



General Assembly

Seventy-seventh session

11th plenary meeting
Friday, 23 September 2022, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Körösi (Hungary)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Aidid (Malaysia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 4.20 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (continued)

General debate

Address by Mr. Gaston Alphonso Browne, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Corporate Governance and Public Private Partnerships of Antigua and Barbuda

The Acting President: The Assembly will hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Corporate Governance and Public Private Partnerships of Antigua and Barbuda.

Mr. Gaston Alphonso Browne, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Corporate Governance and Public Private Partnerships of Antigua and Barbuda, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Gaston Alphonso Browne, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Corporate Governance and Public Private Partnerships of Antigua and Barbuda, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Browne (Antigua and Barbuda): As high representatives of our world's nations gather at this seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly, our peoples would have been right to expect greater achievement of global peace and prosperous development.

Unfortunately, that has not happened. Seventy-seven years have passed since the leaders of the world's big Powers promised the international community that they would save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. The five victorious nations of the Second World War assigned to themselves permanent membership of the Security Council. They assumed the responsibility to implement the promises of the Charter, not only in their own interests, but also on behalf of the many nations that did not choose them and that had no option but to trust them.

The state of today's world does not readily inspire such trust. Instead, it arouses an overwhelming sense of disappointment. It is a disappointment concerning which small countries such as mine would be less than candid, less than honest, if we did not convey our sentiment to the permanent members of the Security Council. We are obliged to ask what happened to the commitments that were chiselled into the Charter of the United Nations as binding obligations on all, but particularly those in the Security Council that took upon themselves the task of guardianship of peace and development. Lest we have forgotten, let my small nation remind all here gathered of those commitments, for they are commitments we took seriously and expected to be fulfilled. The commitments were to practising tolerance and living together in peace with one another as good neighbours; to uniting our strength to maintain international peace and security; to ensuring, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in a common

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>).

22-60025 (E)



Accessible document

Please recycle



interest; and to employing international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples.

Our world is now gripped in a fearful atmosphere of economic and financial instability and the worry of expanded warfare. Every nation without exception is confronting escalating inflation, food shortages, high prices and increasing debt. But the worse effects are being suffered by the poor and powerless, the small and exposed. There should be no doubt in the Assembly that trust in the Security Council has been diminished by the actions taken within its membership. Many small and defenceless nations now feel gravely unprotected by the weakening of the international legal order, which was our first, last and only defence against aggression. Even worse, our development prospects and our hard work to rise up from poverty are being retarded by the high prices and severe disruptions that began with the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and that are being exacerbated by the war on Ukraine.

Therefore, we call on the permanent members of the Security Council to recommit themselves to the role that they assumed and pledged to safeguard. Peace must be restored for the world's sake and should be restored soon. It is the permanent members of the Security Council — all of them — that have that primary obligation. To abandon that obligation in the pursuit of selfish desires legitimizes the call for reform and an expansion of the Security Council. Concerted action by the Security Council is necessary to prevent major human rights violations, stop ongoing breaches and address global conflicts. If that fails to happen with the urgency that is required, it may call for the General Assembly to initiate its own global actions and to authorize their implementation. I do not anticipate that this call for action by the General Assembly would be welcomed by the permanent members of the Security Council, and that is fine. However, each of them must understand the deep concern of other nations when the Council is dysfunctional on issues whose effects are global. Peace in the world is not a commodity to be traded; it is a right to be protected in the interest of all.

That observation is also strongly pertinent to the issue of climate change, which poses an existential threat to small island States and countries with low-lying coastlines. We will all recall that, last December, due to a veto by one of the five permanent members, the Security Council had to reject a draft resolution (S/2021/990) framing the problem of climate change

as a threat to international peace and security (see S/PV.8926). That was extremely unfortunate. That draft resolution was sponsored by 113 Member States, representing the second highest number of countries to support a draft resolution in the history of the Security Council, yet it was vetoed.

Is it fair that the evidence-based draft resolution, which emanated from the concerns and anxieties of so large a host of nations, should be vetoed by a single country? Climate change remains the single greatest common threat to all humankind, and more so for small island developing States (SIDS), which lack the financial resources to adapt to the mortal shocks and to rebuild in their aftermath. SIDS have a legitimate and urgent concern, for although collectively we contribute the least to carbon dioxide emissions — a mere 0.2 per cent — we are the greatest victims, not only because of unattended loss and damage to our lives and livelihoods, but also because the very existence of our countries is fatally endangered.

The effects of global warming are universal. They reach every country, but it is vital that we all understand that, inasmuch as global warming is universal, its damaging effects are not the same. The burden falls mostly on the poor in small developing nations, such as mine. And that is why, as the representative of the people of Antigua and Barbuda, I must stand up for their rights, including their right to livelihoods and to life. My voice cannot be stilled while danger gathers in the skies above my small and vulnerable country. I have no choice but to fight unrelentingly for climate justice, and that is precisely what I shall do.

Many are beginning to lose faith in the Security Council. We must not be forced to lose faith also in the collective authority of the General Assembly. That is why my Government urges the Assembly to act on behalf of the smallest and most powerless among us, and in the interest of global justice. An opportunity for action looms. It is the draft resolution being sought by Vanuatu from the Assembly in the coming months to request the International Court of Justice to give an advisory opinion that will clarify the legal obligations of States to protect human rights and environments from climate change. If our nations are indeed gravely concerned about the ravages of climate change, which has spared no country, they will support Vanuatu's request. Not to support the Vanuatu draft resolution would be a vote to circumvent a decision on the legal obligations of each nation. Not to support the Vanuatu

draft resolution would be a vote to prolong this period of abuse, thereby imperilling human civilization.

I also draw attention to an initiative taken by my own country, Antigua and Barbuda, in solidarity with Tuvalu and Palau. We are three small island States that have been buffeted and battered by the effects of climate change. On the eve of the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP), held in Glasgow last year, we launched the Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law. The Commission's purpose is to develop and implement fair and just global environmental norms and practices. In that connection, it will seek an opinion from the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea regarding the binding obligations of its member States to mitigate the effects of their greenhouse gas emissions or to pay for the loss and damage they cause. The polluter must pay. That effort is separate from, but complementary to, the Vanuatu initiative.

Our small countries have talked ourselves hoarse since the 1980s, pointing to the parlous circumstances into which our people and our countries are being plunged, but to little avail. Billions have been pledged in climate finance and not delivered. Promises have been repeated year after year, each with a zealotry that, on the evidence, has been meant to placate and divert, but clearly not to perform or to deliver commensurate with the loss suffered and the damage caused. The stage now seems set for this year's COP27 to fail, despite the genuine efforts of some industrialized nations to address the grave concerns of the majority of the world's people to turn climate change into climate action.

The Group of 20, meeting on 31 August, failed to produce a joint statement on climate change, sending an ominous signal that, yet again, the meeting of the COP in November will be long on words but very short on deeds. At COP26 in Glasgow last year, world leaders acknowledged that their pledges to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions have not met the previously agreed goal of pursuing efforts to limit warming to 1.5°C. They vowed to do better. It appears now that they will not. And that is despite the fact that, as Secretary-General Guterres has observed, we are in a climate emergency that is literally setting our planet on fire. In other words, they are burning down the planet. Therefore, small States, individually and collectively, under the Antigua and Barbuda chairmanship of the Alliance of Small Island States, will attend COP27 in

Egypt and argue strenuously to establish a new loss-and-damage response fund.

But we recognize that reliance on the conscience of others will not be enough and may not produce the results we and the world urgently need. We have been patient. We have urged. We have pleaded. We have begged. And yet, year after year, small island States bear the overwhelming burden of climate change's catastrophic effects, including persistent destruction, the repeated costs of rebuilding and huge debts to finance resilience. That injustice must end, and it must end now. We insist that those States most responsible for this dire situation respect their obligations to stop global warming and to provide compensation to its victims. We will engage fully and constructively at COP27. We will also use all means necessary to pursue the objectives of the Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law and we invite all countries whose peoples, lives and livelihoods are at great risk, to join us.

While I have focused my statement so far on the damaging effects of climate change on SIDS, let it not be believed that the industrialized nations, the rich and the powerful, are immune. The projections of our common future are deeply distressing. In this year alone, temperatures rose above 40°C in Britain, Spain, France and Portugal. China recorded the most severe heatwave anywhere on Earth. Floods hit Pakistan with nearly 800 per cent more rainfall than normal, affecting tens of millions of people and leaving a third of the country under water. These are the realities that we have to deal with. Winter temperatures in the southern hemisphere rose above 45°C in South America, while temperatures in some parts of Antarctica were almost 40°C higher than average. Last year, natural disasters in the United States inflicted an estimated \$145 billion in damage and killed nearly 700 people. And this year was no better. So the question is: What else needs to happen in order to force urgent action?

Even if some of the Governments of the industrialized nations remain reluctant to curb greenhouse gas emissions for the sake of the most vulnerable globally, they should be motivated by the perils for their own people. At the end of the day, we are all in this thing together, and while SIDS will suffer more swiftly and greater, no nation will escape. A global, all-of-society response is required to effectively combat climate change. There is no other viable option. I therefore plead with all Governments to

act on the evidence and to do all in their power to curb greenhouse gas emissions to stop climate change.

I turn now to other international conditions that have unfairly delayed the economic development and social progress of SIDS.

I will start with the Cuban embargo imposed by the United States that is hampering the Cuban people in their collective efforts to achieve economic and social development. That unjust embargo is seriously undermining Cuba's efforts to eliminate poverty and improve the living standards of its people. The Government of Antigua and Barbuda urges the United States to immediately lift the 60-year economic embargo against Cuba and allow the 11 million Cubans an opportunity to be prosperous and a fair chance at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Antigua and Barbuda looks forward to the normalization of relations between the United States and Venezuela in the interest of hemispheric peace and prosperity.

The incongruous criterion applied by international financial and development institutions and the Governments that control their policies to classify some SIDS, such as mine, in the same category as the United States, Japan and Germany because of the skewed measurement of high per capita income is one such condition that is undermining our development. For decades, my small country has been denied access to concessional financing because of that single criterion. The criterion of high per capita income also fails to take into account the structural limitations to include limited natural resources and the reality that we are compelled to import a large percentage of our goods for consumption. For our people to survive and to pay for the high cost of even basic imports, their earning capacity must align with the costs they confront.

In that connection, my Government is thankful to the former President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid of Maldives, for establishing the High-level Panel of Experts to, inter alia, provide recommendations on the potential development, finalization and use of the multidimensional vulnerability index for small island developing States. We also thank Secretary-General Guterres for the proactive stance that he has taken on the index in finding lasting solutions to the barriers that prevent access to concessional financing to SIDS.

I was honoured, on behalf of the people of Antigua and Barbuda, to be appointed as a co-Chair of the High-level Panel, along with the former Prime Minister of Norway, Her Excellency Ms. Erna Solberg. It is our intention that the report and recommendations of the panel will be factual and evidence-based and will open the way for indicators that better reflect the vulnerabilities and challenges faced by small island developing States. For too long, the persistent use of per capita income as the primary criterion for determining access to concessional or grant resources has denied small and vulnerable countries, such as mine, access to concessional financing and tailored debt relief measures.

I call on the General Assembly and all its participants to seize the opportunity to correct a wrong that has persisted far too long and that has punished middle- and high-income SIDS that have performed well economically and politically despite the odds that are stacked against them. It is time to stop penalizing SIDS for good performance. It is time to reward and incentivize them so that they can improve their accomplishments, achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and strengthen their ability to respond to endogenous and exogenous shocks.

A consequence of the disasters spawned by climate change and the locked door to concessional financing for many SIDS is high, unsustainable debt. Many of our countries have been forced to resort to the commercial lending market to borrow in order to rebuild after disasters. We were also forced to do so after the economic devastation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The international financial institutions and the Governments that control them are well aware that our debt burden is unsustainable, and yet the Paris Club will not reschedule debt or engage about ways to ease the burden. Our options are to acquire more debt and more onerous interest rates from the commercial lending market, or to surrender, literally, by imposing burdensome taxing conditions on our people. It is no choice at all. One is as difficult as the other and each consigns our small nations to struggle. Many of us have done so and will continue to do so to survive and not to submit to demands to make the lives of our people harder.

The international community bears responsibility for these blights upon our small countries, which we did not create. The time is upon us to change the direction in how the international community responds to SIDS.

In 2024, Antigua and Barbuda will host the fourth International Conference on SIDS, a conference that must deliver for all small island developing States — a conference unlike any other. We cannot do this alone; we need each and every Member State, starting now, to begin the process of recommitting to SIDS and offer lasting solutions to our needs. We did not start wars. We created no pandemic. We did not cause climate change. Is it not right for the rich nations of the world to contribute to alleviating the problems that have been thrust upon small developing States?

The theme of this year's session of the General Assembly is "A watershed moment: transformative solutions to interlocking challenges". The Assembly is indeed meeting at a watershed moment. The world is dominated now by a conflict that is not in the developing world but very much in the developed world, and an expression of the underlying suspicions that have continued to exist between the nations of the East and the West. The effects of the conflict, exposed by the war on Ukraine, have reached every nation. Therefore, we have a legitimate interest in it and a right to call on all the parties, Russia on the one hand and the NATO and European Union countries on the other, to employ their diplomatic resources and skills to end this globally debilitating war.

Interlocked with the severe challenges of the conflict are climate change, the lingering economic effects of COVID-19, growing economic inequality between nations, high debt burdens without relief and persistent poverty. These interconnected challenges demand meaningful international cooperation — not just words, but deeds. At this watershed moment, I plead with the Assembly, please let us turn words into collective action.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Corporate Governance and Public Private Partnerships of Antigua and Barbuda for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Gaston Alphonso Browne, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Corporate Governance and Public Private Partnerships of Antigua and Barbuda, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq

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

Mr. Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Al-Kadhimi (Iraq) (spoke in Arabic): It is my pleasure to greet the Assembly on behalf of Iraq, a founding State Member of the Organization that hosts us today. I congratulate Mr. Csaba Kőrösi on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session, and am confident in his expertise and competence in achieving the desired objectives of this session. I extend my sincere thanks to Secretary-General António Guterres for his vital role in leading this organ over the past years and in supporting and assisting the Government of Iraq. Our people will always be grateful and appreciative of his efforts.

Iraq is a country deeply rooted in history and human memory. It represents a living example of how hope prevails over significant challenges that may seem difficult, especially at the level of domestic political conflict. However, the spirit of hope embodied by the people of Iraq makes them capable of taking advantage of opportunities to live and achieve progress and peace while overcoming conflicts, crises and challenges. Despite all the difficult circumstances, Iraqis wielded that spirit of hope to fight terrorism and defeat it on behalf of the entire world. The task was arduous. Our people made enormous sacrifices not only to liberate their land from the terrorist gangs of Da'esh but also to prevent that dangerous organization from threatening people everywhere and uproot its destructive ideology. In that regard, I recall the martyrs of Iraq who sacrificed their lives in defence of the values of freedom, justice, democracy and human rights.

During that just war, our Iraqi military forces acquired unique skills in fighting Da'esh, enforcing the rule of law and peacekeeping. Iraq benefited from the expertise of our allies in the fight against terrorism. I would like to reiterate our thanks and appreciation to them. We also reiterate the call of the Government of

the Republic of Iraq for continued confrontation of the phenomenon of international terrorism and the groups that back it. Iraq looks forward to receiving more United Nations support for rebuilding the areas liberated and affected by the occupation of Da'esh terrorist gangs, and more United Nations aid for responding to urgent and necessary humanitarian needs in order to enhance Iraq's capabilities and efforts to rebuild the destroyed infrastructure in a way that would help our cities and their people, including internally displaced persons, to return to normal life.

It is worth noting that the State's ministries and institutions have pursued their efforts to help repatriate Iraqi families living in Al-Hol camp in Syria and to reintegrate them into their hometowns. In that regard, I note that we have developed a comprehensive Government programme for the reconstruction of liberated areas, the rehabilitation of infrastructure and the safe and voluntary return of displaced people. We take this opportunity to express our profound thanks and appreciation to donor countries and international organizations for their humanitarian support and assistance to Iraq.

As I address the Assembly from this rostrum, I reiterate Iraq's call on other countries not to use our territories under any pretext, be it combating terrorism or protecting their own national security, while endangering our security and stability. Iraq stresses the need to respect the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, the rules of international law and international relations, and to respect the sovereignty of States. We therefore ask all States not to interfere in Iraqi territories and to respect the principle of good-neighbourliness, while promoting cooperative relations. The Government of Iraq affirms its adherence to an approach that calls for resolving differences through diplomatic channels.

There is no doubt that Iraq, like the rest of the world, has been affected by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which has impacted all aspects of life and proven that international cooperation and solidarity were successful in confronting it. The Government of Iraq and its national institutions have taken the many preventive and curative measures necessary to control and curtail the pandemic and treat the infected. I take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to those countries and international organizations, including the World Health Organization, for their role and sincere efforts in addressing the pandemic

and assisting developing countries in confronting and combating it.

Realizing the importance of national commitments, the protection of democratic experience and the people's demands to democratically exercise their rights and freedom of expression, the Iraqi Government held free and fair elections with the support of the Security Council, the United Nations and other international organizations, which have all praised the integrity and high professionalism with which they were held. I also want to thank all States and organizations that supported the elections. In that regard, I want to thank the people who helped in holding the most successful of elections since 2003 until now, in particular Sayyid Al-Sistani, the Highest Marja', for protecting the democratic process in Iraq.

Despite the success of the elections, the political forces could not agree on the formation of a new Government, leading to a political impasse. My Government has called for a serious and transparent national dialogue among all political forces and various parties to discuss ways out of the current political crisis in an effort to form a Government that meets the people's aspirations and hopes in achieving their goals and securing their future.

The Government of Iraq is working to build the State and maintain its stature on the basis of coexistence among all the constituents of the Iraqi people, while respecting diversity and ideological, religious and sectarian pluralism pursuant to the values and principles of justice and equality. That can be done by ensuring the freedom of expression, the right to peaceful demonstration and human rights; strengthening law enforcement agencies and accountability measures; ending violations and subjecting perpetrators to accountability; achieving a State monopoly on arms; preventing the possession and use of arms outside the law and State institutions; investigating those who use them against citizens and members of the security forces; holding the perpetrators accountable according to the law; and applying justice to all.

Iraq is keen to be a source of regional and international stability. Iraq seeks to bring together different viewpoints and endeavours to find sustainable peaceful solutions to regional crises and mend ties among the region's countries by introducing a number of initiatives to ensure the protection of peace and security in our region, which has long suffered from

senseless wars and crises. The time has come to rebuild the region, pursuant to our era, history and balanced State policy. Baghdad has hosted many meetings for the region's countries. It is a consequence of the balanced policy pursued by this Government and Iraqi diplomacy with a view to establishing moderation in the region and finding common grounds with neighbouring countries. That will serve the interests of all parties and peoples of the region with historical and cultural ties, encourage regional cooperation and defuse crises.

The Baghdad Conference for Partnership and Cooperation, held in August 2021, witnessed a remarkable participation by regional neighbouring brotherly and friendly countries. The Conference resulted in a number of important recommendations included in the communiqué of the Baghdad summit.

It is no secret to anyone that Iraq is enduring difficult climate conditions due to the scarcity of water resources, the change in course of rivers that Iraq shares with some neighbouring countries, and the implementation of projects without taking into account their effects on water quotas and fair use by riparian countries. All of those conditions have come together and led Iraq to become the fifth most vulnerable country to climate change, which has recently caused most of Iraq's marshes to dry up and damaged the livelihoods of hundreds of rural families living there. The marshes are natural reserves and listed as a World Heritage Site. Those conditions have led to an increase in the rate of desertification and internal displacement due to nature and the loss of many family livelihoods, as well as a drop in the proportion of agricultural land. Iraq calls on all regional countries to enter into a dialogue to resolve water issues, in accordance with international law and conventions.

Iraq is an oil-producing country that has participated in the progress and development of the global economy since the beginning of the twentieth century. While Iraq suffers from climate change, it will also suffer from all the measures taken to address this phenomenon and the reduction in dependence on fossil fuels. Nevertheless, my Government has worked on important strategic projects in clean energy, associated gas extraction and other areas related to the green economy. That requires international support in various fields in order to back Iraq's efforts and enable us to move forward in implementing national policies and strategies to mitigate and adapt to the adverse effects of climate change.

Similarly, we have not neglected the need to develop the education and culture sectors. My Government has made the implementation of the 2030 national strategy for public and higher education a top priority. The most important goals of the strategy are to achieve a 100 per cent school enrolment rate, upgrade the standards of public and higher education, develop educational techniques and technologies, and enhance skills in accordance with the job market and economic development. We have also launched a national initiative for early childhood development that covers a period of 10 years with a view to reducing the illiteracy rate in our society and providing an appropriate educational environment for our children, especially since many sectors have suffered the repercussions of senseless wars, clashes and corruption, which have rocked the foundations of the educational sector in Iraq. We have recently embarked on a campaign to build hundreds of schools in various Iraqi governorates that have suffered significant shortages in recent decades, in addition to facilitating the task of building universities and colleges in the country.

We stress Iraq's steadfast position on the Palestinian question, all the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and respect for the historical status of Jerusalem and its holy sites.

While we stress the need to preserve Syria's territorial integrity and security, we support the holding of political talks among all Syrian parties. We also support the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions.

Like other countries of the world, Iraq believes that regional crises and wars have consequences for all countries of the world. We also believe that peoples always pay the price for such wars. Wars impact all aspects of life, particularly energy supplies, food and security. Iraq has faced many wars and is consequently sensitive to the issue. We stress the need to find peaceful and sustainable solutions to regional and international crises through dialogue and to avoid the use of force. We call for the maintenance of international peace and security. The global economy and humankind must be saved from the repercussions of such wars.

In conclusion, the challenges facing my country, Iraq, today are but the result of the accumulation of political crises and conflicts over a long period. We are working to defuse them, hoping that our society, which

is made up mostly of young people, will adhere to and defend democracy as a way of life and a means of good governance. Our nascent experience of democracy is still imbued with the spirit of courage and hope. We are in dire need of understanding and support from the international community so that we can continue building a modern State, undertaking reconstruction, providing services and building the infrastructure that has been destroyed by senseless wars. We believe in the need to invest in people and uphold their dignity while working to implement the Sustainable Development Goals in cooperation and comprehensive partnership with our neighbours in the region and the international community.

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

Mr. Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Ismail Sabri Yaakob, Prime Minister of Malaysia

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

Mr. Ismail Sabri Yaakob, Prime Minister of Malaysia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Ismail Sabri Yaakob, Prime Minister of Malaysia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Yaakob (Malaysia) (*spoke in Malay; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): First of all, I would like to congratulate Mr. Csaba Kőrösi on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session. I am confident that under his leadership, this session will be conducted with efficiency and effectiveness. I would also like to express my appreciation to the previous President, His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid, for his excellent leadership of the seventy-sixth session in the face of various constraints and challenges.

Malaysia welcomes the theme chosen for this year's session of the General Assembly, "A watershed moment: transformative solutions to interlocking challenges". We believe that the theme is most apt for the situation we are going through together. During the seventy-sixth session of General Assembly, we

heard a high level of commitment and pledged to work together. That has given hope to the world. Numerous statements were issued, all inspiring hope, including in me, that the spirit of a world family would allow us to set aside our differences. That commitment enables us to rise from the pandemic and together overcome the challenges we face.

Even so, that spirit of optimism is fading. I am concerned by the challenges that remain unaddressed and are, in fact, deteriorating. Many challenges remain unresolved. A major lesson the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic taught us is that we cannot run from every challenge that confronts us. Being selfish and not caring about the impact on others will only generate mistrust in international cooperation.

In an interconnected world, the policies and decisions of some countries can affect others. For example, in addressing the current inflation around the world, one country's monetary policy and control of interest rates has an impact on other countries. That is where cooperation and coordination among countries need to be stepped up if we are to achieve the goal of a more just economic well-being for all.

In an international financial and monetary structure that is still dominated by a few major Powers, and in the context of world economic recovery, domestic monetary decisions have to be adjusted by taking the reality and needs of developing countries into account. In that connection, Malaysia urges Member States to establish a cooperative international monetary mechanism to build a more effective and just system that is able to balance the needs of global development.

One truth that we should not forget is that conflicts have nothing but negative effects for the whole world. It is because of conflict that we are now facing various problems, such as lack of nutrients and food resources. In that regard, Malaysia calls on all countries to emphasize the issue of food security so as to guarantee sufficient food resources for all.

The United Nations Charter and international law are there to promote the peaceful settlement of disputes between countries. The Charter and the laws set the limits of a country's pursuit of its own interests. Based on that principle, Malaysia opposes violations of international law, including the principle of sovereignty and territorial integrity of any nation. When a conflict erupts, all parties have the responsibility to ease tension and prioritize the safety and lives of civilians. At the

same time, the conflicting parties need to return to the negotiating table to stop the conflict as soon as possible.

Malaysia does not approve of the isolation of a country from international organizations. Such a measure is against the principle of multilateralism and hinders dialogue. The price to be paid for war is high. That is proven by the situation experienced by Ukraine. The effects are felt not only by the people and the country but also by the world. This conflict has threatened peace, global security and the economy, and undermined food security. Malaysia welcomes the creation of a sea corridor that allows for the shipment of grain from Ukraine. This is a positive step in addressing the food security problem. In that regard, Malaysia reiterates its insistence that all countries, especially the major Powers, refrain from creating isolation blocs that will only push the world towards a cold war. The world needs to realize that peace can be achieved only through dialogue and negotiation.

As for the occupied Palestinian territories, Malaysia is disappointed by the brutal occupation by Israel, which has been going on for a long time. The Palestinian people continue to live under the shackles of Israel's discriminatory policies. Illegal settlements are becoming more widespread, in violation of international law, including Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). The most basic rights of the Palestinian people continue to be denied. Malaysia is therefore of the view that the major Powers need to be honest in resolving the issue of cruelty faced by the Palestinian people. The United Nations should take a firm stand to ensure that the long-standing crisis in Palestine is resolved quickly. Many countries today have been quick to act in the case of Ukraine. Malaysia wants the same action to be taken to resolve the issue of Palestine. Israel needs to stop being an apartheid entity!

Although we are still threatened by conflicts among countries, we cannot ignore other crises around the world. The pillar of strength for a conflict-free world is living together in a culture of peace. Malaysia, as a multiracial, multicultural and multireligious country, always supports and strives for the concept of peaceful coexistence among races, beliefs and cultures. Malaysia has played an important role in conflict resolution in South-East Asia. For example, Malaysia has been involved in the peace process between the Philippine Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front since 2001. In addition, Malaysia has always been proactive in helping to resolve regional crises and conflicts.

However, Malaysia has been disappointed with the situation in Myanmar since the coup that took place in February 2021. It is very saddening that the Security Council has taken no serious action to deal with the situation. Some even see the Security Council as having washed its hands of the matter and handing it over to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Malaysia is disappointed that there has been no meaningful progress in the implementation of the ASEAN five-point consensus, especially on the part of the Myanmar junta. The ASEAN five-point consensus cannot continue any longer in its current form. It needs to be given a new lease of life and refined based on a clearer framework, time frame and end goal. Even more important is that the aspirations of the people of Myanmar must be fulfilled.

The political crisis in Myanmar has also aggravated the situation of millions of Myanmar refugees, including the Rohingya refugees. Although Malaysia is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol, it has accepted nearly 200,000 Rohingya refugees on humanitarian grounds. It is the responsibility of all countries, including those participating in the Convention, to welcome and resettle more refugees. At the same time, Malaysia strongly emphasizes the importance of the world's addressing the root cause of the Rohingya crisis. I believe that this issue will not be resolved as long as the crisis in the country continues.

The conflicts and crises that occur in the world, including in Ukraine, Palestine and Myanmar, cannot be resolved due to the debility of the global governance system and the United Nations. The biggest problem in the United Nations is the Security Council. The power of veto is often misused to favour the world Powers that have it. It is not democratic and violates the principles of democracy. That makes it impossible for conflicts to be resolved by any of the permanent members of the Council. In line with the principle of one-country one-vote, now is the time to abolish the veto power. As an Organization that brings the spirit and symbol of democracy to the world, the United Nations needs to return to its foundations.

Climate change is a universal problem that affects us all. Last year alone, Malaysia was struck by the most serious floods in its history, resulting in losses estimated at \$1.4 billion or 6.1 billion ringgit. Many lives were lost and almost 100,000 people had to be moved to temporary evacuation centres. That

situation arose not only in Malaysia but in several other countries as well. Clearly, mitigation and adaptation measures need to continue. The fact remains that developed countries must bear the responsibility of increasing aid for developing countries by fulfilling their commitment to providing an unconditional yearly allocation of \$100 billion. That will help realize the actions taken against climate change that should have been implemented since 2020.

COVID-19 has slowed our efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). I stand here as the representative of a developing country to assert that the implementation and success of a greener and more sustainable socioeconomic development will be achieved with a fair and inclusive response to that pledge. The fact is that new technology is an incentive for nations to switch to renewable energy. However, that new technology must first be affordable to developing countries. In that regard, Malaysia is committed to shouldering its responsibilities and roles to ensure environmental conservation and sustainability. Malaysia has undertaken various measures in that context. For example, in the palm oil industry, Malaysia has introduced the Malaysian sustainable palm oil standard to meet requirements for the purpose of sustainable development.

Malaysia is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 45 per cent, based on gross domestic product, by 2030. In that regard, Malaysia has set a target of achieving 31 per cent renewable energy use by 2025. Malaysia is also committed to achieving its goal of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The national energy policy 2022–2040 was implemented in Malaysia on 19 September to build macroeconomic resilience and energy supply security. Malaysia has agreed to establish a National SDG Centre to intensify SDG programmes and monitor their progress.

As one of only 17 biodiverse countries in the world, Malaysia is aware of its responsibility to maintain and preserve its natural resources for future generations. During the Earth Summit in 1992, Malaysia pledged to maintain at least 50 per cent of its land mass under forest and tree cover. Three decades on, the entire Malaysian territory today remains 54 per cent forested. That percentage will increase following ongoing aggressive reforestation measures.

Not only Malaysia, but the entire world also needs to be more sensitive to efforts to achieve the Sustainable

Development Goals by 2030. In that regard, Malaysia welcomes the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, to be held next year. That effort is timely because it will give us the opportunity to look back at what has been achieved and what can be improved for the benefit of the world family.

We all share the same concerns on all the issues I have raised. Malaysia remains optimistic. I call on Member States to play their respective roles in overcoming the challenges we face. However, we have to do it together as one big family — the world family. United we stand; divided we fall. As long as we are united and strong together in shouldering this burden, I am sure we will succeed.

Today I invite the international community to work together by practicing the spirit of the world family in facing global challenges. Malaysia will continue to give its full commitment.

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

Mr. Ismail Sabri Yaakob, Prime Minister of Malaysia, was escorted from the rostrum.

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

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

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

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, and inviting her to address the Assembly.

Sheikh Hasina (Bangladesh) (*spoke in Bangla; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): I heartily congratulate Mr. Csaba Kőrösi on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session. I assure him of my delegation's full cooperation throughout the session. I also commend his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid. I would like to express my deep appreciation to Secretary-General António Guterres for his strong commitment to making the United Nations more vibrant in its responsibilities.

The theme of this year's general debate is "A watershed moment: transformative solutions to interlocking challenges". Our planet Earth today is plagued by multiple complex and multidimensional challenges, such as climate change, violence and conflict, and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. This year's theme calls for united efforts to find ways to overcome those challenges and revitalize our economy to build a peaceful and sustainable world. To achieve that goal, we need to act collectively without delay.

We believe that antagonism, like war, economic sanctions and counter-sanctions can never bring good to any nation. Mutual dialogue is the best way to resolve crises and disputes. In that context, I thank the Secretary-General for setting up the Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance. As a champion of the Group, I am working with other world leaders to identify a global solution commensurate with the gravity and depth of the current situation.

The father of the nation of Bangladesh, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, formulated our foreign policy dictum "friendship to all, malice towards none". Bangladesh has been pursuing that principle of non-alignment since its independence. In his maiden address to the Assembly on 25 September 1974, he said:

"Our total commitment to peace is born of the realization that only an environment of peace would enable us to enjoy the fruits of our hard-won national independence and to mobilize and concentrate all our energies and resources in combating the scourges of poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy and unemployment.

"We therefore welcome every effort aimed at advancing the process of *détente*, relaxation of tension, limitation of armaments and the promotion of peaceful coexistence in every part of the world, whether in Asia, Africa, Europe or Latin America." (A/PV.2243, p.160)

That statement of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib is still equally relevant in the present global context. Bangabandhu believed that peace is the embodiment of the aspirations of all men and women in the world. As a result of war, human beings, especially women and children, suffer tremendously. Many people become refugees.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have adopted strategies to contain the crisis, mainly focusing on three aspects. First, we expanded national health care to prevent the transmission and spread of the infection. Secondly, we have provided strategic fiscal stimulus to safeguard our economy. Thirdly, we have secured people's livelihoods. Those initiatives have helped reduce the number of deaths due to the pandemic as well as reduce public sufferings. Vaccination is the key to our safe transition from the pandemic. We thank the World Health Organization and its COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) system and our partner countries for providing this vaccine. As of August, 100 per cent of the eligible population of Bangladesh had been vaccinated.

We are working towards sustainable economic growth, creating equal opportunities for all and realizing an inclusive peaceful society and social harmony. Bangladesh is now one of the five fastest growing economies in the world. We are forty-first in terms of gross domestic product (GDP). We have reduced the poverty rate from 41 per cent to 20.5 per cent over the past decade. Our per capita income has tripled to \$2,824 in just one decade. Before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, our GDP growth rate in fiscal year 2018–2019 was 8.15 per cent. Earlier, we achieved GDP growth of over 7 per cent for three consecutive years. Even during the pandemic, the economy of Bangladesh expanded by 6.94 per cent in the fiscal year 2020–2021. However, as a result of the Russia-Ukraine war, economic sanctions and counter-sanctions, there has been a supply chain disruption and exorbitant price hikes for fuel, food and consumer goods. That has put economies like ours under tremendous pressure. Inflation has been increased. We are taking various initiatives to overcome this situation.

In 2026, Bangladesh is going to graduate from least developed countries category to that of developing country. We are working to transform Bangladesh into a knowledge-based developed country by 2041 and building a prosperous and climate-resilient delta by 2100.

Bangladesh has achieved significant progress in universal primary education, food security, the reduction of maternal and child mortality, gender equality, women's empowerment and so on. The literacy rate has increased from 50 per cent to 75 per cent in the past decade. We have placed great emphasis on ensuring an information technology-based education

system. Our infant mortality rate has declined to 21 per 1,000 live births, and the maternal mortality rate has decreased to 173 per 100,000 live births. The average life expectancy of our people is now more than 73 years. We have paid special attention to the most vulnerable people in society so that no one is left behind. The coverage of the existing social safety net has been expanded to ensure the social and financial security of destitute women, widows, the elderly, persons with disabilities, third gender people and other vulnerable segments of society. Currently, about 10.7 million people are receiving direct benefits under the social safety net.

Improved physical infrastructure serves as the foundation for a strong economic structure. That is why we are building massive sustainable infrastructure, including underwater tunnels, elevated expressways and mass rapid transit systems. Recently, we have added the Padma Multipurpose Bridge, a self-funded asset, to our road communications system. It will facilitate Bangladesh's local and international trade and enhance regional connectivity. That will ensure at least 1.23 per cent growth in our national income.

The impact of climate change is one of the biggest threats to humankind. In the past, we have seen a vicious cycle of promises being made and broken. We must now change this course. In Bangladesh, we have led many transformative measures to tackle the perilous impacts of climate change, consistent with the implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. During our presidency of the Climate Vulnerable Forum, we launched the Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan, which is aimed at putting Bangladesh on a sustainable trajectory from vulnerability to resilience and climate prosperity. Our national plans and policies on climate change and natural disaster have been made gender sensitive. We are ready to support other vulnerable countries to develop their own prosperity plans. I call on world leaders to promote inclusive climate actions.

Migrants continue to face precarious situations in their migration journeys and are denied their rights. To overcome that situation, we must enhance global partnership and solidarity. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and its Progress Declaration give us an excellent road map in that regard.

Today complex global crises have reversed decades of development gains of many developing countries.

The realization of the 2030 Agenda appears to be a farfetched dream for many of them at this moment. They need targeted support in areas that are severely impacted, including health, education, decent jobs and agriculture. There is no better way than harnessing the potentials of science, technology and innovation. We are witnessing how frontier technologies are rapidly changing the world. It is imperative that everyone, everywhere gets fair and equal access to these technologies. The burgeoning digital divide must be bridged.

Sixteen countries, including Bangladesh, are now on track to graduate from the list of least developed countries. However, the evolving global crises have posed serious challenges to our sustainable graduation. We appeal to development partners for enhanced and tailored support. We welcome the Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries in that regard.

After the peaceful settlement of maritime boundary issues with neighbouring countries, the blue economy has opened a new horizon for the development of Bangladesh. We are committed to working with global partners for the sustainable use, conservation and management of our marine resources to accelerate our socioeconomic development. The effective implementation of the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea is imperative to harnessing sustainable utilization of ocean resources. In that regard, I also call upon Member States to work closely to bridge the gaps and conclude the much-needed international instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction.

We are fully committed to complete disarmament, including the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. We ratified the landmark Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in 2019. We have consistently implemented our commitment to peacekeeping operations. As a reflection of our peace-centric foreign policy, we are the largest contributor of troops and police to United Nations peacekeeping missions. They help maintain peace, support the capacity-building of national and local institutions, protect civilians from harm, empower women and other vulnerable communities and build a sustainable society. While performing those duties, many of them have sacrificed their lives.

We believe that we cannot sustain peace without addressing the root causes of conflict. As the current Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, we are doing our part by creating a platform for multi-stakeholder engagement in support of the conflict-affected countries. We are committed to pursuing our efforts to strengthen the women and peace and security agenda. We have adopted a zero-tolerance policy on terrorism and violent extremism. We do not allow our territory to be used by any party to incite or cause terrorist acts or harm to others. I also call on Member States to work together for the conclusion of an internationally binding instrument to tackle cybercrime and cyberviolence.

As a responsible Member State, Bangladesh is fully committed to protecting and promoting the human rights of its own people. We have adopted a holistic and inclusive approach to ensuring the political, economic, cultural and social rights of the people. For example, we have adopted legal provisions to ensure the rights and welfare of third-gender individuals. We have been implementing the Ashrayan project to provide free housing to all homeless and landless families in the country. Since 1997 and for 18 years during the tenure of my Government, we have provided housing to more than 3.5 million people.

We believe that continued democratic polity and norms can ensure people's socioeconomic emancipation. We will continue to extend our support to the Palestinian people. I reiterate Bangladesh's unequivocal support for the two-State solution, based on the pre-1967 borders and the establishment of a Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

I shall now turn to the Rohingya people forcibly displaced from Myanmar. Last month marked five years since the 2017 start of the mass exodus of the Rohingyas to Bangladesh from their home country. Despite our bilateral engagements with Myanmar, trilateral discussions with partners and engagements with the United Nations and Member States, not a single Rohingya has been repatriated to her or his ancestral home in Myanmar. The ongoing political turmoil and armed conflicts in the country have made the repatriation of the displaced Rohingyas even more difficult. I hope the United Nations will play an effective role in that regard. The prolonged presence of the Rohingya in Bangladesh has had serious repercussions on our economy, environment, security and sociopolitical stability. Uncertainty over repatriation has led to widespread frustration. Cross-

border organized crime, including human and drug trafficking, is on the rise. This situation can even potentially fuel radicalization. If the problem persists further, it may affect the security and stability of the entire region and beyond.

The greatest lesson we learned from the COVID-19 pandemic is that no one is safe until everyone is safe. We must use the hard-earned lessons to stimulate the critical and much-needed reforms of our institutions, including of the United Nations, to better prepare for such calamities in the future. We are interested in looking for transformative solutions to alleviate poverty, mitigate the adverse effects of climate change, and prevent conflicts and the economic, energy and fuel crises that the world is grappling with now.

However, we need to understand the fact that socioeconomic development cannot be achieved without ensuring peace and stability. We want to see the end of the Russia-Ukraine war. Due to sanctions and counter-sanctions, all humankind, including women and children, is being punished. The war's impact is not confined to one country; rather, it puts the lives and livelihoods of the people of all nations at greater risk and infringes their human rights. People are deprived of food, shelter, health care and education. Children suffer the most in particular. Their future sinks into darkness. I appeal to the conscience of the world to stop the arms race, war and sanctions; ensure food, education, health care and the security of the children; and establish peace. We want to see a peaceful world with enhanced cooperation and solidarity, shared prosperity and collective actions. We share one planet, and we owe it to our future generations to leave it in a better shape.

I would like to talk about a cruel tragedy now. On 15 August 1975, my father, the father of the nation, the incumbent President of Bangladesh Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was brutally assassinated, along with my mother Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib, my three younger brothers, Freedom Fighter Captain Sheikh Kamal and his newly married wife Sultana, Freedom Fighter Lieutenant Sheikh Jamal and his newly married wife Parveen Rosy, and Sheikh Russell, who was just 10 years old. A total of 18 of my family members were killed, including my paternal uncle Freedom Fighter Sheikh Abu Naser, paternal uncle Abdur Rab Serniabat, his 13-year-old daughter Baby Serniabat, 10-year-old son Arif Serniabat and 4-year-old son Shukanto, my paternal cousin Freedom Fighter Sheikh Mani and his pregnant wife Arzu Mani, Brigadier Jamil, and

police officer Siddiquir Rahman. May their souls rest in peace. My younger sister, Sheikh Rehana and myself survived the brutality on 15 August 1975, as we were in Germany at that time. After that, we spent six years abroad as refugees.

In 1971, when the liberation war going on, the Pakistan occupation forces killed 3 million innocent Bengalis. Two hundred thousand women were heinously tortured and abused. I recall their sacrifices with deep homage. After my father was arrested in 1971, he was taken to an undisclosed location in Pakistan. In Dhaka, my mother, my younger brothers Sheikh Russell and Sheikh Jamal, younger sister Sheikh Rehana and I were arrested, too, and were kept in a damp one-story house. My first child, Sajeeb Wazed Joy, was born in that prison house. There was no furniture in that house. There were no medical facilities or provisions. Even getting daily food was uncertain.

Having suffered these things myself, I can rightly realize the pain and agony that people endure due to the horrors of war, killings, coups and conflict. I therefore do not want war. I want peace. I want welfare for humankind. I want economic development for people. I want to ensure a peaceful world, and a developed and prosperous life for future generations. My earnest appeal to Member States is to stop war and the arms race. May the values of humankind be upheld. Let us join our hands together and build a better future, leaving no one behind, so that our future generations may live in a peaceful world.

Joy Bangla, Joy Bangabandhu. May Bangladesh live forever.

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

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

Address by Mr. Andrej Plenković, Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia

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

Mr. Andrej Plenković, Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia, was escorted to the rostrum.

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

Mr. Plenković (Croatia): We have gathered this year as a brutal war with a multifaceted and global impact continues to rage in Europe. The Russian aggression against Ukraine has upended the rules-based order, the multilateral system and economic flows. It has brought about human suffering and refugee flows, destruction of civilian infrastructure and war crimes. The latest announcements about partial mobilization in Russia, preparations for the organization of sham referendums in occupied parts of Ukraine and nuclear threats are another dangerous escalation in an already unprecedented crisis. While the Ukrainian people are suffering the most in their struggle to defend their homes, the consequences of the Russian aggression are felt globally and so it must be condemned worldwide.

Three decades ago, Croatia itself was a war-ravaged country in jeopardy, also facing armed aggression. Almost a third of its territory was occupied. Additionally, we had to fight for international recognition and were under an arms embargo. The Croatian people know what it means to be under attack and what it takes to defend their homeland. Against all odds, Croatia and the Croatian people prevailed. Many, especially our defenders, paid the highest price for our freedom and liberty. Stronger for its own experience, Croatia today is an exporter of peace and stability, a humanitarian donor worldwide, a popular tourist destination and the country that produces the fastest electric car in the world.

Success is possible if one is determined and has a vision of the future. Precisely because of our own experience, Croatia immediately and unequivocally extended political, humanitarian, economic and military support and solidarity to Ukraine. To do otherwise would be a betrayal of principles and values we all hold dear, particularly respect for human rights and responsibility to protect populations from atrocity crimes. This time around, Europe and its partners came together to stand up to aggression, show solidarity and strengthen their own resilience. In October, we will highlight this unity once more in Zagreb, as Croatia prepares to host the first-ever Parliamentary Summit of the Crimea Platform.

Croatia's transition was long and complex, but it was guided by a firm notion that democracy, human rights and respect for national minorities was the best way for Croatian society as a whole to further develop and prosper. Today our democratic systems are challenged by the fallacious and dangerous thesis that autocracy is ultimately a more efficient and pragmatic way to govern. Our national dialogues are distorted by targeted disinformation, fake news and hybrid attacks. Our trust in democracy is being undermined from both within and outside of our societies.

As fierce as these challenges are, our commitment to democracy, its procedures and values must remain strong. On the crossroads between democracy and autocracy, our choice should remain clear. In today's perilous moment, Croatia remains a staunch supporter of the international rules-based order and the United Nations at the centre of global cooperation. Although far from being ideal, this system, with all of its flaws, has still enabled the world to reach common ground and find some remarkable and inspirational results for local and global issues in the almost eight decades of its existence.

We live in a plurality of simultaneous and interconnected crises that affect us all. In order to overcome this perfect storm of crises, we need determined action now. The further erosion of our core rules and values should be halted and reversed, respect for international law upheld and accountability ensured. We should also act to make our system fit for purpose. That is particularly true for the reform of the Security Council. The General Assembly intervened instead and offered a platform for an overwhelming majority of States to condemn the aggression against a sovereign and independent country.

When the world is facing a geopolitical crisis of the scale such as the one in Ukraine today, we must ensure that our policies and actions are predictable, reliable and timely across the United Nations system. Croatia's adherence to promoting peace and security is evident also in its continuous participation in the United Nations, European Union (EU) and NATO peacekeeping missions and operations. It is an investment we are readily willing to make.

As we were beginning to recover from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), the war in Ukraine dramatically altered our perspectives and political agenda. It radically changed not only the security

but also the energy architecture of Europe, and is threatening global food security. We must stand united and step up our efforts to reorganize the energy supply lines. We cannot accept extortion and we cannot be held hostage over food and energy, which all of us need. Therefore, we applaud the Secretary-General and the United Nations for their role in brokering the deal to export Ukrainian grain.

On the regional level, Croatia is contributing to energy security and diversification by its liquefied natural gas terminal on the Adriatic island of Krk. Beyond ensuring its own needs, Croatia is now able to supply its neighbours and other countries in Central Europe. Simultaneously, we are investing in renewable energy, with a third of our energy consumption and almost half of our electricity production already coming from renewables. We are ensuring a fair transition and preventing energy poverty, implementing financial measures that benefit both the citizens and the business sector.

We must find a global solution to the price of gas, which threatens our households and our economies. It is intolerable for a minority of speculators to enrich themselves in these times by imposing exorbitant prices. What is more, we are also witnessing an intolerable imbalance in terms of greenhouse gas emissions. The richest 1 per cent in the world are responsible for 15 per cent of emissions — twice as much as half the poorest of humankind. That is not acceptable. It is up to those who pollute the most to provide the most effort; that is not only fair but also the most effective if we are to achieve our climate objectives.

Clean mobility and innovative technologies are an opportunity and new technologies, such as hydrogen, offer new horizons for stronger cooperation between Europe, Africa and the Middle East. While we in Croatia successfully passed the test during the pandemic and avoided social fracture with tailored national measures, global inflation and the rise of prices have to be tackled again. We as a Government are continuing our interventionist policy to alleviate the burden of the energy crisis on our households and businesses, local Governments and public institutions, schools and hospitals. Similar to our efforts during the pandemic, we are now implementing a strong national package worth more than 6 per cent of our gross domestic product. That includes financial measures, subsidies for vulnerable groups and limitations on the prices of basic food items.

I wish to say a few words on climate change and biodiversity. Despite the enormous current challenges, we have a responsibility to also safeguard our commitments to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Croatia welcomes the ambitious approach put forward in the report of the Secretary-General *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982) as a concrete road map towards its realization. Here, too, a revitalized global action and political commitment are needed to ensure effective multilateralism. By integrating the Sustainable Development Goals in its national development strategy towards 2030, Croatia has proven its dedication to their full implementation.

As a current member of the Economic and Social Council, we will work closely together with our partners to ensure more sustainable, greener, inclusive and equitable societies in which no one will be left behind. Ahead of the twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Egypt, let us evaluate the implementation of our joint commitments from Glasgow. We need to strengthen cooperation in the effort to find mechanisms and financial resources to fulfil the Paris Agreement and to continue the fight against climate change at the national, regional and global levels.

In the year in which we are marking the thirtieth anniversary of our United Nations membership, Croatia remains a constructive and responsible international actor. In the coming months, we will join a group of only 15 other countries that are at the same time members of the EU, NATO, the Eurozone and the Schengen Area. That follows a sober and prudent decision in line with my Government's policy of modern sovereignism. Through that policy, we have strengthened our international position by pooling resources with our allies and partners, furthering our national interests and tackling economic and social challenges.

Croatia also pays special attention to South-East Europe, a region still not fully integrated into the EU. The region's stability, development and democratic progress are not only in our, but also in Europe's interest. We support a clear European Union perspective for candidates and aspirants based on the fulfilment of well-established and clear criteria, the implementation of reforms and the delivery of tangible results. The stability of neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina, with which we share a 1,000-kilometre border, is of particular importance to Croatia. We would like to see

a prosperous and functional Bosnia and Herzegovina progressing firmly on the path to EU membership.

In the light of the current situation in Ukraine and elsewhere, it is pivotal that international law and international treaties be respected. That includes in particular peace treaties such as the Dayton-Paris Peace Agreement, which brought peace to Bosnia and Herzegovina as the multinational and multicultural homeland of its three constitutive peoples — Croats, Bosniaks and Serbs — as well as others. For the cohesion, stability and progress of the country, their constitutional full equality must be ensured and respected. Given the fact that the Bosniak political leaders have publicly admitted they had no true intention of coming to a deal with Bosnian Croat political leaders over the electoral reform, in line with the Constitutional Court verdict, the only way forward remains for High Representative Christian Schmidt to act and use his Bonn powers. As a friend of Bosnia and Herzegovina, I call upon him to use his powers to ensure legitimate representation and equality of Bosnian Croats in the country's institutions following the 2 October general election. As the least numerous among the constituent peoples, the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina demand no favours, only equality.

We are mutually interdependent. Turmoil in one region has consequences for us, all no matter where we are on the globe. None of our national goals can be achieved without solidarity and the rules-based order upon which not only our security, but also our survival rests. We must build, protect and defend, and stand up to those who destroy, lie and loot. As we witness aggression and atrocities on European soil again and as the rule of power threatens to bring the world order down, we owe it to future generations to be on the right side of history.

The international community must foster its unity and stand with Ukraine in the fight for its own existence. We have to unite in our respect for international law, as well as in finding global solutions to overlapping crises, including rising inflation, energy and food crises. To achieve secure and affordable energy, we need a global solution for gas prices. We must also ensure sustainable energy transition.

Our world has changed permanently. In these new circumstances, more international cooperation has no alternative. Let us commit to working jointly for the benefit of our common future. The approach of

democracies in international relations is a cooperative one. The approach of the authoritarian regimes is a conflictual one. The global Organization, the United Nations — and all of us within it — must prove that the rules-based order and the cooperative approach will prevail.

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

Mr. Andrej Plenković, Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Her Excellency Ms. Fiame Naomi Mataaafa, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa.

Ms. Fiame Naomi Mataaafa, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Ms. Fiame Naomi Mataaafa, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, and inviting her to address the Assembly.

Ms. Mataaafa (Samoa): I extend Samoa's congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Csaba Kőrösi on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session. He can be assured of Samoa's full support in the successful execution of his mandate over the next 12 months.

It is an honour for me to address the Assembly in person as Samoa's Prime Minister as part of the year-long celebratory events of the sixtieth anniversary of our independence since we became independent in 1962.

Samoa has for decades championed the importance of the rule of law and the protection of human rights. Many labelled the events that unfolded following our 2021 elections a constitutional crisis. While those were difficult times for Samoa, they were also key to our forward journey as a maturing democracy. They divided our country and tested the key pillars of our society:

our faith, our culture and the rule of law. However, my delivering this statement today as the first female Prime Minister of Samoa and bringing about a change in Government after four decades are testaments to the fact that the rule of law has prevailed. Samoa today remains peaceful and stable, despite all the challenges we lived through.

My Government will continue to safeguard the rights of all its citizens, especially the most vulnerable, by strengthening appropriate social protection measures and prioritizing assistance for those most in need. We have focused on people-centred development as pivotal to the implementation of our development agenda over the next five years.

Samoa presented its third universal periodic review in November 2021. We maintain that our Christian values, unique culture and traditions complement our human rights obligations and fundamental freedoms, which we have committed to promote, respect, protect and fulfil.

As we take stock of the global challenges we face, we highlight the need for sustainable measures to address economic recovery following the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and urge all nations to resolve and work towards peace and security, enhance resilience from climate change impacts and achieve our Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda.

The theme of this year's general debate, "A watershed moment: transformative solutions to interlocking challenges", resonates with Samoa as we clearly recognize that the world is at a critical moment in the history of the United Nations, owing to complex and interconnected crises. We need an effective United Nations to mobilize our collective efforts and to propel urgent actions to address those issues.

The achievement of the SDGs must be the driving force in our collective efforts over the next eight years. Together, we must elevate our actions with a sense of urgency to address the climate emergency or our planet will be lost to us and to future generations. Though we are far removed from the centres of conflict, resultant escalating fuel and food prices and threats of nuclear weapons use have reached our isolation. Yet no one empathizes with the war climate is waging on atoll islanders watching their maritime boundaries disappear fast with sea-level rise.

Samoa stands ready to meet its obligations and commitments to achieving the SDGs. There is a need to strengthen capacity-building at all levels, enhance data and information collection and storage through national and regional climate change portals, as well as invest in robust systems and processes, including reporting and verification, and knowledge brokerage. Improving resilience actions through learning and developing knowledge societies will enable adaptation and responsiveness to future crises.

Both the global financial and governance systems are desperately in need of reform. As the Secretary-General lucidly puts it, the global financial system is morally bankrupt, and it favours the rich and punishes the poor. That must change. The approval and effective implementation of the multidimensional vulnerability index will be a move in the right direction in addressing that imbalance and make the global financial architecture fit for purpose by tackling the financing gaps of small island developing States (SIDS). The full support of all our development partners, international financial institutions and multilateral development banks is critical in ensuring the effective implementation of the multidimensional vulnerability index.

Small island developing States face a unique set of vulnerabilities that impede their ability to achieve sustainable development. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated those vulnerabilities, with many SIDS being particularly affected by the drop in international tourism and remittances. Consequently, the timely call for and endorsement of a multidimensional vulnerability index will allow for the inclusion of more than just income-based criteria to assess eligibility for concessional finance. A universal multidimensional vulnerability index could be viewed as the foundation upon which the key principles guiding specific responses to our vulnerabilities are anchored. It is an option and not a hindrance. It should be perceived as the landing zone upon which specific responses could be framed depending on the circumstances involved. It is a tool that provides for a richer lens on vulnerability and resilience; its adoption and full implementation are therefore critical to our economic recovery.

Climate change remains our number one priority. The scientific evidence is clear and irrefutable. For Pacific communities, the main challenge is securing action for survival, and we all need to shoulder our responsibilities and play our part. The big polluters and emitters have a moral obligation and responsibility to

meet their commitments ahead of the twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27), because they hold the key to our achieving the 1.5°C promise of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. We call on all parties to commit to more ambitious nationally determined contributions to meet the Paris Agreement promise, as we are all part of the solution.

Our global commitment to implementing the Paris Agreement is critical. Even if warming is limited to 1.5°C, SIDS will continue to incur severe loss and damage. We must therefore promote recovery investments that are climate-smart, resilient and in line with net-zero emissions by 2050. We are at the doorstep of COP27. We must work diligently to generate solutions to meet expectations. The achievement of a 50/50 split between mitigation and adaptation funding is of paramount importance to Samoa and SIDS. We should not put out the flame of loss and damage.

Natural disasters continue to devastate countless lives. Recent climate events are transboundary and drive home the reality that no country is immune to the impacts of climate change. Those environmental threats will worsen. The triple planetary crisis is the alarm knell that is reminding us that we are putting immeasurable pressure on the planet. Our relentless need to extract resources from nature is causing disruptions, propelling climate change, destroying nature and raising pollution levels.

Any response programmes must be informed by our commitment to science for informed policy and law and institutions that strengthen environmental governance. We seek to further enable change through transformations in finance and economic systems and by leveraging data and technology for the environment. Small island developing States like Samoa do not always have the requisite levels of capabilities and capacity to repurpose and redirect financial and economic systems towards sustainability, improve the effectiveness of legal frameworks, deliver science as the catalyst for action and be digitally connected.

The ocean is in us, and we are the ocean. It is the lifeblood of our blue Pacific nations — the lungs of our planet. But while its sustainable use provides a strategic pathway towards our sustainable development, we must also address the associated risks. The health of the ocean is a key priority. We must therefore continue to advance work on the ocean-climate nexus, such as

by empowering women, girls and youth with relevant knowledge and skills to contribute to the health of the ocean.

The recent Our Ocean Conference in Palau and the second Ocean Conference in Lisbon were opportunities to take stock of SDG 14 and we welcome the call for more investment in making the ocean and its resources more sustainable. Of all the SDGs, life below water is the most underfunded. That must change. We need to attract and retain sustainable and innovative investment, including foreign direct investment through blending, guarantees and other innovative financial instruments. Our global community must focus on the work that remains to be accomplished. The pledges and commitments made at those two conferences and at COP26 are inconsequential if they are not delivered on time to effect actions on the ground.

Samoa's marine protection goals, outlined in our first ocean strategy, are aligned to the Blue Leaders 30x30 campaign, as are calls for protecting 30 per cent of our global oceans by 2030. We welcome the complementarity of such initiatives and encourage others to join.

The Pacific Ocean hosts a remarkable array of biodiversity. With our blue Pacific family, Samoa continues to prioritize both marine and terrestrial ecosystems restoration. We remain engaged in the Convention on Biological Diversity process. Together with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and COP27, 2022 is a critical year for aligning action to tackle the climate emergency and addressing the threats posed by biodiversity loss.

The Pacific SIDS subscribe to the position that preserving maritime zones and the rights and entitlements that flow from them give expression not only to the foundational principles of equity and stability, but also to the notion of climate justice deeply rooted in human rights and the principles of international law. In that vein, we urge all Member States to inject a sense of urgency into efforts to conclude negotiations on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond areas of national jurisdiction. Samoa pledges its support to the Vanuatu initiative to seek an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on climate change.

We must unite to prevent and reduce marine pollution, including plastics, oil spills, waste discharge and nuclear contaminants. If we continue down the current path, we will fish out of our oceans more plastics than fish. Pacific SIDS contribute less than 1.3 per cent of the mismanaged plastics in the world's oceans yet are among the main recipients of plastics pollution and its impacts.

The effects of overfishing and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing are a major concern for Pacific economies. Lost revenues are in the billions. The increased acidification of our ocean is already destroying entire reef ecosystems. Reef damage affects fish population, which in turn affects entire fisheries upon which we rely for our livelihoods.

The global food system is at a critical stage, made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic, the onslaught of climate change and the ongoing war in Ukraine. The Food Systems Summit held last year mobilized the global community to find transformative solutions. Samoa was pleased to be part of that important event, which encouraged shared exploration of potential for collective action.

Through organized dialogues, Samoa benefited from a comprehensive assessment of the issues involved in building the sustainability of our food systems. Access to a balanced and nutritional diet is crucial and requires a return to locally produced, high-quality fresh foods and less of processed imported foods. That will be key to addressing the rising burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), which represent the single largest cause of premature mortality in the Pacific countries, including Samoa. With support from our development partners, the Samoa Government launched the first comprehensive NCD control programme among Pacific Island countries, in May 2020. Its aim was to build people-centred and systematic NCD service provision in Samoa to strengthen primary health care, empower community participation, promote early detection and effective referral of NCDs, and increase population awareness of NCD risk factors.

We continue to call for a future of peaceful and open societies, free from wars, nuclear weapons and the threat of terrorism. The Boe Declaration on Regional Security defines for the Pacific what constitutes security concerns. Those are primarily non-conventional in nature, ranging from climate to environmental and resource security, human and cybersecurity, and

transnational crimes. The 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, adopted by Pacific Island Forum leaders at their July 2022 meeting, will support and strengthen the key tenets of the Boe Declaration.

While Samoa welcomes development partners on our terms, we note with concern the ongoing geopolitical posturing in our region and call for our national and collective interests to be placed at the forefront, for a peaceful and secure blue Pacific continent.

We are concerned about the serious shortfalls in the implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, noting that nuclear-weapon States have spent billions of dollars on modernizing and maintaining their nuclear arsenals rather than on helping the victims of past use and testing of nuclear weapons and focusing on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The increasing use of information and communications technology has raised issues of security and privacy. Online cybercriminal activities have increased, including the dissemination of disinformation and the misuse of information.

We rely on our collective responsibility as a global community to prevent and combat high-tech cyber- and electronic crimes. Samoa believes those are crucial processes at the multilateral level in ensuring that cyberspace is safe for all. We therefore need to work together to combat and eliminate those destabilizing activities.

Accelerated action to meet the promise of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs is an imperative. COVID-19 and climate change have uprooted and even reversed hard-fought development gains. However, we must persist to meet the SDGs, as they provide the best option for a brighter future and countering the threats posed by the climate crisis.

We should not forget the commitments and undertakings made towards the full implementation of the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway. I thank all SIDS partners and the Secretary-General for their continuous support and commitment to that task. The proposed monitoring framework for the SAMOA Pathway is a necessary tool for follow-up action and review, allowing for effective resource allocation and accountability. Outstanding issues relating to the framework must be concluded urgently, considering the fast-approaching timeline set out in the Secretary-General's report on that matter (A/73/226),

as well as the fast-approaching timeline of the 2024 SIDS conference.

No country should be placed in a situation of choosing between rebuilding its economy and servicing its debt obligations. The March 2021 report of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) noted that SIDS simply cannot support their SDGs and fund their core needs on their own under the prevailing conditions of economic contraction. Tourism may never return to pre-COVID-19 levels. Aviation services will be slow to recover, and one casualty of the pandemic, in our case, was the recent demise of our national airline, Samoa Airways.

Many Pacific Island countries rely on remittances from diasporas and communities. Apart from being an important source of income for families and foreign exchange reserves for Governments, remittances are an important buffer in periods of economic shocks and natural disasters. Yet the cost of sending remittances to the Pacific is over 10 per cent, which is higher than the global average and 7 per cent higher than the target set by the SDGs.

According to the 2021 IMF report, the Pacific region is in a recession. Income, demand for regional exports and tourism receipts have all recorded reductions, while public spending continues on an upward trajectory. The projected outcome is a greater risk of debt distress. It is also the case that most of the Pacific debts are with multilateral agencies. While the adoption of austerity measures is an option, there is also the real possibility that this may worsen poverty and undermine economic recovery.

Multilateralism and united international cooperation are our best response to the many threats we face, as building resilience at the national level can only take us so far. Samoa is confident that despite all the challenges — existential threats for some of us — there is still hope if there is unity among our United Nations family. We need to change our world for the better and leave hope for our future generations.

The COVID-19 situation, forcing border lockdowns and state-of-emergency restrictions further emphasize the importance of digitalization for the SIDS to build resilience and meet the Sustainable Development Goals. Samoa will continue to prioritize the need to invest in digital technologies and promote a digital economy and connectivity. This is key to stimulating business opportunities and increasing productivity and growth

in more traditional sectors, such as agriculture and tourism. Investment in innovation and digitalization for Samoa can enable more efficient delivery of health and education, improve connectivity between rural and urban communities, advance economic empowerment for women and youth, and assist with more efficient public-service delivery.

To fully realize the benefits of a digital economy, Samoans must be able to connect with and trust the technology; an enabling business environment must be in place; and investment in education, skills, and digital literacy is paramount. The availability of fast, reliable and affordable internet services to Government, the business community and the public is crucial. In the agriculture and health sectors, we are investing in digital solutions for contact-tracing and for information-sharing between farmers. We recently launched our e-health system to improve medical record-keeping and strengthen health information and vital statistics. More importantly, as we expect increasing health-security threats, this e-health system will be vital to protecting the health and well-being of our population and enhance its resilience. Our experiences with COVID-19 and the ongoing fight with climate change reinforce our conviction of the importance of technology and online distance learning to provide access to quality education for all.

We should not lose sight of the fact that, while pursuing these home-grown solutions, we do not end up creating disparity between those who can and those who cannot gain access to or afford these solutions. But I am convinced that embracing technology and knowledge-sharing for our people will be a powerful driver for change, innovation and welfare.

The report of the Secretary-General entitled “Our Common Agenda” (A/75/982) highlights the urgency of reforming our global governance system. The coronavirus disease is upending our world, threatening our health, destroying economies and livelihoods and deepening poverty and inequalities. Increasingly, people are turning their backs on the values of trust in and solidarity with one another — the very values we need to rebuild our world and secure a better, more sustainable future for our people and our planet. We agreed that our challenges are interconnected, cross borders and all other divides and can only be addressed by an equally interconnected response, through reinvigorated multilateralism with the United Nations at the centre of our efforts. “Our Common Agenda” is,

above all, an agenda of action designed to accelerate the implementation of existing agreements, including the Sustainable Development Goals, and it is our road map to recapturing this positive spirit and beginning to rebuild our world and mend the trust in one another that is needed at this moment in history. Just as with the Security Council and the global financial system, Samoa is convinced that now is the opportune moment to bring about reforms that would make our global response to future crises and emergencies more effective and timelier, and that an all-United Nations institutional approach is a necessity.

In conclusion, let me end by reaffirming Samoa’s commitment to the United Nations and our conviction that it remains the foremost forum to address all issues that transcend national boundaries. As we look to the future, the collective hope for humankind is for leaders to take tough decisions for the health of our planet. Entrenched positions detached from today’s realities and designed to pursue unrelated agendas do not have a place in our collective efforts. While we need to make bold and courageous decisions, let us protect the safety nets crucial to our existence.

There is a saying in my country that goes

“Aua le naunau i le i’a ae ia manumanu i le upega”,

which translates to

“Hunger not for the fish at the risk of ruining your net”.

I am grateful to be able to make this statement on behalf of my country.

Address by Dritan Abazović, Prime Minister of Montenegro

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

Mr. Dritan Abazović, Prime Minister of Montenegro, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Dritan Abazović, Prime Minister of Montenegro, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Abazović (Montenegro): It is a great pleasure for me, on behalf of the people of Montenegro, to address the General Assembly today, just as it is always a pleasure to feel the cosmopolitan spirit of the annual high-level week at the United Nations.

At the outset, I would like to wish success to the new President of the General Assembly, Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, and say that I hope that his term will be very successful.

The world staggers from one crisis to the next, from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic to yet another war, and today we are all concerned.

Montenegro's position on the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine is that we stand with the people of Ukraine and strongly oppose the aggression, which is an attack on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of that country. War is not the solution. Aggression is not the solution. Bombs are not the solution.

Mr. Fifield (Australia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We come from a part of the world that knows well the cost of humanitarian and refugee crises stemming from ethnic conflict and the uselessness of raising armies against one another. That is not the solution. In the twenty-first century, humankind should be smarter than that. We should not use war to resolve political problems. That is not a solution.

We should sit together and engage in dialogue to consider the different political options. States must find a way to engage in dialogue. I know that that is not easy, but war is not the solution.

We will continue to support Ukraine. We will do so permanently. Our agenda is to follow European Union (EU) foreign policy to the letter, including sanctions against the Russia Federation. It is not a question of economics; it is a question of principles and standards. Today we have an aggression against Ukraine; tomorrow some other State could be attacked.

We need to find other solutions. War has created a lot of problems. In Montenegro, we have around 10,000 Ukrainian refugees. For many of the countries represented in this Hall, that is not a huge number, but for Montenegro, a small country, it is almost to 2 per cent of the population. As Montenegro's Prime Minister, I am very proud to say that everyone in Montenegro feels very comfortable and very safe. We will continue to open the door for people in trouble.

We will not say that they are not welcome. They are welcome. And with our relatively small capacity, we will support everything that upholds democratic standards and solidarity with our fellow human beings.

War produces a great many problems. At this very moment, however, we are facing another crisis — an energy crisis — which may lead us to experience a very problematic winter in Europe. We should understand one simple thing: today's energy crisis will become tomorrow's economic crisis, which will then, in turn, become a security crisis the day after tomorrow. If we do not find a solution together with EU countries, we will be facing some very big problems.

Why are we facing an energy crisis? It is not only because of war. There are two factors that are driving the world's current energy crisis, especially in Europe. The first factor is the war in Ukraine, which is making a mess of the energy markets, triggering an increase in the price of every kind of energy, including electricity. The second factor is climate change. Today in Europe, we have rivers that are at their lowest levels. We have lakes that are also at their lowest levels. And it is at the United Nations that we must engage in solving this problem for the future. We are therefore experiencing an energy crisis, but it is not just because of the war. War is a key factor, but it is a secondary factor. The main factor is climate change. We need to protect the environment for future generations.

I want to talk about the environment because I come from a State that, in its Constitution, is dedicated to being an ecological State. We are the only State in the world whose Constitution declares it to be an ecological State, and I am more than sure that constitutions in future will be written with ecological provisions designed to protect the environment. We want to build our country as a green destination. I am very proud to say that we can still drink water from rivers in the north of my country.

It is crucial that we protect nature, undertake green projects, find solutions to the problem of pollution and everything else that destroys nature. I agree with those who say that we need to take greater care. This is not a question for one country alone. We need to act with unity and solidarity in this, or we will worsen the problem. Green projects and the protection of the environment are items high on Montenegro's agenda. We hope that together with other countries we will find a productive and sustainable solution for the future.

Another important issue for us is transitional justice, which has been with us in the Western Balkans for many years. Members know that we had a major conflict in the past, and that, since the dissolution of

Yugoslavia, there has been a great deal of fighting over ethnic and religious problems. Today we are trying to build a modern European society, but we cannot do that if we are still dealing with transitional justice.

There are two types of peace: positive peace and negative peace. Negative peace is when there is absence of conflict, but institutions are weak, politicized, unprofessional and controlled by corrupt leaders. That is negative peace.

We want to see more positive peace in the region. Positive peace stems from independent institutions, an independent judiciary and efforts to fight against organized crime and corruption, especially corrupt leaders who promote nationalism and conflict in the region because they want to maintain the regional status quo and foreclose the possibility of new leaders coming to power to make changes in the country or in the region.

Positive peace is something what we want to fight for. It is the way that we can end the period of transitional justice. It is how we can look at and deal with what happened in the past. Without pursuing that, we will not have the truth, and without truth we will not have reconciliation.

Our country is in this Hall to promote reconciliation. Our country is in this Hall to shake hands with representatives of every country in the world that seeks to be grounded in universal principles. The people of Montenegro want justice. I believe that the people of many countries represented in this Hall want to see more justice globally and more justice locally.

We are very proud of our very inclusive multicultural society. It is true that our country has had problems, but we try to solve them in the right way. Everyone is more than welcome in Montenegro. We need to move forward by promoting, just as members of the Human Rights Council do, human rights everywhere, inclusive open societies, for the sake of every nation, ethnicity, religion, and individual.

We are proud of our diversity. We promote diversity. Diversity is good for every society. It is good to see the cosmopolitan spirit in New York these days. We want to have that kind of society.

We want to promote more media freedom. We want to condemn people who are against media freedom. In our country, we are still investigating the killing of some well-known journalists that took place 20 years ago.

We are not proud of that. We want to have institutions that can fix the problem and punish people who attack the media.

Media freedom is an important part of democracy. In our country we should do more about that. We should promote freedom of media and every kind of every kind of freedom.

I am very proud of the Government of Montenegro's in fighting organized crime and promoting justice in this most recent period. Why do I mention this now? I do so because it is not only Montenegro's problem.

I refer in this regard to high-level corruption, namely, cigarette smuggling and cocaine smuggling. Some 20 per cent of all cigarettes smuggled in EU countries go through Montenegro. We are the country which, in the last six months, seized 149,000 cartons of cigarettes, worth more than \$120 million on the market. That is the biggest action against cigarette smuggling in all of Europe. Last year we undertook a similar action against cocaine smuggling. That cocaine was not sold in Montenegro because Montenegro has 600,000 people; it is cocaine for sale in Western Europe. These results show very clearly the Government's orientation as well as that of the State and the people of Montenegro: we no longer wish to have organized crime or corruption in our country.

We are ready to commit to that, and we invite the General Assembly and the rest of the United Nations, as well as other partners, to support us, because it is a transnational problem. It is not the problem of only one country.

We will continue these efforts with our international partners and with States that provide us with a lot of information. But it is important to understand that behind nationalism in the region hides corruption. Again, behind nationalism in the Western Balkans lies corruption. Fighting against corruption will fight nationalism. The less corruption there is, the less nationalism there will be; the less corruption there is, the less tension there will be. With less corruption, we can focus on the economy and on progress.

With current levels of corruption, our attention will always be focused on the past. We cannot change the past. The only thing we can change is the future. Our common strategy should be to change the future in the right way.

With regard to Montenegro's foreign policy, I would like to underline two very important points. We are full members of NATO. We made a very good decision in 2017 to join NATO. Now, in a period of crisis, when we see that such countries as Sweden and Finland are joining NATO, everybody in Montenegro understands why our joining was so important.

Another one of our goals — and this is bigger than NATO membership — is to join the EU. We want to be part of the big European family. For small countries like Montenegro, it is very important to be in the democratic countries club. We want to be the next member of the EU. We are dedicated to doing everything we must do to find the solution to joining the EU as soon as possible.

The Western Balkans should not be the black hole of Europe. The Western Balkans can make great contributions to Europe and to the world, with its culture, diversity, people — with everything they have to offer

And it is very important to understand that we are not alone. I am more than sure that we are not alone, but we need first to finish with our internal Montenegrin issues, and we are really ready to do that.

It is very important for us to have regional cooperation and for us to support regional initiatives. All regional initiatives that bring greater focus on the economy and on progress are welcome in our country. We want to see people who had problems with each other in the past to sit together and discuss these projects.

We are really proud to be the positive case in the region. We are the country that builds bridges between other countries. We continue to be ready to play that role in the coming period.

We want to see how Serbia and Kosovo find common agreement. We want to see how our neighbour Bosnia and Herzegovina finds internal agreement with itself. We want to see all of its six States of the Balkans form a productive Balkans region. Every inclusive initiative is more than welcome for our country. We cannot feel comfortable if we are successful and our neighbours are not. We want to be successful together. We want to see every single country — not just in the region, but in the world — succeed. This is the politics of a small country called Montenegro.

We want to promote peace. Our wish is to promote peace. Our wish is to promote stability and progress. I think that the opportunity afforded us in these five

or six days in New York is the future. We understand that deglobalization — a concept that got its start a few years ago — is not sustainable. Every problem of every country can very easily be the problem of another country.

That is why we should talk, why we should find solutions together, why we need to promote more unity everywhere.

In our country, the world will always find a partner for good initiatives. For everything that brings peace, progress and stability, we are ready to participate. We will be found in the General Assembly with every country in the world that wishes to promote the same values.

We need to promote more ethics in global politics and less populism. We need to promote more concrete action and less rhetoric. We need to promote more justice and less support for authoritarian regimes around the globe.

Our duty is to give our best so that democracy may survive. Democracy should be more functional, and we should stick together. A globalized world is like a village.

Nobody can say that this is not important for me personally. We are in this Hall to discuss and understand that everyone is important. The size of the population of a country or the territory of a country is irrelevant. Everyone is important. Every voice is important. We need to advocate democracy. We need to advocate universal values. This is how we can make the world a better place for all of us.

I am grateful for this opportunity to address the General Assembly, and on behalf of the people of Montenegro, I wish all members the greatest success in each of their countries.

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

Mr. Dritan Abazović, Prime Minister of Montenegro, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Terrance Micheal Drew, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, National

Security and Immigration, Health, and Social Security of Saint Kitts and Nevis

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, National Security and Immigration, Health, and Social Security of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Mr. Terrance Micheal Drew, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, National Security and Immigration, Health, and Social Security of Saint Kitts and Nevis, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Terrance Micheal Drew, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, National Security and Immigration, Health, and Social Security of Saint Kitts and Nevis, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Drew (Saint Kitts and Nevis): I congratulate Mr. Kőrösi on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session. I also pause to salute his predecessor in office, His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid, Foreign Minister of Maldives, for his sterling tenure during his service. I recognize the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, for his outstanding stewardship over the past few years.

It is indeed an honour for me to address this organ for the first time since assuming the role of Prime Minister just 44 days ago. I bring greetings from the Government and the people of Saint Kitts and Nevis, and we pledge our unswerving support for the ethos of this great organ.

I assumed my new responsibilities at a time when the complexities of the multiple and interlocking challenges facing humankind require from us a renewed commitment to the democratic principle and to multilateralism.

It is clear to me that the tectonic plates of geopolitics and global stability are shifting beneath us. What are those tectonic shifts? It is now certain knowledge that a pathogen can emerge with such lethal power that it threatens the very survival of humankind. The coincidence in timing of a global pandemic and a war, with the growing calamity of the climate crisis, has exposed the fragility, vulnerability and instability of the global supply chains for food, staples and other essentials.

Power shifts are taking place in international relations as the influence of some countries rises and that of others wanes. With that has come an insistence on the reform of the United Nations to make it more relevant and reflective of the composition of today's world and the current power structures, including the reform of the anachronistic Security Council.

The effect and widespread nature of technology is creating change faster than most can manage. Faith in multilateral systems is being eroded, and their capacity to do global good is being jeopardized by the rise in crass, unbridled nationalism, which has shown the powerful to be nonchalant to the suffering of anyone other than their own population.

It was the seventh Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, who reminded us that no nation can defend itself against the threats to development entirely on its own and that the challenges we face are global, and they demand a global response. That remains true today.

The coronavirus disease, with all its consequences, has presented us with a powerful reminder that we are all connected, which compels every nation and every person to be their brothers' and sisters' keepers.

The United Nations finds itself at a crossroads in our reckoning with history's judgment. Do we want to be the body that abdicated our responsibility to protect the planet or the body that debates and postures as the world around us submerges beneath cascading crises? It is my hope that we choose instead to be the body that met the moment and responded to the fierce urgency of now.

We must therefore use this seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly not merely for political posturing, but for a resolute recommitment to multilateral cooperation. For small island developing States, and indeed vulnerable peoples everywhere, there can be no international security without climate security. That requires collective fidelity to multilateral action for our very survival.

I am ready, and I am sure that all of us are eager to build a better world through multilateral action and to uphold this sacred tenet of the United Nations with all our will and might. Even as geopolitics and great Power competition exacerbate conflict and the climate catastrophe, we must face the hard truth that only through multilateralism will we force the

global trajectory towards global peace, prosperity and sustainability.

Every country on the planet and national populations have had to confront the reality of climate change. As our planet heats up, so too have the frustrations and impatience of the globe's ordinary citizens, who feel that they are losing the fight to make ends meet and secure the future of their children.

Small island developing States and other developing nations experience a reality that is plagued by that continuous existential threat. With the passage of every hurricane, every outbreak of war and every global food shortage, we all remain at risk of tipping the balance that we have striven to create over these many years.

Consequently, it is not enough for us to articulate that grim reality year after year. We must now look to act in ways that provide tailored responses to those vulnerabilities so as to foster true resilience and risk mitigation. I therefore humbly urge countries to honour the financial commitments made before the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to double contributions to adaptation financing by 2025. A delayed response to those commitments would further imperil our developing nations. Climate financing, resiliency and environmental conservation must be integrated into national development policies and must be at the forefront of our global development agenda.

The situation cries out for the multilateral system to urgently put in place a multidimensional vulnerability index that takes into consideration the particular characteristics and climate vulnerabilities of small island developing States such as mine.

All countries are environmentally vulnerable; all are socially and economically exposed to the exogenous shock, but the climate-challenged, tourism-dependent countries in the Caribbean Sea run the real risk of a wipe-out event during several consecutive months every year. Surely that warrants special consideration.

Caribbean nations are on the bullet end of a climate fight that we did not cause, do not want and cannot afford, but that we are unable to escape. I therefore join my brother and sister leaders in the Caribbean Community in calling for the development of a multidimensional vulnerability index. Saint Kitts and Nevis will use such an index in its advocacy for a more

appropriate redistribution of development assistance and access to concessional financing.

Notwithstanding such injustice, we continue to invest in social empowerment programmes in order to build resilience in our people and our economy. One such area is education, which is one of society's greatest equalizers. Saint Kitts and Nevis reaffirms that access to quality education is a human right and the foundation of sustainable development and thriving societies.

We welcome the Transforming Education Summit, which was held earlier this week. I am happy to report that our Government committed to entering a new pact — a new deal on education, as it were — that will reform, transform and reinvigorate our education system based on equality, access and inclusion. In fact, just a few weeks ago, my Government made a decision to introduce free tertiary education to ensure that all people can have equal access regardless of their socioeconomic status.

Other goals for education reforms include, but are not limited to, first, incorporating specialist spaces for science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics in all schools; secondly, reintroducing the I-Literacy one-to-one laptop programme; and thirdly, strengthening technical and vocational education by providing alternative programming and scholarships.

As part of my Government's thrust to mainstream empowerment across all sectors and policies, Saint Kitts and Nevis will continue to put women and young people at the forefront of its social development and all its pursuits, including the advancement of the digital economy. We are confident that our active inclusion of women and young people in public life through their appointment in our Parliament, diplomatic and senior civil service and other decision-making forums will bear much fruit.

It is against that backdrop that we therefore pledge our support for the ongoing process of the Declaration for Future Generations, which will culminate in the Summit of the Future next year. As its leader, I pledge my country's active commitment to meeting Sustainable Development Goal 5 and surpassing, or meeting, the goals of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women in achieving gender equity now and for future generations.

The recent past has proved that we cannot ignore the glaring truth of our interconnectedness as nations in the international community. The world continues to shrink in size, drawing us all nearer to each other as a people, reinforcing the need for global solidarity, international cooperation and strong and meaningful partnerships.

We are therefore stronger in the company of our friends, particularly those that share our democratic principles and values. At this body of nations, I re-emphasize our unswerving support for Taiwan's meaningful participation in the United Nations system. Taiwan has been a long-standing friend and a partner for sustainable development. Its unfailing commitment in that regard since the very day of my country's independence is consistent with the spirit and intent of Sustainable Development Goal 17.

I can also speak first-hand to what our friendship with the Republic of Cuba means to me and its value to the people of Saint Kitts and Nevis. Cuba has partnered with my own country and many in the developing world in health care, education, training and agriculture. We therefore call for an end to the decades-long embargo imposed against Cuba. My country encourages meaningful dialogue in resolving that and other conflicts in countries targeted by unfair sanctions that create enduring external and internal hardships.

In conclusion, we must be bold and grand in the way in which we forge ahead with the promise to leave no one behind. My Government and I are prepared to do our utmost for our people. That will be enhanced by multilateralism, and the United Nations should afford that opportunity to all of us. The theme for this year's General Assembly shares the idea of a watershed, which speaks to the significant and transformational changes that are taking place. The challenges faced by the countries of the world and their peoples are indeed interlocking, and we must resolve them together. The issue for us is how we will bring that change about for those who most need it.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, National Security and Immigration, Health and Social Security of Saint Kitts and Nevis for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Terrance Micheal Drew, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, National Security and Immigration, Health and Social Security of Saint Kitts and Nevis, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. John Briceño, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Development and Investment of Belize

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Development and Investment of Belize.

Mr. John Briceño, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Development and Investment of Belize, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. John Briceño, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Development and Investment of Belize, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Briceño (Belize): I take this rostrum with a heavy heart, more pessimistic than I was last year and more cynical and disappointed. We have come to depend on the multilateral system that has the Charter of the United Nations at its centre. Where is the collective will to adequately address the challenges of our time? Where is our shared conviction to work together for the betterment of humankind? Where is the hope?

Today there are conflicts on several continents; geopolitical tensions are heightened. The unjustified, unprovoked and illegal attack on Ukraine by the Russian Federation has shaken the foundations of the multilateral system. That is wrong. The consequential crises that we face are not confined to the battlefield in Europe; they are global and affect us all.

Democratic norms and human rights, even where thought to be firmly rooted, are being rolled back. Poverty is on the increase. The planet is being destroyed by climate change. International cooperation and solidarity have been supplanted by nationalism and unilateralism.

Global market prices for food and petroleum remain volatile, having reached historic highs earlier this year. The lingering impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and persistent supply-chain disruptions have contributed to skyrocketing inflation.

Those economic realities exacerbate an already acute social situation in Belize. Poverty is estimated to have risen by 10 per cent between 2018 and 2021. A total of 45.5 per cent of Belizeans are estimated to

be moderately to severely food insecure. Homicides are again on the rise.

The post-pandemic recovery that we anticipated is delayed, and the chorus of promises and commitments to pivoting towards building back better and to getting the recovery right have yielded little. Instead, global action and inaction have resulted only in deepening the many crises that we are facing.

Global temperatures have already increased by 1.2°C above pre-industrial levels. Greenhouse gas emissions reached record highs in 2021 and continue to rise this year.

Fossil fuels are still dominant, while renewables account for an abysmal 15 per cent of global energy sources. The current energy crisis in Europe has led to people using more fossil fuels as a panacea rather than doubling down on the energy transition. Biodiversity is declining at a faster rate than ever before, with profound and unknown consequences for our environment, health, productivity and well-being. Those realities heighten climate risk, especially for vulnerable States. Belize ranks eighth of 183 on the Global Climate Risk Index. We are but one hurricane away from catastrophe, yet financing needed for climate adaptation remains woefully inadequate; only about a quarter of all climate finance goes to adaptation.

Global debt is at crisis levels. The Secretary-General's latest report on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) paints a dismal and disturbing picture of the state of play of the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The SDGs are at real risk of not being achieved. Our current systems and institutions, conceived for Second World War recovery, are straining under the weight of today's crises. In truth, they are broken and stand impotent in the face of the three Cs: COVID-19, climate and conflict. And, yes, our people and our planet are paying the price.

How do we fix that? We need a full-scale, bold reimagining of the global financial architecture, and no more tinkering at the edges to conceive additional programmes that are based on the same false logic — it simply does not work.

Public-sector expenditure on climate-caused loss and damage cannot continue to be classified according to fiscal orthodoxy. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is largely devoid of ways to quantify consequential climate impacts on public debt and countries' capacity

to pay. The obstinate focus of international financial institutions on primary balances and debt-to-gross domestic product (GDP) ratios ignores the empirical evidence that nature is in revolt. Incredibly, a recent analysis revealed that of the 80 IMF-funded country programmes around the world, climate was central to the country assessment in only a single case — that of Samoa.

We need a new global financial architecture that has the willingness and capacity to identify systemic threats, such as debt and climate risk, and devise tools that are commensurate to the challenges. We urgently need a new global financial architecture dedicated to achieving the SDGs and net-zero emissions and to building resilience. We need a new global financial architecture that incorporates an effective global financial safety net with the capacity to respond to today's multiple, simultaneous and escalating crises. We need a global financial architecture for today's challenges that is responsive to the current needs of States, especially the vulnerable countries, many of which were not Member States in the 1940s.

Belize has, within its limited fiscal space, tried to stimulate an economic recovery while staying true to its social values. The Belizean economy grew by 5.3 per cent in the first quarter of this year, the highest level of production for any first quarter on record. Through an innovative debt-for-nature swap, Belize reduced its debt-to-GDP ratio from 133 per cent to 108 per cent last year, resulting in more than \$250 million in debt-service savings.

My Government has instituted an amnesty programme to enable up to 40,000 qualifying persons to be regularized. We anticipate that by the end of the amnesty we will have regularized more migrants per capita than any other country. But forces at the global level are determined to diminish our aspiration to an economic rebound and underwrite our social and human development and resilience. Three critical issues must be addressed by a new global financial architecture in order to achieve transformative and systemic solutions.

The financing needs of developing countries have increased significantly since we adopted the 2030 Agenda. The international financial institutions and multilateral development banks have failed to meet the needs of developing countries. The figures do not lie. The truth is that the financing needs of developing countries amount to \$4.3 trillion — more

than quadruple the lending capacity of the IMF and well above the lending trends of the World Bank, which loaned only \$99 billion last year. The availability of affordable, long-term and dependable sources of financing is indispensable to the achievement of the SDGs and climate resilience.

We need international financial institutions that will urgently align their policies and practices with the achievement of the SDGs and climate goals and redistribute liquidity to developing countries. We need a long-overdue expansion in quota allocations to expand the resources of the IMF. We need the multilateral development banks and regional banks to provide considerably more longer-term financing, de-risk investment, support the development of capital markets and integrate sustainability objectives to enable the use of innovative instruments. Financing must be accessible and affordable to vulnerable countries.

Amazingly, in the past seven years financial flows to small island developing States (SIDS) have declined. Net official development assistance declined from \$6.2 billion in 2016 to \$4.1 billion in 2018. The paradox is that the countries most vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters, and with the least fiscal capacity to adapt and recover, do not qualify for grant and concessionary financing. And the fact that since 2008 the Group of 20 (G-20) nations have printed \$25 trillion in stimulus money magnifies that paradox.

We therefore call on international financial institutions, multilateral development banks and development partners to use the multidimensional vulnerability index after its finalization later this year. That will unlock financing for vulnerable countries, supporting their efforts to achieve the SDGs, adapt to climate change and build resilience. Public debt is at unprecedented levels globally. It has surpassed the 2008 financial crisis levels. Commercial banks and private investors hold about \$54 trillion in the global sovereign debts of emerging markets. That debt deluge is attributable to the inaccessibility of concessional financing, the impact of the pandemic, the costs of climate change and disaster recovery, other external shocks and, for SIDS, structural features related to their small size.

The current tentative, reactionary and piecemeal approach to addressing the debt problem has proven hopelessly ineffective. We must break the pernicious cycle between debt and climate and disaster risk. The

international financial institutions must incorporate climate risk into debt sustainability tools. We need a two-pronged response. First, debt relief is needed for all vulnerable countries. Secondly, we need to rapidly mainstream innovative policies that tackle debt repayment capacity and avoid excessive indebtedness. In the current circumstances, there is a compelling need for urgency to advance a multilateral sovereign debt restructuring mechanism.

History — a cruel history — is repeating itself. For centuries, colonialism transported trillions in plundered wealth to the oppressors. Reparations are overdue. I now ask how much longer the new climate colonialism will continue punishing the victims and sparing the victimizers?

Speaking of injustices, it is shameful that a unilateral, illegal and immoral commercial and financial embargo continues to be imposed on Cuba, in defiance of the international community and United Nations resolutions. The cruel sanctions visited on the Cuban people were not eased as they suffered the wrath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Even now, as the effects of the fires in Matanzas cause hardship, there appears to be no possibility of an easing. Belize repeats its call for the immediate lifting of the embargo and salutes the resilience and fortitude of the Cuban people.

(spoke in Spanish)

We stand with them.

(spoke in English)

Belize continues to be gravely concerned about the spiralling deterioration of the situation in Haiti. We call on the international community to advance a robust and comprehensive programme of support for the Haitian people.

Taiwan, an exemplary nation in many respects, continues to be excluded from the international community, unable to participate and contribute to functional multilateral cooperation. The challenges confronting humankind today require the full participation of all countries and peoples in the struggle for development and prosperity. The outdated policy imposed on Taiwan to promote its exclusion must yield to the greater good. Belize calls for Taiwan to take its rightful place among the international community of nations.

I also reiterate Belize's full support for the realization of an independent Palestinian State, within its 1967 borders, with all attendant rights, including the recognition of East Jerusalem as its capital and the right of return. The people of Palestine continue to suffer the indignities of illegal occupation and apartheid. It is a disturbing prospect that the world's sacred promise to deliver a two-State solution is slipping from their grasp.

Justice is the cornerstone of peace. In that spirit, Belize and Guatemala have been pursuing the peaceful, just and final resolution of Guatemala's claim to Belizean territory before the International Court of Justice. We continue to count on the support of the international community as the judicial process proceeds and, when it concludes, for the demarcation exercise to be carried out. In the meantime, we must redouble our efforts to manage the daily challenges that arise along the border areas, in accordance with the 2005 confidence-building measures. Additionally, now more than ever we need to conclude a Sarstoon protocol, a cooperation mechanism that would help to prevent unnecessary incidents in that area.

We had great expectations for the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26) in Glasgow. COP26 was considered a make-or-break moment for the world's leaders to make more ambitious pledges to keep the goal of limiting warming to 1.5°C within reach. We were wrong. Rather than getting global commitments to keep the 1.5°C goal alive, we left Glasgow with commitments that will see the global temperature increase by 2.7°C by 2100. That is utterly unacceptable and morally unjust. Our people will continue to suffer for something that we did not cause. Rather than meeting the commitments to delivering \$100 billion annually, we left Glasgow with a finance road map — yet another paper promise. Rather than delivering a loss and damage facility to help our countries deal with the losses and damages caused by climate change, we left with *más palabras*. In the meantime, Belize continues to suffer from climate-related damages equivalent to 4 per cent of its GDP annually — among the highest in the world.

Let us try this again. We need less talk and more decisions at the next two climate-related conferences. The fifteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, to be held in Montreal, must agree an ambitious and effective post-2020 global biodiversity framework to take into account

the economic costs of biodiversity loss and provide financial support for developing countries' efforts to deter it. At COP27 in Egypt, the G-20 must bring new commitments to closing the emissions gap, bring the financing for adaptation and establish a financing facility to substantively address loss and damage. We are extremely concerned that those expectations may be jeopardized by G-20 dynamics, but we cannot allow backsliding — achieving anything less will be a failure.

For Belize and SIDS, failure is not an option. The COVID-19 pandemic and the climate emergency are the most catastrophic events since the Second World War. Then as now, a new vision, frameworks and instruments are required to achieve the sustainable and inclusive future that our people and future generations deserve. The near-term global economic outlook compels us to act with urgency to avert even worse humanitarian and development outcomes and to restore stability to the international system.

Our failure to act decisively and urgently on COVID-19, conflict and climate condemns humankind and our planet irreversibly to disaster. History will not absolve us if we fail. Our collective destiny and future inspire us to action. The aspirations of our people must be fulfilled. We know what to do. We have the resources to meet the needs of humankind. We must find the political will to act. We must act now to avert disaster and fulfil the promise of tomorrow. We ask for the guidance of our Creator in order to ensure that our work is not in vain.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Development and Investment of Belize for the statement he has just made.

Mr. John Briceño, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Development and Investment of Belize, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Kausea Natano, Prime Minister of Tuvalu

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

Mr. Kausea Natano, Prime Minister of Tuvalu, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Kausea Natano,

Prime Minister of Tuvalu, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Natano (Tuvalu): On behalf of the Government of Tuvalu, I congratulate Mr. Csaba Kőrösi on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session. Tuvalu has full confidence in his leadership. Let me also take this opportunity to thank the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session, the Honourable Minister Abdulla Shahid, for a very successful session under his leadership, despite the challenges arising from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

We welcome the pragmatic vision of Mr. Kőrösi's presidency of the General Assembly at its current session. We applaud him for the theme of his presidency, "A watershed moment: transformative solutions to interlocking challenges". Indeed, we must strengthen our commitment to upholding the core principles of the Charter of the United Nations at this watershed moment. We maintain that the Charter is our shared constitutive instrument for maintaining international peace and security, developing friendly relations among nations and promoting social progress, better living standards and human rights. We are indeed encouraged by the priorities of his presidency, and we look forward to working closely with him as we continue to grapple with economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, tackle climate change and strive to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Global crises have become more complex, interlinked and transboundary in their impacts, demanding global cooperation and solidarity to formulate and implement sustainable solutions. That requires all the partnerships we need to bring about positive changes to people's lives. It is, however, regrettable that the Republic of China on Taiwan, with its notable partnerships on a wide range of development issues, continues to be kept out of the United Nations system. Tuvalu has significantly benefited from our partnerships in agriculture, food security, public health, medicine and clean energy, including our recovery from the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Tuvalu strongly supports the readmission of the Republic of China on Taiwan to the United Nations as a founding Member of the Organization, and the restoration of its active participation in United Nations specialized agencies, including the World

Health Organization, the International Civil Aviation Organization and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. We must not sideline Taiwan, which is a vibrant democracy that has made significant progress on all the Sustainable Development Goals and is ready to contribute more to global efforts to achieve the SDGs.

It is also regrettable that the people of Cuba continue to face the economic burden of long-standing unilateral economic blockades. The economic blockades neglect the human rights and spirit of cooperation espoused in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Keeping those measures in place has deprived Cuba of the international development assistance and partnerships necessary to recover and build back better.

In the same vein, we reiterate the strong concerns of our region about the potential threat of nuclear contamination posed to the health and security of the blue Pacific, its people and prospects, and reaffirm the importance of ensuring international consultations, international law and independent and verifiable scientific assessments. Those principles must govern the deployment and use of nuclear technology and the discharge of nuclear materials and waste into our blue Pacific continent. We maintain that the United Nations decolonization process is critical to the protection of human rights, including the right to self-determination, and urge the meaningful engagement of the United Nations with all relevant partners and stakeholders in the decolonization process.

Let me now speak of an issue that is of the greatest concern to my country. Climate change and its consequential sea-level rise remain the single greatest existential threat my country faces, underscoring the urgent need to limit global warming to 1.5°C through rapid, deep and sustained reductions in greenhouse-gas emissions. With an average land elevation of no more than 2 metres above sea level, my country will succumb to sea-level rise. The report issued last year by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change makes clear that, with the current global-warming trend, we are destined to miss the 1.5°C target of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. That clearly means that Tuvalu will be totally submerged within the century.

The climate crisis is creating an increasingly uncertain future for people in most parts of the world. Paradoxically, in my region, the Pacific, it is making our future increasingly certain, but not in a way that gives

us any kind of comfort. During this century, several Pacific island nations will become mostly uninhabitable. For my country, Tuvalu, which sits halfway between Hawaii and Australia, that could happen in the next two to three decades. Other Pacific island countries on the front line of climate change may have a few decades longer, but our final destination is no longer a matter of guesswork. Most societies see climate change as mainly about cutting carbon emissions or mitigating future impacts. We are facing a looming situation far more profound — the near certainty of terminal inundation. Our peoples, in my generation or the next, will be unable to exist on the islands that have nurtured our ancestors for centuries. It is our God-given home.

Tuvalu and its Pacific neighbours have done nothing to cause climate change. Carbon emissions combined across the entirety of the Pacific islands amount to less than 0.03 per cent of the world's total, and even less if we are speaking of historical emissions. The existential threat we face is not of our making, but it will remake us. How we will negotiate that remaking is a question that the international community must now urgently begin to address. Major economies, which contribute the most to greenhouse gas emissions, cannot be oblivious and do nothing. People everywhere, across all ages and walks of life, are demanding leadership on climate change, especially from those most able to provide it. Tuvalu is an acid test for such leadership because, if the international community allows an entire country to disappear as a result of climate change, what hope will be possible for anyone else?

These are unprecedented times. Science cannot tell us exactly when our homeland will become uninhabitable, but it does tell us how. As the ocean rises, salt water permeates the aquifers that provide our drinking water; now, in many places, our water security is now severely compromised. A rising ocean brings higher tides, and with increasing storm frequency and intensity, our villages and agriculture are devastated. Flooding leaves soil saline, reducing crop yields and severely compromising our food security. Infrastructure, such as homes, roads and power lines, are washed away, and higher land on which to rebuild does not exist.

The precious coral that supports our tourism and nurtures our fish-stock perishes as the ocean warms and acidifies. The cost of eking out an existence and maintaining the status quo increases for individuals and the entire country and, over time, becomes too

much to bear. Such extreme conditions push citizens to leave. The nation itself becomes increasingly inchoate, legally and spiritually rooted to a shoreline that is disappearing under rising tides. That is how a Pacific atoll dies. That is how our islands will cease to exist. This is not about some future scenario — it is what we are living with now.

Inaction entails responsibilities. Tuvalu has not yet reached the end of the process of salination, destruction, degradation and demise, but we are well past the beginning. Despite international agreements and repeated commitments, global greenhouse-gas emissions continue to rise, with many countries still pursuing a future fuelled by coal, oil and gas. This is the first time in history that the collective action of many nations — or, more accurately, the collective inaction of many nations — will be responsible for making sovereign countries uninhabitable. It is an unprecedented crisis requiring radical intervention.

Current international instruments such as the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness do not cover our situation, nor do the United Nations various efforts to address climate change. Agreements reached at its annual summits, including the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Glasgow last year, cover a wide range of issues like targets for cutting emissions or commitments for international finance to address impacts. But, with regard to the looming uninhabitability of sovereign States, they say nothing.

That is why Tuvalu and the Marshall Islands launched the Rising Nations Initiative, two days ago, to fill the current gaps in awareness, legal frameworks and political commitments. The global community must begin a serious and responsible dialogue that acknowledges both the realities and the rights of Pacific island nations like mine and, more fundamentally, of our citizens.

This is about sovereignty, dignity and integrity. We need a global settlement that guarantees nation States, such as Tuvalu and the Marshall Islands, a permanent existence beyond the inhabitable lifetime of our atoll homes, irrespective of the onslaught of climate change and sea-level rise. It must recognize and protect our cultural integrity, our human and economic capital and our sovereignty. It must be co-created and enacted with

the Governments and the peoples of island nations, not visited upon us by others.

Such a settlement must ultimately include the protection of our rights to our land and ocean and preserves our heritage and sovereign right to govern our citizens. We do not seek to move from our homeland. We seek the fair and amicable treatment of displaced people so that we do not become a burden on others. Equally, however, natural justice also dictates that we not be fobbed off with a wasteland. Economically, we can continue to support ourselves, for example, in the case of Tuvalu, by using the income from the continued sustainable use of the exclusive economic zone around our islands. Finding the right solution will require statesmanship and empathy, beginning with an acknowledgement that a situation globally caused must also have a globally just and equitable solution.

As Pacific peoples, we raise our children to respect the ocean, land and sky as providers of life. Now, through no fault of our own, we will soon have to abandon the oceans, land and sky that have forged our cultures and identities for centuries. We neither castigate nor demand charity, but we do ask for generosity of spirit, support and justice that recognize our reality and our grave concern about the potential eradication of our atoll nations by rising sea levels in our part of the world.

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

Mr. Kausea Natano, Prime Minister of Tuvalu, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Abdullah Shahid, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Maldives and immediate past president of the General Assembly.

Mr. Shahid (Maldives): I congratulate my successor, His Excellency Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session. Allow me to also take this opportunity to express my profound thanks to the many Heads of State and Government and ministers who have said very kind words in recognition of the achievements of my presidency of hope during the seventy-sixth session. I am truly humbled by their sentiments.

Mr. Kőrösi takes stewardship of the Assembly in extraordinary times. Not since 1945 have we witnessed the international agenda grow in scale so drastically

and so relentlessly. As conflicts grow, as the climate crisis rages, as economies lie in shambles and as we emerge from an era-defining pandemic, we are left anxious and fearful. Yet we cannot retreat or linger in despair. Instead, this moment should make us reflect on the kind of world we want going forward. How can we make it more resilient and more just?

The Maldives proposes five main areas of focus.

First, we need to address the raging climate crisis. That crisis remains an existential threat, especially to small island developing States. For us, the difference between 1.5°C and 2°C is death. Internationally, the Maldives will continue to lead the way in climate action. In doing so, we will continue to advocate for a rights-based approach.

In 2008, the Maldives and other like-minded countries pursued Human Rights Council resolution 7/23, on human rights and climate change. After decades of advocacy at the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly, in July we celebrated, in this Hall, the adoption of the landmark resolution 76/300, recognizing the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

We are once again competing for a seat on the Human Rights Council for the 2023-2025 term. If elected, addressing climate change as an integral part of the global human rights discourse will be among our priorities. We hope to have members' support for our candidature.

The Maldives will also set a national example. Like other small island developing States, we make only a minuscule contribution to global carbon emissions. We will be the first to bear the consequences, yet we are the ones with some of the most ambitious climate action targets. We are pursuing an ambitious national plan to reach net-zero emissions by 2030 — a goal we can meet only with international support. This year, we launched the Glasgow-Sharm El-Sheikh work programme on the global goal on adaptation in the Maldives, with a view to supporting global action.

I urge the global community to do more. We must act before it is too late. We also urgently need to protect our oceans. The Maldives is a large ocean State. Our lives, livelihoods, culture and traditions are linked to the ocean. That is why we support the global initiative to protect 30 per cent of the world's oceans by 2030.

Nationally, we have been working to protect our exclusive economic zone. We have now designated 79 marine-protected areas, including 14 per cent of our coral reefs. Considering the damage caused by plastics to maritime ecosystems, we have also implemented a ban on the importation, production and sale of several types of single-use plastics. We have set a national target to fully phase out single-use plastics by 2030.

We have only one planet. Protecting it is our only choice if we care about our continued survival.

Secondly, we need sustainable and reliable sources of financing. In 2009 in Copenhagen, an ambitious pledge was made that \$100 billion in climate financing would be mobilized by 2020. Even in 2022, we are far short of meeting that pledge. Partners must scale up their efforts to make up the difference and we urge our partners to redouble adaptation finance as agreed under the Glasgow Climate Pact in 2021.

It is also important to make access easier for all, especially developing countries and small island developing States in particular. We know that the world can mobilize resources when required. We know that we have the finances, but we need to direct them. We need to make assessments to make that financing fairer. That is why we have always been staunch supporters of alternative measures to gross domestic product. Traditional measures of development fail to accurately capture the vulnerabilities of countries and their resilience against external shocks. In that context, we look forward to the finalization of the multidimensional vulnerability index by the end of the year and its swift utilization.

Thirdly, we need gender equality to be at the forefront of our agenda. For centuries, women have had their contributions undervalued and their voices entirely discounted. That injustice cannot continue. We cannot solve the challenges facing all of humankind while half of it is denied their full potential. Women deserve an equal seat at the table.

The Maldives is advancing many legislative and executive initiatives to advance women's representation. The Government has passed legislation to allocate 33 per cent of our local council seats to women. We have appointed women as Supreme Court justices for the first time. Half of our ambassadors overseas are women.

Despite the progress made, much remains to be done. Women continue to face a variety of challenges, including misogyny and gender-based violence. We can and must do better.

Fourthly, it is vital that the world come together to meet the peace and security challenges we face. We need to work harder to stop conflicts and the flagrant violations of international norms undermining the multilateral system we have painstakingly built over the past 77 years. The people of Ukraine, Afghanistan and Myanmar, among other countries plunged into conflict and bloodshed, deserve peace. They deserve an end to the ongoing tragedies upending their lives.

It is the same for the people of Palestine. The Maldives reiterates that a two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine, is the only meaningful solution for a lasting peace.

Addressing terrorism should also be a priority. Its menace continues to plague our world and jeopardize the safety and cohesion of our societies. The Maldives condemns terrorism in all its forms and will work with the international community to comprehensively combat both terrorism and violent ideologies.

The issues of our time are complex and multifaceted. We cannot apply old solutions to new challenges. That brings me to my fifth and final point.

It is vital that we reform the multilateral system and better equip the United Nations to meet contemporary and future challenges. What we need is a United Nations 2.0. That is the thrust of the Secretary-General's report *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982). We wholeheartedly welcome the recent adoption by consensus of resolution 76/306, establishing the United Nations Youth Office, carrying forward one of the report's most important recommendations. We agree with the underlying spirit of that resolution. We cannot continue to deny the voices of the 1.8 billion young people, especially on decisions that impact their futures. The Maldives will constructively engage with Member States to continue the follow-up process on *Our Common Agenda*.

Another critical aspect of revitalizing the United Nations should be reforming the Security Council — a goal the Maldives has advocated for decades. We have consistently called for an increase in the number of both permanent and non-permanent seats, while

ensuring equitable geographic representation, to make the Council more responsive and responsible.

We also support increasing the substantial role and moral authority of the General Assembly. A welcome decision in that regard was the recent adoption of the veto initiative — a resolution that Maldives was happy to support (resolution 76/262).

The Maldives has always believed that our small size should not diminish our standing in the international arena. We believe that a rules-based international order, in which all States have a voice and are fairly represented and included, is necessary. It is our hope that our ongoing efforts aimed at multilateral reform culminate in such an outcome.

The extraordinary times we face must be met with extraordinary courage, extraordinary vision, extraordinary ambition and extraordinary leadership. As we look ahead, the tasks before us may seem daunting. They are immense in scale and borderless in their dimensions. They are beyond the capacity of any one single country to address by itself. But together, we can meet those challenges. Together, we have the resources, the power and the imagination to usher in a brighter future for humankind. The Maldives will continue to work alongside our peers and nations in the international community to deliver that vision. Together, we can.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Penelope Wong, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Commonwealth of Australia.

Ms. Wong (Australia): It is my honour to speak on behalf of Australia in the venerated General Assembly Hall, which signifies so much to the world's peoples. It remains the only place where the whole world has agreed to come together, recognizing that we can solve our biggest problems only together; recognizing that progress and development are preconditions for peace; and recognizing that, to avoid conflict, we must talk to each other and we must listen to each other.

It is my honour to speak on behalf of a country that is home to people from more than 300 different ancestries and to the oldest continuous culture on the planet. Like this Hall, Australia is an assembly of the world's peoples. When Australians look out to the world, we see ourselves reflected in it. Equally, the world can see itself reflected in Australia, a nation whose people share common ground with so many of the world's

peoples. It is a nation where half of our people were born overseas or have a parent born overseas. I am one of those people, and the Australian Parliament I serve in is ever more reflective of our modern nation, both enriched by their diversity.

That follows the collective decision of the Australian people to turn the page and write a new future for themselves. Newly elected parliamentarians have origins from across the world and indigenous Australians have been elected in record numbers and serve in the Ministry in record numbers. The new Australian Government is determined to make real progress on the national journey of healing with indigenous Australians — the first peoples of our continent. As Foreign Minister, I am determined to see First Nations perspectives at the heart of Australian foreign policy. This week, I have been encouraged by discussions with other countries on their own journeys.

I am humbled to be guided in those efforts by First Nations colleagues. Here in New York, I am joined by Senator Patrick Dodson. To many Australians, Senator Dodson is the father of reconciliation. Senator Dodson is a Yawuru man from Broome, in the remote north-west of Australia. Like many First Nations people, he walks in two worlds — as a Senator and leader in our Parliament; and as an elder, native title holder and ceremony man for his people. In our Government, Senator Dodson has been tasked with responding to a call from First Nations people for a constitutionally enshrined voice to the Australian Parliament, as well as treaty and truth-telling.

With daunting challenges facing the world, we have much to learn from First Nations peoples, both at home and in international forums. Elevating First Nations voices, including right here, has never been more important.

Our nation's history and present show that, like anything human — indeed, like this institution in which we gather — we are not perfect. But we aim ever-higher and we look to make our contribution to the world. Australians see our country as it is and we see our world as it is, and we seek to shape them for the better. Sharing common ground with so many of the world's peoples means that Australians want to see the interests of all the world's peoples upheld, along with our own.

That aim of today's Australia accords with the ambition of an Australian who helped shape the Charter

of the United Nations, our former Foreign Minister and the third President of the General Assembly, Mr. Herbert Evatt. At the 1945 San Francisco Conference, where the Charter was written, Mr. Evatt challenged the great Powers. They wanted a strong Security Council that had control over the General Assembly. Mr. Evatt did not succeed in his fight against the great Powers' veto within the Security Council, but he did succeed in ensuring that the General Assembly had the ability to decide its own course and could address any matter that falls within the Charter of the United Nations or the powers and functions of any of its organs.

He understood that small and medium-sized countries cannot simply allow their fates to be decided by the great Powers. He understood that small and medium-sized countries must be able to maintain their sovereign choices, protected by a stable framework of rules. He also understood that, in order to maintain those sovereign choices, the small and medium-sized countries of the world, including Australia, must work together. Those are legacies that we renew today.

Mr. Evatt also saw economic and social security as the precondition for peace. He pressed the San Francisco Conference to ensure that the United Nations addressed the broadest range of social, economic and human rights issues, saying:

“Real stability... can only be achieved by building an organization that will do its utmost to assure the peoples of the world a full opportunity in living in freedom from want as well as in freedom from external aggression.”

Some did not want to extend the ambit of the United Nations to economic and social development. On behalf of Australia, Evatt insisted. Again, those are legacies Australia renews today.

Despite inheriting the biggest debt in our nation's history, the new Australian Government is determined to play its part in supporting the development of other nations, particularly in our region. We are alarmed that, for the first time, the United Nations Human Development Index declined for two consecutive years, in 2020 and 2021. The impact of that decline has been most severe on women and girls, with nearly half a billion women and girls now living in extreme poverty.

The global food security crisis is increasingly grave. More than 800 million people go to bed hungry every night, 345 million people face acute food insecurity, and

50 million people across 45 countries are on the brink of famine. That is a growing scale of human suffering that threatens untold global instability. Australia is increasing our contribution to development assistance by over a billion dollars. If we are ever to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, which represent our collective vision for minimum living standards for everyone living on this planet, every country needs to do more. Over the coming months, we are designing a new development policy outlining how we will play our part in an era of crisis and how we will help developing countries without driving them into unsustainable debt.

The world has experienced disasters and conflict in the past, but the intensity and confluence of today's challenges in an interconnected world are without precedent. The coronavirus disease has set back development gains. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has unleashed further suffering and made it harder for populations to recover from the pandemic. Drought and potential famine plague the Horn of Africa. We have seen major floods in Pakistan and record-breaking heatwaves in Europe and Asia. The alarm bells of climate change are growing louder, including in my own country.

Australians are clear that they want urgent and serious action, and they have given their Government a mandate. Among the first acts of the new Australian Government has been to submit our ambitious nationally determined contribution to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and we have just passed legislation that makes those targets law. Our climate policies mean that within this decade, 83 per cent of Australia's energy supply will be renewable. We want to help the global energy transition. Australia will be a renewable energy super-Power.

And while we are playing our part to reduce our own emissions, we are working in our region to support Pacific countries, which have the most to lose from the changing climate. Nothing is more central to the security and economies of the Pacific than climate change. As Pacific leaders themselves put it plainly in the first article of the 2018 Pacific Island Forum's Boe Declaration on Regional Security, we reaffirm that climate change remains the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and well-being of the peoples of the Pacific and our commitment to progressing the implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

Australians are part of the Pacific family, and families are about care, love and forgiveness. But they are also about duty and loyalty, looking out for each other and listening to each other. The Australian people want to be better, more involved and more helpful members of the Pacific family. In my first months as Foreign Minister, I have visited six Pacific Islands Forum countries. It is a clear sign of our priorities that, by the end of this year, I will have visited nearly all of them.

Australians want to enhance our defence, maritime and economic cooperation with Pacific Island countries because our peace and prosperity are one. And we want to be the Pacific's partner of choice for development and security. We are increasing our development assistance to the Pacific by over half a billion dollars, and we are working with our Pacific partners to address our shared challenges and implement the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. We want to bridge our cooperation across the Pacific and South-East Asia to address shared challenges and to build the region we want.

Australia seeks deeper engagement with South-East Asia. It is a region I know well. It is the region I am from. The region is being reshaped, and Australia seeks to work with its partners in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to shape this period of change together. Australia seeks a region that is peaceful and predictable; that is governed by accepted rules and norms, where all our countries and peoples can cooperate, trade and thrive; where our relations are based on respect and partnership and guided by the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific; where all States can contribute to a strategic equilibrium in a regional order in which countries are not required to choose sides, but can make their own sovereign choices.

We recognize we must bring more to the table in South-East Asia. That starts with an additional \$470 million in development assistance and a forthcoming strategy on economic engagement. We must contribute to the strategic balance of the region. We do not want to see any one country dominating or any country being dominated.

We cannot accept a situation where large countries determine the fate of smaller countries. That is why Russia's illegal, immoral invasion of Ukraine cannot be normalized and cannot be minimized. Russia's attack on Ukraine is an attack on all smaller countries. It is an

assertion that a larger country is entitled to subjugate a smaller neighbour to decide whether another country can even exist.

It was never intended that the Security Council veto power would be used to enable unchecked abuse of the Charter of the United Nations by the very countries that were given the veto. So it is especially important for countries that play leading roles in international forums and countries with influence on Russia to exert their influence to end that war. In that regard, the world looks to China, a great Power, a permanent member of the Security Council with a no-limits partnership with Russia.

Mr. Putin's weak and desperate nuclear threats underline the danger that nuclear weapons pose to us all and the urgent need for progress on nuclear disarmament. Australia has always pursued a world without nuclear weapons. We will redouble our efforts towards that goal and to strengthen the non-proliferation regime.

The death and destruction in Ukraine remind us all how much we have to lose if we fail to protect the Charter of the United Nations. It reminds us that each nation must make its own choices and exercise its own agency. We cannot leave it to the big Powers, and we cannot be passive when big Powers flout the rules.

Aside from terrible damage and the loss of life in Ukraine, Russia's invasion is compounding human suffering and propelling the global crisis in food and energy security. In my own region, where geopolitical contest becomes ever sharper, we must ensure that competition does not escalate into conflict, because if conflict were to break out in the Indo-Pacific, it would be catastrophic for our people and our prosperity.

And with the Indo-Pacific's centrality to global prosperity and security, the cost would extend far beyond our region and reach into every life. So I say to small and medium-sized nations like my own: We are more than just supporting players in a grand drama of global geopolitics on a stage dominated by great Powers. It is up to all of us to create the kind of world to which we aspire — stable, peaceful, prosperous and respectful of sovereignty. That is the very rationale for the United Nations itself.

It is up to all of us to ask ourselves how we can each use our State power, our influence, our networks and our capabilities to avert catastrophic conflict. How do we acquit our responsibilities to constrain tensions, to

apply the brakes before the momentum for conflict in our region or beyond becomes unstoppable?

Australia is resolved to those tasks in all our diplomacy in the United Nations and beyond. It is why we seek a seat on the Security Council for 2029-2030. It is why we seek reform of the Security Council, with greater permanent representation for Africa, Latin America and Asia, including India and Japan. Being genuinely committed to the United Nations means being genuinely committed to reforming the United Nations and keeping it vital.

We know that we will always be better off in a world where rules and norms — whether on trade, the maritime domain or military engagement, on the environment or human rights — are clear, mutually negotiated and consistently followed. History teaches us that the alternative to what we have built here is conflict and chaos — a world where differences and disputes are settled by size and power alone, instead of by agreed rules and norms.

Humankind has benefited from the multilateral system. Humankind has benefited from the rules that have underpinned an unequalled period of human development. Humankind will pay the price if we allow it to flounder — every nation and all our peoples.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Simeón Oyono Esono Angue, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

Mr. Esono Angue (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of His Excellency Mr. Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, I would first like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Csaba Kőrösi of Hungary on his unanimous election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session, and the members of the Bureau. We assure him with absolute certainty that he will be able to count on the support and cooperation of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea during his presidency.

The past few years have been very difficult for humankind owing to the emergence of a series of multifaceted crises ranging from the desolation brought about by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic to the energy crisis; deteriorating food security; the monetary crisis, aggravated by the current tense international situation just as we are commemorating the seventy-seventh anniversary of the creation of the

United Nations and coinciding with the war between Russia and Ukraine. Today's global situation is calling on and compelling us to make use of innovative and multilateral cooperation focused on human solidarity.

Indeed, and as is stated in the motto of this seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly, this is a watershed moment for world leaders to search for lasting, consensual, transformative and sustainable solutions to the interlocking challenges that have a transversal impact on every continent on the planet. We are living in a globalized world, and it is therefore to be hoped that we will forge partnerships of solidarity, support and multilateral cooperation, through frank dialogue, to address inequalities and settle our differences.

Equatorial Guinea is today launching an appeal on the need and importance of enhancing multilateralism and international cooperation, which are so necessary to address those global challenges and to revive development and sustainable economic growth in our countries, especially developing countries. We need to promote the building and strengthening of different infrastructure, especially health infrastructure, in order to face not only potential new pandemics, but also endemic diseases, such as HIV/AIDS and malaria.

From the establishment of the United Nations until today and into the future, the maintenance of international peace and security is essential to the development and prosperity of Member States. The coexistence of traditional conflicts and emerging challenges, such as transnational crime, cybersecurity, biosecurity, climate change and piracy, among others, are becoming increasingly prominent, which means that the current world situation can be solved only by seeking peace by all means necessary through negotiations and inclusive dialogues.

Equatorial Guinea calls on the countries involved in the ongoing conflicts, as well as on the Governments directly or indirectly involved in those conflicts due to geostrategic, economic or other interests, to prioritize dialogue and inclusive negotiations, in a realistic and pragmatic way, to resolve them. In that connection, we again call on the Assembly to collectively denounce and categorically reject the constant foreign interference destabilizing some countries of the world.

The African continent must remain at the heart of initiatives to support and finance development with the decisive implementation of the commitments for financing sustainable development in order to

implement the goals contained in the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 of the African Union, leaving no one behind, and funding support for peacekeeping as a prerequisite for addressing the phenomenon of terrorism, migration, human trafficking, piracy, mercenaryism, among others, as factors that hinder Africa's development.

Faced with their own humanitarian challenges, the Heads of State and Government of the African Union met in Malabo in May for an extraordinary summit and a donor roundtable to discuss and provide the necessary support to address the humanitarian challenges facing Africa, which have been exacerbated by the socioeconomic effects of COVID-19 and disasters across the continent, in order to find lasting solutions to the current humanitarian crisis, especially humanitarian funding. In that context, we welcome and appreciate the Global Security Initiative presented by the People's Republic of China, whose precepts are relevant to the current global situation.

Equatorial Guinea is committed to the promotion of human rights and has therefore designed a wide range of national strategies and standards to strengthen rights, such as the rights of the child and of persons with disabilities and the right to food, to equal access to vaccines against pandemics, to housing and so forth.

In terms of the promotion of justice and international law, Equatorial Guinea stressed the need to reform the United Nations system, including the Security Council, whose structure today is one of the great injustices within the United Nations and reflects a serious lack of the democratic spirit in the Organization. Africa, in the framework of the Ezulwini Consensus, has been calling for that injustice to be corrected for more than 15 years through the allocation to Africa of two permanent seats and two additional non-permanent seats on the Security Council.

Within the same context of the promotion of justice and international law, we call for the lifting, once and for all, of the commercial, economic and financial embargo imposed on Cuba six decades ago. That brotherly country deserves the opportunity to play its part on the global stage as a sovereign country.

In Central Africa, we remain deeply concerned about the ongoing crisis situation caused by maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, the perpetrators of which are increasingly acquiring ever more sophisticated methods for greater autonomy in the open sea, with

consequent harm and damage to the countries of the subregion.

We welcome resolution 2634 (2022), recently adopted by the Security Council, calling on countries of the Gulf of Guinea to criminalize piracy and armed robbery at sea under their domestic laws, and to investigate and prosecute or extradite, in accordance with applicable international law, perpetrators of piracy and armed robbery at sea, as well as those who incite, finance or intentionally facilitate such crimes.

As His Excellency Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo has always expressed in international forums, and in particular at last year's seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly (see A/76/PV.11), we wish to insist on the imperative proposal of the need to organize a Summit on the Gulf of Guinea in order to design a strategy to stop all terrorist activities and attempts that threaten regional and international peace and security, as well as to pool our efforts to advance the region and tackle the challenges that surround it.

In conclusion, I wish to once again express my congratulations to the President of the General Assembly and to wish him every success during his presidency. We again encourage Secretary-General António Guterres to continue his noble work on United Nations reforms and to resolutely support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Peace. We also express our strong desire that the United Nations assume its role as mediator in world conflicts in order to reach peaceful, just and negotiated solutions that avoid the use of weapons, which are not the appropriate means for the resolution of any conflict.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Dominique Hasler, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Education and Sport of the Principality of Liechtenstein.

Ms. Hasler (Liechtenstein): We gather this year at a time of enormous challenges. Geopolitical conflicts, mass displacement, food insecurity and the effects of the pandemic continue to make people suffer around the globe and pose massive threats to human security. We need more ambition and effective action to fight climate change. In short, we are off track to meet the Sustainable Development Goals. The conclusion to be drawn from all of that should be obvious to all — we urgently need to recall our commitment to leave no one behind and to come together for the sake of our common

interests, embrace multilateralism and redouble our political investment in the United Nations.

Instead, we are witnessing a frontal assault on the very Charter of the United Nations. The aggression against Ukraine is nothing less than an attack on the international world order established after the Second World War. Indeed, that order, which we have all built up together and is best represented right in the General Assembly Hall, is being challenged in its very foundation. This act of aggression, carried out with complete disregard for the most basic rules of international law, is an unprecedented test to our resolve to stand up together for our international order. We in Liechtenstein are committed to defending our freedom. We have joined with partners from our region, particularly the European Union, but also from other parts of the world, to stand united with Ukraine and to stand against aggression, wherever it is committed.

We have witnessed dramatic events in the past few months, developments of historic dimensions for the United Nations — a military build-up on the borders of one of the founding Members of this Organization, meeting the threshold of the threat of use of force foreseen in the United Nations Charter, accompanied by denial and disinformation. After the military attack on Ukraine commenced, the Security Council was blocked yet again, predictably, through the veto. However, for the first time in decades, it then invoked the Uniting for Peace resolution and handed its competence over to the General Assembly. The resolution adopted in this Hall with an overwhelming majority (resolution ES-11/1) on 2 March will stand out as a landmark in the history of the United Nations. Condemning the aggression against Ukraine in unequivocal terms was of enormous importance. It backs the international response to that assault on our rules-based order. Just as important, it lays the foundation for what we should do going forward — hold criminally accountable the political and military leaders who initiated the aggression committed against Ukraine.

The source of all the crimes committed in Ukraine is the crime of war itself. Therefore, as President Zelenskyy also made clear in his address to the Assembly this week (see A/77/PV.7), addressing the crime of aggression is a powerful deterrent to help defend the international order reflected in the United Nations Charter. The newly announced sham referendums for parts of occupied Ukraine are a continuation of the aggression and make a mockery of the right to self-

determination — a cornerstone of the United Nations Charter and the international order.

This is also a moment for us to not just reflect on the future role of this Organization, but to decide together which United Nations the planet needs today. This Organization is playing a crucial role in the current global challenges in the areas of humanitarian assistance, global public health, nuclear safety and food security. It enjoys strong support and high levels of trust among the wider public. At the same time, it continues to disappoint, especially in its core task — the maintenance of international peace and security. Its mission “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war” is deeply ingrained in the collective conscience of the peoples on whose behalf it works.

But more often than not, it does not meet those expectations. For us in Liechtenstein, maintaining peace and security remains the core purpose of this Organization. And we remain committed to being part of the change required to have the United Nations at the centre of that effort, through prevention, mediation and collective action. In that spirit, Liechtenstein put before the Assembly the veto initiative, adopted earlier this year (General Assembly resolution 76/262). I wish to thank all the partners that supported that idea, and I am grateful for the way it continues to resonate far outside this building. The veto initiative, of course, introduces a very important measure of accountability for the use of the veto. But more important, it creates a policy space for the Assembly to step in when the Security Council is paralysed or deadlocked, as it may well be on frequent occasions in future. The veto, indeed, is no longer the last word.

In some of the ongoing conflicts, we are witnessing the use of military force in its most crude and brutal form. But in parallel, we are also dealing with cyberwarfare, which has added an insidious and often invisible layer of challenges to our collective security. Liechtenstein is a small country in the heart of Europe. We do not have armed forces. Therefore, we must rely solely on respect for the rule of law and on strong partnerships in the region and beyond. We are certainly shocked by the frontal assault on the European security architecture. And we are horrified that military force, in its crudest form and against our hopes and beliefs, is being applied again in our part of the world. And yet, in thinking about our national security, our biggest concern is the insidious ways in which cyberspace is used to undermine democratic

institutions — the foundations of our societies and the very basis of our prosperity and of the peace we have enjoyed for long decades. Addressing those threats and enforcing international law in cyberspace is therefore one of the key challenges we must face.

When addressing the Assembly in the past, Liechtenstein has regularly talked about the nexus between peace and justice and about the need to ensure accountability for the most serious crimes under international law, if we are to be successful in our efforts to achieve lasting peace. Time and again — in Myanmar, in Syria and elsewhere — we have witnessed how impunity has led to more and often even graver atrocities, to crimes against humanity and to genocide, causing immense human suffering, destroying societies and destabilizing whole regions. The aggression against Ukraine is but the most recent illustration of that sad pattern. This war is not only illegal in and of itself, but it is also carried out with systematic disregard for international humanitarian law, in particular the Geneva Conventions, mirroring the playbook of the conflicts in Syria and elsewhere. As a long-standing supporter of the International Criminal Court (ICC), we supported the referral of the situation in Ukraine to the ICC. That referral is a decisive test in two ways — of the effectiveness of the Court and of our consistency in lending the Court political and financial support. This is our chance to illustrate our resolve — not just to prosecute crimes committed in Ukraine, but to give steady support to an ICC that does its work independently, across the globe and fully in line with its founding treaty, the Rome Statute.

Our work to address the Organization's role to safeguard peace and security must embrace a comprehensive notion of security, with climate change being one of the key threats. Every year, natural disasters and extreme weather events increase in severity and frequency. Yet our collective understanding of the threat is not matched by the determination to move forward together with the required sense of urgency. Progress in climate negotiations has been insufficient, and the pandemic, armed conflicts and challenges to energy supplies have done their part to contribute to a negative outlook. Our collective action in the framework of the process of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change will remain instrumental. But it may well not be enough, in and of itself, to achieve the goals we have set ourselves in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Many of

our friends are contemplating legal avenues to fight climate change. And in line with our commitment to the rule of law, we are open to working with them

In conclusion, protecting the planet and saving the livelihoods of future generations are the biggest challenges of our time and the ultimate test of our ability to be truly united nations. It is our duty to take action together in order to ensure that no person, no country and no region is left behind. Everyone committed to those goals will find a reliable partner in us.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Robert Dussey, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and Togolese Abroad of the Togolese Republic.

Mr. Dussey (Togo) (*spoke in French*): After unprecedented formats of our General Assembly, following the constraints related to the coronavirus disease pandemic, we are again gathered here under the same roof to calmly debate the problems that disrupt the life of our world. The objective is to restore our common Organization to its fundamental values and principles, which have been severely tested by geopolitical rivalries, the temptation to dominate, national withdrawal and conflicts.

I would therefore like to welcome the theme chosen to guide the general debate of this session: "A watershed moment: transformative solutions to interlocking challenges". But before I continue, allow me to extend to the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session my warmest congratulations on his election and our best wishes for success. I can assure him of my delegation's support. I would also like to pay tribute to his predecessor for the work he accomplished in a rather difficult context.

On behalf of the President of the Togolese Republic, His Excellency Mr. Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé, I would like to pay a warm tribute to Secretary-General António Guterres for his various initiatives to make our Organization more efficient.

During its 77 years of existence, the United Nations has worked tirelessly to prevent conflicts and maintain international peace and security. Today the threat to peace has changed. The inter-State conflicts of yesteryear have been replaced by new forms of violence involving actors who are difficult to capture.

Africa, spared for the time being, has become a sanctuary for terrorist groups. The terrorist threat, long

confined to the countries of the Sahel, is spreading to the coastal countries on the Atlantic Ocean in West Africa. That is why the President of the Togolese Republic, His Excellency President Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé, has never ceased to invest personally in peace and stability in West Africa, and particularly in the Sahel. That determination has enabled the President of the Republic, as mediator in the crisis between the brotherly countries of Côte d'Ivoire and Mali, to obtain the release of three of the 46 remaining Ivorian soldiers. I would like to encourage all parties to show restraint and patience so that mediation can succeed.

The recent terrorist attacks in northern Togo, which left casualties and significant material damage in their wake, demonstrate the increasingly sophisticated means used by the jihadists. That situation is of the utmost concern to my delegation. That is why we welcome the adoption by consensus of the annual progress report of the Open-ended Working Group on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International and National Security on 29 July. Togo remains firmly committed to combating such criminals and driving them beyond its borders. In that regard, we will never waver.

In order to contribute to that pressing goal, Togo hosted the first Pan-African Cybersecurity Summit in Lomé on 23 and 24 March. The Lomé Declaration resulting from the Summit is a commitment to combating cyberthreats. In that context, my country welcomes the work under way in the Ad Hoc Committee to Elaborate a Comprehensive International Convention on Countering the Use of Information and Communications Technologies for Criminal Purposes and encourages all stakeholders to engage in developing such a legal instrument.

Beyond the military response, we are fully aware that the fight against terrorism also depends on the degree of trust between the army and the population and between the latter and the Government. We therefore work daily to combat the root causes of the spread of violent extremism, which fuels terrorism. Togo also took innovative and multisectoral measures, as set out in its strategy document to combat violent extremism, adopted on 1 July. To that end, an emergency programme for the Savannah region, with a budget of \$9,104,704, was drawn up for the implementation of various projects up to 2025 in the water, energy, health, infrastructure, education and agriculture sectors.

We are in a new phase of the asymmetric war against that terrorist insurgency. The deterioration of the security situation must be of concern to us all, particularly the United Nations. To that end, it is important to successfully revitalize our Organization and do our utmost to reform the Security Council.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the Global Programme on the Protection of Vulnerable Targets, from which my country, Togo, benefits as a pilot country. That United Nations Programme, aimed at strengthening the capacities of Member States and providing them with logistical support for the protection of vulnerable targets against terrorist attacks, has proved to be of great importance to our countries.

The other major challenge facing humankind is climate change. All the experts' reports on that issue are worrisome. That phenomenon is all the more of concern because it affects all countries in the world, including, unfortunately, the least polluting countries, such as ours.

Togo adopted a robust policy for the restoration of vegetation cover, with an ambitious programme for a green transition. The Togolese Government is firmly committed to ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources and resilience to the impact of climate change. With a view to sustainable management and protection, the Togolese Government has therefore focused its priorities, among other things, on improving marine and coastal ecosystems, regulating fishing and promoting the blue economy. Lastly, as part of the preservation and restoration of ecosystems and combating desertification, Togo launched a major national reforestation programme of 1 billion trees by 2030, banned the import, marketing and use of glyphosate and all products containing it and promoted the use of biopesticides and biofertilizers in the country.

We very much hope that the upcoming twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Egypt from 7 to 18 November, will help to bring environmental conservation back to the centre of the international agenda by urging stakeholders to honour the financing pledges needed to address global warming.

In the area of renewable energy, Togo established strategic partnerships for the provision of reliable, modern and low-cost services in rural areas. Consequently, the fund for access to electricity for

all, called the Tinga fund, the Cizo, or Sun, project for the supply of solar-energy kits to rural and vulnerable populations, photovoltaic power plants, miniature solar power plants and solar street lamps were set up throughout the country, contributing to the widespread use of renewable energy in Togo.

On the economic and social front, Togo adopted a Government road map up to 2025, whose vision is to make Togo a modern nation with inclusive and sustainable growth. The road map has three main axes, namely, strengthening inclusion and social harmony and ensuring peace, boosting job creation by building on the economic potential and modernizing the country by strengthening its structures.

The reform of the business climate enabled Togo to significantly increase foreign direct investment in the country. Similarly, the strengthening of development cooperation has contributed to the increased mobility of foreign resources due to the new momentum created by the adoption of the Government's road map and its endorsement by development stakeholders, the establishment of new partnerships and the revitalization of existing partnerships.

The major challenge for Togo is to implement and strengthen its national social protection system. Improving people's access to basic social services and strengthening inclusion mechanisms also remain fundamental to poverty reduction. To achieve that, the Government has included the principle of leaving no one behind in public policies.

As a result, other innovative initiatives have made it possible to expedite the inclusion of all social groups. Those include the adoption of the law establishing universal health insurance and the WEZOU digital platform, set up in 2021, to take care of pregnant women and newborns in order to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality. Strengthening women's protection against discrimination and gender-based violence and reducing sociocultural barriers have considerably improved the contribution of the female population to the country's development.

Togo set up a mechanism for the financial inclusion of the most vulnerable sectors of the population through cash transfers. A project for the development of social-safety nets and basic services, as well as a programme to support vulnerable populations, was established. In addition, an incentive mechanism for agricultural financing based on risk-sharing and a plan

to structure and improve rural agricultural training and integration were launched.

To conclude my remarks, I would like to encourage everyone to consider the foundations of multilateralism and the aims of the founding fathers in devising that system of global governance. At the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly, we had a wide-ranging debate on the United Nations we want and reaffirmed our commitment to multilateralism. The important declaration (resolution 75/1) adopted at the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations adequately reflects the new multilateral ambition to which we committed, and which, moreover, aims to be just and equitable. It also seeks to show us that we are the driver of development and sustained global growth.

Today we are called on to take concrete action to address the many challenges that plague our world, including terrorism and security challenges, as well the coronavirus disease. However, unfortunately, we see that all too often we flout our multilateral commitments. We have at times taken away their substance, their strength and their roots. How else can we understand why the Security Council remains so exclusive? Why not work in good faith to reform that important organ of the international security system by making it more representative of the current world realities?

Based on that analysis, we come to the following conclusion. Today we are convinced that African countries, and Africa in general, no longer want to align themselves with any of the major Powers due to the shortcomings of the concept of multilateralism. The role attributed to Africa in the twenty-first century reflects the image that certain Powers still have of our continent as solely their area of influence. Africa has virtually no impact on the current world order, while it is drastically affected by the consequences of the disruptions in international affairs. It is only of interest to certain Powers when they find themselves in trouble. We must be concerned about Africa's place on the world stage. In truth, today Africa does not occupy the place that it should in the international arena.

For many Powers, the African continent has no role to play as a major actor, in the Kantian sense of the word, in the international arena. They think that they live in the same world, whereas the world has profoundly changed. When the United Nations was established in 1945, apart from two African countries

that we all know — Liberia and Ethiopia — African countries were not yet independent. After 77 years, unfortunately, it is the same international system that remains in place because of the will of the five permanent members of the Security Council, known to us all.

Although the African integration project is still in progress, a consensus has since emerged among African States at the level of the African Union, as recalled at this session by the President of Senegal, Chairperson of the African Union, with regard to the need for the continent to obtain two permanent representative seats on the Security Council, in addition to the two non-permanent member seats allocated to African States (see A/77/PV.4). Despite the general consensus of 54 Member States, the reluctance of some of the five permanent members to see Africa take up those seats is clear. Unfortunately, Africa's voice does not seem to be heard, as some simply do not want Africa to be a strong continent.

The great Powers want to reduce Africa to a merely functional entity in the service of their causes and clearly do not want the continent to be able to play a significant, or even a leading, role in the world. They usually try to get Africans to subscribe to their narrative and, in the end, Africans are used to support one side against another. When it comes to voting on a draft resolution in the Security Council, we are actively lobbied by both sides. Africa is then greatly in demand, and even put under pressure by some of its partners.

Today we believe that such attitudes and actions, which belong to another era, take place in a historical context in which Africa has become aware of its own responsibility and is increasingly speaking with one and the same voice. The divides of the colonial era between a so-called, *inter alia*, French-, Portuguese-, English- or Arabic-speaking Africa have lessened, as have the post-Cold war ideologies that dominated the second half of the twentieth century. Today Africa wants to be itself. In truth, Africa is Africanophone, if you will allow that neologism. Africa today is no longer the Africa of the 1945s, let alone the 1960s. Today we have a host of new partners in Africa that are an integral part of the new international geopolitics, far removed from the two opposing blocs that shaped the post-war world of the twentieth century. The world has decentred to become multipolar. To paraphrase Blaise Pascal, the world is now a sphere whose centre is both everywhere

and nowhere. Africa no longer can, or wants to, be the carriages of a single locomotive.

In reality, many African countries no longer feel too bound, in the sense of being tied, by colonial history and are eager to work with new partners. All those changes, linked to history itself, whose essence is perpetual evolution, as well as to the clear desire for a paradigm shift in the level of cooperation in Africa, should lead some Powers to change their approach if they want to continue to work with Africans. There is a need for a change of mentality and behaviour of our partners who come to Africa, each of whom without exception has an agenda dictated primarily by their own interests.

Africa expects more equality, respect, equity and justice in its relations and partnerships with the rest of the world and the major Powers, regardless of who they are. Today Africans want to be real partners with the rest of the world. The community of nations must listen to Africa in order to give purpose to our dialogue. Failure to listen distorts the purpose of dialogue, turning it into a juxtaposition of monologues and partial arguments, sometimes under the guise of pseudo-multilateralism, which runs the risk of distorting the relationship.

In this world of ours, it is only by collectively pooling our intelligence that we will be able to reach agreement on objectives to achieve collectively. Although the major problems we continue to face are the same, they are perceived in different ways by the North and the South. When it comes to major international issues, listening to African voices means more than just calibrating the discussion. Africa's megaphone may not be as loud as those of the world's major Powers, but Africa's voice counts and must count for those who seek to partner with it on major international issues.

Africa is in fact waiting for a real partnership and our allies must make an effort to take on the spirit of such a partnership. Our allies cannot always expect unconditional support from our continent. Africa wants to cooperate with its allies on the basis of its own best interests. To that end, our partners need to abandon fantasies that were largely forged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and are clearly out of step with the twenty-first century, in which national and regional challenges have global implications and global challenges have regional, national and even local manifestations and ramifications. The current international economic repercussions and disruptions

directly resulting from the return of war to Europe are a clear example of that.

In reality, we are all exposed to the same threats and challenges to our survival and even our existence. However, we deeply believe that we can build a prosperous, more stable and safer world for our peoples through an enhanced and effective multilateralism. Our only option for achieving that is restoring, under the aegis of the United Nations, the strength and determination in our collective capacity for dialogue, resilience and solidarity, which will enable us to make our planet habitable again for all and to sustainably build our shared world together.

We should — and I truly mean this — read our founding texts more often and learn to respect and consider the smallest, weakest and the most fragile among us. Yes, we believe that another world is possible. It is inevitable for all of us, because in truth — and here I paraphrase the famous scientist Albert Einstein on the subject of war — I do not know what the Third World War will be like, but I do know that there would not be many people left to see the fourth.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Awatif Altidjani Ahmed Koiboro, Minister for Foreign Affairs, African Integration and Chadians Abroad of the Republic of Chad.

Ms. Koiboro (Chad) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I congratulate Mr. Csaba Kőrösi on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session and wish him every success in conducting its work. I also pay tribute to Mr. Abdulla Shahid, the outgoing President of the General Assembly, for the dynamism with which he led the work of the seventy-sixth session. I further commend Secretary-General António Guterres and wish him every success at this difficult time of multiple and complex crises throughout the world. We reiterate to him Chad's full friendship and support.

The seventy-seventh session, whose theme is “A watershed moment: transformative solutions to interlocking challenges”, is taking place at a time when humankind is facing a multitude of challenges unprecedented since the creation of our Organization. They are serious, complex and successive challenges to our collective efforts and difficult to address. The current international order, based on the Charter of the United Nations, is being severely tested, for instance, by the geopolitical tensions in several parts of our planet,

including those caused by the ongoing war in Ukraine, with its impact on the affected civilian populations and on the entire world at the economic, food security and energy supply levels.

One of the difficult experiences we have faced was the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic that plunged our lives into a state of great upheaval. Today the world is struggling to recover from the shock of COVID-19. We have lived through that unprecedented challenge, enduring the loss of millions of human lives and its adverse health, social and economic consequences. The recent lull in the situation should not lead us to relax; rather, it should prompt us to further consolidate the multilateral cooperation we witnessed when States and organizations came together and supported each other to overcome the scourge. We hope to see a further consolidation of that multilateral cooperation, particularly in addressing other persistent and recurrent crises and challenges such as wars, terrorism, climate change, health and food crises and poverty.

This session is therefore an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and to reiterate our collective commitment to realizing them, in particular through the implementation of the recommendations made in the declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations (resolution 75/1). The time has come to take practical measures to achieve those objectives by correcting the many mistakes that have led to the recurrent problems hindering the work of the international community and preventing the full realization of the promises contained in the Charter.

In that regard, the Secretary-General's Our Common Agenda initiative, which is an action plan aimed at strengthening and accelerating the implementation of multilateral agreements, in particular the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and making a concrete difference in the lives of people, is particularly welcome. It is indeed an important step in the right direction. Chad fully supports the initiative and hopes that it will lead to the promotion, strengthening and prioritization of multiple concrete solutions to the major challenges of our time and have a real impact on the lives of the people, particularly those in poor countries, rather than being a sham of multilateralism that is limited only to lengthy statements that have no real effect.

In that regard, it is clear that seven years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and three years since its proclamation here in New York, the results of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals are still far from being achieved, especially for poor countries. As the Secretary-General's reports on that issue have mentioned, those goals will not be met, and many people will be left behind, if bold action is not taken. Unfortunately, a downward spiral may be set off and cause disappointment in the hearts of millions of people around the world. That is why, in the wake of the declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, the Secretary-General's Our Common Agenda initiative gives us hope that our legitimate expectations regarding international agreements and programmes, first and foremost the 2030 Agenda, can be realized.

All our actions converge towards sustainable development, but development is only possible where there is lasting peace and security. That is why the efforts of our States to achieve those objectives require increased and continuous support. The international commitments made to that effect through the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the New Urban Agenda and all other international agendas must be honoured if we are to achieve the ultimate goal of ensuring that no one is left behind and having a planet that is fit to live on and can be passed on safely and proudly to succeeding generations.

To that end, in the face of mounting and accumulating challenges, it is crucial to strengthen the existing commitments made by virtue of the indispensable solidarity that binds our States together, especially the rich and the poor, through development assistance, on the one hand, and the implementation of economic and financial empowerment mechanisms, as well as sustainable development policies in favour of the least developed and landlocked developing countries, on the other.

Despite geopolitical emergencies and various constraints, any approach or attempt to limit development aid would be counterproductive and could increase crisis situations in the world. Chad therefore calls on donor countries to maintain and increase development assistance through the United Nations, which provides unlimited assistance to hundreds of millions of people around the world whose very survival depends on it.

I cannot but also mention the issue of debt, which continues to place an unbearable burden on many developing countries, including Chad. That burden constitutes a real problem, hampering post-COVID-19 recovery, economic recovery and the implementation of sustainable development programmes. Debt relief therefore remains an urgent need to promote economic recovery in low-income countries and reverse the gloomy outlook for the global economy. From that perspective, Chad reiterates its commitment to the various needs and initiatives to cancel or restructure the debt of developing countries. I also want to call for the swift implementation of the facilities granted to my country, Chad, within the framework of the initiatives that various multilateral bodies have taken in order to enable us to respond to the pressing needs of our people, who already face the accumulating challenges of economy, humanitarian emergencies, insecurity caused by terrorist threats, the negative effects of climate change, the food crisis and others.

Regarding the political situation in my country, as the General Assembly knows, we have been undergoing a period of political transition since 20 April 2021. I can tell everyone now that the transitional process is progressing satisfactorily. The Transitional Military Council, headed by General Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno, and the Transitional Government, are committed to ending that process and achieving lasting peace leading to rebuilding the Chadian State awaited by the Chadian people. Our inclusive and sovereign national dialogue, which is now under way, should lead to the holding of democratic, free and transparent elections. The dialogue brings together all the nation's active forces and ensures the participation of political and military movements, made possible thanks to the Doha agreement signed on 8 August.

I take this opportunity to express from this rostrum the deep gratitude of the Government and the people of Chad to the Government of the State of Qatar, headed by His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, who kindly hosted and facilitated the pre-dialogue between the Government of Chad and the political and military groups. The inclusive and sovereign national dialogue, in which all segments of the Chadian society participate — including political parties, civil society, politicians, military staff, professional organizations, women, youth, people with special needs, expatriates, civil and religious leaders, defence and security forces and others — is a historic

opportunity for Chadians to decide, in full sovereignty, how to rebuild their country.

Participants in the dialogue have discussed all issues related to the future of Chad in complete honesty, freedom and sovereignty. The outcome of the dialogue will be implemented and binding on all. Chad is counting on its partners to support and finance the implementation of the dialogue's ensuing decisions and recommendations. Of course, some have opted not to take part in that historic dialogue. Endeavours are being undertaken to persuading those brothers and sisters to reconsider their choice and join the dialogue.

In terms of security and development, the situation in the Sahel and the Lake Chad region has become extremely worrisome and continues to deteriorate due to many factors, including institutional changes in many countries of the region, the dismantling of military counter-terrorism units, the effects of climate change leading to increased food insecurity due to the lack of an appropriate response, uncontrolled illegal migration and unchecked growth in illicit trafficking.

With regard to the security situation, we note the resurgence of terrorist activities in the Sahel, which has been relentless in its spread to neighbouring regions in West Africa, especially Togo, Burkina Faso and Benin, where terrorist attacks have taken place. In the light of the continued deterioration of the situation, Chad has continuously called for a new approach to the situation in the Sahel so as to better adapt our responses.

In that regard, Chad welcomes the initiative of the United Nations and the African Union, in partnership with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) to conduct a joint strategic assessment of the situation in the Sahel and the appointment of the former President of the Niger, His Excellency Mr. Mahamadou Issoufou, to head the Independent High-level Panel on Security and Development in the Sahel, responsible for conducting the assessment. We have no doubt that President Issoufou and his team will carry out an in-depth analysis of the problems plaguing the subregion and propose solutions to help us readapt the response to a multidimensional crisis that, despite the solutions already implemented, continues to deteriorate year after year.

It is true that the Sahel does not lack strategies or plans to address the crisis. The States of the Sahel and their bilateral and multilateral partners have

implemented measures that have been in place for almost 20 years, with results that have fallen short of our expectations. The strategic assessment will therefore enable us to understand the causes, although we already know that the terrorism which is spilling blood in the Sahel cannot be defeated without the restoration of peace and State authority in Libya.

The many initiatives adopted by Member States at the national and subregional levels continue to suffer greatly from the lack of adequate resources for their implementation. The G-5 Sahel Joint Force, for example, is struggling to find sustainable and predictable resources to carry out its activities adequately. That is why Chad once again calls on its partners to support the G-5 Sahel in order to prevent the region from plunging deeper into violence and chaos. I reiterate the call of the G-5 Sahel Heads of State for sustainable and predictable funding from United Nations assessed contributions for the Joint Force.

With regard to the internal situation of the G-5 Sahel, it has seen the withdrawal of the sisterly Republic of Mali. We regret that withdrawal, as Mali was a founding member of the organization. Its place will be preserved. We will not be able to defeat terrorism or achieve stability and development in the Sahel unless we all join the struggle and pool our capabilities. We hope that our Malian brothers will reconsider their decision and rejoin our joint organization. The door of the G-5 Sahel remains wide open to them.

With regard to the situation in Libya, Chad is concerned about the persistence of the political impasse related to the clashes that took place in Tripoli on 26 and 27 August. Chad once again urges the Libyan political actors to prioritize dialogue in order to end the ongoing crisis and continue implementing the agreed elections agenda. Chad encourages the international community, in particular the United Nations and the African Union, to pursue efforts to bring the positions of the various parties to the conflict closer together and foster political dialogue, as the Libyan crisis will be resolved only through peaceful means and a Libyan-led inclusive political dialogue.

The persistence of the conflict in Libya poses a permanent threat to neighbouring countries and the entire Sahel region, for which Chad has paid and continues to pay a heavy price. In that regard, Chad once again reiterates its call on the Security Council and the Secretary-General to implement the disarmament,

demobilization and reintegration process, which represents a lasting solution to the issue of its nationals engaged with the various Libyan military factions.

With regard to Cuba, Chad calls for the lifting of the economic and trade embargo imposed by the United States Government on that country, which continues to weigh heavily on the lives of its people.

Concerning the reform of the Security Council — the organ responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security — Chad once again urges Member States to move from talk to action on implementing that reform and lifting the historical injustice against the African continent, which excludes it from full and fair participation in that organ. In that regard, Chad will continue to fully support the Common African Position, as set forth in the Sirte Declaration and other relevant conventions.

In conclusion, I wish the General Assembly every success in carrying out its tasks.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind them that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Vinito (India): It is regrettable that the Prime Minister of Pakistan has chosen the platform of the General Assembly to make false accusations against India (see A/77/PV.10). He has done so to obfuscate misdeeds in his own country and to justify actions against India that the world considers unacceptable. A polity that claims to seek peace with its neighbours would never sponsor cross-border terrorism, nor would it shelter planners of the horrific Mumbai terrorist attack, disclosing their existence only under pressure from the international community. Such a country would not make unjustified and untenable territorial claims against neighbours. It would not covet their lands and seek to illegally integrate them with its own.

But it is not just about the neighbourhood that we have heard false claims today. It is about human rights, about minority rights and about basic decencies. When young women in the thousands from the minority community are abducted as a standard operating procedure, what can we conclude about the underlying mindset?

The desire for peace, security and progress in the Indian subcontinent is real. It is also widely shared, and it can be realized. That will surely happen when cross-border terrorism ceases, when Governments come clean with the international community and their own people, when minorities are not persecuted and, not least, when we recognize those realities before the Assembly.

Mr. Erciyes (Türkiye): I have taken the floor to exercise the right of reply to the statement made earlier on behalf of Greece by Prime Minister Mitsotakis (see A/77/PV.10). Unfortunately, his statement was yet another example of the distortion of facts and hostile narratives against Türkiye. We would therefore like to make the following brief points in response to the statement, while reserving our right to respond to it comprehensively in writing, as well.

First, Türkiye's role in its region and beyond is well appreciated by the international community. It is regrettable to see that Greece is an exception.

Second, Türkiye supports sanctions if they are mandated by the Security Council. It is therefore a double standard on the part of Greece to accuse Türkiye, as Greece itself circumvents others sanctions through the practice of tanker-to-tanker oil-transfer operations.

Third, Türkiye does not challenge the territorial integrity and unity of Greece. That is false propaganda. However, Türkiye challenges Greece to enter into an honest and meaningful dialogue, in accordance with international law, to address not only one, but all legally interrelated Aegean Sea disputes. That includes Greece's 10-nautical-mile unlawful national airspace claim, the violation by Greece of the demilitarized status of the eastern Aegean islands, and the sovereignty of certain insular formations in the Aegean Sea that were not ceded to Greece by valid international treaties.

Fourth, contrary to Greek propaganda, it is actually Greece that has been threatening Türkiye since 1 June 1995 with the unilateral extension of the territorial sea limit beyond six miles in the Aegean Sea. That grave threat has recently been reinforced with the increasing militarization of the eastern Aegean islands, in contravention of international treaties.

Fifth, Türkiye wishes to remind Greece of the principle of equity and the jurisprudence of international courts when it comes to maritime boundary delimitations, as opposed the maximalist

boundary that Greece claims in the Aegean Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean.

Sixth, Türkiye stands ready to enter into an honest and meaningful dialogue to address the interrelated Aegean disputes with Greece and does not rule out any peaceful means of settlement, including recourse to the International Court of Justice, to be mutually agreed by the parties. Yet that requires genuine political will and an honest approach, which Greece is unfortunately lacking at this time. In that regard, it is worth recalling Greece's reservations to the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice on three Aegean disputes, namely, the national airspace limits, the demilitarized status of the eastern Aegean islands and the maritime boundary delimitation.

Seventh, the current negative atmosphere unfortunately prevailing in our bilateral relations is the deliberate choice of Greece. It has chosen nearly daily provocative actions and escalatory rhetoric over cooperation and good-neighbourliness. It is the Greek side that has frozen the bilateral and NATO confidence-building measure talks.

Eighth, Greece's degrading and life-threatening treatment of irregular migrants in the Aegean Sea is well documented not only by Türkiye, but many international and non-governmental organizations. We therefore urge Greece to take responsibility and stop its inhumane push-back practices in the Aegean Sea.

Last but not least, I would like to underline that Türkiye will continue to support the Turkish Cypriot people and their inherent rights, namely, their sovereign equality and equal international status.

Ms. Saleem (Pakistan): My delegation is exercising its right of reply in response to the statement made by the Indian representative. Denial, deflection and disinformation continue to define India's diplomacy, as we have just witnessed.

The myth of terrorism created and propagated by India against Pakistan cannot and will not hide the stark reality that the people of Pakistan in occupied Jammu and Kashmir and its own minorities are victims of its State-sponsored terrorism. Today India itself is the principal perpetrator, sponsor, financier and abettor of terrorism in the region. India has sponsored and perpetrated terrorism and aggression against all its neighbours by creating terrorist groups

and destabilizing and blockading neighbours to do its strategic bidding.

In Pakistan, India is funding and supporting terrorist organizations like Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan and the Balochistan Liberation Army. Over the past two decades, thousands of innocent Pakistanis have lost their lives and been injured as a result of those Indian-sponsored terrorist attacks. Pakistan has shared irrefutable evidence of India's involvement in sponsoring and supporting terrorism with the international community. India's National Security Adviser, Mr. Ajit Doval, has publicly admitted supporting and financing terrorist organizations. The captured Indian spy, Kulbhushan Jadhav, has also confessed to organizing terrorist attacks in Pakistan.

Since the Hindutva-inspired Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Bharatiya Janata Party Government's unilateral and illegal actions on 5 August 2019, dubbed as the final solution, India's 900,000 occupation forces in occupied Jammu and Kashmir — the densest occupation in history — have escalated their operations involving 8 million Kashmiri men, women and children in the world's largest open-air prison through extrajudicial killings in fake encounters, the enforced disappearances 15,000 young Kashmiri boys, the incarceration of the entire Kashmiri leadership, bringing about demographic change by issuing millions of fake domicile certificates to non-Kashmiris, gerrymandering electoral boundaries to reduce Muslim representation, curbing religious freedom and orchestrating media and Internet blackouts.

Last year, Pakistan presented a comprehensive dossier containing concrete evidence of massive human rights violations, war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide being perpetrated by Indian occupation forces with impunity. Since 1989, Indian occupation forces have committed more than 100,000 extrajudicial killings, approximately 162,000 arbitrary arrests and acts of torture. More than 25,000 pellet-gun injuries, 11,250 cases of rape and gang rape, and 8,652 unmarked mass graves attest to the genocide that is being committed in the occupied territory.

Yet we fear that those discoveries of Indian crimes are but the tip of the iceberg. The High Commissioner for Human Rights has published two reports highlighting grave and systematic human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law. Calling for accountability, the High Commissioner

has recommended the establishment of a commission of inquiry to investigate those atrocity crimes against the Kashmiri people and has called on India to grant access so that the worsening human rights situation can be monitored.

Several special procedures mandate-holders have declared the human rights situation in the occupied territory to be in “free fall”. International media and major human rights organizations have also expressed serious concerns about human rights violations in the occupied territory. Mr. Gregory Stanton, President of Genocide Watch, has warned that

“the Indian Government’s actions in Kashmir have been an extreme case of persecution and could very well lead to genocide”.

Not surprisingly, the Indian authorities have not yet responded to any of those communications; in fact, a witch hunt has been launched against those who dare to report those crimes, including Amnesty International and other human rights organizations, journalists and human rights defenders. If India has nothing to hide, it must grant human rights mechanisms access to the occupied territory, accept a United Nations commission of inquiry and agree to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions granting the right to self-determination to the people of Kashmir.

India’s reign of terror against its minorities, who number more than the populations of the majority of countries of the world, continues unabated. The Islamophobia pandemic has penetrated the very foundations of the Indian State, where 200 million defenceless Muslims are lynched by cow vigilantes and killed in pogroms led by Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh

brown-short thugs. Public calls for genocide against Muslims are being made with official complicity, while the criminal perpetrators of the Gujarat and Delhi pogroms enjoy State office and patronage.

The desecration of mosques, including the Babri Mosque and a temple being built in its place is the State agenda, while the rich Muslim culture and heritage are being destroyed and history is being rewritten. The citizenship amendment act aims to purge India of its Muslim minority, the hijab has been banned, the anti-Muslim trolls of corona jihad rule the Internet, the ruling Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh-Bharatiya Janata Party leaders refer to Muslims as “termites” and “the green virus”, and Muslim-owned shops and houses are being bulldozed.

Derogatory remarks against the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, are made by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh dispensation’s top leadership as part of the State policy to hurt the feelings and sentiments not only of Indian Muslims, but also of billions of Muslims across the world. Other minorities in India, including Christians, Sikhs and Dalits, also face persecution. Churches and gurdwaras are routinely torched.

The Indian delegation would do well to reflect upon the deeply troubling trajectory its State has embarked upon, rather than deploying weapons of mass disinformation against Pakistan. Let me emphasize that no quantum of brutality by the Indian occupying forces can break the will and courage of the Kashmiris to demand freedom from occupation. Just like Martin Luther King Jr., Kashmiris also have a right and a dream — a dream that they shall have freedom one day.

The meeting rose at 10.15 p.m.