



# General Assembly

Seventy-seventh session

**12<sup>th</sup>** plenary meeting  
Saturday, 24 September 2022, 9 a.m.  
New York

Official Records

*President:* Mr. Kőrösi ..... (Hungary)

*In the absence of the President, Mrs. Ataeva (Turkmenistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

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

## Agenda item 8 (continued)

### General debate

#### Address by Mr. Philip Edward Davis, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas

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

*Mr. Philip Edward Davis, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Russian*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Philip Edward Davis, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

**Mr. Davis** (Bahamas): Next year we will mark 50 years since the Bahamas became a fully independent sovereign nation. Our accession to full membership of the United Nations in 1973 was inspired by a recognition of the interdependence of this family of nations and by the hope that dialogue and partnership can be a path to shared solutions. I believe that we Bahamians are justifiably proud of what we have accomplished in our

50 years of independence. We are free, democratic, entrepreneurial and resilient, and our small size has not held us back from great achievements at home and on the world stage.

But we are ever more aware that many of our greatest challenges emanate from or are made worse by events and conflicts outside our borders. Hurricane Dorian in 2019 was a category 5 storm that nearly destroyed two of our main islands and wiped out 30 per cent of our national economic activity. The impact on our economy, our infrastructure and our people is still very much present. The scientific consensus is that as ocean temperatures rise, we can expect hurricanes of greater intensity to arrive with increased frequency. Small island nations like mine did not create the emissions that are warming the Earth, but we are nonetheless on the front lines of climate catastrophe.

Hurricane Dorian in 2019 was followed by the coronavirus disease in 2020. What happens in industrialized countries does not stay in industrialized countries. Every year we welcome millions of visitors to the Bahamas, drawn by our country's beauty, culture and people. But for a long while visitors could not come. The health crisis quickly became an economic crisis and an education crisis, too. Now, as we are working to recover, a global inflation crisis stubbornly endures. It is making the basics of life unaffordable for too many and creating more hardships for our people. The same is true for other countries in the Caribbean Community region and around the world. And of course, day in and day out, we must also defend our thousands of miles of ocean borders from trafficking in people, drugs and

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

22-60148 (E)



Accessible document

Please recycle



guns. We are not waiting for others to act — we are doing what we can to be stronger and better prepared. But no one country, large or small, acting alone can stop climate change, nor can we individually reduce the threat of future pandemics, end the policies and conflicts driving global inflation or tackle global criminal networks. Those problems require collective action.

It was the second Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld, who was candid about the purpose of this Organization. The United Nations was not created in order to bring us to heaven, he said, but to save us from hell. The United Nations was born out of the ashes of two World Wars. Today we face different threats — ones that require us to mobilize, innovate and above all, collaborate.

Of all the risks we face, none require more urgent action than the climate crisis. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the first conference on climate change, was held in 1992, yet despite decades of conferences and meetings featuring warnings from scientists and experts, one sixth of all the carbon emissions ever generated — some 407 billion tons — occurred between 2010 and 2020. I have frequently spoken, as have so many others, about the need for action in terms of climate justice and fairness. Why should small island nations like mine, which have contributed so little to the climate crisis, experience the biggest burdens and risks of climate change? The argument may be straightforward, but it has not been effective. For a long time, decision-makers in both the public and private sectors believed that climate action had to come at the expense of economic growth, but now many are beginning to understand that climate inaction is the most expensive option of all. Taking action is not just in the interests of those of us who are particularly vulnerable. It is in the interests of every country. That enlightened self-interest that should motivate action.

The good news is that there are also positive incentives. Transitioning to clean energy is going to create jobs, increase efficiencies and improve living standards. Again, I want to emphasize that other countries should not do it for us, but for themselves. I do not believe in despair. I believe in determination and human ingenuity. We can do this. Countries that disagree on many other issues, including important ones, must cooperate on this issue in their own self-interest.

We have roughly 40 days until the twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations

Framework Convention on Climate Change is held in Egypt. Let this year be the year that we turn talk into action. Let us roll up our sleeves and get to work. Let those who pledge write the cheque. Countries like mine, already trapped by billions in climate debt, need funding to transition to renewable energy infrastructure. We have begun to install solar microgrids across our islands, but scaling up will require a lot of additional funding.

We in the Bahamas are playing our part. In February and July of this year, we hosted the One Young World regional and annual conferences for young people to support the next generation in their efforts to engage with climate-related issues. This was the first climate conference for young people in the region.

We recognize the importance and value of the participation of young people. The Bahamas supports the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the provisions on youth engagement in the Secretary-General's report entitled "Our Common Agenda" (A/75/982). Then in August, the Bahamas took the lead in bringing together the member countries of the Caribbean to agree a consensus position for negotiations at the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

We are actively defining ways to protect and safeguard our shallow seas, mangroves and seagrasses. All of it acts as a major carbon sink for the world. We urgently need to build capacity. We are now inviting those with potential technological solutions to bring their innovations to the Bahamas.

It is time for a new resolve and new cooperation. Last year, I brought the threat to the financial-services industry in the Bahamas and our region to the attention of the General Assembly (see A/76/PV.14). I said then that financial services are a crucial component of the Bahamian economy. We see an indispensable role for the United Nations in leveraging its universal jurisdiction for greater oversight of global anti-money-laundering, de-risking and tax-cooperation matters. Sadly, little to nothing has changed. We continue to struggle to recover from the economic shocks of hurricanes and the COVID-19 pandemic. We also have the additional battle brought by inflationary pressures created not by us, but by the war in Europe. And now, to top it off, we are yet again the victims of inequitable and unjust measures on the part of major economic actors.

All those factors place a stranglehold on our national development and that of other small island developing States. Just yesterday, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development issued a statement placing the Bahamas on its blacklist. That action is profoundly unfair. When we look at the countries that are flagged as high risk and blacklisted, several startling commonalities emerge. Why is it that European States that operate frameworks akin to those of blacklisted countries are not even eligible for inclusion on these lists? Why are all the countries targeted — all of them — small and vulnerable, and former colonies of European States?

We find it astounding that the \$2 trillion to \$3 trillion, which is estimated to be laundered each year through the developed countries, are never flagged as causes for concern. And yet my country, which is widely recognized as one of the best regulated countries in the world, and other countries such as the Bahamas, are singled out for such reputational attacks. The robust regulatory regimes of our Central Bank, Securities Commission and Insurance Commission are chastised on minor details of technical process, while much bigger transgressions in the developed world are ignored. The evidence is mounting that the considerations behind these decisions have less to do with compliance and more to do with the darker issues of prejudged discriminatory perceptions. Let me submit that Black-governed countries also matter.

We support the call for reforms in the global financial system to make it more relevant to the needs of today. But those reforms need ambition. They need to go beyond the incremental, and they need to apply to all. For example, the community of international financial institutions is in a position to forgive the debt incurred by the economic shutdowns that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, and they should do so. Every year that we do not do the right thing, the right thing to do becomes more expensive.

When my neighbours are in crisis, whether the cause is climate or crime or instability, the Bahamas is affected by the humanitarian and security needs that arise. We repeat once again our opposition to the decades-long embargo and sanctions against Cuba. COVID-19 has exacerbated the situation for the people of Cuba and made existing hardship and deprivation much worse. The people of Haiti continue to suffer. The political vacuum left after the assassination of the country's president just over a year ago has led to more

violence, with the instability fuelling more tragedy and threatening the entire region.

Migration is not the only issue with which the Bahamas is grappling. We are also struggling with the proliferation of guns. We do not manufacture guns in our country, and yet they find their way illegally to the Bahamas and within days can be connected to some criminal activity. In an archipelagic nation made up of some 700 islands and cays spread across 100,000 square miles of water, defending our borders is an expensive challenge. We believe more manageable and effective efforts can be made at the source to ensure that a right to bear arms does not so quickly and easily translate into our right to traffic arms.

We in the Bahamas believe there is still real purpose in the mission of the United Nations. We will continue to support multilateral efforts aimed at tackling the shared challenges of our time. We congratulate Secretary-General Guterres for his leadership in achieving agreement with Ukraine, Russia and Turkey to get the flow of trade in the Black Sea moving once again. The stabilization in world food markets has served millions of people in the developing world.

We see the involvement and participation of women and young people as inherent and central to our process. My Government considers it vital that women play fully active roles in planning and decision-making, both in national and multilateral affairs. We also support the addition of a United Nations Youth Office.

The needs and rights of small island developing States cannot be sustained by making policy advances only in times of global shock. We are grateful that the Alliance of Small Island States seized the moment in 2020 to secure the cause of work on the multidimensional vulnerability index. We consider this a critical step forward in ensuring greater equity for countries such as the Bahamas.

We are aware that the global community is grossly underprepared in securing protections for the global commons, including water, biodiversity and the digital landscape. In moving forward on this agenda, we also recognize that a more robust and better change-making architecture is needed across the United Nations. In this respect, we hope that members will support the candidature of Bahamian citizen Stephen Bereaux for the post of Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau of the International Telecommunication Union for the 2023-2026 term.

By each of us acting out of our own enlightened self-interest, we acknowledge that we ourselves benefit from doing what is in the best interest of all in meeting the existential challenge posed by the climate crisis. It should be an increasingly self-evident truth that none of us can be safe until we are all safe.

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

*Mr. Philip Edward Davis, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, was escorted from the rostrum.*

**Address by Mr. Abdoulaye Maïga, Acting Prime Minister, Head of the Government of the Republic of Mali**

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Russian*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Acting Prime Minister and Head of Government of the Republic of Mali.

*Mr. Abdoulaye Maïga, Acting Prime Minister and Head of Government of the Republic of Mali, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Russian*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Maïga, Acting Prime Minister and Head of Government of the Republic of Mali, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

**Mr. Maïga** (Mali) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to discharge the pleasant duty of sharing with the General Assembly the warm greetings of the Malian people, who are rich in cultural, religious and ethnic diversity, as well as those of His Excellency Colonel Assimi Goita, President of the Transition and Head of State.

The election of Mr. Csaba Körösi to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session and the conclusion of the work of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly skilfully led by his predecessor Mr. Abdulla Shahid of the Republic of Maldives give me the happy opportunity to extend to them the warm congratulations of all of Mali. Allow me also to reiterate to our Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, our great appreciation for the commendable efforts he continues to make towards the realization of

the noble objectives of our shared Organization. We are convinced that he is a friend of Mali and the Sahel.

Since friendship is based on sincerity, I would like to express my profound disagreement with his recent media appearance, during which he took a position and spoke on the case involving the 46 Ivorian mercenaries, which is a bilateral and judicial matter between two brotherly countries. It is obvious that the legal character of the offences arising from this case does not fall within the remit of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. In Mali, our Administration does not work on the basis of oral proceedings or press statements, and, accordingly, we scrupulously adhere to the note verbale issued by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), contained in document MINUSMA/PROT/NV/226/2022 of 22 July 2022, in which it is clear that there are no links between the 46 mercenaries and the United Nations. The recent alignment of actions and harmonization of terms intended to change the status of my country, Mali, from victim to culprit in this affair involving mercenaries, are obviously without effect.

As the Secretary-General's position on the matter has been adopted by certain West African leaders, it is through him that we would send them messages. For example, to the current Chair of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Mr. Úmaro Sissoco Embaló, who said,

“We have just seen the day before yesterday the statement of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who said that they are not mercenaries. If I were the Malians, I would have released these 49 soldiers”,

I would like to respectfully point out that while there is a principle of subsidiarity between ECOWAS and the United Nations, it is not clear cut, nor is it mimicry. It is also important to point out that the Secretary-General of the United Nations is not a Head of State, and that the Chair of ECOWAS is not a civil servant. It would therefore be appropriate for Mr. Guterres not to trivialize ECOWAS. Finally, it would be useful to remind the Chair of ECOWAS that in Mali, the authorities do not interfere in judicial matters and that they respect the independence of the judiciary. It is not our role, therefore, to arrest or release people, which is a judicial function.

In addition, Mr. Úmaro Sissoco Embaló should be aware of the fact that he is the custodian of a daunting



legacy and the numerous sacrifices that have made the reputation of ECOWAS. The momentum that has made the organization great must remain unbroken. Furthermore, we have noted the threat of sanctions against Mali, and, far from being afraid of sanctions, I would point out to the Chair of ECOWAS that, at the end of his term of office, the peoples of West Africa will judge him on the efforts he will have made to improve their living conditions, and not on the media shows that serve foreign agendas.

As to Mr. Bazoum, he should take note that the Malian transition Government did not react to his insulting remarks for two reasons. The first reason is the respect we have for the teaching of our ancestors that holds that one should not respond to insults with insults. The second reason is related to the identity of Mr. Bazoum, a foreigner who claims to be from the Niger. Because we know that the brotherly people of the Niger are distinguished by their very rich societal, cultural and religious values, Mr. Bazoum cannot be from the Niger; his behaviour makes us feel completely comfortable with this observation. Mali will draw all legal consequences from the actions of the Secretary-General.

We ask those who wish to refute our version to state, before God and on their soul and conscience, whether they would find it acceptable that military personnel who have concealed their identities by putting in their passports that they are painters, masons or the like disembark at their airports with weapons, without informing them in advance, and with the fateful intention of destabilizing their countries. If they as States do not find this acceptable, if it cannot be done in Lisbon or anywhere else, Mali as a State will not find it acceptable either, be it in Bamako or any other Malian locality.

The theme of this seventy-seventh ordinary session of the General Assembly — a watershed moment: transformative solutions to interlocking challenges — will give hope for better days for Mali, provided that an uncompromising assessment of the previous era is made, lessons learned and objective recommendations made. Once these steps are taken, I have no doubt that through our collective action we will succeed not only in calming the multiple sources of tension in the world, but also in promoting harmonious development and effectively fighting against pandemics, environmental degradation and global

warming, inequalities and policies of domination and resource pillaging.

Since August 2020, my country, Mali, has been in a transition process, which will end on 26 March 2024, with the transfer of power to elected authorities. Between today and that date, and in accordance with the recommendations of the Assises nationales de la refondation, the transitional authorities have, in two timetables agreed with ECOWAS, committed themselves to carrying out political and institutional reforms, before organizing elections, the ultimate objective of which is to rebuild the Malian State, so that it can respond to the deep and legitimate aspirations of our people for peace, security, good governance, development and lasting institutional stability in Mali. With this perspective in mind, I am happy to point out that some major advances have already been made, in particular the promulgation of the electoral law, which includes, *inter alia*, the creation of the Independent Election Management Authority, whose establishment is at an advanced stage, as well as the setting up of a commission composed of eminent personalities from all components of Malian society, to be responsible for drafting the new Constitution.

On another level, few people know that Mali is the only country in the world in which there are four overlapping types of insecurity that occur simultaneously: terrorism, community conflicts manipulated by terrorists and their foreign-State sponsors, transnational organized crime, and the violent actions of isolated individuals. In parallel with the process of returning to constitutional order, Mali continues to wage a merciless struggle against the actors of insecurity, in particular extremist groups that are responsible for all sorts of abuses against our peaceful populations.

With respect to Mali, I am happy and proud to announce that the terrorist groups have been seriously weakened, and fear has even changed sides. However, these criminal groups retain a certain capacity to cause harm in their desperate attempts to undermine our territorial integrity and terrorize our populations.

Mali's valiant defence and security forces remain determined to confront all threats from wherever they may come. Under the leadership of His Excellency Colonel Assimi Goita, President of the Transition and Head of State, the Government of Mali continues to intensify its efforts to recruit, train, equip and strengthen

the operational capacities of the Malian defence and security forces. In this regard, I must say that the offensive actions carried out so far have enabled our forces to win decisive victories against the obscurantist forces. They have also enabled the State to regain its foothold in and reassert its authority over a large part of the national territory, as well as to encourage the return of several thousand of our compatriots to their places of origin.

However, we know that a purely military or security solution has its limits. That is why, in support of military action, the Government of Mali has adopted a comprehensive and integrated strategy that comprises political, social and development measures, including the provision of basic social services to our populations hard hit by the multifaceted crisis we have been experiencing since January 2012, with the objective of restoring the authority of the State throughout the national territory. In this context, the Government of Mali approved the national strategy for the stabilization of the central regions and its 2022-2024 action plan on 24 August. This strategy reflects the desire of the transitional authorities to have a holistic approach to stabilizing the central regions. It aims to make the centre a stable and prosperous area where communities are reconciled and live in harmony with their neighbours. At the same time, the diligent and intelligent implementation of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, which came out of the Algiers process, remains a strategic priority for the transitional authorities, as a peaceful instrument for a lasting resolution of the crisis that Mali is experiencing in its northern part.

I must say that I am particularly pleased with the outcome of the second decision-level meeting of the parties to the Agreement, held in Bamako from 1 to 5 August 2022. This important meeting, which brought together the signatory parties and international mediators, made it possible to remove certain obstacles to the relaunch of the Agreement implementation process.

Continuing this positive and progressive momentum in the peace process, the sixth high-level meeting of the Agreement Monitoring Committee was held in Bamako just a few weeks ago, on 2 September 2022. This session of the Monitoring Committee sent a strong signal of the parties' willingness to engage in a new dynamic to complete the implementation of the Agreement. I would like to reaffirm our commitment to this process, the success of which remains one of

the sine qua non conditions for lasting stability in Mali. This is the right time for me to thank Algeria once again for playing an active role in the peace process and to thank the international mediation team for its support.

I am not forgetting the situation of Malian refugees in neighbouring countries, which I thank in passing for their hospitality towards our people. Nor am I forgetting the situation of our internally displaced compatriots. I want to reassure them that the Government of Mali remains very attentive to their precarious situation and that all our efforts are aimed at creating the conditions for their return home in safety and dignity, with a view to their effective participation in the life of the nation.

In its difficult quest for peace, stability and sustainable development, the Malian people remain grateful for the efforts and sacrifices made by MINUSMA, from its creation in July 2013 to the present day, aimed at helping Mali restore its authority throughout its territory. That is why I would like to pay tribute, on behalf of the people and the Government of Mali, to the memory of all the victims, Malian and foreign, civilian and military, who have fallen on the field of honour in the country.

Nevertheless, we must recognize that almost 10 years after the establishment of the Mission, the objectives for which MINUSMA was deployed in Mali have not been achieved, and this, despite numerous resolutions of the Security Council. That is why the Government of Mali reiterates its often-expressed request for a change of paradigm: for MINUSMA to adapt to the environment in which it is deployed, and for it to be better coordinated with the Malian authorities. From this perspective, it is extremely important for MINUSMA to remain a support force for Mali in its quest for stability.

The Government of Mali denounces negative external influences and attempts to use certain entities legally present in the country to serve hidden agendas, including through the exploitation of the human rights issue for destabilization purposes.

The world will remember that Mali, after being abandoned midstream, on 10 June 2021, by France, which decided unilaterally to withdraw the Barkhane force from my country, was then stabbed in the back by the French authorities. This clarification is all the more useful since we refuse to confuse the French people, whom we respect, with their leaders. The French authorities, deeply anti-French for having

denied universal moral values and betrayed the serious humanistic heritage of the philosophers of the Enlightenment, have turned into a junta in the service of obscurantism. I repeat: the French authorities, deeply anti-French for having denied universal moral values and betrayed the serious humanistic heritage of the philosophers of the Enlightenment, have turned into a junta in the service of obscurantism. I repeat one last time: the French authorities, deeply anti-French for having denied universal moral values and betrayed the serious humanistic heritage of the philosophers of the Enlightenment, have turned into a junta in the service of obscurantism.

The obscurantism of the French junta stems from its nostalgia for condescending, paternalistic and revanchist neo-colonial practices, including ordering the premeditated, unprecedented, illegal, illegitimate and inhuman sanctions against my country adopted by ECOWAS and the West African Economic and Monetary Union. After more than 10 years of insecurity resulting in thousands of deaths, refugees and internally displaced persons, is it not a sacrilege to put a Malian population that is a victim of insecurity in a landlocked country under embargo for seven months by closing the borders and seizing Mali's financial accounts? Thanks to their resilience and the solidarity of friendly countries and peoples of Africa, the Malian people have held out and thwarted the predictions of their adversaries. The obscurantism of the French junta, which has so quickly forgotten its responsibility for the Tutsi genocide in Rwanda, has led to its guilt for instrumentalizing ethnic differences, and to it desperately trying to separate Malian children from each other and their families. Finally, this obscurantism of the French junta has caused it to violate Malian airspace by flying drones, military helicopters and fighter jets more than 50 times over that airspace, providing intelligence, weapons and ammunition to terrorist groups.

In order to ease its conscience, the French junta accuses Mali of being ungrateful for various counter-terrorism operations, and revelling in the regrettable deaths of 59 French soldiers in Mali. In response to this sad accusation, we recall that in most of the official Malian statements and ceremonies, we systematically pay homage to all victims of insecurity in Mali, including the 59 deceased French soldiers, without making distinctions by nationality. Further, we invite the French not to stop there, but to take a look back at their history: their intervention in Libya decried

by all Africa, the forced participation of thousands of Africans in the First and Second World Wars, not to mention the slave trade, which explains the economic rise of many countries. How many Africans have died for France and the free world in which we live?

In view of serious acts committed by the French junta, Mali, in a letter dated 15 August 2022 (S/2022/622), requested an emergency meeting of the Security Council. The purpose of this meeting would be to allow my country to present the evidence it has gathered, which shows that the French army has repeatedly and frequently attacked Mali, violating its airspace without authorization from the authorities and sometimes falsified flight documents. More seriously, Mali will be able to prove that the French junta has provided intelligence and weapons to terrorist groups.

The Government of Mali wonders why this member of the Security Council, which currently holds the Council presidency, is blocking a debate that would establish the truth. The world needs to be informed about the serious events that have taken place in Mali, which are at the root of the worsening insecurity and destabilization of Mali and the Sahel.

By referring the matter to the Security Council, the Government of Mali intends to make this important body, which is endowed with the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, face up to its responsibilities and denounce the French junta's actions against my country. These hostile acts are incompatible with the United Nations Charter and with France's status as a permanent member of the Security Council.

The credibility of the mechanisms of our shared Organization is at stake, as is the effectiveness of its fight against terrorism. But more importantly, the integrity of the United Nations, which is based on respect for international commitments, international legality and the United Nations Charter, *inter alia*, is at risk. It seems appropriate for Mali to request the personal involvement of the President of the General Assembly in calling upon the Security Council to grant our request, so that the duplicity and the proxy war imposed on my country may cease.

In its fight against terrorism and violent extremism, the Government of Mali has been confronted with difficult challenges in terms of human rights. I would like to emphasize that human rights are, more than any other, a value that every Malian embodies. The

Government of Mali remains determined to respect human rights and ensure that human rights are respected, in accordance with its zero-tolerance policy against impunity. We adhere to this out of loyalty to our ancestral values enshrined in the 1236 Kouroukan Fouga Charter of Emperor Soundiata Keita. As a cradle of great civilizations, heir to great empires, a melting-pot land of hospitality and tolerance, Mali makes the promotion and defence of human rights a national priority, which is why I strongly reaffirm that the military operations of the Malian defence and security forces are conducted in strict compliance with human rights and international humanitarian law.

However, as I have just emphasized, the Government of Mali is vehemently opposed to the use of the issue of human rights for political purposes or posturing or blackmail or intimidation. Similarly, we regret the double standards that lead to the rights of populations whose entire villages have been massacred and razed hardly arousing any indignation, while communications are manipulated to pass off terrorists neutralized on the battlefield as innocent civilians.

In conclusion, I will say that the Malian people have decided to take their destiny into their own hands. They fully support the Government in rebuilding Mali and returning it to peaceful and secure constitutional order in March 2024, after free, transparent and credible elections. The realization of these vast projects requires the Government to extend and intensify its efforts aimed at continuously improving the security situation in the country and protecting the people and their property.

In this regard, I am pleased that the third Transition Support Group Meeting on Mali was held in Lomé on 6 September. I am also pleased with this important meeting's outcomes, in particular the recognition of the progress made by the transition authorities, the calls for the mobilization of all Mali's partners to consolidate their political, economic, technical and financial support to the Republic of Mali, and the support voiced for the efforts of Mali's transitional authorities to achieve a harmonious return to constitutional order.

I would like to remind the Assembly that the transition in Mali came as the result of several years of dysfunction in our young democracy, which nevertheless had achieved some positive results. Unfortunately, on balance, our liabilities were greater than our assets, which is what triggered the transition.

I would like to take this opportunity to warmly thank our respected elder, His Excellency Mr. Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, for the wise and enlightened advice he gave us in his memorable address to the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session (see A/77/PV.7). I would like to reassure him that the Malian transitional authorities have no other objective than to carry out political and institutional reforms before organizing elections, while doggedly fighting terrorism. These reforms will improve governance, and all measures will be taken to make Mali's democracy the most envied in the world.

In those efforts, we will pay particular attention to the issue of the "third term", which will be excluded as a possibility in our country. The "third term", for those who are unfamiliar with the concept, consists of the president of a republic carrying out a four-step manoeuvre to retain power for himself and his clan. It works as follows.

The first stage occurs near the end of a president's second term. Because term limits make him ineligible for re-election, the outgoing president calls for a constitutional revision in a non-consensual manner. In the second stage, that of constitutional revision, the outgoing president modifies some constitutional provisions. In the third stage, once the new Constitution has been adopted — against the background of a political crisis, of course — the outgoing president now becomes a candidate, in violation of the two-term limit. His candidacy is now justified by the adoption of the new Constitution under the obvious pretext that the two-term limit was contained in the old Constitution, while the outgoing president is a candidate under the newly adopted Constitution. The fourth stage involves the organization of elections, which are a farce. Naturally, the outgoing president wins the election. A ruthless hunt for political opponents ensues. Some of them are arrested, others go into exile and still others are murdered. Allegiances are won through the power of money, patronage and intimidation.

I would simply state, using a soccer metaphor, that the third term is a magic trick: it is the art of dribbling past one's opponents while keeping the ball.

President Ouattara's advice reminds us of the sad story of the camel mocking the hump of the dromedary.

Despite the tangible efforts of the Malian transition to implement the timetables for the political and institutional reforms and elections that have been



hailed by the international community, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the French junta, from whom Mali has not asked for a single thing, considered there to have been no progress, forgetting that no one can love Mali more than the Malians themselves. Her singular position, adverse to us, hardly surprises us. Victor Hugo in “Claude Gueux” classified the human race into two categories:

“There are men who are metal, and there are men who are lodestones.”

The Minister in question, unfortunately, is neither metal nor lodestone; she is hideously *sui generis*.

Faced with uncertainty and strange situations, the Malian people adopt an attitude of prudence. In *The Strange Fate of Wangrin*, writer and sage Amadou Hampâté Ba advised that:

“If the ability to observe is a quality, knowing how to be silent can save a person from calamity”.

Mali advises the Minister of the French junta to be content with simply observing her situation.

This is an opportunity for me to salute the exemplary and fruitful cooperative relations Mali has with Russia, while reaffirming that Mali remains open to all partners that wish to help it meet the multiple challenges besetting it, in strict respect for its sovereignty and unity and of the dignity of the Malian people.

Mali recalls that, in line with the vision of Colonel Assimi Goita, President of the Transition and Head of State, three principles guide national public action: first, respect for the sovereignty of Mali; secondly, respect for the strategic choices and partners of Mali; and thirdly, consideration of the vital interests of the Malian people in the decisions taken.

In implementing those principles, Mali remains willing to pursue and strengthen its good-neighbourly relations with all the countries around it. Similarly, faithful to its pan-African commitment, Mali will continue to work within subregional and regional organizations to bring about African integration. Also, achieving the objectives of the transition requires the support of all Mali’s partners, including the United Nations. I therefore appeal to Mali’s friends to stand by the Government in order to help it to meet those important challenges together.

As for the vast majority of the world’s States, convinced by mutual respect and the win-win

partnership, I guarantee that Mali’s doors are wide open to them, and Malians will welcome them with open arms. For the minority that may be tempted not to respect those principles, we promise them that they will be met by millions of Assimi Goita supporters, anxious to preserve their honour, their dignity and their vital interests.

I will conclude by giving two pieces of advice to those that are nostalgic for domination. They should have a sense of empathy by treating others as they would like to be treated and not doing to others what they would not want done to them. The second piece of advice is to review their work, revise their models, adjust their mindsets to reflect the change in attitudes and the evolution of the world into their assessment and analysis grids, move on from the colonial past, hear the anger, frustration and opposition coming from African cities and rural areas and African peoples and understand that that trend is inevitable. Thanks to the principle of fractional multiplication, their intimidation and disruptive actions have only swelled the ranks of Africans anxious to preserve their dignity. If there were only 100 of us at independence, today there are millions, and tomorrow, as long as the unequal patterns remain, there will be billions. Mali and its people will not be bystanders in the face of attacks and adversity. For every word used wrongly, we will respond by reciprocating; for every bullet fired against us, we will respond by reciprocating.

Only then will a new era become a reality, with solutions that bring about change to address interrelated challenges through interdependent States and by valuing humankind, without distinction of any kind, in particular with regard to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status, as stipulated in article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

May God bless Mali and protect Malians from the dark and destructive forces of the world. May God bless Africa and protect Africans from the obscurantist and destructive forces of the world. May God bless the world and protect all humankind from the dark and destructive forces of the world.

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

*His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Maïga, Acting Prime Minister and Head of Government of the Republic of Mali, was escorted from the rostrum.*

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

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

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

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

**Mr. Gonsalves** (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): In these dawning years of the third decade of the twenty-first century, despite the progress and huge potential for the further upliftment of the world's civilizations, the human condition is overwhelmingly racked by global turmoil, convulsions, dislocations and the gravest uncertainties about the future. The specifics that have produced, in their aggregation and multiple interconnections, that debilitating malaise and tumult are well known. We identify here and now those of centrality and urgency: irresponsible and dangerous human-made climate change; a dominant economic and trading system, awash with antagonistic contradictions, which has delivered unacceptable burdens to the poor and the weak, on the one hand, and benefits in abundance to the rich and the strong, on the other; unnecessary and unwise conflicts and declared and undeclared wars, which subvert the settled norms and precepts of international law and contribute to economic hardship and immense suffering globally; avoidable public health emergencies, including pandemics, and the distorted, uneven responses thereto; and the dangerous vanities, delusional vainglories and hubris of men and women in power, particularly in the global centres of

imperialism and in the locales of those intoxicated by the quest for hegemony.

Across the world the faces of ordinary men and women are strained and anxious. Indeed, there is increasingly a sense of despair. At such junctures, historically civilizations have either descended into barbarism of one sort or another or accepted the necessity to repair and embrace fresh hope, conjoined with love for humankind and an abiding faith, made perfect in works. Surely, this is the time to embrace fresh hope. The existential longing that touches the human spirit and soul goes beyond a mere amelioration of our current travails; it demands correctives or reformations of a structural or fundamental kind and fresh thinking. Without fresh hope, a desecration of our future awaits us.

Fresh ideas are a core foundation of fresh hope. Over 130 years ago, the Cuban patriot José Martí advised that “weapons of the mind ... vanquish all others”. Through Martí, we learn that

“[A] vital idea set ablaze before the world at the right moment can, like the mystic banner of the last judgment, stop a fleet of battleships.”

Our tumultuous times demand fresh ideas and an invigoration of those that have stood the test of time in the march of civilizations into modernity and uplifting governance.

Unfortunately, stale and outmoded thinking too often shapes, and dominates, the global outlook and conduct of the most powerful nations, to the detriment of peace, security and prosperity for all. For example, at least one mighty State wrongly affirms that it possesses an exceptionalism, grounded in a manifest destiny to rule the world. Another State considers, also wrongly, that its population size, growing wealth and increased military prowess, and a civilization that goes back to near antiquity, justify its quest for global hegemony. Others, not quite behemoths, continue to conjure up ancient glories and historic empires as illusory bases for reconstructing the past, oblivious to the fact that any such presumed future of unalloyed grandeur is actually behind them. Amid all of that competitive jostling for power and vainglory, confusion reigns and the overwhelmingly majority of the world's population suffers. It is instructive to note that the contemporary circumstances of the global political economy and society have prompted the powerful and some wannabe powerful countries to proclaim the necessity

of constructing a new world order, each with its own peculiar agenda. But from the global periphery, which encompasses most of humankind, I ask the relevant and haunting questions. What is “new”? Which world? And who gives the orders? The future of humankind depends on satisfactory answers to those queries.

In that maelstrom, the centre cannot hold and things fall apart. Yet we must not metaphorically wring our hands in learned helplessness. The principals are certainly not ignorant of the existing conditions, and there are bundles of credible ideas in our multilateral system for fashioning possible lasting solutions in pursuit of peace, prosperity, sustainable development and security for humankind as a whole. So where do we go from here? Central to a credible, equitable path forward for humankind and to civilized life, living and production is the requisite of quality global leadership. It is a truism that men and women usually make history only to the extent that the circumstances of history and contemporary reality permit it. But it is also true — indeed, necessary and desirable — for global leadership to transcend the existing circumstances that are given and transmitted from the past and to push the boundaries of possibilities, for humankind’s sake, beyond what are normally considered the outer limits. I believe that the world’s peoples are demanding a quality global leadership that not only inspires them but draws out of them their goodness, their elemental yearnings for humanity and their nobility of purpose. Often the people themselves do not even know that they possess such goodness, humanity and nobility.

At this very moment of our meeting here in civilization’s finest hours, we are eyewitnesses and earwitnesses to immense conflict, strife and harrowing suffering in the world at large. It is an indictment on our civilized Assembly that horrific wars rumble on unabated in Ukraine, Yemen, Syria, parts of Africa and elsewhere. At least one of those wars could lead to a nuclear Armageddon. And how much longer must we stand the balkanization and systematic oppression of the people of Palestine by those who are in arrogant disregard of world opinion and international law? Why are the illegal and unjust economic embargo, undeclared war and criminal interventions against Cuba permitted to continue without let-up, despite overwhelming, near-unanimous denunciation by the General Assembly?

Why do we not unequivocally resist imperialism’s sordid attempts to subvert the duly elected Governments of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the

Republic of Nicaragua? How can we look askance, in relative silence and contented inaction, in disregard of Taiwan’s legitimate right to exist in accordance with the wishes and will of the Taiwanese people? Why do we not encourage peace and security across the Taiwan Strait by, among other things, permitting Taiwan’s participation in the relevant specialized agencies in the United Nations system, such as the World Health Organization and the International Civil Aviation Organization? All of those and other twentieth-century quarrels and contentious situations have potentially viable solutions — or, at the very least, mutually acceptable levels of dissatisfaction — lodged within a framework of peace and security. Quality global leadership in communion with the world’s peoples, credible ideas for resolution and a coherent multilateralism grounded in international law constitute the only viable way forward for humankind. In short, let us give mature diplomacy a chance to succeed.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has had to face immense challenges since March 2020 and continues to do so. In March 2020, the coronavirus disease pandemic descended on us like the proverbial thief in the night. Although we did not close our country down, even in the darkest days of the pandemic, much of the world locked down on us. Life, living and production were, and still are, badly affected. In April 2021, my small country suffered 32 volcanic eruptions that caused widespread destruction of property, immense social dislocation, the immiseration of our people and the evacuation of one fifth of the population into emergency shelters. In early July 2021, Hurricane Elsa struck, resulting in further loss and damage. In late February 2022, open hostilities between Russia and Ukraine erupted, exacerbating the economic turmoil that was already brewing globally. The knock-on effects of the Russia-Ukraine war have been terrible for faraway Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and our Caribbean. The price of basic commodities, such as imported fuel, food, fertilizer and hand tools, has gone through the roof. Still, we are a resilient people. We are not a people of lamentations. We are recovering and embracing fresh hope.

We in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are working hard and smart. But without a fair and just global economic order, a special regard for small island exceptionalism, a global architecture of enlightened multilateralism and internationalist solidarity, our herculean national efforts are unlikely to yield the requisite abundant fruit. Trying to go up a fast-moving

down-escalator is a challenging exercise. Accordingly, I adopt and adapt the words of the iconic Barbadian writer Edward Kamau Brathwaite from his poem “The Awakening”.

“I will rise and stand on my feet; ever so slowly I will rise and stand on my feet ... I am learning, just let me succeed.”

Just let Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the Caribbean and other developing countries succeed.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines expresses its profound gratitude for the regional, hemispheric and international solidarity accorded it at its time of real peril during and immediately after the series of volcanic eruptions last year. Within 24 hours of the first cataclysmic eruption, my dear friend Secretary-General António Guterres telephoned me and placed the Secretariat and the United Nations specialized agencies at my country's disposal. The World Food Programme, UNICEF and the United Nations Environment Programme were particularly heroic in their efforts, admirably coordinated by the Barbados and Eastern Caribbean Multi-Country Office. The World Bank was most helpful, as were the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and its affiliate institutions, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and individual nations across the world. The outpouring of regional and international solidarity was impressive and deeply appreciated.

However, episodic support must metamorphose into structured, ongoing solidarity if small island developing States (SIDS) are to survive and thrive in this increasingly hostile world in which metaphorical elephants trample with very little regard for the proverbial ants who make up much of humankind and are vital to the well-being of our global civilization's land- and seascape. The agenda for small island developing States is well known. Some major planks of it are concerted global action on climate change, including sufficient resources for adaptation and mitigation; the availability of optimal financing for development, including the roll-out of a multi-dimensional vulnerability index, a compensation mechanism for loss and damage and a special and meaningful carve-out for SIDS in international trading arrangements; an end to unacceptable weaponizing of the financial system; appropriate reform of the United Nations to reflect the interests of SIDS; and effective implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, particularly

where they relate to hunger, poverty and inequality. For our Caribbean, another special concern is the urgent issue of reparations from European States for their commission of native genocide and the enslavement of Africans, which has resulted in painful legacies of underdevelopment. The time has now surely come for the issue to be addressed urgently. Reparations is a just and juridically grounded demand that ought to evoke support from well-meaning people, not confrontation.

The continuing deteriorating situation in Haiti demands focused attention from the United Nations. The Caribbean Community, to which Haiti belongs, is pained at Haiti's circumstances and the international community's relative neglect of that invaluable nation. Together, we must do better with and for Haiti in concert with the Haitian people, based on their own home-grown solutions and led by them. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has been actively engaged on that issue within both CARICOM and the United Nations. Haiti's 11 million people deserve better, and a safe and prosperous Haiti means a far more secure and peaceful Caribbean.

In the Caribbean, beyond the Haitian issue, our national and regional efforts are stymied by the unfairness and relative unresponsiveness of the global political economy. Often, too, the unintended consequences of the actions of the centres of imperialism and hegemonic forces induce suffering or hold back our progress. For example, our Caribbean has had its correspondent banking arrangements compromised or withdrawn by the application of rules that our Governments have had little or no role in making. We heard the Prime Minister of the Bahamas speak about that this morning. Similarly, blacklists and sanctions are imposed or threatened by faceless bureaucrats in imperial centres for this or that matter without any regard for multilateral rulemaking or settled international law. Meanwhile, interference in the internal affairs of our nations persists through external State agencies or private entities of imperialist or hegemonic centres bent on imposing their will to their advantage. Often their relentless misuse and abuse of modern information technologies, with falsehoods and misrepresentations galore, have the effect of polluting democratic discourse and undermining democracy itself. The United Nations must address that issue urgently. The United Nations, too, must reform itself to do its work better. In that regard, reform of the Security Council should be delayed no further. Many sensible



ideas for reform are on the table. Let us get on with it and not make perfection the enemy of the good.

The many-sided turmoil of today prompts me to conclude with the probing insights of Guyana's Poet Laureate Martin Carter, in his celebrated poem "Bitter Wood".

"Here be dragons, and bitter cups made of wood; and the hooves of horses where they should not sound.... Here is where I am, in a great geometry, between a raft of ants and the green sight of the freedom of a tree, made of that same bitter wood."

In our final reflections before the General Assembly, let us never forget that our work in this Hall is to improve markedly the lot of all our peoples. To that mighty end, we must construct the best possible partnership between all nations, whatever our differences, to take care of yesterday's heritage, to accommodate and reasonably address today's interests and to pursue effectively, in peace and security, tomorrow's hopes.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Legal Affairs and Information of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Legal Affairs and Information of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, was escorted from the rostrum.*

**Address by Mr. Dickon Mitchell, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance and Minister for National Security, Home Affairs, Public Administration, Information and Disaster Management of Grenada**

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Russian*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister, Minister for Finance and Minister for National Security, Home Affairs, Public Administration, Information and Disaster Management of Grenada.

*Mr. Dickon Mitchell, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance and Minister for National Security, Home Affairs, Public Administration, Information and Disaster Management of Grenada, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Russian*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Dickon Mitchell, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance and

Minister for National Security, Home Affairs, Public Administration, Information and Disaster Management of Grenada, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

**Mr. Mitchell** (Grenada): Please accept my warmest greetings and congratulations on the election of His Excellency Mr. Csaba Kőrösi to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session. I commit my delegation's full support and cooperation to him in the fulfilment of his important duties. I also commend his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid of the Maldives, for his able guidance of the Assembly at its previous session.

I am extremely honoured to be speaking for the first time at this important global forum on behalf of the Government and people of Grenada.

Exactly three months ago today, the people of Grenada exercised their democratic right and voted for transformation. In free and fair elections and through a solid mandate at the polls, the Grenadian people placed their confidence in me to lead our country for the next five years. Today I bring my transformational agenda to the General Assembly because, although we are an island State, our world does not exist in isolation. Successful and sustainable transformation in Grenada is inevitably tethered to the sustainable forward movement of the global community.

This noble institution is nearing its 80-year anniversary, a significant milestone that is worthy of distinct recognition. As my own country also draws near to a noteworthy milestone, that of 50 years as an independent State, it is an appropriate time to renew our commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to international law. It is also a fitting time to review the achievements of the past decades and proffer solutions to the challenges that have stymied progress.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic brought our world to a standstill, without prejudice for the size and economic might of nations. For a time, this disease was the great equalizer and forced us all to re-evaluate our priorities and our approach to working together. Grenada notes with relief news from the World Health Organization that we might finally be entering the end phase of the pandemic. While we welcome the return to some semblance of normal, it is my sincere hope that the lessons learned from the pandemic will remain and that we will not return to business as usual.

The monumental challenges posed by the pandemic were unprecedented and seemingly insurmountable. Amid this worldwide disaster, however, our global community rallied and demonstrated what is possible when we resolve to work together towards a common goal. The pandemic taught us all the value of international cooperation, the timely exchange of information and the sharing of resources critical to avoiding and mitigating similar global occurrences.

It is imperative that the matter of climate change be escalated to this level of urgency among our community of nations. The devastating effects of global warming can already be felt all over the world, with higher temperatures exacerbating many types of disasters, including storms, heat waves, floods and droughts. Our planet is undoubtedly in crisis, but as the ancient Chinese proverb reminds us, “crisis is opportunity riding a dangerous wind.” This window of opportunity is quickly closing, however, and we no longer have the luxury to kick these issues down the road. We are now faced with the reality that tomorrow is today.

We have tinkered long enough and must now accept that the solutions to the problems we face may not be found in this grand Hall or in the highest echelons of global climate discussions, but rather with the people, especially our young people, who stand to lose the most from the inaction of our current leaders. Approximately 60 per cent of the world’s population is under 35 years old. In my own country, 50 per cent of the current population is between 18 and 35 years of age. Young people are therefore critical to the success of sustainable development policies and must play a central role in the implementation of the targets set by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and sustaining peace.

I call on all young people to take action. It is not yet too late to do what is necessary to safeguard our planet for future generations, but the time for action is now. The reality is that the leaders of today will not be around to feel the consequences of their decisions. It is therefore up to our youth to lead the charge for the future they want to see. I challenge all young people today to choose to be agents of change rather than victims of climate change. It can start with small actions that cause ripple effects throughout their families and friend circles, their communities and, eventually, the wider world.

It was not that long ago that I, too, was a young lawyer, seeking to evoke positive change in my community

through small actions. I knew that I could no longer sit on the sidelines and wait for the leaders of the day to solve challenges that had plagued Grenadian society for well over a decade. I had to become the change. In October 2021, I made the decision to enter political life and, shortly after, was elected as the political leader of the National Democratic Congress. Only eight months later, I led the party to victory, winning nine of 15 seats. My presence here today is testament that we can create the change that we would like to see, but it will materialize only if we step forward and accept the call to be the leaders of today.

As leaders, the onus is also on us to create spaces where young people feel empowered to propose innovative solutions to the challenges we collectively face. That is a priority of my Administration and has been backed by gender-forward, pro-youth policies and purposeful action. The appointment of the Honourable Kerryne James as Minister for Climate Resilience, the Environment and Renewable Energy, at 23 years of age, is a milestone for my country and the Caribbean region, as Ms. James is the youngest Government minister in the Caribbean.

Confronting the climate crisis will require a complete transformation of our mindset and behaviours but also, and importantly, the transformation of our energy sources, economic models and land stewardship. This is a unique opportunity to come together, welcome innovative ideas and tackle the problems we have struggled with for generations. Our goal as responsible global citizens should be to leave the planet as good as or better than we found it.

This plea is not without urgency. As the leader of a Caribbean small island developing State, I am all too familiar with the devastating effects of climate change and the stark reality that — in the face of increasingly strengthened hurricanes and sea-level rise — we may not have a country to pass on to future generations.

The small island States of the Caribbean are already experiencing significant adverse effects due to climate change. With every hurricane season — and we are currently in hurricane season — that now brings increased and more powerful storms, we watch and wait, with bated breath and a silent prayer, in the hope that this year it will not be our turn. In 2004, it was Grenada’s turn, with Hurricane Ivan. In a mere eight hours we lost 34 souls. The Category 3 storm destroyed 80 per cent of our housing stock and decimated our

economic and fiscal bases, with damage exceeding 200 per cent of our gross domestic product. Ten months later, in 2005, it was Grenada's turn again, with Hurricane Emily. In recent years, we have watched with horror as our brothers and sisters across the Caribbean experienced their turn, most notably with Hurricane Irma in 2017, which left the island of Barbuda nearly uninhabitable and wrought significant havoc on at least 10 other Caribbean island States, including the British Virgin Islands, which lost approximately 85 per cent of its housing stock. Then, only two weeks later, Hurricane Maria cruelly threatened to exacerbate the wounds freshly inflicted by Irma. And the global community will surely remember the destruction Hurricane Maria visited on Dominica, leaving 31 people dead and 37 missing, as well as causing an estimated \$930.9 million in damages.

I could continue in this vein, highlighting the devastating consequences that Caribbean islands suffer owing to the warming climate, including the harmful effects on our rich biodiversity and underwater resources. We are truly on the front lines and know all too well the ease with which one hurricane can wipe out decades of progress. As I stand here this morning, several Caribbean islands are reeling from the wrath of Hurricane Fiona. That is the reality we face, and why it is urgent that we act.

Given the focus of my address here today, it is evident that climate change is inimical to Grenada's transformational agenda. We continue to insist on a clear road map at the global level for ambitious climate action in order to ensure that global average temperatures remain below the 1.5°C threshold. As we seek to bolster climate resilience in our island home, I reiterate the call for us all to urgently scale up climate financing for adaptation and remove the challenges that developing nations face in accessing such financing. In addition, my Government calls for increased technology development and capacity-building, especially for young people. We are encouraged and indeed proud that a son of the soil has been given the responsibility to manage global climate action. The appointment of Simon Stiell as Executive Secretary of the United Nations Climate Change Secretariat sends a clear message about the importance of island voices in the fight against climate change. We are optimistic that we will achieve the mandates of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate

Change and its protocols, as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Government of Grenada is steadfast in its commitment to creating paths towards sustainability and promoting diversity. Evidence of our resolve can be found in Grenada's first ever long-term national sustainable development plan for the period from 2020 to 2035 in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which is the anchor for our country's development agenda and priorities for the next 15-year period. In that regard, the Government of Grenada is pleased to be one of the 45 countries that presented voluntary national reviews of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development during the recently held High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Our country-led review of progress towards the implementation of the 17 SDGs of the 2030 Agenda comes at a critical juncture in our collective efforts aimed at recovering from the extraordinary socioeconomic crisis created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

For Grenada, the pandemic exposed critical structural weaknesses and resource deficiencies in our health-care system. Managing the high incidence of non-communicable diseases is therefore an urgent priority, and so too is addressing the mental health of our citizens. In addition, the economic fallout from the worldwide closure of borders and the stagnation of tourism — a key economic driver — has exacerbated already elevated levels of unemployment and poverty. My Government intends to mitigate those dire circumstances in the future by diversifying our economy and developing a robust information and communications technology-based digital economy. Trends such as converging technologies and the digitalization of production are rapidly transforming work and life, and they must be factored into training and development opportunities for our young people.

We understand that if we are to adequately equip our young people for the future, inclusive and equitable quality education is fundamental. To that end, my Government has taken the necessary steps to ensure its framework for free universal education up to the community-college level, and is committed to providing second-chance opportunities to all young people who do not complete a primary, secondary or tertiary education. Additionally, we intend to actively seek out opportunities for further studies in the digital and creative fields to support our emerging creative and

digital economies. The answers will once again lie with our young people and their invaluable contributions to the future of the labour force. My Government will foster an environment where young people have access to the support and facilities they need to thrive. In particular, we intend to provide incentives to young entrepreneurs, upgrade our agriculture productions systems and bolster our export capacity. Grenada will act deliberately to attract the attention and support of the international community and the favour of friendly nations as we seek to improve the standard of living of all of our citizens through the exploration of new frontiers of economic and social development.

As we emerge from the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic and optimistically prepare to transform our economy, we cannot ignore the new crisis in the East that has emerged from current geopolitical tensions and conflicts, with devastating and disruptive consequences for energy and food security. Russia's war with Ukraine has already threatened international peace and stability and created hardships for nations unconnected with the conflict. Grenada associates itself with the call of many for Russia to relent in its warmaking in Ukraine and for the parties to negotiate a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

Mindful that peace is a supreme asset and a legitimate aspiration of all peoples, Grenada renews its firm call for the Caribbean to remain a zone of peace. We also advocate for the economic, social and environmental development of all Caribbean States. In that regard, Grenada is satisfied that the removal of the United States-imposed economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba will facilitate economic and social change there. Additionally, we call for Cuba to be removed from the United States State Department's list of countries that are sponsors of terrorism.

In the same way, we lament that more has not been done for our brothers and sisters in Haiti, a country classified as one of poorest amongst us. The Caribbean Community continues to pursue various initiatives to assist Haiti. However, we believe that more productive engagements must be undertaken with all stakeholders to help achieve political stability, peace and economic progress in Haiti.

Grenada also reiterates its support for the ongoing judicial process at the International Court of Justice aimed at bringing a definitive end to the long-standing

Guyana/Venezuela border dispute, and we reaffirm our unwavering support for the territorial integrity of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana.

We further remain resolute in our call for an end to the imposition of unilateral coercive measures against the Republic of Venezuela, contrary to the rules and principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

The net effect of the recent and ongoing crises continues to seriously dislodge the world economy and, in turn, the ability of countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The adverse impacts on production, employment and poverty are growing, while at the same time jeopardizing fiscal management in many countries.

The Government of Grenada is firm in its determination to achieve the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We call, however, for the increased inclusion of youth voices as we seek to chart the future of our planet. We further note that if small island States are to eliminate poverty and attain sustainable levels of development, the vulnerability criteria now applicable to our countries must be comprehensively reviewed as a matter of urgency.

The consequence of upper middle-income status afforded Grenada and many other small States, without consideration of our specific vulnerabilities, continues to hinder our ability to access concessionary and grant financing. We continue to call for a new multidimensional vulnerability index, which would eliminate the threat to our economic development and security, and we encourage the submission of additional proposals that seek to address similar challenges that prevent our countries from moving forward on an equal footing.

The United Nations system over the past 77 years has contributed immensely to humankind. It is now time to consider strategic transformation if we are to achieve the goals set out in the 2030 Agenda and safeguard our planet for future generations.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, and Minister for National Security, Home Affairs, Public Administration, Information and Disaster Management of Grenada for the statement he has just made.



*Mr. Dickon Mitchell, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, and Minister for National Security, Home Affairs, Public Administration, Information and Disaster Management of Grenada, was escorted from the rostrum.*

**Address by Mr. Dimitar Kovachevski, Prime Minister of the Republic of North Macedonia**

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

*Mr. Dimitar Kovachevski, Prime Minister of the Republic of North Macedonia, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Russian*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Dimitar Kovachevski, Prime Minister of the Republic of North Macedonia, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

**Mr. Kovachevski** (North Macedonia) (*spoke in Macedonian; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): Our strength is in our unity. That lesson — that together we can achieve much more than we can alone — is a lesson that the world of today is learning in circumstances unanticipated in the twenty-first century: first the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, and now the cruel war in Ukraine. Now and in the future, the democratic world needs unity in overcoming the global consequences that the countries of Europe and worldwide are facing.

At the onset of the joint and united efforts made in response to the start of the war, the Republic of North Macedonia immediately and decisively aligned itself with European Union foreign policy and that of the democratic world. We joined global efforts in response to the war as a country committed to peace and to finding dialogue-based solutions and fully dedicated to European values. In doing so, we relied on our own experience and lessons learned, according to which peace, strength and progress can be achieved only with unity. We learned this lesson both when we peacefully declared independence in 1991, and in 2001 when we rose above internal inter-ethnic conflict, while today we rely on our experience in pursuing our established concept of “One society for all”, thereby setting an example of a functional, multi-ethnic democracy, while serving as a significant factor for stability in the Western Balkans and consequently in Europe,

which makes us a reliable partner of the international democratic community.

Functional solutions that work in a small area always serve as a road map to finding solutions in the global setting. No matter how many challenges arise in a given wide geographic area, they tend to erupt in a certain smaller area, only later becoming a potential global threat. That point of eruption today is an independent and sovereign State — Ukraine — whose citizens are faced with an unacceptable and unjustifiable aggression by the Russian Federation.

There are two especially concerning aspects that demand our full attention. One is related to the fact that a permanent member of the Security Council — the Russian Federation — committed the aggression. The fact that a country has decided to resolve a challenge using force — despite being a Member of an Organization founded on a commitment to preserving world peace — runs contrary to all endeavours and commitments of the civilized world to put an end to all forms of action that cause loss of human life and jeopardize the global peace. Furthermore, the demonstration of force by a geographically larger country against a geographically smaller country that is committed to fostering and sharing democratic values is a dangerous and impermissible precedent. In simple terms, everything must be done to prevent that from becoming a practice in this world we share, where there are geographically smaller and bigger countries.

As we can see, problems are multidimensional and affect us all. These are the challenges we will all face in the winter ahead, the most severe since the Second World War — to ensure the availability of food and energy for our citizens. Therefore, we must search for solutions while acting in unison. Our response or solutions to interlocking challenges is the essential topic of this debate — that solutions are to be found in solidarity and must be sustainable and science-based.

Speaking of sustainability, I believe that we should take into consideration another bitter experience from the war in Ukraine. The struggle for peace is ongoing and peace requires continual dedication to mutual understanding, vigilance and prompt action.

I should like to convey a clear message from my country. The unprovoked aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine is a gross violation of the Charter of the United Nations and of international legal norms and principles. The aggression cannot be

justified or relativized. The Russian Federation must put an immediate end to the aggression and withdraw its troops from Ukraine. History teaches us that no problem can be resolved by using force. Putting an end to the aggression is the necessary precondition to opening the only feasible way of finding a solution, namely, diplomacy and dialogue. The latter can and must be the sole mechanism for settling disputes and resolving differences between countries.

The uncertainty of the food and energy supply will deepen differences at the global level between the rich North and the poor South and bring millions of people to the brink of adversity, even threatening them with hunger. We will all — the economically more developed and economically less developed countries alike — feel the impact. We must rely on lessons learned from the pandemic. International solidarity should not be guided by whether it is needed among the better developed countries or among the less developed. That is especially true if we want to prevent the rise of new challenges ensuing from the growing dissatisfaction of citizens in global terms.

The pandemic has reminded us that we are all equal when faced with a common and, in this case, invisible enemy that has cost millions of human lives worldwide. The pandemic has also brought to light the importance of solidarity and unity, transposed into concrete, intentional cooperation. These are the principles that should guide our future actions when we face present and future challenges.

In the specific context of overcoming the consequences of the war in Ukraine, it is necessary to redouble our efforts to enhance international solidarity and mutual assistance on an equal footing, both in the European Union, where the impact of the Ukraine war is greatest, and worldwide. This applies in particular to finding viable solutions to overcoming challenges related to the supply of both energy and food. In that context, I underscore the important active role of Secretary-General Guterres and that of Türkiye's mediation in the exportation of wheat from Ukraine.

Developments in and surrounding Ukraine have pushed numerous other conflicts worldwide into the background. However, the focus on such conflicts must remain sharp. Terrorism in all its forms is still a global threat to all humankind. Numerous hybrid threats are a cause of great concern and distress. Fake news and the opportunity for social networks to disseminate such

news on a mass scale via the internet are a challenge facing the entire democratic world. Authoritarian tendencies, disguised under the veil of disingenuous patriotism, pose a serious threat to human rights and freedoms and prompt potential instability.

We also face the burning issue of climate change, despite all efforts to put up a joint and united front in saving our planet Earth. The recent catastrophic floods in Pakistan are but one of the latest visible consequences in a series of extreme natural disasters worldwide caused by climate change. Biodiversity loss, air pollution and the lack of water impose themselves as priority threats, not only to the environment and ecosystems, but also to people's lives. This situation will persist until every individual becomes fully aware that nature is not ours but is part of us, and that we must treat it as such. All these problems demand concerted action, founded on intensified and consolidated efforts focused both on prevention and on finding solutions.

Conflicts, instability, violence and climate change cause the spread of grave poverty for millions of people, as well as population displacements that are growing into an exodus. The waves of migration we have faced in recent years from Syria and Afghanistan are not winding down. Now, we also have millions of refugees from Ukraine.

The Republic of North Macedonia has opened its doors to citizens of Ukraine who have been forced to flee their homeland and seek refuge in our country. This is a good opportunity to duly commend countries worldwide that have welcomed the largest number of refugees, as well as the substantial number of citizens throughout the world who work every day to provide care for refugees and help those in need. My country, the Republic of North Macedonia, using its available capacities, remains committed to honouring its international commitments in the humanitarian area. If we are to successfully address and manage diverse forms of immigration, it is necessary to strengthen the awareness that this is a global challenge that necessitates coordinated activities in accordance with the principle of shared responsibility.

We learn from experience that no problem is a minor problem. Every minor problem has the potential to grow into a more difficult and larger-scale problem. However, our coming together here at United Nations Headquarters serves as a good reminder that strength and solutions can be achieved when we unite in support

of genuine values. Multilateralism and respect for established rules and obligations, starting with the United Nations Charter, are the only way of providing the much-needed predictability in international relations.

We are building our future now, today and together. Despite all the deficiencies of international mechanisms, multilateralism and the United Nations, as its most visible and recognized form, endowed with the universal mission of preserving the peace, are still the key important catalysts encouraging joint efforts towards a better, safer and more just world.

Global challenges require a global response. No country can deal with twenty-first century problems on its own. Now more than ever, we need to demonstrate that multilateralism works and gives results in times of crisis. In that context, Secretary-General António Guterres' report *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982) is to be our road map in pursuing global governance reforms that would open the way for the United Nations multilateral central system to adapt to the future and be able to contribute to joint endeavours.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of course remains the starting point in pursuing global action. The Agenda not only addresses the chronic and persistent problems of poverty and inequitable development, but can also serve as a platform for finding solutions to all other problems, starting with the need for us to unite behind a new agenda for peace, while placing the human dimension in the focus of technological development in the digital era.

The Republic of North Macedonia is working intensively to accomplish the Sustainable Development Goals and supports all efforts aimed at making the United Nations stronger and more efficient. In pursuing the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as other development activities in the national, regional and global settings, we need to ground ourselves on the premise that we owe it to young generations to provide them with the conditions for progress.

Young people, their access to modern, forward-looking education and the resolution of problems they face must be at the centre of our attention and of our political engagement in the coming years. In that respect, I should like to emphasize that, for the second consecutive year, a youth representative from the Republic of North Macedonia is participating in the work of the General Assembly.

On 1 January 2023, the Republic of North Macedonia will have the honour of assuming the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the largest regional security organization. This brings great responsibility, especially in light of the fact that my country will be taking over the OSCE chairmanship at a time when there is a military aggression in Europe, along with all ensuing consequences for peace and security in the OSCE area and beyond. Nevertheless, I am confident that we will successfully justify the trust bestowed upon us. North Macedonia has at times been the beneficiary of mediation-security mechanisms, including a United Nations peace mission, and has had first-hand experience of the benefits of the peacebuilding efforts of the international community. Relying on such experience, we stand ready to contribute to strengthening and developing security in the wider context. As the 2023 OSCE Chair, we will be fully committed to the noble mission of serving peace and security as a precondition for economic and social development, and I am confident that we will contribute to advancing multilateral security mechanisms.

Our confidence is based on our practice of living together in unity and on the related benefits in the national, regional and international contexts. Today in this Hall, I represent a country in which all ethnic communities have equal, constitutionally guaranteed rights and obligations. We are working to make the Republic of North Macedonia a civic, democratic society in which differences are regarded as an enriching advantage, and not as an obstacle. Standing united as a multi-ethnic, functional democracy, today we are a successful example of a mini-Europe in the Balkans.

However, bearing in mind the significance of mutual understanding, respect and support, which prompt and motivate unity, working together with our two neighbours, Albania and Serbia, we have established the Open Balkan initiative. Today, the initiative has grown into a successful example of regional interconnectivity. It has also contributed to our shared commitment to removing unnecessary barriers to the movement of people, trade, the transport of goods and the provision of services. In the present circumstances, the initiative has enabled us to ensure the availability of food for our citizens, based on our agreement to help each other if faced with food shortages in our respective domestic markets as a consequence of the global crisis. We have further agreed that there will be no bans on trade in

basic agricultural and food products. We are also intensively considering options for cross-border trade in electricity and providing assistance with various energy sources as part of our effort to overcome the serious energy situation the entire world is facing.

We are also developing good-neighbourly relations with a keen sense of responsibility and through dialogue, convinced that safeguarding national and State interests does not run contrary to broader integration processes and advanced cooperation with countries in our neighbourhood. Quite the contrary, self-affirmation finds its most relevant and appropriate reflection in a wider community of shared values.

Guided by these policies of building bridges, while employing functional diplomacy, dialogue and understanding, we have succeeded in accomplishing the strategic goal of becoming part of NATO, and today we are a proud, fully-fledged member of the Alliance. Seventeen long years after we were granted European Union (EU) membership candidate status, we have started accession negotiations with the EU. My country attaches particular importance to our speedy EU integration. We are working with dedication and persistence to undertake all the steps required for the accomplishment of my country's second strategic goal.

The citizens of North Macedonia have waited far too long for this moment, and I acknowledge and understand their frustration and fatigue on this long road to Europe. But we have no alternative path to reaching our goal of better living standards. No one promised that the road would be an easy one. Indeed, despite the difficulties, the EU still represents the best option for our future and that of our children. We have neither the opportunity nor the privilege to abandon it. Now is the time to maintain full speed ahead and even redouble our pace.

I would like to underscore that the EU membership of the Republic of North Macedonia is of essential importance also to the European Union itself, especially in the new circumstances of the global context, in which such a message of encouragement that the enlargement process continues and awaits the entire region, which, regardless of its progressive leadership, is not immune to global challenges. This is especially true in conditions in which the European integration and democratic path of the Western Balkan countries should and must be ensured as a contribution to European peace.

*The President took the Chair.*

The story of my homeland, the Republic of North Macedonia, which two weeks ago celebrated 31 years of independence, is a story of peace, cooperation and understanding, through which it was established while dealing with challenges and overcoming threats both to our internal stability and on our way to international integration. I therefore underline that we are solution-oriented, working together to face challenges that do not recognize State borders or ethnic, linguistic, religious or any other differences.

I am especially honoured and pleased that, as Prime Minister of the Republic of North Macedonia, I have the opportunity to addressing Members for the first time here at the United Nations, the Organization that is the guardian of peace, solidarity and prosperity.

I would like to offer my appreciation to Mr. Abdulla Shahid, President of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session, for his successful work. I am confident that Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, who has assumed the presidency of the Assembly at the seventy-seventh session, will be equally successful.

The pandemic and the war in Ukraine have brought to light human weaknesses and fragility even in our modern twenty-first century. Yet, as the pandemic has also demonstrated the power of innovation and the ability of science to quickly produce the necessary vaccines, humankind must also continue relying on science and keep believing in its humanistic foundations and capabilities and peace.

We are all in the same boat and we have no other choice except to treat each other with solidarity and work in unity, defending and advancing the fundamental values of freedom and peace throughout the world. Peace is reached by making compromises, but peace is preserved with mutual understanding.

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

*Mr. Dimitar Kovachevski, Prime Minister of the Republic of North Macedonia, was escorted from the rostrum.*

**Address by Mr. Moeketsi Majoro, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho**

**The President:** The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho.



*Mr. Moeketsi Majoro, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The President:** I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Moeketsi Majoro, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

**Mr. Majoro (Lesotho):** At the very outset, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your well-deserved election to the office of the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session. Your illustrious career as a diplomat assures us of a successful session. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation during your tenure of office. I also wish to commend your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid, for his skilled stewardship in discharging his duties during the previous session.

To Secretary-General Guterres, I extend my country's gratitude and support for the tireless efforts in the daunting task of finding lasting solutions to the persistent problems that face our Organization. We particularly commend him for his wide-ranging reform efforts to equip the Organization to provide more effective support to Member States across the spectrum of challenges they face, including stronger partnerships for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We welcome the *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982) report, which focuses on the next 25 years and represents his vision of the future of global cooperation through reinvigorated multilateralism, with the United Nations at the centre of our efforts.

From the humble beginnings of a fledgling Organization more than seven decades ago to a massive expansion in membership today, the United Nations has undoubtedly stood the test of time. Our Organization has witnessed several changes in the configuration of international relations. Some have been traumatic, while others have been benign. The survival of the United Nations through all those tribulations testifies to its resilience and the enduring validity of its mission. Some of the great strides that the United Nations has made span the peaceful settlement of disputes, restoring calm in many countries through peacekeeping, decolonization, raising awareness of human rights and eradicating diseases.

Despite these laudable achievements, numerous challenges remain on the path towards assuring humankind of a bright, prosperous, dignified and secure future. The continuous eruption of armed

conflicts throughout the world, terrorism, climate change, diseases, the lingering effects of the economic and financial crises and many others continue to transcend our borders and have remained in the foreground of international relations and preoccupied the international community. It is in this context that we welcome the theme for our general debate, "A watershed moment: transformative solutions to interlocking challenges".

We are living in uncertain times. The coronavirus disease pandemic has changed the nature of multilateral engagement, diplomacy, business and basic human interaction. The pandemic has not only hastened the pace and scale of the digital revolution, but has also increased the gap between the haves and the have-nots and further exposed our vulnerability as Africa's landlocked least developed country. We therefore need to make concerted efforts to protect lives and empower the citizenry across the globe through innovation and digital technologies to achieve sustainable recovery. It is of paramount importance for us as African leaders to be proactive in investing in research and development in readiness for a certain future pandemic.

At the same time, the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which was already anaemic prior to 2020, has been aggravated by the pandemic. The expectation of the international community was to intensify the Decade of Action to achieve the Goals, but sadly, we find ourselves in a prolonged period of recovery.

As we ushered in the new 17 Sustainable Development Goals on 1 January 2016, Member States were optimistic that a better life for all was in sight. However, the 2030 deadline for the achievement of the SDGs is gradually approaching, yet there is still no significant progress in their attainment, due to several factors that have adversely affected implementation. In addition to the pandemic, these include unpredictable global shocks, including wars, climate-related events and a lack of predictable financing.

The environment in which we operate is significantly less favourable than it was when we began six years ago. Our room to manoeuvre is much more constrained today. Nevertheless, our quest to pursue a sustainable future must never wane. Unless we can work towards the SDGs in a true spirit of partnership, in which each partner lives up to expectations, the Decade of Action will end as a decade of disappointment.

As the Secretary-General stated during the election of the President of the General Assembly in June this year,

“The seventy-seventh session can be a moment of transformation, a time to recalibrate multilateralism and strengthen the foundations of global cooperation” (*A/76/PV.75, p.3*).

In that regard, I appeal to all Member States to use the seventy-seventh session to renew their determination to work together for the benefit of humankind and to recommit themselves to the cardinal principle of multilateralism. The role of multilateralism and the United Nations has therefore become ever more important. It is morally imperative that we unite our wills and pool our efforts for the well-being of humankind.

Just recently, Lesotho was amongst the 45 countries that presented their voluntary national reviews during the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Among other things, our review highlighted the pressing challenge of climate change, which has a direct bearing on food insecurity and poverty, not only in my country but in Africa as a whole. Climate change destroys our ecosystems, results in land degradation and contributes to the decline of agricultural productivity, which is the mainstay of small economies.

In this connection, my delegation calls upon all Member States to use the twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held this time on African soil, as an opportune time to address Africa's challenges on climate change and to support our needs and priorities in the form of affordable and sustainable energy, capacity adaption and mitigation.

We disagreed for far too long on the subject of climate change until we were confronted by the glaring and compelling scientific evidence that the link between global warming and human activity is indisputable. Sadly, catastrophes have begun to hit, mostly affecting the poorest and most vulnerable countries.

While we appreciate that there are resources aimed at helping developing countries to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change, we are concerned that such funds are very difficult to access. The global climate-finance architecture is complex, with variable structures of governance and modalities. Some finance

is channelled through multilateral agencies, sometimes even outside the funding mechanisms of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and some flows through bilateral development assistance institutions, thereby making coordination difficult. Lesotho calls on the international community and our development partners to simplify the accessibility of funds earmarked for climate change.

The state of peace and security in the world is gradually getting worse, with recurring conflicts and the eruption of new ones in many parts of the world. The emergence of new extremist groups and terrorist entities has not only compounded the problem but is a stark reminder that we must act collectively to discharge the moral responsibility resting on us to ensure that people everywhere enjoy the right to peace, development and the sanctity of life. The use of military force alone as a strategy for combating terrorism has never been a panacea for eradicating that menace. Terrorism requires a holistic approach that addresses its root causes. Similarly, we as leaders should not turn a blind eye to the plight of civilians in all conflict areas. The international community should be consistent in dealing with humanitarian crises in different parts of the world.

We do not derive any comfort from the simmering trade and political tensions between two of the founding Members of the United Nations, namely, the United States of America and the People's Republic of China. We must remember that we came together as Members of the United Nations under the premise that we are all peace-loving nations. The Charter of the United Nations enjoins us

“to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, and to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and ... to employ international machinery for the promotion of economic and social advancement of all peoples”.

In this regard, we call upon those two great nations to show their fidelity to the principles underpinning our Organization and resolve their differences amicably. Military power and aggression can never beget peace.

In the same vein, the ongoing war in Ukraine and other parts of the world inflicts reputational carnage on our beloved Organization. Whereas the peaceful settlement of disputes lies at the heart of the work of the United Nations, we have, however, not sufficiently

utilized tools at our disposal, such as mediation, to solve conflicts between and among Member States. Some take sides and support conflicts in one form or another, while others remain in hibernation. Lesotho therefore wishes to implore the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, to live up to its Charter and be an honest and impartial mediator in conflicts. The resolution of international disputes based on dialogue, justice and the equality of all States must be at the heart of that strategy if it is to succeed. We must shun those who fan the flames of discord among us and, indeed, we must not allow ourselves to entertain any thought that, through divisions, there will be one side that will win. We will all perish and be on the precipice.

We are mindful, however, that it will be difficult for the Security Council to effectively discharge its mandate while it remains an epitome of the 1945 architecture of the world, as seen by the victors of the Second World War. The reform of the United Nations, including the Security Council, can no longer be delayed. A reformed, transparent and more democratic United Nations, in which Africa is represented along the lines of Ezulwini Consensus, is necessary for preserving international peace and security and for confronting the challenges of development. All Member States need to garner the necessary political will to advance the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform.

We note with satisfaction the statement by President Biden, delivered before this House on 21 September (see A/77/PV.6), in which he clearly articulated America's support for the representation of Africa and other unrepresented regions in the Security Council, particularly in the permanent category. Let us make the seventy-seventh session one for decisive action on this matter.

Today we see heightened geopolitical tensions that have led to the re-emergence of protectionist trade policies. The economic war in terms of sanctions has the potential to make global supply chains less efficient, subtracting from long-term growth and adding pressure on prices. This state of affairs flies in the face of the resolve of the representatives who gathered in San Francisco to finalize the Charter of the United Nations more than seven decades ago, and who dreamed of a world of equality and shared prosperity. They renounced a vision of a world of unilaterally imposed economic sanctions and financial blockades against

others, or one in which peoples were denied their right to self-determination or were subjected to occupation.

It would therefore be remiss of me not to unequivocally call for the lifting of all economic and political sanctions against Zimbabwe.

In like manner, we express solidarity with the tenacious people of Cuba for having endured economic sanctions for so many years. We are confident that the United States of America, under the leadership of President Biden, will revisit its position on the embargo against the Republic of Cuba and expand cooperation with Cuba on areas of mutual interest, including on trade and commerce, for the benefit of the peoples of both countries. This the United States did in 2016, through a Presidential Policy Directive, and it can surely do so again.

We also want to express our unwavering solidarity with the People of Western Sahara, who languished under the hegemony of colonialism for far too long. I wish to underline, in particular, General Assembly resolution 40/50, of 2 December 1985, whereby the Assembly reaffirmed the fact that the question of Western Sahara was a question of decolonization that remained to be completed on the basis of the exercise by the people of Western Sahara of their inalienable right to self-determination and independence. Equally, the Security Council, in its resolutions 1920 (2010), 1979 (2011) and 2044 (2012), recognized that the consolidation of the status quo in Western Sahara was unacceptable and called for an intensified pace of meetings and strengthening of contacts between the parties in order to advance the organization of the referendum. We call upon the international community to intensify efforts to bring to an end the question of Western Sahara.

In the same vein, we express our unwavering support for the people of Palestine. Since the founding of the United Nations, the question of Palestine has been at the centre of the agenda of our Organization. Yet today, the Palestinian territory remains under foreign occupation and its people endure untold pain and suffering. We call on the United Nations to intensify its efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine.

Allow me to conclude my remarks by pointing out that the regime of the Charter of the United Nations has so far done its part in preventing a third world war, thereby fulfilling one of the dreams of the architects of

our beloved Organization. The continued success and relevance of the United Nations will depend in large measure on its capacity for self-renewal in readiness to meet modern-day challenges.

We, the United Nations, should continue to be the voice of the voiceless and the best hope for all humankind. Now is the time for leaders everywhere to join the race for transformative action that can drive peace, democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law, human dignity, economic competitiveness and sustainable prosperity for all. Lesotho will continue to be a persistent and resilient part of that initiative.

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

*Mr. Moeketsi Majoro, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho, was escorted from the rostrum.*

**Address by Mr. Adriano Afonso Maleiane, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mozambique**

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

*Mr. Adriano Afonso Maleiane, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mozambique, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The President:** I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Adriano Afonso Maleiane, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mozambique, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

**Mr. Maleiane (Mozambique) (spoke in Portuguese; English interpretation provided by the delegation):** I am highly honoured to participate in this seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, President of the Republic of Mozambique, who, for agenda reasons, cannot be present.

I would like to congratulate Your Excellency, Ambassador Csaba Kőrösi, upon your election as President of the General Assembly at its current session. I wish you great success in your mission. Let me also commend the work done by your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid. Under his presidency, we strengthened multilateral mechanisms in support of Member States to address global challenges such as coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

To His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres go our words of appreciation for the wise manner in which he has led the work of our Organization.

Allow me also, on behalf of the Mozambican people, to thank all United Nations Member States for the support that contributed to the election of Mozambique as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the term 2023-2024. We acknowledge that election with a great sense of responsibility. Based on the motto of our candidacy, "International peace and security and sustainable development", we will advocate for dialogue, the peaceful resolution of conflicts, the promotion of peace, the fight against terrorism and the role of multilateralism as an important tool to address the challenges facing the world.

The theme of the current session of the General Assembly reveals that the world is living through adverse and challenging times, characterized by a multiplicity of interlinked crises. Among those, we can highlight COVID-19, climate change and humanitarian crises, with their negative effects on the global economy.

The emergence of new outbreaks of internal tensions and inter-State conflicts, terrorism and international organized crime is negatively affecting the economic and social development of our countries. These are aggravating the food, energy and humanitarian crises and hampering the functioning of the supply chain in international markets. That is why Mozambique advocates for the need for constructive dialogue and concerted multilateral action, which are the only avenues for the preservation of peace and the continued promotion of the sustainable development of our countries.

For Mozambique, the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will guide us in the search for collective solutions to the problems of this era of change, which is also the theme of this session. In our own experience, the incorporation of the SDGs into the priorities and pillars of our governance programme has had significant positive results for household incomes and the fight against poverty; agricultural productivity and the development of the entire value chain; the supply of drinking water to the population, in particular in rural areas; the number of people with access to electricity; enrolment in primary, secondary, technical-professional and higher education schools; the rates of access and retention of girls in school, particularly in rural areas; and primary health care



and vaccination programmes for children, as well as maternal and child health care.

Equally noteworthy is the expansion of services in the administration of justice, ensuring improved access to justice for citizens. We have also been promoting actions in the area of the blue economy, as well as in the protection and conservation of the environment and ecosystems. However, our experience also shows that we need to rethink the multilateral institutional financing model, which will allow more resources to be mobilized to complement internal efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

In the context of the prevention and combat of COVID-19, the Government of Mozambique has adopted a set of measures to contain the spread of the pandemic in order to ensure a balance between saving human lives and keeping the economy running. Among these measures, we have undertaken massive vaccination campaigns against the disease; 96.6 per cent of Mozambican citizens over 18 years of age have been vaccinated to date.

Each of our countries has lessons to draw from the fight against and prevention of COVID-19. I highlight the need for national health systems to be prepared to respond to health crises, which requires the provision of and universal access to medical equipment and the means necessary for prevention and treatment; funding to effectively respond to public health emergencies; the strengthening of education and the training of health professionals; the strengthening of bilateral and multilateral cooperation; and greater interaction and dialogue between public and private actors, to respond more effectively to crises with global impact.

Climate change has made Mozambique permanently vigilant. In recent times, our country has been cyclically and intensively affected by depressions, tropical cyclones, rains and strong winds, floods and droughts that have caused the loss of human life, the displacement of persons and extensive damage to infrastructure and socioeconomic activities. Between 2019 and 2022 alone, Mozambique was hit by Cyclones Idai, Kenneth, Guame, Chalane, Ana and Gombe.

In order to respond to challenges related to the reduction and risk management of natural disasters, in 2021 Mozambique, in coordination with the countries of southern Africa and cooperation partners, established, in Nacala-Porto, in the north of the country, the Humanitarian and Emergency Operations Centre of the

Southern African Development Community (SADC). The Centre is aimed at providing SADC countries with tools and institutions capable of responding to and mitigating the impacts of climate change and other emergencies requiring rapid, coordinated and timely intervention in any member State.

Mozambique is committed to continuing to strengthen climate security, including through advocacy and the dissemination of good environmental protection practices, management and risk reduction of natural disasters. These actions reinforce the role that His Excellency Mr. Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, President of the Republic of Mozambique, has been playing in his capacity as the African Union Champion for Disaster Risk Management in Africa. In that vein, we call on the international community to join in our efforts so that we can continue to build resilience and adaptation capacity to address the effects of climate change, in line with the commitments made in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

With regard to the consolidation of national peace and reconciliation, Mozambique has made remarkable progress in the process of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of former Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (RENAMO) guerrillas. To date, 4,002 former RENAMO guerrillas, out of a total of 5,221, have been covered by this process. We foresee the conclusion of the DDR process by the end of this year, which will be an important milestone in the implementation of the Accord for National Peace and Reconciliation signed on 6 August 2019 between the Government of Mozambique and RENAMO. With the completion of this stage, we will focus on long-term reintegration and more effective reconciliation, which are crucial to ensuring the sustainability of the peace process and the consolidation of national unity. The remarkable progress we are making in DDR is due to the valuable assistance and support of the United Nations and the Contact Group.

In order to prevent terrorist activity in some districts of Cabo Delgado province, the Government has adopted a comprehensive approach that includes strengthening the operational capacity of the Defence and Security Forces, stabilizing security and creating conditions that will enable recovery, reconstruction and socioeconomic development, so that we can reduce the vulnerability of communities to violent extremism. Thanks to the actions undertaken by Mozambique,

combined with the support and assistance of multilateral and bilateral cooperation partners, including SADC, the European Union and Rwanda, we have made progress in combating terrorism.

Mozambique's approach is a pioneering one in terms of concerted regional action to address the global threat of terrorism. The ongoing actions on the ground are enabling the re-establishment of security and, consequently, the gradual return of the people to their areas of origin and the resumption of economic and social activity in the regions previously affected by terrorist actions, through the implementation of the Cabo Delgado reconstruction programme. I therefore wish to express our appreciation to all those who, directly or indirectly, have supported Mozambique in the prevention of and combat against terrorism by providing humanitarian assistance and rebuilding the economic and social fabric of the affected areas.

At the service of the Security Council as a non-permanent member, I reaffirm Mozambique's commitment to the principles and objectives of the United Nations. We will listen to and work in close collaboration and coordination with all Member States.

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

*Mr. Adriano Afonso Maleiane, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mozambique, was escorted from the rostrum.*

**Address by Mr. Edi Rama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania**

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

*Mr. Edi Rama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The President:** I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Edi Rama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

**Mr. Rama (Albania):** It is a particular honour for me to address this session of the General Assembly because I stand here as the representative of a country, Albania, that is currently serving on the Security Council for the first time in its history. That responsibility lends special importance to our role in this organ and beyond.

We gather here each September, and 77 years since its establishment, the United Nations has only gained in its universal appeal, serving as the parliament of humankind, the forum where we speak to each other and listen to the world. Like nowhere else, the world converges here. We share our successes and progress, outline issues and challenges, express worries and fears, highlight crises and tensions, and talk about agreements and discords, but above all we bring a joint desire for a better world.

In these nearly eight decades, we have witnessed uninterrupted change, profound transformation, unprecedented mobilization, continued solidarity and an all-time imperative of the need to work together. As a result, the world has known undeniable progress on many tracks. On the other hand, we must never forget that our journey has been bumpy. Many times, we have also witnessed terrible setbacks and even reversals of progress. Unfortunately, this is mainly due to man-made catastrophes, ill-conceived policies based on narrow national politics and short-sighted interests fuelled by populism, nationalism and greed for domination.

That is why this place at this time each year is the yearly check-up of the health of the world. We may sometimes have the impression that we say too much of the same thing and that we needlessly and too often repeat each other. I disagree. If committing to peace and security, to development and prosperity, to upholding international law and respecting human rights or to engaging in genuine efforts to mitigate climate change is repeating each other, then we are doing the right thing.

Unfortunately, this year our hopes and beliefs have been bitterly shattered and our assurances broken by an unprovoked, unjustified and premeditated war of one country against another on the European continent — the brutal aggression of Russia against its neighbour, Ukraine. Russia's war of choice is against Ukraine and its people; not only that, but it is also a brutal assault on international Law, a flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and a very direct threat to the European security architecture. It is an open battle between an aging, cynical tyranny and a young, growing democracy. While we all, in our own way and with our respective means, try individually and collectively to project ourselves into the future, one country, led by an illusion of grandeur from bygone times, has decided to drag the world backwards and go

against everything we have built over decades. This is unacceptable.

We will continue to stand in full solidarity with Ukraine and its people, and, like many other countries, help them in any way we can to defend themselves. Their fight is also ours, and I hope that all Members of the United Nations share the core principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, freedom and the right to independently decide on their own future, without fear or interference. Shying away from this defining battle between those principles and all their antitheses is shying away from the duty to protect ourselves, our countries and our children.

While the world expects Russia to come to reason, stop the war and engage in peace negotiations, just a few days ago the Kremlin made another choice, that of escalation, announcing a partial mobilization that would deepen the conflict and bring more crimes, more victims and more misery, but also more shame on Russia itself. Sham referendums are being conducted in some parts of the occupied Ukrainian under the threat of the gun.

It is hard to imagine that anyone here can silently accept such disgraceful disregard of laws, rules, norms and practices that govern relations among States in the twenty-first century. These actions run contrary to international law and not only do not reflect the free will of the Ukrainian people but also offer a miserable show of detachment from everything that brings us together under the roof of the United Nations. We condemn such actions engineered in Moscow and will not recognize any such lawlessness.

In the world we want, impunity should not be a shelter for those who must answer for their deeds. Albania is fully committed to accountability globally and to fighting impunity everywhere, not only to provide justice to victims but also to prevent future atrocities. That is why Albania calls for and supports work towards the adoption of a convention on the prevention and punishment of crimes against humanity. That new instrument would fill a significant gap in the current international framework and facilitate international cooperation to protect civilians.

The world is never a quiet place and there are many serious challenges that need to be properly and immediately addressed. We face serious challenges from open conflict in many parts of the world. Many countries are subject to intolerable seizure of power

by force. Terrorism remains a serious threat to peace and security.

At a time when a multitude of crises have plunged the world into turmoil, including from unacceptable nuclear threats, I would like to call the attention of the Assembly to another crucial issue, closely linked and with a huge impact on peace and security: cybersecurity. Technology is nowadays part of every aspect of our lives. In Albania, 95 per cent of services to the citizens and business are offered online. These user-friendly systems save time and energy, drastically improve efficiency and quality, and are the best tool to eliminate endemic corruption.

Last July, however, Albania was the target of an unprovoked, large-scale cyberattack. The Government's entire digital infrastructure was under sustained and coordinated assault, with the clear aim of destroying it, paralysing public services, stealing data and electronic communications from government systems, creating chaos and fomenting tension in the country. A lengthy and thorough in-depth investigation, conducted in cooperation with the best existing world expertise on cyberterrorism, has now confirmed beyond any doubt that the cyberattack that sought to bring a sovereign country to its knees was a State-sponsored aggression, orchestrated and carried out by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

This is why, in the face of a such blatant breach of the norms of responsible State behaviour in cyberspace in peacetime, which include refraining from damaging critical infrastructure that provides services to the public, the Government of Albania was left with no other choice but to sever diplomatic relations with Iran. We hope that this forced extreme measure will be an example and a deterrent to anyone who supports or sponsors such abhorrent actions against sovereign States. We urge the United Nations, including the Security Council, to focus more seriously and concretely on addressing cybersecurity by investing in prevention and helping Member States build resilience.

Albania is a member of the Balkan community, a part of Europe that has had its share of very troubled history. One need only mention the word "Balkans" and, I would bet, images stained by bloody wars and brutal crimes will come to everyone's mind. One would rightly recall the scars of repression and oppression, genocide in Srebrenica and brutal ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. None of that is or will be forgotten.

Accountability has and will continue to be called for, and we must redouble our efforts to guarantee its unhindered course. This requires a resolved commitment to the ideals of justice and, above all, to cooperation between parties. Justice lies in the foundations of any effort for long-lasting peace, stability and prosperity. But justice is served with facts, proof and evidence, not with fiction or distorted reality. I cannot but share here a terrible example of that, which should serve as a lesson to all the world and, first and foremost, the democratic world.

In 2011, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted a report, compiled by a zealous parliamentarian who goes by the name Dick Marty, accusing the Kosovo Liberation Army of the despicable crime of organ trafficking. Mr. Marty should have been paid as a storyteller, but never trusted as a rapporteur of the Council of Europe. His report was shocking, and not only did many believe it at the time, but it became the key factor in enhancing the idea of and establishing the Kosovo Specialist Chambers. It also became one of the worst cases of distorted reality, a kind of manifesto for worldwide propaganda against Kosovo's independence.

Every investigative effort has been made during these 11 long years to prove those allegations nationally, regionally and internationally — to no avail. Nothing — not a single shred of evidence or proof — was found anywhere, in Kosovo or anywhere else, regarding the alleged trafficking of organs. Yet, the Kosovo Specialist Chambers, which were founded on the basis of that report, arrested Kosovo's sitting President, Hashim Thaçi, without indictment. He waited a year in detention until he was formally indicted. I would ask everyone here to imagine for a moment their president, prime minister or country leader being removed from office in a third country and kept there in custody for a whole year without any formal indictment by a body created and sponsored by a community of democratic countries. And guess what? Not a single word of the entire indictment that came next has anything to do with the Council of Europe's report on the alleged crime of organ trafficking. It is a complete fantasy. Is this not a monumental failure of international politics? This is not about a person. It is not about a court procedure. This is about inflicting an undue stain on a country and its history.

Nevertheless, exactly because democracy and its institutions have, among many virtues, that of repairing their faults and errors, we strongly believe that, based

on this crying lack of any evidence whatsoever, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe will honour the truth and accept Albania's request to produce a follow-up report and, although the damage has been done, help restore the credibility of such an important international organization as the Council of Europe. We will never give up on this truth, and we will not stop honouring all of those who have given their lives for freedom and independence, and against whom nobody, in anybody's name, can cast a single speck of dirt.

I will say a few more words on the Western Balkans, not of the past but of the future — the one that we are working to build together. You need only turn that region in any way you want, and you will find a lot of fuel for division and toxicity. But we in Albania have realized that the best way to advance is to do so together, with shared benefits as sovereign countries but close partners; as national players joined by a common enterprise, with our specific interests as part of a common framework that responds to our citizens.

This brought us, together with North Macedonia and Serbia, to launch the Open Balkans initiative, a platform open to all Balkan countries — not just the three of us but Montenegro and Kosovo, Bosnia and Türkiye, Greece and further — as an investment for everyone and part of the wider, common European project. The best message of the Open Balkans that I want to share today is that you do not need to agree on everything to leave a dark past behind and build step by step a common, bright future by dealing with your disagreements in an increasingly gracious way and by finding ever more good reasons to resolve those disagreements.

By strengthening its relations with Serbia and moving forward together to boost bilateral and regional cooperation, Albania has not and will not move an inch from its firm position in support of the need for every country represented here that has not yet done so, including first and foremost Serbia, to recognize the Republic of Kosovo. It is high time for Kosovo and Serbia to move beyond the current stalemate in their dialogue and to work bravely towards a comprehensive peace agreement by doing their respective parts to adopt a breakthrough document backed by the European Union and the United States.

Dialogue is not just a better way; it is the sole and unique way to deal with issues, however difficult they



may appear, however complex they may be. I remain convinced that Open Balkans will only help facilitate this process, to the benefit of all: Albanians and Serbs, Kosovo and Serbia, but also for the entire region and the wider Europe.

Despite all the worries and challenges that keep us awake at night, we should not lose hope, we should keep trying and renew efforts in order to put universality at the heart of what we say and what we do at the national, regional and global levels. More than ever, in today's shaken world, we need to commit ourselves to our fundamental universal values and acknowledge that we constitute a community of fate, despite our different national perspectives and interests.

Global warming will not distinguish between North and South, and the rise of the sea level will not stop at any shore. If the pandemic that shook the world to the core, has taught us anything, it is a very simple lesson, that no one is immune until everyone is. It is in that spirit that Albania acts in the region, in Europe, including here, at the General Assembly and in the Security Council, that the world expects rightfully to deliver, to stand up and save lives, to prevent and re-solve conflict not to be paralyzed or held hostage.

Let me conclude by quoting a beautiful African proverb, which says it all about our United Nations: "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

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

*Mr. Edi Rama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania, was escorted from the rostrum.*

**The President:** I now call on His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of the Holy See.

**Cardinal Parolin (Holy See):** I am pleased to extend to you, Sir, and to the representatives of nations gathered here the warm greetings of Pope Francis. It is good to be together again in person.

Last year, I spoke of the dark clouds hanging over humankind; while some of those have lifted, other, darker clouds have gathered. Armed conflicts currently afflict our world to an extent not seen since 1945. In addition to the misery caused by violence and cruelty and the anxiety arising from the threat of nuclear

escalation, our world continues to face the challenges of climate change, mixed migration and the ongoing coronavirus disease pandemic, while food insecurity and water scarcity now affect large portions of the global population.

No one can deny that the great challenges of our time are all global. At the same time, alongside the greater interconnection of problems, we are seeing a growing fragmentation of solutions that only fuels further tensions and divisions, as well as a generalized feeling of uncertainty and instability.

We need to recover our sense of shared identity as a single human family. If we do not focus on what unites us, seeking to promote the common good, there will only be growing isolation, marked by a reciprocal rejection and refusal that endangers multilateralism. Indeed, here, at the United Nations, we are called to work together to restore, as Pope Francis has requested, that "diplomatic style that has characterized international relations from the end of the Second World War", making sure it is best able to implement its foundational charter and respond to the challenges faced by humankind.

When Pope Saint Paul VI visited this Hall, his heartfelt plea for no more war was broadcast around the world. Decades later, the hard-fought progress in reducing the prevalence of armed conflict globally has been called into question. This reversal deeply concerns the Holy See. Pope Francis has recognized that "we never learn" and that "unfortunately, the old story of competition between the greater Powers" continue, seeking to extend economic, ideological and military influence. And yet, the Holy See strongly believes in multilateralism and the irreplaceable role of the United Nations. For that reason, Pope Francis speaks repeatedly in support of the Organization, encouraging a process of renewal.

The General Assembly has been working on the revitalization of various aspects of its work for some time. This process takes place against the backdrop of a crisis of credibility arising not only from its apparent impotence in times of crisis, but also from the promotion of agenda in many forums that frequently shift the focus to matters that, by their divisive nature, do not strictly belong to the aims of the Organization. Pope Francis has called this "ideological colonization". Unfortunately, key decisions are now frequently made without a genuine process of negotiation in which all

countries have a say. This is at odds with the true nature of multilateral diplomacy. Unfortunately, international cooperation is hindered by the flagrant imposition of contentious policies that do not enjoy agreement, particularly in the area of human rights.

In that regard, there appears to be little desire on the part of specific States to recover consensus and authentic dialogue. Indeed, today it would appear that only the powerful and the well-funded prevail, reinventing human rights as they see fit. Instead, the fundamental human rights recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are firmly rooted in universal values, such that the right to life, freedom of thought, conscience, religion, opinion and expression, and that the institution of the family are protected. The Holy See reaffirms that human rights remain universal, objective and firmly rooted in the God-given dignity of the human person.

It is imperative that broad agreement and genuine consensus be found again soon within the Organization if it is to restore its international credibility as a true family of nations. It must extend beyond the General Assembly, to the reform of those organs with effective executive capability, such as the Security Council. The landmark resolution 76/262, requiring that the use of veto power be explained before the General Assembly, was a welcome step in that direction. The members of the Security Council, most especially the permanent members, have a crucial responsibility for the maintenance of peace and order in the world. When there is no shared vision or political will for peaceful coexistence, they become themselves the perpetrators of grave injustices. Only when the representatives of nations gathered here are able to place the common good above their own partisan interests will the legal framework of the United Nations system truly be the pledge of a secure and happy future.

At present, however, violence continues to scar our world; the devastation that war wreaks directly upon the populations of conflict zones is compounded by the indirect impact on countless other people far from the frontline. As Pope Francis has pointed out,

“war diverts attention and resources, but these are the objectives that demand the utmost commitment: the fight against hunger, health, and education”.

World hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms are alarmingly on the rise. The number of

people suffering hunger in the world rose to as many as 828 million in 2021.

However, expenditure on arms, today at obscene levels, only serves to increase food insecurity, restrict access to health care and deprive generations of their rightful education. It is time to bring an end to armament hypocrisy — speaking of peace and living off weapons. Instead of squandering vast sums on military equipment, it would be far wiser to invest in avoiding war, rather than preparing for it.

The war in Ukraine has exacerbated already concerning global trends, including rising food and fuel prices and increased displacement. The conflict has also brought renewed attention to nuclear security and the risk of nuclear escalation. With the onset of conflict, a key source of staple grains and cooking oil for countries that rely on food imports was interrupted, placing millions more at risk of food insecurity and starvation. Additionally, the war has also exposed the vulnerability of short-sighted energy policies that rely exclusively on the single source of fossil fuel, rather than developing clean and sustainable alternatives. It is the poorest among us who suffer the most. Addressing these crises requires urgent and concerted action.

Furthermore, the war in Ukraine not only undermines the nuclear non-proliferation regime, but also presents us with the danger of nuclear devastation, through either escalation or accident. Any threat of nuclear weapons use is repugnant and merits unequivocal condemnation.

In the meantime, Europe’s largest refugee crisis since the Second World War only adds to the millions of refugees throughout Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Mixed migration is a global phenomenon that needs to be addressed accordingly. In that regard, implementing the vision and objectives of both the Global Compact for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration, as well as the Global Compact on Refugees, remains among the best ways to encourage international cooperation and burden-sharing. States must continue to make every effort to generate the necessary conditions for people to live in peace, security and dignity in their countries of origin.

*Mr. Dang (Viet Nam), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

Our common home continues to be gravely affected by the adverse impacts of climate change. Indeed, we

have grown so used to hearing of extreme weather events, and yet those phenomena are clear signs of our failure to address climate change. Moreover, multilateral environmental agreements have already laid out obligations for States parties that would prove effective in tackling the threat posed by climate change. In that regard, when the international community gathers at the twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Sharm El Sheikh, it is to be hoped that there will be the political will to take more decisive and transformative decisions to protect the environment by accelerating global climate action through stronger mitigation measures, scaled-up adaptation efforts and enhanced flows of appropriate finance. On this issue, I am pleased to note that the Holy See, acting in the name and on behalf of the Vatican City State, recently deposited its instruments of accession both to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, to contribute to the efforts of all States to work together to respond effectively to challenges posed by climate change.

The digital environment also demands greater attention, given the increasingly important role that information and communication technologies play in our daily lives. Pope Francis points out that

“the potential of digital technology is enormous, yet the possible negative impact of its abuse in the area of human trafficking, the planning of terrorist activities, the spread of hatred and extremism, the manipulation of information and ... in the area of child abuse, is equally significant. Public opinion and lawmakers are finally coming to realize this.”

This is the logic of the appeal of Pope Francis to work together for peace, “not a peace based on the balance of weapons, [or] on mutual fear,” but rather one born of encounter and dialogue. For this,

“it is necessary to pass from the strategies of political, economic and military power to a plan for global peace: no to a world divided among conflicting powers; yes to a world united among peoples and civilizations that respect each other”.

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Wang Yi, State Councillor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China.

**Mr. Wang Yi (China)** (*spoke in Chinese*): We are at a time fraught with challenges. The coronavirus disease

(COVID-19) keeps resurfacing. Global security faces uncertainty. Global economic recovery is fragile and unsteady, and various risks and crises are emerging. The world has entered a new phase of turbulence and transformation. Changes unseen in a century are accelerating.

But we are also at a time full of hope. The world continues to move toward multipolarity, economic globalization is deepening and our societies are becoming increasingly digitized and culturally diversified. Countries are becoming ever more interconnected and interdependent. Peace and development remain the underlying trend of our times. Around the world, the people's call for progress and cooperation is getting louder than ever before.

How should we respond to the call of our times and ride the trend of history to build a community with a shared future for humankind? China's answer is firm and clear.

First, we must uphold peace and oppose war. Chinese President Xi Jinping notes that peace, like air and sunshine, is hardly noticed when we are benefiting from it, but none of us can live without it. Peace is crucial for our future and it underpins the common security of all countries. Turbulence and war can only open a Pandora's box, and he who instigates a proxy war can easily get himself burned. Pursuing one's own absolute security can only undermine global strategic stability. We should remain committed to addressing differences by peaceful means and resolve disputes through dialogue and consultation.

Secondly, we must pursue development and eliminate poverty. Development holds the key to resolving difficult issues and delivering a happy life to our people. We should place development at the centre of the international agenda, build international consensus on promoting development, and uphold all countries' legitimate right to development. We should foster new drivers for global development, forge a global development partnership and see that everyone in every country benefits more from the fruits of development in a more equitable way.

Thirdly, we must remain open and oppose exclusion. President Xi Jinping has pointed out that openness is the sure way to realize human prosperity and advancement. Protectionism can only boomerang and decoupling and supply chain disruption will hurt everyone. We should stay true to openness and inclusiveness and tear down

fences and barriers that hinder the free flow of the factors of production. We should uphold the multilateral trading system, with the World Trade Organization at its core, and work to build an open world economy.

Fourthly, we must seek cooperation and oppose confrontation. As we face a host of global challenges that crop up one after another, our biggest strength will come from solidarity; our best strategy is to stick together, and the brightest future lies in win-win cooperation. It is only natural that countries have problems and differences among them, but they should increase mutual understanding on a basis of equality and respect. We should engage in dialogue, consultation and win-win cooperation, and reject conflict, coercion and zero-sum games. We should jointly oppose group politics and bloc confrontation.

Fifthly, we must strengthen solidarity and oppose division. President Xi once stated that countries around the world were like passengers aboard the same ship who shared a common stake. All of us passengers should pull together to navigate the ship through the storm towards a bright future. Our world must embrace diverse civilizations if it is to make continuous advances, and humankind must pursue an inclusive path if it is to achieve modernization. Peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy and freedom are common values of humanity. Differences in system should not be used as an excuse to create division; still less should democracy and human rights be used as tools or weapons to achieve political ends. We should stand against drawing lines on ideological grounds and make united efforts to expand common ground to promote world peace and development.

Sixthly, we must uphold equity and oppose bullying. Mutual respect and the equality of countries big and small are primary principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Major international issues should be handled by all countries, and international rules drawn up by all countries together. No country is above others, and no country should wilfully abuse its power to bully other sovereign countries. We should advocate and practice true multilateralism, promote the equality of all countries in terms of rights, rules and opportunities, and build a new type of international relations featuring mutual respect, equity and justice, and win-win cooperation.

China, as a permanent member of the Security Council and the world's largest developing country,

is committed to solidarity and cooperation with other countries. It will follow the trend of the times and pursue the shared interests of the vast majority of countries.

China is a builder of world peace. We have actively promoted international peace and participated in the international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation process. China is the top contributor of peacekeeping personnel among the permanent members of the Security Council and the second largest funding contributor to both the United Nations and its peacekeeping operations. China is the only country in the world that pledges to keep to a path of peaceful development in its Constitution. It is the only one among the five nuclear-weapon States that is committed to no first use of nuclear weapons. It has thereby made an important contribution to global strategic stability.

In response to various security challenges facing the world, President Xi proposed the Global Security Initiative. He called on the international community to pursue common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries, to abide by the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, to take the legitimate security concerns of all countries seriously, to peacefully resolve disputes through dialogue and consultation, and to maintain security in both traditional and non-traditional domains, thus contributing China's wisdom to reducing the peace deficit facing humankind and providing China's input to meeting global security challenges.

China has been a contributor to global development. We have endeavoured to build a system of high-standard opening-up and to safeguard the security and stability of global industrial and supply chains. China is a major trading partner of over 130 countries and regions. Contributing about 30 per cent of annual global growth, China is the biggest engine driving the global economy. China is a pacesetter in implementing the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It has met the poverty-reduction goal 10 years ahead of schedule and accounts for over 70 per cent of the gains in global poverty reduction. China is also an active participant in global governance and South-South cooperation. It took the initiative to set up the China-United Nations Peace and Development Trust Fund and the Global Development and South-South Cooperation Fund. It has provided development aid to more than 160 countries in need and extended more debt-service



payments owed by developing countries than any other State member of the Group of 20.

At the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly, President Xi proposed the Global Development Initiative. Putting people front and centre, the Initiative is a rallying call to refocus global attention on development and build a global community of development. At the recent High-level Dialogue on Global Development, President Xi announced dozens of major concrete steps to implement the Initiative, generating a strong impetus for accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. On the margins of this session of the General Assembly, China has hosted a ministerial meeting of the Group of Friends of the Global Development Initiative, renewing the consensus on pursuing the Initiative. As China forges ahead, its fast train of development will continue to drive global growth and deliver more benefits to the people of all countries.

China has been a defender of the international order. We are committed to upholding the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, the international system with the United Nations at its core and the international order based on international law. China has been involved in multilateral affairs in all fields. It is a member of almost all universal intergovernmental organizations and a party to over 600 international conventions. It has concluded more than 27,000 bilateral treaties and fulfilled its international obligations in good faith. China abides by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and has made relentless efforts to protect and strengthen its human rights. China is firmly against attempts to politicize human rights and has worked to advance the healthy development of international human rights cooperation.

As a member of the developing world, China will forever stand with other developing countries. We are heartened to see the rapid progress achieved by the developing world in recent years, and we will continue to speak up for other developing countries, help them overcome difficulties and fully support efforts to raising the representation and voice of developing countries in international affairs. Developing countries are no longer the silent majority in international and multilateral processes. With stronger solidarity, China and other developing countries have spoken out for justice and become a pillar of promoting development cooperation and safeguarding equity and justice.

China has been a provider of public goods. In the face of COVID-19, China has made all-out efforts to advance and engage in global cooperation against the virus. We have done our best to provide anti-COVID-19 supplies and shared our practices in COVID-19 response. China was among the first to promise to make COVID-19 vaccines a global public good and to support waiving intellectual property rights on the vaccines. China has provided over 2.2 billion doses of vaccines to more than 120 countries and international organizations.

In response to tough challenges confronting global development, President Xi has proposed to advance high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, an initiative that has been widely endorsed by the international community. China has signed cooperation documents with 149 countries and 32 international organizations. We have set up the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Silk Road Fund, thereby building the largest, broadest and most inclusive platforms for international cooperation.

In response to the shared concerns of various countries about data security, we have launched the Global Initiative on Data Security as a reference for formulating rules on global data security.

In response to climate change, China is committed to pursuing a development path of green and low-carbon growth that puts ecological conservation first. We announced the ambitious carbon peaking and carbon neutrality goals and are working to implement the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. China accounts for one-fourth of all the trees planted globally. We are making unrelenting efforts to foster a community of life for man and nature.

In response to global food security challenges, China has put forth a cooperation initiative on global food security. This year, we have provided over 15,000 tons of emergency humanitarian food assistance to other developing countries in need.

China has been a mediator of hotspot issues. As a responsible major country, China has explored workable Chinese approaches to solving hotspot issues. While adhering to the principle of non-interference in others' domestic affairs and respecting the will and needs of the countries concerned, China has endeavoured to help settle hotspot issues in a constructive way. Our approach is to promote peace through talks that are fair and pragmatic and that seek to address both the symptoms and root causes of hotspot issues.

China supports all efforts conducive to the peaceful resolution of the Ukraine crisis. The pressing priority is to restore peace through talks. To achieve a fundamental solution, it is important to address the legitimate security concerns of all parties concerned and build a balanced, effective and sustainable security architecture. We call on all parties concerned to keep the crisis from spilling over and to protect the legitimate rights and interests of developing countries.

The Palestinian question is at the heart of the Middle East issue. Justice is already late in coming, but it must not be absent. The two-State solution is crucial to upholding fairness and justice. China will continue to support the Palestinian people as they pursue their just cause of restoring legitimate national rights.

To resolve the Korean peninsula nuclear issue, it is important to address its root cause. We need to follow the dual-track approach and the principle of taking phased and synchronized steps, jointly uphold peace and stability on the peninsula, and resolve the issue through dialogue and consultation.

Afghanistan is in a critical transition from chaos to order. The right way forward is to put in place an inclusive political framework and adopt moderate policies. The goal should be to resume economic growth and improve people's lives. To achieve that goal, Afghanistan should combat terrorism and integrate itself into the region.

A small number of countries have arbitrarily imposed unilateral sanctions, cut off development aid and frozen the lawful assets of other countries. This is an unacceptable practice that must be corrected. China firmly supports the Cuban people in their just struggle to defend their sovereignty and oppose external interference and blockade.

The abuse of guns is becoming an increasingly serious problem across the world. In that regard, I want to announce that China has decided to launch its domestic procedure to ratify the Protocol Against the Illicit Manufacturing and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, a step that will contribute to strengthening global cooperation on gun control and closing the security deficit.

Since ancient times, Taiwan has been an inalienable part of China's territory. China's sovereignty and

territorial integrity have never been severed and the fact that the mainland and Taiwan belong to one and the same China has never changed. All of us Chinese have never ceased in our efforts to realize reunification.

It is explicitly stated in the Cairo Declaration and the Potsdam Proclamation, issued some 70 years ago, that all the territories Japan had stolen from the Chinese, including Taiwan and the Penghu Islands, shall be restored to China. That constitutes an important part of the post-war international order. Fifty-one years ago in this Hall, the General Assembly adopted resolution 2758 (XXVI) by an overwhelming majority, restoring the lawful seat of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations and to expel the representatives of the Taiwan authorities from the place they had unlawfully occupied. The so-called dual representation proposal put forward by the United States and a few other countries to keep Taiwan's seat in the United Nations became a piece of waste paper. Resolution 2758 (XXVI) resolved once and for all, politically, legally and procedurally, the issue of the representation of the whole of China, including Taiwan, in the United Nations and international institutions. It completely blocked any attempt by anyone or any country to create "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan".

The one-China principle has become a basic norm in international relations and a general consensus in the international community. When entering into diplomatic relations with China, 181 countries all recognized and accepted that there is only one China in the world, Taiwan is a part of China, and the Government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legal Government representing the whole of China. By firmly upholding the one-China principle, China is not only maintaining its sovereignty and territorial integrity, but also truly safeguarding peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and non-interference in others' affairs, a basic norm of international relations that is of vital importance to the large number of developing countries.

China will continue to endeavour to achieve peaceful reunification with the greatest sincerity and greatest efforts. To that end, we must combat Taiwan independence separatist activities with the firmest resolve and take the most forceful steps to repel interference by external groups. Only by resolutely forestalling separatist activities in accordance with the law can we forge a true foundation for peaceful reunification. Only when China is completely reunified can there be enduring peace across the Taiwan Strait.

Any scheme to interfere in China's internal affairs is bound to meet the strong opposition of all Chinese, and any move to obstruct China's cause of reunification is bound to be crushed by the wheels of history.

The international community closely follows China's development. Since the eighteenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) convened 10 years ago, socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era. In the past decade, China has registered historic achievements and transformation in pursuing economic and social development. In this decade, it has also realized a historic leap in its relations with the world and made historic contributions to the international community.

China is fully implementing a new development philosophy of innovative, coordinated, green and open development for all, and is pursuing high-quality development and fostering a new development paradigm. With the strong leadership of the CPC, the concerted efforts of our 1.4 billion people, the strengths of socialism with Chinese characteristics, a solid foundation underpinning sustained rapid development, and strong confidence in achieving development through its own efforts, China will enjoy sustained and sound development, usher in even brighter prospects and make more splendid miracles come true.

With one-fifth of the global population, China's march towards modernization has important, far-reaching significance for the world. The path that China pursues is one of peace and development, not one of plunder and colonialism; it is a path of win-win cooperation, not one of zero-sum game; and it is one of harmony between man and nature, not one of destructive exploitation of resources. We will continue to contribute our input to meeting the challenges facing human development, and make our contribution to creating a new form of human advancement.

Next month, the CPC will convene its twentieth National Congress in Beijing. The Congress will, in response to the expectation of all the Chinese people, set well-conceived goals and tasks for China's development over the next five years and beyond, and draw up an overarching plan for China's future development. Having reached a new historical starting point, China will follow the Chinese path to modernization to achieve its national rejuvenation. China will work with other countries to make every effort for peace and development, shoulder the responsibility for solidarity

and progress, build a community with a shared future for humankind, and embrace an even better world.

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Pham Binh Minh, Deputy Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

**Mr. Minh (Viet Nam):** I join others in congratulating Mr. Csaba Kőrösi on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session. As Vice-President, Viet Nam has full confidence in his able leadership and guidance and will work with him to steer the work of the Assembly to success.

I thank Mr. Abdulla Shahid, President of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session, for his important contributions to the work of the General Assembly, and Secretary-General António Guterres for the leadership and innovation he has instilled in the Organization over the past year.

We are at a watershed moment in history. Confrontation, conflicts and violations of international law continue to intensify, mirroring great Power competition and unilateralism. Global military expenditure surged to a record high \$2.1 trillion, while the international community failed to mobilize \$100 billion for climate actions.

The nuclear risk has reached its highest point in decades, but that was still not enough for the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to achieve any collective commitment to action.

The outbreak of armed conflicts and heightened tension, especially between major Powers, have made the international security climate more volatile than at any time since the Cold War.

The climate crisis and other non-traditional security risks threaten our very existence.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has wreaked havoc on health systems, economies and societies worldwide. Poverty, inequalities, violence and exclusion are denying the rights of millions to the basic necessities of life. With less than a decade to go, the Sustainable Development Goals are even further off track.

Facing these multiple crises, developing countries and vulnerable groups, which lack the capacity, resources and resilience to cope with external shocks, are those hardest hit. To reverse this course, we must

fundamentally change our ways of thinking and doing things. This entails reshaping a global approach to addressing global issues, enhancing resilience and placing people at the core of all development efforts.

And key to such an approach is international solidarity and partnerships at all levels. We know this from our own history. International solidarity has been crucial to the success of Viet Nam's national liberation and reunification. Multilateralization and diversification of partnerships, meanwhile, have proven indispensable to Viet Nam's foreign policy of independence, self-reliance, peace, cooperation and development. They have opened the door for Viet Nam to the world and helped bring catalytic resources to propel Viet Nam's Doi Moi renovation process. They have helped improved the lives tens of millions of Vietnamese and brought prosperity to a formerly war-torn country, now confidently on a path to become a developed, high-income country by 2045.

But I believe the experience of Viet Nam is not an exception. There is an abundance of stories about how solidarity and partnerships triumph over mistrust and fragmentation and bring about positive change. As we move forward in the spirit of solidarity and partnership, I wish to underline four key points:

First, a confrontational and zero-sum game approach must be eliminated. Imposition, intervention and unilateral acts have no place in the good conduct of international affairs. Major Powers are particularly looked upon to behave responsibly and work for the common good and not their own selfish interests. Viet Nam calls for strengthened multilateralism and international cooperation in the spirit of openness, inclusiveness, equality and mutual benefit. Major United Nations and international agendas, especially the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and climate actions, must not be put on hold due to isolated disagreements among countries. We must stay focused on our common goals and responsibilities.

We stand in firm solidarity with the people of Cuba and call for the immediate lifting of the unilateral embargoes on Cuba, which are contrary to international law.

Secondly, our actions, both individually and collectively, must be guided by and in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations. Viet Nam firmly believes that respect for international law, especially respect for the sovereign

equality, political independence and territorial integrity of States and the peaceful settlement of disputes, is the most effective and viable measure to prevent conflicts and promote sustainable peace and security. Constructive dialogue and respect for the legitimate rights and interests of all parties, in accordance with international law, are key to resolving differences and reducing tensions.

Viet Nam calls for the cessation of hostilities in Ukraine, and stands ready to contribute to the diplomatic process and to the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Ukraine.

Thirdly, we need strong and effective multilateral institutions, with the United Nations at their heart, to best address global challenges. They are best positioned to initiate and incubate transformative ideas approaches and solutions and to forge partnerships and mobilize resources for the implementation of those initiatives. Viet Nam welcomes the forward-looking proposals in the Secretary-General's *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982) report. We will engage actively in the deliberation of these proposals, and in the preparations of the Summit of the Future and the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. We have high hopes that these summits will provide concrete, meaningful and long-lasting commitment and actions.

Fourthly, regional organizations can pioneer and play a prominent role in bolstering multilateral cooperation.

In South East Asia, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is doing its part to help address regional and global issues. We are working to build a strong and united ASEAN community and advance the central role of ASEAN in the regional security architecture. Building a broad and extensive network of partnerships, ASEAN has created a premier forum for strategic dialogue, engaging important partners of the region, especially with major Powers. ASEAN is working hard to implement the five-point consensus to help find comprehensive solutions to the situation in Myanmar.

Viet Nam underlines the need to maintain peace, stability, maritime safety and security in the South China Sea, and calls on all parties to resolve disputes by peaceful means, in full respect for legal and diplomatic processes. We call on parties to exercise self-restraint, refrain from unilateral activities and attempts to change the status quo, and not to threaten or use force, in accordance with international law, including the



United Nations Charter and the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

This year, Viet Nam celebrates its forty-fifth year as a Member of the United Nations. Since that September day in 1977, the United Nations has been a trusted friend and reliable partner, standing with us in our most difficult times of post-war reconstruction and more recently in the fight against COVID-19, and accompanying us on our path of Doi Moi renovation, improving our people's lives and advancing the country's development.

Welcoming Viet Nam to the United Nations 45 years ago, the President of the General Assembly at its thirty-second session highlighted Viet Nam's dedication to the purposes and principles and affirmed that the admission of Viet Nam "marks a further step towards consolidating peace and security in the world" (A/32/PV.1, para.95).

Forty-five years on, these statements remain valid. Viet Nam's history and its vision for the future have always been intimately linked to its aspirations for peace and development. We have consistently supported and pursued a balanced and constructive approach in seeking lasting solutions to global issues.

As member of major United Nations bodies, most recently the Security Council, Viet Nam has consistently underlined the importance of upholding the United Nations Charter and ensuring that the United Nations best serves the needs and interests of all Members. Our men and women are proudly serving in the United Nations peacekeeping missions in South Sudan, Abyei and the Central African Republic.

Viet Nam is sparing no effort to realize our commitment to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050, an ambitious goal given the level of development and technology capacity of Viet Nam.

At the Human Rights Council, Viet Nam has consistently worked to advance mutual understanding and respect and to foster dialogue and cooperation. We lead efforts to promote the rights of vulnerable groups in the context of climate change.

And now we are aspiring to a seat at the Human Rights Council for the term 2023-2025. I hope we can count on the members' valuable support, just as they can count on us as a reliable, responsible and constructive partner in the promotion and protection of all human rights for all.

In unity there is strength; with solidarity and partnership, there is power. Let us all work together in unity, solidarity and a spirit of partnership to surmount the interlocking challenges we all are facing together at this watershed moment, for the sake of sustainable peace and development in the world.

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

**Mr. Kommasith** (Lao People's Democratic Republic): I would like to begin by extending my sincere congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Csaba Kőrösi on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session. I wish him a successful presidency of this session. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Lao People's Democratic Republic in the Assembly.

We are at a critical juncture as the international community is facing multifaceted challenges, ranging from armed conflicts to environmental crises and an economic downturn that have set back global development. Multilateralism, which is always at the heart of international cooperation, has been undermined while unilateralism has been applied widely. These challenges, already exacerbated by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, have hindered and reversed the development gains attained during past decades. The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has never before been so tarnished. It is disheartening that the most vulnerable peoples and countries are now suffering the most. Countries in special situations — namely, the least developed countries (LDCs), the landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and the small island developing States (SIDS) — which have endured the most difficult period coping with COVID-19 impacts, are additionally confronting climate, food and energy crises. It is more urgent than ever before for the international community to find solutions, not only transformative, but also more practical, effective, action-oriented, sustainable and tailored to the most pressing needs, so as to ensure that the most vulnerable are not left behind.

Seventy-seven years after our United Nations was formed, we should no longer be here in the Assembly Hall to stake any claim, lecture, blame or shame one another. Our world needs greater attention, concerted efforts and common desire. We, as stipulated in the

Charter, are the peoples of the United Nations. We shall gather here to find the most appropriate solutions and take the most urgent actions to address the problems we are all facing today. This cannot be done without firmly upholding the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and preserving multilateralism. Our United Nations was founded to prevent another catastrophic world war. Our shared wisdom and political will to find the most pragmatic and suitable solutions to the multiple crises threatening us all today must prevail over other, individual interests. In doing so, we must strengthen our solidarity, cooperation and collaboration and must not create confrontation and division. As such, it is necessary, after more than seven decades, that United Nations reform revitalize and increase its ability to effectively address global problems.

In this context, the United Nations needs to effectively fulfil its mandate in maintaining international peace and security, as well as in promoting development cooperation. It is our common desire that the United Nations be transformed in order to respond to the current global landscape and needs in our joint effort to overcome the unfolding challenges that threaten international peace and development. The international community must find peaceful and lasting resolutions to any conflict and disputes around the world, including the Middle East problem. We believe that unilateral sanction or measures cannot be effective, as they not only contravene the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, but also hamper the national development of other countries. Sanctions, regardless of their form, will end up compromising not only one's own interests, but those of others and inflicting suffering on everyone.

We must also promote peaceful solutions based on our mutual interests and build an environment conducive to development so as to safeguard lasting peace and prosperity for all. In that regard, my delegation once again joins the overwhelming global call for the lifting of the economic embargo on Cuba and putting an end to all unilateral coercive measures, which have negatively impacted innocent people.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has enjoyed long-lasting peace, security and stability, which have served as favourable conditions for the national socioeconomic development of all member States. We in ASEAN continue to promote regionalism and multilateralism that emphasize the importance of centrality, unity, inclusivity, mutual

benefit and respect, which are a solid foundation for all essential ASEAN cooperation frameworks. Under the ASEAN framework, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has actively participated and very responsibly contributed to the promotion of peace and stability. On that note, the Lao People's Democratic Republic considers the role played by ASEAN as crucial for creating an environment conducive to a return to normalcy in Myanmar, and we should continue to engage Myanmar so as to ensure the continuation of the delivery of humanitarian assistance to its people and to explore ways and means to ensure Myanmar's full and effective implementation of the five-point consensus towards tangible outcomes.

Since the inception of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, the Lao Government has presented two voluntary national reviews, in 2018 and 2021, reflecting the progress made and challenges encountered in the implementation of SDGs through its national socioeconomic development plans, Vision 2030 and the National Green Growth Strategy.

Nevertheless, throughout the past three years, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a direct impact on the socioeconomic development of every country, especially the least developed countries, including the Lao People's Democratic Republic. The progress made prior to COVID-19 in the implementation of our national development and international commitments, like the SDGs and others, has therefore been severely undermined, affecting peoples' livelihoods at all levels.

In addition, we are also facing extreme weather events in various parts of the world due to climate change. Like many other countries, the Lao People's Democratic Republic remains vulnerable to external shocks and has been severely affected by natural disasters, especially extensive flooding. Over the past years, our Government has attached great importance to combating climate change through the implementation of the revised nationally determined contribution, which clearly outlines the ambitious targets of national action plans with regard to tackling and mitigating climate change with a view to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. To that end, there is pressing need for adequate financial resources and technical support for gaining access to climate financing and other sources of funding to support developing countries, especially LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, to achieve their development goals and commitments made under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. In that regard, we call for renewed

political will, coupled with concrete actions, taken by the international community at the upcoming twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in order to preserve our planet for many generations to come.

*Mrs. Narváez Ojeda (Chile), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

Having recognized the multidimensional challenges and special needs of groups of countries in special situations, the Lao People's Democratic Republic is strongly committed to the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals and programmes of action for LDCs, LLDCs, as well as other United Nations development cooperation frameworks. The Lao People's Democratic Republic remains hopeful and firmly believes that multilateralism, with the United Nations as the lead institution, can appropriately address the multiple crises and challenges the international community is facing. We are strongly committed to supporting conflict resolution through peaceful means, guided by the United Nations Charter and other relevant international law. We are confident that development cooperation for common interests and shared benefits must continue to be at the core of international relations. To that end, more action-oriented solutions and non-politicized approaches must be adopted. It is our hope that the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly will offer opportunities to enhance our solidarity and revive sustainable development paths in order for us to ensure transformative solutions to improve the livelihoods of our peoples and the planet.

I would like to end my statement by expressing, on behalf of the Lao Government and people, my sincere appreciations to all Member States for their kind support for our membership in the Economic and Social Council for the term 2023-2025. We stand ready to serve with humility and to make meaningful contributions to the work of the Economic and Social Council, and we pledge to discharge our duties in advancing partnership towards a more resilient and sustainable world.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand.

**Mr. Pramudwinai** (Thailand): At the outset, I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to the President of the General Assembly at its

seventy-seventh session and his entire team. I pledge Thailand's full support as he undertakes to fulfil his important mission.

We are at a watershed moment as an international community and as the United Nations. We stand at a point where the decisions we make and the actions we pursue can shape the world and the course of humankind for years to come. But we can only do it together, guided by our shared interests and on the basis of mutual respect.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has only exacerbated inequality gaps and has reversed at least four years of development gains, according to the United Nations Development Programme. At a time when the world is trying to recover from the two years of the pandemic, our problems are compounded by multiple challenges.

We are seeing new conflicts, on top of global geopolitical tensions. We are experiencing a food crisis, an energy crisis and a financing crisis. These have had the most detrimental impact on those who are most vulnerable — least developed countries, small island developing States and vulnerable groups, such as women, girls, the elderly and people with disabilities. Collective action is certainly needed now.

The food crisis has affected us all. This global food insecurity is due to conflicts, climate change, disruptions to supply chains and uneven recovery from COVID-19.

As such, there is an urgent need to strengthen multilateral action among like-minded partners, United Nations agencies, the World Trade Organization and international institutions in order to facilitate a constructive dialogue and improve policy coordination to address this crisis. It is now especially vital to keep our global supply chains open for seamless cross-border flows of food, fertilizers and essential goods, while also making our food systems more resilient so that equitable access to safe and healthy food for all can be guaranteed. Thailand is prepared to work in partnership with countries and international organizations in order to realize that vision.

In that context, Thailand welcomes the Black Sea Grain Initiative, established by the United Nations, to open a safe corridor for grain transportation that would help ease a global food crisis. The Initiative further stresses the importance of international cooperation

under the Organization's framework in order to respond to new global challenges.

In addition to overcoming food insecurity, we also need to overcome health insecurity. As we learned from the pandemic, good health for all is critical. And that is why universal health coverage should be a high priority for us all. We need to ensure access to high-quality essential health-care services and to safe, effective, high-quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for everyone. We must continue to promote and protect the right to receive the highest attainable standard of health as part of our commitment to human rights. We must continue to invest in promoting a more inclusive social protection system for all, as called for by the Secretary-General in *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982).

To reinforce that, the global health architecture needs to be reformed, both structurally and functionally, in order to address the current shortcomings and systemic failures of health systems. And that is why Thailand fully supports the development of a legally binding international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response under the World Health Organization (WHO). The new instrument must place equity at the centre in order to ensure the self-reliance of developing countries when faced with pandemics, especially through enhancing their capacity to manufacture certain medical countermeasures.

With better food and health security, we will be better positioned to putting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) back on track. In doing so, a human-rights-based approach is needed in order to ensure that the rights and basic needs of all persons are guaranteed, especially those of the most vulnerable and furthest behind. That will help enhance our resilience and capacity to cope with future crises. SDGs serve as both the pathway and the end goal in ensuring the survival of our present and future generations.

As we have only eight years left to attain the SDGs, we need to employ every tool at our disposal — from science, technology and innovation to working in partnership at every level in order to drive this agenda forward — because without sustainable development, there is no future. We need to promote North-South and South-South cooperation and the integration of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable peace with other cooperation frameworks, both at the global and regional levels. That is why the Economic and Social

Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are working to enhance the complementarity between the 2030 Agenda for sustainable peace and the ASEAN Vision 2025. Thailand's hosting of the Global South-South Development Expo with ESCAP and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation in Bangkok last week also demonstrates the importance we place on development cooperation, especially among developing countries.

Furthermore, financing for development and finding innovative sources of finance are key to transforming SDGs from mere aspirations to a reality for all. Thailand agrees with the Secretary-General's proposal to promote cooperation with leading global financial institutions in order to mobilize financing so as to drive forward the SDGs while improving financial liquidity for the least developed countries.

To promote sustainable development, Thailand has adopted the Bio-Circular-Green (BCG) Economy Model as a means to achieve a more balanced development in this recovery phase. The BCG Economy Model utilizes science, technology and innovation to encourage the optimization of resources for environmentally friendly economic growth.

In pursuing sustainable development, we need to ensure balance between our people-centred approaches and protecting our planet. To that end, Thailand is ready to work with the international community in order to contain the triple planetary crises of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss. Thailand is committed to promoting international cooperation for the protection of the environment, including on the negotiations on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and the international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution.

In tackling climate change, Thailand stands firm in our pledge at last year's twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 and net-zero greenhouse-gas emissions by 2065. And with adequate support, Thailand will be able to increase its nationally determined contributions or targets to 40 per cent while achieving net-zero greenhouse-gas emissions by 2050. That is not an empty promise. Thailand will submit our nationally determined contributions and long-term low greenhouse-gas emission development strategies that reflect those goals ahead of the twenty-



seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27), to be held in Sharm El-Sheikh.

Meanwhile, the pledges of developed countries must also be fulfilled. I urge developed countries to keep their promise of providing financial, technological and capacity-building support to developing countries and to deliver on the climate-financing goal of \$100 billion annually as soon as possible. Equal attention should be paid to mitigation and adaptation. Thailand stands ready to work with Egypt and all partners at COP27 in that regard.

We need to restore faith and confidence in the multilateral system and our United Nations. An important step to achieving that is to reverse the polarization in this organ by working more closely on issues that bring us together. Addressing humanitarian concerns is one such issue.

Thailand will continue to work closely with the international community, taking into account the needs of the affected country, in order to address urgent humanitarian challenges through bilateral, regional and multilateral efforts, in accordance with the key humanitarian principles and without politicization. We have supported humanitarian work in Afghanistan through the World Food Programme (WFP) and have contributed to Ukraine through the Ukrainian Red Cross Society and UNICEF.

As for Myanmar, Thailand has worked with partners to provide humanitarian assistance to the people in need through various programmes at the bilateral level, including the donation of 1 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines and through ASEAN. Financial contributions were also made to support the work of international organizations, such as UNICEF, WHO, WFP and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

As an immediate neighbour, with the longest land border, of 2,470 kilometres, it is in Thailand's vital interests to see a quick return to peace and stability in Myanmar. We call on all parties in Myanmar to urgently take steps to de-escalate, end the violence and engage in meaningful talks to resolve differences peacefully. Thailand fully supports the constructive role of ASEAN and believes that ASEAN is best placed to help Myanmar through the time-tested ASEAN practice of consultation, cooperation and consensus. Thailand will continue to play an active and constructive role to

support that ASEAN process, as well as the role of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar.

As a strong believer in multilateralism, Thailand stands ready to continue to do its part to promote multilateral and international cooperation at all levels. Sustainable development and human rights are intertwined and mutually reinforcing. They are vital in ensuring an environment of peace and prosperity. Thailand hereby presents its candidacy for membership of the Human Rights Council for the term from 2025 to 2027. If elected, we can help to strengthen the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms so as to reach out to the vulnerable and those furthest behind and bring about meaningful and real positive changes on the ground.

Thailand also firmly believes that close regional cooperation can complement the multilateral system and reinforce the global agenda. This year, Thailand plays host to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, which is meeting under the theme "Open. Connect. Balance". Such a theme signifies the willingness to embrace every opportunity, connect in all dimensions and balance in all aspects. That highlights Thailand's commitment to promoting multilateral cooperation, which will hopefully lead to more balanced and sustainable development after the COVID-19 pandemic. We look forward to welcoming world leaders to Bangkok in November, as Thailand is fully open and ready to welcome visitors once again.

Despite the challenges and difficulties at this critical juncture in the history of humankind, Thailand continues to have faith in the multilateral system, with the United Nations at its core. We remain confident that the goodwill and shared common interests of humankind will help us to make the right decisions at this watershed moment so that we can move together towards a more stable, sustainable and safer future, with no person or country left behind.

Let me now add this very brief account to end my statement. A few days ago, a sentiment was expressed by the European Union foreign policy chief when he said that we should not rule out the possibility of the use of nuclear weapons in the Ukraine crisis. An oriental saying that could be related to that context pertains to the enjoyment of riding a beast, whether it be a tiger or a dragon. Let us say a tiger in that context. Riding on the tiger's back could be fun and challenging, but no one could enjoy riding on its back with no end in sight.

The question is how to safely dismount without killing the tiger.

Suddenly, the question of “how to” is daunting. We have a suggestion that takes all elements into account and is definitely not free of realpolitik. A possible breakthrough could be apparent during the month of November, with the third week of the penultimate month of the year as our first and golden opportunity for all super-stakeholders in the Ukraine crisis to assemble at three venues in South-East Asia as legitimate participants.

The three venues are one in Phnom Penh for the ASEAN Summit, another in Bali for the Group of 20 and the third in Bangkok for the APEC Economic Leaders Meeting. Separately or in a series, they could serve as a most appropriate platform for talks to provide a possible off-ramp or exit to the high-tension global crisis in Ukraine.

The world body, the United Nations, with all its relevant roles and mechanisms to help safeguard peace and stability, could certainly join in at any juncture to add value to that endeavour. Let us therefore hope that that golden opportunity is not passed up by all the super-Powers and super-stakeholders with regard to the high-tension Ukraine crisis.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Demeke Mekonnen Hassen, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

**Mr. Hassen** (Ethiopia) (*spoke in Amharic; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): I congratulate the President, as well as his country, Hungary, on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session. I would also like to thank His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid for his service and leadership during the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly. I have the greatest honour to address the Assembly on behalf of my country, Ethiopia. (*spoke in English*)

We are at a historic crossroads in the evolution of our multilateral system. Humankind is facing multiple and complex challenges, ranging from climate change, extreme poverty, conflicts, terrorism and geopolitical tensions. The consequences of those global challenges are of epic proportions and leave adverse sociopolitical impacts across the world. Nevertheless, international

cooperation is not nearly at a level that is commensurate with the gravity of the challenges.

Although climate change and the resulting extreme weather conditions occur throughout the globe, the crisis largely affects the minimally resilient and those least responsible for causing the problem. A case in point is our region, the Horn of Africa, which is badly hit by record-level drought in some parts, while sustaining extreme flooding in other parts.

Climate disaster and its insufferable impacts are preventable. I therefore make an urgent call to all States gathered here to translate rhetoric into action. We must realize our climate financing commitments in order to build resilience and mitigate the impacts. We should act to meet our emission-reduction targets. That requires focused coordination, non-politicization, the avoidance of securitization and good-faith cooperation among all stakeholders.

I must emphasize that Africa is not responsible for the historic emissions that caused the climate crisis; yet we are the ones making the most tangible contribution to mitigate the impacts of climate change. In Ethiopia, our afforestation programme, the Ethiopian Green Legacy Initiative, saw the planting of billions of seedlings and created a strong culture of afforestation. We are also on a path to sustainable energy transformation and green growth. These proactive programmes deserve recognition and tangible support.

We have a shared planet and a common destiny. Overcoming our collective challenges requires concerted effort and trusted global leadership. We are gathered in this Hall because our forefathers, learning from the tragic episodes of human history, decided to establish the United Nations as the guardian of peace. However, we have yet to achieve true universality in the main organs of the United Nations. Africa has no permanent seat at the Security Council, and our quest for African solutions to African problems has yet to be given the respect and support it deserves. We believe that these considerations underpin the credibility of the Council on the continent.

African problems are sustainably addressed when approached in the true context of the region and when full account is taken of the strategic interests and aspirations of the countries concerned. It is only when we do this and uphold regional solutions that we will be able to start reducing the proliferation and seemingly

unending presence of African issues on the Security Council's agenda.

Over the past four years, Ethiopia has made significant progress in its socioeconomic development and democratization. At the same time, these years have brought forth challenges that have tested our survival as a nation. In November 2020, a most heinous and treasonous attack was made against the Ethiopian National Defence Forces, which had endeavoured not only to protect the peace and stability of Ethiopia but also to help keep peace in other countries, on behalf of the United Nations and the African Union (AU).

The criminal group that remains hell-bent on destroying the societal foundation of our country colluded with external actors opposed to our development aspirations. The insecurity this group created has been very tragic and costly. Although the Government of Ethiopia earnestly tried to avoid this conflict, our efforts to prevent it from being ignited were regrettably unsuccessful.

Thanks to the resolve and determination of Ethiopians, the designs of the adversaries against Ethiopia's progress have been frustrated. We have also paved a path for peace and recovery, relying on the ability of the peace-loving people of Ethiopia to reconcile, make peace among ourselves and start the process of healing. We therefore call for support for our agenda for peace, reconciliation and reconstruction. We also urge respect and support for the AU-led peace process. Any other approach, including the politicization of human rights and unilateral coercive measures, will not yield a positive outcome.

The past year has also been a milestone for my country and, we believe, for the entire Nile River basin. Our project, the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, commenced lighting our homes and fulfilling our intergenerational aspirations. All the glory and gratitude go to the people of Ethiopia, who financed this project. The dividend goes far and wide to the entire region. Taking this opportunity to do so, I reiterate Ethiopia's commitment to equity and cooperation in the use of transboundary rivers to bring about shared prosperity with all riparian countries. We will continue the trilateral negotiation under the auspices of the African Union in good faith so as to reach a mutually acceptable outcome.

Over the past three years, the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has

encountered serious setbacks. The global coronavirus disease pandemic has tested our health systems. Global trade in goods and services was halted causing great losses in our economies. The response by international financial institutions has been beneath the level required and did not account for the special vulnerability of least developed countries.

As the Secretary-General put it, it is necessary to turbocharge the implementation of the SDGs. We call for enhanced focus on and support for national efforts aimed at improving agricultural and manufacturing productivity, increasing investment, facilitating technology transfer, fostering fair trade, redoubling debt cancellation and restructuring, and enhancing international finance for national priority projects. Furthermore, we should enhance efforts to combat illicit financial flows, unlawful extraction of and trade in minerals, and corruption.

Africa's young population and its vast natural resources should be a source of growth and better jobs. Africa can be the showcase for green and sustainable development. It can feed and power itself and the world. However, that requires reform of the global financial architecture to ensure more equitable, speedy and collaborative cooperation, based on the needs and potential of the least developed countries. More importantly, we must actively support Governments that work to create an environment conducive to the prosperity of their countries. In addition, Africa's effort to chart its destiny must not be complicated by competition among Great Powers.

Allow me to conclude by re-emphasizing the need to scale up international cooperation. The gravity of the challenges we face today demands that we come together in search of collective solutions. We need more, not less, multilateralism. We shall continue to uphold our cardinal principles of independence, impartiality, integrity, non-interference, sovereign equality and non-selectivity to maintain a working multilateral system rooted in the Charter of the United Nations.

We need to reform our global institutions to reflect current realities. We need to make them more representative and responsive to the demands of our times. Only through genuine solidarity and concerted action can we ensure collective security and prosperity.

I am grateful for this opportunity to address the General Assembly and wish the President every success in this session.

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

**Mr. Lavrov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are meeting at a difficult and dramatic moment. Crises are growing, and the international security situation is deteriorating rapidly. Instead of honest dialogue and compromise, what we have is disinformation, coarse statements and provocations. The West's policy is undermining trust in international institutions as bodies designed to reconcile different interests, and in international law as a guarantee of fairness and of the protection of the weak against arbitrary acts. We are witnessing negative trends in a concentrated fashion at the United Nations, which arose from the rubble of German fascism and Japanese militarism and was established to promote friendly relations and prevent conflicts among its members.

Issues relating to the future world order are being decided today, as any unbiased observer can clearly see. The question is whether that world order will have a single hegemon that forces everyone else to live by its infamous rules, benefiting it alone, or whether we will have a democratic and fair world, free from blackmail and intimidation of anyone deemed undesirable, a world without neo-Nazism and neocolonialism. Russia is resolute in choosing the latter option, and together with our allies, partners and like-minded countries, we call for working to make it a reality. The unipolar model of global development serving the interests of the one per cent, who for centuries fuelled its excessive consumption at the expense of the resources of Asia, Africa and Latin America, is receding into the past. Today, with the emergence of sovereign States that are ready to defend their national interests, an equal, socially oriented and sustainable multipolar architecture is taking shape. However, Washington, and the Western ruling elites that have fully submitted to its rule, view those objective geopolitical processes as a threat to their dominance.

The United States and its allies want to stop the march of history. Having at some point declared victory in the Cold War, Washington elevated itself almost to the level of God's messenger on Earth, free of constraints and with a sacred right to act with impunity wherever and however it wants. Any State could be declared its next target, especially if it has somehow displeased the self-proclaimed masters of the universe. We all remember the wars of aggression that were unleashed

far from American shores and on far-fetched pretexts in Yugoslavia, Iraq and Libya, claiming the lives of hundreds of thousands of peaceful civilians. Were the West's legitimate interests really at stake in even one of those countries? Were there bans there on English or other languages of NATO's member States, or on the Western media or culture? Were Anglo-Saxons declared subhuman and heavy weapons used against them? What became of the United States' adventurism in the Middle East? Has it improved the human rights situation or the rule of law? Has it stabilized the socioeconomic situation or improved people's welfare? Name one country where life has changed for the better as a result of Washington's interference by force.

In its attempts to revive a unipolar model under the banner of a rules-based order, the West has established dividing lines everywhere based on the notion of confrontation between blocs and the spirit of "either you are with us or against us". There is no third option or possibility for compromise. In a continuation of its irrational policy of expanding NATO eastward and bringing NATO's military infrastructure close to the borders of Russia, the United States now wants to subjugate Asia. At the NATO summit in June in Madrid, the self-proclaimed defensive alliance declared the security of the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific regions indivisible. Closed frameworks are being created under the banner of Indo-Pacific strategies that undermine the entire open and inclusive regional architecture that the Association of Southeast Asian Nations has built over decades. On top of that, it is playing with fire regarding Taiwan, going so far as to promise it military support.

The notorious Monroe Doctrine is clearly becoming global in scope. Washington is trying to make the entire world its own backyard. Its tool for coercing those who disagree is illegal unilateral sanctions, which for many years now have been used in violation of the Charter of the United Nations as an instrument of political blackmail. The cynicism of that practice is obvious, since the restrictions affect civilians, preventing their access to basic goods, including medicines, vaccines and food. One such egregious example is the United States' blockade of Cuba, which has gone on for more than 60 years, and whose lifting an overwhelming majority of the General Assembly has been demanding urgently for decades. The Secretary-General, whose duties include facilitating the implementation of the General Assembly resolutions, should of course give that issue special attention.



The Secretary-General also has a special role to play in mobilizing the efforts to overcome the food and energy crises that have resulted from the uncontrolled printing of money in the United States and the European Union (EU) during the pandemic, as well as the EU's irresponsible and unprofessional actions in the hydrocarbon fuel markets. Defying elementary common sense, Washington and Brussels have compounded the situation by declaring an economic war against Russia, and the result has been higher prices globally for food, fertilizer, oil and gas. We welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to help broker the Istanbul agreements of 22 July, but those agreements have to be implemented. So far, most of the ships carrying Ukrainian grain have not been directed to the poorest countries, and the financial and logistical obstacles to Russia's exports of grain and fertilizer imposed by the United States and the EU have not been completely removed. We have pointing out for weeks that 300,000 tonnes of fertilizer are being held up in European ports and have proposed shipping them free of charge to the African countries that need them, but the European Union has not responded.

Official Russophobia in the West has taken on unprecedented and grotesque dimensions, with some unhesitatingly declaring their intention not just to defeat Russia militarily but to destroy and dismember it — in other words, to wipe off the world map a geopolitical entity that has become too independent. How have Russia's actions over the past decades actually encroached on its opponents' interests? Could it be that they cannot forgive the fact that Russia's position made the military and strategic détente of the 1980s and '90s possible? Or is it that we voluntarily dissolved the Warsaw Treaty Organization, thereby depriving NATO of its *raison d'être*? Or that contrary to positions in London and Paris, we supported German reunification unconditionally? Or withdrew our armed forces from Europe, Asia and Latin America, and recognized the independence of the former Soviet republics? Or believed Western leaders' promises that they would not expand NATO eastward by an inch, and when the process started, we agreed to basically legitimize it by signing a Founding Act between Russia and NATO? Did we perhaps encroach on the West's interests when we warned that bringing its military infrastructure closer to our borders was unacceptable?

Western arrogance and American exceptionalism became especially destructive after the end of the

Cold War. As long ago as 1991, Paul Wolfowitz, then the United States Deputy Secretary of Defense, in a conversation with NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe Wesley Clark, acknowledged openly that

“[w]ith the end of the Cold War, we can now use our military with impunity.... And we've got five, maybe ten, years to clean up these old Soviet surrogate regimes like Iraq and Syria before the next superpower emerges to challenge us.”

I am sure that one day we will learn from someone's memoirs how the United States built its policy on Ukraine, but Washington's plans are already obvious even now.

Could it be that they simply cannot forgive us that at the request of the United States and the European Union we supported the agreement reached between the-then President of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich, and the opposition on resolving the crisis of February 2014, which was guaranteed by Germany, France and Poland — and was then trampled on the next morning by the ringleaders of the bloody coup, humiliating the European mediators? The West simply threw up its hands and looked on in silence as the putschists began bombing eastern Ukraine, where people refused to accept the results of the coup, just as they did when its organizers elevated the Nazi accomplices who took part in the brutal ethnic cleansing of Russians, Poles and Jews during the Second World War to the rank of national heroes. Were we supposed to stand idly by in the face of Kyiv's policies imposing a total ban on the Russian language and on Russian education, media and culture, demanding that Russians be expelled from Crimea and declaring war on the Donbas — whose residents the Kyiv authorities, then and now, in the words of their most senior officials, have pronounced to be not people but mere creatures? Perhaps Russia was interfering with Western interests when it played a key role in stopping the hostilities unleashed by Kyiv's neo-Nazis in eastern Ukraine and then insisted on the implementation of the Minsk package of measures — which was adopted unanimously by the Security Council in February 2015 but then killed by Kyiv with the direct involvement of the United States and the EU?

For many years we have repeatedly offered to agree on the rules for coexistence in Europe based on the principles of equal and indivisible security, as affirmed at the highest level in documents of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. According to

those principles, no country can seek to strengthen its security at the expense of the security of others. The last time we proposed making those essential agreements legally binding was in December 2021 and we were met with an arrogant rejection.

The Western countries' unwillingness to engage in talks and the Kyiv regime's continuing war on its own people left us with no choice but to recognize the independence of the Donetsk and Luhansk people's republics and launch a special military operation to protect the Russian and other residents of Donbas and eliminate the threats to our security that NATO has been consistently creating in Ukraine on what amounts to our borders. The operation is being carried out in accordance with the treaties of friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance reached between Russia and those republics on the basis of Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. I am certain that any self-respecting sovereign State conscious of its responsibility to its own people would have done the same in our place.

The West is having hysterics over the referendums in the Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhya oblasts of Ukraine, but the people there are merely responding to the Kyiv regime's leader, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who in an interview in August 2021 advised all who considered themselves Russian to leave for Russia for their children and grandchildren's sake. That is what the residents of those regions are doing now, and they are taking the lands where their forefathers lived for centuries with them. It is very clear to any unbiased observer that for the Anglo-Saxons, who have completely subjugated Europe, Ukraine is merely expendable material in their fight against Russia. NATO has declared that our country poses an immediate threat to the United States' quest for total dominance and that China is a long-term strategic challenge. At the same time, the collective West, led by Washington, is sending an intimidating message to every other country, without exception, to the effect that anyone who dares to disobey may be next.

One of the consequences of the crusade that the West has declared against regimes it does not favour is that multilateral institutions are declining at an ever-increasing pace as the United States and its allies turn them into tools for realizing their own selfish interests. That approach is being embedded in the United Nations, the Human Rights Council, UNESCO and other multilateral associations. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has been

virtually privatized. There are fierce attempts being made to undermine efforts to set up a mechanism within the Biological Weapons Convention to ensure the transparency of the hundreds of military biological programmes that the Pentagon has around the world, including along Russia's borders and throughout Eurasia. Irrefutable evidence discovered on Ukrainian territory has shown that they are far from harmless.

We are seeing a huge policy aimed at privatizing the United Nations Secretariat and introducing a neo-liberal discourse into its work that ignores the cultural and civilizational diversity of today's world. In that connection, as the Charter requires, we call for attention to be paid to ensuring the equitable geographic representation of Member States within the structures of the Secretariat so that no one single group of countries can dominate it. An intolerable situation has developed around Washington's failure to meet its obligations, as the host country, under the Agreement between the United Nations and the United States of America regarding the Headquarters of the United Nations, to provide normal conditions for the participation of all Member States in the work of the United Nations. The Secretary-General has corresponding obligations under the Agreement, and any failure to act on them is unacceptable.

Various countries' efforts to undermine the prerogatives of the Security Council are of course a matter of concern. There is no question that the Council, and the United Nations in general, should adapt to current realities. We see opportunities for making the work of the Security Council more democratic but only — and I want to stress this — by expanding the representation of the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. India and Brazil are particularly notable as key international players and worthy candidates for permanent membership in the Council, as long as Africa's presence is enhanced at the same time.

Today it is more important than ever that Member States unambiguously reaffirm their clearly stated commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter as a first and essential step towards restoring their collective responsibility for the fate of humankind. That was the precise purpose of the establishment, in July 2021, of the Group of Friends in Defence of the Charter of the United Nations, which was co-founded by Russia and already includes a couple of dozen countries. The group aims to ensure strict compliance with the universal norms of international law as a counterweight

to pernicious unilateral approaches. We urge everyone who shares that position to join. In that context, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, as well as the BRICS countries Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and ASEAN have considerable positive potential.

Despite their aggressive imposition of their understanding of democracy as a model for the social organization of all countries, our Western colleagues are categorically unwilling to be ruled by the norms of democracy in international affairs. The situation with Ukraine is a very recent example of that. Russia has expounded the basis for its position in detail for the past several years, and the West has expressed its disagreement with it. It should then be up to the other members of the international community to decide what position to take and whether to support one side or the other or remain neutral. That is usually what is done in democracies when opposing politicians make their case to try to win popular support. But the United States and its allies give no one the freedom to choose. They threaten and arm-twist anyone who dares to think independently. They use threats to force others to join sanctions against Russia. That has not worked very well for them, but it is obvious that these kinds of actions by the United States and its satellites are a far cry from democracy. They amount to a dictatorship, pure and simple, or at least an attempt to impose it.

We get a strong impression that Washington and its servant Europe are trying to preserve their vanishing hegemony through exclusively forbidden means. Illegal sanctions are routinely used instead of diplomatic methods against strong competitors, whether in economics, sports, the information space, cultural exchanges or general interactions among people. Indeed, the problems that representatives have encountered in obtaining visas for international events in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Paris also constitute attempts to eliminate competition and insulate multilateral discussions from alternative points of view.

I believe firmly in the importance of defending the United Nations and ridding it of anything confrontational or alien so that we can restore its reputation as a platform for honest discussions aimed at balancing the interests of all Member States. That is the approach that guides us in our efforts to promote our national initiatives within the United Nations.

It will be vital to achieve a comprehensive ban on the placement of weapons in outer space, which is the aim of the Russian-Chinese draft international treaty now under review in the Conference on Disarmament.

Defending cyberspace deserves special attention, including the negotiation of an agreement within the Open-ended Working Group on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies 2021-2025, as well as drafting a universal convention within the Special Committee on countering the use of information and communications technologies for criminal purposes. We will continue supporting the Office of Counter-Terrorism and the other counter-terrorist entities within the United Nations. We will also continue to help promote dynamic ties between the United Nations and the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Eurasian Economic Union in order to coordinate our efforts across greater Eurasia.

Russia calls for stepping up efforts to settle regional conflicts. We believe we should prioritize overcoming the impasse in establishing an independent Palestinian State, restoring statehood in Iraq and Libya, which has been destroyed by NATO's aggression, neutralizing the threats to Syria's sovereignty, establishing a sustainable process of national reconciliation in Yemen and tackling NATO's devastating legacy in Afghanistan. We are working to revive the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action for Iran's nuclear programme in its original form, and to bring about a just and comprehensive resolution of the problems on the Korean peninsula. The multiple conflicts in Africa demand that we resist the temptation to play a geopolitical zero-sum game there and instead consolidate external players in support of the African Union's initiatives. We are concerned about the situations in Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the United States and the EU are stubbornly seeking to undo the international legal framework set forth in Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) and the Dayton Peace Agreement.

In times of change, people tend to rely on and find solace in the wisdom of predecessors who endured similarly challenging hardships. The former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, recalling the horrors of the Second World War, said that "[t]he United Nations was not created in order to bring us to heaven, but in order to save us from hell." Those words have never been more relevant. They call on all of us to assume our individual and collective responsibility to create the conditions

needed to ensure that succeeding generations develop in safety and harmony. For that to happen, everyone will have to demonstrate political will. We are ready to work in good faith and strongly believe that the only way to ensure the stability of the world order is through a return to the roots of United Nations diplomacy on the basis of the key principle of true democracy, which is respect for the sovereign equality of States.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sirodjiddin Muhridin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan.

**Mr. Muhridin** (Tajikistan): Let me join previous speakers in extending our congratulations to Ambassador Csaba Körösi on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session. I would also like to take this opportunity to pay a fitting tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Abdulla Shahid, for his effective guidance and excellent leadership during some of the most challenging and uneasy times for all of humankind.

Our world is going through turbulent times. We are witnessing a transformation of the existing world order. Issues such as terrorism, extremism, drug and arms trafficking, cybercrime and other forms of cross-border organized crime are threatening to increase exponentially. In order to discuss them further, the Government of Tajikistan, together with the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and its partners, will be holding a high-level international conference in Dushanbe on 18 and 19 October on the theme of international and regional border security and management cooperation in countering terrorism and preventing the movement of terrorists. We invite everyone to attend that important conference.

Climate change, natural disasters, food insecurity and the ongoing impact of the pandemic, among other things, are adding further fuel to the fire. The international community needs tools that can help us deal with a rapidly deteriorating environment. Mechanisms that were established decades ago are now finding it difficult to cope with the emerging challenges. The world needs more robust multilateralism to tackle the toughest challenges, with the United Nations at the helm. Tajikistan therefore supports the Secretary-General's efforts aimed at comprehensive reform of our Organization in order to strengthen its ability to respond rapidly and adequately to development needs and address contemporary threats efficiently.

We have a historic opportunity to steer change in a direction that benefits all humankind, and we should not waste it. I would like to address three additional topics my delegation feels are very important to our implementation of our road map — the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, water and climate change, and peace and security.

Tajikistan strongly affirms its commitments to the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As we are lagging behind on many of the SDGs, the Government of Tajikistan has taken bold steps to integrate them into our national policies and development plans. However, despite the substantial progress made towards their achievement, there are significant risks, such as climate-related hazards and disasters, that could slow or reverse Tajikistan's path towards the realization of the 2030 Agenda and threaten agricultural productivity and food security.

This year the world has witnessed unprecedented water-related natural disasters. While we have all been struggling with their consequences, we are becoming increasingly aware that water is vital and a resource we must value, protect and manage effectively. We need actions that can make a real difference. Between 6 and 9 June, we held the second Dushanbe Water Decade Conference in Tajikistan, which has become a key preparatory meeting for the midterm review of the Water Action Decade in 2023. As the Assembly is aware, from 22 to 24 March the United Nations will convene only its second Water Conference in 46 years. The 2023 United Nations Water Conference will be a good opportunity for all of us to review and evaluate the progress that has been made, as well as the gaps and obstacles we have encountered, in realizing the goals of the Water Decade. Tajikistan and the Netherlands, leading the preparations for that global event, are working diligently and are determined to make the Conference a watershed moment for the whole world. That is why we have launched the Water Action Agenda as one of the outcomes of the 2023 United Nations Water Conference and expect and encourage everyone to come to the Conference with new commitments to enrich it. This is important and necessary not only for us today, but also for our children and our future generations.

The impact of climate change on water resources is another crucial topic that requires our concerted efforts. Alongside the increase in mud flows, floods, water scarcity and droughts, and changes in the hydrological



cycle, today the accelerated melting of glaciers, the primary source of fresh water on the planet, is of great concern.

To that end, Tajikistan is actively promoting an integrated approach to addressing water and climate issues, including within the Water and Climate Coalition. During the Coalition's first meeting, Mr. Emomali Rahmon, President of the Republic of Tajikistan, proposed declaring 2025 an international year of glacier preservation. We are currently working on a draft resolution to advance that initiative through the Second Committee of the General Assembly. We seek Member States' constructive engagement and support for that important draft resolution.

The response to the ever-increasing threat of terrorism and extremism should be comprehensive, with the United Nations as a key coordinator.

For its part, Tajikistan has undertaken several measures in that direction. We have, among other things, adopted our National Strategy and Action Plan of the Republic of Tajikistan on Countering Terrorism and Extremism for 2021–2025 and expressed our readiness to tackle this issue.

Tajikistan strongly believes that small States should also have a greater chance to contribute to finding solutions for maintaining peace and security. Hence, following years of contributions to multilateralism through active participation in United Nations activities and processes and having unique experience in peacemaking and insightful knowledge about Afghanistan, the time has come for Tajikistan to seek, for the first time, a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for 2028–2029. We are looking forward to working closely with all Member States to gain trust and support for that vital campaign.

Tajikistan, a peace-loving country that went through a devastating, imposed civil war, is very aware of the cost and long-lasting consequences of war. Therefore, we cannot remain indifferent to the fate of our immediate neighbours — the noble people of Afghanistan, who have suffered enough for the past 40 years. They deserve peace and tranquility.

Exactly one year ago, in this same Hall, the President of Tajikistan, Mr. Emomali Rahmon, in his virtual message before the General Assembly, dedicated more than half of his statement to the situation in

Afghanistan (see A/76/PV.11, annex III). His concerns and warnings, unfortunately, fell on deaf ears.

One year after the fall of Afghanistan, no inclusive Government has been formed, despite repeated calls from Afghans, regional countries and the international community for greater ethnic, political and geographical diversity in the de facto administrative structures. The country is on the verge of a humanitarian and economic catastrophe.

To ease the suffering of the Afghan people during these difficult times, Tajikistan has provided its infrastructure, territory and means of communication to all stakeholders and donor countries to deliver humanitarian assistance directly to the people of Afghanistan. We have also never stopped providing the people of Afghanistan with much-needed electricity since the Taliban came to power. The environment of intimidation and the deterioration in respect for human rights, including the rights of women and girls, is overwhelming.

Diverging opinions and existing internal contradictions within the Taliban and the emergence of additional armed opposition groups, including the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan and other terrorist groups, make the security situation in the country even more fragile. Furthermore, the Taliban's inability to control its militants and other terrorist groups further complicates the already difficult situation. The recent discovery and killing of one of Al-Qaida's top strategic minds in Kabul is a vivid testimony to those ties.

Afghanistan is rapidly becoming a safe haven for terrorist groups and a springboard for spreading the Taliban's radical extremism. In addition, we are witnessing systematic work on transferring militant groups consisting of former nationals of Central Asia to the north of Afghanistan aimed at consolidating and creating a new hotbed of tensions near our border.

Unfortunately, the implications for Tajikistan, which shares 1,400 kilometres of border with that country, are enormous. In the current alarming situation, it is paramount for Tajikistan to strengthen its border with Afghanistan and create the necessary border infrastructure along its entire length.

At the same time, we believe that the participation of Afghanistan in the process of multifaceted regional

cooperation is key to the success of the efforts undertaken by the international community.

On 20 September, the leader of the Kyrgyz Republic delivered his speech from this high rostrum and talked about the Kyrgyz version of the conflict on the Tajik-Kyrgyz border (see A/77/PV.4). It is regrettable that the issue of the settlement of the State border line between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, which we inherited from history, was groundlessly raised at the General Assembly.

I believe it is important to inform the Assembly that, on 19 September, the authorized representatives of the two sides signed a protocol on the settlement of the situation at the border. All hostilities have ceased. The troops and military equipment of both sides must be withdrawn to their places of permanent deployment. A joint inspection was organized in the border area. A joint task force has been set up to monitor the implementation of the agreement reached. Most importantly, both parties reaffirmed their commitment to resolving all bilateral issues exclusively by political and diplomatic means. Tajikistan has followed and will always follow that principle when any issues arise, including the settlement of the situation on the border.

It is with deep regret that Kyrgyzstan is deviating from the agreement reached, creating a false appearance of withdrawing troops and heavy military equipment from the line of contact by hiding them in populated areas near the border. Therefore, the responsibility for any next round of tensions on the Tajik-Kyrgyz border will lie exclusively with Kyrgyzstan.

The leader of our neighbouring country, in his speech, mentioned the death of its citizens and financial damage, creating the false impression that the tragedy on the border affected that country exclusively. The evidence says otherwise. As a result of the military aggression of Kyrgyzstan, more than 40 civilians of Tajikistan were killed, and approximately 200 were injured. The casualties included pregnant women, children, the elderly, doctors and devout Muslims who were attending the mourning ceremony in the mosque. In addition to border facilities, schools, hospitals, religious buildings, residential buildings, infrastructure and utilities were destroyed. Indeed, who is the aggressor there?

Tajikistan is currently channelling significant resources to rebuilding destroyed houses and vital infrastructure. The tragedy that happened in the border

area was not accidental. Since the previous autumn, our neighbours have been preparing for aggression, which manifested as the creation of military infrastructure near our borders.

In recent years, our neighbours have often spoken, including from this high rostrum, about the importance of an international transport artery and the creation of favourable conditions for transportation, while advocating for the removal of barriers to economic cooperation, the simplification of border-crossing procedures and transit between countries and regions. At the same time, Kyrgyzstan often creates problems for the transit of goods to and from Tajikistan, delaying vehicles carrying thousands of tons of our cargo.

It is important to note that we have managed to successfully resolve the border issues with China and Uzbekistan through a lengthy process involving all parties. We have accumulated substantial experience, which is important to use in its entirety when resolving border issues on the basis of mutual respect, trust and openness.

Over the 20-year history of negotiations with Kyrgyzstan, we have signed dozens of protocols. However, as time passes and the political groups in power change, the country continuously revisits those documents and implements only the provisions that favour it exclusively, while ignoring the other provisions.

As of today, both countries have managed to agree on and develop a draft description of about 602 kilometres of our joint border, which is approximately 61 per cent of its total length.

Tajikistan, relying on the international practice of border delimitation, has repeatedly offered to its neighbours to record the results of those many years of work on paper by signing an agreement on separate sections of the border. But our neighbours strictly declined that proposal.

The leadership of Kyrgyzstan mentioned at this high rostrum the Agreement establishing the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Alma-Ata Declaration, presenting them as a legal framework for determining the State border. However, I must emphasize that the issue of determining the border line is not the subject of the regulation of those documents. To our deep regret, relying on its unilateral approach, since the 1950s, Kyrgyzstan has arbitrarily seized more than 2,110 square kilometres that rightfully belong

to Tajikistan. Our neighbours have not mentioned anything about that, either.

I would like to inform the General Assembly that Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have reached an agreement on the description of the State border line according to the documents of the national territorial delimitation of 1924–1927. Those documents have gone through all the constitutional procedures and, accordingly, are the only legal framework for continuing the negotiation process. Despite that, in order to show goodwill and maximum flexibility, we met our neighbour halfway and agreed to also use the documents of the 1989 parity commission proposed by Kyrgyzstan.

Border issues are not resolved by populist statements and the creation of crisis situations. We need daily, thoughtful, joint work based on the political will of the parties. We stand ready to continue negotiations. We firmly believe that the Tajik and Kyrgyz peoples have the right to live together and build together an atmosphere of peace, friendship and harmony.

Tajikistan, having survived the horrors of internal conflict, understands the value of peace and will make every effort to ensure that security and stability reign in our region.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on Mr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Minister for External Affairs of the Republic of India.

**Mr. Jaishankar** (India): I bring to you the greetings of more than 1.3 billion people from the world's largest democracy. They join me in congratulating President Csaba Kőrösi on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session. They follow closely developments at the United Nations, reflecting the increasingly globalized nature of our existence.

We meet at a challenging time for the world order. This session's theme, "A watershed moment: transformative solutions to interlocking challenges", seeks to capture its seriousness.

The year 2022 is an important milestone in India's journey towards growth, development and prosperity. India is celebrating 75 years of its independence, what we call "Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav". The story of that period has been one of the toil, determination, innovation and enterprise of millions of ordinary Indians. They are rejuvenating a society pillaged by centuries of foreign attacks and colonialism, and they are doing so in a democratic framework, whose steady

progress is reflected in more authentic voices and grounded leadership.

That new India, under the visionary and dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is a confident and resurgent society. Its agenda for our centenary will be achieved through the five pledges to which we committed ourselves on our independence day.

First, we are resolved to make India a developed country in the next 25 years. For the world, that creates more capacities for global good.

Secondly, we will liberate ourselves from a colonial mindset. Externally, that means reformed multilateralism and more contemporary global governance.

Thirdly, our rich civilizational heritage will be a source of pride and strength. That includes care and concern for the environment, concepts which are so ingrained in our traditional ethos.

Fourthly, we will promote greater unity and solidarity. That expresses a coming-together on global issues, such as terrorism, pandemics and the environment.

And fifthly, we will work to instil a consciousness of duties and responsibilities in both our citizens and the nation.

These five pledges affirm our age-old outlook that sees the world as one family. We believe that national good and global good can be entirely in harmony.

It is this conviction that led us to supply vaccines to over a hundred nations. Similarly, our evacuation operations in humanitarian-assistance and disaster-relief situations have always had room for other nationals in distress. Even as we meet our own development targets, India offers partnerships to our brothers and sisters in Asia, Africa and Latin America, and we do so based on their needs and priorities. Today, that focus is on green growth, better connectivity, digital delivery and accessible health. Our solidarity is not just in words; it is evident in 700 projects across the world.

Even while India contributes to global betterment, we recognize the sharp deterioration in the international landscape. The world is already struggling with challenges of post-pandemic economic recovery. The debt situation of the developing world is precarious. To this are now added the rising costs and shrinking availability of fuel, food and fertilizers. These, along

with trade disruptions and diversions, are among the many consequences of the Ukraine conflict.

The Indo-Pacific region also has fresh concerns about its stability and security, and climate events have added an overlay to these mounting anxieties. As we saw in the case of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the South will be most affected, even if the immediate causes are well beyond its geographical location. It is imperative that global conversations recognize this deep unfairness. The inequity of vaccine distribution should not be replicated in other domains.

As the Ukraine conflict continues to rage, we are often asked whose side we are on. And our answer, each time, is straight-forward and honest. India is on the side of peace and will remain firmly there. We are on the side that respects the United Nations Charter and its founding principles. We are on the side that calls for dialogue and diplomacy as the only way out of conflict. We are on the side of those struggling to make ends meet, even as they stare at escalating costs of food, fuel and fertilizers. It is therefore in our collective interest to work constructively, both within the United Nations and outside it, to find an early resolution to this conflict.

While global attention has been on Ukraine, India has also had to contend with other challenges, especially in its own neighbourhood. Some of them may be aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing conflicts, but they also speak to a deeper malaise. The accumulation of debt in fragile economies is of particular concern. We believe that in such times, the international community must rise above narrow national agendas.

For its part, India is taking exceptional measures in exceptional times. We do so when we send 50,000 metric tons of wheat and multiple tranches of medicines and vaccines to Afghanistan; when we extend credits of \$3.8 billion to Sri Lanka for fuel, essential commodities and trade settlement; when we supply 10,000 metric tons of food aid and vaccine shipments to Myanmar; when we fill the gap in humanitarian needs left unaddressed by political complexity. Whether it is disaster response or humanitarian assistance, India has stood strong, contributing particularly to those nearest to us.

The world as we have known it is poised for transformational changes. It has been affected in recent times by a succession of shocks, each of them significant. The COVID-19 pandemic called into question the overcentralized nature of globalization

and has led all of us to seek greater resilience in and reliability of supply chains. The repercussions of the ongoing Ukraine conflict have further heightened economic stresses, especially on food and energy. Climate events have added to the disruption that the world is already facing.

As for the promise of technology, it has certainly multiplied our capabilities but also added to vulnerabilities. Trust and transparency are legitimate expectations of a more digitized world. The quest to create a better global order would necessarily have to address all these issues. Among them, some are clearly more existential in nature and necessitate intense coordination by the international community.

Climate action and climate justice are particularly noteworthy in this respect. Working towards them, India has collaborated with partners on the International Solar Alliance, the One Sun, One World, One Grid initiative and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure. We stand ready to support any collective and equitable endeavour to protect our environment and further global wellness. “Lifestyle for environment” or “LiFE”, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared on the sidelines of the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 26) in Glasgow, is our homage to Mother Nature.

India remains deeply committed to fighting climate change under the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement. We do so based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances. We have announced our updated nationally determined contributions after COP 26.

India's steadfast commitment to South-South cooperation is by now well established and well recognized. Our approach is based on principles of mutual respect and national ownership, with a commitment to sustainable development for all. As we begin the Group of 20 (G-20) presidency this December, we are sensitive to the challenges faced by developing countries. India will work with other G-20 members to address serious issues of debt, economic growth, food and energy security and particularly, the environment. The reform of governance of multilateral financial institutions will continue to be one of our core priorities.



India will be completing its term as an elected member of the Security Council this year. In our term, we have acted as a bridge on some serious but divisive issues confronting the Council. We have also focused on such concerns as maritime security, peacekeeping and counter-terrorism. Our contributions range from providing technology with a human touch to ensuring the safety and security of United Nations peacekeepers.

As the Chair of the Counter-Terrorism Committee this year, India will be hosting its special meeting in Mumbai and New Delhi. I invite all States Members of the United Nations to participate in it.

We need to create a global architecture that responds to the new tech tools deployed against open, diverse and pluralistic societies. Having borne the brunt of cross-border terrorism for decades, India firmly advocates a zero-tolerance approach. In our view, there is no justification for any act of terrorism, regardless of motivation. And no rhetoric, however sanctimonious, can ever cover up blood stains.

The United Nations responds to terrorism by sanctioning its perpetrators. Those who politicize the Security Council sanctions regime under resolution 1267 (1999), sometimes even to the extent of defending proclaimed terrorists, do so at their own peril. Believe me, they advance neither their own interests nor, indeed, their reputation. India has always espoused a cooperative, inclusive and consultative approach to international relations.

We believe that multipolarity, rebalancing, fair globalization and reformed multilateralism cannot be kept in abeyance. The call for reformed multilateralism — with reforms of the Security Council at its core — enjoys considerable support among United Nations Members. It does so because of the widespread recognition that the current architecture is anachronistic and ineffective. It is also perceived as deeply unfair, denying entire continents and regions a voice in a forum that deliberates on their future.

India is prepared to take up greater responsibilities. But it seeks, at the same time, to ensure that the injustice faced by the global South is decisively addressed. We call for serious and sincere negotiations on this critical matter. They must not be blocked by procedural tactics. Naysayers cannot hold the intergovernmental negotiations process hostage in perpetuity.

In these turbulent times, it is essential that the world listen to more voices of reason and experience more acts of goodwill. India is willing and able on both counts. We believe that this is not an era of war or conflict. On the contrary, it is a time for development and cooperation.

In the past, the Assembly has served as a meeting point of views and a catalyst for action. It is vital that we continue to believe in the promise of diplomacy and the need for international cooperation. Let us therefore strive to return to the course of seeking peace, progress and prosperity.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Ann Christin Linde, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden.

**Ms. Linde** (Sweden): Times of crisis require the best of us. When warnings sound, action must follow. Only then will development be sustainable and peace be maintained. Honest reflection on the gravity of the challenges must be followed by determined commitments to address them. That is what respecting the Charter of the United Nations means and what multilateralism is all about.

We are all aware of the immense tasks facing us. Almost 350 million people in more than 80 countries face acute food insecurity, trying to merely survive the day instead of making plans for tomorrow. Some 50 million people in 45 countries are on the brink of starvation. Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is halting, leaving millions of women, men and children behind. Extreme poverty is on the rise for the first time in two decades. The world is in the midst of an accelerating climate and environmental crisis, and the effects of the ongoing pandemic continue to afflict individuals and societies around the world.

A permanent member of the Security Council has launched an unprovoked, unjustified and illegal aggression against a neighbouring country. That was done in blatant disregard of its international obligations and the human suffering that extends far beyond the immediate war zone.

As Member States, we also know what is required of us. The General Assembly has come together to demand that Russia immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw all of its military forces from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. The General Assembly has

reaffirmed Ukrainian sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

Today Sweden reiterates that demand in the strongest possible terms, alongside other European Union (EU) member States, transatlantic partners and countries around the globe. The war in Ukraine must stop, and Russia's troops must withdraw. Any fake referendums on Ukrainian territory would be illegal and will have no effect. Neither partial mobilization, the appalling use of nuclear threats nor any other escalation will deter us from supporting Ukraine. Humanitarian law and principles must be upheld, and Ukraine's nuclear power plants must be protected from Russia's illegal and reckless attacks. Accountability for the heinous crimes committed must be ensured. International law must be upheld, and decisions by United Nations entities must be respected.

Russia's aggression has severely escalated the food security, energy and financial crises. Governments and societies already struggling to cope with the consequences of climate change, conflicts and the pandemic now face even more serious challenges. Because of the actions of one country, more than one and a half billion people in more than half of the States Members of the United Nations find themselves at greater risk of poverty, starvation and debt. In short, the global relief, recovery and resilience needs are immense. Sweden and the EU have scaled up our own contributions to meet them.

To save lives and alleviate suffering where needs are greatest, Sweden has increased its humanitarian assistance to a record high \$950 million this year. We commend the efforts of the Secretary-General and the President of Türkiye on the Black Sea Grain Initiative. Under the Initiative, some 50,000 tons of wheat will, thanks partly to Swedish funding, soon leave the port of Odesa, bound for millions of women, men and children at risk of famine in Yemen. A significant part of Sweden's ambitious aid budget has been directed to the United Nations as an investment in global peace, security and development and the multilateral system itself. Our actions are firmly anchored in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Peace, with the SDGs, and in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which are now more important than ever. It is time to raise our ambition and accelerate action to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss, or we will fail not only future generations but also our own.

At the international meeting Stockholm+50, held in June, countries came together to follow through on recommendations and actions. Sweden has spearheaded the climate transition through innovation and green investments and an ambitious increase in climate aid. Mounting evidence shows that climate change also leads to greater risks to peace and stability. A solid foundation for advancing climate security is in place at the United Nations and in regional organizations. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe took key decisions last year during the Swedish chairpersonship, and the EU is scaling up.

The nuclear threat is alarmingly present, and Russia's actions lower the threshold in a way that increases the threat facing us all. In January, the leaders of all five nuclear-weapon States committed to the prevention of nuclear war and avoiding an arms race. They affirmed that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. Russia's irresponsible actions and nuclear rhetoric since then severely undermine the credibility of its commitment to that pledge. It is also deeply troubling that Russia broke consensus on the draft outcome document of the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The countries of the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament have presented ideas in response to the Secretary-General's call to bring disarmament and non-proliferation back to the top of the international agenda.

The world is in a gender-equality recession. Regrettably, we still cannot take for granted women's rights and representation or the resources needed to ensure them. Violence against women and girls has increased. Access to safe and legal abortion has suffered major setbacks. And one year after the Taliban takeover, the situation for women and girls in Afghanistan has turned into a nightmare, in an unparalleled system of discrimination. At the same time, more and more States are acknowledging that a gender perspective is needed to meet global challenges.

As we gather for the first fully in-person General Assembly high-level week since the outbreak of the coronavirus disease, we must do everything in our power to prevent another pandemic. Sweden and the EU have made substantial contributions to global vaccination. Last year alone, Sweden committed more than \$600 million to global health. The Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response has set

out clear recommendations for action, and we should make use of them.

A year ago, the Secretary-General presented his blueprint for a modern multilateral system. *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982) is an accelerator of the SDGs, a launch pad for a new agenda for peace and a way towards a more inclusive, modern and networked United Nations. It was us, the Member States, who called for the report — and as Member States we should do our collective best to act on it. The recent establishment of the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth was a fitting first decision, because this is an agenda for the future. And the convening of the Transforming Education Summit earlier this week was another important step towards implementation. We look forward to similar progress on other recommendations, from investments in peacebuilding and strategic foresight to digitalization and a global economy that benefits all by being fair and open. We must keep up the momentum until we realize our ambitions at the Summit of the Future in 2024.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine has caused the greatest refugee crisis in Europe since the Second World War, aggravating the already serious global refugee situation. This military invasion of a country in our neighbourhood, in violation of the very same international law that has protected us all from aggression, has also fundamentally changed Sweden's security environment. In response to the serious deterioration of the security situation, on 16 May the Swedish Government decided to apply for NATO membership. The decision has broad national support and was made following extensive consultations among our political parties. It was taken in tandem with Finland, and the decision is anchored in a firm belief that security is best built together with others.

When I signed our formal request for NATO membership, I noted the fundamental changes to our defence and security policy. But I also stressed the importance of the continuity of our ambitious global and multilateral foreign policy. That enduring global commitment is also reflected in the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. Sweden will hold the presidency of the Council of the European Union for the first half of 2023. We look forward to further strengthening the EU's global role and deepening cooperation with partners around the world. We will work to protect, promote and defend democratic principles, human rights and the rule of law. And we

will reinforce the already solid EU-United Nations relationship in seeking multilateral solutions. We lend our full support to Denmark's candidacy to serve as an elected member on the Security Council for the 2025-2026 term. Its campaign message — equality, security, action — is a message from all the Nordic countries.

People working for peace, security, development and human rights should feel safe in their jobs. There have been 176 attacks on humanitarian workers so far this year, and 47 of those workers were killed. More than 50 peacekeepers have lost their lives while serving in United Nations missions. A few months ago, the Secretary-General and I inaugurated a work of art in this very building in memory of Zaida Catalán and Michael Sharp, who were murdered while working for the United Nations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In too many countries, civil-society representatives, human rights defenders and journalists are threatened, subjected to violence or even killed for expressing their opinions or reporting on current events. The global trend of democratic backsliding must be reversed, and we must break the vicious circle of a lack of democracy, disrespect for human rights and disregard of the rule of law. Investing in democracy means investing in peace and sustainable development. Efforts must continue to bring clarity to the circumstances of the death of former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld and his crew. We fully support the work of the United Nations-appointed independent investigator.

To echo the topic of today's debate, we are at a watershed moment. We are witnessing a full-scale war in Europe. Across the globe, armed conflict and repression cause suffering and halt development. We are not doing enough to tackle the climate crisis. Too many people are facing hunger, being forced to flee their homes, dying from curable diseases or living in fear or under oppression. We, the United Nations, must make sure there is a different story to tell next year. It will not be easy, but it is possible if we heed the call to meet our interlocking challenges with transformative change — and act when warnings sound.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Nikolay Milkov, Caretaker Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria.

**Mr. Milkov** (Bulgaria): We are living in unprecedented times with many challenges — war and insecurity, energy and food crises, climate change and the lingering consequences of the coronavirus disease

(COVID-19) pandemic. And that list of challenges is far from complete. The abrupt increase in security risks and the tectonic instabilities that have occurred since the previous session's general debate are threatening to destroy the rules-based world order — the order that has been built here in this Hall by all of us, by sovereign States and the peoples of the world. That is why a great majority of the speakers during this year's debate believe our biggest security risk to be the war that the Russian Federation is waging against its neighbour, breaking basic international rules and violating the Charter of the United Nations itself.

This illegal military aggression by a permanent member of the Security Council is not only undermining global security but also putting the international rules-based order in jeopardy. Bulgaria is deeply concerned about the recent escalation of the conflict and the partial mobilization announced by the Russian Federation. We reject the ongoing sham referendums in occupied Ukraine and consider them neither free nor fair and with no binding force. In those unfortunate circumstances, each and every contribution towards achieving more stability and cooperation among States in different regions must be encouraged and welcomed.

As a South-East European country, Bulgaria attaches the utmost importance to peace, stability and prosperity in the Western Balkans region. We are confident that the transformative power of the European Union integration process and inclusive regional cooperation are both the most powerful tools for achieving a common space of democratic governance, a market economy and political, economic and social sustainability. We will continue to support such countries on their path to the European Union.

Bulgaria is concerned by the lack of progress in the efforts to advance the Middle East peace process, as well as the recent escalation of tensions in the Gaza Strip. Enhanced cooperation between international and regional partners is needed to provide a political horizon for the resumption of bilateral Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. A negotiated and viable two-State solution that allows both Palestinians and Israelis to live side by side in peace, within secure and recognized borders, is essential to the stability of the entire Middle East.

Bulgaria is following with concern the critical developments in Afghanistan, including the human rights situation and the restrictions imposed by the

Taliban on the rights of women, girls' access to education and journalists.

The war in Europe has global repercussions. The Russian aggression against Ukraine has caused food insecurity and an energy crisis, which have devastating socioeconomic impacts on countries worldwide. Even before, the global food system was already under pressure due to factors such as climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the crisis has escalated dramatically because of the war, as disruptions in food, energy and financial systems in more than 90 countries around the world have put 1.7 billion people at risk.

Bulgaria highly appreciates the United Nations- and Türkiye-mediated deal on the resumption of grain exports from Ukraine's Black Sea ports, and we fully share the assessment that that very welcome development has the potential to significantly alleviate the current food crisis. Nevertheless, the situation remains critical, and the need for humanitarian assistance to a number of countries in the global South persists.

Some two and a half years ago, we were faced with the first lethal pandemic of the twenty-first century, which changed our lifestyles, the way of doing business and, above all, the way in which we communicate with each other. The COVID-19 pandemic also triggered a revolution in human online activities and interaction through various digital communication platforms. It also caused huge quakes in both societies and economies, deepened the gap between the rich and the poor, applying both to people as well as to entire nations, and wiped out at least a decade of progress made in reaching the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Our planet is visibly suffering from the devastating effects of climate change: deforestation, desertification, weather extremes, environmental degradation and the loss of biodiversity, affecting in one way or another each and every one of us, no matter where we live. Action is urgently needed.

We are deeply concerned about the humanitarian and food crises in Africa, especially in the Sahel and Lake Chad regions, which are further exacerbated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. They are an additional burden on post-COVID-19 recovery efforts. In that context, specific and comprehensive responses that address the short-term needs of the countries concerned, as well as strengthening their resilience and sustainability, are needed. We therefore commend



the efforts of both the United Nations and the African Union to address those challenges.

Dialogue and cooperation with the countries of the Indo-Pacific region are becoming particularly important. Bulgaria supports the strengthening of partnerships with like-minded countries from the region in energy connectivity, digitalization, people-to-people contacts, security of supplies, security and defence, countering disinformation, et cetera. As the country currently holding the presidency of the Economic and Social Council, we attach great importance to the priorities of emerging economies with regard to sustainable development, as well as to the priorities of small island States, taking into account their specific needs, including their existential struggle over the impact of global warming and the constant sea-level rise.

I would now like to share another very important and pressing issue. The world finds itself at a watershed moment for human rights, as it faces numerous challenges in that regard. Neither peace nor prosperity can be meaningful concepts without full respect for human rights and human dignity. We are a staunch supporter of the universality and indivisibility of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. As an active member of the Human Rights Council between 2019 and 2021, Bulgaria firmly promoted the rights of the child, women and girls, as well as their empowerment. Gender equality and the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities are also key priorities for my country. Strongly committed to further advancing the human rights agenda worldwide, Bulgaria has presented its candidature for membership of the Human Rights Council for the period from 2024 to 2026.

Education is a basic human right, with the transformative power to foster a fairer and more inclusive world. Education is a solid foundation for future peace, tolerance and sustainable development. Over the past couple of years, the COVID-19 pandemic further limited the access of children to education in the developing world. That motivated my country to play an active role in the preparation of the Transforming Education Summit, and we are encouraged by the successful outcome of that event.

Let me now briefly turn to United Nations reform in three closely interrelated areas: governance, peace and security and sustainable development. We cannot be complacent about the pace of reform so far, and we

must seize the historic wave of opportunity to make strides in the process. Bulgaria therefore supports the acceleration of the reform efforts, in line with the proposals in the Secretary-General's report *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982), aimed at reaching a new global consensus on our future and stepping up multilateral cooperation to achieve it.

We support the comprehensive reform of the Security Council. We have reached a critical juncture where it is untenable to maintain the status quo. The current situation where that highest organ of the Organization is failing to play its key role under the Charter of the United Nations cannot be tolerated by the international community. That is a duty that we owe to the future generations. Allocating at least one additional non-permanent seat to the Eastern European States in a reformed Security Council remains a priority for my country.

During the seventy-seventh session, Bulgaria will remain strongly committed to its financial obligations to the United Nations and is concerned about the persisting liquidity challenges, which undermine the ability of the Organization to implement its mandates and carry out its approved programme of work. We will continue to support the Secretary-General's policies to improve the financial situation of the United Nations. Bulgaria consistently ranks among the Member States that have contributed on time and in full to both the United Nations regular and peacekeeping budgets.

Allow me to conclude by sharing with the Assembly our vision of the way ahead. We will have to navigate uncharted waters. If we build upon the consolidated and unanimous approach of upholding the principles and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, we may exit the present crisis, but we will have a long way to go to re-establish security and economic stability after the war.

*The President took the Chair.*

The world of tomorrow will be very different from what we expected it to be not too long ago. Whether or not we will be up to the challenge will depend on our unity and ability to act together, as one, to mitigate negative side effects, readjust our lives to the new realities in the world and shore up rules-based multilateralism, with the United Nations at its core.

**The President:** I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sameh Hassan Shoukry Selim, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

**Mr. Selim (Egypt)** (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its current session and wish you every success in presiding over its work.

The current session of the General Assembly is taking place at a delicate historic time. The international arena is witnessing intertwined crises of immense complexity, requiring concerted action to invigorate multilateralism, including, first and foremost, the United Nations system. As the world still suffers from the colossal consequences of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, successive geopolitical crises have raised international tensions to unprecedented levels. In the light of those delicate circumstances, Egypt would like to reflect on the current international landscape, the challenges faced by our world today and the means to confront them.

First, the United Nations system still faces the challenge of acting outside its working context. That undermines its capacity to take an effective international stance that supports the maintenance of international security and stability and promotes the development and prosperity of peoples of the world. It is unfortunate that our hopes have been dashed in terms of achieving, in the twenty-first century, a world of stability and renouncing tensions while establishing international systems based on respect for international law. Instead, we are surprised by a growing tendency towards polarization and confrontation rather than achieving complementarity to realize our common interests, or even to compete on the basis of justice leading to human advancement.

The United Nations system is further threatened by the use of double standards in dealing with similar crises even when acting outside its working context. What is an acceptable response for one crisis is considered rejected for another. Therefore, the flaws we are witnessing are not a feature of the United Nations system itself, but they reflect the will of certain members in the system.

As we meet in September of every year in this international forum, I call on all those gathered here to respect the United Nations system, with a view to reinvigorating and reforming it. That process should not remain incomplete. Instead, it should be addressed

seriously, objectively and fairly so that the United Nations can better respond to the challenges we face and become more flexible in meeting the demands and needs of our peoples. In that regard, Egypt reiterates its adherence to the African common position calling for reform of the Security Council, based on the Ezulwini Consensus and Sirte Declaration.

The Russian-Ukrainian crisis has further exacerbated the global economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic's negative impact, coupled with successive geopolitical developments, has increased the burdens on the developing countries, especially pertaining to the sovereign debt crisis and soaring budget deficits. Developed countries therefore need to respond by launching a global initiative between creditor and debtor nations, to transform the bulk of debt into joint investment projects. That would create more job opportunities and contribute to economic growth.

The current international situation clearly indicates that the concept of international security is now closer to a system of balance of power than one of collective security. The international environment has been characterized by conflicts, not cooperation. We must therefore work to promote the spirit of international consensus to ensure the security of all States, without threatening or undermining each other's security and safety. The current global challenges have threatened the very notion of the nation-State, interfering in its internal affairs and disrespecting the unique features of its society. They weaken the State entity and, at times, even disrupt it, which enables non-State actors such as terrorist groups and armed militias to control the fate and wealth of peoples. The nation-State and its institutions must be empowered to play their role at all levels to preserve and promote international peace and security.

There are many complex and intertwined challenges on the international scene with multiple repercussions, most notably the food security crisis, which is the result of the international community's failure, over many years, to achieve Sustainable Development Goals, particularly the Goal seeking to eradicate hunger and achieve food security. In addition, the crisis has been exacerbated by the recent economic and geopolitical crises. Regrettably, in Africa alone, one in five people are at risk of hunger and the continent remains a net food importer, at an annual cost of \$43 billion. We reiterate the need to confront the global food crisis by establishing an integrated strategy that addresses its

root causes through developing sustainable farming and agricultural systems and meeting the urgent needs of food-importing developing countries. We also must ensure that their products have unimpeded access to the global supply chain, particularly through the development and transfer of agricultural technology. We also stress the importance of supporting early warning systems regarding food insecurity and promoting grain storage and exports. In that context, thanks to its unique geographical location, Egypt declares its readiness to cooperate with the international community to establish an international centre for storing, supplying and trading grains in Egypt, which will contribute to maintaining global food security.

The current session of the General Assembly is taking place under a theme that reflects our deep understanding of the crises and challenges the world is facing today. There is no doubt that the search for radical solutions to those interlocking crises is most applicable to the climate change crisis.

Egypt, in its capacity as President of the upcoming twenty-seventh session of the Conference of States Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 27), appeals sincerely to all members of the international community to translate our pledges and commitments into action and to support developing and least developed countries in their efforts to confront the devastating impacts of climate change. They are the most deserving and in need of such support on the basis of the principles of equity and common yet differentiated responsibilities.

During COP 27, which Egypt will host in a few weeks' time, we look forward to reaching outcomes that contribute to accelerating the pace of implementation at all levels, consolidating the international community's commitment to addressing climate change, including through emissions reduction, enhancing adaptation and tackling losses and damage due to climate change and, most important, raising climate financing ambitions. We must also commit to double adaptation financing and ensure \$100 billion annually, as well as working towards a just transition to renewable energy.

The international community's ability to move forward on implementing the goals of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, especially limiting the rise in global temperature, is closely linked to the achievement of tangible outcomes in Sharm El-Sheikh conference. That will demonstrate to our peoples that

confronting climate change remains a top priority at the global level, among all other challenges that confront today's world. In that context, Egypt reaffirms its steadfast commitment to providing all favourable conditions to that end.

Water security remains one of the most important challenges facing our world today, especially in the Middle East and the African continent, where some countries are located in the driest and most arid areas in the world. Unfortunately, that grave human suffering is not always due to a lack of resources or declining rainfall, but often to non-compliance with international law and to certain upstream countries monopolizing water resources and depriving downstream countries of the water that flows for the common good of all peoples.

Those who believe that resorting to peaceful means to settle water disputes is a form of weakness are mistaken. Such an approach is rooted in the strength and ability to protect and preserve the rights from loss or alienation. It is also based on a keen awareness by Governments of the negative impacts of conflict on people. In that context, after a decade of self-restraint, Egypt still recognizes the right of the Ethiopian people to development. However, that cannot be at the expense of the Egyptian people's right to life and survival, which has been linked to the Nile River since the dawn of time. I reiterate the need to reach, without delay, a legally binding agreement regarding the filling and operation of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, in accordance with the Agreement on Declaration of Principles concluded by Egypt, the Sudan and Ethiopia in March 2015 in Khartoum and the presidential statement issued by the Security Council on 15 September 2021 (S/PRST/2021/18). As three sovereign States, they must respect what they agreed upon and implement their agreement through deeds, not just words, in order to maintain international peace and security. Egypt therefore calls on the international community, represented by the United Nations and the Security Council, as well as influential States at the international level, to implement international law in order to safeguard the rights and lives of 250 million Egyptian, Sudanese and Ethiopian citizens.

Reaching definitive solutions to the crises in our region remains an essential pillar of building a secure and stable international system. At the forefront of that is the need to reach a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question, through negotiations on the basis of resolutions of international legitimacy

and the two-State solution, in order to establish a Palestinian State along the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Meanwhile, it is essential to refrain from any unilateral measures that would change the facts on the ground and undermine prospects for an ultimate solution.

Based on Egypt's responsibility to support its brothers, we continue to support efforts to reach political solutions, in accordance with international terms of reference, in Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and the Sudan in a manner that preserves the unity, integrity and sovereignty of those brotherly countries and puts an end to any external interference in their affairs.

Egypt continues to support the efforts of our brothers in Libya to establish the constitutional framework to allow for the simultaneous holding of presidential and parliamentary elections as soon as possible and ending the transitional period. In that regard, Egypt commends the role of the elected Libyan Parliament and stresses the importance of the withdrawal of all foreign forces and mercenaries from Libya, as well as the dismantling of armed militias within a specific time frame, in order to restore long-desired stability in Libya.

Our region has suffered for a long time, and it is high time to overcome the suffering, to prioritize peoples' interests over personal ones that seek power and wealth and to end attempts to undermine our region's unity and national security.

Before concluding, I would like to note in particular the importance of solidarity as a fundamental value of which we are in dire need, now more than ever before. The designation by the United Nations of 20 December as the annual International Human Solidarity Day reflects the importance of initiatives to eradicate poverty and celebrate unity in the context of diversity. It is also an indication that the United Nations believes in solidarity as an indispensable value, not only to effectively achieve the Sustainable Development Goals but also to counter emerging challenges and address economic gaps.

Solidarity remains a source of hope for a better tomorrow. That tomorrow cannot be achieved unless we all act together, hand in hand, to build and to banish all evil for peoples who seek coexistence and cooperation under the banner of human fraternity.

*The meeting rose at 3.30 p.m.*