not allow us access to sufficient, affordable long-term financing for SDG investments, and our capacity to mobilize public resources domestically is limited by our small size and vulnerability. This touches on the issue of graduation criteria, which do not take into account the range of vulnerabilities facing middle-income countries. Our economies face further challenges as a result of de-risking and the attendant problem of losing correspondent-banking relationships, which severely impedes access to essential financial services.

In the context of our special vulnerabilities, my delegation welcomes the midterm review of the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA Pathway), which presents an

opportunity to further operationalize the mandate of the Pathway. Jamaica is committed to this process and looks forward to seeing the full support of the international community in this regard.

I am pleased to inform the Assembly that on 1 January, Jamaica successfully implemented a ban on the importation, manufacture and distribution of single-use plastic bags, expanded polystyrene and plastic drinking straws. The ban has served to sensitize the general public to the environmental challenges posed by non-biodegradable litter, especially that which ends up in our oceans. We are considering expanding the ban as we make it a priority to strengthen our waste-management systems. We also launched a national tree-planting initiative this year through which we will plant more than 3 million trees over three years, which represents a tree for every Jamaican citizen.

We remain committed to reducing the erosion of watersheds and its related impact on coastal ecosystems. We are partnering with others to ensure that our marine environment, on which our socioeconomic survival depends, is being sustainably utilized and managed. The High-level Panel on Building a Sustainable Ocean Economy convened by the Prime Minister of Norway, Ms. Erna Solberg, and its resulting Call to Ocean-Based Climate Action and report entitled *The Ocean as a Solution for Climate Change: 5 Opportunities for Action* enjoy Jamaica's full support. We look forward to the convening of the Ocean Conference in Norway next month and in Portugal in June 2020.

That brings me to the single most visible threat to the global environment, which is climate change. Its effects are intensifying, with coastal cities and low-lying island nations facing the greatest risk. The recent devastation wrought by Hurricane Dorian in the Bahamas reinforces this reality. We are deeply saddened by the tragic loss of life and extensive damage to property, infrastructure and livelihoods occasioned by this climate disaster. Jamaica and other Caribbean islands have first-hand experience of the increase in the intensity of hurricanes, as well as intermittent increased rainfall and extended periods of drought. These adverse weather events have resulted in major economic loss and dislocation across the region.

Jamaica has adopted several policies and legislative measures to reduce its vulnerability to natural hazards and adapt to the effects of climate change. These include the development of a comprehensive and first-of-its-

kind public financial disaster-risk monetary policy, with provisions for financial risk-protection, including budgeted contingency funds and State-contingent debt instruments. More action is needed at the national and global levels to urgently tackle climate change. I was therefore honoured by Secretary-General Guterres's mandating Jamaica to jointly lead, along with France and Qatar, the climate-finance and carbon-pricing track at the recently concluded United Nations Climate Action Summit. The success of these efforts for climate action will depend on adequate financing and transformative and scalable programmes. I look forward to building on the outcomes of the Summit and the decisions to be made at the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Santiago later this year.

This is a seminal year for the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, as we commemorate the twenty-fifth year of its entry into force, as well as the twenty-fifth anniversary of the International Seabed Authority (ISA), which is headquartered in Jamaica. The ISA's contribution to the development of this constitution of the oceans and its continued relevance to the preservation of a global common resource are commendable. We look forward to successfully concluding negotiations in 2020 on an international treaty under the Convention on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Jamaica maintains an abiding faith in the value of multilateralism. Every State Member of the United Nations has a role to play in confronting the challenges that beset the global community. This perspective is what continues to inspire countries like Jamaica to contribute its professional and technical expertise to the multilateral process, including at the Council of the International Maritime Organization and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, in 2020. We are committed to supporting the fulfilment of our common objectives in both institutions.

The Charter of the United Nations commits the international community to saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war and conflict of all kinds. Jamaica therefore supports the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoys for Syria and Myanmar and Personal Envoy for Western Sahara. We also support efforts aimed at rapprochement on the Korean peninsula and discourage any action that

would reverse those efforts. We also remain conscious of the persistent tensions in the Middle East and Africa, where the attainment of peace and security has been far too elusive. Closer to home, we further reiterate the call for the discontinuation of the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on our neighbour, Cuba. We are equally concerned about the disarmament and proliferation landscape, particularly the gradual dismantling of long-standing disarmament treaties and its implications for international peace and security.

*Mr. Baati (Tunisia), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

We cannot ignore ongoing conflicts in such countries as Yemen, Afghanistan and Libya, where United Nations personnel continue to provide yeoman service in peacekeeping. We commend their dedicated efforts and respectfully recall the memory of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in seeking to advance the ideals of the United Nations of global peace and security. This includes one of our own Jamaican nationals, Mr. Clive Peck, who lost his life in the service of the United Nations as a result of a bombing that occurred in Benghazi, Libya, a few weeks ago. We thank the Secretary-General and the United Nations as a whole for the support it has provided to his family at this time of bereavement.

As a global family of nations, our collective commitment to the rules-based international order must remain steadfast. Sustainable development for all is attainable only through concerted effort and partnership. To that end, we must act decisively and expeditiously. This seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly represents a crossroads for decision-making and action. Let us not waver in our determination to make that a reality.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Jamaica for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Andrew Holness, Prime Minister of Jamaica, was escorted from the rostrum.*

#### **Address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan**

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

*Mr. Qohir Rasulzoda, Prime Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Qohir Rasulzoda, Prime Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

**Mr. Rasulzoda** (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Russian*): It gives me great pleasure to join in the heartfelt congratulations extended to Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. I would also like to express my appreciation to Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés for her excellent work as President of the Assembly at its seventy-third session.

For nearly 75 years the United Nations has been a universal platform for discussing and resolving urgent issues of the day. However, the world we live in is changing rapidly. The current unstable situation, in a context of growing geopolitical and economic competition as well as increasing numbers of global threats and challenges, demands that we act effectively and consistently. We believe it is essential to marshal all the tools at the Organization's disposal and to improve our joint efforts. We must also strengthen our commitment to maintaining the rules-based order, with an effectively functioning United Nations at its centre. In that regard, Tajikistan supports the Secretary-General's efforts to promote comprehensive reform of the Organization, aimed at strengthening and enhancing its capacity to counter today's challenges and threats in a timely and effective manner.

Terrorism and extremism, together with transnational organized crime and illicit drug trafficking, undermine international peace and security, aggravate conflicts and destabilize entire regions. They hinder our efforts to advance and protect human rights and promote sustainable development. Today Tajikistan is doing its utmost to help to combat terrorism and extremism, transnational organized crime and illicit drug trafficking. Given our years of experience in peacebuilding and in preventing and countering terrorism, as well as combating illicit drug trafficking, in May in Dushanbe we held a high-level conference on international and regional cooperation on countering terrorism and its financing through illicit drug trafficking and organized crime. The Dushanbe conference was the first in a series of regional initiatives within the framework of the follow-up process to the High-level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States convened by the Secretary-General on 28 and 29 June 2018 in New York. We are

confident that the Dushanbe conference will serve as an important platform for comprehensive dialogue and the exchange of best practices and experiences among all interested parties.

Issues related to combating terrorism and extremism were also discussed at the fifth Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia, held in Dushanbe on 15 June. As the current Chair of the Conference, we believe it important to advance our countries' efforts to promote peace, stability and security in Asia, which should focus on dismantling the military infrastructure of international terrorism, denying it political, military and financial support and preventing the misuse of the Internet for radicalization, recruitment and propagandizing for extremism and violence.

Illicit drug trafficking is one of the primary sources of terrorism financing. As my country is on the front lines of the battle against that evil, we have done a great deal to address it since becoming independent. At the direction of President Emomali Rahmon of Tajikistan, our national drug enforcement agency was established in 1999 with the support of the United Nations. In 2013 we adopted a national counter-narcotics strategy for the period from 2013 to 2020. In what we see as an important and timely initiative, President Rahmon has proposed establishing, with the support of the United Nations, a special group that would include representatives of law-enforcement agencies from the countries of the so-called Northern Route, with the participation of experts researching issues related to illicit drug trafficking. We hope that Member States will support that initiative.

Security and stability in Central Asia are closely linked to developments in Afghanistan. Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan is the longest of any country, and since the first days of our independence we have therefore worked consistently to promote lasting peace and stability in our neighbour. We are also making a practical contribution to Afghanistan's social and economic development by connecting our two countries' transport corridors through an energy bridge, the Central Asia-South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project, which provides the Afghan people with electricity and essential commodities, as well as by training specialists. One of the important areas in that regard is involving Afghanistan in the process of multilateral regional cooperation and the creation of conditions that will help to fulfil the transit potential of the country and the region. Tajikistan fully supports

the efforts of the Afghanistan authorities to establish a peaceful negotiation process.

This is a very important year for taking stock of the results of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The four-year cycle of the High-level Political forum on Sustainable Development has been successfully completed. We have plenty of room for enhancing our efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda over the next 11 years, since the current pace of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is insufficient, despite significant efforts. In that regard, we support the call of the Secretary-General to act urgently and with purpose in order to successfully implement the 2030 Agenda in a timely manner. We have adopted a national development strategy for the period up to 2030 and a medium-term development plan from 2016 to 2020, both of which fully align with the 2030 Agenda and are key tools for ensuring national ownership of the SDGs in Tajikistan. However, we are also dealing with an array of new issues and problems, first and foremost of which, in our view, is climate change, which seriously affects the process of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and their targets.

Over the past 60 years, the average annual air temperature in Tajikistan has increased by 1°C. The number of days with heavy precipitation has increased, as have the frequency and intensity of natural hydro-meteorological events. Water-related natural disasters alone cost our economy hundreds of millions of dollars in damage every year. Natural disasters often claim human lives. The negative impact of climate change on the quantity and quality of the world's freshwater resources is also becoming increasingly evident. In the past few decades Tajikistan has seen the surface area of its glaciers, which are vitally important to the whole of Central Asia, shrink significantly. In that regard, we believe it is essential to strengthen cooperation among countries in order to address the consequences of natural disasters by developing preventive measures and establishing funds to assist countries in need. It is also essential to enhance the monitoring of glaciers, snow and other water sources and take effective steps to protect them for future generations.

We consider it vital to promote development of a green economy in every way, and particularly green energy, which is a crucial component of sustainable development. Expanding the use of renewable energy, principally hydroelectricity, contributes to Tajikistan's economic and social development while keeping harmful

emissions into the atmosphere as low as possible. Hydropower plants, which generate about 98 per cent of our electricity, form the basis of the country's energy sector. The Government has been taking comprehensive measures to balance energy production and consumption by modernizing and upgrading our existing hydropower stations, building new ones and introducing modern energy-conservation methods.

Tajikistan is a leader in promoting water issues at the global level. It is well known that in the past few decades, at the initiative of President Rahmon four important global initiatives were endorsed by the General Assembly. In the course of their promotion and implementation, the initiatives received broad support from Member States, international and regional organizations, financial institutions, prominent members of the science and business communities and representatives of civil society. In 2018, we began implementing our fourth global initiative, the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development" 2018-2028. Resolution 71/222, on this issue, outlines the modalities of the midterm comprehensive review of the Decade's implementation and envisages two important global events. For the first time since the first United Nations Water Conference was held in Mar del Plata, Argentina, more than 40 years ago, a United Nations conference on the midterm comprehensive review of the implementation of the objectives of the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development" will be held in New York in March 2023. In 2021, there will be a one-day high-level meeting of the General Assembly to promote the implementation of the water-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda.

In that connection, the Republic of Tajikistan, as part of the Dushanbe process, will hold the second conference on the implementation of the International Decade of Action, entitled "Galvanizing water-related actions and partnerships at the local, national, regional and global levels", in Dushanbe in June 2020. We sincerely hope that Member States will once again support us and take an active part in our upcoming conference in Dushanbe. We believe firmly that developing water cooperation and partnerships will help to ensure the timely adoption of measures needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

In conclusion, I would like to note that today, against a background of emerging problems on a global scale, we must make tremendous efforts to achieve

the goals we have set in a timely way. Of those, the most urgent are the threats of global terrorism, climate change, environmental degradation, acute shortages of resources and the growing gap between poor and rich countries and population groups. The United Nations remains the only universal organization capable of coordinating and uniting the efforts of the entire international community to resolve these problems currently facing humankind.

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

*Mr. Qohir Rasolzoda, Prime Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan, was escorted from the rostrum.*

**Address by Ms. Erna Solberg, Prime Minister of Norway**

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

*Ms. Erna Solberg, Prime Minister of Norway, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Ms. Erna Solberg, Prime Minister of Norway, and inviting her to address the Assembly.

**Ms. Solberg** (Norway): Norway is a firm supporter of a rules-based multilateral order. We are a consistent partner in efforts to promote sustainable development, peace, security and human rights. The world needs strong multilateral cooperation and institutions to tackle global challenges such as climate change, cybersecurity and terrorism, and the United Nations needs to be strengthened so that we are better equipped to respond to the current challenges.

Norway wants to take part in that responsibility. That is why we are a candidate for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the period from 2021 to 2022. We are ready to serve and to build a more effective and transparent Council that will help us to solve our common challenges in a better way. We must all work to forge new partnerships. Those partnerships must build on common interests and objectives, regardless of geography or tradition. Norway supports a more representative Security Council that better reflects global realities. That includes the expansion of

both permanent and non-permanent seats for Africa. We need reforms that ensure greater legitimacy and lead to better results for more people. The Secretary-General has shown great leadership in reforming the United Nations, and Norway will continue to support the implementation of his reforms, both politically and financially.

The consequences of instability affect us all. Areas of conflict and instability are breeding grounds for violent extremism and international terrorism, and those threats are not limited to the conflict areas themselves. Terrorist propaganda, incitement and resources can move across borders, both real and virtual, and there is no single ideology, religion or belief behind them. Global security threats require global responses. Broad international cooperation is essential among States, international organizations, non-governmental partners and the private sector. We also need to work within our communities to prevent radicalization. We must prevent the spread of terrorist content online without undermining human rights or freedom of expression. Norway is committed to the Christchurch Call to Action. We too have experienced the deadly outcome of online radicalization.

Creating durable peace is crucial to long-term security. Norway's extensive experience in conflict resolution and peacebuilding guides our work in the United Nations. Since the end of the Cold War, mediation and conflict resolution have been cornerstones of our foreign policy. At the request of the parties, we have been engaged in efforts to resolve conflicts all over the world, in Colombia, Venezuela, the Philippines and Afghanistan, on the African continent and in the Middle East. We always seek lasting solutions. There is so much to be gained if we succeed. That is why Norway is willing to take the political risk of engaging early and why we persist in our efforts over time.

For example, we remain committed to a negotiated two-State solution between Israel and Palestine. As Chair of the International Donor Group for Palestine, Norway remains committed to strengthening the institutional foundation for a future Palestinian State. Norway also supports an inclusive peace process in Afghanistan. We welcome the progress made in talks between the United States and the Taliban and urge the parties to finalize an agreement, thereby opening the way for peace negotiations among Afghans.

In our international peace efforts, we do not work alone. We need partnerships and cooperation with the United Nations and other international organizations, with civil society and various interest groups. We know that the inclusion of women and minorities leads to stronger agreements, better implementation and greater legitimacy. Above all, the parties to a conflict must own the process. Norway is always impartial, but we are never value-neutral. We promote dialogue, listen to all parties and conduct pragmatic diplomacy. If we are elected, we will take that approach with us to the Security Council and put conflict resolution and peacebuilding high on the Council's agenda.

In a world where insecurity is increasing, United Nations peacekeeping must be adequate and relevant. Peacekeepers do the essential job of protecting civilians. Norway is an active supporter of the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative. We must develop innovative solutions to ensure that the United Nations has the quality and predictability it needs. One example is the rotational concept for military transport aircraft, which Norway initiated. By providing camp facilities, we also reduce costs for the United Nations and our rotation partners. Norway will continue to deploy high-end niche capacities on the ground, examples of which are our transport aircraft and specialized police team in Mali. We also provide staff officers and police advisers to the United Nations missions in South Sudan, Colombia and the Middle East, and will soon do so to the mission in Yemen.

A strong relationship with the African Union (AU) is key to the success of United Nations peacekeeping in Africa. We should strengthen the strategic partnership between the United Nations and the African Union and secure sustainable and predictable financing of United Nations-mandated AU peace support operations.

Norway is a champion of women and peace and security. We will continue to push for a better gender balance at all levels and in all fields of peacekeeping activities. The participation of women is a priority in all of Norway's peace and security efforts, our work in mediation and peacekeeping, our humanitarian response and our peacebuilding efforts, and will remain a priority for us at the United Nations. Conflict and insecurity increase the need for humanitarian efforts. We are all responsible for supporting those in need of humanitarian assistance and protection, but we must do more. We must work to ensure compliance with international humanitarian law and to strengthen

protection efforts. The scale of sexual and gender-based violence in today's humanitarian crises is totally unacceptable. These terrible crimes, which too often go unpunished, must be stopped. Norway is working actively with partner countries to that end.

In recent years, we have seen an increase in the use of mines and in numbers of civilian casualties. The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention remains as relevant as ever. Norway currently holds the presidency of the Mine Ban Convention and we are also a major donor to mine action.

The record numbers of internally displaced people around the world show no sign of decreasing. We need better strategies for addressing and reducing internal displacement and closer cooperation between the humanitarian and development sectors. Norway welcomes the forthcoming establishment of a high-level panel on internally displaced persons. We were one of the initiating countries, and the Secretary-General can count on our support. Norway has increased its humanitarian budget by more than 65 per cent since 2013, and we will maintain that high level of funding in the years to come.

Security is closely linked to sustainable development. Conflict can reverse years of social and economic progress. Conflict prevention, peacekeeping and disarmament are vital if we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and sustainable development is crucial if we are to reduce insecurity and conflict. Looking ahead to 2030, we have made encouraging progress, especially in terms of access to education, health services and clean energy, but we are still not on track. As the Secretary-General has pointed out, we must step it up. Norway is a consistent partner in this endeavour, allocating 1 per cent of its gross national income to international development aid. National ownership is crucial to the achievement of the SDGs, as is the mobilization of national resources. Stimulating the private sector, boosting job creation, building fair and effective tax systems and curbing illicit financial flows and corruption are paramount for success.

Norway is proud to hold the current presidency of the Economic and Social Council, and financing for development is the main priority for our presidency. At the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the pledge to leave no one behind. If we are to deliver on that commitment, development must

be inclusive. We must reach the most vulnerable and marginalized. Norway is increasing its efforts to target those groups. We have consistently met the United Nations target of allocating 0.2 per cent of our gross national income to least-developed countries, and we have decided to increase that support further.

If elected to the Security Council, we will strive to ensure that the oceans do not become a new area of conflict. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea provides a legal framework for the oceans, ensuring predictability and stability and promoting peaceful international cooperation on the conservation and sustainable use of the world's oceans. It ensures freedom of navigation at sea. It is vital to ensure that all States fully implement it. The threats facing the oceans are unprecedented — loss of biodiversity, marine pollution, climate change and the overexploitation of marine resources are just some of the challenges we are seeing. At the same time, the oceans holds the key to achieving many of the SDGs. They are a vital source of food, energy, medicine and employment. If managed wisely, they offer huge potential for human development. Safeguarding the oceans is a shared responsibility and a matter of global urgency. That is why I initiated the High-level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy two years ago. Next year, at the second United Nations Ocean Conference, we will present a to-do list for the oceans. In October, we will host the Our Ocean conference. Norway has also launched a development aid programme to combat marine litter. We believe that ocean-based climate action can be a key to achieving our commitments under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

In Paris, we made a commitment to delivering results and outlining new ambitions for significant reductions in carbon emissions by 2020. That is what Norway is doing. Almost 30 years ago, we introduced a carbon tax in Norway, including in our petrol sector. My Government's budget proposal, to be presented next week, includes a 5 per cent increase in the tax on carbon emissions. With European Union emissions trading and our carbon tax, we are actively using market mechanisms to speed up the green shift in our economy. We are making it cheaper to be green and more expensive to pollute. The tax revenue will be used to reduce other taxes.

With close to 45 per cent of our new passenger cars now zero-emission vehicles, we are going from black to green in our passenger transport sector and we are also

starting to reform our goods transport system. As a major shipping nation, we are working in the International Maritime Organization to reduce emissions from ships, and we are scaling up the construction of offshore floating wind developments. We must all do our part, and Norway will strengthen its nationally determined contribution by 2020. I urge all other countries to do the same, because it is no longer possible to ignore the fact that climate change affects security. I am not talking about a scenario in the distant future. These security risks are already a reality for millions of people around the globe, and they are not going away.

Norway supports the call to appoint a special representative for climate and security, and we believe that the Security Council must address climate security issues. Hurricane Dorian has reminded us of the devastating effects of the climate crisis, and Norway will continue to support the call for graduated countries to be eligible for official development assistance if they are severely affected by natural disasters. Some of the countries experiencing the worst effects of climate change are among the world's lowest emitters. The threat to small island States is existential. Climate-vulnerable countries such as Tuvalu, Dominica and the Seychelles should not bear the burden of adapting to this new reality alone. We are far apart geographically, but the oceans connect us. As an ocean country close to the melting Arctic ice, we share a common concern and can feel the urgency of the crisis. We must invest in resilience. That makes sense in economic terms, too.

Our forests, and especially the rainforests, have a vital role to play. For many years, Norway has championed emission reductions globally through our climate and forest initiative. We have continued to reduce deforestation by working with a number of countries, including in the Amazon. The initiative agreed on in Leticia by the Amazon countries has our full support. Norway will be working with all of the countries in the region — including Brazil, I hope — in order to reach a point where deforestation comes to a halt. But reducing future emissions is of little immediate help to those already affected. Norway is therefore scaling up its support for climate change adaptation, resilience and food security in climate-vulnerable countries. This is an urgent task, and Norway will be an active partner in getting it done.

Much has changed since Norway's previous term on the Security Council in 2001 and 2002. But our commitment to solving common problems through the

United Nations has not changed. We are a consistent partner at the United Nations. We will remain a strong supporter of a rules-based international order. Ours is and will continue to be an independent voice, and we will strive to find common ground. Norway is ready to serve again on the Security Council, and of course we hope for the support of all Member States.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Norway for the statement she has just made.

*Ms. Erna Solberg, Prime Minister of Norway, was escorted from the rostrum.*

**Address by Ms. Mia Amor Mottley, Prime Minister, Minister for National Security and the Civil Service, and Minister for Finance, Economic Affairs and Investment of Barbados**

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister, Minister for National Security and the Civil Service, and Minister for Finance, Economic Affairs and Investment of Barbados.

*Ms. Mia Amor Mottley, Prime Minister, Minister for National Security and the Civil Service, and Minister for Finance, Economic Affairs and Investment of Barbados, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Ms. Mia Amor Mottley, Prime Minister, Minister for National Security and the Civil Service, and Minister for Finance, Economic Affairs and Investment of Barbados, and inviting her to address the Assembly.

**Ms. Mottley** (Barbados): At the outset I would like to congratulate Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session, and to pledge Barbados's support throughout his tenure. I also want to thank his predecessor for her able and astute leadership over the course of the past year. Like other delegations, Barbados supports the very timely theme of this year's session: "Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion".

We could not have chosen a more relevant and appropriate theme. Barbados has premised its own development on education and inclusion so that we can eradicate poverty from our landscape. But while we have

made good progress, our gains are being jeopardized by one main challenge that we all know only too well, that of climate change. Denying the existence of climate change does not diminish its reality. I want to take this opportunity to join my fellow leaders on this platform in expressing my country's deepest sympathy and empathy with our brothers and sisters of the Government and the people of the Bahamas, following the awful devastation visited on them by Hurricane Dorian on the islands of Abaco and Grand Bahama. That catastrophe represents an unfortunate new normal for many people in small island developing States (SIDS). From my own first-hand knowledge, I can say that it was horrific.

The world in which we live can no longer ignore the reality of climate change. It is not about hurricanes and floods. It is about droughts, wildfires, sargassum and our ability to provide drinking water, feed our people and provide them with shelter. We are facing those problems in our own nation today, from drought to sargassum. And while hurricanes may be viewed as heart attacks, sargassum and droughts are truly like diabetes — insidious and wearing us down. It is the world of our children that is absolutely at risk.

Last Friday, young people of the world across 150 countries chose to champion the cause of climate justice. Greta Thunberg spoke from this rostrum, and she must be comforted and told that when humankind cannot answer, it will attack. People play the man and not the ball. I want to say that for me it is significant that when young people engage in battle, the war is usually won. We saw that in South Africa, and we will see it now in the battle against climate change. I am therefore confident that the battle will be won. The question — and each of us here knows it — is whether it will be in time for our people who live in small island developing States. Will our small States survive this climate catastrophe before humankind finally finds the solution that can halt and reverse climate change? It is we in the Caribbean and the Pacific — small islands in the oceans of the world — who are on the front line. But as I say all the time, make no mistake, because others are in line behind us. As we would say in my own country, "Today for me, and tomorrow for you".

What is really preventing us from following the science — science, by the way, that is exceedingly compelling? I ask that we as leaders be real — real with ourselves, our people and the young. It is about political will. That is it, nothing more and nothing less. We have been discussing the challenge of

climate change for more than three decades, from the time when small island developing States first raised the global alarm in 1988. The Commonwealth gave us a vulnerability index in 1989. The Barbados Programme of Action on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States came 25 years ago, followed by the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway. How many more? How much more talk? And we are still here today, some of us singing the same chorus as if many among us were deaf and blind. I find it ironic that after our Climate Action Summit on Monday, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released another special report on oceans and the cryosphere stating that some of the more severe consequences of climate change can no longer be avoided. How many times have we been told this? How many times has science reinforced that our very survival is threatened? Some will go up into high altitudes and remain there as if that can insulate them — but for how long? The destructive behaviour continues.

Today in this Hall, I ask the Assembly, where is the moral leadership of our world? Where is the constructive action by the countries responsible for carbon emissions that believe that it is okay to continue to build coal-power plants and not decommission them, and that do not understand that the world is providing us with prospects of new industries and new jobs while enabling us to save the world for our young people? Do they not see what is happening? Why are they not acting? Do they not care? We are told, and I believe the science, that we are the last generation that can deal with this existential threat, which comes week by week — this past weekend it was Tropical Storm Karen. In the Atlantic we were lucky that Jerry and Humberto did not go the way of Dorian. How many more must stand on this rostrum? How many more must speak in the corridors of power? In the name of the people who have sent us here and who expect us to create the new industries that can transition them from coal, from destructive behaviour, from diesel- and gasoline-powered cars, we must change how we build and how we transport ourselves. We can make that difference. It is within our power. It is within the political will of the leaders. The time to act is now. Never in the history of humankind has one generation had such responsibility to protect this planet.

Unfortunately, today the Caribbean also finds itself on the front line of too many other major challenges.

That is why I constantly ask who sees us and who hears us. We continue to be confronted by the problems of blacklisting, which pale in significance when compared to climate change but which destroy our financial sector. Then there is the illicit flow of weapons, which has meant that the ease with which people can go into public spaces and shoot and kill others is now just another item on the news. We promote profit in the manufacturing and trade of guns weapons, and through the non-communicable diseases that strike down our people in the most insidious ways because we allow diets that promote the prosperity of a few multinational corporations to become the norm of the day through the food that we eat and the lives that we live.

Within our own community, Belize and Guyana continue to face challenges to their territorial integrity. I suppose people feel that because we have talked so long about Belize and Guyana and Cuba, we can continue to talk about climate change and those other things and that it is okay for it to be just another check mark on a General Assembly speech. Those are all threats to our stability, the stability of the people in our lands. But since last we met, other instances and circumstances not of our making have arisen that may yet destabilize us. We say it over and over, and we ask who is listening.

But we do not come only with tales of woe. The Caribbean has produced excellence, it really has. It has produced Nobel laureates, sportsmen and artists who have excelled and are the best in the world of their type, leaders who have inspired previous and current generations. We do not come here as a proud people asking for handouts. We do not want to be mendicant, and we will not be. What we want — no, what we need — is the fiscal and policy space to achieve sustainable development, to be nimble, to adapt and innovate in ways that enable us to be true and faithful to the task of bringing prosperity to our people or, as is the theme of this session of the Assembly, to eradicate poverty, educate our people and include all so that some are not outside and others inside. We want an international order that recognizes that there must be different policy prescriptions to suit the circumstances that each of us has, and we can still be friends — small and large, North and South, Christian, Hindu, Muslim, all different races and all genders. We want an equitable and just international order that is truly built on the principles of justice and fairness for all and not just for some. We want a United Nations that recognizes

that at 74 years old, we must be able to have difficult conversations as mature people and solve problems.

Many in the developing world were persuaded or required to abandon policies that were designed to transform the majority of our populations, and that were then fashioned to conform to a consensus that was settled in Washington and named for it. That, ultimately and regrettably, was about the consolidation of wealth in the hands of a very few. That is the reason for the growing inequality that we have seen in the world over the past few decades. That is why too many people the world over have become cynical about Governments and the benefits they can bring to them. The fuelling of the greed of a few threatens to undermine what little gains we have made since independence, and we judge ourselves harshly because independence is a recent phenomenon for us. Others, who have taken 150 years to get to where they are, are still stumbling and falling, and they want to judge those who have had less than 50 or 60 years to operate in a world that has not been made in their image and that does not reflect their interests? That is the fate of simply too many.

Despite our small size, the 14 countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) have been able to play leadership roles of international import. I cannot stand here today without talking about Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, which has become the smallest nation in the world ever to be elected to sit on the Security Council. We are proud of them. In addition — and I want to speak to this — when CARICOM was confronted with the unfolding situation in Venezuela, I accompanied the then-Chair of CARICOM, the Prime Minister of St. Kitts and Nevis, as well as the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, to meet in this building with the Secretary-General in January of this year. We also met with many delegations. Some said that we were wasting our time and some said that the time for talk was already over. We said then, as we say now almost nine months later, that the time for dialogue can never be over in a world that wants peace and prosperity.

We do not take sides, but what we know is that one cannot elevate war over dialogue. The people of Venezuela must be allowed to decide their own future in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, that is, the principles of non-intervention, non-interference, the prohibition of the threat or use of force and respect for the rule of law, human rights and democracy. It is regrettable that other multilateral organizations have not followed

their own charters. That is what makes the actions of the Secretary-General of the United Nations even more laudable for refusing to breach the Charter and take actions even though Member States have hurried to recognize the unelected.

That is why Barbados readily agreed to the request by Norway, and I salute my colleague, the Norwegian Prime Minister, who just left the rostrum, to host the talks between the Venezuelan parties. We salute the Government of Norway for walking the walk and taking leadership in facilitating those talks. We also regret that the talks have broken down. We remind people that dialogue remains critical if there is to be a meaningful outcome and benefit for the Venezuelan people and its neighbours not only on the Latin American continent but in the Caribbean Sea, because people forget that Trinidad and Tobago is less than seven miles from the coast of Venezuela. Our Caribbean Sea must remain a zone of peace. We will fight for that.

I speak plainly and without fear because, since independence, the foreign policy of Barbados has been premised on the principle of friend of all, satellite of none. Barbados has therefore always remained and will remain proud to have Cuba as a treasured friend. Barbados established relations with the People's Republic of China when others failed to. We may be small but we are principled. Our relationship with Cuba is based on a historical foundation rooted in solidarity, cooperation, complementarity and our common Caribbean civilization. We say that the long-standing economic embargo on Cuba continues to be a cause of serious concern. I reaffirm the strong opposition of Barbados to that unilateral action and even more so to the recent activation of article 3 of the Helms-Burton Act, imposing new restrictions and further exacerbating the situation. And to what end, I ask? The continued attempt to stop the people of Cuba from living with basic human dignity is unacceptable.

It is time that the global community recognized that small island developing States are equal partners in the international arena and that our special development needs must be taken into account in multilateral forums. We contend that growth in the economies of developed States must not come at the expense of the very viability of small developing States. Small children have a phrase for that. They call it cowardice, bullying and crowding out. We ask for fairness, equity and the opportunity to take our legitimate place in the

global community. That is all. That was the promise underpinning our membership of the Organization.

I know that today I have a duty to acknowledge and commend the heroic efforts of the Secretary-General, António Guterres, who is swimming against the rising tide of anti-multilateralism and anti-globalism, navigating the dangerous currents of dwindling resources and resisting the efforts to set adrift all the excellent work done over the past seven and a half decades by leaders across the world and his predecessors to ensure development, peace and the dignity of the human family.

As a small nation, we are not only committed to multilateralism, we also understand that it is the one thing that protects our sovereignty and our ability to navigate in this world. It is our buffer against the display of might and it is our shield against tyranny. We continue to view the United Nations as an important mechanism for achieving international peace and security and sustainable development for all countries, but in particular for the most vulnerable.

Historical examples have proved that national interests are best advanced by pursuing collaboration, partnership and a multilateral approach. No country trades or grows its economy on its own. A multilateral trading system and an international economic order that respond to the needs of all nations, even the smallest, are therefore of critical importance. All of us in this Hall know that. It is for that reason that Barbados intends and hopes to host the fifteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in October 2020.

We will be the first small island nation ever to host UNCTAD. Barbados welcomes the unique opportunity to work with others, our partners, to shape the trade and development agenda of the Organization for the next four years, conscious that if ever small island developing States needed to be at the centre of those discussions, it is now in order to discuss trade and climate, trade and the blue economy and sustainable development for our people. We look forward to forming those critical partnerships with all United Nations Member States to make UNCTAD XV an inclusive and successful event.

The United Nations exists to identify the commonalities that will help us get past our working differences. As I said earlier, there is no progress without communication and there is no progress without talking to each other. If the consequences of not talking

to each other are a little less sleep, then that is okay and we can accept it, but when the consequences are the loss of life and loss of livelihood, then we are in trouble. That is why there are those who believe that we are invisible because those who should know better and can do more are turning a blind eye with impunity.

If the truth be told, how many times have we been ignored on too many matters? And I ask myself how many times are we really going to come and make the same speech from this rostrum? SIDS are the canaries of the international community. The international community will ignore us at its own peril.

We are the canaries. Regrettably, we are noticed only when it is time to garner votes or to support seats on the Security Council or when a person wants a candidate to head an international organization. It is indeed only then that real value is placed on us. One asks oneself how people can be so transparent and so lacking in dignity and conscience. As I had cause to do earlier this week, I would like to remind Member States that the Alliance of Small Island States represents 20 per cent of the membership of this body — 43 States — and our votes and our voices count. They count but our lives and our dignity count more. We are committed to taking the action needed to overcome the deleterious effects of what threatens to destroy us — climate change. As Dylan Thomas wrote,

“We will rage, rage against the ... light [and] not go silent into that good [or, should I say, dark] night”.

The world is at a crossroads, and we continue to be reminded of it as recently as this morning in the statements we have heard. The United Nations will survive only if it remains relevant to the needs of our people and to finding solutions, not to all the problems of our time, but to the great problems and challenges to humankind — saving where we live, living with others with respect and dignity in peace and supporting equality, not the dominance of any one race, religion or sect. The only way that the mission of this entity can be guaranteed is if, country by country — and multilaterally, I might add — we stand on principle, the principles that have protected us from another great war for the past 74 years — and thank God for those principles and our avoidance of that great war — and that have inspired us to continually work to achieve and maintain human dignity and prosperity, as we set about meeting the Sustainable Development Goals.

The baton is now with us. It is our turn. Will we hold it firmly and continue the race to help the marginalized, those unseen and without voice, truly the forgotten of this world, or will we drop the baton — even when we know better from the experiences of the past century, during which so many died needlessly? My country and region are clear about where we stand. No war is worth it. No profit is large enough to be worth the price of war or the destruction of our planet. The people of Barbados, and I, as their leader, choose to honour our legacy, our great civilization and our freedom fighters who fought for better. Barbados chooses to fight for the path of peace, prosperity, planetary protection and hope. Barbados chooses love of self, love of neighbour, love of planet and love as a virtue. Barbados chooses a spirit of love, courage, hope and brotherhood for all humankind. We pray that everyone here will make the same decision.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister, Minister for National Security and the Civil Service, and Minister for Finance, Economic Affairs and Investment of Barbados for the statement she has just made.

*Ms. Mia Amor Mottley, Prime Minister, Minister for National Security and the Civil Service, and Minister for Finance, Economic Affairs and Investment of Barbados, was escorted from the rostrum.*

**Address by Mr. Edi Rama, Prime Minister and Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania**

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania.

*Mr. Edi Rama, Prime Minister and Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Edi Rama, Prime Minister and Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

**Mr. Rama** (Albania): Over the more than seven decades since this rostrum was raised to bear the weight of the entire world's concerns, and the more than half-

century since the gloomy past of the Cold War began, we have heard in this Hall bright promises of democratic reconstruction — such as in the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall — and of caring for people in need, as was the case with the Kosovo Albanians facing genocide in the late 1990s. Yet even here, in the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session, this Hall has once again been witness to a dozen complaining voices, various diverging world views and a substantial number of predictions of looming threats.

Many years after the end of history was announced and vast enthusiasm for globalism prevailed, we have been through the worst economic recession since the Great Depression of the 1930s, experienced a rise in violent extremism and terrorism that began on 11 September 2001, when Al-Qaida killed nearly 3,000 innocent people, and been exposed to climate change, whose effects are felt in the air we breathe in the twenty-first century. While globalism can be criticized or endorsed, that does not actually matter in the end. What matters is that it exists. Nationalism might sound like an attractive alternative at times, and it can sometimes seem so, especially nowadays. But the range of issues that we face together is essentially transnational. Willy-nilly, we find ourselves in a context in which the distinction between national interests and global priorities is largely blurred if not entirely erased.

We live in a world in which, alongside its increasing opportunities, new threats are emerging on the horizon and new risks coming to the fore. Even worse, many of those threats and risks, however clearly they are expressed, do not usually meet with the right response. We live under an ozone layer that is thinning and in a climate that is melting icebergs. While security mechanisms are increasingly sophisticated and intelligence mechanisms have been improved, illegal migration, radicalization, extremism, organized crime and human smuggling have challenged not merely our security environment but the quality of our democracy. The range of issues clearly requires not just the mobilization of national capacities but much more efficient interaction at the transnational level.

Last Friday I had to interrupt my flight to New York after landing in Frankfurt, because Albania had been struck by a powerful earthquake. My country was severely damaged, but no lives were lost, thank God. As if that were not enough, just before the aftershocks subsided, we were assailed by a storm and a torrential

downpour that made the situation even more horrible for our vulnerable citizens.

Science has progressed a great deal, and whether for good or bad goes well beyond the scope of this discussion, but it has not progressed to the point of being able to predict the arrival of earthquakes. However, while that may be the case with earthquakes, it is certainly not the case with regard to climate change, whose destructive effects can be tackled in advance in a number of ways. Needless to say, no country on Earth is immune to nature's distorted hostilities or strong enough to cope with them alone. I am therefore pleased to be able to inform the Assembly that Albania has been working hard to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by reducing greenhouse-gas emissions by 45 per cent in the next decade and achieving net-zero emissions by 2050, in accordance with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. In addition, we have adopted a national climate change strategy, a mitigation action plan for greenhouse-gas emissions and a national climate-change adaptation plan, making Albania the first and so far the only country in the Western Balkans with a consolidated strategy on climate change.

We have undertaken many other initiatives to keep our skies blue and make our future horizon greener. New energy-efficiency standards in construction, a forthcoming ban on non-degradable plastic bags, a moratorium on hunting and logging and a growing tree-planting campaign are only a part of our ambition to make Albania a leading example for the green agenda. Those endeavours also serve as a reminder that climate action requires daily commitment. Not only is that true of action on climate change, it is certainly also true of the other great concern that we all share in today's world — security.

An experienced army general once said that there are two types of countries in the world — small countries, and countries that are not aware that ultimately they too are small. Albania might be a small country from a global perspective, but it is aware of its global responsibility. During Albania's decade of NATO membership, and regardless of the vast challenges we have faced, we have deployed troops to Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Latvia, Mali and Afghanistan in order to make our mark in a world that should be safer and in hopes of a brighter future. Only a few months ago, two Albanian soldiers serving in NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence in Latvia lost their lives in the line of duty while dismantling explosives. Albania

proudly remembers them today, at the world's largest gathering of nations. Their martyrdom is a universal reminder of the noblest of causes, the protection of freedom and security and the provision of security to maintain freedom.

Despite that tragic loss, which cut deeply and has left a void in our souls, Albania is still firmly willing and ready to take up new responsibilities in Iraq in support of that country's efforts to achieve stability. Even after the triumph of the defeat of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant was declared, every country in the Assembly should be aware of the risks that come with post-caliphate metamorphosis. The small terrorist groups that may seem to have finally disappeared can still retain their capacity to launch brutal attacks. Neither the size of their territory nor their geographic location should prevent the world's nations from carrying out their responsibilities and meeting their obligations.

Albania is particularly concerned about Iran's destabilizing behaviour in the Middle East, but also by its often disruptive actions with regard to the Iranian opposition community, which has suffered despicable massacres and which my country is now generously hosting. We have had to respond firmly to various illicit activities against our national security interests and we stand firmly with countries that have been hurt by such activities, whether at sea or on land. No country is too small to take on its global responsibilities, regardless of its population, size or geographic location.

Albania will build on its multilateral experience by taking on and increasing its multilateral commitments. Next year Albania will chair the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe for 2020, with a special focus on the protracted conflicts in and around Ukraine, Nagorno Karabakh and Transnistria, to mention only a few. Albania will also devote special attention to fighting any form of discrimination, particularly anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, by relying on its exemplary interreligious tolerance, and by strengthening the role of women in peacebuilding activities, reflecting our nation's feminist spirit. For a century Albania has provided a historical example of how harmony among Muslims, whether Sunni or Bektashi, Christians, whether Catholic or Orthodox, and Jews is not only possible but also socially fruitful. Though we are often regarded as a Muslim-majority country, we are also the land of Mother Teresa, now Saint Teresa, who is our highest national symbol and most distinguished daughter. Perhaps it is her human

solidarity and commitment to universal goodness that should still guide us as we face the great threats to peace and security all over the world today.

Given its exceptional historical record and now very mature multilateral experience, Albania is no longer concealing its ambition to serve as a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 2022 and 2023. I therefore call on all nations here today to take positive note of our Security Council bid for 2022. However, having global ambitions does not mean ignoring regional issues. My region of the Western Balkans has a long history of oppression and conflict and suffered under two of the cruellest evils of the twentieth century, communist dictatorships and inter-ethnic wars. As a result, while in the heart of Europe, the Western Balkans is its most underdeveloped region, with a number of disputes that still continue. We especially celebrated the Prespa agreement, which ended a decades-long dispute between Greece and North Macedonia. Albania was actively engaged in making it possible, and we see it as an inspiring example for the settlement of other ongoing disputes.

In order to build stronger ties and streamline cooperation by building a road map for connectivity and mobility in our region, Albania is working closely with Kosovo, Montenegro and North Macedonia, and looks forward to working with Serbia, too. However, while the climate for regional cooperation has improved significantly, the open dispute between the Republic of Kosovo and Serbia is still an obstacle to the entire region's potential for development. Regardless of the issues that a young democracy like that of Kosovo might naturally face, it is quite clear that more than a decade after declaring independence, the Republic of Kosovo has managed to build a vibrant democracy and prove itself a reliable regional partner that has never wavered in its Euro-Atlantic commitment.

The time has come for all members of the Assembly — above all our Serbian friends — to recognize Kosovo's independence, do justice to history and acknowledge reality, as the only reliable basis for building a better, common future. I therefore call on Serbia to recognize that an independent Kosovo is a reality that cannot be reversed and therefore to stop living in denial and make history — for themselves and for the world — by accepting reality. It is also important that Kosovo be given the opportunity to join all international and regional organizations that any

independent sovereign country in the world has a right to join.

It is my sincere hope and daily commitment that the countries of the Western Balkans will manage to break once and for all with their past and work together to build their economies, integrate their markets and provide a better future, thinking and working for their children and ceasing to talk about their ghosts from the past. In that regard, I must underline a fact that I have stressed repeatedly to my European colleagues, which is that it is inexcusable that Kosovo, a country of just 2 million people, remains the only country in Europe today whose people remain isolated from the entire network of the visa-liberalization regime.

Since 2014, more than 100 million people have been added to the multitudes of people who can enter the European Union (EU) without a visa. How is it possible that the EU can still hold 2 million people hostage who have fought hard for their freedom and are firmly committed to the EU perspective? I urge the EU to stop this nonsense. On that note, I must also emphasize that the stability, security, prosperity and democracy of the region can be guaranteed only by adopting the European perspective. For this reason, a positive response to Albania and North Macedonia's ambitions for opening accession talks will not be a mere acknowledgment of their merits, but also strategically the wisest decision by the EU for the EU.

When the first man stepped on the moon in the late 1960s — which, by the way, was a sign not only that humankind was expanding the limits of its universe, but also that it was heading into its future — Albania's universe was extremely narrow and its orientation was backward. As the most isolated country on earth, Albania was the North Korea of Europe of its day. While the heritage of the past still affects the dynamics of our country in multiple ways, Albania has today joined the nations of the world in trying to build a brighter future by carrying out its institutional tasks in accordance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. My Government considers the implementation of the 2030 Agenda to be an important part of Albania's vision for development and integration. Indeed, we see it as an important complement to the agenda determined by our efforts to join the European Union. Our national strategy for development and integration combines our agenda for European integration with the 2030 Agenda.

We are committed to both these agendas for a very simple reason. We believe that they constitute a road map for modernizing our country and institutions and for elevating our society. Among the most important milestones of that agenda are our action plans on Roma — Egyptians — and on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and persons with disabilities. They contain concrete plans that are being implemented in order to guarantee the rights of these groups, which have very often been unfairly and unjustly marginalized. In addition, we have made great progress in terms of gender equality, with more women than ever before represented in Government, Parliament, regional councils and public administration. I am very proud to say that there are more women than men in my Government, which a good indicator of success.

In his memorable visit to Tirana in 2014, Pope Francis advised the youth of Albania to fly higher and higher and higher but never to forget their nest. While that sounds almost like divine advice, it is also an absolutely realistic demand, not only for Albania but it would seem for the entire region. In the context of our broad ambition to convert the brain-drain phenomenon into a process of brain circulation, we are pursuing special programmes to enable the members of our diaspora to anchor their futures in their country of origin.

There is one more element that I would be remiss not to mention, which is Albania's unprecedented justice reform. The process of conducting a major clean-up by removing corrupt judges and prosecutors from the system, as well as establishing new judicial institutions tailored to tackling corruption and organized crime at the highest levels, is transforming the entire face of the country. The decades of corruption in the judiciary not only prevented justice from being served, it also became an impediment to ensuring that justice was the rule of our daily existence as a society. As the new justice system gradually takes shape and becomes fully operational, we hope that it will seriously curtail all acts of corruption and abuse of power and that it will finally ensure the triumph of a sense of justice and the rule of law throughout my country, a country I love deeply and am proud to represent in this Hall today.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania for his statement.

*Mr. Edi Rama, Prime Minister and Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania, was escorted from the rostrum.*

**Address by Mr. Hubert Alexander Minnis, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas**

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

*Mr. Hubert Alexander Minnis, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Hubert Alexander Minnis, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

**Mr. Minnis** (Bahamas): I congratulate Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. I assure him and the members of the Bureau of the support of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas during his tenure. I also extend our congratulations to his predecessor, Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, for her leadership of the Assembly at its seventy-third session.

It is my privilege to address the Assembly on behalf of the people of the Bahamas. In the context of the global climate emergency, it is also my responsibility, as a citizen of a vulnerable State, to speak on behalf of the community of small island developing States (SIDS), the peoples of the Caribbean and the Caribbean Community, and the coastal and other communities around the world that are especially vulnerable to rising sea levels and increasingly powerful storms.

I commend Secretary-General António Guterres for his extraordinary leadership in focusing the attention of the international community on the global climate emergency. This global emergency poses myriad and dire risks for all of humankind, especially the poorest in the global commons. I thank Mr. Guterres for his visit to the Bahamas in the aftermath of Hurricane Dorian, one of the most destructive the Atlantic has ever generated, and a generational tragedy for the Bahamas, since it has decimated and devastated great swathes of Grand Bahama Island, as well as Abaco and the Abaco Cays, which are our second and third most populous

centres. I also want to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Mark Lowcock, for his visit in the immediate aftermath of the hurricane.

The Bahamas is an archipelago of many islands and cays stretching more than 750 miles from off the south-east coast of Florida in the United States to the north-eastern tip of Cuba. We inhabit approximately 180,000 square miles of ocean and 16 principal islands whose cities, towns and settlements have names such as Marsh Harbour, Hope Town, Eight Mile Rock, West End and Sweetings Cay, reflecting the rich and diverse heritage of our country. The Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield once noted, "From space, the Bahamas is the most beautiful place on Earth", adding,

"The Bahamas are gorgeous. The deep trench in the ocean floor called the Tongue of the Ocean, which comes between the islands, is the most beautiful deep indigo colour."

We delight with great pride in sharing our archipelago, vibrant culture and natural wonders with millions of visitors from around the world.

Tourism is our principal industry. We are stewards of this natural treasure for ourselves and for humankind. But this surpassing beauty, and our very existence as a country, composed of many low-lying islands and more than 2,400 cays, is under grave threat. It is a threat that we did not cause. It is a threat that we cannot survive on our own. While many countries have coastal cities and zones, the Bahamas in its entirety is a coastal zone of many cays and islands forming an extensive archipelago. Over the past three decades, hurricanes have grown increasingly lethal throughout our region. In the words of the Secretary-General, they have become turbocharged. The Bahamas experienced major hurricanes in 2015, 2016 and 2017, but on 1 September 2019, we experienced something far beyond anything we had seen before. In an unprecedented destructive force of wind, rain and sea surge, Hurricane Dorian ripped into the islands of the northern Bahamas.

The naturally warm aquamarine and jade waters of the Bahamas, made even warmer by earth-warming carbon-gas emissions, were rapidly whipped up into action as instruments of death and destruction. With unrelenting fury, Hurricane Dorian lingered for painful hours on end, its deadly force laying waste to communities where children were preparing for the beginning of a new school year. The hurricane and

its destructive winds, storm surges and rain remained stationary over Grand Bahama and Great Abaco; the 30-hour fixed position of the storm's eye wall over some communities exacerbated these hazards. At its peak, Hurricane Dorian had maximum sustained winds of 185 miles per hour and gusts of more than 220 miles per hour. There were storm surges of 18 to 23 feet above normal tide levels, roughly three times my height of 6'1". Officially, there were 56 lives lost, but we know that the accurate number is considerably higher because 600 people are still missing as rising and receding ocean waters have swept young and old from their homes. The picturesque and industrious principal town of Marsh Harbour on Abaco has disappeared. Nothing is left of it but heaps of rubble. East End, on Grand Bahama, is in ruins. The hurricane was a physical apocalypse for some communities.

Our hearts still ache as I address the Assembly here today. Thousands in our country continue to suffer and will face great difficulties in future as we struggle to recover and rebuild our broken towns and settlements and mend our spirits. At the same time, however, our hearts are filled with gratitude for the many friends and neighbours who came to our assistance even as the wind and water were still threatening us, and we thank those who continue to support us through these trying times.

In addition to the brave men and women of our Royal Bahamas Defence Force and the Royal Bahamas Police Force, we were aided by officers from the United States Coast Guard, our Caribbean Community friends and partners, including security personnel from Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, the Royal Canadian Air Force, the British Royal Navy and the Royal Netherlands Navy, which also transported troops from Germany, France and Belgium. Furthermore, the support that the Bahamas has received from fellow States Members of the United Nations, global and local non-governmental organizations, religious institutions and individuals, including school children, is a powerful demonstration of what it means to come together as a nation. To help focus and coordinate recovery, reconstruction and development assistance, we have created a new Ministry of Disaster Preparedness, Management and Reconstruction.

The small island countries in the Caribbean, the Atlantic, the Pacific and the Indian Ocean and elsewhere around the world are on the front lines of being swallowed up by an abyss, initially created by human activity and increasingly exacerbated by human

inaction. Our vulnerabilities as States on the front line are profound. Because of the geographic distribution of the Bahamas, extending from Cuba and parallel to Florida, any number of hurricane trajectories may result in dire and protracted implications for our inhabited islands.

Global warming increases the severity and frequency of hurricanes for our archipelago and destroys our natural defences against such storms. Coral and mangrove degradation, land erosion, increased tidal movements and a myriad other consequences of global warming increase our vulnerability and hinder our ability to develop and implement effective resilience measures. We cannot make meaningful progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals if, as forecasters are predicting, recent cyclonic and other extreme climate events are poised to become the new norm and may worsen. When one storm can obliterate an island State or a number of States in one hurricane season, how will we survive? How can we develop? How can we continue to exist?

I therefore add my urgent plea to the cries and voices of many other leaders and citizens of the global commons for the nations of the world assembled in this Hall to treat the global climate emergency as the greatest challenge facing humankind. It is a challenge that if not treated with the greatest urgency will continue to ravage small island States such as the Bahamas, and will also have a devastating impact on more developed States.

The Bahamas fully supports the Secretary-General's comprehensive strategy to address the global climate emergency — which will eventually devastate the entire planet — including his plea to international financial institutions to provide concessionary financing to countries severely affected by the external shocks occasioned by climate change. The United Nations Development Programme is already working with three of our Caribbean neighbours — Saint Lucia, Dominica and Antigua and Barbuda — on various measures. The Bahamas encourages an expansion of this approach to include the Bahamas.

We urge the implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA Pathway) and enhanced financing for sustainable development. We support the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure promoted by the Government of India, which I also thank for its recent assistance. Owing in particular to its many islands and cays requiring basic

infrastructure, the Bahamas has major vulnerabilities and resilience deficiencies. We must urgently address these vulnerabilities in order to secure our citizens and protect vital public and private infrastructure.

For many years, the Bahamas and countries with similar characteristics have urged an alternative to per capita gross national income as the sole indicator of a country's level of development and eligibility for concessionary financing. When we call for consideration of a country's unique local circumstances in determining its financial worthiness, it should be remembered that access to financing is also a condition and requirement for our resilience. The Bahamas is a testament to the ability of SIDS to manage debt, despite such external setbacks.

I would also like to take this opportunity to invite potential travellers from throughout the world to come and visit one or more of the 14 other major islands in the Bahamas that were not affected by Hurricane Dorian, including Nassau, on the island of New Providence. The revenue from tourists visiting the Bahamas will help to play a vital role in reconstructing and rebuilding the affected areas.

To help rebuild and restore Abaco, the Abaco Cays and East Grand Bahama, the Government of the Bahamas has announced that those areas will be designated as special economic recovery zones for an initial period of three years, which will enable the communities affected by Hurricane Dorian to benefit from an extensive range of tax breaks and incentives for Bahamians and international investors.

Amid the decimation and devastation, there has been a symbol of hope and resilience in Abaco, from which we may draw inspiration, renewed energy and optimism. The iconic red-and-white-striped lighthouse in Hope Town on Elbow Cay, which is featured on the back of the Bahamian \$10 bill, survived Hurricane Dorian. Built in 1863, over the decades this 89-foot lighthouse has helped to warn mariners of the dangerous reefs below. It is a symbol of pride for Abaconians and Bahamians. Soon after Hurricane Dorian, some of the residents of Hope Town placed a temporary light that shone in the darkness, with few other sources of light on the horizon. The Bahamas will restore the Hope Town lighthouse as a symbol of resilience, a source of unity and a beacon of hope. May it also serve as a symbol of resilience, unity and hope for a global commons willing

to summon the courage and the imagination to act with justice and urgency to save our shared home.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Hubert Alexander Minnis, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, was escorted from the rostrum.*

**Address by Mr. Timothy S. Harris, Prime Minister and Minister for Sustainable Development, National Security, People Empowerment and Constituency Empowerment of Saint Kitts and Nevis**

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Sustainable Development, National Security, People Empowerment and Constituency Empowerment of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

*Mr. Timothy S. Harris, Prime Minister and Minister for Sustainable Development, National Security, People Empowerment and Constituency Empowerment of Saint Kitts and Nevis, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Timothy S. Harris, Prime Minister and Minister for Sustainable Development, National Security, People Empowerment and Constituency Empowerment of Saint Kitts and Nevis, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

**Mr. Harris** (Saint Kitts and Nevis): It is a privilege to address the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. Every year at this time, Heads of State and Government from all over the world make the annual journey to the United Nations to deliberate on the current state of our world, highlight concerns that keep us awake at night and seek consensus on how best to create a world that is peaceful, prosperous, inclusive and integrated.

We all come ready to speak out and represent, but the fundamental question is whether we have also come to listen. Even as we forcefully articulate our views, this global gathering will be useful only if we listen with equal intensity to the concerns and proposals of others. It was Ralph J. Bunche, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate, who stated:

“The United Nations exists not merely to preserve the peace but also to make change — even radical change — possible without violent upheaval. The United Nations has no vested interest in the status quo. It seeks a more secure world, a better world, a world of progress for all peoples.”

The people of Saint Kitts and Nevis agree. For us, the United Nations is a force for good, a shining light in a sometimes dark and difficult world. It is through multilateralism at the United Nations that smaller States can have their voices heard. However, we are concerned about the weakening of the multilateral system. Small nations are committed to meeting their Sustainable Development Goals, but developing countries are often not supported by sufficient resources.

We need a more coherent, system-wide approach to sustainable development at the United Nations, both in terms of policies and through operational practices in processes and country programmes. Developing countries often lack the capacity or capability to capitalize on the latest global trends in public-sector innovation, Government reform and technology in addressing development challenges. The United Nations role must be to help and stimulate the developing world and provide support in critical areas such as education, training and human-resource development.

One of the issues that is a clear and present danger to small and developing nations is climate change. As we all seek to attain the Sustainable Development Goals, our Governments cannot focus on achieving such goals when the very existence of our countries and peoples is constantly threatened. Let us be absolutely clear. Climate change is a product of developed nations’ push for economic growth and industrialization.

For far too long and with far-reaching consequences, rich countries have been allowed to emit greenhouse gases unimpeded. Yet the brunt of climate change is borne by developing nations. Small States such as Saint Kitts and Nevis find themselves on the front line of a war they did not start and that they do not want. This is unfair and unjust. People in developing countries will feel the impact first and worst because of vulnerable geography and their lesser ability to cope with damage from severe weather and rising sea levels. We therefore need and are owed support, solidarity and greater assistance.

With increasing vociferousness, the leaders of the Caribbean, and indeed of small island developing States

(SIDS) from every corner of our globe, have raised the issue of climate change and the grave and present danger that it poses to all of us. We speak out, and we speak loudly, because of the existential vulnerabilities that we suffer in the face of this growing threat.

Two years ago my colleague the Prime Minister of Dominica, Mr. Roosevelt Skerrit, was at this rostrum (see A/72/PV.19), dispirited but dignified. He had come straight from the front line of the devastation that had been wrought by Hurricane Maria. Yesterday it was Dominica; today it is the Bahamas. Each hit is more devastating than the one that preceded it. Hurricane Maria passed over Dominica with extreme ferocity, killed 65 people and wiped out 200 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP).

Hurricane Dorian sat over part of the Bahamas chain and unleashed Armageddon, with the number of dead still unknown, leaving incalculable destruction in its wake. The people of Saint Kitts and Nevis extend their deepest sympathy to their brothers and sisters in the Bahamas. My country has responded by providing security personnel and financial support to help the Bahamas in its recovery efforts. We appeal to other nations to provide tangible expressions of solidarity and support to the people of the Bahamas.

With every disaster comes a crisis of conscience in the international community that results in pledges and promises, few of which are fulfilled. Today I join my voice with that of the Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, Mr. Allen Chastanet, to support the effort to establish a SIDS foundation for climate adaptation and mitigation.

We are tired of those who posture as champions of our cause but are essentially promoters of their own conceit. We are tired of the agencies whose brokerage of climate funds is more centred on implementation fees than on adaptation impact. Rebuilding has to start as soon as the disasters have passed, and we require a quicker process that is sensitive to recovery. We are tired of empty promises.

Now is the time for us to take hold of our own destiny. We are almost out of time, and we are short of options and lost for patience. The scientific community has further reinforced our call to limit the increase in temperatures to 1.5 C° if we are to stabilize the global climate. Exceeding 1.5 C° will mean ever-increasing climate risks such as extreme weather, sea-level rise, increased poverty and a threat to hundreds of millions

of lives. Limiting global warming to 1.5 C° for SIDS is not optional. It is a matter of our collective survival.

The unfair practice of categorizing countries based on their per capita GDP and denying them access to concessionary funding continues to pose a major challenge to our quest to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and our economic development. We continue to demand that consideration be given to our vulnerability to internal and external shocks. I call for similar concern and protection for our threatened seas. In the face of global warming, we need a blue strategy to preserve and protect what is so important to our food security, the livelihoods of our fisher folk and our economic growth and development. There is huge untapped economic potential in our seas, and it must be protected and nurtured. To put it simply, we need to protect the ocean. I call on the developed countries of the United Nations to offer their support to smaller countries so that together we can protect and nurture our planet.

The health of our citizens is becoming critically important to us as we continue to grapple with the high prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Just one year shy of our commitment to preventing and controlling NCDs, our Government is happy to approve new commitments to building a healthier world through universal health coverage. Saint Kitts and Nevis believes that universal health coverage is key to reducing social inequities and a critical component of sustainable development. It will provide greater access to health-care services that will ensure a healthier population and financial risk protection to ensure that people are not pushed further into poverty.

International support is crucial to helping to build the economies of smaller countries. The European Union's unfair practice of blacklisting is a burden from which SIDS must be freed. De-risking by correspondent banks is an equally harmful practice. It has now become an existential threat to the economies of small island States. Expanding diplomatic relations in order to pursue strategic alliances is beneficial to trade, development and global security.

Saint Kitts and Nevis has nurtured relations with the Republic of China on Taiwan, and that has been of immense benefit to us, given Taiwan's experience and expertise in such areas as technology, renewables and health care. I call on the United Nations to utilize Taiwan's experience, resources and expertise and to

enable other developing nations to benefit from it as well. Our experience over the past 36 years is that the Republic of China on Taiwan offers true friendship and solidarity to its allies and is prepared to assist the rest of the global community.

The Republic of Cuba has been a long-standing friend of Saint Kitts and Nevis. We will continue to support the call for removing the economic and financial embargo on it, which has caused untold suffering for Cuba's citizens.

Saint Kitts and Nevis continues to monitor the situations in Venezuela and Nicaragua. We adhere to the Inter-American Democratic Charter and urge all States members of the Organization of American States to comply with it. The ongoing crisis in Venezuela in particular occupied virtually all of my time as the previous Chairman of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). Saint Kitts and Nevis continues to support the CARICOM position, enunciated at Basseterre in Saint Kitts, that the Venezuelan people must find a peaceful resolution to their crisis through dialogue and restore peace, safety and security in their country. Saint Kitts and Nevis welcomes the recent dialogue facilitated by Norway between the contending parties in Venezuela and we urge all parties to resume those talks without delay. Saint Kitts and Nevis notes with deep concern the content of the report on the situation in Venezuela (A/HRC/41/18), dated 5 July 2019, by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Saint Kitts and Nevis reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the maintenance of human rights and human dignity. We can resolve many issues domestically, but regional and international solidarity and cooperation are critical. I salute the United Nations and the international community for the contribution that they have made to peace, understanding and welfare for more than 74 years. We must all resolve to strengthen our efforts and endeavour to ensure that we are ready to deal with the challenges and opportunities facing us in the twenty-first century. In moving forward, we must help the vulnerable members of our societies, particularly the poor, to improve their lives, give hope to young people and help all countries reach their potential. That was the vision of the United Nations that invited all nations, small and large, to become involved. Let us therefore commit to delivering on the vision of peace and prosperity for all peoples and nations. May God bless us all.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Sustainable Development, National Security, People Empowerment and Constituency Empowerment of Saint Kitts and Nevis for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Timothy S. Harris, Prime Minister and Minister for Sustainable Development, National Security, People Empowerment and Constituency Empowerment of Saint Kitts and Nevis, was escorted from the rostrum.*

**The President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Wang Yi, State Councillor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China.

**Mr. Wang Yi** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): This year marks the seventieth anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. The United Nations was established in 1945 in response to the call of the times. Four years later, the People's Republic of China was founded and the Chinese nation re-emerged before the eyes of the world as a completely reborn nation.

Over the past 70 years, we Chinese have changed our destiny through tireless efforts. Seventy years ago, China put an end to a period in modern history during which the country was torn apart and trampled on. We stood up and became the true masters of our country. Over the past seven decades, China has transformed itself from a closed, backward and poor country with a weak foundation into one that is open and on the move.

With regard to meeting the basic needs of its people, China has achieved initial prosperity. Eight hundred and fifty million Chinese have shaken off poverty, and hundreds of millions have joined the middle-income group. Such achievements are nothing short of a miracle in the development of humankind. In just a few decades, China has finished what it took developed countries several hundred years to complete. In so doing, China has blazed a new path to modernization for developing countries, and what it has achieved has enriched the dreams of people around the world for a better life.

None of those achievements has fallen from the sky. Rather, they are owed to the hard work, vision and courage of the Chinese people. The secret behind China's development is our adherence to the centralized, unified leadership of the Communist Party of China, the development path suited to China's national conditions,

the fundamental State policy of reform and opening up and a people-centred development philosophy.

Over the past 70 years, China has integrated itself into the global community and made its contribution to the world, boosting world peace and prosperity through its development. Today China has become the leading engine of global development and an anchor of stability for world peace. We are the second-largest funding contributor to both the United Nations and United Nations peacekeeping operations. China has also deployed more peacekeeping personnel than any other permanent member of the Security Council. For more than a decade, China has been a main driver of global growth. We are now pursuing a new round of opening up with higher standards, which I am sure will deliver new opportunities for the world.

As we enter a new era, we Chinese are more confident and capable than ever of achieving a great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, and we are better positioned than ever to make a greater contribution to humankind. Guided by Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, China will continue to strive for success and forge ahead. Looking back on the road we have traversed over the past 70 years, we are full of pride. Looking ahead at the journey before us, we are full of confidence in our bright future.

On the diplomatic front, China has travelled a journey of tests and challenges and has remained true to its original purpose. The goal of China's diplomacy has never changed. The Chinese people and the peoples of other countries have always treated each other with sincerity and lent each other mutual support. China and the rest of the world have become stakeholders sharing a common future as their interdependence has increasingly grown. Facing international uncertainties, China will maintain the stability and continuity of its foreign policy and will continue to pursue major-country diplomacy, with distinct Chinese features. We will continue to safeguard world peace and prosperity and promote the development and advancement of humankind.

China is guided by the principle of independence. We will continue to pursue an independent foreign policy of peace. We will neither subordinate ourselves to others nor coerce others into submission. We are firm in upholding China's core national interests and legitimate rights, and we are opposed to the abuse of power and will never yield to pressure. We will

remain committed to the basic principles of sovereign equality and non-interference in other country's internal affairs, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. China will never pursue hegemony or seek expansion. Peaceful development, which has long been incorporated into China's Constitution, is the cornerstone of its foreign policy.

China believes in equality among nations. In the twenty-first century, power politics and the law of the jungle are outdated and obsolete. People want mutual respect and harmonious coexistence. China stands for equality among all countries, irrespective of their size. China respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other countries and the social systems and development paths independently chosen by the people of those countries. China stands ready to share its development experience with other countries and provide the necessary assistance in times of need, but we have no intention of exporting our development model or lecturing others. Nor do we attach any political strings to our assistance.

China stands for equity and justice. On the international stage, we speak for justice and oppose hegemonism and bullying. We wish to engage others in extensive consultations and joint contributions in pursuit of shared benefits. We call for handling international affairs based on the merits of each particular case, and for settling issues through consultations. As the world's largest developing country, China will always stand firmly with other developing countries in safeguarding their common interests and right to development and in increasing their representation and say in global governance so as to promote democracy in international relations.

China pursues mutually beneficial cooperation. In this globalized world, countries all rise or fall together. A zero-sum mentality and beggar-thy-neighbour policies are recipes for failure. China is committed to fostering an open world economy, upholding the multilateral trading regime of the World Trade Organization and making globalization more open, inclusive, balanced and beneficial to all. We do not seek unilateral security, nor do we put our own interests above those of others. It is our aim to advance our development as part of the development of the global community. We seek to keep the door open, expand shared interests and share opportunities with others through cooperation.

The world today is not a peaceful place. Unilateralism and protectionism are posing major threats to the international order. At a time when the future of the world is at stake, China has never been and will never be an onlooker. As a founding Member of the United Nations, we will work with other countries to build a new type of international relations and a community with a shared future for humankind. We will be resolute in upholding the stature and role of the United Nations, the international system underpinned by the United Nations and an international order anchored on international law.

Facing the headwinds of protectionism, we should not just stand idly by. Erecting walls will not resolve global challenges and blaming others for one's own problems does not work. The lessons of the Great Depression should not be forgotten. Tariffs, and the provocation of trade disputes that upset global industrial and supply chains, undermine the multilateral trading regime and the global economic and trade order. They may even plunge the world into recession.

China is committed to resolving economic and trade frictions and differences in a calm, rational and comprehensive manner, and is willing to demonstrate as much patience and goodwill as necessary. Should the other side act in bad faith or show no respect for equal status or rules in negotiations, we will have to respond as necessary to safeguard our legitimate rights and interests and uphold international justice. Let me make it very clear. China is a country with a 5,000-year-old civilization, 1.4 billion hardworking and courageous people and a vast land of 9.6 million square kilometres. We will not be cowed by threats or subdued by pressure.

In the face of rampant unilateralism, we should not sit on our hands. For the international order to function, we must abide by laws and rules, and acts that violate international norms can only plunge the world into chaos. The opportunities arising from the new round of scientific and technological revolution are opportunities for the world. The advances thus made should not be monopolized by any single country, and no one should obstruct the efforts of other countries in the name of innovation. It is neither legitimate nor justifiable for any country in a position of power to impose unilateral sanctions or exercise long-arm jurisdiction over other countries, as such practices have no basis in international law and are therefore devoid of legitimacy. Putting one's own interests above the common interests of all other countries is a typical

bullying practice that will find no support among the people.

The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty is important in upholding global strategic balance and stability. A unilateral withdrawal from it would have multiple negative effects. China is opposed to the deployment of land-based intermediate-range missiles in the Asia-Pacific. We urge the countries with the largest nuclear arsenals to fulfil their special and primary responsibilities in nuclear disarmament. China will continue to take an active part in the international arms control process. I would like to announce here that China has initiated the domestic legal procedures for joining the Arms Trade Treaty.

The permanent members of the Security Council should lead by example, as major countries have special responsibilities for maintaining a stable international order. We support the new round of efforts by Secretary-General Guterres to reform the United Nations system and make it more efficient and equitable. China has set up an 8,000-strong peacekeeping standby force and permanent peacekeeping police squads. They have met the standards for operation and are ready for action. China stands ready to work with other parties to fulfil our due responsibilities as a major country in upholding global peace and justice.

In a world fraught with challenges and mounting risks, China will remain on the side of peace and justice. We will actively explore and apply a Chinese approach to addressing hotspot issues and play a constructive role in upholding international peace and security. China stands for common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security. We hold that disputes should be settled through dialogue and consultation and that common threats should be addressed through international cooperation in the interests of sustaining global peace and common security.

The Iranian nuclear issue affects world peace and security. All the parties involved should work together to uphold the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and ensure that this historic effort is not derailed. Given the growing tensions in the Middle East and the Gulf region, China proposes that the Iranian nuclear issue should be speedily put back on the JCPOA track, the Gulf countries urged to establish a platform for dialogue and consultation, and that countries from outside the region should play a positive role in maintaining security in the region.

The Palestinian issue should be at the top of the international agenda. What we lack is not a grand design but the courage to deliver on existing commitments and the conscience to uphold justice. There should be no more backsliding on the efforts to achieve a two-State solution and implement the principle of land for peace, which represent the bottom line for international justice. The establishment of an independent State is the inalienable right of the Palestinian people and should not be used as a bargaining chip.

Turning to Afghanistan, what we hope to see is a united country where all political parties and ethnic groups can unite to determine the future of their nation, a stable country that resolutely combats terrorism and a country living in harmony with its neighbours that can become a positive force for maintaining peace and stability in the region. We will continue to do our share in contributing to Afghanistan's reconciliation and reconstruction.

Regarding the Korean peninsula, we must not miss the opportunity for a political settlement again. The zigzag course of the past 20 years or so has shown time and again that the only realistic and viable way forward is by promoting parallel progress in denuclearization and the establishment of a peace mechanism in order to accommodate the concerns of all sides and gradually build trust through phased and synchronized actions. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has demonstrated a readiness to promote dialogue, and it is to be hoped that the United States can meet the Democratic People's Republic halfway. In the light of the new developments on the peninsula, the Security Council should consider invoking the rollback terms of the relevant resolutions in order to foster a political settlement of the issue.

With China's mediation efforts, Myanmar and Bangladesh have reached a new, common understanding on accelerating the work of returning displaced persons to Myanmar. The momentum created did not come easily. Waiting without taking action produces no solutions and can lead only to a further deterioration in the humanitarian situation. Only real action will bring hope and create the conditions for reaching a final settlement of the issue of Rakhine state. All the parties involved, including United Nations agencies, should help move things forward rather than hold back the process.

The Kashmir dispute, a holdover from the past, should be peacefully and properly addressed in accordance with the Charter, the relevant Security Council resolutions and bilateral agreements. No actions that would unilaterally change the status quo should be taken. As a neighbour of both India and Pakistan, China hopes to see the dispute effectively managed and stability restored to the relationship between the two sides.

Development is the master key to solving all problems. It should be at the centre of the global macro policy framework, with a continued focus on priority areas such as poverty reduction, infrastructure, education and public health. We need to maintain global development cooperation with North-South cooperation as the main channel, supplemented by South-South cooperation. We must build an open world economy and help developing countries better integrate into the global industrial and value chains. Member States should align their medium- and long-term development strategies with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in an effort to pursue high-quality development. China's Belt and Road initiative aims to achieve high-standard, people-centred development that is open, green and clean. The initiative, which is highly compatible with the 2030 Agenda, has become a road to cooperation, hope and prosperity, delivering real benefits to people the world over. We hope that other countries will seize the development opportunities that it creates to add fresh impetus to their implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

There is global consensus on the need to address climate change, and cutting emissions calls for concerted global efforts. The outcomes of the Climate Action Summit are positive. China, as a co-lead on the nature-based solutions track, has done its part to make that possible. We believe in acting in good faith. We will deliver what we have signed up to, fulfil our obligations and take concrete action to help to build a clean and beautiful world.

China places high importance on the life and health of its people and has always taken a zero-tolerance approach to narcotics. We have put controls on all fentanyl-related substances, a move that goes well beyond the scheduling efforts of the United Nations and demonstrates that China is actively participating in global narcotics control with a keen sense of responsibility. With regard to the Ebola outbreak in Africa, as the alarm is sounded once again,

China has already sent emergency aid supplies to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its neighbours affected by the epidemic. China has also sent public health experts and is maintaining a close collaboration with the World Health Organization and the African Union Commission. In addition, China will donate another \$18 million to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

I would like to conclude with a quote from President Xi Jinping, in which he said,

“Our world is full both of hope and challenges. We should not give up our dreams just because the reality around us is too complicated. We should not stop pursuing our ideals just because they seem out of our reach.”

Let us work tirelessly to promote the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and together build a community with a shared future for humankind.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

**Mr. Lavrov** (Russian Federation): We are getting ever closer to the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, which was established thanks to victory in the Second World War and our recognition that a collective mechanism for maintaining international peace and security was essential. Unhappily, the events of the Cold War, which began soon after, prevented it from unleashing the full extent of its potential for good. The hope re-emerged almost 30 years ago with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the symbol of two irreconcilably opposed systems. It was the hope that perhaps at last we could turn the page on the pain of wars, cold and hot, and unite our efforts for the benefit of all humankind.

However, we have to admit that despite the fact that thanks to the United Nations we have succeeded in preventing a third world war, there are no fewer conflicts and enmity on the Earth, and new and terrible challenges have emerged — international terrorism, drug trafficking, climate change, illegal migration and a growing gap between rich and poor. Coping with these and many other challenges becomes harder and harder every year, and the international community is only growing ever more fragmented. We believe that the chief reason for this state of affairs is the unwillingness of the countries that declared themselves the victors in the Cold War to consider the legitimate interests of

every other State and to accept the objective realities of the course of history. The West is finding it difficult to come to terms with the fact that its centuries-long dominance of world affairs is disappearing. New centres of economic growth and political influence are springing up and becoming stronger, and without them it will be impossible to find sustainable solutions to the world's problems, which we can address only through the firm foundation provided by the Charter of the United Nations and by balancing the interests of every State.

The leading Western nations are trying to prevent the establishment of a polycentric world, restore their positions of privilege and impose standards of conduct on everyone else based on their own narrow interpretation of liberalism. To put it in a nutshell, they say, “We are liberals and can therefore do anything we want”. In its desire to achieve this, the West recalls international law ever more rarely, and ever more often and more insistently argues for a so-called rules-based order. The aim of the concept of this kind of order is obvious — it is to rewrite the norms of international law that no longer suit the West and replace them with rules that conform to their self-serving schemes, devised based on political expediency, while the West proclaims itself, and itself alone, the undisputed source of legitimacy. For instance, when it is advantageous, the right of peoples to self-determination is important, but when it is not, it is declared to be illegitimate.

These revisionist rules are justified by manipulating the public consciousness, disseminating false information, creating double standards for human rights, suppressing unwelcome media outlets and banning journalism. The West also has apt pupils among its client States in post-Soviet territory. Collective work on an equal footing is being replaced by closed-format meetings held outside the legitimate multilateral frameworks, with approaches agreed on behind closed doors by a select few that are then declared to be multilateral agreements, accompanied by attempts to privatize the secretariats of international organizations and use them to advance non-consensus ideas in order to circumvent universal mechanisms.

The attacks on international law are reaching alarming levels. There has been much talk about the withdrawal of the United States from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action for Iran's nuclear programme, endorsed by Security Council resolution 2231 (2015). Not only has Washington repudiated

its obligations under the resolution, it has started demanding that everyone else also play by the United States' rules and sabotage its implementation. The United States has taken a hard line in its efforts to erode United Nations resolutions on the international legal foundations for a settlement in the Middle East. It has proposed that we await some so-called deal of the century while at the same time it takes unilateral decisions on Jerusalem and the Golan Heights. The possibility of a two-State solution to the Palestinian issue, which is of key significance for satisfying the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people and ensuring the security of Israel and the whole region, is under threat.

When members of NATO bombed Libya in open violation of Security Council resolutions, it was clear that they too were guided by the logic of their so-called rules-based order. The result was the destruction of Libya's statehood, while to this day the international community is grappling with the mess created by the pernicious legacy of NATO's adventurism, especially for the countries of Africa.

The hidden agendas continue in the counter-terrorism arena. Despite the universally binding Security Council resolutions on listing terrorist organizations, some countries have made it a rule to shield terrorists and even work with them on the ground, as we have seen in Afghanistan, Libya and Syria, for instance. The United States is already saying openly that Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham is a quite moderate group that it can do business with. It also wants to get other members of the Security Council to go along with its unacceptable reasoning, as the recent discussions on the situation in Idlib in Syria showed. And the West also applies its own rules with regard to the Balkans, where it is openly working to undermine Security Council resolutions on the settlements in Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Together with the resolutions of the Security Council, our universal conventions are integral to international law. The West would like to replace them with its rules, too, as happened with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, whose Technical — and I stress the word "technical" — Secretariat was illegally granted so-called attributive functions as a result of unlawful manipulation and unscrupulous pressure, in direct violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the exclusive prerogatives of the Security Council.

The game-playing continues around conventions that require all countries to uphold the linguistic, educational, religious and other rights of their national minorities. Even here our Western colleagues are guided by their rules. They turn a blind eye to blatant efforts to deny national minorities such rights and continue to condone the shameful existence of statelessness in Europe.

Revisionist tendencies with regard to international law are increasingly evident in the sustained attempts to rewrite the history of the Second World War and to justify the growing manifestations of neo-Nazism and the vandalism of monuments to the liberators of Europe and the victims of the Holocaust. The strength of key principles of the United Nations Charter such as non-interference in the internal affairs of others and the inadmissibility of the use or threat of force is also being tested. Attempts are now being made to add Venezuela to the list of countries whose statehood has been violated before our eyes through aggression or foreign-inspired coups. Like an overwhelming majority of the States Members of the United Nations, Russia rejects any attempt to resurrect the rules of the Monroe Doctrine era in Latin America and to effect regime change in sovereign States from outside without shrinking from military blackmail, unlawful coercion and blockades, as is the case with Cuba despite numerous United Nations resolutions.

Next year marks the sixtieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, which was adopted on Russia's initiative. To this day, however, a number of western States are still clinging to the old rules, ignoring the Declaration and other General Assembly resolutions on decolonization that pertain directly to them by retaining their control over former overseas territories.

This November marks another anniversary — 20 years since the Charter for European Security and the Platform for Cooperative Security were adopted at the sixth Summit of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Those documents set out the principles of cooperation for every country and regional organization in the Euro-Atlantic area. Our Heads of States and Governments solemnly declared that no country should pursue its own security at the expense of another. Today, regrettably, the consensus reached back then at the highest level is being replaced by the practices that NATO has adopted as its rules, as it continues to think in terms of seeking out enemies,

moving its military infrastructure eastward towards Russia's borders and increasing its military budgets, although they are already more than 20 times larger than those of Russia. We call for a return to the agreements that establish equal and indivisible security within the OSCE area, which some of Europe's responsible politicians have spoken out in favour of recently, as was the case at the August meeting of President Putin of Russia and President Macron of France, for instance.

We also need a reliable and open architecture in the Asia-Pacific region. It would be dangerous to yield to the temptation to divide it into conflicting blocs, which would be at odds with the goal of uniting the efforts of every country of the region to respond effectively to the continuing threats and challenges there, including that of resolving the whole complex of issues on the Korean peninsula by exclusively peaceful means.

Tremendous damage has been done to the decades-old system of global strategic stability by the actions of the United States, which, after withdrawing from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, has now destroyed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, with the obedient support of every member of NATO. Now the future of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) is in question. On top of that, the United States refuses to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and has lowered the threshold in its doctrinal documents for the use of nuclear weapons. It is also on a course to transform cyberspace and outer space into arenas for military confrontation.

Russia has put forward a number of initiatives to prevent the further escalation of tensions. President Putin announced the decision to refrain from deploying land-based intermediate- and short-range missiles in Europe and other regions as long as the United States does the same. We have urged the United States and NATO to sign up to a moratorium in that regard. We have also repeatedly invited Washington to begin negotiations on extending the New START Treaty. Together with China, we support an agreement on a legally binding document on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. So far the reaction of the United States and its allies to all of these proposals has not been encouraging. We are also disturbed by the protracted lack of a response to a proposal we made to our American colleagues a year ago to adopt a high-level Russian-American declaration on the unacceptability and inadmissibility of nuclear war, a war that by definition no one can win. We call on all Member States to support that initiative.

Today I would like to announce that during the current session of the General Assembly we will introduce a draft resolution on strengthening and developing the system of agreements on arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. We invite everyone to constructive negotiations. The adoption of such a resolution would represent a major contribution to creating the conditions for a successful Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons next year.

Russia will continue to work diligently to strengthen global security. We are acting with the utmost responsibility in this area by exercising restraint in building our defence capacity, although obviously not at the expense of effectively guaranteeing national security, and in full compliance with international law. We support the consolidation of efforts to combat international terrorism under the auspices of the United Nations. In the interests of mobilizing the potential of regional organizations to suppress the threat of terrorism, Russia convened a ministerial meeting of the Security Council (see S/PV.8626), with the participation of representatives of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

One of the most crucial tasks of the international community is developing generally acceptable approaches to regulating the digital arena and understanding the processes related to the development of artificial intelligence. Last year, the General Assembly endorsed the start of substantive work to agree on rules for responsible State behaviour in the information space. On Russia's initiative it also adopted resolution 73/187, on combating cybercrime. It will be important to work to reach legally binding agreements on every aspect of international information security.

We should also ramp up our efforts to settle the many crises and conflicts all over the world. The main point is to get the parties involved to comply with existing agreements and not to allow them to invent pretexts for refusing to fulfil commitments they have already made. Of course, that also applies to conflicts in the post-Soviet space, including the importance of strict compliance with the provisions of the Minsk package of measures for resolving the crisis in eastern Ukraine.

In Syria, where there have been major successes in the fight against terrorism, the priority now is further advancing the political process, led by the Syrians with

the assistance of the United Nations. With the decisive contribution of Russia, Turkey and Iran as guarantors of the Astana format, the Constitutional Committee has been established, as Secretary-General António Guterres announced a few days ago. On the agenda are post-conflict reconstruction and the creation of conditions conducive to the return of refugees. The United Nations system should play a much more active role in this.

In general, however, there are still many problems in the Middle East and North Africa. We have seen what is happening in Libya and Yemen. The prospects for a resolution of the Palestinian peace process and the realization of the Arab Peace Initiative are on the verge of collapse. The attempts to play the Kurdish card, which is potentially a combustible issue for many countries, are alarming. The tensions in the Persian Gulf are being artificially escalated. We call for resolving the existing disagreements through dialogue, without resorting to baseless accusations. This summer we contributed by presenting Russia's renewed concept for collective security in the region.

Yesterday, in support of the efforts of African States to end the conflicts on their continent, Russia held a Security Council meeting on strengthening peace and security in Africa (see S/PV.8627). In Sochi, at the end of October, we will host the first-ever Russia-Africa Summit, and we hope that its results will enable us to improve the effectiveness of the fight against the current challenges and threats, as well as of the work on the development issues that African countries face.

The reform of the Security Council is aimed at improving the anti-crisis and peacekeeping activities of the United Nations. The realities of our multipolar world mean that our chief task is finding a formula that can end the obvious geopolitical imbalances in the Council's current composition and expand the representation of African, Asian, and Latin American countries on it, with the broadest possible agreement of Member States.

Dividing lines are damaging to the world economy as well as world politics. The economy's inclusive growth is being limited as a result of the fact that other rules are replacing the norms of the World Trade Organization — methods involving unfair competition, protectionism, trade wars, unilateral sanctions and blatant abuse of the status of the American dollar. That all leads to the fragmentation of the global economic

arena and has a negative impact on people's lives. We believe that it is essential to return to working constructively together both in entities of the United Nations system and in the Group of 20. We will help to create conditions conducive to that, including through the potential of the BRICS group of countries of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, of which Russia will assume the pro tempore presidency in 2020.

Together with other like-minded countries, we support harmonizing integration processes. That approach is at the core of President Putin's initiative in establishing a greater Eurasian partnership made up of the member countries of the Eurasian Economic Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and which is open to all States in Eurasia, including the European Union member countries. We have already made progress in that direction by linking development plans for the Eurasian Economic Union and the Chinese Belt and Road initiative. The consistent implementation of those efforts will enable us not only to speed up economic growth but also to lay a solid foundation for building a space of peace, stability and cooperation from Lisbon to Jakarta.

In the run-up to the next anniversary of the United Nations, I would like to underline that despite all its trials, the system of a world order centred on the United Nations remains stable and has considerable capacity for resilience. It is a kind of safety net, and if we respect the Charter, it will guarantee humankind's peaceful development by finding a balance of what are sometimes the very contradictory interests of various countries. Perhaps the main conclusion to be drawn from those 75 years is that States' experience of non-ideological cooperation in the face of a common threat, gained in the course of that cruellest of wars, is still relevant. Today's challenges and threats are no less dangerous. Only by working together can we respond to them effectively. Half a century ago, the great Russian scholar, public figure and Nobel laureate Andrei Sakharov wrote,

“The division of mankind threatens it with destruction ... If mankind is to step away from the brink, it must overcome its divisions”.

The founding fathers of the United Nations saw its chief task as one of uniting. Let us show ourselves worthy of their legacy and their memory.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sabri Boukadoum, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Algeria.

**Mr. Boukadoum** (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by congratulating Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande on his presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. I also thank Mrs. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés for her efforts during the previous session.

Poverty eradication, quality education, climate change and inclusion are all issues that will be discussed this year. They are at the core of the goals we adopted four years ago and are interconnected, with a direct impact on sustainable development for individuals and societies. Despite the achievements that have been made in the area of poverty eradication, as illustrated in various reports of the Organization and its specialized agencies, much remains to be done, particularly in low-income countries, in order to ensure their ability to respond to those challenges and meet the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The annual general debate in the Assembly is a good opportunity to assess the current situation. Is today's world better than it was during the previous session? Are we living in a safer and fairer world? What kind of world will we leave to our children? What must we do to end the ongoing assault on nature? All of those questions require that we focus on the meaning of our presence here and remind ourselves of the fundamental principles on which the United Nations is based and through which it seeks a world based on unity and solidarity.

Algeria wants to emphasize its commitment to building a world of peaceful coexistence, particularly in our neighbourhood and region. We are committed to a world in which multilateralism is the best and preferred way forward and the United Nations is a source of inspiration and a driving force for a world that is better and safer and that demonstrates greater solidarity and respect for nature.

Humankind has achieved an unprecedented level of economic development, prosperity and technological development. But that is merely a question of statistics — the reality is that millions of people are living in poverty, which is a source of concern and resentment. Of the more than 740 million people living on less than \$2 per day, many are concentrated in rural

areas, which raises the issue of balanced development. The fight against poverty is not limited to charitable institutions. It is a matter of social justice and peace and stability for all.

Sustainable development makes it possible to respond to current needs without diminishing the resources or capacities of future generations. It relies on rational economies, good governance and partnerships that take the protection of the environment into account. Development can be sustainable if policies are aligned with efforts to safeguard the planet and address climate change, which continues to have a large impact on our ecosystems and biodiversity and causes increasingly severe natural disasters.

Africa — particularly the Sahel-Sahara region, to which my country belongs — is one of the continents that has been most deeply affected by these phenomena, particularly through accelerated desertification and drought. Although it emits the lowest proportion per continent of greenhouse gases in the world, Africa remains among the least prepared to confront the negative effects of climate change. It is the responsibility of industrialized countries to settle their climate debt by providing adequate financial and technical assistance adapted to the needs of the least polluting countries in order to eliminate the environmental disparities between developed and developing countries.

Achieving the goals set by the international community will depend on the degree to which each country fulfils its responsibilities, taking into account its capacities. Today we must promote the principle of multilateralism and protect it from attempts to weaken it, including those that result from misguided policies. Sustainable development at the international level can be achieved only in the context of a sustainable form of multilateralism that is based on justice, equity and finding the balance that best serves the interests of both developed and developing countries.

The challenges of a multilateral world are inextricably linked to the issue of United Nations reform. Reform is of great importance because the Organization's mechanisms were born from post-Second World War power balances that no longer effectively correspond either to the current composition of the international community or to the challenges facing our world today. For this reason, modernizing the mechanisms and revitalizing the activities of our Organization should be undertaken without further

delay, especially in the light of challenges that have direct implications for international peace and security. The double standards and impunity that we have witnessed in past decades have had a profound impact on the moral authority of the multilateral system and the level of respect for the United Nations flag wherever it is raised. That is why we need legitimate and urgent reform of our Organization and reimagined governance. Any acceptable reform will have to recognize the fundamental role played by the General Assembly and promote greater democratization in the composition of the Security Council.

The African Union framework for the reform of the Security Council is worthy of consideration. Algeria stands ready to actively contribute to the realization of this process. We are also prepared to make a positive contribution to moving forward on disarmament issues, including strengthening such related multilateral mechanisms as the Conference on Disarmament, which my country will preside over as of 1 January 2020.

Our Arab region continues to suffer numerous crises, both long term and emerging, which have been worsened by the international community's failure to adopt approaches appropriate to solving those crises in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. This failure has fuelled the phenomenon of extremism and violence.

At the heart of the Arab and Islamic world and for all lovers of peace around the globe, the Palestinian question has emerged as a central issue and one that is closely linked to a number of other crises, including regional security in the Middle East and throughout the world. Despite the numerous binding resolutions adopted by our Organization and the constructive Arab Peace Initiative, we have unfortunately been unable to implement these instruments on the ground, making the possibility of finding a solution in line with the requirements of international legitimacy increasingly remote. Although the majority of the international community condemns the policies and aggression of Israel, the occupying Power, as well as the long-standing historical injustice and continued impunity of the aggressor, the unarmed Palestinian people remain deprived of their most basic national rights, including the right to return to their homeland, while attempts continue to be made to change the status of their capital, Al-Quds Al-Sharif.

Algeria continues to support its strategic choice of establishing the Arab Maghreb Union, the first seeds of which we planted three decades ago. My country remains fully committed to translating the objectives to which the peoples of the Union aspire into reality on the ground. Nevertheless, we regret that we have not matched the Secretary-General's dynamism with respect to Western Sahara. We also regret the resignation of Mr. Horst Köhler, Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara. We hope that the spirit of dialogue will prevail between our brothers in the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro so that they can reach a final solution that guarantees the ability of the people of the Sahara to exercise their legitimate right to self-determination, in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.

With regard to Libya, Algeria has repeatedly warned of the creation of obstacles to finding a political solution to the crisis. We have consistently stressed to the various parties in Libya, as well as regional and international partners, that the country's overarching interests should ultimately take precedence over all other considerations. Algeria will stand side by side with the Libyans in promoting dialogue as a means to end the crisis and begin a reconciliation process free from foreign interference, which serves only to threaten the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country, as well as the stability of its society. Algeria reaffirms that the Libyan crisis can only be resolved by the Libyans themselves, with the support of their neighbours, and that an approach based on weapons and foreign intervention cannot lead to a settlement.

In Syria, we have recently witnessed several positive developments. With the defeat of various terrorist groups, security has been restored in a number of regions, which has enabled the return of the first wave of internally displaced persons from within and outside the country. We must now focus on setting the requirements for a political solution leading to national reconciliation, enabling all Syrians to return to their homes and communities and, with the help of all, to begin the process of reconstruction.

We should not omit to mention our brother nation of Yemen, also in the Arab world, where the conflict has had serious repercussions for people's lives and triggered a serious humanitarian situation. We hope that

dialogue between the belligerents in line with respect for national and international legitimacy will prevail and that the efforts to fight terrorism and unacceptable aggression are successful. In this regard, I would like to pay tribute to the work of other brother countries of the region in helping to bring the Yemeni crisis to an end.

In Mali, the achievement of lasting peace requires the full and effective implementation of the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali that resulted from the Algiers process. Closer cooperation among all the signatory parties to the Agreement must be established. We commend the progress made in this regard, but we must bear in mind that much remains to be done by all Malian stakeholders. As President of the Agreement Monitoring Committee, Algeria affirms its determination to support the Malian parties in addressing the root causes of the crisis and putting a definitive end to it. We are steadfast in our determination to see Mali achieve security, unity and territorial integrity, and we will continue to provide the country with assistance.

The lack of security in the Sahel region fomented the spread of terrorist groups, whose capacity to do harm has grown. They benefit from a criminal economy based on looting, illegal trafficking and smuggling, resulting in poverty and the creation of fertile ground for attracting young recruits. Given our geographical position in the region and our long-standing experience in fighting terrorism and violent extremism in our country, and given that we are a key pillar of stability in Africa and the Mediterranean region, Algeria has adopted a global policy of working relentlessly to fight this international scourge while introducing far-reaching reforms on the political, economic, social, cultural and religious fronts. Violent extremists' malign exploitation of religious beliefs, particularly those of Islam, has had a significant impact on the stability of societies in the Arab and Muslim world and has also led to an increase in the hatred of Muslims and Muslim communities around the world. This is an issue that must be tackled through continuing cooperative action based on mutual respect, while countries should also adopt national legislation to eliminate this scourge.

The issue of migration also requires greater attention. Respect for people and their dignity must be at the foundation of all policies aimed at organizing migration. It must also be part of a comprehensive and balanced approach that takes into account the interests of countries of origin, transit and destination, as well as

the root causes of the phenomenon of migration. In recent years there has been a significant focus on the security and humanitarian dimensions, but the development aspects have not yet received the attention they deserve. Promises related to official development aid must be translated into tangible development programmes that respond to the needs of local communities and prevent individual migration. Unfortunately, the Mediterranean has become a graveyard for many migrants, owing to the sinking of many migrant convoys attempting to reach Europe. Surely it is time for the Mediterranean region to reclaim its role as a model for partnership, cooperation and solidarity. In Algeria, we are confident that this can be done, and we stand ready, with our partners on both sides of the Mediterranean, to make positive contributions to any effort aimed at achieving this goal.

In conclusion, I would like to say that Algeria is a State that deeply believes in the purposes and principles of the United Nations and in the ideals of peace and mutual respect. As a State, we are willing to build relationships based on solidarity and stability. Algerians are currently aspiring to develop their country and build its strength so that they can continue their quest to preserve peace, security and peaceful coexistence, not just in the country's geographical area of the Sahel region and the Mediterranean, but throughout Africa and the world.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Jeremiah Manele, Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade of Solomon Islands.

**Mr. Manele** (Solomon Islands): The Government and the people of Solomon Islands join me in congratulating Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. His wealth of experience will serve the United Nations well as he leads us through the Assembly's agenda, and I want to assure him of the support and cooperation of Solomon Islands during his time in office. I also wish to express my gratitude to his predecessor, Her Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, for her sterling leadership and stewardship over the past year, and to wish her every success in her future endeavours.

If there was ever a time where the work of the United Nations needed to be enhanced, it is now. The many challenges we face require collective efforts and solidarity for progressive action moving

forward. Our aspirations for achieving peace and well-being and living in dignity depend on the strength of multilateralism. The theme of this session of the General Assembly, “Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion”, is therefore both fitting and timely.

As we prepare to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the creation of our Organization, let us use a reinvigorated United Nations to provide the platform on which we, the leaders, can confront the many challenges and issues that we face today and will face long into future. That requires collective action. We must not allow the United Nations to be undermined by the unilateral actions of a few. The United Nations was set up for all. It provides a platform for global discussions. It unites and promotes our common strengths in addressing the complex challenges facing our countries.

Over the past 41 years, our relationship with the United Nations has been managed externally from the United Nations Development Programme’s Pacific Office in Fiji. We reiterate our call for the United Nations to end its business-as-usual approach and build a stronger country presence in Solomon Islands. We do not accept the outcome of the assessment of the Multi-country Office, which recommended retaining the current arrangement. Solomon Islands is a post-conflict country. Its population is estimated to surpass that of Fiji by the early 2030s. It deserves to have its own country office.

Climate change and natural disasters are affecting all our countries. Our oceans are warming. Sea levels are rising. Extreme weather events, such as tropical cyclones, hurricanes, flooding, drought and king tides, are becoming more intense, inflicting more damage and destruction on communities and ecosystems. They put people’s lives at risk. In this regard, my Government expresses its sincere condolences to the Government and the people of the Bahamas for the recent destruction caused by and the lives lost in Hurricane Dorian. We are steadfast in our support for and solidarity with the Government and the people of the Bahamas as they embark on the long recovery process ahead.

The Pacific island countries and the Caribbean island countries are and always will be at the forefront of the climatic events generated through the changing global climate systems. The Secretary-General’s visit to the Pacific earlier this year highlighted the

gravity of climate change for small island States. In the 75 years of the history of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres is only the second Secretary-General to visit the Pacific islands. His visit demonstrates his personal commitment to better understanding the plight of the peoples of the Pacific in their struggle against climate change. It helped him see and understand that climate change is a matter of life and death for the peoples of the Pacific.

The impact of climate change is well documented. However, it is important to remind the General Assembly of a few key points. By 2030, it is estimated that 90 per cent of our coral reefs will be bleached, threatening the food security, fisheries and livelihoods of our people. There will be more frequent severe weather events leading to the destruction of property and the loss of life. The economic costs resulting from severe weather events in smaller island States are beyond the capacity of each individual country to address or respond.

It is also important to reflect on the impact of climate change to date. Solomon Islands is experiencing an impact of climate change that is three times the global average. The pace of sea-level rise means that we are continuing to lose islands. The ongoing resettlement of internally displaced populations is now a new normal. We remain in an endless state of recovery from slow-onset events; this is particularly the case with populations living on low-lying islands.

Considering those events, my Government wants to once again convey its sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General for gracing our region with his visit, which showed us that he cares. There is no room for cynicism or complacency. We need urgent and collective climate action. The Kainaki II Declaration for Urgent Climate Change Action Now, issued by leaders at the Pacific Islands Forum held in Tuvalu last month, reaffirmed climate change as the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and well-being of our peoples.

We commend the Secretary-General’s Climate Action Summit, convened this week. However, we are disappointed by the lack of political will on the part of those with the means of implementation to present more ambitious commitments that would put us on a pathway below 1.5°C. In the current circumstances, we are heading towards a 3°C world. The science is clear and non-negotiable, and we must ensure that our policies and actions are guided by it.

Solomon Islands has embarked on an exciting journey to further reduce its carbon footprint. In 2024, we will commission our first 15-megawatt hydropower project, which will reduce fossil-fuel consumption by 70 per cent, the equivalent of 50,600 tons of carbon-dioxide greenhouse-gas emissions. This is more than twice our commitment under the nationally determined contributions we have submitted. We continue to call for international partnership to help us meet our conditional emission-reduction targets of 45 per cent by 2030 and 50 per cent by 2050.

We rely on our oceans for our livelihoods. Much of our economy is linked to our oceans, including tourism, fisheries and transportation. Our oceans are an essential part of our culture, gastronomy and leisure. Our identity as islanders is inextricably linked to the ocean. It defines who we are. As an ocean State, we are committed to strengthening the management, use and conservation of our oceans, including the high seas.

It is no secret that our ocean is the last remaining rich fishing ground in the world. Our region supplies more than 60 per cent of the world's tuna. It is our shared responsibility and in our collective interest to have a healthy ocean with a healthy tuna stock to ensure that we have sustained supplies of tuna for current and future generations.

Our regional institutions, the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency, which is located in our capital city, and the secretariat of the Pacific Community, continue to assist our island countries in managing the tuna resources of our member States, worth over \$3 billion annually. This annual catch generates \$535 million for the region and contributes more than \$400 million to the region's gross domestic product. Despite these facts, it is the distant-water fishing nations that still obtain the largest benefits from the tuna industry. Solomon Islands' tuna catch in our waters last year amounted to 124,724 tons. Some 24,000 tons are processed for consumption by our local company, SolTuna Limited. The export of processed tuna generated an average annual export value of \$59 million and provides 2,000 jobs.

Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing is undermining our tuna-management system. We have put in place mechanisms, including the Niue Treaty on Cooperation in Fisheries Surveillance and Law Enforcement in the South Pacific Region and the Vessel Day Scheme, as a deterrence-management system. IUU

fishing in the Western and Central Pacific region has an estimated value of \$600 million, with an estimated direct economic loss of around \$150 million for island countries. We call on distant-water fishing nations to eliminate IUU fishing and to ensure that ocean States receive the full benefits from the resources within their jurisdiction.

The Pacific small island developing States are in one of the largest oceans in the world, with an estimated total area of more than 36 million square kilometres. The Solomon Islands exclusive economic zone amounts to 1.4 million square kilometres of sea, compared to a land area of 28,466 square kilometres.

Solomon Islands has developed a national ocean policy to manage all issues relating to the oceans. I am pleased to note that our tripartite joint submission for an extended continental shelf, the Ontong Java Plateau, prepared by Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and the Federated States of Micronesia, was successful, and we thank the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf for its consideration of our joint submission.

A future instrument on biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction is currently being negotiated. We anticipate a fair, equitable and inclusive outcome that addresses our specific needs to support us in the implementation of our obligations and rights under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. We hope to incorporate traditional-knowledge systems that complement science in the new instrument. My Government is committed to working with others towards concluding the negotiations on biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction by 2020.

The United Nations was born out of the ashes of the Second World War. The Charter of the United Nations compels us to uphold peaceful coexistence among, within and between nations through the use of intensive, sustained and inclusive dialogue to resolve our differences and conflicts. Peace is not just the absence of war. It means the absence of hunger, too, and access to the basic necessities of life, so that we can all live our lives to the full. Access to finance, particularly for the most marginalized and vulnerable, is one of the basic necessities of modern-day life. These basic rights remain a challenge in my country, with a narrow economic base and an increasingly large youth bulge that creates 18,000 new job seekers every year, competing for employment in a market that can provide only 3,000 new jobs each year. Job security is key to

long-term peace and security in a post-conflict country such as Solomon Islands

While facing its own challenges, Solomon Islands is proud to have contributed 12 police officers to the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, in the Sudan, and we stand ready to deploy more officers for peacekeeping duties in other United Nations missions. As a beneficiary of the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands over the past 14 years, we know what it means to reciprocate the type of assistance from which our people have benefited. I must also note my country's deep gratitude to the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund for their continued support to our people. Three of our provincial Governments have received programme, policy and budget support from the Commission.

With regard to Security Council reform, we would like to see the Council become more representative, relevant and effective, in keeping with today's realities. In this regard, we call for a non-permanent seat on the Council expressly for small island developing States.

Solomon Islands reaffirms its ongoing commitment to maintaining a nuclear-free Pacific through the Treaty of Rarotonga. We reiterate our call for the total elimination of nuclear weapons by all nuclear-weapon States, including those continuing to possess all forms of weapons of mass destruction. Indeed, we would also like to see a world free of weapons of mass destruction. Solomon Islands will spare no effort in seeking the full implementation of all the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The World Summit for Social Development identified poverty eradication as a moral, ethical, social, political and economic imperative for humankind. We support the call for Governments to address the root causes of poverty, provide for the basic needs of all and ensure that the poor have access to productive resources, including credit, education and training.

Responding to the need for support for financing for rural development, in 2018 my Government passed an act re-establishing the Development Bank of Solomon Islands, which will facilitate the economic and social development of Solomon Islands within our national development strategy. The emphasis will be on Solomon Islanders' participation in economic development, as well as the stimulation of industrial activities.

Beginning in August, my Government doubled the basic minimum wage in the country in order to increase the ability of workers to cope with the high cost of food, electricity, rent, transport and school fees. We will also review our personal tax-exemption threshold for workers.

Attention is being paid to how the most vulnerable can benefit from rapid technological developments and interconnectivity. Our undersea cable, which will link Honiara to Sydney, is a critical transformative infrastructure that will bring the Government closer to its people. The submarine cable will be commissioned and go live in December, and I thank the Government of Australia, the main financing partner of this transformative project.

The Solomon Islands Government has embarked on an ambitious and transformative infrastructure development agenda for a national transport core, which aims to connect all 50 constituencies in our 10 provinces and the totality of our population within 15 years. The first phase of this transformative infrastructure programme, which involves building roads, bridges, ports and airports, as well as procuring well-designed ferries, aims to connect 37 constituencies and 75 per cent of our population in the first 10 years. The Government is also exploring other innovative modes of revenue and partnerships as we look to transform our country's development.

Solomon Islands is scheduled to graduate from the least-developed-country category in December 2024, after meeting two of the three criteria for graduation. While accepting that we need to graduate, I must emphasize that we did not pass the vulnerability criterion, which should have been the most important of the three. As the several superstorms that have recently hit small islands States attest, the gains made by a State can be reversed in a matter of hours. We look forward to further discussing those matters during the visit of United Nations agencies in mid-October to assist us in developing a practical and smooth transition strategy.

Solomon Islands subscribes to the Istanbul Programme of Action, the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). I am happy to state that the goals, targets and indicators in those three global mechanisms have been mainstreamed into our 2016-2035 national development strategy. Incorporating all three global frameworks into our development

strategy will ensure that we will not only achieve the targets set forth in it, it will also fulfil the national vision underpinning the strategy, entitled “Improving the Social and Economic Livelihoods of all Solomon Islanders”. Solomon Islands will present its voluntary national review of the SDGs in July 2020.

Solomon Islands has the fastest population growth rate in the Pacific, with 50 children — two full classrooms — being born every day. By 2050, it is projected that almost 80 children will be born in our country every day, the equivalent of three new classrooms every day, or a new combined primary and high school every week. We are reforming our education system to accommodate this added pressure, with an increased focus on technical, vocational and life-skills education.

We are also creating an inventory of all youth in the country, with a view to having a pool of young people ready for employment opportunities inside and outside their country, as well as for further training opportunities. I acknowledge with appreciation the tremendous support provided by Australia and New Zealand for employment opportunities for young Solomon Islanders in their respective countries.

While accepting that climate change is the most important challenge facing all countries, and especially Pacific Island countries, I must also express my Government’s concern that the single largest killer of our people today in virtually all our countries is non-communicable diseases (NCDs). I am also concerned about the fact that not nearly as much attention is accorded to halting or reversing the NCD epidemic. In Solomon Islands, seven of every 10 deaths are due to NCDs. In some other Pacific countries, it is as high as eight of 10 deaths. Malaria adds to the challenge.

I am happy to inform the Assembly that my Government has developed and is implementing a road map to eliminate malaria by 2030. We are also developing a road map to halt and reverse the NCD epidemic in Solomon Islands. For some forms of NCDs we are also exploring alternative modalities of treatment, particularly plant-based pharmaceuticals that are affordable and can be produced domestically. Solomon Islands is working with Cuba to explore further opportunities in this area. However, my key message to the Assembly is that hundreds of thousands of people are dying every day due to NCDs and diseases

such as malaria. We must therefore step up the fight with urgency and reverse the NCD epidemic.

With regard to human rights, Solomon Islands is preparing its third Universal Periodic Review and will ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities during the current session.

With respect to the issue of West Papua, Solomon Islands aligns itself with the position of the Pacific Islands Forum. We reaffirm Indonesia’s sovereignty over Papua. However, we remain concerned about the escalation of violence and the continued allegations of human rights abuses reported in West Papua. We welcome Indonesia’s invitation to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to visit and conduct an independent assessment of human rights in West Papua. We encourage both parties to agree quickly on a date for such a visit to ensure that the outcome is reached as soon as possible.

Solomon Islands thanks Cuba for the training it has offered our medical students, with more than 80 medical doctors from Solomon Islands having graduated from Cuban medical schools. We note that the 59-year economic embargo imposed on Cuba remains in place. Solomon Islands calls for the lifting of this embargo. We encourage the restoration of good relations between Cuba and the United States in the name of peace and in line with the spirit, purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

My country has made a commitment to hosting the 2023 Pacific Games, which will bring together all 24 countries and territories of the Pacific. I am pleased to note the support we are receiving from traditional and non-traditional development partners in preparing our country for the Games, and I especially want to acknowledge our immediate neighbours, Papua New Guinea and Indonesia. We are also reaching out to other partners who we hope will respond positively to our 2023 Games proposals.

I also want to announce to the Assembly that Solomon Islands has begun reviewing its foreign policy. In so doing, we have recognized the One China policy, in accordance with resolution 2758 (XXVI), and have formalized our relations with the People’s Republic of China. We are broadening our engagements with all countries in keeping with our policy of “friends to all, enemies to none”.

In conclusion, returning to the theme of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly, “Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion”, Solomon Islands sees value in it and believes that we can achieve many things through strategic partnerships and meaningful multilateral and bilateral engagements among and between countries. I commend the Secretary-General for this theme. It has provided a basis for self-reflection for many countries.

In the Pacific context, our ocean is our single largest shared resource and one where meaningful multilateral and bilateral efforts can unlock untold development opportunities. Protecting our oceans is protecting our future.

The United Nations negotiations on climate change must be concluded without delay. We must go from rhetoric to real progress to ensure that our children and future generations are able to live their lives to the full.

The NCD crisis must be halted and reversed. The NCD epidemic could undermine the future of some countries. In my view, this challenge is more urgent right now than climate change.

As the great French writer Victor Hugo said, “Nothing is as powerful as an idea whose time has come.” I submit that the twin fights against climate change and NCDs are ideas whose time has come. Let us do that now and be on the right side of history.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Khemais Jhinaoui, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tunisia.

**Mr. Jhinaoui** (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I am pleased to extend my sincere congratulations to Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, and through him to our brother country of Nigeria for the confidence shown to him in his election to preside over the General Assembly at this current session. I wish him every success in this noble task. I would also like to express my appreciation and gratitude to Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés for her able leadership of the work of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session.

I express my utmost appreciation to Secretary-General António Guterres for his valuable efforts aimed at serving the purposes and principles of our Organization and upholding its noble ideals, and I renew my support for his various reforms and initiatives.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the Secretary-General and the States Members of the United Nations for the kind gesture to Tunisia and its great departed leader of holding a meeting of the General Assembly on 1 August in memory of our late President Béji Caïd Essebsi, the first democratically elected President in Tunisia (see A/73/PV.102). President Essebsi was indeed a great statesman who relied on his wisdom, foresight and vast political experience to lead us through dialogue and consensus, and with full respect for the rights and fundamental freedoms of all Tunisians, to the democratic transformation of our country.

Since 2011, Tunisia has embarked on an irreversible democratic path that was consecrated in our 2014 Constitution. This democratic path is based on the supremacy of the rule of law, State institutions and support for individual and collective rights and freedoms in all areas. In the past few years, Tunisia’s nascent experience has already shown that the path has been well taken, despite difficulties and the ongoing challenges. We saw proof of that in the smooth transfer of power following the death of President Essebsi, in full application of the provisions of our Constitution.

In the same context, on 15 September Tunisia held a first round of presidential elections under the supervision of the Independent High Authority for Elections and in the presence of international observers from various countries and regional and international organizations, all of whom attested to the transparency and integrity of the elections. We are confident that the second round of elections, which are to be held in few days, as well as the legislative elections to be held on 6 October, will be just as transparent and impartial, thereby proving that we have come a long way on the path to democracy in Tunisia and that there will be no going back. We hope that the elections will result in the enhanced representation of women and youth as a national choice reflecting the development and maturity of Tunisian society, reaffirming the importance of enabling these two groups to assume the highest positions in decision-making and public affairs.

The theme of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly — “Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion” — reflects our firm belief in the work of multilateral mechanisms, foremost among which is the United Nations, as the best way to fulfil our joint hopes and aspirations for peace, comprehensive

sustainable development and prosperity for all. These priorities will receive our most serious attention in the upcoming phase of our national development.

The gravity of the common development, social and environmental challenges facing our countries and peoples today confirms our urgent need to work together as an international community to entrench the principle of collective solidarity, with a view to putting an end to poverty and marginalization and to promoting social integration, empowering women, providing better education and fighting the effects of climate change. The States Members of the United Nations recognized this collective responsibility when they adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a common framework for addressing current challenges, securing the basic rights of our peoples and realizing safe, prosperous and sustainable societies.

Tunisia has adopted all these noble objectives and incorporated them into its five-year development plan for the period from 2016 to 2020. Accordingly, at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July, we presented our first voluntary national review on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

In the most recent period, Tunisia, eager to realize economic transformation, support social change and protect the path to democracy, has continued to implement its major structural reform programme. We have been able to achieve positive results in terms of improving development indicators, promoting internal and external investment, restoring the tourism sector and raising our standing in the human development indices, despite ongoing difficulties and regional instability. My country relies mainly on its capacities and potential in achieving those goals. We also seek to tackle challenges by developing cooperation and partnerships with all our friends and partners in various fields, with a view to serving mutual interests and contributing to greater security and stability at the regional and international level.

Given the particular importance we attach to the African dimension of our foreign policy, Tunisia reiterates its commitment to developing cooperation and partnership on the continent, while we seek to further African economic integration pursuant to Agenda 2063 of the African Union. From this rostrum, I want to renew our call to the international community to continue providing the support needed to help Africa fulfil its

promise and potential and by generally strengthening development across the continent. This approach will open new horizons for African youth and enable young people to become active contributors to development and prosperity, while protecting them from falling victim to terrorism and illegal migration networks.

Violent extremism and terrorism have been on the rise around the world. Their promoters have taken advantage of tensions and unresolved crises to threaten security and stability, targeting countries and community cohesion in order to undermine development and democracy. Efforts made at the national, regional and international level to combat terrorist organizations and abort their plans have led to substantial progress. Nevertheless, terrorist entities have been able to regroup and reposition themselves, exploiting ongoing conflicts and setting up smuggling networks in hotbeds of tension. We must therefore mobilize efforts and coordination activities beyond mere cooperation to root out the sources of terrorism, including working diligently to resolve crises and respect arms embargoes, in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions, as well as to provide adequate support to the countries at the forefront of combating this scourge.

We would also like to emphasize that fighting terrorism requires confronting extremist ideologies and shielding communities, especially young people, from social isolation and vulnerability to extremist recruitment. Tunisia has come a long way in implementing its national strategy to combat terrorism and violent extremism, which has helped us to attain significant security successes in fighting these dangerous phenomena, foiling terrorist plans and protecting democracy, security and stability.

Our Arab region continues to witness unprecedented instability owing to ongoing conflicts and tensions, an increase in current threats and dangers, and the undermining of the capacity of some countries in the region, all of which hampers development. We believe that dangerous developments such as the military confrontations taking place in our sister country of Libya contribute to deepening the suffering of the fraternal people of that country, creating a serious threat to security and stability, not only in Libya, but in the region as a whole.

Given the special and deep historic ties between the fraternal peoples of Tunisia and Libya, and in the light of our sense of responsibility and duty to that country,

we reiterate our call to our Libyan brothers and sisters to put an immediate end to hostilities and military operations and return to the political settlement process under the auspices of the United Nations. Following the initiative of President Essebsi and in full coordination with Algeria, Egypt and the international community, Tunisia reiterates its commitment to doing everything it can to support our Libyan brothers and sisters in overcoming the current crisis through dialogue, consensus and upholding the primacy of their national interests, with a view to reaching a comprehensive political settlement.

The long-standing Palestinian question remains at the top of the list of urgent regional and international issues. We believe that a just settlement of the Palestinian question represents the main path to restoring security and stability in the region.

To that end, on 31 March, Tunisia hosted the thirtieth regular summit of the League of Arab States, at which we stressed the central importance of the question of Palestine. Today, Tunisia stresses anew that it is absolutely vital to reach a just and comprehensive solution of the question, in which the fraternal Palestinian people regain without delay their legitimate rights and establish their own independent State within the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem at its capital, based on the agreed terms of reference, resolutions of international legitimacy, the Arab Peace Initiative and the principle of a two-State solution. We renew our call to the international community to shoulder its responsibilities, provide the protection the Palestinian people need, and preserve the legal and historic status of Jerusalem and the other occupied Palestinian territories.

Furthermore, Tunisia calls for intensifying the international and regional efforts to find a political settlement to the crisis in Syria that preserves the sovereignty and integrity of this fraternal country, ends the suffering of its people and fulfils their aspirations towards living in peace and stability. In this regard, Tunisia welcomes the establishment of the Constitutional Committee, which gives hope for seeing an end to the conflict and the launch of an inclusive Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process, with a view to achieving the long-awaited settlement, in accordance with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015).

We also hope that the international community can help our brothers and sisters in Yemen achieve a political solution that preserves the integrity and sovereignty of their country and bring their humanitarian suffering to an end, thereby contributing to strengthening the security and stability in the Arabian Gulf.

With regard to the fraternal Republic of the Sudan, Tunisia once again welcomes the agreement reached between the Transitional Military Council and the Forces for Freedom and Change on administering the country during its transitional period. Tunisia stresses the importance of this agreement, which is a significant positive step in this latest phase in the history of the Sudan that will contribute to preserving the country's security, stability and territorial integrity and will meet the aspirations of its people for democracy, development and peace. In this context, Tunisia calls for lifting the sanctions imposed on the Republic of the Sudan, which will help to support the efforts of that brother country to make a successful transition to democracy and achieve economic and social development.

Tunisia is preparing to join the Security Council on 1 January 2020 as a non-permanent member for the period from 2020 to 2021. It will be the fourth time in our history that we have served on the Council. It is an important task for which we will count on the help and support of all our friends and partners. As a peace-loving nation, my country, which is known for its dedication to international legitimacy, will focus on preventive diplomacy in settling disputes by peaceful means and on promoting the role of women and young people in maintaining international peace and security. We intend to play our role in the Security Council in a constructive and responsible manner and to actively contribute to collective efforts to fulfil the Council's mandate.

Tunisia will do its utmost to promote dialogue, trust and rapprochement and achieve political settlements to current disputes and conflicts, particularly in the Arab and African regions, as quickly as possible, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the requirements of international legitimacy. As a member of the Security Council, my country will seek greater support for United Nations peacekeeping operations, including by striving to ensure that their missions conform to the desired goals and operate successfully within the means available. We also reiterate Tunisia's

commitment to strengthening its own participation in peacekeeping operations.

In conclusion, we emphasize Tunisia's determination to continue working, in cooperation and coordination with all fraternal and friendly countries,

to achieve the lofty objectives of the United Nations in the humanitarian arena and to further entrench the noble universal ideals set forth in the Charter.

*The meeting rose at 4.15 p.m.*