



General Assembly

Sixty-ninth session

17th plenary meeting
Monday, 29 September 2014, 9 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Kutesa (Uganda)

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

Agenda item 8 (continued)

General debate

Address by Mr. Gabriel Arcanjo Ferreira da Costa, Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe.

Mr. Gabriel Arcanjo Ferreira da Costa, Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Gabriel Arcanjo Ferreira da Costa, Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Da Costa (Sao Tome and Principe) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): It is a great honour and pleasure for me to take the floor for the first time in this world forum as Prime Minister and Head of Government, proudly representing the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe.

At the outset, please allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at the sixty-ninth session and to offer our full support during the current session, which we wish to be crowned with success. Your election resulted from

the Member States' recognition of the experience that the Republic of Uganda has accumulated and of the increasingly significant role that the African continent plays in the international community in consolidating peace and security worldwide. It also reflects your efforts to achieve sustainable development for the developing countries, in addition to your outstanding professional qualifications, which testify to your technical knowledge and life experience. We are certain that your diplomatic experience will greatly contribute to the favourable outcome of our work and help us to discover ways of resolving matters of major concern to the international community.

We also welcome the important and relevant theme of this session, "Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda". The post-2015 development agenda, when properly defined and structured, will certainly become a useful instrument to guide developing countries, particularly those of the African continent, to sustainable development.

We wish to express our appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his competent, selfless and zealous stewardship of the Organization. We congratulate Mr. John William Ashe, who zealously and selflessly presided over the deliberations of the Assembly at the sixty-eighth session for the past 12 months.

The pertinence of the theme chosen for the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly is clear in the light of the persisting economic and financial

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506. Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).

14-55181 (E)



Accessible document

Please recycle



crisis that continues to ravage the world. We must combine our efforts and focus them on building the more just and auspicious future to which our peoples legitimately aspire. To that end, Africa has identified the six pillars on which its sustainable development should rest: structural economic transformation and inclusive growth; science, technology and innovation; people-centred development; environmental sustainability, natural resources management and disaster management; peace and security; and finance and partnerships.

From our perspective, those pillars emanate from the aspirations of our African nations. All partners of the African continent should take them into account in the arduous efforts to bring about sustainable and equitable development and enhance the dignity of our peoples. Therefore, Sao Tome and Principe believes in sustainable development in Africa, based on the pillars proposed by the African Union. It calls on the United Nations to adapt its programme to the specific realities of Africa, without losing sight of the accomplishments of certain countries in attaining some of the eight Millennium Development Goals.

It is an indisputable fact that the *raison d'être* of the United Nations is to maintain peace and security around the world, which is a *sine qua non* for the promotion of development. However, in the light of the significant changes that the world has undergone since the establishment of our Organization in 1945, we must stress the urgent need to adapt it to the new challenges of our time. Therefore, we again reiterate our call for the acceleration of the ongoing process of reform throughout the entire United Nations system, in order to imbue its operations with greater dynamism, representativeness, effectiveness, capacity and legitimacy, thereby leading to the maintenance of peace and security and thus to the promotion of development worldwide.

We unfortunately continue to observe the persistence of some conflict areas and the outbreak of new tensions, with alarmingly significant humanitarian repercussions, throughout the world. In Mali and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, despite the relative stabilization of conflict zones as a result of United Nations efforts, we think that the combined operations must continue in order to consolidate and strengthen the achievements.

We are grateful for the resolution of the situation in Guinea-Bissau, where the transition process has led to the election of a new President of the Republic and a new Government, thereby repositioning the country in accordance with regular and institutional democratic processes. However, it is incumbent on the international community, particularly the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, to continue to collaborate and combine their efforts to consolidate the democratic rule of law so that our sister nation may advance the progress and well-being of its people.

It is with enormous and fraternal satisfaction that we commend the political actors in Mozambique for their great maturity and for taking into account the higher interests of their people by recently signing a peace agreement, thereby avoiding more suffering and loss of human lives.

With regard to the Central African Republic, we welcome the decision of the United Nations to dispatch the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic to end the suffering of that country's people and clear the way for national reconciliation. The reconciliation process began with the recent Brazzaville forum and should be completed by the Bangui forum and the holding of elections. These should open a window of opportunity for the resolution of the disturbing crisis in the Central African Republic, which is in our subregion, and enable it to return to institutional normalcy.

With respect to South Sudan, we encourage efforts to convince the conflicting parties to engage in negotiations with a view to seeking solutions for their existing differences and ending the suffering of innocent civilians. In Western Sahara, the long-standing situation continues to be a matter of concern for us and to require a greater involvement from the international community so that the long negotiation process can finally be completed. Therefore, we renew our call for the involved parties to return to the negotiating table in order to reach a mutually acceptable political solution.

In the light of the resurgence of acts of international terrorism everywhere, it is imperative for all the members of the international community to coordinate their actions, since that is the only way the world will be able to overcome that scourge. To that end, we wish to note our apprehension and express our concern

with regard to the actions perpetrated by Boko Haram in our neighbour, the Republic of Nigeria, and the consequences of such actions. Nigeria is a country with which Sao Tome and Principe maintains ties of friendship and multiple relations of understanding and cooperation in areas of common interest.

We are also troubled by the recent phenomenon of the Islamic State and its implications. The Middle East, unfortunately, continues on the path of bloody conflicts. These have taken an enormous number of human lives, owing to the long-standing hostilities between Israel and Palestine, whose devastating consequences the world recently witnessed. Therefore, we welcome the recent ceasefire between the two parties, and we renew our call for a negotiated solution that will ensure the Palestinian people's right to control their own destiny, as well as the State of Israel's right to exist, in accordance with the relevant resolutions.

Similarly, there is no military solution for the persistent internal conflict in Syria, which has also created disastrous humanitarian consequences. Therefore, we welcome the recent ceasefire between the parties and renew our call for a compromise to be reached, with the help and support of the international community, in order to end the hostilities and clear the way for a frank dialogue across the negotiating table and a political solution for lasting peace.

As to the conflict in Ukraine, which is also causing the loss of many human lives, the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe regrets the situation and calls on the parties to move forward rapidly, through dialogue, in resolving their differences. The international community must make all efforts to facilitate such dialogue.

We believe that the Assembly will agree with us when we say that global security is vital for the sustainable development of our countries. Therefore, considering that Sao Tome and Principe is centrally located in the Gulf of Guinea, a region that is strongly affected by piracy, terrorism, drug trafficking and other illicit acts committed at sea, we have taken national steps to fight those phenomena, including the drafting of a legislative framework for the modernization of the armed forces, based on a strategy that focuses decisively on the sea and its resources.

At the subregional level, we have worked, as part of the tripartite partnership of ECOWAS, the Economic Community of Central African States and

the Gulf of Guinea Commission, to implement the recommendations of the Summit of Heads of State and Government on Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea, held in Yaoundé. To that end, we welcome the progress achieved in the process of establishing the Interregional Coordination Centre, which is scheduled to begin operations very soon, and we renew our call to the international community to continue with us on the arduous task of ensuring our collective security.

We strongly believe that taking steps to reduce the harmful effects of climate change is a responsibility that must be shared by developing countries and developed countries alike, in order to ensure the continuity of the clean development mechanism, particularly for the least developed countries, as well as to mobilize the political will for a legally binding global agreement through the adoption of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change at the twenty-first Conference of the Parties, scheduled to take place in Paris in 2015.

The trade embargo imposed against Cuba decades ago constitutes another matter of great concern for us, and we therefore renew our call for the sanctions to be lifted. Cuba should be allowed to address its economic and social development challenges in an environment of normalcy, without the restrictions imposed by such sanctions, and to take better advantage of opportunities for trade relations on an equal footing with other States Members of our Organization.

The African continent is once again assailed by an epidemic of haemorrhagic fever caused by the Ebola virus, with incalculable consequences. In the light of the high level of mortality and the devastating effects of the disease, on the one hand, and the chance that it may spread to other areas of the world, on the other hand, we must urgently identify synergies to engage in an all-out struggle to save the thousands of lives that are threatened by this terrible scourge.

In Sao Tome and Principe, we fortunately have not yet seen any Ebola cases. However, in the light of our country's vulnerability, our economic and financial weaknesses, and our health institutions' lack of experience in dealing with the outbreak, we have prepared a contingency plan and taken prevention and response measures, including entry and exit restrictions at our ports and airports, which may impact our fragile economy. Members will understand that we must count on the World Health Organization's help and on the

support and experience of friendly nations in order to protect our population against all sources and forms of contamination. In that regard, we welcome the Secretary-General's initiative in convening a high-level meeting on the margins of this session in order to discuss the matter and take appropriate measures.

Before I finish my statement, please allow me to note the situation of calm and progress between the two sides on the Taiwan Strait. We welcome that environment and encourage the parties to develop their relations through negotiations. Our country is pleased to see the participation of the Republic of China on Taiwan in the General Assembly of the World Health Organization and applauds the fact that Taiwan was invited, for the first time since 1971, to participate in the Assembly of the International Civil Aviation Organization in 2013.

Therefore, and considering the enormous potential of Taiwan, we would like to see its participation further extend to other specialized agencies of the United Nations, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and to the implementation process of the post-2015 development agenda, in which it could be of significant help to the international community.

In conclusion, we reiterate our country's willingness to continue to participate in the efforts to mobilize wills and facilitate synergies for the achievement of the basic principles and noble objectives that guided the establishment of the United Nations.

It is certain that today we are a democratic country with a community of free citizens, but challenges will continue to arise in the future. Therefore, we have taken steps to consolidate democracy, so that our citizens may have an increasingly aware and active involvement in our collective existence and the political debate may be broader and more responsible. It is hoped that these steps will enable compromises among all the political forces to be achieved and to serve as the basis for the reforms that our country needs. We are fully aware that our country's economic performance hinges on political stability and our citizens' trust in our democratic institutions.

I cannot conclude without informing the Assembly that Sao Tome and Principe will hold long-awaited legislative, regional and local elections on 12 October. The electoral process is being managed in an environment of full normality, and we have resolved

the financial difficulties related to the elections with the generous support of our development partners, to which we express our profound gratitude and esteem. We expect the election results to be transparent and fair, as our tradition dictates, and that our country will continue to be a benchmark of democracy in our subregion.

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

Mr. Gabriel Arcanjo Ferreira da Costa, Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Manuel Vicente, Vice-President of the Republic of Angola

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

Mr. Manuel Vicente, Vice-President of the Republic of Angola, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Manuel Vicente, Vice-President of the Republic of Angola, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Vicente (Angola) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Angola, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Sam Kutesa, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session, and to assure you of my country's support as you fulfil your mission. I would also like to congratulate Ambassador John William Ashe for the competent manner in which he led the work of the previous session. We extend our greetings to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and commend him for his commitment to finding solutions to the issues facing the international community.

This session of the General Assembly is taking place in an environment that gives rise to concern due to the aggravation of international tensions, the intensification of conflicts and the deepening of global crises that require effective and sustainable solutions. It is a matter of consensus that the solutions to common challenges are to be found in multilateral negotiations and should take into account the specificities of each

country and each people. The United Nations has always been and will continue to be the mainstay of Member States' participation in decision-making on issues of concern to the international community and in upholding the global values of tolerance and peaceful and harmonious coexistence of countries and peoples, in accordance with the principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

Angola would once again like to reiterate the importance of all Member States joining in efforts to make the United Nations a strong and effective organization, and one that serves as the basis for a more balanced, fair and inclusive international legal order and global security system, while promoting confidence among States and strengthening relations of friendship and international cooperation. Our Organization should pay special attention to the resurgence of armed conflicts and their negative effects on populations, as well as to arms flows, trafficking in drugs and human beings, transnational organized crime, international terrorism and piracy — all phenomena that have an adverse impact on economic development and consequently impede the improvement of living conditions.

Religious fundamentalism in some African countries is taking on such violent proportions that it poses a threat to regional security, with serious consequences for peace, stability and development. Angola strongly condemns the acts committed by terrorist groups and expresses its support for efforts to ensure the full neutralization of those groups. Angola supports efforts to strengthen the crisis-management capacity of the United Nations and considers dialogue and negotiation to be the best means of resolving conflicts.

We will continue to meet our international obligations, with special emphasis on the African continent and the regional groupings in which we operate, including the Southern African Development Community, the Economic Community of Central African States, the African countries that use Portuguese as an official language, the Gulf of Guinea Commission and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, with a view to defining mechanisms and forms of cooperation with the United Nations, the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries and other international partners.

Angola assumed the rotating presidency of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region

in January, and in that forum continues to promote the resolution of conflicts on the African continent with a view to attaining stability, political and institutional development, internal and border security, good governance and human rights. It is in that context that Angola is engaged in the peace processes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and the Great Lakes region.

The Ebola epidemic is an issue of great concern. The position of the Security Council, which declared the epidemic to be a threat to international peace and security, fully reflects the seriousness of the situation. A decisive commitment on the part of the international community is required if the scourge is to be combated and eradicated.

We reiterate the need to reform and revitalize the United Nations system, in particular the need to reform the Security Council, which should be brought into line with the current international context and whose membership should reflect an equitable geographical representation through an increase in the number of permanent members. Angola reiterates the right of the African continent to sit among the permanent members of the Council.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the lack of progress in finding a lasting solution are a major cause of widespread instability in the Middle East, and also the root cause of the resurgence of terrorism in the region. That situation worries the Government of Angola. We call for political will and flexibility from both parties, and we encourage the Secretary-General and the United States Secretary of State to continue their mediation efforts with a view to establishing a sovereign and independent Palestinian State, as well as a *modus vivendi* to ensure that the two States coexist in peace and security within internationally recognized borders.

The impasse in resolving the question of Western Sahara continues to delay the exercise of the right to self-determination of the people of that territory. Angola calls on the parties to continue negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations and the African Union in order to find a solution in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and resolution 1514 (XV) of December 1960.

With regard to the situation in the Ukraine, Angola deplores the loss of human lives caused by instability

in the region and calls for dialogue between the parties involved to find a political solution to the conflict.

The situations in Somalia and South Sudan remain cause for concern. However, there has been some encouraging progress, which is why we urge the authorities in those countries and the international community to continue their efforts for stabilization. Angola welcomes the constitutional normalization in some African countries. We welcome the holding of democratic elections in Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar and Egypt, and we express our solidarity with the national reconciliation and reconstruction processes and the economic and social development in those countries.

The Government of Angola expresses its appreciation for the choice of the central theme of this session, "Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda". It is greatly relevance, especially for the least developed countries. The progress made in some of those countries is far behind the targets of the Millennium Development Goals, due to structural issues, and is insufficient to mitigate the persistent effects of the economic problems.

With one year remaining until the final assessment of the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, our economies continue to suffer the effects of the international economic and financial crisis, which create barriers to economic growth and hinder the implementation of programmes to combat poverty and improve the living conditions of our peoples. However, we note with satisfaction that the African continent has ceased to present the image of desolation it did at the beginning of the millennium. A new reality has emerged in which African countries boast an average growth of 5 per cent per year and improvements in several human development indicators. We believe that the trend of progress will prevail in the near future, and we will do everything to make it so by investing in future generations on the basis of the objectives of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, the post-2015 road map and the African Agenda 2063.

Angola is implementing its National Development Plan 2013-2017, which aims to increase the supply of social services to the population, diversify the economy and consolidate macroeconomic stability, thus laying the foundation for the process of graduation to a middle-income country.

Angola reiterates the need to end the economic and financial embargo imposed on Cuba, which limits the right of the Cuban people to development and is a clear violation of the principles and rules of international law.

Mr. Mnisi (Swaziland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Finally, we appreciate and have been touched by the support that Angola has received from numerous countries for its candidature to be a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the 2015-2016 biennium, elections for which will place during the Assembly's present session. Once elected to that important organ, we will work with partners in the Council to seek solutions to the serious problems facing the international community and to make a real contribution to peace and security in the world.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Angola for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Manuel Vicente, Vice-President of the Republic of Angola, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Barnabas Sibusiso Dlamini, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland

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

Mr. Barnabas Sibusiso Dlamini, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Barnabas Sibusiso Dlamini, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Dlamini (Swaziland): It is a great honour for me to address the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session on behalf of His Majesty King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of eSwatini. I convey the congratulations and best wishes of His Majesty the King and the people of the Kingdom of eSwatini to the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session, a son of Africa. We commend the Secretary-General and his staff for the good work they are doing in creating an enabling environment for all humankind to live in peace despite the multiple challenges facing the world.

As we gather here, we are very mindful of the new challenge that confronts the global community following the outbreak of Ebola in some parts of the African continent. That disease is claiming hundreds of lives and diverting focus and resources from essential development initiatives. It is also a serious drawback to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals and is a threat to humankind. We urge the United Nations and its Members to spare no effort in providing all the necessary assistance at its disposal to curb the disease and prevent any further loss of life.

My delegation takes this opportunity to thank the General Assembly for convening the high-level plenary meeting known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples. It was particularly opportune, as indigenous knowledge and practices substantially contribute to the sustainable development agenda.

Last week the General Assembly held its twenty-ninth special session, on follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014. My delegation was pleased to participate in that event. We reaffirm the Kingdom's commitment to the Programme of Action, which is as relevant today as it was twenty years ago.

This year the regular session of the General Assembly was preceded by the Climate Summit, at which Heads of State and Government deliberated on issues of environmental protection. Those issues are critical to the achievement of sustainable development, particularly for the developing countries. We are pleased that the Summit was able to mobilize sufficient political support for guiding the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Lima in December. The issue of climate change is crucial for many of our developing economies, especially on the continent of Africa. It has a direct effect on our national objective to produce enough food for ourselves. The unpredictable weather conditions continue to be of great concern to our farmers. We shall continue to call upon the United Nations to expedite the issue to prevent further adverse effects on our lives.

The theme of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session is "Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda". It resonates well with our call for a development agenda that is inclusive. It is a clear indication that we are transcending the era of the Millennium Development

Goals, entering a new chapter of the development agenda. As we set the stage for the post-2015 development agenda, my delegation is heartened to see that we have not forgotten our collective inability to meet all the Millennium Development Goals.

I commend the co-Chairs of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals for the manner in which they ably guided the proceedings of the Group. We welcome the outcome document of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (A/68/970) and the goals and targets contained therein. The Kingdom of eSwatini is pleased that the framework for the post-2015 development agenda has taken into account those Millennium Development Goals that have not yet been met, especially the eradication of poverty. As we begin a new era, let us not forget our previous commitments, and let us continue to emphasize the urgency for the developed partners to honour their official development assistance commitments.

Food security remains a critical challenge for the African continent, and we wish to reiterate our call for the provision of adequate financial resources, the transfer of environmentally sound technologies and technical assistance to developing countries if we are to achieve our development goals. We have abundant resources on the continent. However, there is a great need for value addition to our products in order to maximize our food-production initiatives.

The Kingdom of eSwatini continues to set aside a sizeable budget for agriculture. Due to the negative effects of climate change, we have a programme to construct dams for irrigation throughout the Kingdom. Assistance to subsistence farmers with farming inputs has also been increased with the intention of increasing their yields and thus increasing food production in the Kingdom.

The Kingdom of eSwatini fully supports the African Union's road map for development, Agenda 2063, which is critical to attaining the Millennium Development Goals. We are confident that, with United Nations support, that approach will accelerate Africa's regional economic integration agenda and help realize it, facilitate integration in the world economy and ultimately improve the continent's living standards.

Africa is home to the majority of the world's fastest-growing economies, and trade remains an integral part of the development agenda. Focus is now on

sustaining that growth through boosting intra-African trade and establishing the continental free trade area. It is important, however, that access to the global markets remain open to mutually beneficial conditions that promote the United Nations ideals of increased international cooperation and trade.

We are encouraged by the renewed commitment for the economic development of the African continent as resolved in different summits. The continent abounds with investment opportunities in different sectors, such as infrastructure, information, communication, technology and energy, to name but a few. That will, no doubt, have a huge impact on the sustainable development programmes for the continent. It will also contribute handsomely to job creation, particularly for the youth.

We should ensure that the post-2015 agenda is cognizant of the special development needs of developing countries, particularly those in Africa. We also give particular recognition to those developing countries that have special challenges due to their geographical position, such as small island developing States and landlocked developing countries. My delegation hopes that the agenda will also take into consideration the special plight of middle-income countries, where the majority of the world's poor reside.

The Government of the Kingdom of eSwatini is pleased to note that the Republic of China on Taiwan continues to contribute to global issues, and the positive developments taking place in that region are encouraging. We encourage their full participation in all United Nations structures.

As we meet here, in some parts of the world people are living in fear as every day thousands of human beings, especially vulnerable groups, are losing their lives to terrorists. We encourage the United Nations to take a leading role in promoting peace and coexistence in the world. We call on all those who are fighting to find a lasting, peaceful solution to their problems through dialogue and not through the barrel of a gun.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of eSwatini would like to commend the United Nations and related agencies for being a key factor in helping to overcome the many complex challenges facing the world today. We reiterate our call for peaceful solutions and dialogue in all conflict situations so that the United Nations may achieve its noble objectives. We take pride in and reaffirm our commitment to the principles and ideals

contained in the Charter of the United Nations. May the Almighty God bless us all.

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

Mr. Barnabas Sibusiso Dlamini, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Domingos Simões Pereira, Prime Minister of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau

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

Mr. Domingos Simões Pereira, Prime Minister of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Domingos Simões Pereira, Prime Minister of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Pereira (Guinea-Bissau) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): On behalf of the President of the Republic, Mr. José Mário Vaz, and on my own behalf, and in the name of the State and people of Guinea-Bissau, I would like to congratulate Mr. Sam Kutesa on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. His election by this most representative institution of the international system is a tribute not only to his country, Uganda, but to the entire African continent. I welcome him and wish him success in guiding the work of the Assembly.

We are grateful to the United Nations, and to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in particular, for the attention given to Guinea-Bissau and for the important contribution of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in our country to our political normalization process. We would also like to say a special word of appreciation to the former Special Representative of the Secretary-General, President Ramos-Horta, for his friendship with Guinea-Bissau and his dedication to his mission.

We express our appreciation to and thank the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, its Government and people. When they saw the need of their sister nation of Guinea-Bissau, they extended the hand of friendship and provided valuable and extraordinary support to our country in dealing with our crisis, for which the entire nation of Guinea-Bissau is grateful.

The subregion contributed financial support in helping our Government to function, which has been key in enabling us to reach the point where we find ourselves today. We would like to express our appreciation and acknowledgement to the forces of the Economic Community of West African States Mission (ECOWAS) in Guinea-Bissau, who carried out their mission with professionalism and ensured a peaceful and orderly transition. Similarly, we commend the efforts of all our national political actors and international partners to reach the consensus required to maintain an international stabilization force after the end of the Mission's mandate.

We would like to acknowledge and thank all the member countries of ECOWAS for their support, in particular my friend and brother President Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria, who chaired the Contact Group on Guinea-Bissau and provided additional and valuable support to our country. I pray for peace and tranquillity for his country and for the welfare of his people. We are also deeply grateful to President Alpha Condé of Guinea, who mediated the crisis in Guinea-Bissau. Finally, we would like to express our profound acknowledgement and gratitude to all our international partners — the United Nations, the African Union, ECOWAS, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries and its member States, the European Union, the West African Economic and Monetary Union and the International Organization of la Francophonie, whose support was important in monitoring and managing the political transition process, as well as in holding free, transparent and fair general elections in our country.

I would also like to share with the Assembly that Guinea-Bissau's society has renewed its hope in a new political cycle and to assure it that we possess the political will and deep commitment needed to consolidate political stability, revitalize and strengthen the State's capacity and create the basic conditions that will enable our people to realize their dreams.

Guinea-Bissau is a post-conflict State with fragile institutions and scarce financial resources, suffering

from the severe political, economic, environmental and social consequences of our crisis. We therefore face a complex and difficult situation, in which we call on the international community for assistance, that will be essential if we are to stabilize our country in this post-election period and achieve our goals of strengthening the State's institutional capacity, reducing our people's poverty and vulnerabilities, ensuring social stability, legitimizing the Government, and relaunching our economy. That approach to international assistance, at the centre of our dialogue with our international partners, is based on the Government's agenda, which includes three key programmes: Urgent, Contingency and Medium-Term Development.

Under the Urgent Programme, we must ensure food safety and social stability through support for agricultural production and distribution, improve access to food and income for some sectors of the population, provide the population with basic health, education and water and power supply services, and pay civil servants' overdue salaries. It also includes an emergency health action plan for preventing and responding to the threat of an Ebola epidemic. The Contingency Programme's objective is essentially to ensure the transparency and accountability of all natural-resource concession and exploitation agreements and to end the nefarious procedures that allowed our country's forestry and fishery resources to be plundered over the past two years. The Medium-Term Development Programme will be presented to our international partners at a donor conference to be held at the end of this year or early next, and for which we are requesting the essential support of the United Nations and all our multilateral and bilateral partners.

As we embark on the challenge of rebuilding Guinea-Bissau anew, we are fully conscious of the problems but filled with a patriotic spirit of collective drive and unity joining all Bissau-Guineans and, in particular, all political actors and sovereign institutions, with full confidence in an inclusive Government that incorporates all political parties represented in our Parliament, as well as civil society and the diaspora. This confidence was significantly enhanced by our national Parliament's recent unanimous approval of the Government's programme, which is unprecedented in the history of our democracy.

While it is true that the ongoing process of political stabilization and normalization of the democratic institutions in Guinea-Bissau depends on a major

national effort, it will also require unequivocal and urgent support from our regional and international partners. We must structure and coordinate our actions based on the goals established in the Government's programme in order to lay the foundations for our country to change course and become viable.

In this context, three situations demonstrate how imperative it is for us to combine our efforts. The first is the ongoing process of defence and security sector reform, including extensive steps taken in recent days towards its reorganization. We need international support in order to make those steps sustainable and irreversible. The second is the extension of the State's presence throughout the national territory in an effective and organized manner through decentralization and local elections. The Government will lay the foundations for the municipal administrations to become operational and will adopt the national territory organization policy. The third is the extremely complex task of combating drug trafficking and organized crime. Our country's efforts will be successful only through a collective and objective approach.

Guinea-Bissau needs a robust and impactful intervention from our development partners in order not only to consolidate the success of our political transition but also to lay the foundations for a transition to development. We request the reactivation of the International Contact Group on Guinea-Bissau under the auspices of the United Nations, for the purpose of monitoring the domestic situation in our country and supporting the mobilization of international aid, which is key for us to face the challenges in our future.

The new authorities in Guinea-Bissau, our Parliament, the President of the Republic and our Government chose an inclusive dialogue and political coordination as the preferred tools in our efforts to consolidate political stability and create broad consensus around the main thrusts of governance. Therefore, in addition to strengthening the democratic legitimacy of our political institutions, we wish to take clear, unequivocal and decisive steps to build broad consensus on the main issues facing our society. They would be anchored in a political protocol that establishes the main areas of legislative and executive action, including issues related to reforming the State, revising the Constitution and rebuilding the economy. A sign of this power-sharing vision for the resolution of our main problems is the inclusion of the opposition leader in our delegation to the United Nations, in order

to show the world that Guinea-Bissau has embarked on a path of harmony and stability.

Our subregion, West Africa, is facing an Ebola epidemic, which directly threatens several members of ECOWAS, to which we belong. Allow me to offer Guinea-Bissau's solidarity to our sister nations where cases of contamination have been identified. I would like to note our appreciation for the international efforts in providing urgent medical assistance and to call on the international community to step up its commitment and support in combating and preventing this epidemic. We also appeal for the establishment of an effective international coalition to confront this grave threat to international security, which was recently recognized as such by the Security Council.

I reaffirm my country's position on reforming the Security Council. The enlargement of this important United Nations body is required in order to enhance the legitimacy of its representation and to reflect the new international order under discussion. Therefore, and in accordance with the African Union's position, Guinea-Bissau calls for the designation of two permanent seats with the right of veto and five non-permanent seats in the Security Council for the African continent. We also voice our support for the designation of permanent seats on the Security Council for Brazil, Japan, Germany and India.

I would like to assure the peoples and countries that have fallen victim to international terrorism of our solidarity and to renew our Government's commitment to combating this scourge within a framework of coordinated actions undertaken jointly with our regional and international partners, according to the specific nature of the actions.

We note with concern that the economic and financial embargo imposed against Cuba more than 50 years ago constitutes a serious obstacle to that country's economic and social development, and we reiterate our call for it to be lifted.

We commend and encourage the United Nations, and in particular the Secretary-General, for their renewed efforts, vision and wisdom with regard to the issue of climate change and its effects on life on our planet. The Climate Summit held here on 23 September was an eloquent testament to this fact. The main areas that may allow for viable and sustainable development emerged and seem likely to gather the required consensus for the establishment of a post-Kyoto global

climate regime designed to promote the well-being of all.

Sustainable development goals, the new post-2015 global development paradigm, must be rooted in the peoples' cultures and objective realities and must undoubtedly draw their inspiration from the lessons of the Millennium Development Goals.

It should be noted that climate change is no longer simply a future threat; it has now become an unequivocal threat to the present. The rising incidence of climate change that exposes our vulnerabilities is now felt and has increasingly unpredictable consequences. Human, economic and environmental losses in a vulnerable country such as Guinea-Bissau are increasing and threaten our survival and development prospects.

Sea-level rise may irreversibly affect coastal areas, including entire islands, villages, cities and other seaside settlements. This situation is particularly worrisome for our country, which, with its combination of coasts and archipelagos, is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate events and may see its efforts to combat poverty and achieve development goals compromised.

Despite all the difficulties that have challenged Guinea-Bissau's efforts to fulfil our international commitments holistically, we are pleased to note that 12 per cent of our national territory consists of protected areas, which should double by 2020. Unfortunately, most of the population in developing countries with forests, such as Guinea-Bissau, continues to depend on these natural resources as their only means of survival. Therefore, in order to offset the possible loss of those resources, technological and financial alternatives must be made available to this population.

I conclude my statement by thanking the United Nations and expressing our deep appreciation for the significant role that the Peacebuilding Commission has played in supporting the consolidation of political and governance stability in Guinea-Bissau. I also recognize the United Nations bodies, including the United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF, the World Food Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Population Fund and the World Health Organization, as well as the grass-roots groups and non-governmental organizations working on a day-to-day basis with our Government in combating poverty and the vulnerabilities of our population and advocating respect for human dignity.

The people of Guinea-Bissau look forward to the active engagement of those bodies in assisting in the new phase of our accelerated efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Guinea-Bissau is poised to transform its territory into an area of peace, security, and openness for all of those who, together with our people, wish to build a more brotherly, secure, welcoming and progress-oriented society with all peoples and cultures.

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

Mr. Domingos Simões Pereira, Prime Minister of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Joe Natuman, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu

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

Mr. Joe Natuman, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, was escorted to the rostrum.

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

Mr. Natuman (Vanuatu): Vanuatu is honoured to join other speakers in congratulating Mr. Sam Kutesa on assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. I believe that his able leadership will successfully guide the session to its conclusion. Let me also extend my gratitude to his predecessor, Ambassador John Ashe, for his exemplary leadership and the important achievements during his tenure in the past year.

Since the last session of the General Assembly, many major global events have taken place which, on the one hand, have contributed to strengthening the international system and, on the other, have threatened international peace and security and directly derailed the process of development, resulting in the marginalization of the vulnerable populations of our societies. Given past efforts to address the global financial crisis, we have witnessed some recovery of the global economy. That is good news; but it is well known that the recovery

is fragile and further international efforts are needed to ensure that global growth prospects in the long run will remain solid and sustainable.

We are concerned about prolonged periods of conflict that have led to the displacement of the most disadvantaged members of our societies, including women, children and the disabled. It bothers us to see the increased radicalization of groups and individuals that have been targeted to create terror and impose threats against countries, Governments and citizens. Those are all problems that could be avoided, if all countries adhered strictly to the peaceful principles of dialogue enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. As members of the international community, we have a moral duty to ensure that the principles of dialogue and reasoning prevail in order to address conflict. I have no doubt that the multilateral system is best placed to address the challenges.

The outbreak of the deadly Ebola virus that has claimed over 2,000 lives in West Africa has also concerned us greatly. In this regard, we highly commend the efforts of the United Nations agencies, in particular the World Health Organization, and the international community in addressing the security risks of the epidemic. Likewise, the efforts of the Secretary-General and his determination in addressing the challenges are most commendable. I would like to reiterate my Government's support for the ongoing efforts.

Concerning the political developments in the Pacific region, I wish to congratulate the people of the Republic of Fiji on successfully and peacefully electing a new democratic Government. My Government commends the people of Fiji for their resilience and steadfastness, and I congratulate the newly elected Prime Minister on fulfilling his promise to the international community to successfully lead his country to a democratic election.

Vanuatu, a small island developing State, has a small economy which is open and vulnerable to internal and external shocks. Those characteristics have determined and shaped our development outcomes. For decades now, our economy has been growing and is now generating increasing per capita incomes. Vanuatu was one of the countries that called on the United Nations to allow vulnerability to become one of the three criteria used in assessing or identifying graduation cases. Vanuatu's vulnerability was recognized as a result of the revised criteria, and our country ceased to qualify

for graduation. It was not until the end of the twentieth century that Vanuatu's eligibility for graduation from least developed country (LDC) status was raised again, after a decade of unquestionable economic progress in our island nation.

After the Committee for Development Policy and the Economic and Social Council reviewed our progress in 2012, the General Assembly, in December 2013, decided that Vanuatu would graduate (see A/68/PV.59). At the same time, a grace period of four years was granted to enable a smooth transition to post-LDC life. Vanuatu's graduation from LDC status is now scheduled to take place in December 2017. My Government accepts that as a positive signpost. However, the issue of vulnerability must be carefully addressed by the United Nations.

We are examining the LDC benefits we may eventually lose, with a view to negotiating the possibility of retaining certain concessions we deem important — if not vital — in sustaining economic development. Our impression of the graduation process is that our attention is being drawn to the question of smooth transition, while the real issue — the question of vulnerability, even during the post-graduation stage — is being circumvented. Our situation could best be described using the analogy of an aircraft. Vanuatu is in the descent phase, but the focus should not be on the smooth landing; rather, we must look to what happens after the smooth landing, as that is the real issue. Our vulnerabilities as a small island developing State (SIDS) remain undiminished, with lasting disadvantages and growing challenges regardless of our graduation from LDC status.

What is it, then, that the United Nations, which has been so generous in recognizing our vulnerabilities, can now offer us, as a SIDS, in support of our efforts to build resilience and productive capacity, and in support of our climate adaptation expenditure? Surely SIDS dealing with such issues deserve as much special attention as do LDCs. Is it unreasonable to expect that attention be translated into some form of special treatment for SIDS? We appreciate the focus of the United Nations on the importance of a smooth transition for graduating countries, but we also urge it not to be distracted from the real question, which is the way we SIDS will be treated after graduation.

Like other, similar economies, while Vanuatu has made some headway towards meeting the Millennium

Development Goals (MDGs), it is still finding it difficult to achieve all of the goals by 2015. The reasons for that are numerous, but one of the significant difficulties is our narrow revenue base, coupled with a geographically dispersed population scattered over our 83 islands, which makes it a challenge for the Government to deliver basic services to all of its people. We are grateful that our development partners are always there to support us. Given the challenges that SIDS and LDCs face in financing development, I appeal to the developed countries to honour their commitment to increasing their aid to 0.7 per cent of gross national product, as agreed on in the Monterrey Consensus.

The current problem of terrorism threatens the security of States and the safety and well-being of innocent and vulnerable women and children. The kidnapping of innocent people, including some of our peacekeepers, is a threat to international security and peace. As a participant in various United Nations peacekeeping missions, I would like to express our gratitude to the United Nations and other countries for their assistance in negotiating the release of Fiji's United Nations peacekeepers. The cooperation in this respect of members of the international community is a positive sign for the concept of our collective responsibility for international peace and security.

We salute the Secretary-General for his leadership as a vigorous campaigner for climate action and for convening this year's Climate Summit. Leaders made many pledges and commitments during the Summit, and we look forward to seeing the rhetoric translated into urgent action. My delegation calls on the United Nations family to stand together to find ways to address climate-change issues. We are staring at a climate-change bubble, and the longer we delay action, the costlier it will be for our future generations. We must act now and fast to ensure that we steer clear of the current dangerous carbon-pollution trajectory.

The theme for the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly, "Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda", is timely and relevant, particularly considering the ongoing efforts to arrive at a new post-2015 development agenda for all countries. I commend the excellent progress that has been made in this area, and I recognize that it is not easy to negotiate such goals, with so many member countries and the different groups they represent, all of which want their development agendas incorporated. I believe that our draft agenda does represent a consensus

on the part of every United Nations Member and that it is capable of bringing development to a new level in all of our countries.

As a Pacific small island developing State, we are dealing with numerous development challenges that the United Nations system and the international community should address. I reiterate that climate change is a major global challenge for all of us. Some Pacific States are facing an existential threat, and we cannot deal with the issue of sustainable development alone if climate-change challenges are not addressed seriously by the international community. To that end, it is vital that climate change remain one of the major elements on the agenda of sustainable development goals (SDGs).

We note that this is a matter for considerable debate, owing to its cross-cutting nature. However, it is not a new issue, for the climate-change agenda is prominently featured in "The future we want" outcome document of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (resolution 66/288, annex). Our current efforts to address climate change are consistent with that, and it is another reason why our climate-change targets should be more ambitious. We strongly urge that the target of holding the increase in global average temperature below 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels be included in the SDGs.

In addition to climate change, our support for the SDGs extends but is not limited to the inclusion of peace and effective institutions; ocean management; health and education; energy security and gender equality. We also concur with the emphasis on the means of implementation in the report of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals (A/68/970) and urge the United Nations and the developed countries to continue to support developing countries, especially the SIDS and LDCs, in the areas of sustainable development financing and improving institutional capacity in their efforts to promote development.

Coincidentally, my country is at an important stage in its development planning process. Our current development planning framework will come to an end in the fourth quarter of 2015, and we are already consulting for the post-2015 era. The agenda and issues being discussed in the global arena will be translated into and merged with our development aspirations. I would like to take this opportunity to call on our

development partners to support us by working in harmony and in a true spirit of partnership to help us to fulfil the dreams of our people, particularly our young and more vulnerable generation.

My Government acknowledges the synergy of the efforts being made by the United Nations and the British Commonwealth to uphold the international principles of peace and good governance, as well as in promoting stronger partnerships for inclusive development. I would like to ask the United Nations to allow the views expressed by the Commonwealth Heads of Government on the post-development agenda to be seen as additional contributions to that process.

My country has a history that evolved as the result of a long political struggle to achieve political independence, which finally came in 1980. But when most of us were young, it was governed by Britain and France, and we were stateless in our own country, neither French nor British citizens. For more than seven decades, we were exposed to foreign rule. We thus had to struggle to reconstruct our identity as a nation that could govern itself rather than be subjected to foreign rule. In 1981, after independence was achieved in 1980, I finally arrived here at the United Nations with our late former Prime Minister, Walter Lini. I clearly remember that cold autumn morning, when a small group, along with the United Nations protocol staff, gathered outside the entrance of this magnificent building to raise our flag for the first time at the United Nations. A new nation was born and was accepted by the United Nations family of nations.

As a freedom fighter and as the Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu who took office less than six months ago, I proudly stand here today to thank the United Nations for the recognition and endorsement of our membership. But more importantly, here on this rostrum I want to underscore the unfinished business of the United Nations with regard to bringing closure to its work on decolonization. Part of my country's sovereign territory is still being disputed by one of our former colonial Powers, which is also our dear friend and development partner.

I am delighted that the United Nations once again, through the work of the former United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, Mr. James Anaya, brought the matter to the twenty-first session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva. My country is delighted that in 2012 France responded

to that action and expressed its openness to dialogue. We believe such openness is a necessary element for progress so that our indigenous peoples will be able to resume their rights to fully exercise their cultural and spiritual obligations on the two islands of Umaenupne/Matthew and Leka/Hunter, and to revive the traditional routes of our ancestors in Tafea province.

My country's political struggles have led to a strong position on decolonization. We share the dreams of those who are still longing for freedom so that they can achieve self-government and independence. As we near the midpoint of the United Nations Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, I want to echo those voices, from within our region and beyond, who should one day be able to stand on this podium as free and democratic nations.

My country acknowledges the message of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, reminding the 2014 Pacific regional seminar of the United Nations Decolonization Committee held in May this year that "good intentions will have to be translated into credible action to make the Third International Decade a success". In that connection, my country supports the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report of the United Nations visiting mission to New Caledonia this year (A/AC.109/2014/20/Rev.1) and calls on the United Nations and the international community to pursue their efforts to provide support to the people of New Caledonia and the Government of France in their endeavour to implement a successful decolonization process under the Nouméa Accord.

At the nineteenth Melanesian Spearhead Group Leaders Summit in June 2013 in New Caledonia, the Group's leaders renewed their commitment through a declaration to support the Front de libération nationale kanak socialiste (FLNKS) in their pursuit for full emancipation under the Nouméa Accord, through the provision of technical assistance and training programmes for the Kanak peoples to assist them in their struggle to fully exercise their right to self-determination and independence. While the New Caledonian people look forward to a political transition, I call upon the United Nations, through its regional agencies, to provide assistance to New Caledonia, in particular the FLNKS and the Kanak people, in specific areas of training to enable them to fully participate in the implementation of the Nouméa Accord. I appreciate the cooperative efforts of the Government of France for facilitating the implementation of the Nouméa Accord

in a very mature and responsible manner. Those efforts must not be derailed.

I cannot close this section of my speech without paying tribute to the late Mr. John Ondawame, a freedom fighter from West Papua, who passed away last month while in exile in my country. He was laid to rest in my country as a hero who had fought for the rights to self-determination for the people of West Papua. He and other martyrs had a dream that one day the United Nations and all nations advocating and promoting democratic principles would hear their cries and deliver on the promise of a self-determined future. At his funeral service, I stated that his struggle for freedom and justice would continue to be our struggle until colonialism is eradicated.

There are many other heroes in many countries that are still voiceless and are suffering in silence, either owing to unilateral policy choices, or because of ignorance on the part of the multilateral system. My country is encouraged by the onset of flexibility exercised by the United States of America towards the Cuban people. I believe that the willingness for dialogue and consideration is a responsible gesture that will slowly open the door for a better future for all Cubans. We must, as individual countries, be ready to be a voice for the voiceless. Bigger and richer countries must be the burden-bearers for smaller nations. In doing so, we demonstrate our willingness to live as a village, a world community of friends and not aggressors. I want to stress that the only way to address that issue is through dialogue and unity. It is our moral responsibility not to fail those who have been victims of past ignorance.

My country and many others have repeatedly raised these concerns on this same podium for many years, because we subscribe to them as inalienable human rights. The concerns of vulnerability, sustainable development, fisheries, job creation, human rights and many others are reflected in the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (Samoa Pathway) outcome document (A/CONF.223/3, annex). My country fully endorses the Samoa Pathway document as a guide that is to be used to navigate through our development challenges.

The Samoa Pathway, built on the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation, has charted a decisive course going forward. The United Nations system and the international community are urged to ensure that it is

integrated into a transformative post-2015 development framework and that we close the implementation gaps of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy.

Let me take this opportunity to thank the Government and the people of Samoa for ably hosting the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States held in Apia.

I deeply appreciate the opportunity to present my views to this important forum. I hope that the statements and the deliberations that we make today will translate into concrete actions leading to a better future for all our peoples. Long live our aspirations to create lasting peace and a better world for our people! May God bless the United Nations!

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

Mr. Joe Natuman, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of the Holy See

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Secretary of State of the Holy See.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of the Holy See, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of the Holy See, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Cardinal Parolin (Holy See): In extending the Holy See's congratulations to Mr. Sam Kutesa on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session, I wish to convey the cordial greetings of His Holiness Pope Francis to him and to all participating delegations. He assures the President of his closeness and prayers for the Assembly's work during this session with the hope that it will be carried out in an atmosphere of productive collaboration, working for a more fraternal and united world by identifying ways to resolve the serious problems that beset the whole human family today.

In continuity with his predecessors, Pope Francis recently reiterated the Holy See's esteem and

appreciation for the United Nations as an indispensable means of building an authentic family of peoples. The Holy See values the efforts of this institution to ensure world peace, respect for human dignity, the protection of persons, especially the poorest and most vulnerable, and harmonious economic and social development.

Although mindful of the human person's gifts and abilities, Pope Francis observes that today there is the danger of widespread indifference. To the extent that indifference concerns the field of politics, it also affects economic and social sectors, since an important part of humanity does not share in the benefits of progress and is in fact relegated to the status of second-class citizens. At times, such apathy is synonymous with irresponsibility.

I also recall the words of His Holiness to the Secretary-General at the beginning of August: "It is with a heavy and anguished heart that I have been following the dramatic events in northern Iraq". He was thinking of the tears, the suffering and the heartfelt cries of despair of Christians and other religious minorities of that beloved land. In that same letter the Pope renewed his urgent appeal to the international community to take action to end the humanitarian tragedy now under way. He further encouraged all the competent organs of the United Nations, in particular those responsible for security, peace, humanitarian law and assistance to refugees, to continue their efforts in accordance with the Preamble and relevant Articles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Today, I am compelled to repeat the heartfelt appeal of His Holiness and to propose to the General Assembly and to the other competent organs of the United Nations that they deepen their understanding of the difficult and complex time in which we are now living.

With the dramatic situation in northern Iraq and some parts of Syria, we are seeing a totally new phenomenon — the existence of a terrorist organization that threatens all States, vowing to dissolve them and to replace them with a pseudo-religious world government. Unfortunately, as the Holy Father recently said, even today there are those who would presume to wield power by coercing consciences and taking lives, persecuting and murdering in the name of God. Those actions bring injury to entire ethnic groups, populations and ancient cultures. It must be remembered that such violence is borne out of a disregard for God and falsifies religion itself, since religion aims instead at

reconciling men and women with God, at illuminating and purifying consciences and at making it clear that each human being is the image of the Creator.

In a world of global communications, that new phenomenon has found followers in numerous places and has succeeded in attracting from around the world young people who are often disillusioned by widespread indifference and a dearth of values in wealthier societies. That challenge, in all its tragic aspects, should compel the international community to promote a unified response, based on solid juridical criteria and a collective willingness to cooperate for the common good.

To that end, the Holy See considers it useful to focus attention on two major areas. The first is to address the cultural and political origins of contemporary challenges, acknowledging the need for innovative strategies to confront those international problems in which cultural factors play a fundamental role. The second area for consideration is further study of the effectiveness of international law today, namely, its successful implementation by those mechanisms used by the United Nations to prevent war, stop aggressors, protect populations and help victims.

Following the attacks of 9/11, when the world woke up to the reality of a new form of terrorism, some media and think tanks oversimplified the tragic moment by interpreting all subsequent and problematic situations in terms of a clash of civilizations. That view ignored long-standing and profound experiences of good relations between cultures, ethnic groups and religions and interpreted other complex situations through that lens, situations such as the Middle East question and civil conflicts occurring elsewhere.

What, then, are the paths open to us?

First and foremost, there is the path of promoting dialogue and understanding among cultures, which is implicit in the Preamble and Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations. That path must become an ever more explicit objective of the international community and of Governments if we are truly committed to peace in the world. The natural growth and enrichment of culture is the fruit of all components of civil society working together. International organizations and States have the task of promoting and supporting, in a decisive way and with the necessary financial means, those initiatives and movements that promote dialogue and understanding among cultures, religions and peoples.

Peace, after all, is not the fruit of a balance of powers, but rather the result of justice at every level and, most importantly, is the shared responsibility of individuals, civil institutions and Governments.

And yet, we do not face the challenges of terrorism and violence with cultural openness alone. The important path of international law is also available to us. The situation today requires a more incisive understanding of international law, with particular attention to the responsibility to protect. One of the characteristics of the recent terrorist phenomenon is that it disregards the existence of the State and, in fact, the entire international order. Terrorism aims not only to bring change to Governments, to damage economic structures or simply to commit common crimes, it seeks also to directly control areas within one or more States and to impose its own laws, which are distinct and opposed to those of the sovereign State. It also undermines and rejects all existing juridical systems, in an attempt to impose dominion over consciences and complete control over persons.

The global nature of this phenomenon, which knows no borders, is precisely why the framework of international law offers the only viable way of dealing with this urgent challenge. This reality requires a renewed United Nations that undertakes to foster and preserve peace.

Given that the new forms of terrorism are transnational, they no longer fall under the competence of the security forces of any one State. The territories of several States are involved. Therefore, the combined forces of a number of nations will be required to guarantee the defence of unarmed citizens. Since there is no juridical norm justifying unilateral policing actions beyond one's own borders, there is no doubt that that area of competence lies with the Security Council.

My delegation wishes to recall that it is both licit and urgent to stop aggression through multilateral action and a proportionate use of force. As the representative body of a worldwide religious community that embraces different nations, cultures and ethnicities, the Holy See earnestly hopes that the international community will assume responsibility in considering the best means to stop all aggression and prevent the perpetration of new and even graver injustices.

It is paramount that there be a unity of action for the common good, while avoiding the crossfire of

veto. As His Holiness wrote to the Secretary-General on 9 August,

“the most basic understanding of human dignity compels the international community, particularly through the norms and mechanisms of international law, to do all that it can to stop and to prevent further systematic violence against ethnic and religious minorities”.

While the concept of the responsibility to protect is implicit in the constitutional principles of the Charter of the United Nations and of humanitarian law, it does not specifically favour a recourse to arms; it asserts, rather, the responsibility of the entire international community, in a spirit of solidarity, to confront heinous crimes such as genocide, ethnic cleansing and religiously motivated persecution. Today, I cannot fail to mention the many Christians and ethnic minorities who in recent months have endured atrocious persecution and suffering in Iraq and Syria.

In its resolution 68/6, the General Assembly decided that it would at the present session discuss the post-2015 development agenda, which would then be formally adopted at its seventieth session, in September 2015. The President aptly chose the main theme of the present session to be “Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda”. In a communication to the recent meeting of the Chief Executives of the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations, His Holiness requested that future objectives for sustainable development be formulated

“with generosity and courage, so that they can have a real impact on the structural causes of poverty and hunger, attain more substantial results in protecting the environment, ensure dignified and productive labour for all and provide appropriate protection for the family, which is an essential element in sustainable human and social development. Specifically, this involves challenging all forms of injustice and resisting the economy of exclusion, the throwaway culture and the culture of death”.

In that regard, the Holy See welcomes the 17 sustainable development goals proposed by the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals, which seek to address the structural causes of poverty by promoting dignified labour for everyone. Equally, the Holy See appreciates that the goals and targets do not, for the most part, echo wealthy populations' fears regarding population

growth in poorer countries. It also welcomes the fact that the goals and targets do not impose on poorer States lifestyles that are typically associated with advanced economies and which tend to show a disregard for human dignity.

As stated earlier, the responsibility to protect is relevant to cases of extreme aggressions against human rights and cases of serious contempt of humanitarian law or grave natural catastrophes. In a similar way, there is a need to make legal provision for protecting people against other forms of aggression that are less evident but just as serious and real. For example, a financial system governed only by speculation and the maximization of profits, or one in which individual persons are regarded as disposable items in a culture of waste, could be tantamount, in certain circumstances, to an offence against human dignity. It follows, therefore, that the United Nations and its Member States have an urgent and grave responsibility for the poor and the excluded, mindful always that social and economic justice is an essential condition for peace.

The President returned to the Chair.

Each day of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly, and indeed of its next four sessions, until November 2018, will bear the sad and painful memory of the futile and inhumane tragedy of the First World War — a senseless slaughter, as Pope Benedict XV referred to it, with its millions of victims and untold destruction. Marking the centenary of the start of the conflict, His Holiness Pope Francis expressed his desire that

“the mistakes of the past are not repeated, that the lessons of history are acknowledged, and that the cause of peace may always prevail through patient and courageous dialogue”.

In making my own the sentiments of the Holy Father, I fervently hope that they may be shared by all present here. I offer to all members of the Assembly my best wishes in their work. I trust that this session will spare no effort to put to an end the clamour of weapons that marks existing conflicts and that it will continue to foster the development of the entire human race, in particular the poorest among us.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Secretary of State of the Holy See for the statement he has just made.

Archbishop Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of the Holy See, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Walid Al-Moualem, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Al-Moualem (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, and your friendly country, Uganda, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its current session and to wish you success in leading the work of the session, bearing in mind the important and neutral role of the President of the General Assembly. I would also like to thank your predecessor, Mr. John Ashe, for his efforts.

Many events and significant changes have taken place since I stood here last year (see A/68/PV.21). Those events have surprised many of the countries represented here today, but they did not surprise us, since we have been warning the international community about trends leading towards the current situation for the past three and a half years. Speeches from this rostrum have focused on the economic and political crises that we have been waiting for the international community to resolve. However, talking about such issues is no longer a priority.

What we have been witnessing for a few months is much more dangerous than all the political and economic crises that have been happening in the world. More than once and from more than one international platform, we have talked about the grave threat of terrorism that is striking Syria. We said that such terrorism would not be limited to the territory of my country, since terrorism has no boundaries. Extremist ideologies acknowledge only themselves and do not recognize anything but slaughter, murder and torture. Today we are witnessing what the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the most dangerous terrorist organization in the entire world in terms of its unprecedented funding and brutality, is doing to Syrians and Iraqis of all stripes and religions. That terrorist organization is enslaving women, raping them and selling them in slave markets. It decapitates and cuts off limbs, teaches children to slaughter and murder and destroys historical and cultural monuments, as well as Islamic and Christian symbols.

All that is happening before the eyes of the entire world and countries that have vowed always to fight terrorism, even though they themselves have not experienced the scourge of terror. Today I stand here to ask the following. Is it not time for all of us to stand

united in the face of the serious threat of terrorist takfiri ideology worldwide? Has the time not come for all of us to admit that ISIL, the Nusra Front and other Al-Qaida affiliates will not remain within the borders of Syria and Iraq but will spread to every place that they can reach, starting with Europe and America? Should we not learn the lesson of what happened in previous years and unite all international efforts so as to deal with those groups? Those organizations have rallied extremists from all corners of the Earth and brought them to one place to train and arm them. They then spread their ideology and terrorism through those extremists back to where they came from.

Some people may say that a resolution was recently adopted unanimously under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations in order to prevent the expansion of that organization and other terrorist groups and to eradicate them. It is true that it is better to arrive late than never. The resolution, adopted on 15 August, in fact came too late. However, the issue here is whether everyone is serious about its implementation, as we have not yet seen any serious steps to implement it. Furthermore, we have not seen any real sense of fear among the regional States that continue to provide all kinds of support to those terrorist groups, not enough fear to cause them to work for the implementation of the resolution. On the contrary, what we see on the part of the United States Administration is a policy of double standards and alliances in order to carry out certain political agendas, in particular by supporting with money, weapons and training groups that they call moderate.

That will lead only to more violence and terrorism, the shedding of more Syrian blood, a protracted Syrian crisis and the prevention of any political solution. Such behaviour creates fertile ground for the growth of terrorist groups that are committing the most heinous crimes on Syrian territory. That requires all of us to seriously and effectively address and eradicate terrorism in order to restore security and stability in Syria and the region. Today, enslaved women look to us to see what we will do for them, their sisters and their children. The sons and daughters of the victims beheaded by ISIL await our action and our response in the face of the atrocities that are being committed daily by that terrorist organization, the Nusra Front and other groups.

Combating terrorism cannot be achieved through unimplemented United Nations resolutions. Intentions

are meaningless. We can fight terrorism through the real implementation of resolutions or, clearly, by means of military strikes. But, most importantly, it can be achieved by preventing States from arming, supporting, training, funding and smuggling those terrorist groups. We must also deprive terrorism of its resources. Striking terrorism militarily while some States continue to support terrorist groups will create a vicious cycle from which the international community will not escape for decades.

Military strikes should take place at the same time as the implementation of Security Council resolution 2178 (2014), adopted on 24 September under Chapter VII. We must also put pressure on countries that provide multifaceted support to such terrorist groups. Those countries are well known to us all. The most important issue is to put pressure on those countries that have exported and continue to export extremist Takfiri ideology, thereby seriously jeopardizing international peace and security. ISIL is an ideology transformed into an organization that is supported, armed and trained to be unleashed against Syria, Iraq and Lebanon like a monster.

Let us together put an end to that ideology and its exporters. Let us simultaneously put pressure on the countries that have joined the coalition led by the United States so as to put an end to their support of armed terrorist groups. Only then does combating terrorism militarily become viable. Otherwise, our presence there will not measure up to the tears of the captives, enslaved women and children who have fallen victim to Daesh, the Nusrah Front and other groups.

Once again, the Syrian Arab Republic reiterates that it stands with any international effort to combat terrorism. We stress that that must be done with full respect for the lives of innocent civilians and for national sovereignty, in conformity with international agreements. At the same time, the Syrian Arab Republic would like to thank all countries that have stood firm and rejected any prejudice to the sovereignty of other States, underscoring respect for international resolutions.

It is high time to unite all our efforts against such terrorism, since everyone is surrounded by the imminent threat and no country is immune to it. My country maintains its declared position of the 1980s with regard to fighting terrorism before it becomes rampant, as is currently happening.

In Syria we respect our commitments and honour our promises and pledges. We have confirmed that position on more than one occasion, particularly since the beginning of the Syrian crisis.

Syria agreed unconditionally to attend the Geneva II Conference on Syria and participated in its deliberations with an open mind, although we were convinced that the solution to the crisis should be Syrian-owned and take place on Syrian territory. However, as a goodwill gesture, in order to put an end to the shedding of Syrian blood, we went to Geneva, only to find a delegation that was not negotiating on behalf of Syrians.

First, that delegation has no influence whatsoever on the ground in Syria and has neither popularity nor legitimacy among the Syrian people. The delegation was negotiating with the Syrian Government while following the orders of its Western masters. It does not believe in combating or confronting terrorism. Furthermore, that delegation does not respect Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and it verbally refuses to ask terrorist groups to stop their terrorist acts. We know that that opposition and delegation would not be able to pressure anyone, either armed groups or any Syrian faction on the ground.

We went to Geneva with the priority of combating terrorism, since we believed, and continue to believe, that we cannot embark on any political solution while terrorism is still rampant in Syria. Some in Geneva opposed our acknowledging the fight against terrorism as a priority, although it is a paramount part of the provisions of the Geneva declaration. However, the delegation of the so-called coalition continued to reject any proposal to tackle or to condemn terrorism.

Now we see the entire international community adopting our view that fighting terrorism is the top priority and that nothing whatsoever can be done as long as terrorism brutally strikes everything in its way and terrorists return to countries from which they came. Once again, we emphasize that we are ready for, and even actively seek, a political solution in Syria and talks with all honourable opposition members who oppose terrorism in Syria and among Syrians themselves on Syrian territory.

Everyone assumed their responsibility in the presidential elections, which took place before the eyes of the world. The will of the Syrian people is greater than that of all those who have tried to suppress it for more than three years now. That was demonstrated

when the entire world heard the voice of the Syrian people both inside Syria and beyond.

Now, after the presidential elections, we would like to tell all those who desire and look forward to a political solution in Syria that they must first respect the Syrian people's will, which was expressed explicitly, clearly, firmly and loudly. For the first time in Syria's modern history, they chose their President in multiparty elections, with international monitors from several countries who witnessed the integrity and transparency of the elections, as well as the enthusiasm of the people to participate in them.

I would like to emphasize that the Syrian people have made their choice. Those who want to speak on behalf of the people must first be representatives of the people and, secondly, must respect the people's will and their decisions. Any dialogue must therefore be based on respect for the will of the Syrian people and their decisions. Accordingly, we are open to a political solution in Syria with a genuine opposition that seeks the prosperity, stability and security of Syria — an opposition that does not depend on external elements and speak on their behalf, an opposition that has an impact in Syrian territory and has deep roots inside Syria, not in hotels and Western capitals. It must be a national opposition that upholds fighting terrorism as its priority and encourages the ongoing national reconciliation efforts, paving the way for a successful political solution.

Humanitarian needs in many basic areas have increased because of the continuing terrorist attacks in Syria. The inhumane sanctions imposed by the European Union and the United States have exacerbated the poor living conditions of Syrian civilians. At the same time, my Government is striving to meet the basic needs of our citizens, in particular those forced by terrorist acts to flee their homes. We are doing that in cooperation with the United Nations and its humanitarian agencies, in the context of the humanitarian response plans agreed by those bodies with the Syrian Government.

We should note that a great number of our people have been forced to seek refuge in neighbouring countries. Regrettably, some of those countries put displaced Syrians in military training camps resembling places of detention in order to train them to take up arms. From this rostrum, I underscore the fact that the Syrian State guarantees for those citizens who wish it a safe return and a decent life, free from the inhumane

conditions that they suffer in those camps. I affirm Syria's readiness to make every effort to deliver aid from international organizations to all Syrian citizens, without any discrimination whatsoever and wherever they are, in the context of respect for our national sovereignty.

The Syrian Arab Republic confirms its resolve with regard to the full restoration of the occupied Syrian Golan up to the line of 4 June 1967. It also emphasizes its rejection of all actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, to change the natural, geographical and demographic characteristics of the Golan, in clear violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 497 (1981) and 465 (1980).

Syria also affirms that the Palestinian question is the central issue for the Syrian people, who support the inalienable and legitimate rights of the brotherly Palestinian people, particularly their right to return, to self-determination and to establish an independent State on their land, with Jerusalem as the capital.

Last September, Syria accepted the initiative of the President of the Russian Federation, His Excellency Mr. Vladimir Putin, and acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention on the basis of the need to render the Middle East a zone free of nuclear weapons and all weapons of mass destruction. We also wanted to prove to the whole world our commitment to stand firm against any use of chemical weapons. Syria has met its obligations pursuant to its accession to the Convention and has fulfilled its commitments despite the current difficult situation.

Were it not for Syria's cooperation with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)-United Nations Joint Mission, the Mission could not have completed that task. The Special Coordinator of the Joint Mission, Ms. Sigrid Kaag, expressed her happiness at and gratitude for the Syrian Government's fruitful and constructive cooperation, which led to the completion of that unprecedented work.

As a State party, Syria is committed to the full implementation of the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention within the framework of the OPCW. However, the big question remaining is whether those who are supplying terrorists with chemical and other types of weapons will stop doing so and abide by international law, especially the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Security Council resolutions related to terrorism.

Syria stresses that a Middle East zone free of all weapons of mass destruction cannot be established unless Israel, the only nuclear Power in the region, accedes to all treaties banning the proliferation of such weapons and puts its nuclear facilities under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency. At the same time, we emphasize the right of all countries to acquire and develop nuclear technology for peaceful uses.

The imposition of unethical, unilateral coercive economic measures by the United States and the European Union contravenes international law and the principles of free trade. Therefore, we call for lifting the blockade that the United States has imposed on Cuba for decades, and we renew our call to lift and stop all the unilateral coercive measures imposed on Syria and the peoples of other countries, such as Iran, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Venezuela and Belarus.

We look forward to the United Nations being able to realize the aspirations of our peoples to live in dignity and to achieve development and food self-sufficiency, free from all forms of terrorism, tension and confrontation, in implementation of the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular safeguarding the States' sovereignty and equality in rights and obligations. We also believe that priority should be given to concerted efforts by the international community to combat the terrorism of Daesh, Nusra Front and other Al-Qaida affiliates and to drain their resources so that security and stability will prevail in our region and the entire world.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Thongloun Sisoulith, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Mr. Sisoulith (Lao People's Democratic Republic) (*spoke in Lao; English text provided by the delegation*): On behalf of the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. I assure you of our full support and cooperation in the discharge of your duties. I would also like to sincerely commend His Excellency Mr. John Ashe for the successful completion of his work as President of the Assembly at its sixty-eighth session.

We have just over 450 days remaining for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). While many countries have made considerable achievements and will achieve the MDGs, others, like the least developed countries, have seen slow progress and face various challenges in achieving all Goals within the time frame. Moreover, complex regional and international situations, such as armed conflicts, political unrest, pandemics and environmental degradation, among others, have inevitably brought about more obstacles to those countries' efforts to realize the MDGs.

Against that backdrop, based on past experience, it is evident that socioeconomic development in any country can succeed only in an enabling, lasting and secure environment. Only under such conditions could we employ all efforts and draw on all potential and resources available in the country for development in the most effective and sustainable manner.

Over the 39 years of its existence, since the war ended, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has deployed all its efforts in national development, starting from the period of healing the wounds of war to the era of formulating and implementing the seventh five-year national socioeconomic development plan, based on the renovation policy set by the Lao People's Revolutionary Party. The achievements made in each period are the results of lessons learned through actual development activities carried out and from adapting to specific conditions within the country and to the external environment.

Lessons learned from friendly countries, both near and far, are valuable assets. We therefore would like to express our sincere appreciation to all friendly countries for sharing their knowledge and experience, including both successes and failures, with the small and young Lao People's Democratic Republic in each period.

The mid-term review of the implementation of the seventh five-year national socioeconomic development plan has shown that the Lao People's Democratic Republic has made remarkable achievements in many areas, especially in maintaining a steady pace of economic growth, political stability and social order, thus ensuring that the Lao people of all ethnic groups can enjoy their legitimate rights and freedom and can actively participate in national development. That has laid a solid foundation for the country to move towards

realizing its ultimate goal of graduating from the least developed country status by 2020. The achievements so far were made possible not only due to national efforts, but also through the support and cooperation extended by friendly countries and development partners, including international organizations, especially the United Nations system.

Nevertheless, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has also been affected by the global financial and economic crisis in recent years. That has given rise to major obstacles to national economic development as well as to the implementation of various development goals. In that regard, the Lao Government has taken timely measures to stabilize its macroeconomy, aimed at promoting sustained growth in the coming years.

In addition, as a landlocked and least developed country, the Lao People's Democratic Republic remains vulnerable. It still faces numerous challenges, especially in achieving some of the MDG targets, including reducing child malnutrition, ensuring gender equality in education and reducing child and maternal mortality.

Minimizing the impact of unexploded ordnance (UXO) dropped during the war also remains a challenge. Taking into account the importance of dealing with that matter, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has adopted a localized millennium development goal on addressing the impact of UXO, as its national MDG 9.

Reducing the impact of UXO remains a huge burden and task for the country, as it hampers national development and the eradication of poverty. In that connection, the Lao People's Democratic Republic is one of the countries that initiated the process to formulate the Oslo Convention on Cluster Munitions. The full and effective implementation of the Oslo Convention is of great importance, because it will lead to a total prohibition of the use, production or transfer of cluster munitions.

In that connection, I take this opportunity to convey our congratulations to Saint Kitts and Nevis, Belize and the Republic of the Congo on their ratification of the Oslo Convention, which increased the total number of States having done so to 86. We hope that other countries will also consider becoming parties to the Convention.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic shares the common concern over the escalating armed

conflicts in different parts of the world, which are posing increasingly major threats to the international community. We urge all parties concerned to exercise the utmost restraint and refrain from taking any action that could cause loss of people's lives or property. Only through addressing those conflicts by peaceful means can we ensure mutual trust. Resentment and hostility against one another lead to escalating violence and use of force, resulting in loss of life and property and pain and suffering for innocent people.

In addition, the Lao People's Democratic Republic shares the strong concern about the escalating conflict in Palestine, which has led to loss of Palestinian lives. We therefore urge a peaceful resolution of the issue of Palestine.

In this era of interdependence, cooperation and engagement are key factors for peaceful and mutually beneficial coexistence. The enforcement of isolation and of sanction measures imposed on any country may not benefit the international community. On the contrary, it may cause losses to all and lead to increasing hostility. Likewise, the unilateral embargo on the Republic of Cuba — a sovereign State — for many decades has had a major impact on the lives of the peace-loving Cuban people. Therefore, it is now time to lift the embargo.

In this complex and challenging global environment, the United Nations, the only universal organization, under the leadership of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, has made tireless efforts to seek ways and means to address these international issues, promote cooperation for sustainable development and poverty eradication and maintain peace, stability and security in the world. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the Secretary-General for his various initiatives in addressing issues of common concern, including the organization of the Climate Summit, which has just been successfully concluded.

Nevertheless, amid complex and unpredictable circumstances, the United Nations needs to strengthen itself through the reform of various organs so that it can more effectively carry out its mandate and fulfil its obligations. The international community is hoping to see further tangible progress next year on the reform of the United Nations, on the occasion marking the seventieth anniversary of the founding of the Organization.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a regional organization that has enjoyed

rapid growth, and all ASEAN-initiated mechanisms are bearing fruitful results. We are therefore convinced that ASEAN community-building in 2015 will be successful, turning ASEAN into a single market and production base with increased competitiveness, thus promoting trade and investment in the region and between ASEAN and its external partners. ASEAN is now earnestly mapping out the ASEAN Community Post-2015 Vision, aimed at strengthening and ensuring ASEAN unity while promoting peace and security in the region and the world at large. On that note, we hope that the international community will continue to support the implementation of the ASEAN Community Post-2015 Vision, as well as the Lao People's Democratic Republic's ASEAN chairmanship in 2016, after ASEAN becomes a Community.

Landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) compose one of the groups of countries in special situations that are recognized by the international community. After 10 years of implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action on addressing the specific problems and special needs of LLDCs, it has been noted that many objectives have not been realized, thus those countries continue to face daunting challenges and marginalization in many areas.

More than half of the LLDCs are also least developed countries. In that context, the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries, to be held in November in Vienna, is of great significance to LLDCs, as it will conduct the 10-year review of the implementation of Almaty Programme of Action and adopt a new programme of action for the next decade. On that note, we would like to call upon all stakeholders, including transit countries and development partners, to participate actively in the Conference with a view to ensuring its successful outcome. Also, we call on the international community to support the implementation of the new programme of action in order to help those countries overcome their special problems and challenges and achieve sustainable development.

The year 2015 will mark the seventieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. We hope that the international community will spare no effort in building a peaceful, secure and prosperous world.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Shaikh Khalid Bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Shaikh Khalid Bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, it gives me great pleasure to congratulate you warmly, Mr. President, and, through you, your friendly country Uganda upon your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. I take this opportunity to wish you luck and success in the noble mission entrusted to you, and I affirm the Kingdom of Bahrain's support for your judicious proposal regarding the formulation and adoption of a post-2015 development agenda that will build on past achievements in the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for the well-being of all people.

It would be remiss of me not to commend your predecessor, Ambassador John Ashe, for his excellent conduct of the work of the Assembly during its sixty-eighth session and his outstanding and successful efforts.

We also greatly appreciate the efforts of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to revitalize and strengthen the Organization's role and to realize its objectives in all fields. I commend the report he introduced earlier in the current session on the work of the Organization (A/69/1). It demonstrates the daunting responsibility assumed by our Organization in creating an environment conducive to seeking appropriate solutions to the problems and challenges that we all face.

The inaugural statement by the Secretary-General at the opening of the general debate (see A/69/PV.6) shed light on a number of the challenges facing us, including climate change, the spread of diseases, particularly the Ebola epidemic in West Africa, the aggravated refugee problem, the propagation of extremism, policies of exclusion, violence, violations of human rights, particularly those affecting women, and issues related to health, education and food security.

My country supports the Secretary-General's urgent call to conclude a global climate agreement at the forthcoming Lima and Paris conferences and stresses the importance of the Green Climate Fund, designed to mitigate the effects of climate change.

It is a matter of particular pride for me to mention the vigorous efforts undertaken by the Kingdom of Bahrain and the resulting successes in countering the numerous challenges and instability currently facing the region. As classified by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) *2014 Human Development Report* — which is based on objective

statistical criteria regarding, first and foremost, health care, education, per capita income and the equality of women — the Kingdom of Bahrain is ranked among the countries with “very high human development”. That is a status achieved through persistent hard work, and we will endeavour to maintain it.

Those goals, however, have never been an end in themselves. The principal objective is to achieve the well-being of Bahraini citizens and to protect all those who live within the borders of the Kingdom, an oasis of security and calm enjoyed equally by all.

I am pleased to recall in that context the award bestowed on His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa by the Foundation for Coexistence among Religions in recognition of His Majesty's outstanding contributions in the field of dialogue among civilizations and cultures. I also note that the fourteenth Conference on All Civilizations in the Service of Humanity was held in Manama in early May under the high-level patronage of His Majesty the King and with the participation of the United Nations and a distinguished group of thinkers, scholars and opinion-makers. The Conference adopted the Bahrain Declaration, which has been circulated and deposited as an official document of the United Nations (A/68/959, annex).

Additionally, I would like to mention His Majesty's initiative to establish an Arab human rights tribunal. The initiative has been approved by all States members of the League of Arab States, and the statute has been adopted. I would also like to mention the launch in Bahrain in November 2013 of the UNDP report *Water Governance in the Arab Region*, which calls for the adoption of a joint Arab water-management strategy.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has continued to play an energetic role in the United Nations system, where it seeks to further progress through gradual and steady reform and modernization along the lines envisaged by His Majesty the King. Such reform would be based on a strategy of common denominators, continuous and open dialogue and a national exchange of views — the same strategy as led to the early achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Accordingly, the strategies and preparations for the post-2015 development agenda are also based on tireless work, determination, persistence, good faith and comprehensive planning and are aimed at promoting continual and enhanced progress and serving the interests of the Kingdom's citizens and residents alike.

Our region is going through a phase of extreme difficulty — probably the most difficult in its modern history — in which a climate of instability, chaos, tension and savage, bloody and unprecedented terrorism prevails. Of the many contributing factors, the most salient are the following.

First, the accelerated emergence of terrorist groups of various global dimensions and affiliations. They thrive in our region, exhibiting the greatest savagery and callousness. Not only do they target innocent people in general, they also engage in such inhumane practices as mass murder, public beheadings and the persecution of ethnic and religious minorities, which they displace, destroying their cultural heritage, depriving them of religious freedom and causing them to flee their homes. They attack entire cities and declare war on sovereign countries in regional and international settings, in complete disregard of all religious doctrines and the intrinsic human values — tolerance, equality, moderation and respect for cultural diversity — that have enabled human civilizations, including our Arab and Islamic civilization, to coexist. These terrorist groups — they include Al-Qaida, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Hizbullah, and their extensions and counterparts — recruit their fighters from both East and West and perpetrate horrific terrorist acts. The young and the old alike are killed, women are taken as war bounty, families are displaced and privacy is violated, the objective being to undermine security, propagate anarchy and topple regimes.

Therefore, combating terrorist groups requires us to work together in three main areas. The first of these is the security and military area, owing to the worsening threat posed by these terrorist groups as they acquire heavy weapons, enabling them to occupy cities for use as safe havens and bases from which to launch the terrorist operations that disrupt the stability and security of our region.

We share a common responsibility with friendly countries and our allies is to eradicate the terrorist group of ISIL. To that end, our air force, in collaboration with these countries, has targeted a number of ISIL positions. We welcome Security Council resolution 2178 (2014), adopted on 24 September, which focuses on stopping the recruitment of foreign terrorist fighters. Also, we continue to closely monitor borders and exit and entry points so as to stop citizens of the Kingdom from contacting or joining terrorist groups and to arrest and

prosecute all those who have allegedly been affiliated to them as soon as they return to the country.

Secondly, we must combat all ideology that runs counter to human nature and betrays true Islam by distorting its precepts. Muslim clerics and scholars can play an important part in counteracting such distortion. We therefore call on all Muslim scholars to expose and disown ideas that are not related to Islam in any way, and we appreciate their playing a leading role in that respect. It is imperative to stand together in the face of the ideas propagated by the terrorist groups.

Thirdly, we must deal with financing, as it constitutes the lifeline of the terrorist groups, enabling them to perpetrate their barbaric acts, purchase weapons and influence some young people. In that connection, the Kingdom of Bahrain will convene a high-level international conference during the first week of November to consider the financing of terrorism, how best to combat such financing and how to deprive terrorism of its sources of finance. We firmly believe that preventing the financing of terrorism will significantly contribute to overcoming terrorism and to eradicating it.

The second challenge to the security and stability of our region is that of political expansionism and attempts to impose hegemony, in disregard of the sovereignty of States, and to interfere in their internal affairs. All the countries of the region, without exception, have suffered from such issues as a result of attempts to export seditious revolutions and to train terrorists in violation of international law and the principles of the United Nations. Such attempts represent an ideology that is archaic in its political dimension and in its defiance of the values and principles enshrined in numerous international instruments.

One form of such interference is the exploitation of the media, in particular satellite television channels and social media, which are misused in order to distort facts and to cause instability in the region. We condemn such illegal and illegitimate practices, which contravene international values and principles.

I would like to point out what the Republic of Yemen endures. With each step that it takes forward, terrorist groups rush to pursue their criminal objectives by undermining its stability and security. The Kingdom of Bahrain reaffirms its support for President Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour and his tireless efforts to strengthen the national consensus achieved through a

comprehensive national dialogue on the basis of the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Turning to Iraq, which has suffered from flagrant interference, insecurity, hegemony and anarchy, we see some hope in the positive developments in the country. We are pleased to welcome the election of President Fuad Masum and the establishment of the new Government under Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi. We hope that such a development will enhance the political and development processes, thereby contributing to the consolidation of Iraq's security and stability, the preservation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity and the strengthening of its links with its fellow Arabs in the region where it naturally belongs.

The conflict in Syria becomes more complex and more acute every year. Innocent civilians are paying the ultimate price and losing their lives, property and dignity. The humanitarian situation deteriorates daily in the absence of a comprehensive political solution to safeguard the lives of the Syrian people and to extricate that beloved country from its protracted suffering through a comprehensive political process aimed at achieving reform and political plurality. With regard to the humanitarian aspect, we reiterate that it is necessary to overcome all impediments to the delivery of humanitarian assistance to those in need, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

In that respect, I wish to express my country's great appreciation for the humanity shown by the sisterly Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in hosting and delivering assistance to Syrian refugees. We also appreciate the humanitarian role played by Turkey and Lebanon, as well as by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

With regard to the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Kingdom of Bahrain welcomes the democratic development that has taken place in that country and the implementation of the road map through the establishment of a Constitution that reflects the will of the Egyptian people. We also welcome the presidential elections and the ongoing preparations for the holding of legislative elections so as to complete the State institutions under the Constitution.

The Kingdom of Bahrain reiterates its complete condemnation of any interference in the internal affairs of Egypt. We support the efforts of President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi and the steps that he has taken to combat

terrorism, to preserve the security and stability of Egypt and to pursue its strategic and active role at the Arab, regional and international levels. In that regard, I would like to commend the initiative taken by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, King of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in announcing the convening of an Egyptian economic summit in support of Egypt and its economic development.

We reiterate the historical, principled and constant position of the Kingdom of Bahrain in solidarity with the Kingdom of Morocco and our full support for its initiatives with regard to self-government for the Moroccan Sahara within Moroccan sovereignty and territorial integrity, in accordance with international legitimacy.

With regard to Libya, the Kingdom of Bahrain wishes to express its grave concern about the deteriorating security situation as a result of the violent acts perpetrated by terrorist groups and the repercussions of such acts on the stability of neighbouring countries. The Kingdom of Bahrain supports the legitimate constitutional institutions represented by the elected House of Representatives and welcomes the establishment of the new Government under Mr. Abdallah Al-Thani. We hope that such a development will help to establish security and stability and to preserve the unity and territorial integrity of that sisterly country.

In view of our keen interest in striving to achieve our principal goal, namely, to protect humankind from the scourge of war, conflict and disaster and to condemn attempts at hegemony and destabilization, we reiterate our call to make the Middle East, including the Arab Gulf region, a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons. On the basis of that principle, we support the efforts of the P5+1 to promptly find a solution to the issue of the Iranian nuclear programme, in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Convention on Nuclear Safety, without prejudice to the use of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. Such use is a natural right of all States under the international safeguards system.

The third and last challenge is the illegal occupation of the territory of other States in breach of the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, as demonstrated by Israel's violation of all

international laws, agreements and decisions and its targeting of the Palestinian people by confiscating their land, by building or expanding settlements thereon and by imposing blockades on them. Such violations found their ugliest expression in the most recent criminal aggression against the Gaza Strip, which resulted in tremendous damage and caused the death of more than 2,000 martyrs, the displacement of a great number of Palestinians and the destruction of infrastructure.

I would like to recall the words of President Mahmoud Abbas in his statement before the General Assembly, his request that international protection be provided to the Palestinian people and their territories under occupation and his demand that Israel abide by the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 (see A/69/PV.12). It is imperative to have a specific time frame for an end to the Israeli occupation and to achieve the aspirations of the Palestinian people for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on all its territory within the boundaries of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, as stipulated under the Arab Peace Initiative and the two-State solution, in accordance with international legitimacy and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

In that context, we commend the pivotal role played by the Arab Republic of Egypt in order to reach a ceasefire in Gaza. We greatly appreciate its hosting, in cooperation with the Kingdom of Norway, an international conference in support of Palestine and the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip next month. We also commend the important role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

With regard to the occupation by the Islamic Republic of Iran of the three islands Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, which belong to the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Bahrain reiterates its consistent position condemning that occupation. We call on Iran to heed the efforts of the United Arab Emirates to resolve the issue through direct negotiations or through the arbitration of the International Court of Justice.

Those are the key challenges facing our region. If we overcome them, it will be relatively easy for us, within our common responsibilities, to address the international challenges that the Secretary-General described in his statement, to which I referred at the beginning of my statement. If we focus on those very

serious issues, we will be on the right path towards true sustainable development and the necessary reform to meet the aspirations of all peoples.

Notwithstanding the challenges that we all face, the Kingdom of Bahrain will always remain committed to moving forward on the path of development, reform and positive interaction with the international community in order to achieve our aspirations and objectives. In that respect, the Kingdom of Bahrain, in line with its firm approach towards reform under the leadership of His Majesty the King, will continue to work for the upholding of the rule of law, pluralism and active political participation. We look forward to the elections to be held on 22 November, so as to consolidate all our achievements.

In conclusion, I would like to underscore the fact that in the Kingdom of Bahrain our choices are clear. Our vision is comprehensive and our strategy complementary to and in line with our Gulf, Arab and international contexts. The Kingdom always seeks to promote stability, peace, security, development and the protection of human rights. It rejects and condemns terrorism, violence and hatred and works for a society in which harmony and consensus prevail for the benefit of all and for the establishment of a promising future full of opportunity and achievement for all future generations.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Aurelia Frick, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister for Education and Minister for Cultural Affairs of the Principality of Liechtenstein.

Ms. Frick (Liechtenstein): This has been an enormously difficult year for the United Nations. As the Secretary-General has pointed out, we are living in an era of an unprecedented level of crises. I echo his call for leaders to unite. At a time when the world seems to be breaking apart, it will serve us well to remember what unites us. We need to look no further than the Charter of the United Nations. The preamble to the Charter offers a vision that seems so difficult for us to fulfil: we are determined “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”.

The Organization was created, above all, to prevent war. Indeed, it offers a system of collective security that is far more effective than anything that existed before. Yet the events over the past year have shaken its very foundations. At times, it seems that we revert to the habits of past centuries. We are disturbed by the acts

of aggression perpetrated against Ukraine and by the illegal annexation of parts of its territory. Those acts are massive violations of the principles on which the Organization was built. They are a major setback for collective security. As a small country situated in the heart of Europe and a member of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, we hope that we can quickly re-establish a consensus on security issues in Europe.

The events in Ukraine also underline the need to ensure the enforcement of international law — if necessary in a court of law. We now, for the first time since the Nuremberg Tribunal, have a historic opportunity to criminalize the most serious forms of the illegal use of force in an international court. Jurisdiction for the crime of aggression before the International Criminal Court (ICC) will be possible as early as 2017. The ratification process of the Kampala amendments is well on track. I welcome the ratifications by Latvia, Poland and Spain just a few days ago. We look forward to achieving that goal, together with the largest possible number of partners.

For truly collective work to maintain peace and security, we need a collective sense of purpose. That is difficult to reconcile with the notion that a single Security Council member is able to block the action required if the United Nations is to fulfil its purposes and principles — with no questions asked, no matter how large the majority in favour of such action. We of course accept the veto as a reality of the Charter of the United Nations, as we did when we joined the Organization. However, we do not accept that the veto should be used in a manner that contradicts the very purposes of the United Nations. We have witnessed too many such instances in recent times. Change is urgently needed. We therefore look for a commitment from States serving on the Council not to vote against any action necessary to prevent or to end crimes of atrocity. We look to the permanent members in particular to give a clear commitment to that end.

We are determined to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights and in the dignity and worth of the human person. The United Nations, created as a family of nations, has the rights and dignity of the individual at the centre of its efforts. This is a human rights organization. The General Assembly, which we have entrusted to your leadership, Mr. President, during this session, is also a human rights organ. The world is

changing at an ever-increasing speed. That requires our continued commitment to human rights.

The right to privacy, for example, is at risk of being lost. The digital era makes large-scale data collection both easy to undertake and difficult to detect. Discrimination on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, nationality, ethnicity, religion, disability or any other status remains rampant in many parts of the world.

The rise of religious intolerance is especially alarming. Conflicts around the world are characterized by the persecution of religious minorities, be they Shiites, Yazidis, Christians or others. We are witnessing a disturbing rise in anti-Semitism. The Assembly should respond by uniting in a call against the persecution of any religious minority anywhere in the world. I am also particularly alarmed about the rising violence against human rights defenders, such as the recent murder of Samira Saleh Al-Nuaimi, an Iraqi activist and the mother of three children. There is nothing Islamic about that barbaric act, committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

In times of conflict, international humanitarian law represents our hope for at least the bare minimum of human dignity. The Geneva Conventions of 1949 are among not only the greatest achievements in the history of international law but also the most successful treaties with their near-universal acceptance. Nevertheless, their core principles — proportionality in the use of force and a distinction between civilians and combatants — are violated on a daily basis. The recent conflict in Gaza was carried out at the expense of civilians by both parties to the conflict. The civilian population of Syria has been experiencing enormous suffering for more than three years now. Atrocities have been committed against men, women and children by the regime and, increasingly, by other actors. Humanitarian access has been blocked systematically as a method of warfare. Civilians in both Syria and Iraq are left at the mercy of the sickening brutality of ISIL. There has rarely been a time when civilians were at greater risk of being victimized by atrocity crimes. We are not living up to our promise, made some 10 years ago, to collectively ensure protection against such crimes.

We are determined to reaffirm faith in the equal rights of men and women. Equality between men and women was one of the first things on the minds of the drafters of the Charter of the United Nations just after

the end of the Second World War. Is that not striking? We have certainly achieved much since then. The 1995 Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women in particular was a watershed moment in that regard. The commemoration of its twentieth anniversary is the best opportunity for us to show that we remain fully committed to its outcome.

Next year we will also reflect on our progress on the women, peace and security agenda 15 years after it was established under Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Clearly, we will have to find new strategies to protect women in conflict from violence, in particular sexual violence. We are still far from using the full potential of women as agents of peace. Men have always been in charge of making war and of making peace: their record is not impressive. Women must obtain their seat at the negotiating table, where they belong and where they are needed. I am grateful to the Secretary-General for taking the lead on that issue and for increasingly appointing women to high positions in the areas of mediation and conflict resolution.

We are determined to establish conditions in which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained. Justice and the rule of law are areas where we have made important progress. International courts and other judicial mechanisms are gaining greater acceptance. Calls for accountability are becoming louder. We can look to an impressive body of international jurisprudence.

That is particularly true for the International Criminal Court (ICC). Victims of the gravest crimes around the world place their hopes for justice in the Rome Statute system. That is a great responsibility for the Court, an institution which frequently works in a politically charged context. Those who support the Court must make that support felt. For that reason, I have initiated an informal network of ministers who support the ICC personally as politicians. Our network has grown to 26 members. We stand ready to defend the Court and the integrity of the Rome Statute, because we know that political attacks against the ICC are easy to launch but difficult to respond to.

The fact that the Court is an entirely independent institution that follows the law, not politics, does not make the headlines. The fact that the ICC has jurisdiction in some places but not in others is easily misrepresented as selectivity. Our goal therefore remains for the Rome

Statute to become a universal treaty. Victims of crimes in Syria, Iraq, Palestine and North Korea — to cite just a few examples — deserve their day in court as much as those in other parts of the world.

We are determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. There could not be a greater challenge for the Assembly than setting the global agenda for sustainable development for the next generation. And there could not be a greater opportunity to show its relevance.

The Millennium Development Goals were a success. They set the agenda for more than a decade, galvanized tremendous efforts for development and led to very significant advances. However, they were also a learning process. We must be honest about where we have failed and do better where we can. Three areas stand out in that respect.

First, accountable institutions, access to justice and an effective fight against corruption are key ingredients of development that are truly transformative and sustainable. That is amply illustrated by national experiences around the world and is well documented by research. Placing the rule of law at the heart of the sustainable development goal agenda will therefore be one key of success.

Secondly, there is no sustainable development without the full empowerment of women. Nothing short of full equality between men and women will be required for development to be sustainable. We must therefore fully recognize the empowerment of women as a key ingredient of sustainable development.

Thirdly, the implementation of international commitments cannot be left to chance. We need accountability. We must establish a system to monitor progress in the implementation of the post-2015 agenda, carried out by us as States but involving all stakeholders. The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development is the best anchor for such a system.

Our work to date in developing the post-2015 agenda gives us cause to be optimistic. Let us make the best use of the upcoming months to produce an agenda of which we can be truly proud as a platform for collective action and an inspiration for future generations.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Erlan Abdyldayev, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Mr. Abdyldayev (Kyrgyzstan) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session and to wish you every success in carrying out that important task. It is also a great pleasure to express my gratitude to Mr. John Ashe for his successful and fruitful guidance of the previous session of the General Assembly.

The current situation in the world vividly demonstrates that the ongoing instability, increasing disputes among the leading world Powers and the absence of a clear and comprehensible vision for the future of the world order have become part of our everyday life. War, conflict, a refusal to listen to one another and unilateral action are pushing the international community ever closer to the precipice. Such developments undermine our efforts to work together effectively to address today's threats and challenges. It is no surprise that various terrorist and extremist groups are cunningly taking advantage of the prevailing political vacuum and fierce opposition among world and regional Powers in order not only to insinuate and assert their presence, but also to demonstrate their ability to directly influence the situation around the world.

Therefore, the role of the United Nations as a platform for comprehensive dialogue is becoming ever more important. Kyrgyzstan has consistently advocated the further strengthening of the central coordinating role of the United Nations in international affairs so as to maintain peace, security and stability; to promote shared sustainable and constructive development; and to encourage broad international cooperation. We believe that the ongoing and emerging sources of global instability require a strengthened role for the United Nations in every possible way. The relevance of political and diplomatic conflict resolution is reconfirmed by the situations in Afghanistan, the Sahel, East and West Africa, Ukraine and Syria. In order to overcome the threats and challenges to peace, prosperity and creative development, we should firmly and resolutely move forward by uniting the efforts of the entire international community. Kyrgyzstan expresses its full readiness to participate in such constructive and effective international cooperation.

Against the backdrop of such negative global political developments, the further strengthening of human rights principles and of the rule of law, based on constructive approaches and cooperation, is becoming all the more relevant. For Kyrgyzstan, these principles

are an integral part of political development. The upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections in Kyrgyzstan, in 2015 and 2017, will serve as an important step in strengthening the democratic foundations of our country. We hope that the international community will provide effective assistance to Kyrgyzstan in implementing its far-reaching goals. In line with our commitment to democratic principles and the desire to make a further contribution to the dialogue on global democracy, Kyrgyzstan has announced its candidacy for the Human Rights Council for the period of 2016-2018. We count on the support of members of the Assembly in that regard.

The world today is at a difficult juncture, marked by increasing regional and international instability. All nations, regardless of their geographical location, face similar security challenges. Our region, in this regard, is no exception. It is obvious that the most serious external challenge to Central Asia remains the situation in Afghanistan, as well as the threats of terrorism, extremism and drug trafficking emanating from that country.

As in the past, problems related to illegal drug-trafficking as a direct consequence of the situation in Afghanistan are among the most severe in the entire region. We are especially alarmed by the continuing strong link between terrorism and illegal Afghan drugs, which undermine the achievements in Afghanistan's security situation and its ability to ensure law and order throughout the country. In this regard, it is necessary to pool efforts with the United Nations to promote security and stability in Afghanistan.

In order to effectively curb these threats, we call for a more proactive international contribution, in order to strengthen the capacity of regional law-enforcement agencies and to promote regional cooperation. We attach particular importance to the Istanbul Process as an important dialogue in improving regional cooperation on Afghan issues. We count on the active participation of all parties in achieving practical results. We hope that the establishment of the new Government of Afghanistan by Mr. Ashraf Ghani and Mr. Abdullah Abdullah will be the starting point for the future stabilization in that war-weary country.

Another important factor for regional instability is the unresolved border issue in Central Asia. Undoubtedly, a successful solution is in the best interests of all States of the region. The solution would

greatly contribute to enhancing the regional transit potential of our countries, developing cross-border infrastructure, improving the economic situation and decreasing social tension. In this regard, I call on all Central Asian States to support the recent initiative of the President of Kyrgyzstan, Mr. Almazbek Atambaev, on the development and subsequent signing of bilateral agreements on border-related confidence-building, as put forward at the summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization held in Dushanbe. I am confident that the successful implementation of that initiative would let us take historic steps towards the development of regional economic and trade relations, as well as in jointly maintaining regional stability.

Amid the turmoil sweeping through the Middle East, it is especially important to focus our attention on the issue of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, which we view as the major destabilizing factor for the region and the world. The use of force leads only to further bloodshed, destruction and hatred and does not solve any problem. In order to revive mutual trust, the conflict must be resolved by exclusively political and diplomatic means, on the basis of relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

The theme of the present general debate, "Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda", is both timely and relevant. Next year, at the seventieth anniversary session of the United Nations, we will need to formulate and adopt new goals for the following 15 years. The evolving situation today illustrates that many countries, including Kyrgyzstan, are unlikely to achieve all the objectives proposed in the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2) and the Millennium Development Goals in the next year. We believe that the goals not achieved should be refined in the light of gained experience and they should find proper reflection in the post-2015 goals for sustainable development.

We advocate including countries with special development needs on the agenda of the post-2015 agenda. Kyrgyzstan falls into such a category. Ours is a developing, landlocked and mountainous State that is highly vulnerable to climate change. It is well known that extreme poverty in Kyrgyzstan has many causes, foremost among them a disadvantageous geographical location. More than 70 per cent of our territory is mountainous. The country lies 5,000 metres above sea level, with approximately one third of its total area lying 400 metres above sea level. Such

States are characterized by remoteness, inaccessibility, informational isolation, severe geoclimatic conditions and a high cost of living.

For Kyrgyzstan, the absence of access to the sea is yet another factor having a restrictive effect on our economic development. Remoteness from major international transport networks and high transportation costs hinder the development of multi-vector and diversified international economic relations and the implementation of the country's large-scale investment projects. We believe that the establishment of an international development fund to provide support and assistance for the economies of developing landlocked countries would contribute to their sustainable economic development. This is especially important in the run-up to the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries, to be held in Vienna, where a new programme of action for the next decade should be adopted.

The year 2015 will be a milestone for the entire world community. In addition to the adoption of the post-2015 agenda, we anticipate the adoption of an international legally binding instrument on climate change. On 23 September, on the margins of the General Assembly, the United Nations Summit on Climate Change was held, at which States outlined their vision for a solution incorporating adaptation to and mitigation of climate change. For Kyrgyzstan, as for all mountainous countries whose ecosystems are highly sensitive to climate change, these issues are of priority importance on the national agenda. Abruptly melting glaciers, rising temperatures, soil degradation, landslides, mudflows and floods cause significant economic damage and serve as vivid reminders of the vulnerability of mountain ecosystems. According to reliable forecasts, Kyrgyzstan's ice cover could be reduced by 40 per cent by 2025, leading to a one third drop in the water available in the region. In that regard, conscious of the undoubted interconnections between the environment, climate change and sustainable development goals, we believe that it is essential that the interests of vulnerable countries be adequately and fairly reflected in future action at the global level.

Speaking of regional problems in Central Asia, I should note that dealing as we are with global challenges such as climate change, the potential threat of an energy crisis and population growth, water resources are a key factor in prosperity, and in that regard, our basic position is that the issues of water resources and

energy are indissolubly linked and inseparable from each other. It is crucial to understand that hydropower development is an essential precondition for our sustainable development. That is entirely consistent with the Secretary-General's initiative in declaring the period between 2014 and 2024 the Decade of Sustainable Energy for All. It is clear that access to modern, affordable and environmentally friendly energy supplies is essential if developing countries are to achieve global development goals, including those in the Millennium Declaration. The issue of affordable energy should unquestionably be appropriately reflected in the new world agenda of the United Nations post-2015.

The recovery and secure storage of uranium tailings in Kyrgyzstan remains a serious transboundary problem for Central Asia. Most are concentrated in densely populated areas, and their condition has deteriorated in the last 10 years in the wake of closings of industrial enterprises and major production facilities. Moreover, a large part of these tailings are at risk of exposure to landslides and floods, as they are located in seismically active regions near the banks of Central Asia's major transboundary rivers. Despite my Government's efforts at the national level, along with the support of various international programmes and projects, the serious social, economic and environmental problems related to these issues continue. I would therefore like to urge the international community to assist Kyrgyzstan in dealing with this problem of radioactive and toxic waste through full rehabilitation of the contaminated areas, as envisioned in resolution 68/218, on the role of the international community in averting the radiation threat in Central Asia.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that no State can solve all the challenges it faces and maintain sustainable development in isolation. We cannot achieve our sustainable development goals and establish global order without the consolidated efforts of the international community. In that regard, I would like to assure the Assembly that Kyrgyzstan, in its partnership with the United Nations, stands ready to contribute to the search for new opportunities to solve the complex challenges of our time, as well as to contribute to strengthening stability and peace in the world.

Address by Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister and Minister of Public Affairs and the Diaspora of the State of Israel

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister of Public Affairs and the Diaspora of the State of Israel.

Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister and Minister of Public Affairs and the Diaspora of the State of Israel, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister and Minister of Public Affairs and the Diaspora of the State of Israel, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Netanyahu (Israel): I come here from Jerusalem to speak on behalf of my people, the people of Israel. I have come to speak about the dangers we face and about the opportunities we seek. I have come to expose the brazen lies spoken from this very rostrum about my country and the brave soldiers who defend it.

The people of Israel pray for peace, but our hopes for peace, and those of the world, are in danger, because everywhere we look militant Islam is on the march. It is not militants; it is not Islam; it is militant Islam, and typically, its first victims are other Muslims. But it spares no one. Christians, Jews, Yazidis, Kurds — no creed, no faith, no ethnic group is beyond its sights, and it is rapidly spreading in every part of the world. We know the famous American saying "All politics is local". For the militant Islamists, all politics is global, because their ultimate goal is to dominate the world.

Now that threat might seem exaggerated to some, since it starts out small, like a cancer that attacks a particular part of the body. But left unchecked, the cancer grows, metastasizing over wider and wider areas. To protect the peace and security of the world, we must remove that cancer before it is too late. Last week, many of the countries represented here rightly applauded President Obama for leading the effort to confront the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS); and yet weeks before, some of those same countries — the same countries that now support confronting ISIS — opposed Israel for confronting Hamas. Evidently, they do not understand that ISIS and Hamas are branches of the same poisonous tree.

ISIS and Hamas share a fanatical creed that they both seek to impose well beyond the territory under their

control. Let us listen to what ISIS's self-declared Caliph, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, said two months ago. He said that the day would soon come when the Muslim would walk everywhere as a master, and that Muslims would cause the world to hear and understand the meaning of terrorism, and destroy the idol of democracy. Now let us listen to Khaled Mashal, the leader of Hamas. He proclaims a similar vision of the future. "We say this to the West", he says. "By Allah it will be defeated, and tomorrow our nation will sit on the throne of the world".

As its Charter makes clear, Hamas's immediate goal is to destroy Israel; but it has a broader objective. It also wants a caliphate. Hamas shares the global ambitions of its fellow militant Islamists, and that is why its supporters cheered wildly in the streets of Gaza when thousands of Americans were murdered on 9/11. That is why its leaders condemned the United States for killing Osama Bin Laden, whom they praised as a holy warrior. When it comes to their ultimate goals, therefore, Hamas is ISIS and ISIS is Hamas.

And what they share in common, all militant Islamists share in common — Boko Haram in Nigeria, Al-Shabaab in Somalia, Hizbullah in Lebanon, Al-Nusra in Syria, the Al-Mahdi Army in Iraq and the Al-Qaida branches in Yemen, Libya, the Philippines, India and elsewhere. Some are radical Sunnis, some are radical Shiites. Some want to restore a pre-medieval caliphate from the seventh century. Others want to trigger the apocalyptic return of an imam from the ninth century.

They operate in different lands. They target different victims. They even kill each other in their battle for supremacy. But they all share a fanatic ideology. They all seek to create ever expanding enclaves of militant Islam, where there is no freedom and no tolerance, where women are treated as chattel, Christians are decimated and minorities are subjugated, and sometimes given the stark choice: convert or die. For them, anyone can be considered an infidel, including fellow Muslims.

Militant Islam's ambition to dominate the world seems mad, but so too did the global ambitions of another fanatic ideology that swept into power eight decades ago. The Nazis believed in a master race. The militant Islamists believe in a master faith. They just disagree as to who among them will be the master of the master faith. That is what they truly disagree about. Therefore, the question before us is whether militant

Islam will have the power to realize its unbridled ambitions.

There is one place where that could soon happen — the Islamic State of Iran. For 35 years, Iran has relentlessly pursued the global mission that was set forth by its founding ruler, Ayatollah Khomeini, with the following words:

"We will export our revolution to the entire world, until the cry 'There is no God but Allah' will echo throughout the world over".

Ever since, the regime's brutal enforcers, Iran's Revolutionary Guards, have done exactly that. Let us listen to its current commander, General Mohammad Ali Jafari, who clearly stated that goal:

"Our Imam did not limit the Islamic Revolution to this country. Our duty is to prepare the way for an Islamic world Government."

Iran's president, Mr. Rouhani, stood here last week and shed crocodile tears over what he called the globalization of terrorism. Maybe he should spare us those phony tears and have a word instead with the commanders of Iran's Revolutionary Guards. He could ask them to call off Iran's global terror campaign, which has included attacks in two dozen countries on five continents since 2011 alone. To say that Iran does not practice terrorism is like saying Derek Jeter never played shortstop for the New York Yankees. The bemoaning by the Iranian President of the spread of terrorism has got to be one of history's greatest displays of double talk.

Some argue that Iran's global terror campaign — its subversion of countries throughout the Middle East and well beyond the Middle East — is the work of the extremists. They say that things are changing. They point to last year's election in Iran. They claim that Iran's smooth-talking President and Foreign Minister have changed not only the tone of Iran's foreign policy but also its substance. They believe that Rouhani and Zarif generally want to reconcile with the West, that they have abandoned the global mission of the Islamic Revolution. Really?

Let us look at what Foreign Minister Zarif wrote in his book just a few years ago:

"We have a fundamental problem with the West, and especially with America. This is because we

are heirs to a global mission which is tied to our *raison d'être*".

A global mission which is tied to our very reason for being? Then Zarif asks a question — an interesting question, in my view. He says, "How come Malaysia" — referring to an overwhelmingly Muslim country — "does not have similar problems?" Then he answers: "Because Malaysia is not trying to change the international order". That is our moderate.

Let us not be fooled by Iran's manipulative charm offensive. It is designed for one purpose and one purpose only — to have the sanctions lifted and the obstacles to Iran's path to the bomb removed. The Islamic Republic is now trying to bamboozle its way to an agreement that will remove the sanctions it still faces and leave it with the capacity of thousands of centrifuges to enrich uranium. That would effectively cement Iran's place as a threshold military nuclear Power. In the future, at the time of its choosing, Iran, the world's most dangerous regime, in the world's most dangerous region, would obtain the world's most dangerous weapons. Allowing that to happen would pose the gravest threat to us all.

It is one thing to confront militant Islamists on pickup trucks armed with Kalashnikov rifles. It is another thing to confront militant Islamists armed with weapons of mass destruction. I remember that last year everyone here was rightly concerned about the chemical weapons in Syria, including the possibility that they would fall into the hands of terrorists. Well, that did not happen, and President Obama deserves great credit for leading the diplomatic effort to dismantle virtually all of Syria's chemical weapons capability. We can only imagine how much more dangerous the Islamic State — ISIS — would be if it possessed chemical weapons. Now, let us imagine how much more dangerous the Islamic State of Iran would be if it possessed nuclear weapons.

Would you let ISIS enrich uranium? Would you let ISIS build a heavy-water reactor? Would you let ISIS develop intercontinental ballistic missiles? Of course you would not. Then you must not let the Islamic State of Iran do those things either, because if you do, here is what will happen. Once Iran produces atomic bombs, all the charm and all the smiles will suddenly disappear — they will just vanish. It is then that the ayatollahs will show their true face and unleash their aggressive fanaticism on the entire world.

There is only one responsible course of action to address this threat. Iran's nuclear military capabilities must be fully dismantled. Make no mistake — ISIS must be defeated, but to defeat ISIS and leave Iran as a threshold nuclear Power is to win the battle and lose the war.

The fight against militant Islam is indivisible. When militant Islam succeeds anywhere, it is emboldened everywhere. When it suffers a blow in one place, it is set back in every place. That is why Israel's fight against Hamas is not just our fight; it is everyone's fight. Israel is fighting a fanaticism today that other countries may be forced to fight tomorrow. For 50 days this past summer, Hamas fired thousands of rockets at Israel, many of them supplied by Iran. I want members to think about what their countries would do if thousands of rockets were fired at their cities. Let them imagine millions of their citizens having seconds at most to scramble to bomb shelters, day after day. Members would not let terrorists fire rockets at their cities with impunity, nor would they let terrorists dig dozens of terror tunnels under their borders to infiltrate their towns in order to murder and kidnap their citizens. Israel justly defended itself against both rocket attacks and terror tunnels.

Yet Israel faced another challenge. We faced a propaganda war because, in an attempt to win the world's sympathy, Hamas cynically used Palestinian civilians as human shields. It used schools — not just schools, United Nations schools — private homes, mosques and even hospitals to store and fire rockets at Israel. As Israel surgically struck at the rocket launchers and at the tunnels, Palestinian civilians were tragically but unintentionally killed. There are heartrending images that resulted, and these fuelled libellous charges that Israel was deliberately targeting civilians. We were not. We deeply regret every single civilian casualty.

And the truth is, Israel was doing everything to minimize Palestinian civilian casualties. Hamas was doing everything to maximize Israeli civilian casualties and Palestinian civilian casualties. Israel dropped flyers, made phone calls, sent text messages, broadcast warnings in Arabic on Palestinian television — all this to enable Palestinian civilians to evaluate targeted areas. No other country and no other army in history have gone to greater lengths to avoid casualties among the civilian population of their enemies.

Such concern for Palestinian life was all the more remarkable given that Israeli civilians were being

bombarded by rockets, day after day, night after night. And as their families were being rocketed by Hamas, Israel's citizen army, the brave soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces, our young boys and girls, upheld the highest moral values of any army in the world. Israel's soldiers deserve not condemnation but admiration — admiration from decent people everywhere.

Here is what Hamas did. Hamas embedded its missile batteries in residential areas and told Palestinians to ignore Israel's warnings to leave. And just in case people did not get the message, they executed Palestinian civilians in Gaza who dared to protest. And, no less reprehensible, Hamas deliberately placed its rockets where Palestinian children live and play.

Let me show the Assembly a photograph. It was taken by a France 24 crew during the recent conflict. It shows two Hamas rocket launchers, which were used to attack us. Three children can be seen playing next to them. Hamas deliberately put its rockets in hundreds of residential areas like this — hundreds of them. That is a war crime. I say to President Abbas, these are the crimes — the war crimes — committed by his Hamas partners in the national unity Government which he heads and for which he is responsible. These are the real war crimes he should have investigated or spoken out against from this rostrum last week.

As Israel's children huddle in bomb shelters and Israel's Iron Dome missile defence knocked Hamas rockets out of the sky, the profound moral difference between Israel and Hamas could not have been clearer. Israel was using its missiles to protect its children; Hamas was using its children to protect its missiles.

By investigating Israel rather than Hamas for war crimes, the United Nations Human Rights Council has betrayed its noble mission to protect the innocent. In fact, what it is doing is to turn the laws of war upside down. Israel, which took unprecedented steps to minimize civilian casualties, is condemned; Hamas, which both targeted and hid behind civilians — that is a double war crime — is given a pass. The Human Rights Council is thus sending a clear message to terrorists everywhere: "Use civilians as a human shield. Use them again and again and again." And you know why? Because, sadly, it works. By granting international legitimacy to the use of human shields, the Human Rights Council has become a terrorist rights council,

and it will have repercussions — it probably already has — in terms of the use of civilians as human shields. It is not just our interests and values that are under attack: it is the interests and values of all of us.

We live in a world steeped in tyranny and terror, where gays are hanged from cranes in Tehran, political prisoners are executed in Gaza, young girls are abducted en masse in Nigeria and hundreds of thousands are butchered in Syria, Libya and Iraq, yet nearly half of the Human Rights Council's resolutions focusing on a single country have been directed against Israel — the one true democracy in the Middle East; Israel, where issues are openly debated in a boisterous Parliament, where human rights are protected by independent courts, and where women, gays and minorities live in a genuinely free society.

The biased treatment of Israel by the Human Rights Council — that is a misnomer, but I will use it just the same — is only one manifestation of the return of one of the world's oldest prejudices. We hear mobs today in Europe calling for the gassing of Jews. We hear some national leaders compare Israel to the Nazis. This is not a function of Israel's policies; it is a function of diseased minds, and that disease has a name. It is called anti-Semitism. It is now spreading in polite society where it masquerades as legitimate criticism of Israel. For centuries, the Jewish people have been demonized with blood libels and charges of deicide. Today, the Jewish State is demonized with the apartheid libel and charges of genocide.

In what moral universe does genocide include warning the enemy civilian population to get out of harm's way or ensuring that they receive tons of humanitarian aid each day, even as thousands of rockets are being fired at us, or setting up a field hospital to aid their wounded? I suppose it is the same moral universe in which a man who wrote a dissertation of lies about the Holocaust and who insists on a Palestine free of Jews — *Judenrein* — can stand at this rostrum and shamelessly accuse Israel of genocide and ethnic cleansing. In the past, outrageous lies against the Jews were the precursors to the wholesale slaughter of our people. But no more; today, we the Jewish people have the power to defend ourselves. We will defend ourselves against our enemies on the battlefield and we will expose their lies against us in the court of public opinion. Israel will continue to stand proud and unbowed.

Despite the enormous challenges facing Israel, I believe we have a historic opportunity. After decades of seeing Israel as their enemy, leading States in the Arab world increasingly recognize that together we and they face many of the same dangers. Principally, that means a nuclear-armed Iran and militant Islamist movements gaining ground in the Sunni world. Our challenge is to transform those common interests in order to create a productive partnership that would build a more secure, peaceful and prosperous Middle East. Together we can strengthen regional security. We can advance projects in water, agriculture, transportation, health care, energy and so many other fields.

I believe that the partnership between us can also help facilitate peace between Israel and the Palestinians. Many have long assumed that an Israeli-Palestinian peace can help facilitate a broader rapprochement between Israel and the Arab world. But I believe that, these days, it may work the other way around, namely, that a broader rapprochement between Israel and the Arab world may help facilitate an Israeli-Palestinian peace. Therefore, to achieve that peace, we must look not only to Jerusalem and Ramallah but also to Cairo, Amman, Abu Dhabi, Riyadh and elsewhere. I believe that peace could be realized with the active involvement of Arab countries that are willing to provide political, material and other indispensable support.

I am ready to make a historic compromise, and not because Israel occupies a foreign land. The people of Israel are not occupiers in the land of Israel. History, archaeology and common sense all make clear that we have had a singular attachment to this land for over 3,000 years. I want peace because I want to create a better future for my people. But it must be a genuine peace, one that is anchored in mutual recognition and enduring security arrangements — rock-solid security arrangements — on the ground. Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon and Gaza created two militant Islamic enclaves on our borders from which tens of thousands of rockets have been fired at Israel. Those sobering experiences heighten Israel's security concerns regarding potential territorial concessions in the future.

Those security concerns are even greater today. Let us just look around. The Middle East is in chaos. States are disintegrating, and militant Islamists are filling the void. Israel cannot have territories from which it withdraws taken over by Islamic militants yet again, as happened in Gaza and Lebanon. That would place the likes of ISIS within mortar range, a few miles of

80 per cent of our population. Think about that. The distance between the 1967 lines and the suburbs of Tel Aviv is similar to the distance between United Nations Headquarters and Times Square. Israel is a tiny country. That is why in any peace agreement, which will obviously necessitate a territorial compromise, I will always insist that Israel be able to defend itself, by itself, against any threat.

Yet despite everything that has happened, some still do not take Israel's security concerns seriously, but I do and I always will. That is because as Prime Minister of Israel I am entrusted with the awesome responsibility of ensuring the future of the Jewish people and the future of the Jewish State. No matter what pressure is brought to bear, I will never waver in fulfilling that responsibility.

I believe that with a fresh approach on the part of our neighbours, we can advance peace despite the difficulties we face. In Israel, we have a record of making the impossible possible. We have made a desolate land flourish, and with very few natural resources we have used the fertile minds of our people to turn Israel into a global centre of technology and innovation. Peace would enable Israel to realize its full potential and to bring a promising future not only to our people and not only to the Palestinian people, but to many, many others in our region. But the old template for peace must be updated. It must take into account new realities and new roles and responsibilities for our Arab neighbours.

There is a new Middle East. It presents new dangers but also new opportunities. Israel is prepared to work with Arab partners and the international community to confront those dangers and to seize those opportunities. Together, we must recognize the global threat of militant Islam, the primacy of dismantling Iran's nuclear weapons capability, and the indispensable role of Arab States in advancing peace with the Palestinians. All that may fly in the face of conventional wisdom, but it is the truth. And the truth must always be spoken, especially in the United Nations. Isaiah, a great prophet of peace, taught us nearly 3,000 years ago in Jerusalem to speak truth to power. He said:

“For the sake of Zion, I will not be silent. For the sake of Jerusalem, I will not be still until her justice shines bright and her salvation glows like a flaming torch”.

Let us light a torch of truth and justice to safeguard our common future.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister of Public Affairs and the Diaspora of the State of Israel for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister and Minister of Public Affairs and the Diaspora of the State of Israel, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Gunnar Bragi Sveinsson, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iceland.

Mr. Sveinsson (Iceland): Next year we will celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations. As we approach that milestone, it is good to reflect on the successes of our Organization: the extensive codification of international law, advances in combating poverty and disease, and fighting human rights abuses. We have established monitoring mechanisms, such as the human rights treaty bodies, and accountability tools, such as the International Criminal Court, and agreed on historic policy targets that have transformed international cooperation, such as the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. Masood Khan (Pakistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

These are not small achievements, but sitting on our laurels is not an option. The system of rule-bound relations between nations is under threat, and we must protect it. Most worrying is the growing disregard for international law. This erodes the international legal framework we have developed since the Second World War. A shocking recent example is the terrorist group operating in Iraq and Syria, the self-styled Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. As human beings, we are revolted by its brutality and appalled by its mindless destruction.

The international community cannot accept the disregard for the fundamental principles of the United Nations — indeed, of human decency — shown by this group. Iceland therefore agrees with the lawful actions taken to end these atrocities by countries of the region and from other parts of the world. Iceland will contribute humanitarian aid through the United Nations agencies. No civilized nation can look the other way when the barbarism and cruelty are so overwhelming. The United Nations and international law must be centre stage, and we underscore the role of the Security Council in maintaining international peace and security.

The suffering of the Syrian people and the total disrespect for humanitarian law in that civil war are equally shocking. Almost 200,000 people have died, 3 million refugees are abroad, and the country is in ruins. The prolonged foreign occupation of the State of Palestine is another violation of international law. Land-grabbing continues unabated. The blockade of Gaza shows no signs of being lifted. Violations of human rights continue, including against freedom of movement, the right to freedom of speech and assembly and property rights.

This summer, a pointless war between Israel and Gaza caused an unacceptable loss of life. I condemn the indiscriminate rocket attacks of Hamas and other militant organizations in Gaza against civilian targets in Israel. I also condemn the disproportionate use of force by the Israel Defense Forces, which resulted in more than 2,000 deaths in Gaza. Let the loss of life not have been in vain and let the future of Palestinian children be a future without foreign occupation. A two-State solution, with the comprehensive support of neighbouring countries and robust international peacekeeping arrangements, should be the objective. To the Palestinians I say, “Reconcile. Be your own best friends so you can build a free and sovereign Palestine ensuring fundamental rights and freedom for all”. To the Israelis, I say, “The current situation is unsustainable. Be brave, be wise and give peace a chance. The occupation of Palestine must end.”

The violation of Ukraine’s territorial integrity breaches the Charter of the United Nations, international law and numerous treaties. The illegal annexation of Crimea threatens security and stability throughout Europe. The credibility of the Security Council is seriously undermined when a permanent member violates the Charter by using force to change borders, and then can veto the necessary response and actions by the body empowered to maintain international peace and security. The Council is also undermined when it proves incapable of defending civilians who are subject to foreign occupation or is unable to prevent the use of chemical weapons.

The United Nations was founded to ensure that the fate of nations would never again be decided at the barrel of a gun. Recent events have shown that we must reaffirm our commitment to the Charter of the United Nations and other legal instruments to safeguard the foundations of a just and peaceful world. This holds particularly true for the Security Council. In its role

of maintaining international peace and security, its compass should be the Charter of the United Nations and international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law. It should apply the law equally to all parties. The Council needs to become more solution-oriented and directly engaged. Its working methods must improve, especially the application of the veto. Iceland supports the recent French- and Mexican-led proposal for framing the veto in cases of mass atrocities. The Council should also make use of its referral power as intended by the Rome Statute.

In a world riven by inequality, poverty and conflict, it is a challenge to chart a path towards the future we want. Since the most recent general debate, we have made real progress in preparing for the decisions to be taken next year on a new framework for sustainable development. The year ahead will be a test of our resolve to deliver. Iceland will participate constructively in the negotiations for the post-2015 agenda, as well as for a new regime to address climate change.

Allow me to highlight a few issues that I believe to be fundamental. With an increasing world population, measures to ensure food security are more important than ever. For 3 billion people, seafood provides about 20 per cent of their intake of animal protein. Nine to 12 per cent of the global population depends on the seafood sector for their livelihood. Yet we have a paradox. Overfishing remains a widespread problem, but at the same time fisheries are greatly underperforming. With improved infrastructure and better management, the economic benefits from marine fisheries could be increased by \$50 billion per year, or more than half the value of the global seafood trade.

It is clear that ocean issues are one of the keys to the post-2015 development agenda. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea provides a sound legal basis on which States can harness their marine resources. Iceland remains firmly loyal to the Convention, and we build our marine policy on scientific research where sustainability guides all our decisions. The Convention on the Law of the Sea has been instrumental to Iceland's success, yet what is often lacking is the capacity of States to implement effective monitoring and sustainable harvesting. Iceland has been sharing know-how through the United Nations University Fisheries Training Programme in Iceland, where over 1,500 experts have benefited from post-graduate studies and workshops in the field.

The second key area for ensuring food security is land. Every decade, 120 million hectares of land — an area the size of South Africa — are lost to desertification and drought. Climate change is contributing to an ever-faster rate of land degradation, which in turn releases greenhouse gases, creating a vicious circle. Switching to sustainable land management is therefore not only crucial to food and water security, but an important factor in mitigating and adapting to climate change. This is why Iceland argues strongly for measures to achieve a land-degradation neutral world. Iceland contributes actively to these efforts through the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General in New York and through the United Nations University Land Restoration Training Programme in Iceland.

A third key area is to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. No society can develop without energy, yet today over 1.3 billion people have no access to electricity. As energy production grows, it is essential to substantially increase the share of renewable energy in the global energy supply by 2030. Iceland is contributing to that effort. We have partnered with a group of countries and the International Renewable Energy Agency to identify opportunities and to support mechanisms to scale up geothermal production. In that connection, we invite Member States to join the Global Geothermal Alliance. Iceland has also been working with the World Bank on projects in the Great African Rift Valley, and we have run the Geothermal Training Programme of the United Nations University in Iceland for 35 years.

In Iceland and the other Nordic countries, the revolution in women's education and the high level of female participation in the labour market have been the basis of our welfare and economic prosperity. Without the full and equal participation of women in all spheres of society, including in decision-making, it will be impossible to make real and lasting progress in addressing sustainable development challenges. The stand-alone goal on gender equality and women's empowerment agreed in the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals must be maintained. But we should not stop there. Gender equality must be further mainstreamed throughout the new framework. In that regard, I cannot leave out the centrality of ensuring sexual and reproductive health and rights.

We must continue to fight for the full implementation of the commitments we made almost 20 years ago in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for

Action. Iceland is proud to support UN-Women in the campaign to celebrate Beijing+20. We have partnered with Suriname to lead a friends' group of countries to galvanize support to promote gender equality and to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Declaration. We call on Member States to join that effort and take concrete actions on the 12 themes of the Platform for Action.

For our part, we want to bring men and boys to the table on gender equality in a positive way. Iceland and Suriname will convene a "barbershop" conference in January 2015, where men will discuss gender equality with other men, with a special focus on addressing violence against women. That will be a unique conference, as it will be the first time at the United Nations that we bring together only male leaders to discuss gender equality. It will provide an exceptional contribution to the Beijing+20 conference and the HeForShe campaigns.

We have been reminded in recent weeks of the fragility of human beings and the need for us to work together on the biggest threats to humankind. Let me express our sympathy for and solidarity with the States suffering from the Ebola outbreak. The Government of Iceland will join in the international effort to curb the outbreak with financial contributions to United Nations agencies.

Next year, the States Members of the United Nations will come together to make important decisions on how to address climate change and pursue sustainable development. In the North, Arctic biodiversity and ecosystems are threatened by climate change, and sustainable harvesting of natural resources is vital. I pledge Iceland's commitment to work for bold decisions on the future of our planet and the increased prosperity of the world community in the year 2015. May the wise words of Nelson Mandela come true as we navigate that path: "It always seems impossible until it's done."

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Phandu Skelemani, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Botswana.

Mr. Skelemani (Botswana): It is a singular honour and privilege for me to address this gathering of the international community. Allow me, on behalf of His Excellency the President of the Republic of Botswana, Lieutenant General Seretse Khama Ian Khama, to join other delegations in extending our warmest congratulations to the President on his election to the

presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. We are confident that his vast experience and dedicated service to the Government and people of Uganda will contribute significantly to the successful conclusion of this session. My delegation and I wish him every success as he embarks on this new responsibility of steering the work of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly. We also extend fitting tribute to his predecessor, His Excellency Ambassador John Ashe, for his sterling leadership of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly. We commend him for his tireless efforts to overcome many of the challenges confronting the international community today.

My delegation welcomes the theme that the President has chosen for the current general debate, namely, "Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda". We consider it both pertinent and timely, especially as it coincides with ongoing efforts by Member States to formulate a new global development agenda to succeed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We shall tirelessly work with the President and the international community as we define the post-2015 development agenda. The priorities that the President has laid out for this session of the Assembly, that is, the issues of climate change, poverty eradication, the empowerment of women and gender equality, the rule of law and international peace and security, are among the most critical and central to the success and sustainability of a global development agenda.

As we draw the curtain on the Millennium Development Goals, it is important that we reflect on our successes and failures in order to draw vital lessons from our experience. The global community, most notably in the developing world, has faced significant challenges in fully realizing the MDGs. That has resulted in many of our countries failing to deliver tangible development achievements to their citizens, as cogently set out in the MDGs, despite their best efforts and intentions. We continue to witness intolerable levels of poverty, disease, economic stagnation and environmental degradation, as well as other drawbacks, precipitated in large part by natural disasters and severe resource and capacity constraints.

While Botswana has made impressive gains in the implementation of the MDGs, it has not been without enormous challenges, chief among which were resource and capacity constraints. The Botswana Government has strived to achieve the MDGs and improve the quality of

life of its citizens by allocating a substantial percentage of the national budget to the sectors with significant bearing on the country's development, including education, health, infrastructure, the development of human capital, and women and youth empowerment. Botswana continues to make every effort, in the remaining time before the target 2015 completion date, to finish the unfinished business remaining from the MDGs, especially Goals 4 and 5, relating to infant and maternal mortality.

The outbreak of the deadly Ebola virus disease, evolving, as it did, into a public health catastrophe, is a serious setback to the achievement of the MDGs. We therefore implore the Assembly to call on all partners and organizations of goodwill to spare no effort in rescuing the West African region from that scourge.

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development of 2012 mapped a clear and strategic path for the achievement of global sustainable development, calling for an inclusive and transformative agenda that integrates the three pillars of sustainable development, namely, economic, social and environmental protection.

Botswana has keenly followed the work of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, which has had as its primary objective the formulation of a single, transformative and global development agenda, as mandated by the Rio+20 outcome document. We are highly encouraged by the spirit of consultation and the collective will and commitment of the international community to craft an ambitious yet inclusive, measurable and sustainable set of goals, which should inspire and challenge us all to excel in our quest for the attainment of the future we want. I commend the co-Chairs of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals for their exceptional performance in driving the negotiation process to its logical conclusion. We look forward to the intergovernmental negotiations on the broader post-2015 development framework, which will begin during this session of the General Assembly. I assure the Assembly of our fullest cooperation and constructive engagement in those deliberations.

My delegation will actively participate in all deliberations on the key development priorities outlined by the Secretary-General, in particular the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda. However, there are issues of major strategic importance to Botswana. They include climate change, landlocked developing

countries, middle-income countries, countries in special situations and issues of peace and security and the advancement of human rights.

On climate change, Botswana knows only too well the devastating effects of that phenomenon, which continues to cause extreme temperatures, changes in the patterns of rainfall, land degradation, desertification and persistent droughts. In that regard, we believe that addressing those problems should be a primary consideration in the current deliberations on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda. We therefore look forward to the twentieth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Lima this year, which is supposed to lay the foundation for a legally binding agreement for adoption at the next Conference of the Parties in Paris. We commend the Secretary-General for his initiative in convening the recently concluded Climate Change Summit, which successfully injected much-needed political momentum into the process as we move towards 2015.

As a middle-income, landlocked developing country with particular vulnerabilities, we also strongly hope for a comprehensive account of those issues in the post-2015 development agenda. We welcome the 10-year review of the Almaty Programme of Action, to be held in November in Vienna, which will broadly consider effective mechanisms for addressing the vulnerabilities of landlocked developing countries. We hope that, during the review, special attention will also be given to countries with ever-increasing elephant populations, whose numbers not only give rise to serious animal-human conflict, but also devastate the very environment that the elephants depend on for their survival. Botswana has the largest elephant population in Africa.

On issues of social development, I am delighted to inform the Assembly that Botswana is making steady progress in eradicating abject poverty, as a result of the implementation of the national poverty eradication strategy that was launched in 2010. Furthermore, we have been able to achieve universal primary education and access to HIV/AIDS treatment, care and support services. However, challenges remain on the issues of maintaining quality in education and general services.

Financial support, technology transfer and capacity-building must invariably be factored into the post-2015 development agenda discussions. Failing

that, our efforts towards poverty eradication and sustainable development will be rendered futile. We keenly await the adoption of the new development agenda, which will, we trust, support our individual and collective efforts to deliver our shared aspirations of a safe, secure and prosperous world for both present and future generations.

Threats to international peace and security continue to be among the greatest challenges to human development. Botswana is gravely concerned about the increasing trend of instability, insecurity and violent conflict in various parts of the world. We are currently witnessing unimaginable levels of human suffering, with thousands of innocent lives being lost and the world hurtling precipitously towards calamitous levels of humanitarian crises.

The Palestine/Israel conflict and the protracted brutal war in Syria defy human imagination. In Africa, the frequent eruption of violent conflicts in certain parts of our continent, now particularly in South Sudan and the Central African Republic, are distressing. Regrettably, Iraq is also under siege by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and the Nusra Front. Those terrorist groups threaten not only the stability and security of the Middle East, but the maintenance of international peace and security at large.

Not only are we failing as nation States to exercise our duty and responsibility to protect populations from war crimes and crimes against humanity, we in effect inadvertently acquiesce in the annihilation of future generations. Last June, Botswana and the Netherlands co-hosted the fourth meeting of the Global Network of Focal Points on the Responsibility to Protect, in an effort to further consolidate that fundamental principle, which promotes our individual and collective sense of responsibility towards our citizens.

While such efforts may be effective in terms of awareness-raising, swift and decisive action remains the domain of the Security Council. It is therefore incumbent upon members of the Security Council to demonstrate exemplary leadership and a genuine regard for their Charter responsibilities to maintain international peace and security, as mandated by Article 24 of the Charter. Botswana is deeply disappointed and concerned that some permanent members of the Security Council consistently thwart any efforts to find lasting solutions to conflict situations. Surely, responsible members of the international community would not, and should

not, abdicate their solemn responsibility and allow the Council to be seemingly impelled into a state of grim paralysis as the world burns towards extinction. Just this past May, the Council failed to adopt a draft resolution seeking to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court (ICC). Needless to say, that was nothing short of a travesty of international criminal justice.

Botswana's commitment to an effective international criminal justice system remains steadfast. To that end, we continue to support the independence and credibility of the ICC as the only existing international judicial mechanism available for the investigation and prosecution of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of aggression. However, the role of the Security Council in facilitating the work of the ICC cannot be over-emphasized. It is our sincere hope that, going forward, reason and basic human compassion will prevail in Council decisions aimed at eliminating threats to international peace and security and at fostering a global culture of judicial accountability, inclusive governance, the rule of law and respect for human rights. In that regard, Botswana welcomes the French initiative regarding voluntary restraint on the use of the veto by the permanent members of the Security Council in situations of mass atrocities.

Botswana also commends those countries, human rights defenders and humanitarian organizations that have valiantly contributed to efforts to relieve human suffering wherever it occurred around the world. We especially applaud Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his unwavering commitment to the pursuit of international peace and security, including addressing the plight of vulnerable groups in society, such as women and children.

Let me conclude by reiterating and reaffirming Botswana's commitment to the principles and ideals of the United Nations as enshrined in the Charter. We remain steadfast and resolute in our obligation as a member of the international community to contribute, in our own small way, to the creation of a peaceful, secure and prosperous world for all.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Wunna Maung Lwin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Mr. Wunna Maung Lwin (Myanmar): We are gathered here at a time when the world is facing

pressing global challenges and security threats that must be addressed collectively and with urgency. Our planet is heating up owing to the clear and imminent danger of climate change. Terrorism is rearing its ugly head once again. The global village is gripped with fear of the spreading Ebola epidemic. Tension and mistrust are building up among the major Powers, reminiscent of the rivalry of the Cold War. The number and scale of regional and local conflicts is growing in some parts of the world. One billion people are still trapped in poverty. The world we want is still a distant dream.

Climate change is no longer merely an issue for scientific argument; it is one of survival that requires our urgent action. Many developing countries economically dependent on agriculture, as well as small island States, will bear the brunt of its impact. It is of the utmost importance that we agree a new global commitment on climate protection and emissions-reduction objectives. My delegation is therefore thankful to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for organizing the Climate Summit 2014, whose message that urgent and united action is needed was loud and clear. Myanmar will continue to work together with the international community towards a meaningful, implementable and universal climate agreement in Paris in 2015.

In support of the vision of the President of the General Assembly for a transformative post-2015 development agenda, we must intensify our efforts at this session to set the world on the path to sustainable development in its economic, social and environmental dimensions. In that process, we must also work together to find effective means for implementation, including the mobilization of financial and technological support, in order to ensure the success of the new agenda and the sustainable development goals.

The Ebola outbreak in West Africa, with its unprecedented nature and scope, is alarming. We must not see that outbreak as unique to one particular people or place. It is a common challenge to all of humankind. Myanmar welcomes the swift and timely response by the Secretary-General in proactively establishing the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response.

Terrorism cannot be condoned for any reason or under any circumstances. Ruthless killings and atrocities in the name of religion must not be tolerated. Myanmar has always opposed terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We are not oblivious to the fate of those who have fallen victims to terrorism. The

international community must be united to eliminate those horrible crimes. In that regard, my delegation fully supports the statement issued by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Foreign Ministers a few days ago here in New York.

Myanmar firmly believes in the continued relevance and legitimacy of the United Nations in world affairs. We will continue to actively cooperate with it, in line with the principles of our foreign policy. Thanks to the positive changes in Myanmar, the cooperation between Myanmar and the United Nations is now better than ever. The United Nations and its agencies are showing greater interest in Myanmar, extending a helping hand to the people of Myanmar in all aspects of their lives. The Government, for its part, is facilitating the effective implementation of the United Nations missions.

The maintenance of international peace and security is one of the main purposes of the United Nations. Myanmar, as a peace-loving nation, abhors weapons of mass destruction and is fully cognizant of the danger of nuclear weapons. To that end, Myanmar has annually submitted, since 1995, a draft resolution on nuclear disarmament. We will do so once again at the present session of the General Assembly. We encourage all Member States to positively support our draft resolution. If we follow the road map in the resolution with a strong political will, a world free of nuclear weapons will be within our grasp soon.

I would like to inform the Assembly that Myanmar is making domestic preparations with a view to ratifying major international disarmament instruments. Considerable achievements have been made in that process. I am pleased to announce that the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, our Union Parliament, has just approved Myanmar's accession to the Biological Weapons Convention.

The winds of change have blown across Myanmar over the past three years. The scope and pace of positive changes in Myanmar have earned remarkable recognition and encouragement from the international community. Those changes have contributed to raising Myanmar's profile in the regional and international arena. On the regional stage, Myanmar held the Chair of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation until March this year. After successfully carrying out that responsibility, we are now shouldering the prestigious responsibility of chairing ASEAN. Under our chairmanship, ASEAN is

exerting its efforts to speed up the ASEAN community-building process with the theme of “Moving forward in unity to a peaceful and prosperous community”.

Myanmar is advancing well on the path of peaceful democratic transition, which began over three years ago by setting in motion various waves of political and economic reforms. The first wave was the peaceful transformation from a military Government to a multiparty democratic system, where all political forces are working together to overcome differences through dialogue in our two houses of Parliament. An all-inclusive political system has been established, bringing in all stakeholders in the process through national reconciliation. The first wave of reform brought about national reconciliation, the granting of a series of amnesties, the creation of greater political space, freedom of the media, freedom of expression, and freedom of association and peaceful assembly. It was followed by the second wave of reform, unleashing an array of political, economic, administrative and private sector development reforms. Now, the third wave of reform has been launched, which aims at laying down a firm foundation for a new democratic State and delivering benefits to the people by fulfilling their socioeconomic needs. We are determined to keep the reforms on track through ensuring peace, stability and national reconciliation.

Since our democracy is still in its infancy, we are facing a multitude of daunting challenges, like other countries in transition. The Government has a long to-do list despite its limited capacity. We are determined to overcome the challenges and we are convinced that we will achieve our objectives. We need the international community's understanding and continued support in our efforts for economic development and capacity-building to lay a solid foundation for a democratic society.

One of the issues that attracts domestic and international attention is the process of amending Myanmar's present Constitution. In that regard, the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw set up the Constitutional Amendment Review Joint Committee in July last year. Further, after soliciting suggestions and recommendations from the general public and political parties, the Constitutional Amendment Implementation Committee was formed to address the issues of constitutional amendment based on the suggestions received.

Putting democratic values into practice, the Government is placing much more emphasis and consideration on the aspirations of our people as a whole. Accordingly, we are laying foundations to successfully conduct an independent, free and fair election within a legal framework that does not compromise national sovereignty. In that context, Myanmar recently received the visit of a needs assessment mission from the United Nations. All existing political parties are expected to take part in the elections. The final decision will be made by the people on election day.

Peace and stability are prerequisites for political stability and for the socioeconomic development of the country. Strengthening national reconciliation is an integral part of our reform process. We are working together with all ethnic armed groups in good faith to reach a nationwide ceasefire agreement. So far we have already reached such an agreement with 14 out of the 16 groups. We are now working on a draft framework for political dialogue that will pave the way for bringing an end to the six-decade long conflict.

The Government is serious in its commitment to the success of the peace process. It is open to discussing all issues, except those that could undermine the unity and sovereignty of the State. The political dialogue will also become a historic forum for discussion of all issues of national concern. We are confident that we are now getting closer to achieving a comprehensive and lasting peace.

There has been steady progress in the promotion and protection of human rights in my country. A series of presidential amnesties have been granted, which creates an enabling environment for everyone to participate in the parliament, political parties, civil society organizations and labour organizations. The Myanmar National Human Rights Commission, which was first established in 2011, was reconstituted very recently with a view to functioning as an independent entity. Many complaint mechanisms, including the Commission, have been made available to citizens so that they can file complaints in the event of violation of their rights.

In this new era, press and media freedom is one of the most visible outcomes of the reforms. In contributing to the all-inclusive reform process, the media is getting more space now. The abolishment of decades-old press censorship, the publishing of a multitude of private newspapers and journals and the enactment of a new

media law are among the significant achievements in our media landscape.

With firm resolve, Myanmar is now combating human trafficking, preventing gender violence and protecting children. Sexual violence is a crime strongly abhorred in our traditional values and national culture. It is strictly forbidden by law. At the global summit in London in June this year, Myanmar joined the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict. Its signing of the Declaration reflects the country's State policy of zero tolerance for use of rape or sexual violence as a weapon of war. The Armed Forces of Myanmar are making important progress in its implementation of the action plan to end the recruitment of child soldiers in Myanmar. Due to our strong commitment, there is no new underage recruitment, unwittingly or otherwise.

All major human rights concerns have been addressed to a larger extent in the new Myanmar than before. We have now reached the middle tier of the human rights ladder. That progress is contributing to the better enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by the people of Myanmar. Therefore, we are now fully convinced that Myanmar should no longer remain on the agendas of the Human Rights Council and the Third Committee of the General Assembly.

We are also paying great attention to and making efforts to address the issue of the communal violence that had occurred between the two communities in Rakhine state. The history, diversity and complexity of the issue must be fully understood before jumping to conclusions. The situation should not be looked at in a superficial manner. The international community should contribute pragmatically and objectively to finding a durable solution. In addressing the root cause, we are working for peace, stability, harmony and development for all the people in Rakhine state. An action plan is being finalized and will soon be launched. Once in place, it will be implemented in a systematic and timely manner.

I take this opportunity to thank all international partners for contributing to our efforts to address the current needs of the affected people. As development is one of the main challenges in Rakhine state, I would also like to invite the international community, particularly the United Nations, to provide much-needed development assistance there.

The Government of Myanmar has been focusing on poverty reduction and rural development with a view to lifting the living standards of rural and urban people alike. We are striving to realize the structural changes from an agriculture-based economy to an industrial one. As those efforts become increasingly crystallized, we have been enjoying steady economic growth. We have achieved a growth rate in our gross domestic product of 5.6 per cent, 7.3 per cent and 8.7 per cent in the past three years, respectively.

That encouraging trend in economic growth and overall progress in our reform process has made us take an important decision. Taking this opportunity, I would like to announce that Myanmar is fully determined and has initiated the internal process to graduate from its least developed country (LDC) status. In that regard, President U Thein Sein has communicated to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, our intention and determination to graduate from LDC status. A high-level national committee and subcommittees are actively coordinating domestic measures, including a transition strategy, for our graduation. We are now working closely with the relevant United Nations agencies for technical and necessary assistance.

Myanmar has made tremendous progress over the past three and a half years, since it began wide-ranging reforms in transition to democracy. Myanmar's success in peaceful transformation was even lauded as a model in the world today. Despite all those achievements, there remain many challenges and hurdles on our path to democracy and development. We are fully aware of those daunting challenges. We will not be complacent. We are resolute and determined to continue our unrelenting efforts aimed at reform and the building of a democratic State.

Myanmar is changing, and changing in the right direction. We are laying a solid foundation for a democratic State in which we can live in harmony, peace and prosperity. Developments in Myanmar should also be viewed in a more balanced and objective manner. It is the primary responsibility of the people of Myanmar to realize their long-held aspirations for democracy, peace and prosperity. The continued support and understanding of the international community would contribute positively to Myanmar's reform process. Rome was not built in a day.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Albert del Rosario, Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Philippines.

Mr. Del Rosario (Philippines): On behalf of the Philippine Government, we offer our warmest congratulations to Mr. Kutesa on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. I assure him of the Philippines' steadfast support as he provides the leadership and inspiration in the daunting task of continuing the pursuit of a transformative and inclusive post-2015 development agenda. In choosing the theme for his presidency, he has positioned people at the centre of this development agenda. This people-centred agenda is also at the core of President Benigno S. Aquino III's Social Contract with the Filipino People, which is underpinned by a regime of good governance.

I would like to address the following issues, which are consistent with both the President's Social Contract and the United Nations post-2015 development agenda: progress on the Millennium Development Goals; climate change and disaster-risk reduction and management; the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham; the Ebola virus disease outbreak; peace, security and the rule of law; disarmament, peacekeeping, migration, the protection of women and children; and the call for United Nations reforms.

Fourteen years ago, a shared vision of a decent and secure life for all our peoples motivated us to adopt the Millennium Development Goals. We all vowed to undertake a mission to fight poverty and disease; grant children of school age access to primary education; improve gender equality, care for mothers and children; provide our communities with safe drinking water; protect our environment from further degradation; and mobilize international partnerships and resources to help those in great need. Today, based on the latest report on the Millennium Development Goals, our collective efforts have reduced by half the number of people living in extreme poverty, provided over 2 billion people with access to safe drinking water, and achieved success in the fight against malaria and tuberculosis. But, with one year to go, much remains to be done.

The Philippines' scorecard shows that we have made considerable progress in the areas of extreme poverty eradication, under age 5 mortality, the fight against both malaria and tuberculosis, access to safe drinking water, and gender equality. Like many other developing

nations, however, we continue to face challenges in other areas. We have recently taken pause to consider new strategies. We have also realized the importance of strengthening good-quality data collection and analysis as a tool for measuring our Millennium Development Goals and to aid our decision-making.

A year ago, before this very same Assembly, the Philippines called for a post-2015 development agenda anchored in respect and promotion of human rights, accountable governance and inclusive development (see A/68/PV.22). All our current national efforts are founded on these pillars.

The greatest challenge to the Philippines in meeting the Millennium Development Goals has been the series of disasters that have visited our country. Super-typhoon Haiyan, the strongest typhoon to have hit landfall in recorded history, had a significant impact on the modest progress we had achieved towards the Millennium Development Goals. This and the disasters in other parts of the world remind us of the urgent need to address climate change.

Two months ago, we completed a comprehensive rehabilitation and recovery plan for the Haiyan-affected areas. The comprehensive plan requires a considerable amount of resources and effort, but the Philippines and its international partners are determined to see this massive rebuilding and rehabilitation plan to full completion. We are resolute in not only building back, but building back better. Once again, let me reiterate the Filipino people's gratitude for the outpouring of assistance from the international community for the victims and survivors of Haiyan. Its response and solidarity were indeed timely, overwhelming and inspiring. At this time, we look forward to the forthcoming Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan, and to the first-ever World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, Turkey, during which we hope to share the lessons we have learned from Haiyan.

Just as the international community mobilized as one in extending help to the Philippines in the aftermath of Haiyan, it should also do so in the case of two present-day scourges: the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) and the Ebola virus disease outbreak. The Philippines condemns the war crimes and crimes against humanity being perpetrated by ISIS. We support Security Council resolution 2178 (2014) on foreign terrorist fighters, adopted on 24 September,

because we believe that resolute and immediate action is necessary to suppress that group. As a responsible member of the international community, the Philippines will do its part in the global efforts to thwart ISIS and its false ideologies.

On the Ebola virus disease outbreak, the Philippines recognizes its threat to global health and its impact on development. Based on our capacity, we will support the international community's efforts in arresting the spread of this scourge through the auspices of the World Health Organization.

Development efforts are jeopardized by setbacks brought about by threats to peace, security and the rule of law. We must ensure that conflicts do not undermine any development agenda that we pursue. We must rededicate ourselves to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and relevant international conventions and agreements to resolve all conflicts peacefully and in accordance with the rule of law.

In this spirit, I am pleased to share the Philippine experience in building peace in the southern Philippines. With the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro, we are optimistic that peace dividends in the form of investments, jobs, economic opportunities, access to basic services and infrastructure will finally redound to the benefit of our Muslim brothers and sisters. We are grateful to the United Nations and the international community for their role in supporting us through the long and challenging journey of this peace process.

As we herald these achievements of peace at home, however, we face the reality of exacerbating tensions in our regional seas. Again, the Philippines has resorted to the rule of law in trying to resolve these tensions. The Philippines believes that the core instrument for resolving maritime disputes is the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). We have invited a State party to settle our maritime disputes peacefully through UNCLOS, including its provisions on dispute settlement, specifically arbitration under annex VII to the Convention.

However, it has refused to join us and has continued to unilaterally embark on an expansionist claim that violates the legitimate rights of the Philippines and other littoral neighbours under UNCLOS, such as their exclusive economic zones and continental shelves. Instead of peacefully resolving the maritime disputes within the framework of UNCLOS, the said State

has embarked on a series of dangerous, reckless and forceful activities in an attempt to impose unilateral change in the maritime status quo of the South China Sea. Those unilateral activities escalated the tensions and threatened peace and stability in the South China Sea.

In 2012, after forcibly occupying the tiny rocks of Scarborough Shoal, within 126 nautical miles of the Philippine island of Luzon, the aforementioned State refused to abide by a mutual agreement to de-escalate tensions by not withdrawing its vessels from the said rocks. Earlier this year, said State imposed a unilateral moratorium on fishing in some areas of the South China Sea that infringes on the legitimate sovereign rights of the Philippines and other coastal States to their exclusive economic zones. In the past two years, it has undertaken massive land reclamation activities in Johnson Reef, McKennan Reef, Hughes Reef, Cuarteron Reef and Gaven Reef in the Spratly Islands.

Those unilateral activities, among others, form part of a pattern of forcing a change in the maritime status quo in order to advance a so-called nine-dash line position, an expansive claim of indisputable sovereignty over nearly the entire South China Sea, which is in contravention of both the 2002 China and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea and the UNCLOS. The Philippines supports the Secretary-General's call for States parties to clearly define and publicize the limits of their respective maritime zones so that parties will have greater certainty concerning their maritime spaces.

UNCLOS provides a viable mechanism for resolving conflicts, *inter alia* through arbitration. Arbitration is an open, friendly and durable mechanism for the peaceful settlement of maritime disputes. Arbitration, in defining maritime entitlements, is intended to benefit all. Therefore, the Philippines is more determined than ever in its pursuit of all possible means under international law to keep the conflict from escalating and undermining regional peace, security, and stability.

At the 47th meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of ASEAN, in Nay Pyi Taw, the Philippines proposed the triple action plan to reduce tensions. Our triple action plan proposal contains immediate, intermediate and final approaches to address the provocative and destabilizing activities in the South China Sea. It is a positive, comprehensive and

constructive framework that brings together various initiatives that the Philippines and other countries have been advocating on the issue of the South China Sea for several years.

As an immediate approach, the triple action plan calls for the cessation of specific activities that escalate tensions in the region, pursuant to paragraph 5 of the 2002 ASEAN-China Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea. Paragraph 5 calls for, first, self-restraint; secondly, no inhabitation of uninhabited features, including massive reclamation; and thirdly, the handling of differences in a constructive manner. For the intermediate approach to managing tensions until a final resolution is achieved, the triple action plan highlights the need for the full and effective implementation of the Declaration and the expeditious conclusion of a code of conduct. As a final approach, the triple action plan underscores the need for a settlement mechanism to bring the disputes to a final and enduring resolution anchored in international law.

The Philippines is pursuing such a resolution through arbitration and believes that the arbitration decision will clarify maritime entitlements and will pave the way for the full resolution of the maritime disputes in the South China Sea. Those approaches under the triple action plan can be pursued simultaneously, and they do not prejudice territorial claims. We enjoin all to be united in addressing the challenge of resolving this issue in accordance with the rule of law.

On disarmament, the Philippines is deeply concerned about the threat of weapons of mass destruction, from the Middle East to the Korean peninsula. The Philippines has remained firm in its position on the total and complete elimination of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. The Philippines strongly believes that the conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction should be convened as soon as possible. The Six-Party Talks on the Korean peninsula should restart. We need a successful outcome to the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to ensure the credibility of the Treaty.

The Philippines strongly supports the ongoing discourse on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons that has been gaining ground within and outside the United Nations. We will continue to lend our voice to calls for nuclear disarmament until we have reached the goal of global zero. The Philippines also

deplores the use of landmines and improvised explosive devices and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, which, unfortunately, still continue around the world.

United Nations peacekeeping missions are crucial to international peace and security. The Philippines, through its continuous participation in peacekeeping missions, has shown its steadfast commitment to contributing to that worthy cause. Let me take this opportunity to thank our partners in the international community for their invaluable assistance in recent incidents involving our Philippine peacekeepers, specifically in the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force in the Golan Heights. Our collective action has highlighted the importance that the international community continues to accord to United Nations peacekeeping.

In the face of grave danger, Filipino peacekeepers have bravely helped to safeguard world peace. They have served with honour, distinction and professionalism in implementing peacekeeping mandates. We are deeply concerned about the continuing and emerging dangers faced by all United Nations peacekeepers, and urge the United Nations and all fellow Member States to ensure that those dangers are addressed comprehensively. We believe that outstanding operational and tactical issues relating to United Nations peacekeeping must be resolved at the highest levels as soon as possible. The Philippines reiterates its solid commitment to upholding multilateral peacekeeping, collective security and the rule of law.

When we speak of inclusive development, we must take into full account the invaluable contributions that migrant workers make to global development and progress. Their well-being is a shared responsibility and part of the international community's commitment to promoting inclusive societies. Those migrants are especially vulnerable in times of conflict and should not be forgotten. They deserve the complete support and cooperation of the international community in ensuring their safety, security and well-being. For such an important task, all countries — whether receiving, transit or sending — must be fully involved.

We are also alarmed that migrants, particularly women and children, continue to be victims of trafficking. National and international efforts to prevent trafficking, prosecute traffickers and assist in the recovery and rehabilitation of victims must be strengthened. From a broader perspective, we should

fully respect the rights of migrants by according them equal treatment in all countries. The Philippines will continue to support efforts to protect the basic rights of migrants, recognize their contributions to development and secure for them a place in the inclusive societies that we envision in the post-2015 development agenda.

As we discuss and negotiate the best ways to deliver and implement the post-2015 development agenda, we should take concrete action on the proposed United Nations reforms that have been the subject of years of discussions and dialogues. The Philippines supports change and reform in the United Nations to strengthen its ability to meet new demands and deliver its mandate in the most effective, transparent, accountable and efficient manner. Reforms should include a better selection process for the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and executive heads of the United Nations; an increase in the membership of the Security Council; a review of the use of the veto power in the Security Council; an increased budget

for peacekeeping missions; and ways to make full and effective use of partnerships across the range of United Nations activities. For example, if we were to elect a woman to be the next Secretary-General of the United Nations, that would be a powerful signal on gender equality and empowerment.

As we set the stage to roll out a new set of goals for the post-2015 development agenda, let us not lose track of the equal importance of an enabling political and social environment to support the goals. When conflicts and insecurity endure, when disasters strike, when pandemics break out, when terrorism spreads and when the Earth's bounties are confronted with depletion, we face the real danger that our development agenda will fail. It is our responsibility, therefore, as States Members of the United Nations, to exert every effort and expend every resource at our command to make the United Nations the instrument for promoting peace, progress and development.

The meeting rose at 2.20 p.m.