



General Assembly

Seventy-sixth session

12th plenary meeting

Friday, 24 September 2021, 9 a.m.
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Official Records

President: Mr. Shahid (Maldives)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Malovrh (Slovenia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 9 a.m.

Agenda item 8 (continued)

General debate

Address by Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Cyprus.

Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

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

President Anastasiades: At the outset, I would like to congratulate the elected President of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session, His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid, and the Secretary-General, Mr. Antonio Guterres, on his recent reappointment to a second five-year mandate. I assure them of my Government's unwavering support for their missions.

This is the ninth consecutive year that I have attended the general debate of the General Assembly. Every year, our deliberations focus on important issues

regarding developments and challenges that are critical for humankind with the aim, through collective action, of addressing them effectively. Taking stock of our declarations and decisions over time, I must confess that — like many of us here — I feel a deep sense of disappointment. That sense of disappointment results from witnessing a widening gap between words and deeds, and between the auspicious declarations and commitments that are made and the results of the measures that we promise to deliver.

In all honesty, how many times have we spoken about the need to address regional disputes, invoking the Charter of the United Nations as well as the decisions and resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council? To what extent do the weakness or insufficient implementation of our decisions perpetuate conflicts and encourage violations that, in turn, proliferate humanitarian crises? How often have we spoken about the dire need to tackle major global challenges such as poverty, hunger, child mortality, social and economic exclusion, a lack of adequate health care and a shortage of educational opportunities? How compliant are we in the implementation of what we have agreed with regard to the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change?

I could expand into numerous other problems, the resolution of which could have been possible had the United Nations implemented its relevant decisions. That is why our collective and shared failure to decisively tackle the challenges I referred to has let down and disappointed many people across the world

In accordance with decision 75/573, and without setting a precedent for mandated high-level meetings planned for future high-level weeks, the official records of the General Assembly will be supplemented by annexes containing pre-recorded statements submitted by Heads of State or other dignitaries, submitted to the President no later than the day on which such statements are delivered in the Assembly Hall. Submissions in this regard should be made to estatements@un.org.



whose fundamental human rights and dignity are not adequately protected.

At the same time, it has also led to the rise of worrisome developments such as religious fundamentalism, violent extremism, sectarianism, the destruction of cultural heritage, civil war and ethnic conflict. What is equally alarming is that the combination of that has led to the forced displacement of millions of people and created unprecedented waves of refugees and migratory flows, exerting huge economic and social pressures on all countries and regions affected.

Unfortunately — and we have to be honest with ourselves — selfish interests hinder the founding principles of the United Nations, in which humankind has vested its hopes for a prosperous and peaceful future. In order to achieve that objective, there is only one answer: multilateralism, tangible solidarity and stronger partnerships that are based on a positive agenda. It is for that reason that we lend our unwavering support to the reform and revitalization priorities of the Secretary-General, which aim to reinforce the effectiveness of the Organization and further advance peacekeeping and peacebuilding, humanitarian assistance and long-term development and growth.

What I have just referred to is by no means intended to belittle the numerous achievements of the work of the United Nations. My remarks and observations aim to emphasize the need to transform, via reforms, an Organization that will give real hope to those in need of international protection and to the quest for collective peace and security and development — in other words, to turn the United Nations into a much more effective Organization.

My strong and honest words are not unintentional. I stand here before the Assembly representing a country that, regrettably, still endures the consequences of the blatant violation of the fundamental principles of the United Nations as a result of the 1974 illegal military invasion by Turkey and the ongoing occupation. Ever since, both the General Assembly and the Security Council have issued numerous decisions and resolutions that call on Turkey to end the illegal occupation and withdraw its occupying troops, establishing at the same time the basis for reaching a comprehensive solution to the Cyprus problem. Those decisions and resolutions, in the absence of resolve and the necessary means for their implementation, have led to the audacity of the

invader, which tries to be portrayed as a victim instead of the perpetrator it actually is.

It is not my intention to engage in a blame game, but I cannot leave unnoticed the absurdity of the Turkish rhetoric, which lies in their claim that efforts towards reaching a compromise have been exhausted and that our focus should now be on reaching a settlement based on the so-called realities on the ground. Let me remind members what the true realities on the ground are.

Is it not a fact that 37 per cent of the territory of the Republic of Cyprus, a European Union member State, remains under Turkish military occupation, with more than 40,000 troops still on the ground? Is it not a fact that after the Turkish invasion, one third of Greek Cypriots were forced to leave their ancestral homes? Is it not a fact that, while the Turkish Cypriots own approximately 14 per cent of privately owned land, today they usurp 37 per cent of the island?

Is it not a fact that they looted churches, destroyed archaeological sites and thousands of years of cultural heritage? Is it not a fact that they killed thousands of people and committed atrocities of all kinds and today almost 1,000 persons are still missing? Is it not a fact that they have sent hundreds of thousands of Turkish nationals to the occupied areas, thereby severely altering the demographic character of the island, turning the Turkish Cypriots into a minority in the areas they occupy? Is it not a fact that they have never implemented the 1975 Agreement on the status of the enclaved persons, who then numbered more than 23,000? Today there are only 350 of them.

Is it not a fact that all the aforementioned crimes have been condemned by the European Court of Human Rights and the Council of Europe in a plethora of decisions, with Turkey failing to comply with even one ruling? Is it not a fact that Turkey has established an illegal entity in the occupied areas, which is under its absolute political, economic, societal, cultural and religious control — a control that is also denounced by the majority of Turkish Cypriots; an illegal entity described by the European Court of Human Rights as a subordinate local administration of Turkey?

Is it not a fact that Turkey tries to equate the State, the internationally recognized Republic of Cyprus, member of the United Nations and the European Union, with the illegal secessionist entity? Is it not a fact that the aforementioned proclamation of the purported secession has been condemned by the Security Council

and considered legally invalid? And is it not a fact that the Security Council called for its reversal and for all States and the international community, as a whole, not to accept or in any way assist it? Is it not a fact that, recently, with the presence of President Erdoğan in Cyprus, they are trying to change the status of the fenced city of Famagusta, contrary to Security Council resolutions and the condemnation of the international community?

During his address to the General Assembly on Tuesday, the President of Turkey, Mr. Erdoğan, stated,

“[w]e hope that the problems regarding maritime boundary delimitation will be resolved within the framework of international law and good-neighbourly relations” (*A/76/PV.3, p.41*).

I wonder to which international law Mr. Erdoğan refers. Is it not a fact that Turkey refuses to ratify and abide by the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which codifies relevant customary international law? How does Mr. Erdoğan understand the settlement of disputes concerning delimitations? Is he referring to Turkey's own arbitrary interpretation of international law, which reduces the exclusive economic zone of Cyprus by 44 per cent, at the expense of Greek and Turkish Cypriots alike?

President Erdoğan also spoke of the need to maintain good-neighbourly relations. I again ask which country invaded and to date still occupies Cyprus? Which country invaded Syria? Which country violates the sovereignty of Iraq? Which country interferes in the internal affairs of Libya? Which country violates the sovereign rights of Greece? Which country interfered in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict?

The narrative also put forward by the Turkish side, according to which all efforts to reach a compromise have failed and we should therefore seek solutions outside the United Nations framework, reinforces the valid argument that Turkey's end-game is not to solve the Cyprus problem but to turn Cyprus into its protectorate. I will elaborate.

In paragraph 27 of his report of 28 September 2017 (S/2017/814), with reference to the outcome of the Conference on Cyprus at Crans-Montana, the Secretary-General rightly assessed that all internal elements included in his six-point framework were almost, or about to be, resolved. Therefore, while the aim of the Secretary-General to reach a strategic

agreement was within close reach, the reason for the unsuccessful outcome was Turkey's inflexible stance and insistence on maintaining the anachronistic Treaty of Guarantee, the right of intervention and a permanent presence of troops.

Furthermore, following the Conference held at Crans-Montana, in line with our commitment to resume the peace process, both leaders — I and my counterpart, the Turkish Cypriot leader — and the Secretary-General reached a joint understanding on 25 November 2019 on the principles that should guide the resumption of a new round of negotiations, namely, the Joint Declaration of 2014, the convergences reached so far and the six-point framework presented by the Secretary-General at Crans-Montana.

Following that, one would expect the next step to be the resumption of negotiations. Nevertheless, with Turkish objectives being different, we witnessed blatant intervention by Turkey to oust the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community, with whom the aforementioned joint understanding was reached.

The evident goal was for him to be replaced by a new leadership that reproduces and adopts Turkey's position on changing the agreed basis for a settlement, with the ultimate goal being a two-State solution. Therefore, it is clear why a compromise cannot be reached when one side deviates from the United Nations framework or annuls agreements reached and aspires to a different form of settlement, contrary to the agreed basis and the good-offices mandate of the Secretary-General.

Part of the Turkish agenda is also the creation of a new fait accompli on the ground in Famagusta, in full contravention and violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 550 (1984) and 789 (1992). All such actions are clearly intended to destroy the prospects of a settlement based on the agreed United Nations framework.

A compromise becomes even more difficult to reach when new ideas put forward by our side, as requested by the Secretary-General and in an effort to move the process forward, are blatantly rejected.

I have proposed the decentralization of the exercise of powers, which we deem as the appropriate balance between the enhancement of the constituent States' essential role and the unhindered functioning of the State, including at the international level.

I have also flagged our willingness to consider the option of a parliamentary system with a ceremonial Head of State and a rotating Prime Minister.

More recently, I even extended an invitation to the Turkish Cypriots to rejoin the State institutions established by the 1960 Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus, thereby fully implementing, *mutatis mutandis*, its relevant provisions. It goes without saying that such an invitation is not meant to be an alternative to the agreed basis of the settlement. It is meant to ease the Turkish Cypriot community back into the State pending a final settlement, provided a strategic agreement is reached, thereby fully participating in the evolution of the Republic of Cyprus into a federal State.

That proposal should also be assessed in conjunction with the package of game-changing, win-win, confidence-building measures that I proposed last December and which were unfortunately rejected by the Turkish side. Those confidence-building measures are still on the table.

I would like to assure the Assembly about my determination to set the negotiation process back on track, on the basis of the United Nations framework and the agreement reached in Berlin on 25 November 2019. For us, there is only one plan, that is, to reach a settlement on the basis of a bizonal, bicomunal federation with political equality, as set out in relevant Security Council resolutions and in line with the principles on which the EU is founded; a settlement that will lead to a functional and viable State, without the obsolete system of guarantees, the right of intervention, the presence of Turkish troops or any kind of foreign dependencies; and a settlement that will equally benefit all Cypriots — Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots — while fully respecting their human rights and contributing to the peace and stability of the region.

My extensive reference to the Cyprus problem aims to highlight the need to address the realities and issues before us on the basis of the values and the principles of international law, and not on the basis of the law arbitrarily interpreted by the powerful.

The chosen theme of this year's General Assembly, "Building resilience through hope — to recover from COVID-19, rebuild sustainably, respond to the needs of the planet, respect the rights of people and revitalize the United Nations", is of course very timely and relevant to the momentous challenges that we need to tackle.

As our actions are interconnected and have an impact on one another, we — all the nations of the world — made a collective pledge to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals so as to address universal challenges, to which I have already alluded, for the benefit of humankind.

At the same time, we must all realize that we are at a defining moment for climate change. Taking into account the alarming projections concerning its impact on our immediate region, namely, the eastern Mediterranean and the greater Middle East, Cyprus has undertaken a coordinating role in the development of a regional action plan, consisting of two distinct components, that is, a scientific and, subsequently, an intergovernmental one.

I would be remiss if I did not refer to the recent developments in Afghanistan. We share a collective responsibility to uphold international humanitarian law, particularly with regard to the protection of women and minorities. We also need to ensure that Afghanistan does not become a safe haven for terrorism and extremism, or a breeding ground for organized crime, weapons and drug trafficking and renewed waves of migration.

Another region that is also considered synonymous with discord and strife is the Middle East and North Africa. In that regard, as a strong proponent of the ideal that the eastern Mediterranean and the greater Middle East can become an area of stability, peace and cooperation, Cyprus strives to actively promote an enhanced network of regional cooperation.

In conclusion, please allow me to stress that, in a fragmented and multipolar world, we have more than ever a moral, ethical and political duty to promote the essence of human civilization, unite our strength to maintain international peace and security and establish conditions that can bring prosperity and welfare to all.

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

Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Muhammadu Buhari, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Mr. Muhammadu Buhari, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Muhammadu Buhari, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Buhari: On behalf of the Government and the people of Nigeria, let me congratulate the President on his well-deserved election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session. I would like to assure him of the full support and cooperation of the Nigerian delegation throughout his tenure.

I would like to commend his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Volkan Bozkir, for the many remarkable achievements recorded during his tenure, despite the challenges posed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

Permit me to congratulate the Secretary-General, António Guterres, on his reappointment and to commend his strong commitment to making the United Nations more alive to its responsibilities. I also want to express my gratitude to him for reappointing Ms. Amina Mohammed as Deputy Secretary-General to assist him in discharging his responsibilities.

The theme of this year's General Assembly, "Building resilience through hope — to recover from COVID-19, rebuild sustainably, respond to the needs of the planet, respect the rights of people and revitalize the United Nations", sums up our common desire to rescue our planet, recover our economies and restore hope to all the peoples of the world. In that regard, my delegation will continue to support the United Nations as the indispensable forum for international cooperation and the cornerstone of the multilateral system, rooted in respect for international law, including international human rights law, and predicated on a rules-based order.

I want to thank the international community for its concerted response to COVID-19. The solidarity and

drive to contain the first truly global health emergency of our time is a pointer to the many things we can achieve if we work together.

For our part, Nigeria has made strenuous efforts to contain the virus and halt its deadly onslaught on our people. Our efforts have been rewarded with moderate success. At the outset, we recognize detection and contact-tracing to be important tools in combating the virus. In that connection, from a mere four laboratories with testing and detection capacities, we ramped up the capacity of our facilities to more than 140 centres today.

Similarly, we built isolation centres and emergency hospital wards in record time all over the country. We carry out genomic sequencing in designated laboratories across the country with a view to detecting variants in circulation. In addition, more than 40,000 health-care workers have recently been trained on infection prevention and control measures with the support of various partners.

Nigeria remains grateful for the assistance received from our partners and friends all over the world. Vaccination is the key to our safe emergence from the pandemic. We fully support the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access initiative, from which we have benefited. We also thank the United States of America, Turkey, India, China, the European Union and others for the vaccines provided.

Despite the acknowledgement, however, I would like to reiterate my call for a fairer and more equitable distribution of vaccines to all countries so that together we can fight and contain the pandemic. The rising wave of newer and more contagious strains makes that even more urgent. No country can afford the socioeconomic implications of prolonged shutdowns. It is imperative to underscore that no one is safe until everyone is safe.

Nigeria remains deeply concerned about the illicit trade, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons. Their excessive accumulation and uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world have devastating humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences, especially on the continent of Africa. In that regard, my delegation calls for the worldwide application of the Arms Trade Treaty to codify accountability in the conventional arms trade, which is critical to the security of nations. That is in recognition of the need for a broad-based global partnership in the ongoing battle against transborder crimes, including terrorism and piracy.

We must deal not only with the symptoms of conflict but also the immediate causes that fuel conflicts in the first place. Those include poor and undemocratic governance, human rights abuses, poverty, ignorance, injustice and inequalities. There are no easy solutions to those conditions. They require long-term investments and more effective international cooperation. In that connection, my delegation underscores the importance of promoting the peaceful, unfettered and inclusive participation of States in global actions towards conflict prevention. That will facilitate the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 of the African Union.

In West Africa especially, our democratic gains of previous decades are now being eroded. The recent trend of unconstitutional takeovers of power, sometimes in reaction to unilateral changes of constitutions by some leaders, must not be tolerated by the international community. Nigeria fully supports the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States to address that growing challenge and appreciates the support of both the African Union and the United Nations.

In that regard, I would like to reiterate that, as leaders of our individual Member States, we need to adhere to the constitutional provisions of our countries, particularly on term limits. That is one area that generates crisis and political tension in our subregion.

Nigeria is fully committed to nuclear non-proliferation and has always supported the view that it should involve all States. Disarmament conventions deserve the support of all States: small, large, nuclear and non-nuclear. Nuclear weapons remain the ultimate agents of mass destruction, and their total elimination should be the final objective of all disarmament processes within the broad spectrum of the goals being pursued by the United Nations.

In that regard, Nigeria will participate actively in the forthcoming Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and in the first meeting of States parties to the landmark Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, to be held in the first quarter of 2022. Nigeria regards those upcoming events as important steps towards the realization of a world free of nuclear weapons. We are therefore supportive of any diplomatic efforts to that end. We hope that the upcoming NPT Review Conference will lead to a successful outcome that will

facilitate global denuclearization. We will do our part to ensure such an outcome.

Terrorism continues to dominate security discourse worldwide. In Nigeria, the Boko Haram terrorist group, although fragmented by internal strife and weakened by our defence forces, is still active and preys on soft targets. Nigeria will continue to work closely with United Nations counter-terrorism bodies and entities with a view to bringing that scourge to an end. Nigeria has spared no effort in addressing the challenges of terrorism posed by the activities of Boko Haram in north-east Nigeria and the Lake Chad region, as well as by banditry in north-west and north-central Nigeria.

The impact of climate change is already with us in Nigeria, as manifested in various ways: it has triggered conflicts, caused food insecurity, dried up lakes and resulted in youth migration and the loss of livelihoods, among other things. The trend is the same in many other countries that are threatened by forest fires, rising sea levels, drought and desertification. As leaders, we must create inclusive and gender-sensitive policies that address all issues connected to climate action, from mitigation to resilience. That is why we are working on a transition to a low-carbon economy, consistent with implementing the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Combating illicit financial flows and ensuring the recovery and return of illicitly acquired assets have the potential to provide resources in the immediate term for financing development in this era of the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. Illicit financial flows and assets deprive national Governments of the means needed to provide adequate and meaningful sources of livelihood for their citizens. That gives rise to more irregular migration patterns, with unwholesome consequences for inter-State and human relations.

On the issue of debt, we have seen that developing countries faced unsustainable debt burdens even before the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the risk of a new wave of deepening debt in which vital public financial resources are allocated to external debt servicing and repayments at the expense of domestic health and financing for critical development needs. There is an urgent need, therefore, to consider the expansion and extension of the Debt Service Suspension Initiative to include all developing countries, least developed countries and small island developing States facing fiscal and liquidity challenges.

Nigeria reaffirms that international trade is the engine of development and sustained economic growth, as well as the global eradication of poverty. We therefore call for a reform agenda that will engender better recovery from the current crisis, build resilience to future shocks and pursue transformative development strategies that can deliver the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

The global food system has been impacted in recent times by several factors, such as population growth, the availability of, and accessibility to, arable land and water resources, climate change and the loss of biodiversity. Climate change and unpredictable shocks such as the current global pandemic further exacerbate the vulnerabilities of the global food system, requiring the urgent attention of the United Nations.

Nigeria has been steadfast in safeguarding human rights, including the advancement of women; the protection of children; the protection of the rights of people living with disabilities; the treatment of migrants, refugees, returnees and displaced persons; and the promotion of fundamental freedoms through all legitimate means. In that regard, my delegation commends the positive example of leaders like Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern of New Zealand.

The recent rise in hate-related crimes around the world underscores the urgent need to continue our engagement against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other related intolerance. It is sad to note that the issue of racism remains alive worldwide. We are beginning to forget our affirmation of the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of every individual, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

No society can claim to be free or just if it deprives anyone of those rights. Today racism drives hate crimes and institutional discrimination, in which Africans and people of African descent are among the primary victims. I am confident that this forum will make a significant impact in the quest to end race-related vices and injustices.

No reform of the United Nations system is more urgent than that of the Security Council. Stakeholders around the world are asking how such power could be concentrated with such scant representation. The intergovernmental negotiations have taken too long — some 15 years. We must avoid going around in circles. Consensus has been achieved on some

elements of the reform, especially with regard to the representation of Africa on the basis of the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration. It is unreasonable to expect unanimity on this matter.

Our Organization is at the peak of the multilateral system. It is also the pre-eminent body for solving our current and emerging challenges and developing norms to protect us all. In the current moment, hope for achieving those goals is dependent on how we assist each other to get COVID-19 out of all countries, regardless of their classification. We can and must do so.

In that regard, let me conclude my statement by paying special tribute to a great and humane internationalist and an exemplary practitioner of multilateral cooperation, Chancellor Angela Merkel of the Federal Republic of Germany. As she exits the stage, we wish her well.

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

Mr. Muhammadu Buhari, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Michel Aoun, President of the Lebanese Republic

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Lebanon to introduce an address by the President of the Lebanese Republic.

Ms. Mudallali (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my pleasure to introduce a pre-recorded statement by the President of the Lebanese Republic, His Excellency Michel Aoun, at the general debate of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Lebanese Republic.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex I and see A/76/332/Add.7).

Address by Mr. Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Senegal.

Mr. Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sall (*spoke in French*): Senegal congratulates President Abdulla Shahid and wishes him every success during his presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session. I should like to once again congratulate the Secretary-General on his reappointment and wish him every success in the exercise of his mission for the benefit of Member States.

The theme of this session is a reminder of the magnitude and the urgency of the challenges that we must overcome in order to bring about a better and safer world. That is most urgent in the Sahel, where terrorist groups continue to wage attacks and to engage in deadly looting, targeting innocent peoples. As a contributor of 1,350 troops to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), Senegal stands in solidarity with those fraternal countries that are enduring tremendous difficulties. We continue to advocate for MINUSMA to be given a robust mandate to effectively combat terrorist groups. Moreover, it is vital that Group of Five for the Sahel States enjoy adequate support in their vital struggle against terrorism.

Wherever it may take root, terrorism remains a global threat, and the United Nations system of collective security must fight it. We cannot allow Africa to become a safe haven for international terrorism.

In the Middle East, Senegal reiterates its call for the Palestinian people's right to a viable State coexisting in peace with the State of Israel, each within secure and internationally recognized borders. There is also an urgent need to combat the devastating health-related and economic and social fallout from the coronavirus disease pandemic. Senegal engaged in transparent management of the pandemic as soon as it emerged, on 2 March 2020, by publishing a daily situation report. Moreover, we have deployed an economic and social resilience programme to the tune of \$2 billion to support households, businesses, workers and our diaspora; significantly expanded the medical resources available to individuals; provided free tests and care; and acquired vaccines.

I wish to thank partner countries and institutions for their support in our fight against the pandemic. I applaud the spirit of solidarity and the generous surge of support provided through the Coronavirus Disease Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility initiative. Those significant efforts notwithstanding, there is a growing divide between vaccinated countries in the north and non-vaccinated countries in the South, which will only set back efforts to eradicate the pandemic and achieve a return to normal life for all.

An each man for himself mentality will not end the pandemic. Nobody will be safe if the virus and its variants continue to circulate anywhere in the world. Only a global response facilitating access for all to vaccines can put an end to this global scourge. In that spirit, I wish to thank partner countries and institutions that have been supporting the vaccine production project of the Pasteur Institute in Dakar, a major initiative servicing Africa. Senegal will contribute to the financing of the project via part of our special drawing rights.

At the same time, it is incumbent upon us to persevere in our efforts to achieve economic recovery. That is the thrust of the "New Deal" for Africa, which was an outcome of the 18 May summit in Paris on financing for African economies. Thanks to the consensus that prevailed at the Group of 20, the first goal of the summit was achieved with a historic allocation of special drawing rights to the tune of \$650 billion. I applaud the diligent approach of Ms. Kristalina Georgieva, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, in the implementation of that consensual decision.

Africa was able to receive a share of only \$33 billion to shore up its health-related resilience, partly mitigate the impact of the crisis and launch its economic recovery. That is a significant step forward that should be welcomed. Yet in the light of the tremendous impact of the crisis, Africa needs additional financing of at least \$252 billion by 2025 to mitigate the fallout and launch its economic recovery.

Let us work together to achieve the second goal set in Paris: to reallocate to African countries, in line with modalities to be agreed upon, \$67 billion mobilized through the special drawing rights quotas of consenting wealthy countries, in order to achieve the agreed-upon \$100 billion threshold. We can achieve that by preserving the transparent, trust-based dialogue that is already under way. In that way, we can lay

the foundation for a New Deal for Africa through a reformed global economic and financial governance that is more fair and more inclusive. Such a New Deal is possible if we see to it that the relationship structures with our continent are based more on partnership than on official development assistance.

Clearly assistance alone cannot meet the needs of a continent of more than 1 billion people where a great deal is yet to be built. Beyond those domestic efforts, the Africa to which its people aspire most of all needs access to adequate concessional and mixed resources in the form of loans to finance the sectors that are vital to its economic growth. These include, inter alia, infrastructure, energy, agriculture and industry, as well as water, sanitation, health, education and training.

To that end, a New Deal for Africa should help to overcome the deterministic mindset that has hampered the continent's access to those resources. I call upon partner countries and institutions to work with us to relax the rules of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to harness Africa's investment potential. Each of us has a role to play, because the investment needs of Africa that is being built are shared opportunities for growth and prosperity.

Likewise, seventy-six years after the creation of our Organization, reform of the United Nations is necessary. The multilateral system inspires confidence so long as it brings together and reflects the aspirations and interests of all stakeholders. It is high time for the composition of the Security Council to reflect the realities of the twenty-first-century United Nations in all of its diversity, not the reality of the obsolete post-World War landscape. Senegal therefore reaffirms its commitment to the Common African Position as set out in the Ezulwini Consensus.

Building our shared future also means taking care of our planet, in line with the principle of shared but differentiated responsibility given the ravages of global warming. Under our nationally determined contribution, Senegal is pursuing its efforts towards an energy transition, with the goal of basing more than 30 per cent of installed electrical capacity on renewable energy. That will be shored up by the solar electrification project under way for 1,000 villages, in line with the partnership for the Green Climate Fund and the West African Development Bank.

Ultimately, thanks to the gas-to-power strategy, we are seeking to achieve the goal of 100 per cent clean

energy through the forthcoming use of gas resources. But our countries cannot achieve an energy transition or abandon the polluting practices of industrialized nations without a viable, fair and equitable alternative. Natural-gas use as a transition energy should be maintained. That is why Senegal believes that an end to financing for the gas sector under the pretext that gas is a fossil fuel, without accounting for the fact that it is also an especially clean energy, would represent a major obstacle to our efforts to achieve an energy transition, universal access to electricity, competitiveness and economic and social development.

Our countries, which are already shouldering the overwhelming burden of an uneven exchange, should not be expected to shoulder also the burden of an uneven energy transition; hence I would call for gas-financing mechanisms to be maintained as a transition energy.

We face another important challenge: the status of women worldwide. As we have just commemorated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, with the Generation Equality initiative, we know that progress has been achieved. However, we are cognizant in particular of the long road that lies between us and the goal of eliminating all forms of inequality, discrimination and violence against women and girls. It is not acceptable for women and girls, who represent half of humankind, to continue to endure such treatment in the twenty-first century. Senegal therefore in January 2020 criminalized acts of rape and paedophilia.

As we continue the overarching mobilization for women's protection and empowerment, we must also focus on that of young people, including through the promotion of inclusive financing and resource allocation under the Global Financing Facility campaign initiated by the World Bank.

These are without a doubt difficult and uncertain times. However, let us nourish the hope mentioned in the theme of this session. To achieve that, we must act bearing in mind the fact that the United Nations was built on the promise of a better world, one governed by the principles of the sovereignty of, cooperation among and the diversity of peoples. It is faith in those ideals that has brought the representatives of peoples to this Hall for the past 76 years. Consequently, every blow to sovereignty, cooperation and diversity represents a blow to our shared ideals and to our reason for being here. A world weary of the blight of war, isolationism,

environmental destruction and material servitude is headed for a fall. The promise of a better world for all blossoms in the soil of dialogue and mutual respect, not in the dogma of conformism and cultural and civilizational contempt. It blossoms in a spirit of openness, respect and care for the other, in easing the plight of the hungry, the thirsty, the sick and those who lack education.

To that end, we cannot be satisfied merely with empty promises. It is our duty to work for a future of fulfilled promises. Such a future requires that we lay down our weapons, manifest greater solidarity, protect our environment, cultivate our shared values, and accept and respect our differences by abandoning civilizational dicta.

It is thus that we will bring forth the world of our dreams, a world of coexistence — a better world for all. I wish the General Assembly every success at its seventy-sixth session.

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

Mr. Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, President of the Federal Republic of Germany

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, President of the Federal Republic of Germany, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Frank-Walter Steinmeier, President of the Federal Republic of Germany, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Steinmeier (*spoke in German; English text provided by the delegation*): As we meet in this venerable forum, the final election rallies are being held in Germany. The day after tomorrow, 60 million Germans will be called upon to elect a new parliament. They will decide on new coalitions and on the successor to the Federal Chancellor who has governed Germany for 16 years.

At this time of political transition in my country, I would like to assure the Assembly that after this election, Germany will remain a country that is aware of its international responsibility and shoulders it.

There are two compelling reasons for that. First, we Germans do not forget that our political and economic rebirth after two World Wars, our journey to re-enter the international community after all the horrors for which my country was responsible and, finally, our peaceful reunification — this, Germany's path of fortune — was possible only with the support of our neighbours and partners.

Secondly, we remain convinced that the path to a more peaceful future and the resolution of the major issues facing humankind will require much, much greater cooperation on the part of the international community.

The Preamble to Germany's Basic Law formulates our aspiration in brief but precise terms: "to promote world peace as an equal partner in a united Europe". That aspiration, that obligation is one shared by every German Government, and that is why it was important for me to come to New York today as Federal President and convey Germany's message to the international community: our partners can rely on us, and our competitors will need to keep reckoning with us.

To my mind, our foreign policy responsibility begins with a frank and undistorted look at the world. Over the past few days, speakers at this session of the General Assembly have been unusually open in their endeavours here. Indeed, the global situation today is in many respects sobering. The fall of Kabul marks a turning point. We achieved our goal of defeating those who wrought horrendous terror on that city 20 years ago. But despite an immense endeavour and investment, we were not able in two decades to establish a self-sustaining political order in Afghanistan.

My country also shares responsibility, and we have an ongoing responsibility, particularly towards the many Afghans who had hoped for a more peaceful, free and democratic future.

Yet I believe we need to ask ourselves: what conclusion do we draw from this failure?

What lessons can we learn and what tasks do we feel able to perform having had to acknowledge that we wanted too much? I am convinced that resignation would be the wrong lesson to draw. To my mind, this moment of geopolitical disenchantment contains three

messages for our foreign policy: we need to become more honest, smarter and stronger.

First, we need to be honest with regard to both our options and our limits. We need to be more realistic in defining and prioritizing our aims and interests. We can often achieve more when we want less.

Secondly, we need to be smarter in choosing our instruments and setting our priorities. German and European foreign policy must not restrict itself to being right and condemning others. We need to extend our diplomatic, military, civilian, humanitarian toolboxes. For me, being smart also means less a sense of mission and more openness in our endeavour to find potential solutions and common ground, including with those who are different from us.

Thirdly, even though some may find this paradoxical, we need to get stronger with regard to our means. Citizens in all our countries expect their Governments to protect them from threat and attack — and rightly so. That is why, in these unstable times, my country is also investing more in its defence capability. But one thing is clear as well: future generations will not judge us on our military strength today but on whether we were able to resolve problems and conflicts. Military strength without the will to forge understanding or the courage to engage in diplomacy does not make the world a more peaceful place. That is why we need strength at the negotiating table just as we need strength in defence. For this reason, Germany shouldered this responsibility over the past two years in the Security Council, and we would like to do so again in the 2027-2028 term.

Yes, we failed on many things in Afghanistan, but our failure should not be cause for *schadenfreude* for others. I am deliberately using this German word that has made its way into many languages: *schadenfreude*, which refers to a mindset in which loss to one is gain to another. Such a mindset fails to do justice to the reality of our interconnected world. Regional instability, weakening State structures, refugee and migrant flows, religious extremism and terror, and new forms of conflict — hybrid, digital, environmental and resource-based — are developments that threaten us all, and all of us, small and large alike, have to deal with them.

The major Powers — the United States, China and Russia — shoulder a particular responsibility towards smaller countries. The privileges the major Powers enjoy in the United Nations system are justified only to

the extent that they promote and uphold the international peaceful order in the interests of all and do not ignore or undermine that order in pursuit of their own interests. The United Nations is not a boxing ring devoid of values at the disposal of world Powers. I also do know that our hand pointing the finger at others has other fingers pointing back at ourselves. Those warning now about an American withdrawal should not succumb to similar reflexes at home. We Europeans and we Germans have to do more for our own security. We need to do more for peace and stability in our neighbourhood and around the world.

We need to continue our multilateral efforts — in Libya, in eastern Ukraine and in the Middle East. We are ready to renew the nuclear agreement, and we call upon Iran to return to serious negotiations as quickly as possible.

I know we are in agreement with our closest partner, France, in saying that we need a strong common foreign and security policy in Europe. Only a strong Europe can expect others to play their part along with us in building a peaceful international order. Only a strong Europe can do both at the same time: seek cooperation with China where cooperation is in the interest of both sides and indeed necessary, and, at the same time, demand that China respect human rights and international law, as well as the legitimate interests of its neighbours.

A strong, rules-based peaceful order also needs a strong transatlantic partnership. We know that the United States is setting new and different priorities, and we know that, as the world changes, alliances also need to adapt. But no short-term advantage is worth causing cracks to appear in our transatlantic unity. We need to be mindful of that together.

The responsibility of the major Powers, including us Europeans, weighs upon us all the more heavily when we call to mind the great global challenges, the major issues facing humankind. Never before have we had such an existential experience of our interdependence, our reliance on one another, as we have had in the almost two years of the coronavirus pandemic. And yet, although we do know that the pandemic is only over when it is over everywhere, when we take stock of global vaccine distribution, the picture is at best mixed.

Too many people are still waiting for the life-saving vaccine. That is why the distribution of vaccines must not be an instrument for countries to showcase themselves or grant tactical favours. The COVAX initiative under

the auspices of the United Nations is the right way forward together, because it is our shared way forward together. One in three COVAX vaccine doses is being made available by Europe, and, as the world's second-largest donor, my country will contribute €2.5 billion, which will make at least another 100 million doses available by the end of the year.

What holds true for the existential threat posed by the pandemic is just as true for climate change. Apocalyptic fires and scorching temperatures, tropical storms and hurricanes, failed harvests, drought and famine: they are happening now, they are happening in this country and everywhere. They pose a threat to people, families, livelihoods — to everyone, particularly the most vulnerable — but also to the rich industrialized countries. Devastating floods in western Germany this summer cost almost 200 of my compatriots their lives, and we also recall the recent images from New York City of huge masses of water in streets, apartments and subways.

Against this dramatic backdrop, the regression to the national egoisms I warn against is more than just a step back to the past: it is robbing us of our shared future. It is harming the very institutions and instruments that we now need. We need strong joint decisions at the upcoming summit in Glasgow.

After all, when it comes to climate change, it is also true that the gap between our ambitious goals and our concrete policies remains much too wide. It is our shared job to close this gap, and we need to do it now. After all, we are living in an era in which humankind can irreversibly destroy the living conditions on our planet. It is up to us, our generation, to leave the future open for our children and grandchildren. We have to leave them an open future in which climate and environmental protection, economic prosperity, a self-determined life in freedom and social cohesion are all possible simultaneously. This is — and I am not using this lofty word lightly — is our historic task. We must not fail because the future of humankind is at stake.

I began my address with democracy and the democratic transition unfolding in my own country. As I draw to a close, I would like to widen the angle once more and consider the situation of liberal democracy as a whole — its credibility, its impact and its future at this difficult geopolitical juncture. In Afghanistan, a long engagement which cost many lives has failed — but not the idea behind it. My country has a deep-seated

commitment to the idea of freedom and democracy, perhaps precisely because our German path to get there was long.

We do of course know that, in reality, political systems will never be perfect — not in Europe, not in America, not anywhere. Consequently, they can neither be exported, nor, taking it further, imposed. I believe the task is a different one: it is not by missionary zeal that we render the best service to this tremendous idea but by letting the strength of democracy shine through at home, by bringing democracy to bear in the daily lives of our citizens and by resisting any authoritarian temptation. Only through that can we render the best service to this tremendous idea.

At this General Assembly, President Biden spoke of the global power of democracy (see A/76/PV.3). I would like to underscore that democracy is not a force directed against anyone. It is not a Western instrument of political power. It is an open project, regardless of compass reading or geographical borders — and regardless of skin colour. It is the project for freedom and human dignity that the countries of the world have set as their yardstick in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Because the Universal Declaration must remain the yardstick for us Germans, even after failing in Afghanistan, withdrawal from the world is not an option. While people are being robbed of their dignity, indifference is impossible.

That is why more realism in foreign policy does not mean less responsibility, nor does it mean less ambition to make the world a better place. On the contrary, the inherent human yearning for freedom and dignity and self-determination will never be extinguished anywhere. Doing justice to this human yearning instead of suppressing it — that is the real question defining our future in the twenty-first century.

And this question will not be decided on any battlefield in our world. After all, the firepower of the most powerful army comes to an end, as does the long arm of the strongest State. But the appeal of freedom and democracy in the hearts and minds of people lives on. That is my firm belief.

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

Mr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, President of the Federal Republic of Germany, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Borut Pahor, President of the Republic of Slovenia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Slovenia.

Mr. Borut Pahor, President of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Borut Pahor, President of the Republic of Slovenia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Pahor: Almost all the challenges we face are global. The solutions for them can be found only by working together. We have a historic opportunity to steer change in a direction beneficial for all humankind. I welcome the Secretary-General's intention to hold a broad debate about our common future. We have to engage in meaningful discussion and dialogue, even with those — or specifically with those — with whom we do not agree. The culture of dialogue has dangerously deteriorated owing to widespread intolerant or offensive speech, even hate speech. We must do everything within our power to emphasize respect for and consideration of different opinions and their reconciliation. It is about the art of listening and speaking to others. Constructive cooperation is possible only through dialogue, and cooperation is the only way of reaching peaceful solutions to all disputes.

Having said that, I would like in my statement to address three main topics: the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, climate change, and peace and security.

First, with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic, this pandemic is proving to be a demanding and, also, unfortunately, divisive challenge for our societies. I express my deepest sympathies to all those who have suffered, and I pay respect to new heroes, among them medical and health-care workers, scientists, teachers and the young generation that has struggled with limited access to education. Science has once again proved its decisive role. The pandemic has set us before the greatest test in global solidarity in generations. I am

proud to say that my country, Slovenia, pledged half a million euros to the COVAX facility, and our share of donated vaccines, measured per capita, is among the world's highest.

Secondly, with regard to climate change, the recent report of International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is alarming. It has become clear that the environment is in worse condition than expected. Let me assure the Assembly that, in its capacity as President of the European Union Council in the run up to and during the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 26), Slovenia is committed to the objective of a climate-neutral European Union by 2050. We will do our utmost to contribute to the success of the COP 26 conference in Glasgow. It is imperative that we move on climate-change mitigation, adaptation and financing in order to meet the objectives of the Paris Agreement.

The IPCC report is in fact a final, urgent call for immediate climate action from us. More than ever, we need to listen to scientists and experts. We can learn from them, and if we do, our decisions will be better. My permanent advisory committee on climate change, established two years ago, is an example of good practices. We regularly discuss a variety of aspects of climate change and recommend the Government or legislative measures to be adopted.

The much-needed green transition should go hand in hand with digital transformation. We must commit to achieving climate neutrality through reform and investments in the areas of energy efficiency, renewable energy, sustainable mobility and circular business models.

Climate change greatly affects water — through both the droughts and floods that we witnessed this summer — and has an impact on the quality of water. Competition for scarce water resources will intensify. The imminent water crisis is a threat, but it also presents an opportunity to rethink water innovation, governance and collaboration on all levels. Slovenia is a country with a long tradition of integrated water-resource management and cross-border cooperation on water. We will continue to raise awareness and understanding of the interlinkages between water and climate change and the importance of water for international peace and security.

Climate change profoundly affects food security. For the very first time in modern history, a famine in one country — Madagascar — is attributed solely to global warming. Since 2014, Slovenia has doubled its contribution for food security, in particular through World Food Programme initiations for South Sudan and Yemen, but also through bilateral projects. Slovenia has recently been helping to ensure food and water security for children and other vulnerable groups in Madagascar through the humanitarian association Akamasoa founded by Father Pedro Opeka, which is an outstanding example of fighting poverty. Through these efforts, over the last 30 years, the lives of thousands of poor people who once lived off of garbage dumps have changed.

The Akamasoa community in Madagascar gives humankind high hopes that poverty can be eradicated. However, our efforts to fight famine need to go beyond humanitarian aid. We have to accelerate the transition to sustainable and resilient food systems. That is why Slovenia welcomes the holding of the very first United Nations summit on food systems, which I see as an opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of responsible investment in environmentally friendly agriculture and the prevention of food loss and waste.

I believe the responsible use of new and emerging technologies can help us deal with modern challenges. New technologies offer numerous opportunities to mitigate climate change, support sustainable agriculture, introduce smarter mobility, offer better education and improve the effective use of resources, to name just a few activities. That is why I was delighted to officially launch, together with the Director-General of UNESCO, Ms. Audrey Azoulay, the International Research Centre on Artificial Intelligence, in Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, in March 2021.

The pandemic has only increased our dependence on the digital space, while at the same time revealing its vulnerability to the spread of the hate speech I mentioned earlier. It is important to keep in mind that fundamental freedoms apply both online and offline.

Thirdly, with regard to peace and security, the dependence on the digital space has also revealed our vulnerability to security threats and cyberattacks. It has highlighted the extent of the damage caused by such attacks with respect to critical infrastructure, the economy and society; these attacks have even caused loss of life. The nature of conflicts has expanded. To

enable peace and security in all domains, we should collectively and more efficiently respond to different crises that exceed the capacities of individual States to react alone. We should also promote reconciliation processes more energetically once peace and security are established.

The interconnected and interdependent nature of peace and security, sustainable development and human rights is more evident than ever. The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the situation of the most vulnerable members of our societies — children, the elderly and human rights defenders. In many societies, we face shrinking spaces for freedom of expression. The full realization of human rights for all has proven to be key to our resilience and must be an integral part of our recovery.

The situation in Afghanistan has exposed the fragility of our human rights system. Let us never forget that women's and children's rights, as well as the rights of minorities, are universal human rights. Slovenia therefore welcomed the Secretary-General's call for action on human rights and supports a higher regular-budget allocation for the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Finally, following the atrocities of the Second World War, we have built an international system for the promotion of dialogue and the peaceful settlement of all disputes. The system is codified in international law, for whose principles we must actively ensure respect, with a view to strengthening international justice. It is a question of effective multilateralism, which Slovenia passionately advocates. It is the finest achievement of the United Nations. Once again, let us work together.

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

Mr. Borut Pahor, President of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mario Abdo Benítez, President of the Republic of Paraguay

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Paraguay to introduce an address by the President of the Republic of Paraguay.

Mr. Arriola Ramírez (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the great honour to introduce the

pre-recorded video statement by His Excellency the President of the Republic of Paraguay, Mr. Mario Abdo Benítez, on the occasion of the general debate of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Paraguay.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex II and see A/76/332/Add.7).

Ms. Fatima (Bangladesh), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Address by Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Palestine to introduce an address by the President of the State of Palestine.

Mr. Al-Malki (Palestine) (spoke in Arabic): It is my honour to introduce the pre-recorded statement by His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, before the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly. I wish this session every success in dealing with the challenges that the peoples of the world and our people face as they look to us to fulfil our duties and achieve their rights.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the State of Palestine.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex III and see A/76/332/Add.7).

Agenda item 8 (continued)

General debate

Address by Mr. Charles Michel, President of the European Council

The Acting President: The Assembly will hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Charles Michel, President of the European Council.

Mr. Charles Michel, President of the European Council, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Charles Michel, President

of the European Council, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Michel (European Council) (spoke in French): Nadia Murad was born in Iraq. Nadia Murad is Yazidi, and on 15 August 2014 her life changed: jihadists attacked her village. Six of her brothers were murdered before her eyes. That day she would see her mother for the last time. She would be captured to become a sex slave and would suffer the most horrible abuses. She eventually escaped. Today Nadia Murad is a Nobel Peace Prize winner and fights tirelessly for the rights and dignity of women.

From this rostrum I want to quote what she said just a few days ago:

“Today we see the price of conflict marked on women’s bodies in Iraq, Afghanistan, Tigray and so many other places ... So much potential is lost when the power of women in preventing conflict and rebuilding communities is ignored.”

I met Nadia Murad. I saw in her eyes all the strength of humankind. I heard in the softness of her voice an absolute determination. She has decided to draw from the tragedy and endless suffering an unshakeable strength to transform the world. It is because of Nadia Murad’s inspiration that I address the General Assembly today.

(spoke in English)

The European Union (EU) was forged by Europeans, like an irrepressible surge of dignity and freedom after two bloody world wars. Today we face another turning point in human history because we are entrenched in another war — a global war. That global war has no opposing sides and no armies and no land is lost or conquered. Yet that war destroys lives and brings countries to their knees and unimaginable suffering to families.

I am talking about the war that we humans have waged against nature. We have tortured our planet and abused our natural resources. We have committed acts of war against our environment, and now nature is fighting back, bringing us back to our senses and back to humility.

No one can say “I did not know”. For decades, scientists have sounded the alarm, but their warnings have fallen on deaf ears. We turned away so as not to see, and today the shock is brutal. We are reaping

what we have sown — the fires that have devastated Australia, the droughts that have ravished Africa, the floods that have scarred Europe and the hurricanes that have battered the United States.

There is another scourge that has afflicted our planet for nearly two years, which was also predicted by science — the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). It has killed 4.7 million people and shattered the lives of billions more.

But the pandemic has also led us back to the essential — life and human dignity. To safeguard those, we have taken exceptional measures — massive confinement that has brought our economies, our social lives and, most seriously, our freedoms to a near standstill.

The pandemic has opened our eyes to the obvious — our lives and our health are inextricably linked to the health of our fields, forests, oceans and fauna. We share our planet with other living beings, and it is time. It is time to stop waging war against nature. It is time for humans to sign an armistice with nature — a peace treaty with our planet — for the generations to come.

It is time for us to transform the world, just as the previous generation did after the most recent world war. Inspired by the vision of the signatories of the Charter of the United Nations, it is time to get back to basics — reason and good judgment. Inspired by those principles, they left us an international order based on rules to promote peace. They built liberal democracies to guarantee the dignity of each individual. They championed the development model based on the freedom to trade and to pursue economic opportunity to ensure prosperity.

Those choices have ushered in progress and greater stability. But the world of yesterday is not that of today, and even less the world of tomorrow.

Brutal unilateralism too often elbows out multilateralism. The ambition to dominate creates new dependencies and leads to tensions and conflicts. Democracies are under pressure, both from within and from without. Authoritarian regimes — openly or not — meticulously undermine the principles of freedom at home and even beyond their borders.

Finally, our model of economic development has run its course. Its flaws are increasingly visible — the extreme exploitation of resources and

increasing inequality. We must escape that vicious circle. We are indeed at an inflection point. We must ask ourselves: What world do we want for tomorrow?

We want a world inspired by reason, a world that trusts in science and guarantees the dignity and freedom of every human being. We want a fairer and a safer world. We want cooperation rather than confrontation, solidarity rather than isolation, transparency not secrecy. And we want loyalty — honouring our word when our word is given.

(spoke in French)

The international community can count on the European Union to support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, with full confidence in Secretary-General Guterres.

A fairer world is one in which we are all protected from COVID-19. The European Union has sought to provide comprehensive support for research and has developed significant vaccine production capacities. We have exported 700 million doses to 130 countries and have invested €3 billion in the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility. But we must recognize that the vaccination gap with developing countries is unacceptable. We need to take even more vigorous action.

We have launched concrete projects, investing €1 billion to develop pharmaceutical production capacities, including for vaccines, in several African countries. We are also ready to support partnerships in Latin America.

Finally, we know now it will not be enough to defeat this pandemic. We must prevent future ones and strengthen the resilience of the entire world. That is the goal of the international treaty on pandemics that we proposed in partnership with Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus. I encourage everyone to support the launch of negotiations as soon as possible.

A fairer and safer world is also a world free of the climate threat. We need to set ambitious targets. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change was a major step to that end, and the European Union played a major role. Unlike others, we stood firm to defend it and, two years ago, the 27 Heads of State and Government of the European Union led the way by committing to climate neutrality by 2050. Others are following our example. In the same ambitious spirit, the European Union subsequently revised the target date to 2030.

Of course, we must also make progress in international cooperation. We believe we should move towards carbon-pricing. The EU began such an initiative with the Emissions Trading System because we believe that approach stimulates innovation, produces results and encourages a circular economy.

We must also stimulate investment in the greening of the economy. We hope to be able to develop global strategies to establish a regulatory framework for green financing.

Finally, we all know that not everyone is equal in the race against the clock for global warming. Developed countries have a particular responsibility to support developing countries. Despite the 2009 and 2010 pledges to mobilize \$100 billion annually to finance the international fight against global warming, few have kept their word.

From 2013 to 2019, the European Union and its member States contributed €127 billion, one third of the total. We urge the other partners to keep their promises as well. It is a matter of trust and equity.

A fairer and more secure world is also a peaceful world. At this very moment, women are being brutalized and raped because they are women. That weapon of war is used in the Horn of Africa.

In Ethiopia, we call for a ceasefire and an immediate end to the ethnic violence. Access to humanitarian aid must be guaranteed without hindrance.

Poverty and radicalism are two mutually reinforcing scourges. Education, basic services, health and infrastructure are the best remedies against instability and its concomitant dangers. In the Sahel, the European Union and nine of its member States are working with the population to help with security, defence and development aid. Restoring the authority of the State and ensuring governance are essential to achieve lasting results.

The new situation in Afghanistan is a failure for the international community, and we must learn from it. But one thing is certain — the end of military operations does not mean the end of the European commitment to the Afghan people. We want to avoid any kind of humanitarian catastrophe and to preserve as far as possible the achievements of the past 20 years, especially with regard to the rights of women and girls.

In the Indo-Pacific region, the European Union is the largest investor and one of the most important trading partners — 40 per cent of our trade passes through that region. We have decided to significantly strengthen our cooperation there. That is the reason for the current strategic partnership with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Security and the freedom of navigation in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean must be guaranteed, in accordance with international law. The European Union will fully assume its responsibilities in that regard.

The European Union will never turn a blind eye to human rights violations. The rule of law, non-discrimination and respect for minorities — including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex rights — are cardinal values. That is the purpose of our ongoing human rights dialogue with many countries around the world. We firmly defend our values, but we are also ready to engage in dialogue to address global challenges such as climate, biodiversity and the fight against pandemics.

Peace is much more than the absence of war. Peace can never be taken for granted. It is shaped on a daily basis. It is nurtured by the mutual connections among our societies. The more interests we share, the less conflict we have. Economic, scientific, cultural and intellectual exchanges are powerful forces for stability. That requires regional or continental integration projects as well as major partnerships between those new integrated areas — whether in Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia or Africa.

With our African brothers, we are working hard for a new alliance with the African continent. Listening, mutual respect, taking into account the specifics and realities on the ground, transparency and good governance must be the hallmark on both sides. We will mobilize the private sector to invest in infrastructure and new technologies. We will support all efforts to promote education, which is the best way to ensure a better future. Our common interests can greatly enable the success of our new partnership.

The European Union and our member States are one of the world's leading economic Powers. We are also the primary sponsor of peace and sustainable development. We fund one quarter of the regular budget of the United Nations, 30 per cent of the total peacekeeping budget and half of global development aid. It is a deliberate choice that is consistent with our vision of

an open and interconnected world. We have values to promote, citizens to protect and interests to defend. It is in that spirit that we are developing the European Union's strategic autonomy, including in our security and defence capabilities in order to be less dependent, strengthen our positive influence and consolidate our Atlantic alliance, which is rooted in our democratic values and is an unshakeable pillar of our security and stability in the world. Stronger allies make a stronger alliance in transparency and loyalty.

Of course, we want to deepen our positive influence in our immediate neighbourhood. That is the reason for our Eastern Partnership, which is a long-term commitment with Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Armenia and Azerbaijan. That is also the reason for our support for the people of Belarus and our firm stance towards the Lukashenko regime, in particular when it attempts to use migrants as a hybrid weapon to destabilize members of the European Union. Finally, that is why we are working to strengthen ties with the countries of the Western Balkans.

The recent upsurge in violence in the Middle East is yet another reminder of the absolute necessity of resuming peaceful dialogue towards a two-State solution between Israel and Palestine.

To transform the world, make it more just and secure and guarantee the dignity of everyone — that is the pledge of the United Nations. Let us all live up to that promise for all the Nadia Murads of this world and for the generations to come. The international community can count on the European Union.

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

Mr. Charles Michel, President of the European Council, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mrs. Isatou Touray, Vice-President of the Republic of the Gambia

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

Mrs. Isatou Touray, Vice-President of the Republic of the Gambia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Mrs. Isatou Touray,

Vice-President of the Republic of the Gambia, and inviting her to address the Assembly.

Mrs. Touray (Gambia): Once again, we thank almighty Allah for making it possible for us to gather in person at the General Assembly to collectively discuss and find solutions to our shared challenges as members of the international community. That is even more important today as we strive to overcome the challenges posed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

On behalf of His Excellency President Adama Barrow and the entire population of the Gambia, let me express our sincere gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Volkan Bozkır for his excellent leadership during the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly.

Similarly, the Gambia welcomes the present presidency of the General Assembly with renewed hope and enthusiasm for what we can collectively accomplish during the seventy-sixth session. We are optimistic that the five-point agenda encapsulated in this presidency of hope will enable us to deliver to the satisfaction of our global organ. Let me assure the President of my delegation's unflinching support and cooperation during his tenure.

We also commend the Secretary-General for his sterling leadership and reform initiatives during one of the most difficult moments as the world faces an unprecedented health, socioeconomic and environmental crisis.

I warmly greet all gathered here on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Adama Barrow, President of the Republic of the Gambia, who would have loved to be here in person but, due to urgent State matters, could not. Instead, he has asked that I extend his best wishes for a successful seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly.

The importance of the theme the President has chosen for our general debate, namely "Building resilience through hope — to recover from COVID-19, rebuild sustainably, respond to the needs of the planet, respect the rights of people and revitalize the United Nations", cannot be overemphasized. The challenges we face today as the international community require resilience-building and recovery from COVID-19 while building sustainability in response to the needs of our planet and its people. Those in turn require a revitalized United Nations that is fit for purpose.

Today Africa as a whole is grappling with the negative effects of conflicts and insecurity. The challenge of addressing the root causes of conflict and climate change require greater global solidarity and United Nations leadership. Apart from the heavy human and material costs, conflicts impede production, damage infrastructure, prevent the reliable delivery of social services and disrupt the growth of societies. Due to conflicts in the continent, poverty continues to be perpetuated, with a negative impact on our collective goal of achieving sustainable peace and security.

The socioeconomic conditions and the governance and security situation in the Sahel continue to alarm us. A more urgent and holistic response to the problems of the Sahel is currently needed. Without a stable Sahel, the West African region will lag in its development aspirations.

In Africa today there is undisputed recognition of strong interlinkages between peace and development, with studies confirming that armed conflicts remain a major obstacle to development in the continent.

Against that backdrop, my delegation calls on the international community to come together and act coherently to address the root causes of conflicts and recovery in Africa by adopting new approaches and narratives that suit the demands of our time. The international community should intensify its collective efforts to accelerate progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the goals and targets of Agenda 2063, including those of the Silencing the Guns in Africa initiative. We must also strengthen the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union in formulating joint responses to existing and emerging threats to peace, security and development in Africa.

We call on the United Nations and the rest of the international community to help build resilience and sustainability in Africa by promoting global engagement and actions around issues of health, education, COVID-19 recovery, vaccine accessibility, democracy, social protection and human-capital development with a view to consolidating regional integration.

We must continue to accelerate structural transformation while promoting industrialization in Africa. Furthermore, our partners should adopt a conflict-sensitive lens to development programming in Africa, including approaches that would prioritize prevention, stabilization, transformation and

sustainability in order to help African countries in their post-pandemic recovery and long-term development.

Like the rest of the global community, we are deeply concerned about the challenges of vaccine access and equity, abject poverty, the crushing debt crisis and youth unemployment. Building back better from COVID-19, reviving the momentum towards achieving the SDGs and addressing ongoing development challenges will require extraordinary international engagement and solidarity. For our continent, delays in addressing those challenges will continue to have devastating consequences on our economies.

We are calling for a new strategic orientation and partnership that would accelerate our pandemic recovery. In our view, building-back-better initiatives should focus on job creation, digitalization, increased SDG financing, strengthened health systems, scientific research and the increased utilization of local experts in programme and project interventions in Africa. Global recovery will be achieved only when vaccine equity, availability and accessibility are adequately addressed in all countries — big or small, developed or developing.

As we continue to count on the United Nations development system for a renewed development partnership in this decade of action to help us address our development challenges, we call on our partners to increase their funding without heavy earmarking. United Nations agencies and other development partners need funding flexibility and predictability in order to deliver programmes that support building prosperous and structurally transformed economies that leave no one behind, especially the least developed countries (LDCs) and middle-income countries.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly exacerbated human suffering in all spheres, it has also challenged us to mobilize all efforts and resources to address the eradication of poverty and inequalities through collective action and renewed momentum towards achieving the SDGs. The pandemic has exposed existing fragilities and vulnerabilities and disrupted economic activities and employment, causing a sharp reduction in revenues and in our ability to achieve the SDGs. Africa's gross domestic product, for example, dropped to an estimated -3.4 per cent in 2020.

At the national level, the Government of the Gambia recently completed the mid-term review of the Gambia national development plan for the period 2018

2021 in order to take stock of the current successes and gaps. In the light of that review, we are taking concrete steps to redefine the strategic priorities of the plan to account for the new challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

We convey our appreciation to the United Nations and all development partners for providing us with timely, innovative and critical support during the pandemic, which helped us ensure Government business continuity, the provision of social protection and the strengthening of our health system.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a significant socioeconomic impact on LDCs, which must be reversed through new and innovative and inclusive programmes, policies and financing to help them recover and build back better. With preparations for the fifth United Nations Conference on the LDCs (LDC-V) currently under way, it will be important for the international community to recalibrate and commit to concrete actions that will support a resilient recovery and the attainment of the SDGs in this decade.

As an LDC, the Gambia believes that it is crucial for Governments to be equipped with the necessary tools and adequate resources to finance our development priorities, which is what we are articulating as part of the LDC-V process. As the state of our collective security continues to be tested by unprecedented threats and challenges, the call to action has become more urgent for the international community to support the efforts of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security.

In that regard, United Nations peacekeeping operations have proven to be the Organization's strongest instrument and most impactful tool in assisting countries' transition from conflict to peace. United Nations peacekeeping efforts deserve our renewed support and participation.

The Government of the Gambia has consistently demonstrated its commitment to United Nations peacekeeping through its contribution of troops and police to various missions, with an ever-improving level of performance, discipline and commitment. We continue to enhance our participation by deploying more women peacekeepers, providing better training in areas that require critical skill sets and forging partnerships with stakeholders to expand our participation in more peacekeeping missions.

Once again, with the support of all our friends, the Gambia continues to progress on a positive and upward trajectory. The Government's policies and approach continue to be guided by our awareness of the difficult history that we travelled as a country to usher in democracy.

The Gambia is at a crossroads as we continue to seek national reconciliation, entrench our democracy and consolidate the rule of law. We are on the verge of organizing presidential elections in December 2021 and legislative elections in 2022. The Government will spare no effort to ensure that those elections are held under free and fair conditions as we march towards the next phase of our political transition. We approach those elections in the knowledge that our journey towards reform and transformation in the areas of good governance, transitional justice, civil service and the security sector is a continuing one. We are grateful to our partners who continue to accompany us in our sustaining peace and peacebuilding efforts.

Developments in the international community continue to be a matter of concern to my delegation. On Palestine, we must always remember that peace and security in Palestine and Israel mean peace and security for the Middle East region and the world at large. It is therefore imperative for the international community to encourage genuine dialogue with a view to ending the deadlock. We must intensify efforts to bring both sides of the conflict to the negotiating table. The use of force and violence will only add to the suffering of the people living in the area. We continue to be deeply traumatized by the negative consequences of the conflict and cannot continue to ignore the humanitarian catastrophe that accompanies it.

It is our strong view that peaceful coexistence is the only viable way forward. Putting an end to occupation and impunity, upholding international law, lifting the blockade on the Gaza Strip, addressing the dire humanitarian and refugee crisis and having an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, should therefore be urgently pursued by all and sundry. A new peace and political process must be launched by the Quartet.

Since we last met in this Hall, the plight of the Rohingya Muslim minority in Myanmar and elsewhere has not improved. The Gambia will continue to pursue the case at the International Court of Justice until the victims of the atrocity crimes receive justice. The

international community must not relent in its quest for accountability in alleviating the dire circumstances of the Rohingya victim communities.

The Gambia believes in friendly relations between States as the bedrock of international solidarity and cooperation. In that regard, we call on the United States to end the embargo against Cuba and pursue meaningful cooperation with its Government and people. Let the embargo be a relic of history.

Furthermore, the Gambia is strongly committed to the principle of recognizing only one China. That is a cardinal principle of our foreign policy, which hinges on further strengthening our excellent bilateral relations on the basis of mutual respect, sovereign equality and shared prosperity — a win-win approach.

We are aware of the geopolitical competition for influence by regional and global Powers, but as small States Members of the United Nations we are more interested in seeing nations increase their cooperation in fighting poverty, climate change, conflicts and global insecurity. We want to see a world of shared prosperity and innovation. We share one planet, and we owe it to posterity to leave it in better shape. Let us eliminate this pandemic together and build forward better by leaving no one behind.

The biggest lesson we have learned from the pandemic is that no one is safe without others and that our institutions are not fit for purpose. We must use the lessons of this pandemic to engender critical reforms of our institutions so that we are better prepared for the next pandemic, climate event or humanitarian catastrophe. The United Nations development system is currently undergoing critical reforms, and we are happy that it is adapting in ways that are contributing to mitigating the impact of COVID-19 in developing countries.

One of the last holdouts of reform is the Security Council. Africa's quest for greater representation on the Security Council is legitimate, just and overdue. We must not relent until our demands are met and fulfilled. We want to have a greater voice in deciding issues that affect us. We call on all true friends of Africa to support our demands based on the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration.

Once again, on behalf of President Barrow and the Government and the people of the Gambia, I extend our sincere gratitude and appreciation to all our bilateral and multilateral development partners for accompanying

us on our march towards greater democracy, good governance, development and prosperity. I wish one and all a successful seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly.

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

Mrs. Isatou Touray, Vice-President of the Republic of the Gambia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Ms. Mariam Chabi Talata, Vice-President of the Republic of Benin

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Benin to introduce an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of Benin.

Mr. Araba (Benin) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to introduce the pre-recorded statement by Her Excellency Ms. Mariam Chabi Talata, Vice-President of the Republic of Benin, on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Patrice Athanase Guillaume Talon, President, Head of State and Head of Government of the Republic of Benin, on the occasion of the general debate of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly.

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

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex IV and see A/76/332/Add.7).

Address by Ms. Rebecca Nyandeng De Mabior, Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan

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

Ms. Rebecca Nyandeng De Mabior, Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Ms. Rebecca Nyandeng De Mabior, Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan, and inviting her to address the Assembly.

Ms. De Mabior (South Sudan): On behalf of His Excellency President Salva Kiir Mayardit, I stand before the General Assembly to share the recent

developments in our country. I intend to do so in the spirit of constructive engagement.

On 9 July 2011, we emerged from a long liberation struggle against oppression and domination. After 10 years of independence, we remain on a path of nation-building founded on the vision and inspiration of our liberation struggle and what we have committed to under the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, which was realized through the support of the United Nations, the African Union and key friendly nations.

While our determination to implement the provisions of the agreement has been impacted by many challenges — above all the outbreak of the global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the limited availability of the resources needed for the implementation of the agreement — it has nonetheless enabled the formation of an inclusive Transitional Government of National Unity, the establishment and operation of local governments and the setting up of the Transitional National Legislative Assembly, all of which are fervently serving the people.

President Kiir launched the national dialogue to complement the agreement while the revitalized peace process was under way. The national dialogue followed a bottom-up approach, conducting grass-roots consultations that covered all the regions in the country and articulated the views and the recommendations of the people of South Sudan, including on the Government that will serve them. The President received the report of the national dialogue in May 2021 and pledged to implement its recommendations, which provide the foundation as we embark upon the process of developing our first-ever constitution.

The Revitalized Agreement and national dialogue are necessary historic steps in our country's quest for peace, but we are still far from building a nation that can provide essential services and development for our people. As national leaders, we admittedly have made mistakes, which may have disappointed our friends, supporters and the world. We have learned from those mistakes, and I am here to engage in constructive dialogue with our international partners, bearing in mind the lessons and consequences of our actions and, more important, the dreams, aspirations and marching orders of our people on the kind of Government and society they want.

Permit me to highlight a few points on our efforts to bring about much-needed peace, security and development for our people.

First, I would like to acknowledge that, although our independence was the product of the struggle and sacrifices of our people, we could not have won without the political and material support of our friends, allies and partners from around the world. We are deeply grateful to them.

Secondly, I want to assure our friends and partners that we are determined never to go back to war. We pledge to pursue the promises our liberators made to our people. We must ensure peace, security and dignity for all without distinction. We must replace the destruction of war with the productive use of our vast natural resources and national assets for the good of our people.

Thirdly, we fully realize that the responsibility for pursuing that vision is our own as a people. We believe that the partnerships we seek can be accomplished only through constructive, mutually beneficial engagements.

The failure to fulfil the promises of our struggle is due to objective reasons for which practical solutions must be found by ourselves in cooperation with our partners.

While there should be no doubt about the goodwill of President Kiir and the Government he leads to secure peace and the establishment of a just, peaceful, inclusive and prosperous South Sudan, we need to identify and address the objective reasons for those failures.

President Kiir recently stated that it is now time to correct past mistakes and open a new page for building a better future of peace, development and prosperity for our people.

We should recall that, at our independence, the international community pledged to help build the capacity of our infant country in all areas of nation-building. As a result, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) was created to help establish the foundations of our new nation. However, after the outbreak of the war, that vision was abandoned, and priority was placed on protecting civilians and providing humanitarian assistance. As a result, support for the capacity-building of the State was terminated.

The protection of civilians is a priority. As the Vice-President responsible for the humanitarian cluster

in our Government, I champion that cause, but it should not be at the expense of capacity-building and sustainable development. Building States' capacities to govern responsibly and effectively is essential. It is also necessary to guard against the unintended consequences of dependency on humanitarian assistance. With the constant improvement in peace and security, it is time to transition from emergency and direct our efforts to resetting the sustainable development agenda.

The development of the revitalized national development strategy is the Government of South Sudan's clear and deliberate road map for accelerating the implementation of our access, while laying the foundations of sustainable peace and the stabilization of our economy.

It is a painful and shameful situation for a country endowed with vast resources of fertile land to be regarded as poor. We must ensure peace and security in the country and redouble our efforts to support those of our people who want to return and are returning to their areas of origin so that they may participate fully in nation-building and contribute to bringing about food security in the country.

At the core of our efforts are our young people. South Sudan is a young and youthful country. We call on our partners to help us in our continuing efforts to develop the skills of women and young people, provide them with jobs and livelihood opportunities and harness their energy and productive capacity to provide them with an alternative to picking up a gun again and engaging in destructive behaviour.

I am glad to note that encouraging steps have recently been taken in that direction. For example, our security forces and their UNMISS counterparts have begun to promote rural peace and security. We will soon unveil a national youth service programme and set up a youth empowerment fund, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme and other partners. The Government welcomes and appreciates such fruitful and positive engagements.

To fulfil the vision of our liberation struggle, we must use our oil revenues to fuel economic growth through investment in agriculture. We will invest in infrastructure to connect our rural communities to markets. We need the public and private sectors, including foreign investors, to join hands in turning South Sudan's potential wealth into a reality.

I am glad to report on the implementation of the various chapters of the agreement.

We have formed executive and legislative organs at the national and state levels, in line with the power-sharing formulas outlined in chapter I of the agreement.

More important, we have made significant progress in implementing the public financial management reforms outlined in chapter IV. Those measures have met the expectations of international financial institutions and other external partners.

In addition, the constitution-making process recently took a significant step forward through the convening of a workshop that charted a road map towards the drafting and adoption of the permanent constitution.

The implementation of chapter V, on transitional justice, accountability, reconciliation and healing, is moving forward at a relatively slow pace, not for lack of political will but rather for objective reasons that we are addressing with our regional and international partners.

We can therefore say that the glass is half full with respect to the implementation of most chapters of the Revitalized Peace Agreement. Where the glass remains half-empty is with respect to chapter II, on a permanent ceasefire and transitional security arrangements. There is an urgent need to form a unified professional army under one command and control. Security sector reform is the most challenging part of the agreement, as it contains elements at the centre of the violent conflicts in the country.

The parties to the agreement and other stakeholders should continue their dialogue to build the mutual understanding and confidence needed to address and resolve long-standing differences. Building sustainable peace requires inclusivity, collective investment, determination, diligence and patience.

Having celebrated the tenth anniversary of independence this year, the next decade — the Decade of Action to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 — is an opportune moment that coincides with our efforts to develop the country's economy by investing in agriculture. Moreover, with young people estimated to represent 73.6 per cent of the population, the Government promises to leverage women's and young people's contribution to agriculture and economic development.

Climate change has already impacted the lives of at least 1 million people across South Sudan. Torrential rains have resulted in the worst flooding in 60 years and have inundated villages and towns and destroyed livestock. South Sudan has developed and submitted its second nationally determined contribution (NDC), which lays out the framework of its commitments to the Paris Agreement and its contribution to the global effort to reduce emissions to below 1.5°C, despite the fact that it already has among the lowest carbon emissions. The NDC not only places South Sudan on a sustainable low-carbon-growth pathway but also develops its resilience against climate-induced shocks and stresses.

South Sudan contributes more than its fair share in reducing global emissions. Yet it is among the countries that suffer the most from the impact of climate change. We call upon Member States to aggressively respond to the call for action to further cut emissions if we are to avert a catastrophic situation that will be a defining moment for humankind.

South Sudan stands ready to help the world. That is in our national interest since we have the natural resources and capacity to enhance climate mitigation and adoption measures. However, funding those measures is essential so that we join the call for climate financing to be made accessible to developing countries in order to enable us to help the world, while also preventing climate change impacts from reversing our development gains and increasing the vulnerability of our people and country to shocks and stresses.

I am happy to report that the bilateral relationship between South Sudan and the Sudan has significantly improved. We have cooperated effectively to resolve our national problems, positively reinforcing our mutual relationship. There are, however, issues that still need to be resolved between our two countries. First and foremost is the issue of the contested area of Abyei. The Protocol on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Abyei Area of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Sudan People's Liberation Army already provides the basis for resolving that issue.

Unfortunately, we disagree on the implementation of the Abyei Protocol and have entered into several additional agreements without a final solution. Now Khartoum has called for the withdrawal of Ethiopian forces from the United Nations Interim Security Force

for Abyei. Any alternative arrangements will take time and leave a dangerous security gap in the Area. That issue can be resolved peacefully through an arrangement that will give the Abyei people their freedom and dignity. Moreover, that will enable them to play a positive role at the border between the two Sudans.

We are determined to learn from the past and look forward to engaging in a constructive dialogue, revitalizing cooperation and being more effective in pursuing our shared objectives. We must make the Revitalized Peace Agreement succeed, and we can do that only with the support of our regional and international partners. Simply stated, South Sudan desires and is ready to turn a new page.

Lastly, I have come to the General Assembly with the spirit of my late husband, Dr. John Garang De Mabior, and all those who paid the ultimate price in the struggle. It was a dream for Dr. John to liberate his people and address the global community at this very rostrum. Being in the General Assembly Hall as a female Vice-President from an independent South Sudan realizes Dr. John's dream.

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

Ms. Rebecca Nyandeng De Mabior, Vice-President of the Republic of South Sudan, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Nikol Pashinyan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Armenia to introduce an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia.

Mr. Mirzoyan (Armenia): I have the honour to introduce the pre-recorded statement by His Excellency Mr. Nikol Pashinyan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia.

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

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex V and see A/76/332/Add.7).

Address by Mr. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister, Minister for Defense, Home Affairs, and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity of the Republic of Mauritius

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Mauritius to introduce an address by the Prime Minister, Minister for Defense, Home Affairs, and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity of the Republic of Mauritius.

Mr. Koonjul (Mauritius): With the President's permission, I invite the General Assembly to hear a pre-recorded statement by the Honourable Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister, Minister for Defense, Home Affairs, and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity of the Republic of Mauritius.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex VI and see A/76/332/Add.7).

Address by Mr. Stefan Löfven, Prime Minister of Sweden

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden to introduce an address by the Prime Minister of Sweden.

Ms. Eneström (Sweden): I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Abdulla Shahid on taking up the position of President of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session. I also welcome the reappointment of Mr. António Guterres as Secretary-General for a second term. Both of them can count on Sweden's full support for their important work.

It is my honour now to introduce Sweden's pre-recorded national address on the occasion of the general debate of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly, delivered by His Excellency Mr. Stefan Löfven, Prime Minister of Sweden.

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

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex VII and see A/76/332/Add.7).

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

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

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

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

Ms. Mottley (Barbados): At the outset, please permit me to congratulate Secretary-General António Guterres and Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed on their reappointments, and the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session on his election.

If I used the speech prepared for me to deliver today, it would be a repetition — a repetition of what the Assembly has heard from others and also from me. Equally, how many more times will we then have a situation where we say the same thing over and over again to come to naught.

We cannot do that anymore. I ask simply that we recall that three years ago, when I delivered my maiden speech (see A/73/PV.13), I indicated from this very rostrum and told the international community that the world appeared awfully similar to what it looked like 100 years ago.

Barbados made that position clear. Regrettably, we have not come to say, "We told you so", but we have come to say that the needle has not moved and that we have not seen sufficient action on behalf of the people of the world. I am therefore not here to keep members long today, and I shall be very brief.

How many variants of the coronavirus disease must arrive before a worldwide action plan for vaccinations will be implemented? How many more deaths must it take before 1.7 billion excess vaccine doses in the possession of the advanced countries of the world will be shared with those who have simply no access to vaccines?

How much more fake news will we allow to be spread without States defending public digital space? We have come together with alacrity to defend the right of States to tax across the digital space, but we are not prepared to come together with the same alacrity to defend the rights of our citizens not to be duped by fake news in the same digital space.

And how many more surges must there be before we ask when the world will take action? None are safe until all are safe. How many more times will we hear that? How much more must we do before the global moral strategic leadership that our world needs comes?

How much more must global temperatures rise before we end the burning of fossil fuels? How much more must sea levels climb in small island developing States before those who profited from the stockpiling of greenhouse gases contribute to repairing the loss and damage that they occasioned, rather than asking us to deplete the fiscal space that we have for development to cure the damage caused by the greed of others? How many more hurricanes must destroy, locusts devour and islands be submerged before we recognize that \$100 billion for adaptation is simply not even enough?

The answer is that we are waiting for urgent, global, moral and strategic leadership. How many more crises must hit before we see an international system that stops dividing us and starts to lift us up? How many more times must people come up to this rostrum and speak about the plight of the people of Cuba and Haiti and see very little being done to lift the floor of social development to give those people the right to pursue their legitimate ambitions? How many more crises and natural disasters must there be before we see that traditional conventions of aid mean that assistance does not reach those who need it the most and those who are the most vulnerable?

And how much wealthier must technology firms get? The top five technology firms have a market capitalization of \$9.3 trillion — I did not say billion. How much wealthier must they get before we worry about the fact that so few of us have access to data and

knowledge and that our children are being deprived of the tools that they need in order to participate in online education?

The answer is that we have the means to give every child on the planet a tablet, we have the means to give every adult a vaccine and we have the means to invest in protecting the most vulnerable on our planet from a changing climate — but we have chosen not to. It is not because we do not have enough. It is because we do not have the will to distribute that which we have. It is also because, regrettably, the faceless few do not fear the consequences sufficiently.

How many more leaders must come up to this rostrum and not be heard before they stop coming? How many times must we address an empty Hall of officials in an institution that was intended to be made for leaders to discuss with leaders the advancement necessary to prevent another great war or any of the other great challenges of our humanity?

How many more times will we stand idly by and watch as women and men of colour — and women in general — are disproportionately attacked as they seek to lead international organizations?

And, yes, how many more times must great needs be met simply by nice words, and not have before us the opportunity to see the goodwill that is necessary to prevent nationalism and militarism?

The answer is that this age dangerously resembles that of a century ago — a time when we were on the eve of the Great Depression, when we were fighting a similar pandemic and when fascism, populism and nationalism were leading to the decimation of populations through actions that are too horrendous for us to even contemplate. Our world does not know what it is gambling with. If we do not control this fire, it will burn us all down.

As I said two years ago (see A/74/PV.9), this is not science fiction. We heard the Secretary-General make the same comment on Tuesday morning, “[t]his is not science fiction; this is our reality today.” (A/76/PV.3, p. 4)

If the truth be told, the Secretary-General’s speech said it all, but who will stand here and support him to give him and our institutions — whether the World Health Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the regional development banks or the relevant development institutions — the mandate to go

forward if we continue to refuse to summon the political will to confront what we know we must confront?

I ask, who in this Hall will sign a new charter for the twenty-first century — not one designed for the next 75 years, because the world in which we live is moving too quickly? Let us try for the next 25 years to meet the needs of the twenty-first century, not the needs of the middle of the twentieth century in the aftermath of a world war that none of us can really relate to today. To paraphrase Robert Nesta Marley, who will get up and stand up for the rights of our people? Who will stand up in the name of all the millions of people who have died during this awful pandemic? Who will stand up in the name of all those who have died because of the climate crisis? Who will stand up for the small island developing States that need 1.5°C to survive on our way to the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change?

Who will stand up, not with a little token but with real progress? Who will stand up for all those in our countries who continue to suffer the indignity of unemployment and underemployment and whose access to food is currently being compromised by increased food and transportation prices? Transportation, quite frankly, has been manipulated. It is not beyond us to solve that problem. If we can find the will to send people to the Moon and solve male baldness, as I have said over and over again, we can solve simple problems like letting our people eat at affordable prices and ensuring that we have the necessary transportation.

We have been told that democracy is what matters in our country and that democracy is fundamentally an issue of the majority and numbers. But why do we not count who stands up in here? Why do we not reckon with the numbers here? It is against that background that I say that this is not 1945, with 50 countries. This is 2021, with many countries that did not exist in 1945 and that must face their people — who want to know what the relevance is of an international community that only meets and fails to listen and talk to one another — and answer their needs.

It is against that background that I say that our voices must be heard and matter. Today Barbados calls at this dangerous fork in the road that the nation States of the Assembly and the people of the world must indicate in which direction we want our world to go and not leave it to the faceless few who have worked so

hard to prevent the world's ample prosperity from being shared with all of our people.

I ask everyone to support us, as we will introduce a draft resolution in the plenary to endorse the approach of Secretary-General António Guterres. When I met with him two days ago, I told him that we share the same philosophy and we want the same destination; the only issue is which road we take and what are the obstacles and potholes in the road that we must overcome.

I fear that we are leaving the General Assembly in need of another General Assembly, with real engagement to secure real progress. That is what the Secretary-General called for on Tuesday. I regret that the token initiatives will not close the gap. On Monday morning, I said to the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom that I was a student in his country and that, as we got off the train, each time there would be a pre-recorded message that simply said, "Mind the gap." Let us not only mind the gap but determine as a global community of nations that numbers matter and that we have the population and Member States to send the signal of the direction that we want our world to follow at this dangerous moment.

Let us do so with the calm assurance that those who live for great causes never ultimately fail, but we must summon the courage to do it. In the name of our people, I ask us to find the global, moral and strategic leadership. It must be global because our problems are global, moral because we must do the right thing and strategic because we cannot solve every problem of the world, but must solve those within our purview immediately.

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

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

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

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

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

The Acting President: It is my distinct honour and privilege to welcome Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

Sheikh Hasina (Bangladesh) (*spoke in Bangla; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): I congratulate the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session on his election. We have confidence in his presidency of hope to steer us through a sustainable recovery that leaves no one behind. I also congratulate Mr. Volkan Bozkir, the previous President of the General Assembly, for his leadership in the face of unprecedented challenges during the historic seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly.

I take great pride in being able to say that I represent my country, Bangladesh, for the seventeenth time at the General Assembly.

The seventy-sixth session is being held while the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is claiming lives across the globe. Many countries are being affected by recurring waves of new variants. The pandemic has battered health systems and economies across the world. I pay tribute to all front-line workers for their dedicated service and sacrifice during the crisis. Against the grim reality of COVID-19, the fact that the theme of this session focuses on hope is very timely.

As an avowed supporter of multilateralism and the United Nations system, Bangladesh would like to see the Organization as a source of hope and aspiration during this critical time. We must set aside our differences and rise as one, while harnessing our collective strength to build back a better world for all.

This is a very special year for us, as we celebrate the golden jubilee of our independence. The celebration coincides with Mujib Year — the centenary of the birth of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. I pay my profound respect and homage to the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, whose selfless, lifelong struggle and visionary leadership brought us our long-cherished independence. I also pay my deepest tribute to the valiant freedom fighters for their courage and sacrifices to free our motherland.

The Father of the Nation was a strong advocate of multilateralism and called the United Nations the centre of the future hopes and aspirations of the world's peoples. On the very first day of our journey in the United Nations, he said in his maiden speech before the General Assembly, on 25 September 1974,

“Our goal is self-reliance; our chosen path is the united and collective efforts of our people. International cooperation and the sharing of the resources and technology could, no doubt, make our task less onerous and reduce the cost in human suffering” (*A/PV.2243, para.23*).

He called for building a world free of economic inequalities, social injustice, aggression and threats of nuclear war, which are as relevant today as they were 47 years ago. We therefore continue to lend our voice and leadership to all issues related to building an inclusive and equal society. Our calls for vaccine equality, our firm position against any form of injustice, such as against the Palestinian people, the resolution of the Rohingya crisis and promoting climate justice are a few examples of our global commitment.

We have been working hard to fulfil the unfinished dream of our Father of the Nation. We are now among the five fastest-growing economies in the world, ranking forty-first in terms of gross domestic product (GDP). Over the past decade, we have reduced the poverty rate from 31.5 per cent to 20.5 per cent. Our per-capita income jumped more than threefold, to \$2,227, in only a decade. Our foreign currency reserve has reached an all-time high at \$48 billion.

Bangladesh has made impressive progress in the socioeconomic sphere and women's empowerment over the past decade. The infant mortality rate was reduced to 23.67 per 1,000; the maternal mortality rate to 173 per 100,000 live births; and the average longevity of people rose to 73 years. According to the World Economic Forum, since 2014 Bangladesh has ranked seventh, ahead of its regional neighbours, with regard to the political empowerment of women.

Our Digital Bangladesh initiative has stimulated transformative impacts on socioeconomic development, education, disaster risk reduction, women's empowerment and so on. Our social safety net programmes have also significantly expanded. As for the Sustainable Development Goal Index score, the *Sustainable Development Report 2021* identified Bangladesh as having progressed the most since

2015. Such progress was due to the heavy investment in women's advancement and empowerment, which contributed to our transformative development.

We achieved the milestone of graduation from a least developed country (LDC) this year. Our vision is to transform Bangladesh into a knowledge-based society and a developed country by 2041 and a prosperous and resilient delta by 2100.

The impact of COVID-19 on Bangladesh has been much less than feared. That is mainly because of our health-care system, which has been strengthened from the grass-roots level. In addition, we adopted a timely, multipronged, multi-stakeholder approach to tackling its challenges. From the very beginning, we took some firm decisions to balance between lives and livelihoods. Those decisions included 28 stimulus packages, to the tune of \$14.6 billion, or 4.44 per cent of our GDP, to keep our economy afloat. We have allocated \$1.61 billion for vaccines in the current budget cycle.

Notably, we paid serious attention to the most vulnerable sectors of our society, such as the ultra-poor, the disabled, the elderly, returnee migrants and vulnerable women. At the outbreak of the pandemic last year, we immediately distributed cash and other kinds of assistance to nearly 40 million people. Our well-timed intervention and our people's resilience helped us to achieve more than 5 per cent economic growth in 2020.

Since time immemorial, humankind has faced the onslaughts of nature and pestilence, as well as human-made conflicts and disasters. Yet humankind has survived those monumental challenges with hope in their hearts and belief in themselves.

The pandemic is another such crisis, out of which many inspiring stories of human survival and magnanimity have been born. Sadly however, the malaise seems likely to be here for a while. Therefore, as we have done in the past, we must come forth with fresh, inclusive and global ideas to fight that common enemy. Let me highlight a few specific issues in that regard.

First, for a COVID-19-free world, we must ensure universal and affordable access to vaccines for people across the world. At the previous session of the General Assembly (see A/75/PV.12), I urged the Assembly to treat COVID-19 vaccines as a global public good. That was echoed by many other leaders. Yet those

calls remain largely unheeded. Instead, we have seen growing vaccine divides between the rich and the poor nations.

According to the World Bank, 84 per cent of vaccine doses have so far gone to people in high and upper-middle income countries, while the low-income countries have received less than 1 per cent. Such vaccine inequality must be urgently addressed. We cannot chart out a sustainable recovery and be safe by leaving millions behind.

I therefore reiterate my call to ensure equitable and affordable access to vaccines for all. The immediate transfer of vaccine technologies could be a means to ensure vaccine equity. Bangladesh is ready to produce vaccines on a mass scale if the technical know-how is shared with us and a patent waiver is granted.

Secondly, the pandemic has disproportionately impacted climate-vulnerable countries. The report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Working Group I provided a grim scenario of our planet. Unless immediate measures are taken, the devastating impacts of climate change will be irreversible. No country, rich or poor, is immune to the destructive effects. We therefore call upon the rich and industrialized countries to cut emissions, compensate for the loss and damage and ensure adequate financing and technology transfer for adaptation and resilience-building.

As Chair of the Climate Vulnerable Forum and the Vulnerable Twenty Group of Ministers of Finance, we launched the Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan — Decade 2030, outlining a transformative agenda from climate vulnerability to climate prosperity. The upcoming twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Glasgow, provides us with an opportunity to rally support for new and inclusive ideas in that regard. Let us not miss out on that opportunity.

Thirdly, the pandemic has severely disrupted our education system. According to UNICEF, close to half of the world's students were affected by partial or full school closures. Millions of students in low-income countries did not have the resources and technologies to join remote-learning facilities, which jeopardized decades of gains in enrolment and literacy rates, among other achievements. We need a global plan to prioritize education recovery by investing in digital tools and services, ensuring access to the Internet and building the capacities of teachers. We also call on the United

Nations system to rally partnerships and resources to make that happen.

Fourthly, despite the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are on track to graduate from the LDC category. Nevertheless, the pandemic has jeopardized the graduation prospects and aspirations of many countries. We look forward to receiving more support from our development partners for an incentive-based graduation structure in order to motivate and incentivize sustainable graduation. As one of the Co-Chairs of the Preparatory Committee for the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, we expect that a concrete outcome of the Doha conference will be the enabling of more countries to sustainably graduate from the LDC category.

Fifthly, migrants have been front-line contributors during the pandemic as essential workers, providing health-care and other emergency services. Yet many of them have been particularly hard-hit due to loss of jobs, salary cuts, lack of access to health and other social services and forcible return. We urge migrant-receiving countries to treat them fairly and protect their jobs, health and well-being during these trying times.

Sixthly, the Rohingya crisis is now in its fifth year, yet not a single forcibly displaced Myanmar national has been repatriated to Myanmar. Despite the uncertainty created by the recent political developments in Myanmar, we expect the international community to provide enhanced focus and active support so that a durable solution to that crisis will be found. Myanmar must create the conditions conducive to the return of displaced persons. We are ready to work with the international community on that compelling priority.

For our part, to facilitate the temporary stay of the forcibly displaced Myanmar national Rohingyas in Bangladesh, we have relocated some of them to Bhasan Char. We have also included all eligible Rohingyas in the national vaccination drive in order to curb the spread of COVID-19 in the camps. I would like to reiterate that the crisis was created in Myanmar and that its solution lies in Myanmar.

The international community must work constructively for a permanent solution of the crisis through the safe, sustainable and dignified return of the Rohingyas to their homes in Rakhine state. Their successful return will require the full support of the international community. We expect the leadership of

the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to step up its ongoing efforts, and the international community must back the accountability processes in place.

We envision a peaceful, stable and prosperous South Asia. We firmly believe that it is incumbent upon the people of Afghanistan to rebuild their country and decide the course of their future themselves. Bangladesh stands ready to continue to work with them and the international community in order to ensure the socioeconomic development of the people of Afghanistan.

Peace remains a pre-eminent focus of our foreign policy. As a sponsor of the flagship Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, we remain deeply committed to creating a peaceful society. Threats of terrorism and violent extremism jeopardize peace and security in many parts of the world. We therefore maintain a zero-tolerance policy in that regard.

As a leading peacekeeping nation, we are proud of our contribution to global peace. Despite the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic, our peacekeepers serve in some of the most difficult circumstances across the globe, with the utmost dedication and professionalism. The international community must do all it can to ensure their safety and security.

With respect to our constitutional obligation, we have always been a steadfast supporter of complete disarmament. We firmly believe that the ultimate guarantee of international peace and security lies in the total elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. It was that conviction that led us to ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which entered into force earlier this year.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the fore the inadequacy of the global response to tackle emergencies. It has also put a spotlight on the critical need for global solidarity and collaboration in order to launch an effective COVID-19 pandemic response. We must demonstrate our ability to work and act together on common issues and create space for new partnerships and solutions. That must start right here at the United Nations, with Member States across regions rising above narrow political interests. Only then can we pursue any meaningful collaboration towards a resilient and inclusive recovery. At this critical juncture, the United Nations stands as our best hope. Let us join hands to keep that hope alive.

Before I conclude, I wish to humbly remind this organ, which was established to ensure peace and justice around the world, that I am still seeking justice for the brutal massacre of my family 46 years ago. It was in the early morning of 15 August 1975 that a band of renegade killers ruthlessly assassinated my father, the father of the nation and then-President of Bangladesh, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman; my loving mother, Sheikh Fazilutunnesa Mujib; my three brothers, the freedom fighter Captain Sheikh Kamal, the freedom fighter Lieutenant Sheikh Jamal and 10-year-old Sheikh Russell; and my paternal uncle, the freedom fighter Sheikh Abu Naser. Eighteen of my close family members were brutally murdered. My younger sister, Sheikh Rehana, and I survived the carnage as we were abroad at the time. For six years we were in exile, suffering from the agony of losing near and dear ones.

Nevertheless, my struggle continued. Since returning to Bangladesh, I have devoted my life to fulfilling the dream of my father, the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, for a happy and prosperous golden Bangladesh. I have faced death threats multiple times, and I have been imprisoned multiple times, but I have never stopped. My only goal is to fulfil the dream of my father to establish a golden Bangladesh. I shall continue to do so as long as I live.

God willing, the people of Bangladesh will lead prosperous lives. May Bangladesh live forever.

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

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

Address by the Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Mark Rutte, Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Mr. Mark Rutte, Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Mark Rutte, Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Rutte (Netherlands): This spring, after a year in the grip of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, we looked forward to the summer. We were full of hope and anticipation. Despite our concern for our loved ones and our economies, there was a light at the end of the tunnel thanks to the scientific community, which developed vaccines in record time, offering a way out of the crisis. Defeating the virus seemed like only a matter of time. The summer of 2021 would be the summer of freedom regained.

But in fact it became a summer of worry. It is true that, in the most affluent parts of the world, vaccination campaigns are well under way. Globally, vaccination coverage is growing by the day, but it is not growing fast enough and is not growing everywhere — not by any means. What is more, the virus hit back and the Delta variant took hold. The pandemic itself is far from over, let alone the long-term consequences of the crisis.

There were other major concerns too. Different parts of the world were battered by extreme weather and devastating natural disasters, from heavy flooding in Africa, China and Western Europe to forest fires in North America and the Mediterranean and hurricanes in the Caribbean. Using hard science and clear statistics, the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change confirmed what we could see with our own eyes: climate change is happening now. It is impacting us all and is hitting us hard.

On top of all that, this summer a tragedy unfolded in Afghanistan. None of us will forget the heartbreaking images of the violence, the people trying to flee, the desperation and the humanitarian need. Right now it is hard to predict the consequences of those recent developments, but I am sure that we all felt powerless and despondent. There was a sense of fighting a losing battle, a feeling that the negative forces were winning over the positive and a fear that our efforts were futile.

I understand those feelings, but at the same time I want to appeal to everyone here: let us not give in to cynicism and fatalism. That is my message today — especially today and especially here. This place, the United Nations Headquarters, this beacon of international cooperation, has proved in the past that we

can find solutions together even if our problems seem too big or too complex. One has only to think back to the start of the United Nations over 75 years ago, when much of the world lay in ruins. At the very point when the world faced an impossible task, countries united and got to work. Although the starting points are very different, we need the same approach now.

As Secretary-General Guterres wrote in the summary to his recent report *Our Common Agenda*,

“In our biggest shared test since the Second World War, [humankind] faces a stark and urgent choice: a breakdown or a breakthrough. [...] The choice is ours to make; but we will not have [that] chance again.”

It is therefore up to us to make the right choices. I see it as our solemn duty to bring about that breakthrough and to work together, with people from all walks of life and with non-governmental organizations and business, on solutions to the major problems of our time for today's generations and for generations to come.

Today I would like to focus on three critical developments — three crises, in fact — that have dominated our attention this summer. The first is the fight against the coronavirus disease and the road to post-pandemic recovery. The second is the disruptive impact of the climate crisis and what we need to do in response. And the third is the situation in Afghanistan.

Let me start with the most acute challenge we face: finding a way out of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have to realize how dependent we are on each other, because the reality is that no one is safe until everyone is safe. COVID-19 will remain a threat as long as a large part of the world is not fully vaccinated. Global solidarity is therefore not simply the right thing to do; it is the only thing we can do to end the pandemic. To that end, we need to put all our effort into stepping up vaccine production and sharing the available doses fairly so that we can vaccinate as many people as quickly as possible.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands is fully committed to that goal. For example, we have contributed €172 million to the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator of the World Health Organization. For every vaccine dose we administer in the Netherlands, we aim to give one away. By the end of the year, we hope to have donated more than 20 million vaccines to countries in need via the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility.

Together with the public health crisis, COVID-19 has also led to a shadow pandemic. Staying at home under the lockdowns has shown to be especially dangerous for women, as domestic violence has increased dramatically. More broadly, the most vulnerable segments of society are the ones that have been hit hardest by the crisis. The impact on young people, women and girls has been enormous.

Young people have not been able to attend school and faced other obstacles in their development. Many women lost their jobs in global supply chains like the clothing industry. What is more, some Governments have used anti-COVID-19 measures as a pretext to restrict fundamental human rights, such as the freedom of expression. Many human rights defenders and civil society organizations have suffered as a result.

Given all that, it is essential that we work to achieve a socioeconomic recovery that benefits everyone and that we get back on course to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Together with the goals of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the SDGs are our guide towards a sustainable recovery in an uncertain world. In order to support that objective, the Kingdom of Netherlands has become the second-largest donor, after Norway, to the United Nations COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund to bolster countries' socioeconomic resilience. We also support valuable initiatives like the Global Financing Facility for Women, Children and Adolescents, which aims to lessen the impact of the pandemic on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

In short, the breakthrough we need requires a two-track approach: first, getting the virus under control around the world and, secondly, working towards an economic recovery that benefits everyone and is green and sustainable.

That brings me to my second point, which is the disruptive impact of climate change. That is no longer a theoretical doomsday scenario; for many, it is now a stark reality. We felt it this summer. Every part of the world experienced extreme weather and devastating natural disasters that are clearly the result of climate change caused by humans. The Kingdom of the Netherlands was not spared either. The six low-lying islands of the Caribbean that are part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands live with the constant threat of sea-level rise, drought and tropical hurricanes, like much of the global South.

In Europe, the Netherlands and its neighbours were hit by extreme rainfall this summer. Tranquil rivers transformed into raging torrents that destroyed everything in their path. Elsewhere in the world, extreme temperatures had devastating impacts, including severe forest fires that forced many people to flee their homes. Clearly, we need to collectively embrace climate action, and we need to do it fast. It is therefore more vital than ever that the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in November, succeed.

Together we must find a way to reduce harmful emissions to net zero by 2050, and we must ensure that the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C degrees remains within reach. We cannot allow political tensions among countries to get in the way of achieving those goals. We cannot saddle our future generations with the problem. And limiting emissions is not the only challenge. Climate adaptation is at least as important because the impact of climate change is already a threat — one we have to arm ourselves against now.

For the Kingdom of the Netherlands, that is not new. For centuries, we have been battling the elements — from North Sea floods to Caribbean storms. Climate adaptation is in our DNA. That is why we hosted the online Climate Adaptation Summit at the beginning of this year. The event saw the launch of the Adaptation Action Agenda, which aims to turn words into deeds.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands understands that we not only need to get our own house in order but we also have to help others do the same. We therefore provide expertise and financial support to protect vulnerable areas against the elements. We have increased our public climate financing, and we support Secretary-General Guterres' call to spend at least half of it on adaptation. In fact, in recent years the Kingdom of the Netherlands has spent almost 70 per cent of its public climate financing on adaptation.

Of course, it is not a matter of either/or. We need to step up our efforts on both adaptation and mitigation and help one another do so. We are all facing the same storm but we are not all in the same boat. That means developed countries have a responsibility to help developing countries take the necessary measures. Only together can we turn things around.

Thirdly, this summer we saw a tragedy unfold in Afghanistan. The situation is desperate. We cannot

abandon the millions of Afghans who are in need of urgent humanitarian aid and whose rights are being trampled, especially the rights of women, girls and minorities. Various United Nations organizations are doing all they can to provide such aid. The people of the United Nations are our eyes and ears on the ground. Even more important, they are the helping hands reaching out to those in need of aid and protecting the weakest in society. We must support and facilitate that good work.

To that end, at the donor conference held on 13 September, the Netherlands pledged an additional €13.5 million for the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund and the Afghanistan Situation Regional Refugee Preparedness and Response Plan. The people of the world, and the Afghan people in particular, are counting on the United Nations.

Over the past 20 years, the international community, including my country, has worked very hard in Afghanistan. Many countries, together with the United Nations and the Afghan people, have tried to ensure a better future for all Afghans in which everyone has opportunities, regardless of their gender, ethnicity or beliefs. And it is important to note that we have definitely taken steps in the right direction.

The Netherlands would like to express our thanks and appreciation to all the military personnel, diplomats and aid workers — as well as the many brave and determined Afghans themselves — who made that possible. We will never forget the many people, including 25 Dutch military personnel, who paid the ultimate price. Thanks to their courage and commitment, a generation has grown up in Afghanistan with better opportunities, child mortality has fallen by 60 per cent, more girls and women have been able to get an education and life expectancy has risen by 16 years.

Those are statistics that matter, but the harsh reality is that we have to pause those efforts now. The question is whether all the hard work of the past 20 years will be undone by recent developments. It is too soon to tell. There continue to be many possible outcomes for Afghanistan, but we must be mindful of the Taliban's track record. Whatever happens, we will continue working to push developments in Afghanistan in the right direction, however difficult that may seem right now. That is because ultimately, we have to continue defending the international legal order and universal human rights in Afghanistan and around the world.

For the Kingdom of the Netherlands, this is especially true in the context of the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH-17. Together with the other countries of the MH-17 Joint Investigation Team, we continue doing all we can to ensure that justice is done. At the moment, family members of the victims are getting the opportunity to share their stories in court, and the emotional impact of that is enormous. One of them said, “We will never be able to come to terms with our loss as long as those responsible refuse to accept responsibility”. I therefore once again call on all countries to cooperate fully with the investigation, in line with Security Council resolution 2166 (2014), so that justice is served and responsibility accepted.

Mr. Salovaara (Finland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In recent months, we have been confronted with our own vulnerability and that of the world around us. I began my remarks by urging everyone not to give in to cynicism and fatalism because, as the philosopher Karl Popper once wrote,

“We are all responsible for what the future holds in store. Thus it is our duty not to prophesy evil, but rather to fight for a better world”.

Please be assured that the Kingdom of the Netherlands will continue working with full conviction to that end, together with all Member States.

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

Mr. Mark Rutte, Prime Minister and Minister for General Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, was escorted from the rostrum.

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

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

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

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

Mr. Mitsotakis (Greece): For nearly two years, the world has been grappling with one of the greatest challenges we have faced in modern times. The impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an ever-present reminder of the realities we continue to face in the battle against the pandemic. But as we gather here this week I believe that, despite the pain and disruption brought about by this horrible disease, there are real reasons to be optimistic. If recent events have taught us anything, it is that hope is born out of cooperation.

For the first time in human history, our planet joined hands and delivered a collective scientific miracle — the discovery, development and production of not just one but several safe and effective vaccines in an amazingly short period of time. What in the past would have taken us decades was achieved in months. And Europe led the way on numerous fronts. We led the way on vaccine procurement. Vaccines were purchased by the European Union (EU) and distributed to all its States members, based on their population, regardless of their size or economic might. It was a true act of solidarity.

Europe led the way on vaccine donations to countries outside the European Union. In my country Greece’s case, 1.5 million doses to date, with 4 million more to come, were donated to countries ranging from Iraq to Rwanda and from Libya to Jordan. We also committed 510,000 doses through the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility. We agreed as Europeans last July on an unprecedented EU-wide fiscal stimulus package — NextGenerationEU — which is now driving a sustained economic recovery across the continent.

And we agreed on the development of the EU Digital COVID Certificate — an innovative concept that Greece was the first to propose — the implementation of which has been absolutely central to the restoration of our freedoms, the support of our tourism industry and the rejuvenation of our economies. As we stand here today — less than six weeks from the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Glasgow — we continue to talk about the other great issue of our time, climate change, with a renewed sense of urgency. The question is whether we are capable of aligning our flowery rhetoric with the necessary action to avert a catastrophe of unimaginable consequences.

Let me be clear: this is no longer about climate change; this is about addressing an acute climate crisis.

Our collective response to the COVID-19 pandemic crossed borders and demonstrated that, when the world needed to stand up and stand together, it was able to effectively confront global issues. Our collective response to the climate crisis must do the same.

Scientists tell us that the Mediterranean ecosystem, which is home to some of the world's most ancient civilizations, is particularly susceptible to the consequences of rising temperatures. Of course, my country Greece is not immune. This summer we paid a very heavy price as unprecedented mega-fires ravaged my country. Yet help to fight the fires came from across Europe and beyond. I am deeply grateful to the 23 countries that sent us support to help us tame a natural phenomenon of ferocious intensity.

I am very pleased that last Friday, together with Greece, the leaders of eight other Mediterranean countries made the climate crisis the focal point of the eighth Summit of the Southern Countries of the European Union, held in Athens. The Athens Declaration, adopted by Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Croatia, Cyprus, Malta, Slovenia and Greece, focuses on key areas of the climate crisis that are of particular relevance to the Mediterranean, including biodiversity, forest management, the marine environment and civil protection, prevention and preparedness. My country's commitment to addressing the climate crisis is unwavering and transcends all aspects of public policy.

Two years ago, before the COVID-19 pandemic struck, I announced from this rostrum (see A/74/PV.9) that by 2028 Greece would shut down all its electricity-production plants fired by lignite — that is, brown coal. We are currently working to make that happen even sooner, possibly by 2025. We are investing €24 billion of European and national funds to support the green transition. We are addressing the issue of plastics pollution on land and at sea. We intend to effectively protect our marine environment by designating 10 per cent of our seas as no-catch zones by 2030.

We are also implementing ambitious plans, in partnership with the private sector, to accelerate the use of green energy in our most sensitive ecosystems. For example, on the island Astypalaia, in the Dodecanese, we have begun a long-term project together with Volkswagen to develop Europe's first fully green island. And Greece is leading a global initiative that aims to accelerate action to protect its cultural and natural heritage from the impacts of climate change.

Let me turn now to the escalating complexity of international relations and our continued efforts to consolidate regional peace and security. Since we previously met at the General Assembly, the eastern Mediterranean has unfortunately seen more days of instability than calmness. While it is true that there are diverging views between Greece and our close neighbour Turkey, Greece has always been committed to the rules and principles of international law and remains a strong advocate of the notion that all disputes need to be settled peacefully, always in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

Let me point out that it is the United Nations Charter that bans the use or the threat of force. However, since 1995 Greece has faced a formal, regularly renewed, clearly illegal and unacceptable threat of the use of force by Turkey — what is known as a *casus belli*. Furthermore, given that Greece is a maritime country made up of many thousands of islands and a coastline that stretches for more than 14,000 kilometres — the longest in the Mediterranean — as a global maritime power we are fully committed to the law of the sea, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

After many years of difficult negotiations, we recently signed delimitation agreements on our maritime zones with Italy and Egypt, and we have agreed with Albania to refer delimitation to the International Court of Justice. That, I believe, is the best proof that disputes regarding maritime delimitations, no matter how complex or long-standing, can be resolved provided that we agree on a common rule book. And the only rule book available is the that of the international law of the sea.

It is that mindset that defines our approach to Turkey. We have always supported the need for open channels of communication and cooperation between our two neighbouring countries. What happened last year, when Ankara raised tensions unnecessarily and without provocation, threatening confrontation between two NATO allies, must not be repeated. Turkey should understand that its aggressive attitude in that respect undermines the prospects for a mutually beneficial relationship and jeopardizes regional security and stability.

More than that, it makes Turkey's relationship with Europe that much more complicated. Let me be absolutely clear: we will continue to protect our

sovereignty and sovereign rights across our territory on land, at sea and in our airspace. At the same time, I will spare no effort to continue reaching out to Turkey to explore avenues of cooperation.

I have a vision for the eastern Mediterranean. Instead of fighting the previous century's battles over hydrocarbons — a fading commodity — we can, and have to, join forces and cooperate against new common enemies. They include the climate crisis, which affects both our countries equally, as well as the threat posed by illegal migration, in which Turkey has an important role to play in cooperating with us to eradicate the networks of illegal smugglers that prey on the desperation of vulnerable people. There is much our two countries can do together. We are bound by history and geography to coexist, and it is in our common interests to do so peacefully and prosperously.

Where I am less optimistic is on the issue of Cyprus. It is regrettable that Turkey continues to ignore a series of United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions 541 (1983) and 550 (1984), and insists on the militarization of the island. It continues its illegal violation of Cyprus' maritime zones and airspace and violates United Nations resolutions on the fenced area of Varosha.

Greece remains fully committed to supporting the efforts led by the Secretary-General for the resumption as soon as possible of results-oriented negotiations on a viable solution to the Cyprus issue. Such a solution can be found only on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions, which call for a mutually acceptable settlement of a bizonal, bicomunal federation, with political equality, a single sovereignty, a single international personality and a single citizenship. Any talk of a two-State solution is simply unacceptable.

In our immediate neighbourhood, Libya continues to suffer from the devastating effects of a decade-long civil war. The Libyan people deserve a peaceful future in which their destiny is in their own hands, free from the presence of foreign troops, mercenaries and foreign fighters. Libyans want the right to freely elect their own Government without foreign intervention. We stand by them and support their demand for the withdrawal of all foreign forces and the holding of free elections on 24 December. We appreciate the work done by the United Nations and by Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Libya, Mr. Ján Kubiš.

I also want to briefly address the issue of the Western Balkans. Greece has always been an active supporter of greater European integration as a vehicle for a more prosperous, stable and democratic future for the region. Ever since the adoption of the Thessaloniki Agenda for the Western Balkans in 2003, that EU perspective has been the driving force for reform, democratization and change. But let us be honest that there has also been fatigue and disappointment. Eighteen years is a long time. In a matter of days, the EU-Western Balkans summit will be held in Slovenia. Let us not miss the opportunity to use the summit to take a bold step forward. It is time for the European Union to deliver.

Greece believes in a multilateral approach to the complex global challenges of today, but I am also a firm believer in the absolute necessity of Europe's strategic autonomy. Recent events have clearly demonstrated that we must be both willing and able to do more as Europeans on our own.

That should not come at the expense of our trans-Atlantic bonds. If anything, a European defence union will strengthen NATO. It will oblige European countries to address issues of inter-operability and meagre defence budgets. It will accelerate our cooperation on cyber and space.

If Europe is to be not just an economic but also a geopolitical powerhouse, it is time for that debate to start in earnest. Those countries most eager to proceed can do so at a faster pace. Our strategic interests in the eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East and the Sahel force us to address that challenge with a renewed sense of urgency, because there will be missions in which NATO or the United Nations will not be present but the EU should be.

Let me conclude by saying that earlier this year, on 25 March, Greece celebrated the two-hundredth anniversary of the beginning of our war of independence. Our ancestors fought for freedom, dignity and respect for the rule of law. They prevailed against all odds, because they were doing the right thing for themselves and their children. The challenges we face are no less formidable. Six thousand years of civilization and the futures of every generation to come rest on our shoulders. Armed with the power of reason and science and a determination to rise to the occasion, I am convinced that we will also do the right thing for ourselves, our children and the future of the fragile yet beautiful blue planet that humankind calls home.

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

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

The meeting rose at 3 p.m.

Annex I**Address by Mr. Michel Aoun, President of the Lebanese Republic**

[Original: Arabic, English and French]

Your Excellency, Mr. Abdulla Shahid, President of the General Assembly,
Your Excellency, Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate your Excellency on your election to preside over the seventy-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly, wishing you success in carrying out your duties, in light of the continuous global endeavours to recover from the repercussions of Covid-19. I would have preferred to congratulate you in person rather than through video-conference, which was imposed by the global health situation, for the second year in a row.

I wish to thank His Excellency Mr. Volkan Bozkir for running well the affairs of last year's General Assembly, and to congratulate His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres on his re-election for a second term at the head of the international organization, thanking him on his efforts for Lebanon and his contribution to the organization of three conferences in support of the Lebanese people in the aftermath of the Beirut Port blast tragedy.

Our thanks also go to the Heads of States who participated in these conferences, to governmental and non-governmental organizations, and to all those who have contributed to this support. I wish to thank France in particular, whose President rushed to Lebanon personally to support it in its ordeal, and the friendly and brotherly States that contribute to promoting our armed forces which are fighting terrorism and cooperating with the Peacekeeping forces to preserve calm and stability on our Southern borders and to implement resolution 1701 (2006).

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Twenty years ago, a few miles from the headquarters, the largest terrorist operation struck the heart of New York, causing thousands of victims and leaving deep marks in the world's conscience. It also had tremendous repercussions at a global scale, and entailed a war on terrorism that succeeded sometimes and failed sometimes.

In all cases, many peoples, especially in our region, have paid dearly for that war, in terms of death, destruction and displacement, and they are now pulling themselves together and trying to rise as New York had risen, because the will of life is more powerful than any terrorism, and it undoubtedly converges with the theme of the present session "Building Resilience Through Hope".

Esteemed audience,

As the Lebanese Government has been formed according to the constitutional mechanism after a political crisis that lasted more than a year, Lebanon has embarked on a new phase that would hopefully mark a promising step on the path of recovery. There is no doubt that major internal and international challenges await the new government to earn the confidence of both the people and the international community after having obtained that of the Lebanese Parliament.

Over the past two years, Lebanon has known its hardest times, whereas successive crises — some inherited and ramified and some urgent — exploded simultaneously, affecting all sectors.

Indeed, the financial and economic policies adopted for decades and built upon the profit-based pattern, in addition to corruption and waste that result from bad management and absence of accountability, pushed Lebanon into an unprecedented financial and monetary crisis which led to economic stagnation, a stifling livelihood crisis, and growing in unemployment, migration and poverty rates.

The Government has committed to carry out the pressing and required financial and economic reforms, to fight corruption and lay down a financial recovery plan in the context of continuing negotiations with the International Monetary Fund, accompanied by a plan to generalize the social safety net, a plan to reform and — where needed — restructure the banking system, and to carry on with the implementation of the electricity sector plan.

The kick-off was with the entry of the financial forensic audit of Lebanon's Central Bank's accounts into force after completing the necessary procedures, and this audit shall be applied to all public accounts; this very audit that I have committed before the people of Lebanon and the international community to execute in line with the principles of transparency and accountability.

And as we rely on the international community to finance vital projects in the public and private sectors to revitalize the economic cycle and create job opportunities, we also rely on it to help us recover the smuggled funds stemming from corruption crimes.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The wars of the region around us have contributed to the exacerbation of our crises, especially the Syrian war which have weighed heavily on us, notably through the imposed siege that has deprived Lebanon of its vital extension, or the infiltration of terrorism into our territories, or the large numbers of Syrian displaced who streamed into Lebanon, exceeding today 1.5 million.

I have been vocal, at all fora and specifically that of the United Nations, in exposing the catastrophic outcomes of displacement on all economic, social, health and security aspects, and I appealed to the international community to help us secure the safe return of the displaced; but unfortunately, no one responded to our appeals, and assistance continued to be given to the Syrians in their place of residence in Lebanon rather than extending it to them in their country, and this encouraged them to stay where they are.

Today, as Lebanon is resisting to survive and go on, I repeat the plea: yes, the international community must help Lebanon shoulder the exhausting burden entailed by the displacement crisis; yet, it must first work for the safe return of the displaced to their country. Lebanon, which has laid a comprehensive plan for this return, affirms its position rejecting any form of integration of the displaced, as it reiterates its position rejecting any form of settlement of Palestinian refugees, based on the necessity to find a solution to the Palestinian issue in accordance with relevant international resolutions, specifically those guaranteeing the right of return.

On the other hand, the persistent Israeli threats remain the main concern of the Lebanese State, the last aspect of which was Israel's attempt to explore for oil and

gas in the disputed area on the maritime borders. Lebanon condemns any attempt to transgress the boundaries of the Exclusive Economic Zone within which Lebanon holds on to its right to oil and gas resources, especially that exploration procurement has begun months ago, then was halted due to strains whose source is no longer a secret to anyone.

Lebanon demands the resumption of indirect negotiations for the demarcation of the Southern maritime borders according to international laws. It affirms that it shall not back off and shall not accept any compromise. The role of the international community is to stand by it.

Esteemed audience,

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit the world with its catastrophic consequences on health, economy, education and other sectors. In Lebanon, its repercussions were exponentially greater because they added up to its crises and they still do. Although the concerned authorities and health organs have dealt with this emergency situation with a professional and proactive approach that kept the infection figures within acceptable ranges, the repercussions have been very hard on an already shaky economy and on the health sector, in light of the growing shortage of drugs, medical supplies and fuel, in addition to the human drain of doctors and nurses due to migration for economic reasons.

As for the vaccination, Lebanon shall have the credit of being among the pioneering countries in this respect, as the rate of vaccination to date has reached 30 per cent, and we are striving to surpass the 40 per cent goal by the end of the year.

Amid these crises, the catastrophic Beirut Port blast came to aggravate the suffering. Today, more than a year later, our capital continues to be quiet and dark, as it remains a disaster-stricken city. We want the heart of our country to beat again, and we also want the Port of Beirut to return to being a pole of attraction.

We are grateful for all the humanitarian assistance that has been sent to our people. Today, the need remains pressing for reconstruction and development supplies and we welcome any international endeavour to habilitate and develop the port, till it is re-operated fully as per the applicable laws.

The international solidarity with our capital and our people is commendable. It has contributed indeed to healing some wounds, but the assistance that Beirut wants as well lies in what may be required by the probe in order to disclose the truth to serve justice. The comfort of the victims' parents and the healing of the wounded's pain can only be complete by serving justice.

The Lebanese justice is investigating the causes and circumstances of the explosion and the administrative liabilities; it has many defendants and arrested. The investigation, which remains confidential, still needs to unveil where the explosive materials came from, why they entered our port, which is really behind them, and if the satellites captured anything at the moment of the blast. We therefore repeat our request to the States, which possess information and data that help the investigation to share them as needed.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The crises of the past two years in Lebanon and the world have delayed the procedures related to the creation of the "Academy for Human Encounters and

Dialogue” which I had launched from the rostrum of the United Nations in 2017, and which earned the support of the General Assembly in 2019 as per resolution 73/344. However, the course of events and the raging conflicts in the surroundings reaffirm the importance of this initiative and what is sought from it in terms of human and civilizational communication.

I’m pleased that a large piece of land very close to Beirut has been allocated to host the Academy, and the necessary studies have been prepared to initiate construction works. I call on all friendly and brotherly States to join those, which have already expressed their desire to sign the Academy establishment convention.

Esteemed audience,

The theme that you have picked for this session, “Building Resilience Through Hope”, is not a mere literary title for the Lebanese people. It is rather a life experienced on a daily basis, for resilience is our life’s journey, our hope has never faded nor has its light ever dimmed. And despite all the hardships, crises and tragedies that besiege us, our people are struggling for a better tomorrow.

As Lebanon tries tenaciously to work its way towards recovery, it relies on international solidarity to achieve its goals.

Thank you.

Annex II

Address by Mr. Mario Abdo Benítez, President of the Republic of Paraguay

[Original: Spanish]

Mr. President of the General Assembly,
Mr. Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Ladies and gentlemen,

We find ourselves gathered here to address the problems that are causing the most distress to all of our peoples. It is our responsibility to ensure that every speech amounts to more than just words and that we can create a space for deep and sincere reflection.

COVID-19 continues to teach us all lessons. It has shown us how solidarity and empathy are vital in dealing with a pandemic and how countries made rapid progress in vaccine production with commendable speed, but it also brought to light some realities that we must face.

On vaccines: how difficult it has been for many countries, like ours, to have to tell our peoples that, despite having arranged and paid for vaccines on time through the COVAX mechanism recommended by the World Health Organization to ensure equitable distribution, the vaccines did not arrive on time. That is the experience of Paraguay and many other countries that have had to wait.

Paraguay has always been committed to multilateralism because we understand that the common problems that transcend our individual countries require a joint response, as in the case of COVID-19. However, we cannot hide our deep disappointment at the response of the multilateral system to the effective and timely distribution of vaccines.

That reality must be addressed in this Hall with a willingness to assess what has happened and to make changes for the future. We cannot turn a blind eye to the fact that some tried to use the vaccine as a tool for political and ideological extortion at one of the most difficult moments in recent human history.

I would like to highlight the cooperation of those brotherly and friendly countries that selflessly extended their hands in solidarity to the Paraguayan people by donating vaccines that allowed us to save lives and move forward with our immunization programme. I would therefore like to thank, once again, the Governments of the United States, Qatar, India, Spain, Mexico, Chile, Colombia, the United Arab Emirates and Uruguay for such a noble gesture. Our country will never forget it.

Mr. President,

Paraguay's economy is largely based on food production for the world and our status as a landlocked developing country strongly conditions our development, including in a structural manner. In the context of post-pandemic recovery, those conditions will once again be a determining factor and it will be vital to facilitate effective access for our products to the markets of most developed countries.

For our part, to lessen the impact of those conditions, we are deploying our efforts to turn our geographical location into an advantage. The ambitious bioceanic corridor project, which will cross Paraguayan territory and link the Atlantic Ocean with the Pacific, is a clear example of how we intend to take advantage of our geographical position and promote the physical integration of our region.

Mr. President,

Integration and sustainable development are priorities in the Republic of Paraguay's foreign policy. For decades, my country has been committed to an energy matrix based on clean and renewable energy, with a commitment to care for the environment and the conviction that energy is an indispensable requirement to continue promoting development.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Climate change is linked to the current water crisis affecting our region. Low river levels are compromising the availability of water for human consumption, affecting navigability conditions, severely damaging our foreign trade, which depends on river transport, and threatening the efficiency of our energy generation sources. We therefore underline the importance of honouring the international commitments of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, in particular those on climate finance, to support the mitigation and adaptation efforts of developing countries, especially those of us most vulnerable to global warming.

Mr. President,

Terrorism, drug trafficking and transnational organized crime are real threats to the international community. For that reason, Paraguay is committed to combating the financing of such activities and money laundering in particular. To that end, we have updated our regulatory frameworks — as well as taking other measures — with the aim of strengthening institutional response capacities and international cooperation to effectively address that scourge.

One of the greatest atrocities of organized crime is the use of children in its activities. Paraguay once again condemns that despicable practice, which we have already suffered, as well as other inhumane actions such as kidnapping and extortion.

Our Government will not cease in its unrelenting and determined fight against criminal groups within the framework of the law, nor will it spare any effort to achieve the return of our compatriots kidnapped by such groups. Our country is a staunch defender of life, the family and human rights.

Mr. President,

As a founding Member, Paraguay reaffirms its support for the United Nations and its importance as the forum that brings together most of the countries of the world.

In order to strengthen democratic governance and establish a more balanced system of decision-making in the United Nations, we believe that the role of the General Assembly should be strengthened and the reform of the functioning of the Security Council should be considered.

Universality is a basic principle of our Organization and, in that connection, we support the inclusion of Taiwan in the United Nations system.

Mr. President,

The ideal of a world governed by peace, democracy and respect for human rights, freedoms and security requires the efforts of all of us. As we set aside our differences and respect the principle of equality of all States, we must deepen the dialogue aimed at promoting actions to combat poverty and inequality in order to promote more equitable development.

I conclude by echoing Pope Francis' words during the General Audience at the Vatican: "Hope is audacious". Hope knows how to look beyond personal comfort, beyond the small securities and compensations that narrow our horizons, and how to open up to great ideals that make life more beautiful and dignified. Let us walk together in hope.

I thank you.

Annex III

Address by Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine

In the name of God the most compassionate and merciful.

H.E. Mr. Abdullah Shahid, President of the United Nations General Assembly

H.E. Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations

Excellencies Heads of Delegations and Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year marks the 73rd anniversary of the Nakba. More than half the Palestinian people were uprooted from their land and deprived of their property in that time. Myself, my family and many others still possess the deeds to our land. These deeds are registered as part of the United Nations' records.

Here is that deed, and many Palestinians carry theirs, as they still hold onto the keys of their houses to this day. We have not been able to recover our properties due to Israeli laws that disregard international law and violate United Nations resolutions, which affirm the right of the Palestine refugees to return to their homeland and to recover their properties and receive just compensation, most notably as enshrined in General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

Contravening those rights, Israel, the occupying Power, enacts laws and holds court hearings to unlawfully and forcibly displace Palestinians from Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan in Jerusalem, which can only be characterized under international law as ethnic cleansing, which is rejected by our people and the international community as a whole and constitutes a crime under international law.

This year also marks the passing of 54 years since Israel's military occupation of the rest of the Palestinian territory in the West Bank, including, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip in 1967.

This occupation persists despite having concluded an agreement of principles — known as the “Oslo Agreement” — to achieve peace and mutual recognition with Israel in 1993. While we remained committed to all of its elements to this day and agreed to every call and initiative to achieve a political solution on the basis of international legitimacy, including the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative and the 2003 Quartet Roadmap, Israel has not honoured its obligations under the signed agreements and has evaded participating in peace initiatives and instead pursued its expansionist, colonial enterprise, destroying the prospect of a political settlement based on the two-State solution.

To those who claim there is no Palestinian partner for peace and that we do not “miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity”, I challenge them to demonstrate that we have rejected even once a genuine and serious initiative to achieve peace, and I accept the judgement of the world in this regard.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Does the Israeli occupying Power believe that it can elude its responsibility for the crime of uprooting more than half of the Palestinian people from their land and for committing numerous massacres, killing and maiming thousands of Palestinians in 1948, in Bald el-Sheikh, Deir Yassin, Abushusha, Tantoura, Ein Zaytoun, Kabia

and others and the subsequent destruction of over 500 Palestinian towns and villages? Does Israel believe it can simply ignore the legitimate rights, including political rights, of millions of Palestinians within and outside of Palestine, the owners and sons and daughters of this land, at the heart of it Jerusalem? Does it believe it can continue its policies to steal their land, suffocate their economy and prevent them from breathing the air of freedom?

Does Israel believe it can endlessly promote a false narrative that ignores the historic and present right of the Palestinian people to their homeland? The crimes and aggressive policies of the Israeli occupying Power against our people, land and holy sites will not thwart our people's struggle to achieve their freedom and independence on their land. This colonial regime it has established on our land will disappear, regardless of how long it takes. We will not allow them to hijack our lives and kill our people's dreams, hopes and aspirations to realize freedom and independence.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is regrettable that the policies of the international community and the decisions of the relevant United Nations bodies regarding a solution for the Question of Palestine have until now not been upheld and implemented, resulting in a failure to hold Israel accountable and sanction it for its violations of international law, allowing Israel, which claims to be a democratic State, to act as a State above the law.

There are still some countries that refuse to acknowledge the reality that Israel is an occupying Power, practicing apartheid and ethnic cleansing. These countries proudly state that they have shared values with Israel, what shared values are you referring to? This has emboldened Israel, only furthering its arrogance and allowing it to reject and violate all UN resolutions.

At the same time, there are those who demand from the Palestinian people and institutions, who believe in the culture of peace and the rule of law, to provide explanations and justifications to demonstrate they do not incite hatred and promote violence. For example, we have to explain and justify what appears in our curriculum, which reflects our narrative and national identity, while no one is demanding to review the Israeli curriculum and media, so the world can see the real incitement by Israeli institutions. We reject these double standards.

Why should we have to clarify and justify providing assistance to families of prisoners and martyrs who are the victims of the occupation and its oppressive policies? We cannot abandon our people and we will continue striving to free all our prisoners. And I salute here the prisoners' heroic stand. If the occupation ends, there will no longer be a prisoners' issue. I cannot but wonder as I address the universal conscience, is there anyone on this earth who would punish the dead and prevent their families from burying them except those who are deprived of morality and humanity?

Until when will this historical injustice against our people continue? Do the States that provide financial and military support to Israel, which it uses to prolong its occupation and kill Palestinians, or those that remain silent in the face of its aggressive policies, besieging and suffocating Palestinians, do these States actually believe they are ensuring peace and security for the Israeli people and stability for the region? I say it loud and clear: they are not.

What more do you want from the Palestinian people? We have honoured all our obligations under United Nations resolutions, we have pressured our people and

ourselves to endure the suffering imposed on us in the pursuit of hope, but all for what outcome? Historical events over the decades have proven that these international policies towards Israel are misguided.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As regards unifying our internal front, we reiterate that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is the legitimate and sole representative of the Palestinian people, and that we are committed to the unity of our people and land and to holding legislative and presidential elections and to the Palestinian National Council as soon as holding such elections in Jerusalem is guaranteed as per signed agreements. We call on the international community to help us bring pressure to bear upon the occupying Power to ensure these elections are held in Jerusalem as we cannot continue being deprived of elections.

Let me state here that we did not cancel the elections, but only postponed them as we could not hold them in Jerusalem. Until this situation is addressed, we will continue striving to create the necessary conditions for the formation of a successful unity government so we can assist our people everywhere and implement reconstruction plans in the Gaza Strip, what requires a complete end to the aggression throughout the territory of the State of Palestine.

I am glad to reaffirm that the coming months will witness the holding of municipal elections in accordance with the law, and elections for all unions and universities are underway.

Ladies and Gentlemen, As regards building state institutions, we stress that we have a full-fledged State with institutions that act in accordance with the rule of law and the principles of accountability and transparency, democracy and pluralism, respect for human rights and empowerment of women and youth. We have acceded to 115 legal instruments and international organizations, committed to upholding our people's rights and strengthening our legislation and regulations, including as they pertain to human rights. We will continue our endeavours to join international organizations.

We have taken the initiative of working jointly with human rights organizations and civil society to preserve these national accomplishments and to guide and adapt the work of our institutions on the basis of the rule of law.

I have issued instructions to take the necessary measures to correct any wrongdoing and continue upholding the rule of law, the freedom of expression and human rights as the path our country insists to remain on.

I reaffirm to the international community our commitment to political engagement and dialogue as the path to achieve peace, and to peaceful popular resistance and to combating terrorism in all its forms and origins in our region and the world. We have numerous agreements with countries around the world to combat global terrorism.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to refer here to the constructive dialogue currently underway with the United States administration to resume Palestinian-US relations and to undertake steps that will ensure the occupying Power's abidance by signed agreements. From our side, we will strive to succeed in this endeavour so as to create conditions

conducive to moving swiftly towards a final political settlement that ends the Israeli occupation of our country.

However, the current and former Israeli governments have persisted in evading the two-State solution based on international law and UN resolutions, and insisted in pursuing occupation and military control over the Palestinian people while presenting illusionary economic and security plans as an alternative. These unilateral plans will not achieve security and stability for anyone as they undermine efforts for a genuine peace and prolong occupation and entrench the reality of one apartheid state.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This is a moment of truth with the occupying Power. We are at a crossroads. We have had enough. This situation cannot continue and our people cannot endure it any longer.

I have dedicated my life to achieving peace and chose the path of peaceful, legal and diplomatic work in international fora. We have extended our hands time and time again for peace and still we cannot find a partner in Israel that believes in and accepts the two-State solution.

The leaders of Israel no longer feel any shame while stating their blunt opposition to this solution that is supported by global consensus. I warn that undermining the two-State solution based on international law and UN resolutions will open the way for other alternatives imposed on us by the situation on the ground as a result of the continuation of the Israeli occupation of our State; the absence of a just solution for the plight of 7 million Palestine refugees uprooted from their land in 1948; the systematic theft of Palestinian land and the ongoing crimes of the occupation and demolition of homes as a means of collective punishment; the killings and arrests and detention by the thousands, including of women, the sick and children as well as the imposition of the inhumane blockade over the Gaza Strip; and measures annexation under numerous pretexts and names, including the settlement plan they now invented in the City of Jerusalem and that we fully reject, all coupled with the crime of forcibly displacing Palestinians from their land, as part of a policy of racial discrimination and ethnic cleansing pursued by the occupation in the absence of a deterrent international response.

Our people will not surrender to the reality of occupation and its illegal policies and practices. They will pursue their just struggle to fulfil their right to self-determination, and options are available, including returning to a solution based on the partition plan of resolution 181 (II) adopted in 1947 which gives the State of Palestine 44 per cent of the land, double the space provided for on the 1967 borders. We remind everyone that Israel seized by military force half of the land dedicated to the State of Palestine in 1948, which is a solution in conformity with international legitimacy.

If the Israeli occupation authorities continue to entrench the reality of one apartheid state as is happening today, our Palestinian people and the entire world will not tolerate such a situation and circumstances on the ground will inevitably impose equal and full political rights for all on the land of historical Palestine, within one State. In all cases, Israel has to choose. These are the options, and it has to choose.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

International law stipulates the right to a free and dignified life, and calls on States to take the necessary measures to protect and secure this right, as protection constitutes an indispensable and decisive element for the maintenance of peace, security, stability, and development. In this regard, I call on the Secretary-General António Guterres to work on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions on protection, including the resolution adopted during the General Assembly emergency session held in June 2018 under “Uniting for Peace” to take the necessary steps towards developing an international mechanism for protection, as foreseen in his report of August 2018, and to activate this mechanism on the borders of the occupied State of Palestine in 1967, including East Jerusalem, to avail our people of international protection.

In parallel, and in accordance with the same resolution, I call on the Secretary-General to convene an international peace conference, in line with the internationally-recognized terms of reference and United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, and under the sole auspices of the international Quartet.

To ensure our initiative is not open-ended, we must state that Israel, the occupying Power, has one year to withdraw from the Palestinian territory it occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem, and we are ready to work throughout this year on the delineation of borders and solving all final status issues under the auspices of the international Quartet and in accordance with United Nations resolutions. If this is not achieved, why maintain recognition of Israel based on the 1967 borders? Why maintain this recognition?

Moreover, in this regard, we will go to the International Court of Justice as the supreme international judicial body, on the issue of the legality of the occupation of the land of the Palestinian state and the relevant obligations for the United Nations and States around the world in this regard and all will have to respect the conclusions of the Court. Colonialism and apartheid are prohibited under international law and they are crimes that must be confronted and a regime that needs to be dismantled.

The international community’s support for this initiative, consistent with international law and United Nations resolutions, may save the region from an unknown fate. We all have a chance to live in peace and security, good-neighbourly relations, each in our State, and delaying implementation of these steps will keep the region in a situation of turmoil and instability with dire consequences. Do the leaders of Israel dream of maintaining their occupation forever? Do they want this occupation to last forever?

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Why should a Palestinian continue living either under Israel’s racist occupation or as a refugee in neighbouring countries? Are there no other alternatives, freedom for example? The Palestinian everywhere is a creative and dynamic human being and the entire world can testify to that. Palestinians deserve to live free in their homeland.

From this podium I call on the sons and daughters of Palestine everywhere around the world to continue pursuit of their peaceful and popular struggle that has shown the true image of the valiant Palestinian people striving for freedom and independence by resisting occupation and apartheid.

I salute our people everywhere and salute all nations and countries that have stood in solidarity with our people during the Jerusalem uprising and the prisoners

uprising and against the aggression that killed hundreds, spread destruction and displaced thousands of our people in the West Bank, Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip

I also salute all those who took part in demonstrations in the United States and Europe and everywhere across the globe to demand an end to the Israeli occupation, apartheid and ethnic cleansing and to call for justice, freedom and self-determination for our people. This is an awakening, recognizing the true Palestinian story, and I urge all to continue raising and defending it and defending the Palestinian right to life, equality and statehood. Opposing aggressive policies and practices of the Israeli occupation and settlers and of the Zionist narrative in general is not an act of incitement or anti-Semitism, but rather the duty of every free man and woman in the world.

In this connection, I convey to the international community our gratitude and appreciation for their political and material support to our people and for the building our institutions and national economy. But the time has come to take tangible steps to revive hope and end the Israeli occupation of our land and people and to consecrate the values of justice and peace in our region. I wonder what prevents countries that recognize Israel from recognizing the State of Palestine, since they support the two state solution?

I say to Israel's leaders: Do not oppress and corner the Palestinian people and deprive them of dignity and their right to their land and State as you will destroy everything. Our patience and the patience of our people have limits. I reiterate yet again that the Palestinian people will defend their existence and identity and will not kneel or surrender, they will not leave and will remain on their land defending it, defending their fate and pursuing their great journey towards ending the occupation. Of the land of the State of Palestine and its capital East Jerusalem. We say once more: this is our land, our Jerusalem, our Palestinian identity, and we shall defend it until the occupier leaves, as the future belongs to us and you cannot claim peace and security for yourselves alone. Let us be.

Peace be upon you.

Annex IV**Address by Ms. Mariam Chabi Talata, Vice-President of the Republic of Benin**

[Original: French]

President of the United Nations General Assembly,
Heads of State and Government,
Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Ladies and gentlemen,

His Excellency Mr. Patrice Talon, President of the Republic of Benin, who could not be here today, has tasked me with delivering the following address on his behalf.

First of all, Mr. President, I would like to thank you for the excellent conduct of the work of the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

The theme of this session is: “Building resilience through hope — to recover from COVID-19, rebuild sustainably, respond to the needs of the planet, respect the rights of people, and revitalize the United Nations”.

When we look at the current state of the world, at various levels, we acknowledge that this theme is very significant, meaningful and relevant to our lives.

It invites us to move away from the ambient and growing scepticism and the rising despair in our hearts in order to solve our current problems and rebuild sustainably.

Mr. President,

For some time now, the international community has had to face the global and destructive reality of the COVID-19 pandemic. In that regard, my country thanks the United Nations and its specialized agencies, in particular the World Health Organization, for prioritizing the quest for a definitive solution to this health crisis.

Widespread and ongoing mobilization, as well as uniting our energies, have allowed for the development of vaccines. Vaccination rates are increasing throughout the world. However, Africa’s vaccination rate remains low, and the continent continues to face other equally deadly infections, namely malaria and HIV/AIDS.

Regarding our domestic management of COVID-19, the State of Benin has opted to fully vaccinate all its citizens and provide subsidization worth several billion CFA francs to people and companies whose businesses have been adversely affected by the pandemic.

In this regard, we thank all partners that support our country in its fight to achieve the SDGs, in line with the Government’s Action Programme.

With regard to the need to rebuild sustainably, we must strive to predict the occurrence of future scourges. Isolated, temporary and local action steps alone are no longer enough. Each State, each continent must open up to others so that, through common and concerted efforts and synergies in actions taken, the world can be rid, once and for all, of its concerns and fears.

Concerning insecurity caused by violent extremism and crime, my country faces two critical situations:

- Terrorism, which is a genuine threat on its northern borders,
- Maritime piracy in the south

To address those issues, in addition to the necessary measures taken internally, Benin joins all initiatives at the regional and international levels to ensure peace, free movement and security for its citizens and everyone on its territory.

The same applies to the needs of the planet. We hope for and expect the same behaviour and attitudes to save a planet that suffers abuses of all kinds, such as overexploitation and excess production and consumption. Beyond our individual sovereignties, we must be compelled to work together on a plan to meet the needs of countries and the planet. We must meet food, water and energy needs — needs that I refer to as strategic — by considering current threats and future generations.

With regard to human rights, the SDGs remind us of them every day through the targets set.

Our country believes that achieving the SDGs is the most concrete and reliable way to ensure respect for human rights. That is why our country strives to mobilize, through various strategies, resources that should enable our citizens to have access to

- an adequate food system with school canteens throughout the country,
- quality education for life,
- health care via the system of insurance for the strengthening of human capital, which protects the poorest,
- drinking water, by expanding our distribution networks,
- energy, by expanding our electricity network and sources of clean energy.

Today, thanks to the successful issuance of SDG Euro bonds, our country has been able to mobilize most of the resources needed to achieve the majority of the SDGs.

At the political level, with the reform of the party system, the regular organization of elections, good governance and the fight against corruption, Benin ensures that its citizens enjoy their human rights.

Mr. President,

The progress made by our country has been tangible, palpable and concrete in recent years. We, therefore, believe that we deserve to be a member of the Human Rights Council for the period 2022-2024 in order to share our experience in the area of protecting and promoting human rights.

This platform is, therefore, a solemn opportunity for me to recall that our country's candidacy has already been formally endorsed by the African Union.

With this support from our neighbours, we also invite all member countries of the United Nations to support Benin's candidacy during the elections that will take place in New York in October 2021.

Mr. President,

Finally, with respect to revitalizing the United Nations, it is crucial to reform the institution so as to guarantee its foundation of equality, justice and solidarity among Member States. Times have changed, the world has evolved. Our institution must also evolve and adapt to modern times.

We appeal to the spirit of consensus to make the United Nations a modern, free and fair institution.

Meanwhile, my country reaffirms its support for diplomatic initiatives that seek to create a viable Palestinian State, with full international sovereignty, living in peace with the State of Israel.

Benin also supports the efforts of the United Nations to find a lasting solution to the situation concerning Western Sahara.

Lastly, my country stands in solidarity with the resolution adopted by the 34th Summit of the African Union in February 2021, in Addis Ababa, on the economic blockade imposed on Cuba by the United States of America. We reiterate the need for the United States to take all necessary measures to end the blockade in the name of promoting peace and development.

Benin therefore calls for the normalization of relations between Cuba and the United States — two countries that are friends of Benin.

Since we must live in hope, we expect that the various calls made here will be heard by all to ensure the advent of a modern, united, free, fair, secure and prosperous world for all.

I thank you.

Annex V**Address by Mr. Nikol Pashinyan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia**

Honourable President of the General Assembly,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to once again deliver a statement at the United Nations General Assembly.

First of all, I would like to congratulate Mr. Abdulla Shahid on his election as President of the General Assembly, as well as Mr. António Guterres on his re-election as Secretary-General of the United Nations. I am confident that with your leadership you will help us overcome the vast challenges we are facing.

Today in my speech, I would like to refer to the situation in the South Caucasus region, present our views and proposals on the solution of the existing problems.

As you know, in the fall of 2020, Nagorno-Karabakh was subjected to aggression. The war that lasted forty-four days took the lives of several thousands of people. Tens of thousands of residents of Nagorno-Karabakh were displaced. The aggression was accompanied by numerous gross violations of international law by the Azerbaijani armed forces, including deliberate targeting of civilians and vital infrastructure, extrajudicial killings of prisoners of war and civilian hostages, torture and many other documented crimes. As a result of these actions, in the parts of Nagorno-Karabakh, which came under the control of Azerbaijan, the Armenian people were subjected to complete ethnic cleansing. Unfortunately, the international community here again could not prevent the mass atrocities. Today, no Armenian lives or practically could live in the territories under the control of Azerbaijan.

Thanks to the mediation efforts of the Russian Federation, it was possible to stop the bloodshed. On November 9, a trilateral ceasefire statement was signed. Peacekeeping forces of the Russian Federation were deployed in Nagorno-Karabakh, which today ensure stability and security thereon.

Dear Colleagues,

One month ago, the Republic of Armenia National Assembly approved the Government's Action Plan for 2021-2026, where one of the key provisions is to open an era of peaceful development for our country and the region. Moreover, as per the results of the early parliamentary election held on June 20, 2021, the people of Armenia gave to our Government a mandate to move towards this key goal. It should be emphasized that our Government received this important mandate based on the results of elections that were held to overcome the domestic political crisis.

This was the second election in our country after the Non-violent, Velvet, People's Revolution in Armenia in 2018. Both elections were assessed by international observers as competitive, transparent, and in line with democratic standards.

So, how are we going to achieve the goal of opening an era of peaceful development for our country and the region? Through dialogue, overcoming incrementally the atmosphere of painful hostility in our region. We realize that the path will be difficult and long. Unfortunately, the incidents designed to delegitimize the peace agenda and deepen and institutionalize the atmosphere of hostility occur on

a daily basis. Violations of the ceasefire, aggressive and insulting statements against Armenia and the Armenian people continue to escalate the atmosphere.

An act against the peace agenda is the fact that, contrary to Article 8 of the November 9 statement, Azerbaijan not only still holds several dozen citizens of the Republic of Armenia in captivity, but also has sentenced many of them to 6 to 20 years imprisonment on trumped-up charges. In addition, there are persons whose captivity has not yet been confirmed by Azerbaijan, although there is clear evidence that they were captured. This becomes even more unacceptable against the background that in the fall of 2020, Azerbaijani users posted videos of the capture of specific Armenian soldiers, and later the decapitated or shot bodies of those soldiers were discovered. We have irrefutable evidence about the torture of our captives.

An outrageous example of the deepening of the atmosphere of hostility is the opening of the so-called trophy park in Baku, where Azerbaijani schoolchildren are taken on excursions to watch the mannequins of captured, killed or bleeding Armenian soldiers.

These and other steps are taken to demonstrate the impossibility of peace in our region, but we will consistently advance that agenda by using every opportunity and by creating new opportunities to open an era of peace for our region.

In this sense, I consider the opening of regional communications extremely important, which is stated in the 9th point of the trilateral declaration signed by the President of the Russian Federation, the President of Azerbaijan and the Prime Minister of Armenia of November 9, 2020 and January 11, 2021.

The interconnected transport arteries of the region will be an outcome of resolving this issue. Opportunity will be created for establishing economic ties, which is one of the important prerequisites for peaceful development.

While examining the topic of reopening transport links, we discovered that there are options that aim at sustaining regional isolation and hostility, but there are also options that emphasize regional interconnectedness and can be a step-by-step solution of the problem of hostility. We are an advocate for the latter option.

If the railway connecting Armenia to Turkey is opened too, then the topic of opening regional communications will cover broader scope.

Honourable Mr. Secretary General,

Armenia is ready for a constructive dialogue, which should lead to the establishment of sustainable and lasting peace in the region. In this regard, we propose to complete the process of return of prisoners of war, hostages and other captives without delay.

It is also necessary to resume the peace process for the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs.

There is no doubt that the situation created through the use of force cannot gain legitimacy from the point of view of international law. The right of the people of Artsakh to self-determination cannot be suspended through the use of force; the conflict cannot be considered resolved through the use of force. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is awaiting its just settlement. This is evidenced by the statements of the Co-Chair countries, which emphasize the need to resume the negotiation process based on the well-known principles.

We believe that the contacts mediated by the Co-Chairs will enable the parties to find common ground, and to open avenues for addressing many difficult issues.

Next is the issue of delimitation and demarcation of the Armenia-Azerbaijan border. I must state with regret that it is difficult to imagine a border delimitation process on the backdrop of almost daily shootings and various provocations on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, on the backdrop of units of the armed forces of Azerbaijan having infiltrated the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia on May 12, 2021 in the Sotk-Khoznavor section. To overcome this situation, we have suggested the following actions: In the above mentioned section, the armed forces of both Armenia and Azerbaijan should withdraw simultaneously to the Soviet times border, international observers would be deployed along that border and under international auspices we would start delimitation and demarcation. We are ready to implement this proposal at any time.

Dear Colleagues,

In my speech, I touched upon issues of vital importance for our country and for the region. These issues need urgently to be addressed today and require the urgent attention of the international community.

At the same time, as I conclude my speech, I would like to reaffirm that Armenia, as a responsible member of the international community and a reliable partner, will continue to contribute to the strengthening of comprehensive international order, to international cooperation based on the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, promoting sustainable development and protection of fundamental human rights.

We are committed to a constructive and inclusive dialogue with all our partners.

Armenia is ready to make every effort to contribute to overcoming the current global challenges such as climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, issues of international peace, security and sustainable development.

With this, let me complete my speech by wishing success to the works of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly.

Thank you for attention.

Annex VI

Address by Mr. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister, Minister for Defense, Home Affairs, and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands, and Territorial Integrity of the Republic of Mauritius

Mr. President,

It is indeed a great pleasure to see you steering the proceedings of the 76th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. Mauritius and Maldives share common challenges as developing islands of the Indian Ocean. We wish to assure you of our full cooperation and support during your Presidency.

I extend my gratitude to H.E. Mr. Volkan Bozkır for his successful Presidency of the last Session.

Let me also congratulate His Excellency Mr. António Guterres upon his re-election as Secretary-General of the United Nations and thank him for his comprehensive report entitled “Our Common Agenda”.

Mr. President,

You have chosen a very appropriate theme for this session given the unique situation we are in for the past 20 months.

Building resilience through hope, recovering from COVID-19, rebuilding sustainably, responding to the needs of the planet, respecting the rights of people, and revitalizing the United Nations cover the whole range of activities which are not only urgent but also crucial if we are to ensure our long term continued existence on our planet, in a manner that enhances multilateralism and cooperation, protects the rights of people by reinforcing our institutions and the Rule of Law, and leaves no one behind.

The COVID-19 pandemic caught a totally unprepared world with unparalleled intensity, disrupting governments and societies, the multilateral system, and more importantly, the lives and livelihood of people.

It has brought to light the scale of global interconnectedness. Events in one country can have rippling effects across the globe.

Almost two years later, we are still grappling with the pandemic and its mutations and despite the fact that vaccines have come out amazingly fast, we are still not in a position to say that life is back to normal.

In fact, just as many countries were finding it hard to find basic protective equipment at the beginning of the pandemic, they are now facing similar challenges to have access to affordable and effective vaccines.

While advanced economies have been able to deploy massive fiscal stimulus to cushion the pandemic’s impact and have succeeded in achieving mass vaccinations, the policy response of developing countries has been constrained by several factors, and access to vaccines is still limited.

Inequitable vaccine distribution is not only leaving millions of people vulnerable to the virus, but it is also allowing new variants to emerge, with the result that recovery will take longer.

We welcome the US initiative to organize a Leaders' Summit to consider ways of eradicating the Pandemic. The meeting held this week shows that bringing together World Leaders, economic partners, and vaccine producers, and the scientific community can lead to concerted actions to fight the pandemic.

We should strive towards producing more vaccines, more rapidly, and decentralize their production to cater for the needs of the people around the globe.

Multilateral facilities such as the COVAX should be fully funded and empowered to redistribute surplus vaccine doses.

Necessary technology and resources should be shared with developing countries, including SIDS like Mauritius, to enable the roll out of vaccines for faster return to normalcy.

In the same vein, unilateral economic sanctions should be reviewed in light of the humanitarian urgency to fight the pandemic.

Mr. President,

With these initiatives, we stand a good chance to eradicate the pandemic or at the very least, be able to learn to live with it, but the world will still have to face the economic challenge that has come with the pandemic.

COVID-19 has severely impacted the world economy. Mauritius was not spared and our GDP contracted by 14.9 per cent in 2020.

Public health spending has had to be increased significantly, together with a string of measures to assist business transformation, support the tourism sector, increase local food production, and support various sectors of the economy.

Along with the pandemic, Mauritius has also faced other challenges concerning its financial services sector, and we have had to address these as a matter of great urgency in order to keep the sector afloat.

Mr. President,

Before the pandemic, Small Island Developing States were already facing significant levels of debt distress.

While we welcome the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative, we believe this facility should be extended to include Small Island Developing States, in particular the Middle-Income Countries as well.

A new global financial architecture focusing on fiscal space and debt sustainability is urgently needed for SIDS.

Mauritius fully supports the proposal to produce a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index to be used in determining the type and measure of support that will be needed by a country, not only to build its resilience, but also to put it on track to achieve its SDGs.

Mr. President,

The Paris Agreement was hailed as a major breakthrough in our efforts to tackle climate change, but the climate events since, show that unless we commit to doing much more, our planet, and indeed our existence, are severely threatened.

The last Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report is unequivocal, we are in the red and human influence is to a large extent responsible for the state of our atmosphere, ocean, and land.

The world has great expectations from the COP26 Summit. We all know what needs to be done; it is not sufficient to simply raise ambitions, but more importantly, we need to commit to deliver on them.

We owe this to future generations.

Mauritius welcomes the fact that the Green Climate Fund has nearly reached the level of contributions that has been pledged. But this will be meaningless unless access to it is simplified, especially for SIDS.

Mr. President,

Oceans are hosts to huge amounts and varieties of biodiversity that need to be protected.

We support ongoing work for a legally binding instrument on biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction that would allow an equitable sharing of benefits.

Mr. President,

The protection and promotion of human rights and gender equality should remain at the centre of all our endeavours.

We have an immense responsibility towards our future generations. Throughout the world, students and young people have been facing growing frustration because of confinements, education disruptions, and fewer job opportunities.

Special efforts need to be made to bring them in the mainstream. Mauritius stands ready to support all initiatives in that regard.

Mr. President,

One sector which has thrived during the pandemic relates to infodemics and criminal activities in cyberspace. This has to be addressed globally.

We support the elaboration of an international Convention on Countering the Use of Information and Communications Technologies for Criminal Purposes.

Mr. President,

The use of force to legitimize governments is a matter of grave concern to the international community and affects peace and regional stability. We condemn such acts just as much as we condemn the resurgence of violent extremism and terrorism in Africa.

We stand in solidarity with the Afghan people and hope that peace prevails and brings stability to the region. We support all regional and international initiatives aimed at finding sustainable peaceful solutions. We also call for a just and lasting settlement for the Palestinian people.

Mr. President,

Mauritius expresses the hope that under your Presidency, the process of reforming the Security Council in order to make it more representative of the new realities will be accelerated.

The historical injustice done to Africa must be corrected. Africa should have its rightful place in an expanded Security Council which should also include a seat for SIDS.

Mr. President,

It remains a matter of concern that more than two years after the International Court of Justice ruled that the decolonization process of Mauritius has not been lawfully completed in view of the unlawful excision of the Chagos Archipelago from its territory prior to independence, and that the United Kingdom has an obligation to withdraw its unlawful administration from the Archipelago as rapidly as possible, we still see no action on the part of the colonial power.

And yet, the findings of the ICJ have been affirmed by UN General Assembly Resolution 73/295 and in January this year, a Special Chamber of ITLOS has held that those authoritative determinations of international law by the ICJ have binding legal effect, rendering it beyond legitimate dispute that Mauritius is sovereign over the Chagos Archipelago as an integral part of its national territory.

The ITLOS Special Chamber also underscored that in adopting resolution 73/295, the General Assembly has set out modalities for the completion of the decolonization of Mauritius, which the ICJ has ruled every member of the UN, and UN agency, has an obligation to support.

The ITLOS Chamber will now proceed to delimit the maritime boundary between Mauritius and Maldives on the basis of Mauritius being the Coastal State in relation to the Chagos Archipelago.

We note with further satisfaction that Specialized Agencies of the United Nations such as the Universal Postal Union have recently adopted by a large majority a resolution to give practical effect to General Assembly resolution 73/295, thereby ensuring respect for international law and its obligations under the Agreement it signed in 1947 with the UN.

Mauritius looks forward to further implementation of Resolution 73/295 by other international and regional organizations, with the support of UN Member States.

Mauritius remains committed to implementing a programme for the resettlement in the Chagos Archipelago of Mauritian nationals, in particular those of Chagossian origin who were forcibly removed by the UK from the Chagos Archipelago in violation of their basic human rights.

I express, on behalf of the Government and people of Mauritius and in particular the Mauritians of Chagossian origin, our sincere gratitude to all the countries that have been supporting us in completing our decolonization and we appeal to the colonial power to comply with the rulings of the international courts and the resolutions of the General Assembly. Compliance with international law is the responsibility of all law-abiding States.

Mr. President,

I would like to reiterate the commitment of Mauritius to ensuring the continued operation of the defence facility in Diego Garcia. Mauritius considers the facility vital to the maintenance of international peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region, and to efforts to combat terrorism, piracy, and the illicit trafficking of drugs and persons.

In this regard, Mauritius, as sovereign over the Chagos Archipelago, which includes Diego Garcia, stands ready to enter into a long-term arrangement with the United States in respect of Diego Garcia.

Mr. President,

With regard to Tromelin which also forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius, we call for the early resolution of the dispute over the island in the spirit of friendship that characterizes the relations between Mauritius and France.

Mr. President,

We can no longer afford to be fractious. We need to promote, preserve, and strengthen multilateralism.

Together, we can build more sustainable, equal societies and economies.

Together, we can transform our world into one that recognizes and respects the dignity of every human being.

I thank you.

Annex VII

Address by Mr. Stefan Löfven, Prime Minister of Sweden

Excellencies,

This year marks 75 years since Sweden became a member of the United Nations.

Today's global challenges demonstrate the urgent need to strengthen international cooperation, with a modern UN at its core.

The devastating impact of the pandemic has tested the resilience of our societies and put pressure on the multilateral system.

More than half of the world's population have not yet been vaccinated against COVID-19.

Making sure that vaccines are accessible equally to everyone must be our priority.

COVAX remains our best instrument. Sweden is its largest per capita contributor, and I am proud to announce that we intend to increase our support for global access to vaccines.

We look forward to cooperating with all Member States in identifying ways to improve health systems' prevention, preparedness and response capacities.

Excellencies,

The extreme weather events we have witnessed, with forest fires, flooding and heat waves, underline the urgent need to act against climate change.

We must listen to the science and transform our societies. We must keep the 1.5 degree goal alive.

Lower emissions, adaptation and protection of biodiversity must be our priority. Recovering from the pandemic will provide an opportunity to build back greener.

This year, we need to stand up to the test as we gather at COP26 in Glasgow, COP15 in Kunming, and prepare to conclude a legal instrument to protect biodiversity in the high seas.

Next year marks 50 years since the world gathered in Stockholm for the first ever UN conference on the environment. In June, we will host Stockholm+50, which we expect will be a catalyst for necessary transformative actions for a systemic change as with regard to the environment and climate change agenda. Let's take this opportunity to help redefine humankind's relationship with nature.

Excellencies,

A renewed commitment to strengthening international cooperation must be based on our joint responsibility to uphold international law.

Human rights are universal and apply to all.

We reiterate our strong support for the Secretary-General's 'Call to Action for Human Rights' and advancing human rights across all of the work conducted by the UN.

We remain deeply concerned that respect for democracy continues to decrease globally. Sweden will continue our strong support to democratic institutions and processes, and to defenders of democracy.

Through Sweden's cross-regional 'Drive for Democracy' initiative, we aim to push back against authoritarianism and promote democracy worldwide.

Excellencies,

The pandemic has exacerbated critical gaps in equality, particularly gender equality. Women and girls have been disproportionately affected. Sustainable development, peace and security are not possible when women and girls are left behind.

This is why my Government is a feminist government.

Sweden will always stand up for sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Excellencies,

International solidarity is part of the Swedish DNA. We remain firm in our global commitments, including to provide 1 per cent of GNI to overseas development assistance.

Free, fair and sustainable trade is key in order to create new jobs and increase prosperity. The World Trade Organization has an essential role in upholding a rules-based international trading system. We must ensure that we have the means to build back better and greener.

As chair of the ILO Governing Body this year, we will promote labour rights.

Excellencies,

The pandemic has also increased the suffering of the most vulnerable. The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance to survive has reached a new record level. Global hunger, driven by armed conflicts and climate change, is soaring.

We urge Member States to urgently step up funding to save lives and alleviate suffering.

Sweden remains one of the largest humanitarian donors.

We need to find new ways to support the Afghan people to sustain the achievements made in the last 20 years. The increasingly acute humanitarian crisis and the protection and promotion of human rights — in particular regarding people belonging to minorities, women and girls — must be addressed. In this, the UN plays a critical role. Sweden's longstanding engagement and our support to the Afghan people remain steadfast.

Excellencies,

Sweden continues to be a champion for long-term peacebuilding and we are a substantial contributor of personnel to UN peace operations.

In Yemen, relentless fighting has worsened the humanitarian catastrophe. Sweden remains deeply engaged. We urge the parties to agree on a ceasefire and take part in political talks under UN auspices. The implementation of the Stockholm and Riyadh agreements remains a key step. Sweden is committed to leading international efforts to mobilise additional funding for the world's largest humanitarian operation.

In Ethiopia, the Tigray conflict's expansion is causing immense human suffering. We urgently call on all parties to ensure full and sustained humanitarian access, agree to a ceasefire and work for a political solution.

Excellencies,

One year ago, peaceful protests in Belarus were followed by ruthless repression. Sweden and the EU demand respect for human rights. We support the Belarusian people's right to democracy, freedom of expression and the rule of law.

Sweden remains a steadfast supporter of Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence. We continue to unequivocally denounce Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol.

This year, Sweden is chairing the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Our guiding principle is to return to the basics by defending the European security order based on respect for international law and the UN charter.

Strengthening the OSCE's cooperation with the UN is a priority, not least on the ground in conflict situations.

Excellencies,

The nuclear threat is as present as ever. To reverse this negative trend, we welcome recent steps such as the extension of the New START Treaty, and the US and Russian joint statement reaffirming that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought".

The Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament aims to ensure that concrete steps towards nuclear disarmament are taken, not least in view of the upcoming Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Some progress has been made, but much more remains to be done. We call on all States, in particular nuclear weapon states, to do their part.

We call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to adhere to its international obligations and take steps towards denuclearisation.

Excellencies,

This will be my last address as Prime Minister of Sweden to the General Assembly. As I look back at my seven years in office, I can only conclude that global challenges are becoming ever more pressing. But together, we have also made important progress.

Sweden remains an active champion of finding common solutions to the challenges we jointly face. Our roadmap is global implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Gender equality is the unfinished human rights struggle of this century. Gender equality has always been a key priority in decision-making and resource allocation in my government — and I have promoted gender equality globally.

Climate change is the defining issue of our time. In 2017, the Swedish Parliament adopted the most ambitious climate reform in Sweden's history, aiming at net zero emissions of greenhouse gases by 2045. Together with India, I am proud to have launched the Leadership Group for Industry Transition.

Inequality has further accelerated. Together with the ILO and the OECD, I launched the Global Deal partnership for decent work and inclusive growth in 2016. The objective is to improve the global labour market and enable people to benefit from globalization.

In October, I will host the Malmö International Forum on Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Anti-Semitism — Remember ReAct. The rise of racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and antisemitism must be rigorously countered. The Forum aims to take concrete steps in the work for Holocaust remembrance and the fight against antisemitism.

Excellencies,

Last year's adoption of the UN75 Declaration, co-facilitated by Sweden and Qatar, was a recommitment to strengthening international cooperation, with a modern, innovative and inclusive United Nations at its core.

Together with the Prime Minister of Spain, I have launched a network of leaders to support the Secretary-General in taking the Common Agenda forward. Future generations should be at the centre of these efforts. We look forward to contributing to the preparations of a 'Summit of the Future' in 2023.

Sweden joined the United Nations 75 years ago. Rest assured that we will continue working with all of you all towards a peaceful, green, more equal and healthier planet.

We will remain as committed to international cooperation in the future as we have been over these last 75 years.

Thank you.
