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Chair: Ms. González López (El Salvador)
later: Mr. Prvý (Vice-Chair) (Slovakia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Statement by the President of the General Assembly

1. **Mr. Shahid** (Maldives), President of the General Assembly, said that, pursuant to General Assembly resolution [75/123](#), the year 2021 marked the beginning of the Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. With 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories remaining in limbo, the United Nations should do everything possible to make that decade the closing chapter of the decolonization era.

2. The resolution of the issue of the long-standing struggle of the Palestinian people to secure its inalienable right to self-determination depended on a just and lasting settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. It had long been recognized that a two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders was the only viable solution to that conflict, and efforts must be expedited to make that State a reality.

3. The efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) within the region helped to safeguard the human rights of Palestinian refugees. However, the precarious financial situation was jeopardizing the Agency's ability to continue its work. The funding gap of more than \$100 million faced by the Agency put at risk the education of more than half a million children and could potentially halt the rollout of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccines at a critical stage, with a fourth wave of infections looming. All Member States should spare what they could and assist the Agency in securing the necessary funds.

4. United Nations peacekeepers remained essential in maintaining stability in conflict-prone areas around the world. With a view to streamlining and strengthening the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations, all stakeholders should redouble their efforts to meet their obligations under the Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and ensure the meaningful participation of more women peacekeepers.

5. The ever-expanding frontiers of outer space should always remain peaceful, and activities in outer space should be guided by scientific curiosity and a spirit of global kinship. Research and exploration in outer space could benefit all humanity and accelerate progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. As humanity delved deeper into outer space, it should leave behind the ugly aspects of its history – from conflicts to colonialism – and preserve space as a common good.

Agenda item 50: University for Peace (*continued*) ([A/76/259](#))

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6. **Mr. Alizada** (Azerbaijan), speaking on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, said that the Movement reiterated its strong support for UNRWA,

whose mandate was to provide humanitarian, development and emergency assistance to more than 5.7 million Palestine refugees, pending a just solution to their plight on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions. The Agency's operations remained indispensable until such a solution was attained. The international community should step up its support for UNRWA, especially in the light of the recurring financial shortfalls, deteriorating socioeconomic conditions and instability in the region, which had been further aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. UNRWA must be provided with sustained, predictable and uninterrupted support, as repeatedly called for by the General Assembly and the Secretary-General.

7. The prolonged crisis in the Gaza Strip must be comprehensively addressed, in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, as part of the overall effort to bring an end to the illegitimate Israeli occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 1967. The illegal blockade on Gaza must be fully and immediately lifted; that step was the only way for the Palestine refugee population in Gaza to become less dependent on UNRWA. The Movement remained committed to promoting a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine, including the plight of Palestine refugees, and would continue to support the Palestinian people's struggle to attain its legitimate national aspirations.

8. The Movement continued to call for international action, particularly by the Security Council, to ensure accountability for, and the cessation of, the violations perpetrated by the occupying Power. Israel must comply with its obligations and responsibilities under international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). The recommendations in the report of the Secretary-General on the protection of the Palestinian civilian population (A/ES-10/794) required serious follow-up, especially given the persistent violations by Israel of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law. Such violations included the killing and injury of Palestinian civilians; the construction of settlements and the separation wall and the transfer of extremist settlers who provoked and terrorized the Palestinian people; the unabated seizure of Palestinian land and property, demolition of homes and forced displacement of Palestinian families; the arbitrary arrest and detention of Palestinians and the ill-treatment and abuse of prisoners and detainees; and the collective punishment of the Palestinian people through severe movement restrictions, a discriminatory permit regime and the inhumane blockade of the Gaza Strip.

9. All those violations must be addressed in accordance with international law, with a view to protecting the Palestinian people and mobilizing collective efforts to achieve a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders, in accordance with international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map. The Movement reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their rights to self-determination and to their independent and viable State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and a just solution for the plight of Palestine refugees on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

10. The member States of the Movement remained the largest contributors to United Nations peacekeeping operations, providing nearly 90 per cent of all uniformed personnel deployed in the field. The Movement commended the Secretary-General for launching a successful vaccination campaign, which had contributed to the safety and security of contingents and local populations, and had allowed peacekeeping missions to continue to deliver their mandates. The ongoing effort to improve peacekeeping had yielded tangible improvements, including the adoption by the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations of the practice of providing a limited number of focused recommendations based on the eight thematic chapters of the Action for Peacekeeping initiative in a short, user-friendly and action-oriented report.

11. The Secretariat and Member States had a shared responsibility to work together to identify ways to enhance the effectiveness and coherence of peacekeeping. Mandates should be well-defined, realistic, achievable and matched with adequate resources, political will, leadership, performance and accountability at all levels. Caveats should be withdrawn, as they had a negative effect on performance and mandate implementation. Member States should pay their financial contributions in full, on time and without condition, and the Secretariat should reimburse troop- and police-contributing countries without delay. The 2021 United Nations Peacekeeping Ministerial Conference would provide a timely opportunity for Member States to make commitments to overcome the operational challenges facing peacekeeping. The priority of the Movement remained ensuring that peacekeeping operations benefited from well-trained, adequately equipped and sufficiently supported

personnel, and enhanced capacities for operating in high-risk environments.

12. The recent spike in attacks against peacekeepers and the increase in disinformation campaigns targeting United Nations peacekeeping operations were of deep concern. All stakeholders should take the measures necessary to improve the safety and security of peacekeepers, including through the provision of adequate resources. The Movement took note of the strategy for the digital transformation of United Nations peacekeeping, aimed at improving the situational awareness of peacekeeping missions and providing them with additional tools for conflict monitoring and analysis, while ensuring the sovereignty of the host State and data privacy. A broader discussion of measures to improve the safety and security of peacekeepers was needed, including through the Group of Friends on the Safety and Security of United Nations Peacekeepers.

13. Enhancing the impact of peacekeeping operations on peacebuilding and sustaining peace was a key pillar of the Action for Peacekeeping initiative, and the Movement commended the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission for convening a meeting on that issue earlier that year. The Movement recognized the indispensable role of women in United Nations peacekeeping operations and supported efforts to increase their participation.

14. The Movement recognized the valuable role played by the special political missions in conflict prevention, mediation, good offices and peacebuilding. Given the importance of national ownership in peacebuilding efforts, the special political missions should enhance coordination with their host countries. To ensure their effectiveness, the special political missions should be financed through the same criteria, methodology and mechanisms used to fund peacekeeping operations.

15. **Mr. Sandoval Mendiola** (Mexico), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that CELAC remained fully committed to the goal of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and called on the administering Powers to adopt the measures necessary to attain the rapid decolonization of each of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, some of which were in the CELAC region, while taking the individual situations of the Territories into account, including the fact that some of them were “special and particular” colonial situations involving sovereignty disputes. At the CELAC Summit held in September 2021, the Heads of State and Government of the Community had renewed their commitment to continue working to make

Latin America and the Caribbean a region free of colonialism. The administering Powers should cooperate with the Special Committee on decolonization and regularly communicate accurate information on each of the Territories under their administration.

16. CELAC supported the work of the Department of Global Communications, including the use of the six official languages on the decolonization website, but stressed the importance of ensuring that content was consistent and regularly updated in all languages. It urged the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Global Communications to ensure the widest dissemination of information on decolonization, including the coverage of all meetings of the Special Committee.

17. CELAC strongly supported the legitimate rights of the Argentine Republic in the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. At the 2021 CELAC Summit, the States members of the Community had reaffirmed their abiding interest in the resumption of negotiations by the Governments of the Argentine Republic and the United Kingdom in order to find, as soon as possible, a peaceful and definitive solution to the dispute, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and the Organization of American States. They had also called on the Secretary-General of the United Nations to renew his efforts to fulfil the mission of good offices entrusted to him by the General Assembly with a view to the resumption of negotiations, and to report on the progress made. CELAC further reiterated the importance of observing General Assembly resolution 31/49 calling on both parties to refrain from taking decisions that would imply introducing unilateral modifications in the situation, and highlighted the continuous constructive attitude and willingness of the Argentine Government to reach, through negotiations, a peaceful and definitive solution to that anachronistic colonial situation.

18. With regard to the Special Committee’s 37 resolutions and decisions on Puerto Rico reaffirming the inalienable right of the Puerto Rican people to self-determination and independence, the Heads of State and Government of CELAC had highlighted the Latin American and Caribbean character of Puerto Rico at the 2017 Summit and had recalled the Havana Declaration of 2014 calling for progress on the question of Puerto Rico.

19. With regard to the small island Territories of the Caribbean and the Pacific, which constituted the majority of existing Non-Self-Governing Territories, continued efforts were needed to facilitate the sustained

and balanced growth of their fragile economies. Those Territories should be allowed to exercise their right to self-determination. Crucially, when the will of the majority of the indigenous population was unequivocal, the administering Powers should not directly or indirectly thwart that will. CELAC therefore remained concerned at the situation in the Turks and Caicos Islands and underscored the need to guarantee a truly inclusive, democratic and representative governmental approach to allow the people of that Territory to participate meaningfully in determining their own future. Similarly, special attention should be paid to key issues affecting small islands, such as accelerating loss of territory due to natural disasters and rising sea levels resulting from climate change.

20. CELAC endorsed all the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council on the question of Western Sahara, including General Assembly resolution 75/106, and reiterated its strong support for the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to reach a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution leading to the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

21. **Mr. Al-Mouallimi** (Saudi Arabia), speaking on behalf of the Group of Arab States, said that more than 75 years after the establishment of the United Nations, the question of Palestine remained the oldest unresolved issue on the Organization's agenda. Despite the adoption of numerous General Assembly and Security Council resolutions affirming the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and countless initiatives taken by Arab countries to find a just and lasting solution, Israel, the occupying Power, persistently rejected all initiatives, openly defying internationally recognized resolutions and the international community itself.

22. For over seven decades, Israel had perpetrated countless violations of international law, international humanitarian law and international human rights law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, imposing a colonialist military occupation, using indiscriminate force against civilians, confiscating land, building illegal settlements, destroying Palestinian homes and evicting their owners. The Group of Arab States condemned attempts by Israel to change the legal and historical status of the holy sites of Al-Quds al-Sharif (Jerusalem), in particular the Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram al-Sharif. Moreover, the occupying Power's continued blockade on the Gaza Strip exacerbated its humanitarian crisis.

23. The Group called on the international community to do its duty to put an end to Israeli violations and provide immediate protection to the Palestinian people. A just and comprehensive peace – the strategic choice of the Arab countries – could only be attained by ending the occupation, in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative and establishing an independent State of Palestine on the 4 June 1967 borders, with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital.

24. Facing the restrictions imposed by the Israeli occupation authorities and growing refugee need as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNRWA continued to provide basic services and humanitarian assistance to more than 5.7 million Palestine refugees in the Agency's five fields of operation. The Agency enabled Palestine refugees to live dignified lives and hold onto hope for a better future while awaiting a just and lasting solution to their plight, in accordance with international law and United Nations resolutions.

25. The Group of Arab States denounced attempts to erase the question of Palestine refugees and the right of return from the international agenda. Arab States called on the international community to uphold its responsibility to provide financial and political support to UNRWA so that the Agency could fulfil its mandate conferred by the General Assembly since 1949.

26. Speaking in his national capacity, he said that his delegation supported the efforts of Morocco to find a realistic political solution to the question of Moroccan Sahara based on compromise, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions and under the auspices of the Secretary-General. Saudi Arabia endorsed the Moroccan autonomy initiative as a solution that preserved the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Morocco, was consistent with international law and the Charter of the United Nations, and had been described as serious and credible in Security Council resolutions adopted since 2007.

27. His delegation welcomed the holding of two round-table meetings in Geneva, at which Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania and the Polisario had participated, and called for continued dialogue under that format. Saudi Arabia hailed the participation of elected representatives of Moroccan Sahara in the round-table meetings and in the deliberations of the Special Committee on decolonization. It welcomed the appointment of the new Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara.

28. His Government commended the efforts of Morocco to promote socioeconomic development and respect for human rights in the Moroccan Sahara. In addition to holding legislative elections nationwide,

including in the Moroccan Sahara region, Morocco had taken measures to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and provide vaccines to a large proportion of the inhabitants of the region.

29. In order to resolve the regional dispute, wisdom, realism and a spirit of compromise would be required from all parties. A solution would contribute to security and stability in the Sahel region. His delegation rejected any attempt to undermine the higher interests, sovereignty or territorial integrity of Morocco, or to intervene in its internal affairs.

30. Saudi Arabia denounced the continued Iranian occupation of the islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, as those islands were an integral part of the territory of the United Arab Emirates. Saudi Arabia supported the legitimate claim to sovereignty over the islands and its appeals to Iran to end its occupation, as well as its appeals to resolve the matter peacefully, whether through direct negotiations or by referring the case to the International Court of Justice.

31. **Ms. King** (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that CARICOM welcomed all efforts to streamline and improve peacekeeping operations and reiterated its support for the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, peacekeeping missions had remained steadfast in maintaining peace by effectively supporting political peace processes and responding to and preventing civilian threats. As a part of the family of small island developing States, CARICOM was aware of how crucial the maintenance of peace and security was to fostering continued economic growth and development and therefore attached great importance to peacekeeping operations.

32. CARICOM supported the active participation of women in all efforts to promote peace and security and welcomed the system-wide strategy of the Secretary-General to achieve gender parity among internationally recruited staff across the United Nations system by 2028. The Department of Peace Operations should continue its efforts to fully integrate women into the peacekeeping and security agenda.

33. The United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti had continued to work in partnership with the people and Government of Haiti to strengthen and promote political stability and good governance. The emergency response in Haiti, including the provision of vaccines and the building of low-cost housing, must be strengthened. When engaging with Haiti, the international community should respect its sovereignty, shore up its stability and seek to empower it. CARICOM remained committed to

assisting Haiti on its path towards sustainable peace, stability and development.

34. The Action for Peacekeeping Plus plan reflected a renewed focus on strengthening the implementation of the Action for Peacekeeping initiative, with particular attention placed on cooperation with host countries, strategic communication and operational integration. The 2021 United Nations Peacekeeping Ministerial Conference would provide a timely opportunity for Member States to make tangible commitments to overcome the challenges currently confronting peacekeeping efforts.

35. The Department of Global Communications and the network of United Nations information centres carried out important work to ensure the dissemination of reliable, accurate and science-based information, in particular during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the precipitous spread of disinformation and misinformation had hindered efforts to contain the pandemic. CARICOM remained committed to combating that trend and ensuring the secure management of information and communications technology. It applauded the cross-cutting reforms undertaken by the Department and the implementation of the global communications strategy, including the commitment to monitoring and evaluation. CARICOM fully endorsed the Verified campaign and welcomed the Pledge to Pause initiative.

36. The United Nations information centres had played an integral role in promoting vaccine equity and consistently emphasizing the importance of preventative measures through collaborative efforts with scientists, researchers, artists, musicians, actors and influencers on social media. The centres had demonstrated their continued relevance and effectiveness in the CARICOM region by providing communications support for the roll-out of vaccines under the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility and rendering support to the resident coordinator offices and the United Nations country teams. CARICOM fully supported the United Nations Information Centre located in Port of Spain, which served territories in the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean. CARICOM commended the centres for their advocacy in 125 languages and in Braille.

37. Inclusivity remained essential to ensuring that all individuals were kept updated and engaged in the process towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and targets. Robust efforts must be made to ensure the effective use of existing communications platforms and to develop innovative ways of using new and evolving media. The Department of Global

Communications should continue to pursue creative and effective mechanisms for information-sharing, with a view to engaging young people and the most vulnerable in society. While recognizing the resource constraints currently facing the Organization, CARICOM reiterated the need for all the official languages to be used at United Nations events and for multilingualism to be continuously implemented at all United Nations information centres.

38. **Mr. Koba** (Indonesia), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that the use and exploration of outer space should be carried out exclusively for peaceful purposes and for the benefit of all countries, irrespective of their degree of economic or scientific development, in conformity with applicable international law and the principle of non-appropriation of outer space. Improving access to space technology should become a priority of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS). The partnership between spacefaring and emerging spacefaring nations and relevant international organizations should be enhanced with a view to building capacities in space technology in a sustainable manner.

39. It was important to develop the legal framework to strengthen international cooperation in space in an inclusive manner and with respect for the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and equitable access. ASEAN urged the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of COPUOS to continue its deliberations on measures to mitigate space debris and encouraged voluntary implementation of the Committee's Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines.

40. More than 5,000 peacekeepers from ASEAN countries were currently deployed in various peacekeeping missions. ASEAN was committed to enhancing its cooperation with external partners on peacekeeping-related issues through the ASEAN Regional Forum and the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus. ASEAN looked forward to moving forward with the Plan of Action to Implement the Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Partnership between ASEAN and the United Nations (2021–2025). In support of the ongoing effort to make peacekeeping more effective and fit for purpose, all ASEAN countries had endorsed the Action for Peacekeeping initiative and called for the effective implementation of the following phase, Action for Peacekeeping Plus. Peacekeeping operations should be deployed with a view to pursuing sustainable political solutions. Clear, focused, sequenced, prioritized and achievable mandates should therefore be devised by the Security Council, in close

consultation with troop- and police-contributing countries, host States and the Secretariat.

41. Adequate resources were required to enable missions to fulfil their mandates. Peacekeepers could not be expected to do more with fewer resources. Member States should therefore pay their financial contribution in full, on time and without conditions, and the Secretariat should reimburse troop- and police-contributing countries without delay.

42. Because better training improved peacekeepers' performance and enhanced their safety and security, ASEAN was keen to work with the United Nations and other stakeholders through the triangular partnership project. ASEAN fully supported the full, effective and meaningful participation of women in peacekeeping operations and was therefore committed to implementing Security Council resolution [2538 \(2020\)](#). Ensuring the safety and security of peacekeepers remained a priority of ASEAN, which strongly condemned attacks against peacekeepers and urged host countries to bring the perpetrators to justice. In the light of the ongoing pandemic, ASEAN urged the Secretariat to keep working to improve medical capacities and ensure the equal distribution of vaccines to peacekeeping missions.

43. Special political missions played a valuable role in responding to complex and rapidly evolving challenges. Given the importance of national ownership, they should coordinate closely with their host countries, which had primary responsibility for advancing their own priorities and peacebuilding initiatives. ASEAN also encouraged increased cooperation between special political missions and regional and subregional organizations and reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening its partnership with the United Nations in conflict prevention, mediation and sustaining peace. While ASEAN welcomed Secretariat efforts to ensure that women were represented in field-based special political missions and elsewhere, more should be done to promote the representation of women at all levels of the Organization.

44. In response to the concerning proliferation of disinformation and misinformation, ASEAN reiterated its support for the Department of Global Communications and called on it to work with United Nations information centres to use local languages with a view to reaching the widest possible audience. The Department should strengthen its partnership with regional organizations and conduct joint activities to raise public awareness of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations.

45. **Mr. de Souza Monteiro** (Brazil), speaking on behalf of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), said that MERCOSUR reaffirmed its support for the legitimate rights of the Argentine Republic in the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. The principle of self-determination was not applicable to that special and particular situation, because the British population on the Islands had been implanted during an illegal occupation and did not constitute a people in the legal sense. The Malvinas Islands were an Argentine territory and the principle of the territorial integrity of States should be observed, in accordance with international law.

46. Since the adoption of General Assembly resolution [2065 \(XX\)](#) in 1965, the General Assembly and the Special Committee on decolonization had recognized that the question of the Malvinas Islands involved a sovereignty dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom, and that the way to put an end to that special and particular colonial situation was the peaceful and negotiated settlement of the dispute between the two parties.

47. In a joint communiqué adopted on 16 July 2020, the Presidents of the MERCOSUR member States had reiterated the terms of the 1996 Declaration of Potrero de los Funes on the Malvinas Islands. It would be in the interests of the region if the protracted sovereignty dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas were resolved as soon as possible in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions and the declarations of the Organization of American States and other regional and multilateral forums.

48. In accordance with General Assembly resolution [31/49](#), the United Kingdom must cease its exploration and exploitation of natural resources and refrain from carrying out military exercises in the disputed area. Unilateral action in the disputed area was incompatible with the relevant United Nations resolutions. The Argentine Republic was entitled to take legal action, in full respect for international law, against unauthorized activities in the area. The South Atlantic was a zone of peace and cooperation, dedicated to the peaceful settlement of disputes. MERCOSUR called on the United Kingdom to resume negotiations, something that the Government of Argentina was fully prepared to do, with a view to reaching a definitive solution to the sovereignty dispute.

49. **Mr. Lam Padilla** (Guatemala), speaking on behalf of the Central American Integration System, said that the System remained committed to ensuring that the Latin American and Caribbean region became a colonialism-free and colony-free zone. Accordingly, it strongly supported the legitimate rights of Argentina in the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. The Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom should resume negotiations with a view to finding a peaceful and lasting solution to the dispute as soon as possible. The System welcomed the decision by the Central American Parliament to adopt 10 June as the Day of Central American Solidarity with the Argentine Malvinas Islands. The Special Committee on decolonization had made a significant contribution in its consideration of the issue in the 56 years since the General Assembly had adopted resolution [2065 \(XX\)](#).

50. **Ms. Quintero Correa** (Colombia), speaking on behalf of the Group of Friends of Spanish, said that multilingualism must be fully applied to enable the successful dissemination of the key messages of the United Nations in an inclusive and reliable manner. The Group welcomed the work led by the Secretary-General and the Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications and carried out by the Department of Global Communications and the team for the coordination of multilingualism to make further progress towards effective communication in all the official languages of the Organization. The Group also welcomed the most recent report of the Committee on Information ([A/76/21](#)), in which the importance of multilingualism had been stressed.

51. The Spanish language had become an indispensable tool for both Member States and the Secretariat in communicating and disseminating messages to Spanish speakers around the world. Nevertheless, the principle of parity among the six official languages of the United Nations must be fully upheld. Existing resources must be allocated in a balanced manner and without delay in order to make the availability of information in Spanish sustainable and ensure a timely and effective response to the demand for information about the work of the United Nations.

52. There was an urgent need to improve the process of publishing treaties and international agreements, in accordance with Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations. Courtesy translations of treaties and international agreements, provided voluntarily, should be used, as appropriate, to ensure their timely publication in the six official languages.

53. The Secretariat should make it a priority to ensure adequate use of the working languages on digital information platforms, social media networks and news sites, and carry out campaigns to share information about the work of the United Nations. The global communications strategy and the Pledge to Pause campaign had helped to counter the negative effects of disinformation and circulate accurate and reliable information about the COVID-19 pandemic. The appeals and reports of the Secretary-General concerning the effects of COVID-19 should be made available promptly in the six official languages.

54. According to the report on the activities of the Department of Global Communications in the area of news services (A/AC.198/2021/3), the number of visitors to the Spanish sites had increased by more than 6 million and the Spanish site had seen the largest proportional increase in visit duration, with visits 93 per cent longer than in 2019.

55. **Mr. Hawke** (New Zealand), speaking also on behalf of Australia and Canada, said that the importance of working together in a multilateral system was nowhere more evident than in building and sustaining peace. Australia, Canada and New Zealand therefore continued to support greater transparency and inclusion in the open debates of the Security Council and encouraged the Council to revisit its working methods as recommended by the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group.

56. Peace and security operations needed to be planned and conducted far differently in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The direction provided in that regard by the Secretary-General through the Action for Peacekeeping and the Action for Peacekeeping Plus initiatives was welcome. The strategy for the digital transformation of United Nations peacekeeping provided timely direction on harnessing technology in support of peace operations. Clear direction on shared commitments and deliverables was needed for Member States and field missions to address the changing requirements on the ground. The 2022 report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations should provide unambiguous and operationally focused recommendations reflecting the Action for Peacekeeping Plus priorities. The 2021 United Nations Peacekeeping Ministerial Conference would provide another key opportunity to strengthen field operations, renew shared commitments, address ongoing capability gaps and bolster training opportunities and capacity-building.

57. Australia, Canada and New Zealand welcomed the mainstreaming of the women and peace and security

agenda across the Action for Peacekeeping Plus priorities and advocated increased investment in gender-responsive initiatives across peacekeeping. They would continue to support the full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership of women in peacekeeping at all levels. The disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women could be addressed by supporting the leadership of women civil society actors, human rights defenders and peacebuilders in all areas.

58. Given their sacrifices, peacekeepers deserved a process for the fair and prompt investigation and prosecution of perpetrators of crimes and attacks against peacekeepers. More needed to be done to address impunity for crimes against peacekeepers. Security Council resolution 2589 (2021) marked a significant step in that direction.

59. The highest standards of conduct should be the foundation of all peacekeeping missions. The launch of the integrated peacekeeping performance and accountability framework and the continued implementation of the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System had been important steps towards enhancing the performance and effectiveness of all mission components and addressing cases of sexual exploitation and abuse, which constituted human rights violations and undermined the work of the missions. Australia, Canada and New Zealand commended efforts to strengthen the zero-tolerance policy of the United Nations and improve services for survivors.

60. The emphasis on data-driven peacekeeping under the strategy for the digital transformation of United Nations peacekeeping was welcome. Each mission must be equipped with the right capabilities to deliver its mandates, in particular protection of civilian mandates. The work under way to form partnerships, such as the Partnership for Technology in Peacekeeping, to improve the comprehensive approach to protection was encouraging. The integration of new technologies, training and resources were key to providing the strong analysis and situational awareness needed to protect civilians and keep peacekeepers safe.

61. Australia, Canada and New Zealand remained focused on the effective implementation of the recommendations of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and hoped that its 2022 report would be concise and targeted and contribute directly to effective peace operations.

62. **Mr. Rai** (Papua New Guinea), speaking on behalf of the Melanesian Spearhead Group, said that the General Assembly could not continue to declare International Decades for the Eradication of

Colonialism indefinitely. It was incumbent on all Member States, not just the members of the Special Committee on decolonization, to bring to a successful end the decolonization agenda at the United Nations. That blight on humanity should be taken into consideration by the Assembly in its evolving discussions on the common agenda.

63. The Group reaffirmed its steadfast support for the self-determination and decolonization of New Caledonia, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Declaration on decolonization, the relevant General Assembly resolutions and the Nouméa Accord. Positive developments had occurred in the self-determination process in the Territory over the previous decade, culminating in two highly successful and peaceful self-determination referendums, on 4 November 2018 and on 4 October 2020, with a third one scheduled for 12 December 2021. The holding of three self-determination referendums within a four-year period was unprecedented and served as clear testimony to the concerted efforts, dialogue and leadership on the part of all stakeholders in New Caledonia and France, as the administering Power. Efforts to promote peaceful progress towards an act of self-determination by the Territory must be based on the principle that it was for the people of New Caledonia to determine their destiny.

64. While the Group welcomed the ongoing dialogue between the Government and political parties of New Caledonia and the administering Power, the suggestion by the administering Power that the self-determination referendum should be held as scheduled was of deep concern, given that the prevailing circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Territory were not conducive to the fair, just, credible, transparent and peaceful conduct of a self-determination referendum. New Caledonia was currently under a state of health emergency that would remain in force until 15 November 2021. About 241 New Caledonians, 60 per cent of whom were Kanaks, had died from COVID-19. The containment measures imposed included special travel permits and the closure of non-essential businesses and public transport. Despite the declining number of COVID-19 cases in New Caledonia, fear of the virus had affected the entire population, health-care personnel were overwhelmed and the economic situation was deteriorating daily. The restrictive measures also included a ban on traditional Kanak mourning rites and related social events, which had caused serious frustration among Kanak families. The recent declaration of a year of mourning of COVID-19 victims to facilitate traditional mourning rites needed to be respected once the situation improved.

65. Under the current circumstances, it would be practically impossible to organize community meetings, rallies and education and awareness-raising activities or to engage in political campaigning. Conducting the voter registration campaign, which was essential for voters on the islands to be able to vote in decentralized voting bureaux, would be challenging. It would also be difficult or impossible to set up decentralized voting bureaux and have a large number of people concentrated in one place for several hours.

66. In view of the evolving situation and the severe impact on the movement of the Territory's citizens, France, as the administering Power, should consider deferring the third self-determination referendum until the situation improved. Not doing so could have serious implications for the meaningful participation in the referendum of eligible voters, especially those from vulnerable communities, and raise serious questions about the credibility and integrity of the referendum outcome.

67. The General Assembly, through the Special Committee on decolonization, should consider taking up the invitation from the administering Power to conduct another visiting mission to New Caledonia to examine the situation in the Territory in the context of the self-determination process. The Fourth Committee should remain seized of the question of New Caledonia and provide support as necessary. The Group was strongly committed to its action plan of support for the aspiration of the Front de libération nationale kanak et socialiste for self-determination in New Caledonia and would strengthen its efforts to provide capacity-building and leadership training for Kanaks in member countries of the Group and to promote subregional trade. The Group was also committed to further constructive engagement with all relevant stakeholders, including the administering Power, to contribute to a lasting and peaceful solution that was acceptable to all New Caledonians.

68. **Mr. Skoog** (Representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia and, in addition, the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina, said that mine action was a critical element of achieving sustainable peace and development. The European Union remained committed to achieving a mine-free world by 2025 and emphasized the need for enhanced support for mine clearance, victim assistance and international cooperation in that regard.

69. The work undertaken by the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation to assess the effects of atomic radiation on human health and the environment was in line with European Union priorities. The European Union welcomed the Scientific Committee's work on medical exposure to atomic radiation and on public exposure to ionizing radiation from natural sources, other radiation sources and discharges to the environment.

70. The European Union strongly supported a multilateral approach to international affairs, including outer space issues. The European Union welcomed the prominence given to those issues in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Our Common Agenda" (A/75/982). The European Union continued to promote the preservation of a safe, secure and sustainable space environment and the peaceful use of outer space, while stressing the need to ensure responsible behaviour in outer space and to strengthen commitments to avoid potentially harmful interference in the peaceful exploration and use of outer space. The European Union welcomed the establishment of the Working Group on the Long-term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the Working Group on Space Resources.

71. The European Union remained committed to achieving a just and comprehensive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a two-State solution and an agreement to end the occupation that had begun in 1967, fulfilling the aspirations and needs of both parties on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions and within internationally agreed parameters. The European Union was ready to work with both parties, its partners in the region and the international community for the resumption of meaningful negotiations.

72. The refugee issue was one of the internationally recognized parameters for a solution to the conflict. It was vital that UNRWA continued to provide Palestine refugees with the necessary protection and services, including health care and education. The Agency made a key contribution to the viability of the two-State solution and was a stabilizing force in the region; the European Union would continue to support it in all its fields of operations, including in East Jerusalem. The generosity and efforts of the host countries were greatly appreciated. The European Union and its member States were, collectively, the largest contributors to the UNRWA budget and continued to answer its call for additional funds. The European Union would remain a staunch and predictable supporter of the Agency, including with regard to its efforts to improve efficiency and strengthen management. Additional financial

support from other and new donors was appreciated and all partners should translate that step into multi-annual contributions.

73. In accordance with international law, including Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), the European Union had consistently reiterated its strong opposition to the settlement policy of Israel and to any actions taken in that context. Israel should halt settlement expansion, especially in sensitive areas such as Har Homa, Givat Hamatos and the E1 area. The European Union would not recognize any changes in the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed to by the parties. Both parties must act in accordance with international law. The establishment of diplomatic relations between Israel and Bahrain, Morocco, the Sudan and the United Arab Emirates was a positive development that contributed to peace and stability in the Middle East.

74. The situation in Gaza continued to cause grave concern. Israel must respect the right to peaceful protest and Hamas must ensure that protests remained non-violent. Ending the closure policy, fully opening crossing points and allowing humanitarian access while addressing the legitimate security concerns of Israel would contribute to the implementation of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). Strong, inclusive, accountable and functioning democratic Palestinian institutions based on respect for the rule of law and human rights were vital for a two-State solution. A date should be set for national elections in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in the Gaza Strip. All Palestinian factions must commit to uphold democratic principles before the elections.

75. The European Union continued to deploy thousands of uniformed blue helmets and remained the second largest financial contributor to United Nations peacekeeping operations. It also continued to support the special political missions. The European Union recognized the indispensable role of women in peacekeeping operations. A better balance between men and women would improve not only community engagement, but also the overall effectiveness of the missions. The European Union welcomed the efforts of the Secretary-General to strengthen the ability of the United Nations system to deal with sexual exploitation and abuse in a swift and decisive manner.

76. One year after the launch of the global communications strategy, the Department of Global Communications had expanded the scope of its activities and increased its engagement with all stakeholders, despite the significant constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic. The European Union supported

the Department's focus on COVID-19 vaccination as the way forward to get back on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Efforts to promote multilateral solutions, including the COVAX Facility, and to strengthen health systems and universal health coverage must continue. Young people should be included in decision-making concerning the communications activities of the Organization. The Department should ensure the equal treatment of all the official languages of the United Nations and continue to disseminate information in other languages.

77. Among the greatest achievements of the Department in recent months had been the work to combat disinformation and misinformation, including through the Verified campaign, in which the European Union had participated actively. The adoption of General Assembly resolution [75/267](#) entitled "Global Media and Information Literacy Week" had created space for further international cooperation, which should be guided by the protection of fundamental rights, including the freedoms of opinion and expression and of the press, and include civil society, the media, academia and the private sector, including online platforms and advertisers.

78. **Mr. Ríos Sánchez** (Mexico) said that his country remained unreservedly committed to the right of peoples to self-determination and would therefore continue to promote any initiative that favoured the self-determination of peoples through peaceful means to resolve pending issues. The United Nations must continue its efforts to find solutions to decolonization processes. Joint efforts should also be made to encourage policies to mitigate the effects of climate change and natural disasters in the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

79. The rights of Argentina in the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas were legally and historically valid. The Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom should resume negotiations with a view to finding a just, peaceful, definitive and mutually acceptable solution to the dispute, in keeping with United Nations resolutions.

80. His delegation supported efforts to find a just and lasting solution to the question of Western Sahara that would lead to the self-determination of the Sahrawi people, as called for in the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. His delegation welcomed the appointment of Staffan de Mistura as the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara and hoped that he would help to build trust between the parties with a view to finding a mutually

acceptable solution. The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara was highly important as a guarantor of stability and the ceasefire.

81. The work of UNRWA would remain indispensable until the final status of the Palestinian refugees was resolved. Mexico remained committed to a comprehensive solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict through recognition of the right of the State of Israel to exist and the establishment of a politically and economically viable Palestinian State within secure, internationally recognized borders, in line with the relevant United Nations resolutions. The sustainable financing of UNRWA should be guaranteed to enable it to carry out its work and provide humanitarian assistance in the region, with a focus on the provision of vital services such as health care and education, including in the areas of sexual and reproductive rights and physical and mental health. Mexico had contributed \$750,000 to the Agency in 2020 and had recently made an additional contribution to support health-care operations and the provision of medical supplies.

82. The COVID-19 health crisis had confirmed the need for peacekeeping operations to be flexible and able to adapt to changing dynamics in order to overcome emerging challenges and provide assistance to populations in need. Early inclusion of peacebuilding in mandates, particularly during transitional and drawdown phases, would lay the groundwork for long-term, sustainable peace. Mexico reaffirmed its commitment to enhancing the meaningful participation of uniformed women in peacekeeping operations with the support of the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations. While it had met the 15 per cent quota of female staff required for contributing countries, his country remained committed to further increasing the participation of female staff.

83. Owing to their focus on preventive diplomacy, mediation and peacebuilding, special political missions provided a flexible and effective tool to societies achieve greater stability and sustainable peace. In the draft resolution to be adopted by the Committee concerning such missions, wording should be included to reflect the vision set out by the Secretary-General in his report entitled "Our Common Agenda". The purpose of the draft resolution would be to help improve the missions' transparency, effectiveness, accountability and gender balance and regional representation. The current and future mandates of such missions should ensure coherence and synergies among the actors on the ground, and countries should be involved in the design and implementation of their policies in order to facilitate flexible transitions towards further development, stability and sustainable peace.

84. At future sessions, the Committee should maintain its practice of holding a joint debate, which made its work more agile and contributed to the revitalization of the General Assembly, and enforce time limits on statements.

85. **Ms. Squeff** (Argentina) said that the situations of the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories must be resolved, taking into account the particularities of each case. Her delegation welcomed the convening, from 25 to 27 August 2021 in the Parish of St. John, Dominica, of the Caribbean regional seminar on the implementation of the Fourth International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. It reiterated its full support for the work of the Special Committee on decolonization, whose recommendations to the General Assembly helped to advance the decolonization process.

86. With regard to its sovereignty dispute with the United Kingdom over the Malvinas Islands, Argentina reiterated its willingness to contribute to the decolonization of the territory in accordance with General Assembly resolution 2065 (XX), in which the Assembly had set out the principles upon which the decolonization of the Islands should be based; noted the existence of a sovereignty dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom regarding the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas; and called upon the parties to hold negotiations to reach a peaceful and definitive solution to that special and particular colonial situation. That mandate had been renewed in subsequent resolutions of the Assembly and the Special Committee and enjoyed broad support from the international community, including such groups of States and forums as the Africa-South America Summit, CELAC, the Group of 77 and China, the Ibero-American Summits, MERCOSUR, the Organization of American States and the South American and Arab Countries Summit.

87. The United Kingdom, citing the supposed right of the islanders to self-determination, maintained that it would not enter into negotiations unless the inhabitants of the territory so wished. That reasoning had no basis in international law and had been contradicted by the actions of the United Kingdom following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 2065 (XX), when it had engaged in bilateral discussions with Argentina for more than 15 years. The United Kingdom sought to justify its disruption of the territorial integrity of Argentina in 1833 by invoking the principle of self-determination. However, it was stated in paragraph 6 of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples that any attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and the territorial

integrity of a country was incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The right to self-determination did not apply to the Malvinas Islands. The composition of the population was the result of the colonization begun by the United Kingdom in 1833, when, having occupied the territory by force and expelled the Argentine authorities, it had implanted British subjects with the aim of establishing a demographic composition that would allow it to strengthen its colonial rule. The illegitimate colonial laws enacted by Britain had thus been intended from the outset to preserve the supposed British character of the population and make it difficult for Argentine citizens from the mainland to settle there. Accordingly, while reference had been made in General Assembly resolution 2065 (XX) to the interests of the population of the Islands, no subsequent resolution on the question of the Malvinas Islands had mentioned their wishes or the principle of self-determination. Moreover, in 1985, the Assembly had rejected two proposals submitted by the United Kingdom seeking to incorporate a reference to the principle of self-determination into the resolution on that question.

88. Her country had consistently demonstrated its respect for the interests and the way of life of the inhabitants of the Malvinas Islands. During the bilateral negotiations that had taken place between 1966 and 1982, Argentina had always shown itself willing to negotiate special safeguards for the interests of the inhabitants of the Islands. Her Government had allowed flights from the Islands to other South American countries and had proposed the resumption of a regular weekly flight between the Argentine mainland and the Malvinas Islands, a proposal that had yet to be accepted.

89. In March 2020, Argentina had indicated to the United Kingdom its willingness to provide food, medical supplies and COVID-19 diagnostic tests to the inhabitants of the Malvinas Islands, as well as humanitarian flights and access to medical treatment on the mainland, but had not received any response. It had nonetheless responded positively to all humanitarian requests, mainly in relation to transport.

90. The islanders had access to the public health and education systems on the mainland and a scholarship programme had been launched for students of the Malvinas Islands who wished to pursue degrees at any of the six universities in Patagonia. In 2021, Argentina had entered into agreements with the United Kingdom and the International Committee of the Red Cross to proceed with the identification of the remaining soldiers buried in the mass grave C.1.10 in Darwin Cemetery and a possible temporary war grave in Caleta Trullo.

Exhumation operations had begun in August, and the remains of six Argentine soldiers had been identified.

91. In contravention of General Assembly resolution 31/49, the United Kingdom continued to carry out illegal exploration and exploitation of renewable and non-renewable resources in the disputed area and to maintain a disproportionate military presence in the South Atlantic. Argentina had repeatedly denounced such actions. Her Government was determined to seek a peaceful and definitive solution to the sovereignty dispute and had assured the Secretary-General of its support for his good offices in assisting the parties to the dispute to resume negotiations. It hoped that the United Kingdom would finally return to the negotiating table with a view to ending that colonial situation.

92. **Mr. Prvý** (Slovakia), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

93. **Mr. Mahmoud** (Egypt) said that 22 million landmines, most of them remnants of the Second World War, remained on Egyptian soil. Egypt had cleared millions of the landmines and would continue to do so, including through cooperation with the United Nations. His Government called on those States that had planted landmines in the western desert of Egypt to assist with their removal and provide maps showing their locations.

94. His Government's position on the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction was clear. The Convention failed to acknowledge that States that had placed landmines on the territory of other States had a responsibility to provide maps of the minefields and to offer support towards demining. It also failed to strike a balance between humanitarian concerns and potential legitimate military uses, particularly in States with extensive borders vulnerable to threats.

95. Egypt had launched its first communications satellite, Tiba-1, in 2019, in support of the communications sector in Egypt and in countries of the Nile Basin and North Africa. The Egyptian Space Agency had been established in 2016 to develop the country's outer space strategy and satellite manufacturing. In 2014, his country had hosted meetings on the drafting of the first African Space Strategy, and the African Space Agency was based in Egypt. In order to prevent an arms race in outer space, it was essential to uphold the international instruments regulating outer space activities and to develop additional binding mechanisms for that purpose.

96. In view of the continued blockade on the Gaza Strip, intensified settlement activity, confiscation of land, home demolitions and settler violence against

Palestinians, in addition to the burden placed on the Palestinian people by the COVID-19 pandemic, a solution to the question of Palestine remained a distant prospect. For its part, Egypt had allocated \$500 million towards the reconstruction of Gaza and was working to promote intra-Palestinian reconciliation and shore up the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. It was essential to make progress towards a political settlement that would enable the Palestinian people to exercise its legitimate rights by establishing an independent State on the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with internationally recognized resolutions, the two-State solution and the Arab Peace Initiative. Moreover, all Arab territories occupied by Israel, including the Syrian Golan, must be liberated. UNRWA must be given the support that it needed in order to fulfil its mandate. Egypt supported UNRWA reform efforts and looked forward to the international conference on financing for the Agency, to be convened by Jordan and Sweden in Brussels on 16 November 2021.

97. The Department of Global Communications had made a commendable effort to combat misinformation. Notwithstanding the impact of the pandemic, it was vital that United Nations information centres around the world continue to receive the necessary resources.

98. In the Middle East, social media platforms were being used widely to spread misinformation and incite violence, hatred, extremism and terrorism. Freedom of expression was a fundamental right enshrined in international law; but abuse of that right had repercussions for peace, security and stability. Social media must therefore be regulated in a manner that struck a balance between protecting the freedom of expression and maintaining security.

99. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic and the increasing attacks on peacekeeping personnel, Egypt continued to participate actively in peace operations, as the seventh largest contributor of forces. A recent attack on the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali had claimed the lives of nine Egyptian peacekeepers. No effort should be spared to ensure the safety and security of peacekeeping forces. To that end, intelligence data should be gathered and assessed to enable units to avert potential threats. His Government supported the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative and the updated plan of priorities in the Action for Peacekeeping Plus initiative, and had been instrumental in the adoption by the African Union of the Cairo Roadmap for Enhancing Peacekeeping Performance.

100. Special political missions should be given clear, achievable mandates and sufficient resources. The

peacebuilding component of peacebuilding missions and special political missions must be given adequate support. As the current Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, Egypt was working to promote coordination of United Nations system-wide efforts in support of national peacebuilding priorities, with a particular focus on the transitional and drawdown periods of missions. That goal would ultimately hinge on sustainable funding.

101. **Mr. Espinosa Cañizares** (Ecuador) said that the persistence of colonialism in the 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories hampered the cultural, economic and social development of their populations and undermined the Organization's ideal of universal peace. It was therefore essential to promote dialogue and cooperation between the administering Powers and the Territories under their control with a view to implementing international commitments relating to decolonization. Efforts to move independence processes forward must be redoubled, taking into account territorial integrity and self-determination and approaching each Territory on a case-by-case basis.

102. The question of Palestine required a peaceful, definitive and just political solution for the parties, based on the existence of two States, Palestine and Israel. All United Nations bodies and the international community should work to mobilize international support and assistance for the Palestinian people.

103. The question of Western Sahara needed a mutually acceptable political solution in the context of arrangements consistent with the Charter of the United Nations, in accordance with Security Council resolution [2414 \(2018\)](#).

104. The only way to resolve the question of the Malvinas Islands was for the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom to resume bilateral negotiations, in accordance with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant General Assembly and Special Committee resolutions.

105. Ecuador supported all initiatives aimed at a thorough and systematic evaluation of the special political missions, bearing in mind their individual characteristics. A comprehensive strategic approach must be maintained in activities related to preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, development and respect for human rights.

106. His country supported the equitable and rational use of outer space for the benefit of all humankind, non-appropriation of outer space, and universal and equitable access to outer space for all countries without discrimination, regardless of their level of scientific,

technical or economic development. Efforts to develop international space law should continue with a view to preserving space for peaceful purposes and improving conditions for people around the world.

107. Spanish was one of the most widely spoken languages in the world and had further solidified its position as the second most used language for consulting the United Nations website and social media platforms. The Department of Global Communications should take into account the figures relating to the Spanish language in the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information ([A/75/294](#)) when disseminating information and designing communications campaigns and strategies. At its forty-third session, the Committee on Information, chaired by Ecuador, had adopted a resolution on the work of the Department of Global Communications, with the aim of strengthening its dissemination activities and communications strategies.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

108. **Mr. Fairlamb** (United Kingdom) said that the United Kingdom had no doubt about its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas of both territories, or regarding the right of the Falkland Islanders to self-determination as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and in article 1 of the two International Covenants on human rights, by virtue of which they freely determined their political status and freely pursued their economic, social and cultural development. Consequently, while the United Kingdom wished to work constructively with Argentina, no dialogue on sovereignty was possible unless the Falkland Islanders so wished.

109. The 2013 referendum, in which 99.8 per cent of those who had voted had wanted to maintain their current status as an Overseas Territory of the United Kingdom, had sent a clear message that the people of the Islands did not want a dialogue on sovereignty. Argentina should respect those wishes. His Government's relationship with the Falkland Islands, as with all of its Overseas Territories, was a modern one based on partnership, shared values and the right of the people of each Territory to determine their own future. None of the resolutions or regional statements to which reference had been made modified or diluted the obligation to respect the legally binding principle of self-determination, to which his country attached great importance. The United Kingdom remained committed to defending the right of the people of the Falkland Islands to self-determination and their right to determine their own political, social and economic future. That

included unequivocal support for the right of the Falkland Islanders to develop natural resources for their own economic benefit.

110. His country was not militarizing the Falkland Islands. The United Kingdom forces in the South Atlantic were entirely defensive and at an appropriate level to ensure the defence of the Falkland Islands against any potential threats.

111. It had been alleged that the Falkland Islanders were not entitled to self-determination because they did not constitute a people. Those claims were untrue: prior to 1833, there had been no indigenous or settled population on the Islands and no civilian population had ever been forcibly removed. Since that year, the local population had developed predominantly through migration from Europe, and several families had been living on the Islands for nine generations.

112. While his Government continued to hope for a more productive relationship with Argentina, it remained firmly committed to the right of the Falkland Islanders to determine their own future. It was regrettable that Argentina continued to take measures that set back relations with the United Kingdom, such as attempting to obstruct the economic development of the Islands and using multilateral forums to advance its illegitimate claim.

113. **Mr. Assadi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, in response to the unfounded and baseless claims made against the territorial integrity of his country, his delegation reiterated its consistent and principled position that it did not recognize the existence of any dispute between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United Arab Emirates over the Iranian islands of Abu Musa, Lesser Tunb and Greater Tunb. Those islands formed an inseparable part of Iranian territory, and his delegation categorically rejected any claim to the contrary. The Islamic Republic of Iran was ready to continue bilateral talks with the United Arab Emirates with a view to correcting any misunderstanding in that regard.

114. **Mr. Alvarez** (Argentina) said that his delegation reiterated the statements made by the President of Argentina at the General Assembly on 21 September 2021 (A/76/PV.4) and by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Argentina at the meeting of the Special Committee on decolonization on 24 June 2021 (A/AC.109/2021/SR.6). The Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas were an integral part of the national territory of Argentina and, being illegally occupied by the United Kingdom, they were the subject of a sovereignty dispute between the two parties, which

was recognized by a number of international organizations. That illegal occupation had led the General Assembly to adopt 10 resolutions on the issue, all of which recognized the existence of the sovereignty dispute and called on the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom to resume negotiations with a view to finding a peaceful and lasting solution to the dispute as soon as possible. For its part, the Special Committee on decolonization had repeatedly adopted resolutions in the same vein, most recently the resolution adopted on 24 June 2021.

115. His delegation regretted the erroneous interpretation of the events of 1833 advanced by the United Kingdom with the aim of justifying an illegal occupation that, since its inception, had been repeatedly protested by Argentina. The principle of self-determination, which the United Kingdom used as the basis for its refusal to resume negotiations on sovereignty, was inapplicable to the dispute in question, as affirmed in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Special Committee. Consequently, the 2013 vote held in the Malvinas Islands was simply a unilateral action undertaken by the United Kingdom, devoid of any legal value; it therefore in no way changed the essence of the question of the Malvinas, it did not resolve the sovereignty dispute and it had no effect on the legitimate rights of Argentina.

116. The interests and way of life of the inhabitants of the Malvinas Islands were adequately addressed by the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and by the Constitution of Argentina. In its resolution 31/49, the General Assembly had called upon the two parties to refrain from introducing unilateral modifications in the situation while the Islands were going through the process recommended by the General Assembly. Argentina reaffirmed its legitimate right to take whatever measures it considered necessary, in full respect for international law, with regard to the unilateral and unauthorized exploration and exploitation of natural resources in the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, which were an integral part of the territory of Argentina. Argentina also reaffirmed its legitimate sovereignty rights over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas.

117. **Ms. Almatrooshi** (United Arab Emirates) said that the Emirati islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb, in the Arabian Gulf, were an integral part of the national territory of the United Arab Emirates. Her Government categorically rejected the continued Iranian occupation of the islands, for which there was no basis. It would continue to call on Iran to respond

positively to its calls to resolve the conflict peacefully, either through direct negotiations or by referring the case to the International Court of Justice.

118. **Mr. Moharram** (Saudi Arabia) said that the three Emirati islands were an integral part of the territory of the United Arab Emirates. Saudi Arabia supported the measures taken by that country to resolve the matter peacefully through direct negotiations or referral to the International Court of Justice.

119. **Mr. Assadi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, by raising unfounded claims against the territorial integrity of his country, which were irrelevant to the work of the Committee, were trying to abuse that august body in order to advance their narrow political interests in the Persian Gulf region. Those countries should reconsider their hostile policies towards the countries of the region and, in particular, towards the Iranian people; observe the principle of good neighbourliness; respect international law; and avoid policies that spread hatred and sectarianism in the region and beyond. The term “Persian Gulf” had been the correct appellation for the body of water situated between the Arabian peninsula and the Iranian plateau since 500 B.C. It was a standardized geographical term recognized by the international community, including the United Nations, and should not be tampered with for political purposes.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.