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President: Mr. Kőrösi (Hungary)

The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (continued)

General debate

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Jeyhun Aziz oglu Bayramov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Bayramov (Azerbaijan): First, I would like to extend congratulations to you, Sir, on assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session and wish you every success in that highly responsible capacity. You can count on the full support of the Republic of Azerbaijan throughout your tenure. I also wish to thank the outgoing President, His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid, for his hard work over the past year.

Azerbaijan is well known for its contribution to promoting intercultural and interfaith dialogue. The Baku process launched in 2008 by the Government of Azerbaijan, together with the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, the Council of Europe, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) and others, has set standards and agendas for dialogue and intercultural cooperation. The important role of the Baku process in advocating dialogue among cultures has been recognized in the reports of the Secretary-General.

Based on the successful experience of the Baku process, Azerbaijan, in partnership with the United

Nations Alliance of Civilizations and ISESCO, launched in June 2021 a new international initiative entitled Peace4Culture Global Call, the aim of which is to contribute to sustainable peace, development and the protection of cultural heritage. We believe that this initiative will be equally successful, and invite all countries and international organizations to join this project.

The world continues to face the serious challenges that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has raised. Despite the fact that expanding vaccination rates and the increasing adaptivity of the global population to new realities offer a glimpse of hope for the post-COVID period, serious challenges remain. All immediate and long-term challenges brought by the pandemic necessitate new mechanisms supported, by high-level political engagement, that would provide a comprehensive framework for global cooperation and solidarity.

From the very beginning, Azerbaijan, in its national capacity and as Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), has advocated greater global solidarity to overcome the pandemic and put forward a number of global initiatives to that end. The initiative of President Ilham Aliyev, in his capacity as Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement, to convene a special session of the General Assembly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic enjoyed broad support of the United Nations membership. On behalf of NAM, Azerbaijan also submitted resolutions on ensuring equal, affordable, timely and universal access to COVID-19 vaccines, which were adopted by the General Assembly and the

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Human Rights Council with the overwhelming support of Member States.

Along with an effective vaccination campaign in the country, Azerbaijan has donated a significant number of COVID-19 vaccines to countries in need. We have provided international assistance to more than 80 countries to combat the pandemic. We will continue our endeavours aimed at further strengthening international cooperation in addressing the consequences of the pandemic and consolidating efforts for global recovery from COVID-19. The President of Azerbaijan, in that regard, has initiated the establishment of a high-level United Nations panel on post-pandemic global recovery, which will be among the topics to be elaborated on at the upcoming summit-level meeting of the NAM Contact Group in response to COVID-19, to be held in Baku in the coming months.

Since gaining its independence, Azerbaijan has made a long journey, transforming from a country with imposed security challenges on its own soil into a contributor to global security. Along the way, Azerbaijan has been a strong and reliable partner of the United Nations, staunchly supported it and actively contributed to its activities. Both in its national capacity and as current Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement, Azerbaijan is keen to continue contributing to peace and security, strengthening the international legal order and enhancing dialogue, global solidarity and multilateralism. We also look forward to the Summit of the Future, its intergovernmentally negotiated outcome and a new agenda for peace as an opportunity to reinvigorate global action and reflect on collective commitment to the Charter of the United Nations and multilateralism.

Azerbaijan is fully committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We have launched a new development strategy up to 2030, which goes hand in hand with the 2030 Agenda. Over the past year, Azerbaijan has progressed further in terms of its achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and is ranked in the top 50 countries in the United Nations *Sustainable Development Report 2022*. Azerbaijan is among 12 countries that have submitted three voluntary national reviews to the High-level Political Forum, held under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council.

We pursue transformational changes in remodelling our economy to make the transition to a green and circular economy. The clean environment and green

growth have been identified as among the five priority areas of our new national development strategy. This transition stands high on our development agenda, despite the fact that the oil and gas sector plays a significant role in our economy. It is against that backdrop that the non-oil sector of Azerbaijan rose by 11 per cent in the first half of 2022, triggering an increase in our gross domestic product by 7.2 per cent.

Currently, Azerbaijan is one of the few countries worldwide that are gradually mainstreaming sustainable energy into its development agenda, while being a reliable hydrocarbons exporter to international markets. We will increase our profile in that regard, including by introducing new elements of alternative and renewable energy as well. A recently concluded European Union-Azerbaijan memorandum of understanding on a strategic partnership in the field of energy is a good example of Azerbaijan's constructive input into global energy security.

Sustainability has also been mainstreamed in post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation activities, including in the liberated territories. New cities and villages are now being built from scratch by applying modern urban planning methods, the concepts of "smart city" and "smart village". After the war, \$3 billion have already been allocated from the State budget for those purposes, and Azerbaijan is keen to invest even more in the future. The liberated area has been designated as a green energy zone.

Positioned at the crossroads of North-South and East-West transport corridors, Azerbaijan is a rising transit country. Corridors and routes passing through Azerbaijan offer competitive advantages for transport operators and businesses in terms of high-end infrastructure and fast, secure transit traffic.

This year marks thirtieth anniversary of admission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to membership of the United Nations. Since becoming part of the United Nations family, Azerbaijan has consistently demonstrated its strong commitment to the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. We joined the United Nations at a time when the very principles, that the Organization stands for were being blatantly violated in relation to Azerbaijan. In those difficult times, the United Nations stood with Azerbaijan in defending the core values enshrined in its Charter.

Azerbaijan suffered grievously from the aggression of Armenia in the early 1990s, at the core of which were groundless territorial claims, misinterpretations of international law, fabricated historical narratives and racist motivations. Back then, the Security Council unanimously expressed its support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of the internationally recognized borders of Azerbaijan, and demanded the withdrawal of all occupying forces from Azerbaijani territories, as did the General Assembly.

In the course of its aggression, Armenia occupied 20 per cent of Azerbaijan's territory. Twenty thousand Azerbaijanis were killed and more than 1 million became refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Almost 4,000 citizens of Azerbaijan, civilian and military alike, remain missing in connection with the conflict.

Armenia has inflicted long-term damage on the environment in Azerbaijan. Also, thousands of Azerbaijani cultural heritage objects have been destroyed, plundered or misappropriated by Armenia. Earlier this year, ISESCO sent a technical mission to Azerbaijan to undertake a post-conflict state of conservation assessment of the cultural heritage in its liberated territories. For decades, Azerbaijan has called on Armenia to support an independent, transparent UNESCO mission to assess and advise on the protection and preservation of cultural heritage in the region. Although the Armenian occupation of Azerbaijan's territory ended in 2020, a UNESCO mission has yet to arrive, and I once again publicly call for such a mission.

The scale of violations and destruction demonstrates a clear intent and purpose to terrorize, kill and expel Azerbaijani civilians and erase all traces of Azerbaijan from those territories. Within almost 30 years, Armenia, having committed ethnic cleansing, carried out an illegal settlement policy by transferring Armenians en masse from Armenia and third countries to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, in blatant violation of international humanitarian law, with the aim of preventing Azerbaijanis from return to their places of origin and securing the annexation of these territories. Conflict resolution efforts under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe yielded no results.

Almost 30 years on, in the autumn of 2020, Azerbaijan, in response to yet another large-scale military provocation by Armenia and guided by

the inherent rights conferred upon the Member States by the United Nations Charter, launched a counteroffensive operation. As a result, Azerbaijan liberated its territories and the three-decade armed conflict was resolved by military and political means, in line with the trilateral statement signed by the leaders of Azerbaijan, Russia and Armenia on 10 November 2020. The trilateral statement announced the end of all military activities between Armenia and Azerbaijan. It set the parameters for consolidating peace in the region, such as the complete withdrawal of all Armenian armed units from the territory of Azerbaijan, the return of displaced persons and the unblocking of all economic and transport connections in the region.

Azerbaijan has now embarked upon unprecedented recovery and reconstruction activities in the liberated territories and prioritized their full reintegration. Such activities are aimed at finally enabling hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons to return to their homes in safety and dignity and at ensuring a peaceful life in conflict-affected territories. The first families have recently returned to Aghali village, in the liberated Zangilan district of Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan is resolved to reintegrate its citizens of Armenian origin residing in conflict-affected territories into its political, social and economic space, guaranteeing them the same rights and freedoms enjoyed by all the citizens of Azerbaijan regardless of their ethnic, religious or any other affiliation. The Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan provides a solid legal framework in this regard.

One of the major impediments to the ongoing recovery and reconstruction efforts and the safe return of displaced persons is a massive contamination of liberated territories by landmines and other explosive devices, and the continued refusal of Armenia to provide accurate and complete information on mined areas. Over the years of occupation of and during withdrawal of its forces from Azerbaijani territories, Armenia heavily and indiscriminately contaminated those areas with mines and other explosive hazards. Since the signing of trilateral statement, more than 240 Azerbaijani civilians and military have been killed or seriously injured by mine explosions.

Obtaining the maps of minefields, along with targeted and sustainable international technical and financial assistance to further strengthen and increase national mine action capacities and efforts in

Azerbaijan, will be critically important to saving lives and strengthening peace. Sustainable United Nations support and adequate and predictable mine action funding are indispensable.

Azerbaijan is committed to regional peace, stability and development. The establishment of good-neighbourly relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan is key to building a secure, stable and prosperous South Caucasus through full-fledged regional normalization. Along with carrying out large-scale recovery and reconstruction works in the liberated territories, and pursuing the reintegration of residents in conflict-affected territories, Azerbaijan has initiated the process of normalizing inter-State relations with Armenia based on mutual recognition and respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity within their State borders.

On numerous occasions, Azerbaijan has expressed its readiness to start negotiations on peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and has established its national delegation to that end. Equally, Azerbaijan has undertaken efforts to start the process of the delimitation and demarcation of state borders between Armenia and Azerbaijan, unblocking transportation and communication links, including the establishment of the Zangezur corridor, which is a part of the international transportation network.

Notwithstanding the increased dynamism in contacts, including direct dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan in recent months, Armenia seems to be sticking to its past practice of engaging in sham negotiations, and instead implementing its commitments in good faith, frequently resorts to provocations and sabotage to exacerbate tensions and undermine ongoing normalization process with Azerbaijan. Armenia has not fully withdrawn its armed forces from Azerbaijani territories, as stipulated by the 10 November trilateral statement, and continues a variety of military activities within the territories of Azerbaijan, including planting landmines. Recently, massive numbers of anti-personnel mines produced in Armenia in 2021 have been found in the Lachin district of Azerbaijan.

Following a series of political and military provocations, especially after the fourth Brussels meeting between the leaders of the two countries, Armenia resorted to another large-scale military provocation along the undelimited State borderline in

the night of 12 to 13 September, attempting to plant mines on the roads between the military positions of Azerbaijan, taking advantage of the night and the complex terrain. Later, Armenia, using weapons of different calibres, opened fire on Azerbaijani positions, which caused losses among the military personnel of Azerbaijan and inflicted significant damage on its military infrastructure.

Azerbaijan took adequate measures to neutralize the threat against its sovereignty and territorial integrity and ensure the safety of its personnel, as well as civilian personnel involved in reconstruction works in the area. The armed forces of Azerbaijan demonstrated the utmost restraint and professionalism, and limited themselves to exclusively targeting Armenia's firing positions with high-precision weapons to suppress its attacks on the positions of Azerbaijan.

Armenia clearly attempted a further escalation to manipulate the attention of the international community. Thus, Armenia disregarded the ceasefire agreed on 13 September and continued shelling the territory of Azerbaijan, including with high-calibre weapons and artillery. As a result, Azerbaijan suffered further losses and casualties, included 80 servicemen killed and 282 servicemen and 2 civilians wounded.

Contrary to such reckless actions of Armenia, Azerbaijan exercised the utmost restraint, took several steps, including through contacts with relevant international partners, and demonstrated good faith and genuine will to restore the ceasefire. Eventually the ceasefire was restored effective 8 p.m. on 14 September through direct communication channels between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and is being maintained, as confirmed by both sides.

In the aftermath of the escalation, Azerbaijan has been engaged in addressing the humanitarian consequences. In that context, it declared its willingness to return to Armenia the remains of deceased military personnel on a unilateral basis, and informed the International Committee of the Red Cross accordingly.

Azerbaijan is not and cannot be interested in tension. As a matter of fact, the latest hostilities erupted in close proximity to areas where impressive large-scale post-conflict investment, rehabilitation and reconstruction projects are under way. Furthermore, the latest escalation of tension fits very well into the pattern we have observed over the past 30 years from Armenia. Each time a decisive stage has been reached towards a

breakthrough, Armenia has resorted to similar serious provocation as a mean of shirking the responsibility of taking necessary decisions. We would have wished that the current leadership of Armenia were not following the path of its predecessors by deliberately closing yet again the window of opportunity for peace and security in the region.

Azerbaijan is resolute in further repelling any threat to its sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as to the safety of its citizens, and urges Armenia to refrain from further escalating the situation. Instead, Armenia has to constructively engage in the ongoing normalization process in order to establish a predictable, stable situation in the region through the establishment of good-neighbourly relations.

In that context, following the agreement reached at the fourth meeting of the leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia with the President of the European Council, held on 31 August in Brussels, Azerbaijan reiterated to Armenia its readiness to start practical work on the peace treaty without further delay. Immediately after the meeting, we proposed a concrete date and venue to Armenia for such talks.

Two days ago we listened to the statement delivered here by the Prime Minister of Armenia (see A/77/PV.9). Regrettably, this was yet further evidence demonstrating that the Armenian side seems focused on continuing the confrontation instead of normalization. In Azerbaijan, we believe that our region has seen enough confrontation, destruction and suffering. It is high time for both our nations to engage fully and wholeheartedly in post-conflict normalization so that we can finally turn the tragic page of our history and start building a better future for our children. The commitment of the Azerbaijani side is there. We hope that Armenia will finally reciprocate constructively and engage genuinely in the negotiations.

Having liberated its territories from a long-term foreign military occupation, Azerbaijan is determined to spare no effort towards their full reconstruction and reintegration, in accordance with the highest possible standards. At the same time, our country will continue to play the role of responsible member of the international community in all relevant fields, whether it is contributing to global energy security, helping fight the COVID-19 pandemic or promoting sustainable development. We believe that, in a globalized world, no country is an island, and we act accordingly.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Singapore.

Mr. Balakrishnan (Singapore): Let me first congratulate Your Excellency, Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, on assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session. I also commend my good friend, His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid, for his stalwart leadership of the seventy-sixth session during a most challenging year.

This session of the General Assembly is taking place in the shadow of multiple concurrent crises. Russia's invasion of Ukraine flagrantly violates international law and the Charter of the United Nations and undermines the rules-based order. We are also deeply concerned about the potential annexation of more Ukrainian territory. The multilateral system, which has contributed greatly to global peace and security, is now being severely tested. At the same time, super-Power rivalry continues to sharpen. As we have seen in theatres from Europe to Asia this year, the risks of accident, miscalculation, confrontation and even outright conflict have escalated. The prospects for international cooperation have weakened considerably and the temptation to resort to unilateralism has become even stronger.

But the need for concerted global cooperation has never been greater or more urgent, given the range of transnational challenges that all of us are confronting today. Our recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) remains uneven and fragile. In fact, the risk of a future and even more deadly pandemic has risen. The global economy is entering a period of higher and prolonged inflation, and we are seeing higher interest rates all over the world. Energy prices have soared, and it will become even harder to generate the resources that all of us need to address those long-term problems. Societies everywhere will have to grapple with greater internal division, disruption and polarization. Without that sense of cohesion, unity, trust or even an ability to agree on facts, the will and unity needed for societies to confront those existential challenges will be undermined severely.

The climate crisis is a clear and present threat. Our global commons, including water and biodiversity, are also deteriorating rapidly. Our global food supply is at risk. To make things worse, all those threats and crises are occurring concurrently, interacting

with and compounding each other in a vicious circle. For instance, the Secretary-General has spoken of a triple crisis of food, fuel and finance. The impact of all those simultaneous crises on ordinary people and our livelihoods has been severe, all the more so in developing countries. We see this in the devastating impact of the floods in Pakistan and in parts of Africa.

The post-Second World War era of relative stability and prosperity has, unfortunately, come to an end. A new world order is being born and, as any obstetrician will tell you, the moment of delivery is actually the most dangerous. Will we have a more divided, less prosperous and less peaceful world? Or can we instead strengthen multilateralism and the United Nations to deal with the challenges of the future, uphold and strengthen the rules-based international system, and jointly harness the opportunities offered by new technologies: including digital technology, synthetic biology, customized health care and, of course, renewable energy? If we can do that, we can create a new era of peace and prosperity for everyone.

Singapore believes that the only way forward is to uphold the inclusive and rules-based multilateral system that has underwritten peace and progress for all of us since the Second World War. That is also why we worked with a cross-regional group of countries to establish the Forum of Small States (FOSS) in 1992. We started small, with only 16 countries. This year, we celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of FOSS. We now have 108 countries — a majority at the United Nations. We are all proud members. FOSS has always been a champion of the United Nations and rules-based multilateralism. It gives us a collective stake and a voice in the global commons, a means to safeguard our interests, and a system where we have sovereign equality and disputes can be settled peacefully, in accordance with international law.

Indeed, the profound importance of multilateralism and international law is precisely why Singapore has condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The security and even the existence of Singapore — and indeed many other countries, especially small States — depend on the international community upholding the fundamental principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity. If we do not protect these principles, there is no basis for countries, big and small, to cooperate on an equal footing. Small States especially must not allow the world to regress to one where might is right.

While the rules-based multilateral system is not perfect, it is by far our best option in addressing transnational challenges and managing the global commons. This was exemplified by the pivotal adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) 40 years ago. It brought order and predictability to the governance of our oceans and provided a universal legal framework in which all States can work together.

The geopolitical reality today makes it harder to forge consensus on such a framework, but as our experience with COVID-19 has shown, multilateral cooperation is the only way forward. Ultimately, we share one planet. Despite our differences, our destinies are interwoven and no one is safe until all of us are safe. This applies to pandemics; it also applies to climate change, the conservation of the oceans and all our other shared challenges.

Singapore will do our part. We are honoured that Ambassador Rena Lee serves as the President of the Intergovernmental Conference 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, which is negotiating a treaty under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). We call on all delegations to expedite the conclusion of a robust and future-proof BBNJ treaty.

There is much more we can do to re-energize and transform the United Nations-based multilateral system towards new realities and challenges. I commend the leadership of the Secretary-General in putting forth a bold and ambitious *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982) report to do so. Let me focus on just three areas in our global commons where there is an urgent need to build resilience:

First is climate change and food insecurity, global health and pandemic preparedness, and digital transformation and cybersecurity.

Climate change remains the most pressing challenge confronting humankind today, as we have seen from the more frequent occurrences of extreme weather events and the devastation that they have wrought the world over. We need a sustained and ambitious global response. The continued commitment of all countries to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Glasgow

Climate Pact is absolutely critical. We also need to step up cooperation in the transition to net zero. That will, in fact, be the biggest socioeconomic transformation since the industrial revolution. Both will require considerable economic restructuring, technological breakthroughs, investments and behavioural changes. The United Nations-led multilateral system will be key in pulling everyone together to row in the same direction and not leave anyone behind.

Singapore, as a small, low-lying and alternative-energy disadvantaged island nation, is especially vulnerable to climate change and rising sea levels. Singapore's impact on global emissions is infinitely small, but we take our climate action obligations very seriously. We have just raised our climate ambition to achieve net zero emissions by or around mid-century. A comprehensive strategy to green our economy is taking shape, and we will raise carbon taxes progressively from 2024.

We will do our part to build a comprehensive green finance ecosystem and facilitate the regional journey to net zero. We are supporting industry efforts to build the infrastructure for a voluntary carbon credit market in Asia. We are also building capabilities in environmental risk management in the financial sector and providing grants to defray the costs of green and sustainability-linked loans and bonds.

An adjacent issue is food insecurity. Climate change, the pandemic and the war in Ukraine have all exacerbated the threat to our food security. According to a United Nations report, as many as 828 million people were affected by hunger last year; that is 46 million more than in 2020 and 150 million more than in 2019. We must reverse this negative trend. First, we need to ensure that food supply chains remain open and operate smoothly. Secondly, we must pursue innovation and leverage technology to adapt to new challenges — for example, working together to develop climate-resilient food systems, while developing the necessary precautions on food safety. There is much scope for multilateral cooperation on capacity-building and the development of global norms and standards.

Next, it is essential to build a more robust global health architecture to protect our future generations. After COVID-19, there will be other pandemics and major health emergencies. In my view, COVID-19 was perhaps a dress rehearsal for a worse pandemic to come. We must be better prepared to predict,

prevent, detect, assess and respond to pandemics in a coordinated and effective fashion in the future. We have a collective responsibility to rectify the long-standing underinvestment in pandemic preparedness, amongst other global public goods.

Singapore has supported multilateral initiatives to strengthen the global health security system. We will continue to support the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility, and we have contributed to the establishment of a financial intermediary fund for pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, hosted by the World Bank.

Lastly, we must enhance international cooperation to harness the opportunities of the digital revolution. Digital transformation does not take place in a vacuum. It must be navigated in the context of intersecting issues: geopolitical tensions, technological bifurcation, cybersecurity threats and the digital divide. The world has made significant progress in development by operating on a single, shared technology stack. Interconnectedness and interoperability brought us together, lowered costs and spurred innovation, competition and the cross-fertilisation of ideas.

But if we fractured our world and our technology stack, all that good work and the speed of progress and innovation will slow significantly. We need an open and inclusive global framework to harness and optimize the opportunities of digital transformation, while effectively addressing its challenges. A zero-sum, exclusionary and bifurcated approach benefits no one. An erosion of trust and an atmosphere of confrontation will only breed more cyberthreats and malicious cyberactivities. We must also ensure that all States, particularly small States, developing and least developed countries benefit from the digital revolution and are not left further behind.

Singapore fully supports the Secretary-General's proposal for a global digital compact, which has received strong support from Member States. We are honoured that Ambassador Burhan Gafoor serves as Chair of the Open-Ended Working Group on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies. The consensus adoption of the Working Group's first annual progress report in July was a welcome sign that multilateralism is alive and well and can still deliver meaningful progress on the global commons, even in these difficult times.

In conclusion, this is a moment when multilateralism must be defended and fortified. Our responses to these myriad opportunities and challenges must remain rooted in the foundational tenets of multilateralism, especially including adherence to the United Nations Charter and international law. I remain an optimist in these difficult times and believe that we are actually on the cusp of an era of profound technological breakthroughs, one that will equip humankind with unimaginably powerful new tools.

It is in the world's interest and in our own long-term national interests to set aside our differences, address the challenges of the global commons and harvest the emerging opportunities provided by new technologies. Ultimately, as Member States, we have as much responsibility to each other and to our citizens to work together and to improve, adapt and strengthen the multilateral system that we have so painstakingly built over the past 77 years, so that our people — all people — can lead better, more secure, more peaceful and happier lives.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Vladimir Makei, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus.

Mr. Makei (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): For more than six months, the world has been living in the shadow of the conflict in Ukraine. It is adversely affecting a great many people on the planet. The conflict, like the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic that preceded it, has once again laid bare the downside of global interdependence.

This session provides a unique opportunity to take stock of the situation. Let us, in a very honest and unbiased manner, answer two questions. The answers to them, like the ensuing necessary action, is what all people around the globe expect from us, the United Nations Member States. The first is: What are the root causes of the conflict in Ukraine? The second is: What needs to be done to stop the conflict and prevent similar events from recurring in the future?

We are convinced that the conflict in Ukraine arises from a wider geopolitical chaos, whose causes must be sought in the events of 30 years ago. History teaches us that epoch-making wars that end in unfair and humiliating peace terms contain the seeds of future conflicts. Let us take a look at what kind of peace was established after the end of the last epochal confrontation — the Cold War.

The so-called winners, apparently influenced by euphoria, did not consider it necessary to draw on examples from the past. After all, they could have followed the path of Alexander I, Metternich and Castlereagh. Those great peacemakers of the early nineteenth century effectively integrated their adversaries into a new security system, thereby bringing lasting peace to Europe that would endure for decades to come. Likewise, they could have drawn inspiration from the model of cooperation established during the Second World War by the “Big Three” — Stalin, Roosevelt, and Churchill — who forged arrangements that significantly narrowed opportunities for great Powers to wage wars against each other.

Nonetheless, unfortunately, the Western policymakers of the early 1990s chose the most inglorious and unpromising option, namely, the path of the 1919-style Versailles diplomats eager to trample upon their main opponent. To begin with, the Cold War ended not even with an official treaty, but with some kind of gentlemen's agreements and declarations. As subsequent events revealed, the so-called winning side did not respect those arrangements; in fact, they were nothing more than a Versailles 2.0.

The West revealed its selfishness by offering to the post-Soviet States only one path, that of being its satellites. To cement that status, the West relied on the expansion of one of its key Cold War-era institutions — the NATO military bloc. NATO's eastward expansion occurred despite the agreements achieved with the West, including those struck with the Soviet leaders. The West overlooked the legitimate security interests of both Russia and Belarus.

In that regard, I recall the outstanding American diplomat George Kennan, whose foreign policy prophecies are so admired by Western policymakers. Why did they fail to heed another of Kennan's famous warnings when, in 1996, he condemned NATO expansion as “a strategic blunder of potentially epic proportions”? With its drive to enlarge NATO, the West trampled upon the indivisibility of security, a vital principle according to which one party must not seek to achieve its own security at the expense of other parties. The peacemakers of 1815 and 1945 grasped that logic very well, whereas the world leaders of 1919 and 1991 refused to embrace it.

NATO's involvement in the illegal wars against Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya and Syria, in addition to the

Alliance's attempts to encroach on some historical Eastern Slavic and adjacent lands made it a foregone conclusion that Versailles 2.0. would suffer the fate of the first Versailles. Therefore, it is the collective West that bears the full responsibility for the ongoing bloodshed in Ukraine. It was precisely the West that made the conflict inevitable, not only through its decision to expand NATO, but also by its refusal to consider the proposals of its opponents. After all, such proposals were made.

The questions arises: What should be done?

Indeed, in 2009 Russia invited all interested parties to sign a new European security treaty that would de jure wrap up the Cold War. The West rejected the proposal. In 2017, it was President of Belarus Alyaksandr Lukashenko who came up with the idea of holding a global security dialogue and proposed Minsk as a venue for negotiations. The opponents ignored that initiative as well. Last December, the Russian Federation made yet another attempt to reach an agreement with the West on the issue of European security. As before, the West remained deaf to the new Russian proposal.

Mr. Rai (Nepal), Vice-President, took the Chair.

What explains this rejectionist policy and stance of the West? The key problem is the ongoing clash at the global level between two incompatible visions of the world order — one concentric, the other polycentric. The West wants to establish a concentric or unipolar world, ruled from one centre and subordinated to the interests of a Western hegemon. Most other countries wish to create a polycentric or multipolar world with no single centre of control and in which no one imposes its visions, interests or values on anyone else. The West has dominated the world for the past five centuries, and believes that it can continue doing so indefinitely.

As for us, we are deeply convinced that the world has changed and that neocolonialism in any form is no longer an acceptable or viable option. Five centuries ago, when the West was just beginning its global ascent, the world came to witness the Copernican revolution of knowledge. That revolution took place, first and foremost, in the minds of the people of that time, who found it difficult to come to terms with the postulate that it was not the Earth but the Sun that stood at the centre of the solar system.

A similar Copernican paradigm shift must occur today. As was the case half a millennium ago, it too must

take place in people's minds. This time around, it must occur in the minds of the West's political mainstream. The West must, at last, recognize a number of truths.

First, international relations do not revolve around one single — that is, Western — centre of power. Secondly, the world's history has no end, because it is not an inexorable movement of all countries towards so-called liberal democracy. Thirdly, the world is too complex a structure to reduce all its problems to a confrontation — as we have also heard from this rostrum — between the so-called democracies and autocracies. That understanding, it would appear, has not yet registered with the West. What we have seen instead is the destruction stubbornly pursued by the West, including self-destruction.

Economic sanctions are almost the only tool in the West's foreign policy toolkit. One cannot fail to sense that the very fact the sanctions have been imposed serves as an indicator of their effectiveness for Europe and the United States. In that regard, we are witnessing a substitution of concepts. The key objective has not been achieved, but the sanctions keep living a life of their own.

What common sense does the West invest in the unilateral, illegal economic sanctions it imposes against other countries? Without any trace of hesitation, the goal has been stated loud and clear — to achieve a change of power in various countries through food riots provoked by sanctions. This calculation has largely turned out to be a failure. Most countries have not joined the effort to implement the sanctions. Many States under sanctions, such as Belarus and Russia, are to a large extent self-sufficient. Importantly, the sanctions have given us a powerful impetus to develop hidden internal reserves and reinvigorate regional integration.

Undoubtedly, we will weather the storm. We will survive just as freedom-loving Cuba has been surviving illegal sanctions for more than six decades. Nonetheless, the sanctions have had two negative repercussions that their sponsors could hardly have anticipated.

First, they have reduced the supply of fertilizer and food from the countries under sanctions. As a result, those who suffer the most are the poorest people in developing countries. Suffice it to say, prices in those countries have skyrocketed by 300 per cent over the past half a year, while Africa is facing fertilizer shortages to the tune of over 2 million tons.

Secondly, funnily enough, the sanctions have had a boomerang effect, hitting the West itself. No matter how some may swagger today, ordinary people in Europe will, unfortunately, have to freeze through the coming winter. It is high time for Western countries to resort to common sense and return to dialogue and cooperation. Even in the current situation, Belarus stands ready to embrace dialogue and cooperation on equal terms, without preconditions or pressure.

Belarus, like many other countries, has spoken a great deal and everywhere about the conflict in Ukraine. We cannot do otherwise. The conflict is happening at our very doorstep. We are extremely saddened to see the fraternal Ukrainian people fall victim to the collective West's geopolitical games. We are convinced that the origins of Ukraine's now specific problems should be sought in 2004, when the West managed to carry out the first colour revolution in that country. The second revolution, a decade later, firmly secured Ukraine's status as anti-Russian.

Instigated by the United States and its allies, Ukraine has been exterminating the people of Donbas for eight years for no other reason than that the local people want to speak their native language, Russian. But the West does not need Ukraine, neither as a member of NATO nor as a member of the European Union. Its new patrons are simply using it in their own great game against Russia. Today Ukraine is paying the price in blood because its politicians bought into that deception and disregarded the historical brotherhood of the three East Slavic peoples: Belarusians, Russians and Ukrainians. But it is never too late to admit and correct one's mistakes.

For Belarus, which itself endured the genocide of the Belarusian people during the Second World War, when one in three people in our country was killed, it is unbearably painful to see the chaos in our neighbouring country and the suffering of ordinary Ukrainians. Ever since 2014, we have been making every possible effort to bring peace to Ukraine. It was our country in particular that became associated with peace in Donbas when the Minsk agreements were adopted in 2014 and 2015. Right after the outbreak of hostilities in Ukraine in February, it was the President of Belarus who managed to get the parties to the conflict to sit down at the negotiating table, once again on Belarusian soil. Belarus hosted three successful rounds of Ukrainian-Russian negotiations that opened real prospects for

settling the conflict. Regrettably, that process has since stalled.

We remain deeply convinced that both a ceasefire agreement and a comprehensive strategic peace settlement around Ukraine, in a broad context of regional and global security, can be achieved only at the negotiating table. There is no alternative to talks. Otherwise, we will all get a new third Versailles. As a neighbour and an affected country, Belarus should be an integral part of the negotiation process and of final security guarantees.

We very much hope that the tragic events in Ukraine will compel the collective West to realize rather quickly that changes in international relations are irreversible. The sooner that happens, the sooner peace can come to Ukraine and other hot spots, and the sooner we can lay the foundation of a new, just world order. We believe that one crucial step in that process is a global security dialogue in the true spirit of San Francisco, whose urgency the President of Belarus clearly stated as far back as five years ago.

We have consistently highlighted the key role of the great Powers in this effort. Unfortunately, as we are seeing today, they hear and understand each other poorly. There is not the slightest hint that they are ready to move on from recriminations. Perhaps the time has come for the countries representing the developing world to collectively take the lead in global security with all of the energy and dynamism they displayed with great success nearly half a century ago in advancing the idea of a new international economic order. We believe that it is precisely now that the Non-Aligned Movement and the BRICS countries — Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa — as well as the regional integration unions, which are on the rise, must be directly and proactively involved in matters of global peace.

It is true that today, unfortunately, we do not have a clear concept for safeguarding the peace and security of our planet insofar because the world has become so complex that a multitude of diverse challenges defy any single framework. What is more, the mechanisms for neutralizing the global challenges that were put in place in the framework of prior geopolitical realities are lagging behind in making the decisions that would fit the times, or stalling altogether.

The task facing humankind today is to ensure that our civilization is not destroyed as we transition to a new multipolar world order. That is exactly what our

common priority for action must be, including at the United Nations. It is in this direction, provided we want to survive at all, that we must seek consensus and promptly forge new, adequate response mechanisms.

It is for the sake of that objective that we must immediately silence the mutually destructive rhetoric and put an end to the fatal total confrontation that leaves no room for diplomatic efforts. That can be done only by responsible world leaders who, in the figurative expression of Henry Kissinger, “possess a sense of direction and mission”. Leaders with such qualities are bound to emerge on the world stage.

Our present state of mind was well captured by Martin Luther King Jr. more than half a century ago when he said:

“We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there ‘is’ such a thing as being too late.”

Let us act before it is too late.

Belarus, for its part, stands ready to play the role of a vigorously engaged and responsible stakeholder in security processes at the global and regional levels alike.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Luca Beccari, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Economic Cooperation and Telecommunications of the Republic of San Marino.

Mr. Beccari (San Marino): On behalf of the Government of the Republic of San Marino, I would like to congratulate H.E. Csaba Kőrösi on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session and to wish him a fruitful work. The Republic of San Marino supports the priorities of his programme and assures him of its full cooperation in all the work of the General Assembly.

I would also like to extend my special thanks to Secretary-General António Guterres for his energy and determination in leading the United Nations in these difficult and challenging times.

I am grateful for the theme chosen for this session, “A watershed moment: transformative solutions to interlocking challenges”. It gives Member States the opportunity to constructively contribute to the work of the General Assembly. The increasingly evident interrelationships among global challenges highlight the need for Member States, today more than ever, to

work together to overcome difficulties. It is clear that there is a link between multilateralism and global challenges, the scope of which goes beyond the capacity of each individual State, even the most powerful or technologically advanced, to face them on its own.

Preserving the values of multilateralism and international cooperation that underpin the Charter of the United Nations and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is of fundamental importance for promoting and supporting peace and security, development and human rights. The Republic of San Marino considers it essential to continue to reaffirm its collective commitment to multilateralism, in particular in the framework of the General Assembly, as the most representative body of the United Nations on account of its deeply democratic nature, universal participation and undisputed legitimacy. However, multilateralism cannot be a mere statement of collective intentions; it must translate into concrete actions to improve people’s lives and leave nobody behind.

We are facing difficult times, with an unprecedented level of violence, mass atrocities and displacement. The armed conflicts across the globe are causing immense suffering to millions of civilians. The war of aggression against Ukraine has had dramatic consequences for the civilian population, including civilian deaths, the destruction of vital infrastructure and massive displacement.

The aggression against Ukraine has been strongly condemned by the international community. Resolution ES-11/1, “Aggression against Ukraine”, demands that Russia immediately stop its military aggression, unconditionally withdraw all forces from the entire territory of Ukraine, and fully respect Ukraine’s territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence within its internationally recognized borders.

San Marino has decided to cooperate within the framework of international structures and mechanisms, foremost among which is the United Nations, because it believes in the strength of dialogue, democracy and respect for others. In line with our values, the Captains Regent of the Republic of San Marino, in their message at the opening of the session of the Parliament in July, called on all parties involved in the Ukraine conflict to renounce the use of force and to reopen the channels of dialogue and negotiation so that politics and diplomacy can prevail in the management of this crisis. No one should remain indifferent to war, but rather we

should all work responsibly to create the conditions for dialogue and peace with the full involvement of international institutions.

San Marino is deeply concerned by the ongoing armed conflicts across the globe. We reaffirm our commitment to the principle of the responsibility to protect, which is essential to the prevention of atrocity crimes. Accountability is indeed another factor that plays an important role in preventing and stopping such crimes. The Republic of San Marino reaffirms its full commitment to its obligations under human and humanitarian law, such as the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the Geneva Conventions.

San Marino reaffirms its full support for the International Criminal Court, whose work is crucial in the fight against impunity for genocide and crimes against humanity and represents one of the core elements of the implementation of the responsibility to protect. The ICC, through its work, fosters accountability and thereby promotes prevention and reconciliation.

The Republic of San Marino would also like to reiterate its support for initiatives such as the Code of Conduct of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group regarding Security Council action against genocide, war crimes or crimes against humanity and the French and Mexican declaration on voluntary restraint of the use of the veto by the permanent members of the Security Council.

Children and youth are uniquely and often disproportionately affected by conflicts and atrocities. San Marino stresses the need to strengthen child protection capacities and to put children and youth at the centre of efforts to prevent atrocities. At the same time, we also encourage Member States to adopt the relevant instruments on the protection of children, including the Paris Principles and the Safe Schools Declaration.

Being part of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict, San Marino is particularly worried about the difficulties in the implementation of child protection activities in armed conflict situations. San Marino commends the dedication of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and of her Office, and appreciates the engagement of all the child protection personnel and partners involved.

Moreover, San Marino is committed to the protection of women and girls and to supporting the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence.

In addition, persons with disabilities face additional risks and vulnerabilities in situations of armed conflict. Their needs should be duly taken into account and barriers to accessing information, evacuation and emergency assistance should be lifted.

San Marino is deeply disturbed and firmly condemns the growing number of deliberate attacks against schools, hospitals and places of worship. We also firmly condemn attacks against journalists, humanitarian workers, human rights defenders and peacekeepers. These stakeholders and civil society actors can play an important role for reconciliation and prevention and early warning mechanisms, and should therefore be supported and protected.

Today the threat of nuclear weapons being used is much higher than it has been in the last decades. We condemn the Russian Federation's dangerous nuclear rhetoric. Any threat of use of nuclear weapons is unacceptable and of the utmost concern. What is needed today is a steady and genuine commitment to international institutions and to disarmament.

In that spirit, San Marino participated in the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and in the first Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) earlier this year. We regret that, at this critical time, the tenth Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty was not able to adopt its final document. San Marino will continue to work for the full implementation of this fundamental instrument. San Marino welcomes the positive outcome of the first Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and urges all States committed to our final goal of a world without such weapons to join the TPNW. Only honouring and reinvigorating our multilateral agreements will we be able to put humankind on a new path towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

Since 1945, the world has witnessed the highest number of violent conflicts. Forced displacement has continued to grow in 2021 and 2022, while refugees have been at their highest number. The war in Ukraine has created one of the largest refugee crises of modern time. More than 7 million refugees — most of them

women and children — have fled Ukraine and a further 7 million have been displaced inside the country. This refugee crisis confronts each Member State with its responsibilities.

The people of San Marino, guardians of a century-old tradition of peace and solidarity, have opened their doors to Ukraine refugees. Since the beginning of the war, the Republic of San Marino has welcomed more than 300 Ukrainian refugees, equal to 1 per cent of the entire Sammarinese population, thanks to the solidarity of public and private institutions and non-governmental organizations and with the help of many volunteers.

Together with the refugee crisis, the impacts of the conflicts may lead to a global food crisis. Food insecurity affects the lives of millions of people across the world and is mainly concentrated in conflict-affected regions. The vast majority of stunted children live in countries affected by violence and conflict. Armed conflicts displace farmers and can destroy agricultural assets and food stocks. Furthermore, they disrupt markets and vital services for the food systems. The ongoing war in Ukraine is disrupting supply chains and further affecting the prices of grain, fertilizer and energy. In the first half of 2022, that caused further food price increases. As reported in *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022*, the number of people unable to afford a healthy diet around the world rose by 112 million to almost 3.1 billion, reflecting the impacts of rising consumer food prices during the pandemic.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has further expanded the fragilities in our agri-food systems and the inequalities in our societies, and increased world hunger and severe food insecurity. At the same time, we also should not underestimate the effects of climate change and climate disasters on aggravating food insecurity. For all these reasons, it is extremely important to keep food security on our agenda and to continue to incentivize the sustainable production, supply and consumption of nutritious foods in order to make healthy diets less costly and more affordable to all. Moreover, as promoter of resolution 74/209, establishing 29 September as International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste, San Marino firmly believes that the fight against food loss and waste will contribute to promoting food security, and welcomes all initiatives aimed at developing awareness in such responsible behaviours.

It is widely acknowledged that the COVID-19 crisis has had a negative impact on global efforts to realize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By the end of 2021, the deaths caused by COVID-19 were nearly 15 million. With the overwhelming of global health systems and the disruption of many essential health services, the pandemic undermined years of progress in fighting other diseases, in particular in developing countries. Compared with the pre-pandemic level, an additional 75 million to 95 million people will live in extreme poverty in 2022. Billions of children have significantly missed out on schooling and over 100 million more have fallen below the minimum reading proficiency level.

Despite some encouraging signs, the global economy recovery struggles to grow due to COVID-19 variants and continued vaccine inequity, together with rising inflation, major supply-chain disruptions, policy uncertainties and unsustainable debt in developing countries. The impact of climate change continues to be felt across the world. COVID-19 has further delayed the urgently needed transition to greener economies. Demand for coal, oil and gas rebounded with the economy in 2021 and will bring, over the current decade, an increase of global emissions by almost 14 per cent. If current trends continue, the Earth could lose the natural wealth of its ecosystems, which would in turn jeopardize global food security, water supplies and livelihoods.

The interconnection of global crises — the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and armed conflicts across the globe — puts at great risk the achievement of the SDGs by 2030. As the Secretary-General has called for in his *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982), a renewed commitment to international cooperation is needed, but the United Nations must adapt quickly to the new global challenges in order to be more effective in carrying out its mandate.

Reforms must remain at the centre of our actions because they are crucial to future world stability and the maintenance of international peace and security. We believe that Security Council reform should be an objective of all Member States. That reform goal can be achieved only through a continuous dialogue among States and the awareness that overcoming respective initial positions is essential to negotiating the broadest agreement possible.

In conclusion, a stronger multilateralism is essential if we want to build fair, just and peaceful societies in which young people can live in dignity, women can have the same opportunities as men, and all minorities and vulnerable groups are protected. I believe that the general debate is an important opportunity to renew our commitment to a stronger United Nations capable of coordinating economic, social and environmental policies and translating them into effective action at all levels.

The Republic of San Marino, in accordance with its history and its tradition of freedom and democracy, firmly believes in that mandate and will support any action that helps strengthen the United Nations in the process.

The Acting President: I now call on to His Highness Prince Faisal bin Farhan A.F. Al Furhan Al-Saud, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Prince Al-Saud (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Csaba Kőrösi on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session. I wish him every success in his tasks.

I also thank Mr. Abdulla Shahid for his efforts during his presidency of the Assembly at its previous session. I commend the outstanding work of the Secretary-General to optimize the efficiency of the United Nations institutions to achieve the purposes of its Charter.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia stresses its commitment to the Charter of the United Nations and its tireless support for the principles of international legitimacy aimed at maintaining international peace and security. It pledges to cooperate on the basis of mutual respect for the sovereignty of States, to resolve disputes through peaceful means and to abstain from threatening or using force. My country participated in establishing the United Nations and signing the San Francisco Charter, based on the teachings of our true Islamic religion and genuine Arab traditions of justice, charity, cooperation, peace and dialogue.

The Kingdom has always supported international multilateral action, in accordance with United Nations principles, to strengthen international cooperation and address the challenges facing our world. My country actively participates in all efforts to achieve a more

just and peaceful world and a promising future for our peoples and future generations.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, eager to achieve the goals and purposes of the United Nations and maintain international peace and security, reiterates its call for Security Council reform to make it fairer in representing today's world, more effective in dealing with the changes and developments of the international community, and more efficient in addressing its common challenges.

With regard to the wars and conflicts being waged throughout the world, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia stresses the need to heed the voice of reason and wisdom, and for dialogue, negotiations and peaceful solutions to end fighting, protect civilians and provide prospects for peace, security and development for all.

We support all international efforts capable of providing a political solution that will end the Russia-Ukraine crisis, stop the fighting and protect lives and property, while maintaining international and regional security stability. In the process of peacebuilding, overcoming challenges and achieving security, stability and prosperity with comprehensive economic development, we all need to pool our efforts, forge partnerships and promote cultural, civilizational and social exchange.

The Middle East region is in dire need of joint efforts to establish security and stability and ensure a better future that meets the aspirations of our peoples towards achieving development and prosperity. The Jeddah Security and Development Summit, in which leaders of the United States and nine Arab States participated, was an opportunity to confirm joint action for a better future for the region, its countries and peoples. We fully support the United Nations efforts to settle disputes peacefully; promote interdependence and integration regionally and internationally; strengthen cooperation based on the principles of the United Nations — respect for the sovereignty of States, non-interference in their internal affairs and respect for their independence, territorial integrity, values and cultures — while diversity enriches understanding and coexistence.

Security and stability in the Middle East swiftly require a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question, pursuant to the resolutions of international legitimacy, the Arab Peace Initiative and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its

capital. We condemn all unilateral measures that would undermine the two-State solution and call for their immediate cessation.

With regard to Yemen, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reiterates its commitment to all efforts to maintain the truce and allow the Presidential Leadership Council to play its full role in establishing sustainable peace among Yemeni brethren, in accordance with the three terms of reference, including resolution 2216 (2015). We continue to play our leading role as the major supporter in meeting the humanitarian and development needs of our brothers in Yemen. In that context, we stress the need to lift all obstacles to the inflow of basic goods and the delivery of assistance, and to open the roads to Ta'iz, Yemen's third largest city, which has been under siege since 2015.

As the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is keen to support security, stability and development in Iraq, we have reinforced our bilateral and collective cooperation with it, including the flow of electricity among the Kingdom, Iraq and the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

My country insists that the relevant Security Council resolutions be respected to ensure the unity, stability and Arab nature of Syria, and supports the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to bring about a political solution to that conflict, in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015). We need to prevent a further outbreak of violence, respect the ceasefire agreements and ensure that humanitarian assistance can reach all Syrians in need unhindered.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia also supports the sovereignty, security and stability of Lebanon, and stresses the importance of implementing comprehensive political and economic structural reform that will ensure the country's success in overcoming its current political and economic crisis. Lebanon should not be a stepping stone for terrorists, drug trafficking or other criminal activities that would threaten regional peace and stability. It is essential that the Lebanese Government be able to extend its control over all Lebanese territory, including the implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Taif Agreement.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia continues to deploy all efforts towards the convening of a dialogue among the Sudanese parties, wishing the Sudan and its people stability and prosperity. We also reiterate our support for arrangements to meet the water needs of Egypt and the Sudan.

We reiterate our full support the Libyan ceasefire agreement signed on 23 October 2020 and the Libyan calls for departure of all foreign troops, fighters and mercenaries without delay, pursuant to resolution 2570 (2021).

The Kingdom reiterates the importance of supporting the security of Afghanistan and the continued delivery of humanitarian assistance to that country, which must not become a base for terrorist operations or a breeding ground for terrorism.

International peace and security cannot be established through an arms race or the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). Instead, they will be secured through cooperation among States for achieving development and progress. We call on the international community to step up its efforts to prevent the proliferation of WMDs and ensure that the Middle East is free of such weapons. We call on Iran to fulfil its nuclear obligations expeditiously and fully cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency and take serious measures to build confidence with its neighbours and the international community.

Humankind is facing common challenges that threaten economic recovery following the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, most notably the security and availability of food and energy, supply chains, the environment and climate change challenges. Our capacity to overcome those challenges very much depends on our collective efforts, strengthened cooperation and a balanced, fair and united international response. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is aware of the importance of cooperation to addressing the challenges of climate change and the need to deal with its negative effects. In that regard, we attach particular importance to implementing the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and supporting the gradual and responsible change towards diversified energy systems and sources that are more sustainable. Achieving these goals requires everyone's participation, bearing in mind the different national and regional circumstances, countries' differing socioeconomic situations, the world energy situation and the access of all to such energy.

In reaffirming our pioneering role in the area of sustainability, the Kingdom has launched the initiatives of the Green Saudi Arabia and the Green Middle East in support of national and regional efforts in that regard. We have announced ambitious goals to diversify sources of energy and optimize its production

and consumption. We have also launched initiatives to protect the environment, promote sustainable forestation, reduce emissions by 278 million tons annually by 2030 and achieve zero carbon emissions by 2060 through the circular carbon reduction approach, in accordance with the Kingdom's development plans and its diversified economy.

My country is also keen to support the world economy by contributing to ensuring balanced energy markets. We stress the importance of investing in fossil fuels and clean techniques in the coming two decades in order to meet the growing global demand and the interests of all consumers and producers, and to save the world from the negative consequences of unrealistic policies aimed at excluding the main sources of energy without considering the negative effects on world supply chains, inflation, high energy prices, increased unemployment rates and other security and socioeconomic effects.

The Kingdom, along with its international partners, works to mitigate the negative effects of armed conflicts and their painful repercussions on food security and 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, especially the goal to eradicate famine. In that regard, it is important to facilitate the export of grains and other foodstuffs, whose prices are skyrocketing, thereby threatening famine. My country contributes significantly to that issue. Our total contribution in food and agricultural assistance has now reached nearly \$2.89 billion. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, along with our brothers in the region, has announced a \$10-billion contribution to that end by coordinating and uniting the efforts of 10 national and regional development funds.

The international community has achieved successive successes in addressing terrorism and extremism. We must continue to work relentlessly to address and eradicate that scourge, which has no link to any race, religion or belief. We stress the importance for the international community to act firmly against States that support and sponsor terrorism and extremism and try to exploit their extremist ideology to expand and create chaos. The Kingdom is pursuing its efforts to promote construction and development in order to meet the aspirations of future generations and improve the quality of life, along with empowering women and youth to innovate and be open to dialogue, tolerance and coexistence.

The Kingdom attaches great importance to human rights, having drafted explicit texts to promote and protect them. My country has also announced legislation pertaining to reforms pursuant to our Saudi 2030 Vision with the aim of achieving better legal and judiciary systems, in accordance with better international practices and criteria aligned with the Kingdom's commitments to international treaties and conventions. Pursuant to its ambitious vision for the future, my country has applied to host Expo 2030 under the theme: "The Era of Change: Leading the Planet to a Foresighted Tomorrow". If we succeed in that candidacy, we wish to bring the exhibition closer in spirit to the idea for which it was created, namely, "Connecting Minds, Creating the Future", with the aim of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. We thank those countries that have supported us in our candidacy.

In conclusion, we hope that our efforts will help convey our messages, values and principles to the world in a spirit of partnership and respect for a better future of humankind as a whole.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Dato Seri Paduka Awang Haji Erywan bin Pehin Datu Pekerma Jaya Haji Mohd Yusof, Minister for Foreign Affairs II of Brunei Darussalam.

Mr. Yusof (Brunei Darussalam): I have the great honour to convey the warm regards of His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam, to this year's session of the General Assembly.

At the outset, I would like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Csaba Kőrösi on assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session. We also convey our deep appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid for his contribution and efforts in bringing multilateralism, which is an important and fundamental principle of our work at the United Nations, to the forefront during his presidency.

While it is good to be back in New York to deliver Brunei's statement in person after a two-year absence, this year's debate continues to take place amidst global uncertainties and challenges that test our individual and collective resilience.

It has been almost three years since we first heard of coronavirus disease (COVID-19), and whilst we are still feeling its effects, many of us are now looking towards a

post-pandemic world. However, a key and crucial factor to achieving this would be a successful vaccination programme and by having vaccine equity. Let us not forget the mantra of the World Health Organization (WHO) that “No one is safe until everyone is safe”.

Unfortunately, as of June this year, only 58 out of 194 countries had achieved the 70 per cent complete vaccination target set by WHO, whilst the others have not. Although initial the challenges faced regarding the supply and manufacture of vaccines that resulted in delays have been addressed, we continue to see many countries still facing problems in getting their allocated vaccines.

While we recognize the role that the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility has played in this global health emergency, we also see the continued need to address the fundamental issue of vaccine inequity that has continued to impede supply and distribution. In this regard, we need to develop a more effective and more resilient global health infrastructure as part of our preparedness to face possible future global health emergencies.

More efforts are also needed to address the impact of the pandemic, especially on mental health, a condition that was often taken lightly even before the pandemic. This is important, as it can result in a huge economic burden on the countries concerned in the future. We in Brunei Darussalam have come to recognize the need to include this in our post-pandemic recovery efforts. As such, we have introduced a five-year Multisectoral Mental Health Action Plan. In addition, we are also working on a regional basis in East Asia in promoting better mental health and well-being.

Climate change is yet another challenge the world was facing even prior to the pandemic, and it is one that continues to be a real and existential threat today and that, if left unaddressed, could lead to another global emergency. In 2015, the world came together on two landmark agreements, namely, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which sets a target to limit global warming by 1.5°C and global greenhouse-gas emissions; as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is aimed at, among other things, to achieve zero hunger. I believe that those two are interlinked and interconnected aspirations.

And yet, as we reach the halfway mark towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we see the latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate

Change showing that the impacts of climate change on agriculture have had devastating consequences on food production and food security. Furthermore, the recent report *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022*, issued by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, WHO and others, has shown that by 2030 the progress made in alleviating world hunger since 2015 will be nullified unless something drastic is done.

That is why we must hasten our efforts and remain steadfast in our commitments. To that end, Brunei Darussalam is committed to the climate ambition and is moving towards net zero by 2050, through forest preservation and transition to clean energy, to shape a low carbon and climate resilient future. With 72 per cent of our total land area still covered by rainforests, our greenhouse-gas emissions only accounts for 0.017 per cent that of global total.

As one of the regional champions for conservation, environment and forest preservation, Brunei is also playing a leading role regionally by hosting the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Centre for Climate Change. It will function as an intergovernmental centre for climate change coordination and cooperation. It will also strengthen the region's capabilities to prevent, mitigate, and manage climate-related disasters through established mechanisms and the formulation of policies. We appreciate the contributions made thus far from our partners and friends in this initiative and continue to welcome others to come on board.

The United Nations is the foremost multilateral institution, and its Member States therefore have a responsibility to uphold international law and adhere to the founding principles of the Organization, specifically those respecting the sovereign equality and territorial integrity of all Members. The maintenance of international peace and security is of utmost importance, and that is no different in South-East Asia.

Last year, our region's peace and stability were affected, and ASEAN collectively agreed on a five-point consensus to work gradually and constructively towards a peaceful solution and eventual return to normalcy in one of our fellow member States, namely, Myanmar. Unfortunately, matters continue to require close attention, and as such we appreciate the continued support and contributions of the United Nations and others in ASEAN's efforts.

On a similar note, the current conflict in Europe has also raised global concern, leading Member States to unanimously adopt a resolution that ensures accountability of the Security Council. It is, however, disappointing that the same attention and regard have not been given to resolving other areas of conflict, particularly on the question of Palestine. We need to ensure that the same amount of attention and consideration are given to conflicts wherever they are, particularly where territorial integrity and sovereignty have been violated. Therefore, the international community must remain resolute in its commitment to safeguarding the two-State solution towards achieving an independent State of Palestine based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

In conclusion, let me say that as we continue to address the concerns of the world in pre- and post-crisis terms, it is clear what this watershed moment in our collective history is. It should not deepen divisions among us. It should not entrench us in our differences, and it should not lead us to serve only ourselves. However, it should, in these final years of the SDGs, make us come together and uphold the spirit of multilateralism that will transform us into a better and more resilient United Nations.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ali Sabry, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Sabry (Sri Lanka): I am honoured to represent Sri Lanka at the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly, which after two years brings together world leaders post-pandemic in this Hall in person.

Permit me the honour of congratulating His Excellency Mr. Csaba Kőrösi on being elected President of the General Assembly at its current session. Sri Lanka looks forward to working closely with him and his team in the year ahead.

May I also convey our appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid of Maldives for his excellent stewardship of the seventy-sixth session. As a close friend and neighbour of Maldives, we express particular appreciation for his presidency of hope, which gave us renewed optimism and vigour. Building on that, we move to the vision of our new President of finding solutions through solidarity, sustainability and science.

Seventy-seven years ago, when the battlefields of the Second World War had fallen silent but their horrors reverberated around the globe, a new world order emerged out of the remains of the old one. And that new world order was manifested by the Charter of the United Nations, developed by 50 nations at the San Francisco Conference. The United Nations is a table at which every State can sit down, a forum where everyone can be heard and where everyone is equally important. That is the concept of multilateralism, and it is a fundamental political principle of diplomacy. It is said that multilateral diplomacy is similar to gardening — you plant, you wait, you sow the seeds, you wait, you trim and you harvest at some point. In multilateralism, we talk to each other, we develop a relationship of trust and confidence and, if something were to come up, you have the base to work from.

The world is facing a multiplicity of complex, interlocking challenges. The far-reaching effects of the pandemic have been further exacerbated by the current global crises. Those vulnerabilities have been aggravated by the devastating consequences of what the Secretary-General has referred to as a “five-alarm global fire”, which has resulted, inter alia, in the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and rising pollution. We are, in addition, witnessing extreme weather patterns resulting in loss of life, property and habitat, involuntary human displacement and an accompanying food and energy crisis.

It is not difficult to imagine that these trends can lead to deepening inequalities, both within and among States. Developing countries and their economies are at extreme risk, with Governments facing debt default and financial collapse due to lack of access to adequate capital, while people face rising poverty, unemployment and hunger. As a consequence, nutrition levels, especially among children, are being affected and their education and intellectual advancement disrupted. Despite our best efforts, our collective ability to realize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or even to sustain the gains already achieved is becoming increasingly difficult.

It is against that challenging global backdrop that significant changes have taken place in Sri Lanka since the last session of the General Assembly. The external and internal challenges we face provide an opportunity for implementing political, social and economic reforms that will lead to recovery and prosperity for our people. Sri Lanka believes that this is the moment to realize

our collective vision for the future — an opportunity to build a more just, sustainable and prosperous future for all Sri Lankans, and to build back better. We look forward to the cooperation and support of the international community, including the United Nations, as we embark on that journey.

Following prolonged social unrest and protests in the country, President Ranil Wickremesinghe, in his maiden speech in Parliament last month stated: “I will implement the social and political reforms requested by the nation”. Those measures include a review of the present procedures, the strengthening of the institutional framework of democratic governance and the adoption of urgent measures to restore long-term economic stability. We have understood that this will be possible only if we engage in strict adherence to fiscal discipline and far-reaching economic and institutional reforms.

We are committed to that process. It is envisaged that through the proposed legislative and constitutional amendments, democratic governance will be reinforced with independent oversight institutions and enhanced public scrutiny. Legal and administrative frameworks are being strengthened to ensure transparency, integrity, accountability and inclusivity in providing access to justice. A greater participation of women and youth will be ensured in this process.

We remain cognizant of and acutely sensitive to the events that have taken place in the recent past. The Government is extremely sensitive to the socioeconomic hardships faced by our people. We are pleased to have reached a staff-level understanding with the International Monetary Fund. We have put in place measures to protect the vulnerable segments of society and will endeavour to ensure that these economic reforms have a minimum impact on their lives. Our institutions and society have demonstrated remarkable resilience in the face of very difficult circumstances.

We unconditionally recognize the fact that one has a fundamental right to the freedom of expression, which we all treat as sacrosanct. However, it must also be appreciated that this freedom must fall within the constitutional order and be exercised having regard to one’s fundamental duty to express oneself within the confines of the law.

I am pleased to inform the Assembly that Sri Lanka’s nationwide strategy in containing the human health impact of the coronavirus disease has

been largely successful as a result of proactive and non-discriminatory measures by the Government and the effective delivery capabilities of our strong health-care infrastructure. Our vaccination drive exceeded World Health Organization targets. However, as a developing country we were highly vulnerable to the economic fallout of the pandemic. The virus has opened a window to the future that we must exploit, highlighting the importance of multilateral cooperation through global health networks.

Permit me to briefly turn to the aspect of climate change. As Sri Lanka is a climate-vulnerable country, climate change has had the potential to adversely impact our socioeconomic progress, as well as food security and livelihoods. Sri Lanka has pledged to meet the targets of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and our updated nationally determined contributions (NDC), submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change last year with the aim of reducing emissions to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. We firmly believe that those commitments should not adversely impact the green economic development objectives. We also appreciate that meeting the NDC targets and executing the corresponding energy transition towards renewable and sustainable energy and energy efficiency measures will require significant climate financing.

Members will appreciate that we cannot do that alone. We believe that in tandem with our own efforts, the world’s largest emitters of greenhouse gases must fulfil their commitments and assist developing nations in adaptation and mitigation measures under a common but differentiated framework. We need to work towards a just, sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery from the adverse impacts of climate change and the energy transition.

Turning to the ocean, members will appreciate that as an island nation, we are acutely concerned about and sensitive to the impact of pollution and climate change on the oceans. With rapidly growing pressure on land resources, the world is turning towards the oceans for sustenance, not only for food security but also as a source of raw materials for industries and energy. We are committed to the sustainable use of the oceans and its resources in consonance with SDG 14. In the General Assembly in May, we were pleased to have led a small but significant nature-based solution to mitigate the impact of climate change that led to the United Nations declaring 1 March as World Seagrass Day. Seagrasses

are an important carbon sink and absorb significantly more carbon than tropical rain forests.

There is a likelihood that the world will not reach the scheduled milestones to achieve zero hunger by 2030. It is predicted that food and nutrition security will be at great risk. Sri Lanka is paying serious heed to those warning signs. Sri Lanka supports the sustainable transformation of agriculture to a modernized sector and encourages enhanced food production to ensure food security. Sri Lanka has initiated the national food security programme with the dual objectives of ensuring that no citizen should suffer for the want of food and no child should be a victim of malnutrition.

Adequate nutrition is a *sine qua non* and vital to ensuring that children of all socioeconomic backgrounds can enjoy good health. The provision of quality education and health care for all is at the core of Sri Lanka's social protection policies and provided the foundation upon which Sri Lanka was able to mitigate the effects of the global learning crisis during the coronavirus disease pandemic. Rapid conversions to digital systems for the delivery of education threatened universal access, participation and survival in the education system, especially among children of low-income households. Sri Lanka aims to bridge the digital divide and ensure that no child will be left behind.

Despite severe challenges, we will endeavour to maintain the significant progress we have made towards achieving the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. Our efforts have placed us in a leading position in the Asia-Pacific region for SDG data availability, thereby enhancing Sri Lanka's capacity for evidence-informed policymaking for the SDGs in future. We recognize that investment in human capital is indispensable to the future of our country. It is no surprise that Sri Lanka is ranked high in the human development category, occupying rank 73 out of 191 countries globally, and is the highest in the region.

Having said that, we are nonetheless concerned that current challenges have disrupted progress. The Secretary-General has in, a serious warning, made reference to rescuing the Sustainable Development Goals. That warning has been followed by an observation by the United Nations Development Programme, that for the first time in 32 years, the Human Development Index has declined globally for two years consecutively.

Let me say a word about global security. Geopolitical tensions among nations have heightened,

creating insecurity and polarization among States. Agreed frameworks for arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament have become fragile. At the recently concluded tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which remains the centrepiece of the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, we were regrettably unable to arrive once again at a consensus outcome.

While we address contemporary challenges, we must not forget the lingering issue of Palestine. While restating Sri Lanka's consistent and principled position that the Palestinian people have a legitimate and inalienable right to the natural resources in their territory and to statehood, we further recognize the legitimate security concerns of both the Palestinian and the Israeli peoples, and an urgent resolution of the matter, on the basis of United Nations resolutions on the attainment of the two-State solution, needs to be pursued immediately.

The absence of a regulatory supervisory regime concerning the use of new technologies in cyberspace and in artificial intelligence needs to be addressed urgently. Their ability to cause large-scale disruption, spread disinformation and undermine scientifically established findings is of real concern and a danger we all face. Sri Lanka, which is implementing the nation's first information and cybersecurity strategy, has identified the importance of establishing a partnership-based approach to protecting cyberspace in order to confront multinational cyberthreats.

I must make a brief reference to the scourge of terrorism. Sri Lanka was a victim of terrorism for several decades. Terrorists' choice of targets, methods of financing and radicalization, as well as the use of new technologies as weapons, have been constantly evolving. Legislative measures and law enforcement mechanisms must be put in place to counter radical ideologies leading to violent extremism and to curb the terrorists' use and abuse of the internet and social media platforms. At the same time, it is necessary to develop the critical thinking capacity of youth, strengthen community bonds, foster a sense of civic responsibility, and build community resilience to mitigate the effects and influences of violent extremist ideology leading to terrorism.

As our contribution to maintaining international peace and security, Sri Lanka looks forward to

enhancing our participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations with professional men and women to serve as peacekeepers. I take this opportunity to honour the thousands of men and women who, for decades, have helped countries navigate the difficult path from conflict to peace under the Blue Helmet. We have taken many measures to ensure that Sri Lankan peacekeepers, with a wealth of experience in counter-terrorism and counter insurgency operations, are trained and equipped with theoretical and practical knowledge of all necessary functions of peacekeeping, including the promotion and protection of human rights.

This is indeed a watershed moment for the international community — a moment of great challenge and opportunity. The complex and interconnected crises that we face cannot be resolved by nations acting on their own. This is an opportunity to demonstrate global solidarity, diplomacy and collective efforts, leveraging the ideas and talents of all of our people and all segments of our society to find transformative solutions that leave no one behind. Multilateralism is a tool for diplomacy that rises above such challenges. Conflicts, disasters and crises will not stop at passport control. Multilateralism is not without its shortcomings, but undoubtedly it provides a solid framework for resolving contemporary challenges.

This, I would say, is the mission of the Assembly, and perhaps the singular reason for which it was established 77 years ago. And that perhaps is the reason why Sri Lanka and many others applied to be Members — to participate, to be visible, to be heard and to embellish the Organization with our own flavours, perspectives, history and knowledge, adding to this fine amalgam and growing from the common work discussions and disputes that we take issue with.

I wind up by citing the observations of one of our late Prime Ministers, who committed Sri Lanka to the way of a socialist democracy, to non-alignment and to an independent foreign policy based on friendship with all countries, irrespective of differing ideological and social systems, when he said:

“We have to build up a new society for ourselves; one, as I have said, which best suits the genius of our country. We should like to get some ideas and principles from this side, and some from the other, until a coherent form of society is made up that suits our people, in the context of a changing

world today. That is why we do not range ourselves on the side of this power bloc or that.”

Permit me to make the observation that the 193 nations represented here jointly share the responsibility to establish justice, maintain peace and ensure progress in a world that is in trouble as never before. We have a Charter and a formidable body of international law, inclusive of our supreme law of the Constitution of the Republic and other local statutes. We are acutely conscious of the fact that, notwithstanding all these sophistications, multipronged challenges remain. The Government of Sri Lanka is committed to overcoming these challenges.

It is to that commitment that Sri Lanka pledges itself today, in the sincere hope that we will exploit the crisis that is at hand, build back better, leaving no one behind, and rise to new horizons of freedom and progress.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Carlos Faría Tortosa, Minister of the People's Power for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Faría Tortosa (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I take this opportunity to read a letter from President Nicolás Maduro Moros for the peoples of the world.

“The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela extends a greeting of brotherhood to the Presidents, Heads of Government and Prime Ministers of the 193 countries of the United Nations.

“Likewise, we salute Secretary-General António Guterres, Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, President of the General Assembly, and other authorities present at this seventy-seventh annual general debate, wishing them every success in the development of this important debate of ideas for timely and collective action in the face of common problems.

“I take the time allotted to us to speak in this forum, on behalf of 30 million Venezuelan men and women, to send an open letter to humankind, which I believe is the sole addressee and purpose that gives meaning to the words of a twenty-first century leader, above all at such a crucial moment for the world, when greater stewardship is needed from the peoples in creating alternatives to transform reality. It is also because we have never been so aware of being a single community, one and multiple at the same time, as we are now as the very thing we share

and that makes us equal — life itself — hangs in the balance. This letter comes from the heart of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, a country that many have heard of and of which, paradoxically, little is known in relation to its political truth, its historical identity and its concrete reality.

“Certainly, a pernicious global campaign of discredit and stigmatization has been waged against our people, our republican institutions and our democratic revolution, for the simple fact that, in the waning days of the last century, we challenged the single-minded regime that was imposed on the world under the mask of the market economy and neoliberal globalization — a model that, in the name of freedom, became the modern version of colonization.

“The aim of this campaign against Venezuela is none other than to create the objective conditions to politically and economically suffocate any attempt to create alternatives to the imperialist and predatory system that capitalism, in all its historical phases, has turned out to be. Imposing their false story, they accuse us of being a dictatorship and a failed State to hide the truth from the world. During the past two decades, my country has held 29 free elections that have defined the social, economic and political model that we call Bolivarian socialism. That is why we have been attacked in multiple ways.

“The peoples of the world should know that every kind of playbook has been applied to Venezuela to destabilize its democracy.

“Politically, imperialism has been unsuccessfully using the illegal method of regime change. They have promoted assassination attempts and invasions, created seditious movements against the Constitution, and even invented a fictitious parallel Government that bordered on the ridiculous.

“Economically, few know that 913 illegal sanctions weigh on our small but dignified country, which, in a word, prevent my people from selling and buying what they produce and need for the development and enjoyment of our individual and collective existence. This translates concretely into suffering, deprivation and systematic attacks that restrict life and the collective rights of my country, which is why we do not hesitate to denounce such cruel measures as crimes against humanity. This

economic war, whose losses for my nation have exceeded \$150 billion dollars in recent years, intensified during the most serious phase of the global pandemic, making it impossible for us to buy medical supplies, medicines and vaccines.

“The stigmatization has also served Europe and the United States as an alibi for carrying out the most shameless plundering that has been committed against our patrimony and assets abroad. More than 31 tons of Venezuelan gold reserves deposited in the Bank of England, calculated to be worth \$1.3 billion, remain sequestered. Another example is the theft of the Citgo Petroleum Corporation, valued at more than \$30 billion in February 2019, adding to the more than \$10 billion of Venezuelan deposits and funds illegally blocked in foreign banks.

“But these illegal sanctions have never been able to bend the will of our people, but have strengthened it in the same way that the conscience and the resolve to be free are strengthened. Neither have they sidetracked us from our path to social justice. Even in the worst circumstances, our model protects and prioritizes human beings in their social rights: access to housing, education, health, work and culture.

“This act of piracy against our country, however, has left deep wounds in society. Those include induced migration, which is flaunted in the media for political and propaganda purposes precisely by those who have propagated and promoted it with false promises and a blockade of their living conditions. Nothing is said about the fact that 60 per cent of the Venezuelans who migrated have voluntarily returned to their country, fleeing conditions of slavery and exploitation, as well as the mistreatment and persecution to which they have been subjected in many countries of the world. Also hidden from the world is the fact that the Venezuelan State is the only one that has a repatriation policy through its airline, Conviasa, which has been permanently boycotted due to illegal sanctions.

“We ask the multilateral organizations: where have the millions in resources supposedly earmarked to support Venezuelan migrants gone? Accountability would be useful in clearing up the opacity with which such allocations have been carried out. In the same way, we demand that

multilateral organizations guarantee the rights of all migrants throughout the world. We do so with the moral authority of a country that, for more than 100 years, has been a beneficiary of good practices towards its migrant population. In this vein, we alert the peoples of the world to the resurgence of xenophobia and aporophobia, hate speech and crimes, and intolerance in general incubated by neo-fascist and neo-Nazi movements that find shelter in political parties and ultra-conservative and far-right Governments.

“Humankind, which sees and listens to us today, has the right to know that, even in the most extreme conditions that I have summarized here, our people have not given up. Quite the contrary, they have paved the way for the consolidation of social peace, economic recovery and the strengthening of democracy. We know in our own flesh the adversity and the miracles that our own will and effort can work. For this reason and from concrete experience, we have built consensus around social and political peace. We have launched an economic plan to confront the blockade, creating new sources of wealth such as tourism, national industrialization, entrepreneurship and agricultural development.

“For the first time in 120 years, we are producing 80 per cent of what we consume and can therefore affirm that we are in a position to join efforts to face the great threats that loom over the world. As one of the main world Powers in oil and gas matters, Venezuela can and wants to be useful, as a member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, in the energy emergency that has been dragging on for a decade and profoundly affecting the price and supply system, impacting the poorest and richest countries alike.

“The coronavirus disease pandemic and the conflict between Ukraine and Russia have dramatically aggravated the situation. However, beyond our historical ability to guarantee, as an irreplaceable producer, the energy balance demanded by the international community, we are concerned about the impact of the various world conflicts on food security. Venezuela has 30 million cultivable hectares and is convinced that only a return to sustainable agriculture can help overcome world hunger and poverty. We offer our potential and our firm determination to work actively in the search for global solutions.

“Undoubtedly, all nations are beset by various problems, each of such profound complexity and gravity that it would be difficult to rank them. Perhaps, of all of them, one of the most imperative is that of world peace and security, which today is severely weakened, as has been mentioned by all those who have preceded me at this rostrum. Regardless of our ideological positions, we must agree on the need to prioritize the re-establishment of the diplomatic path and political dialogue over military confrontation. Humankind will not survive a world war. Therefore, an escalation of war in any part of the world is in no one’s interest.

“For my country, a people that has never participated in an international armed conflict, there is no other way than peace, justice, trust and respect for international law. We therefore endorse the proposal of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who calls for the creation of an international commission to facilitate sovereign dialogue between Russia and Ukraine, and we stand ready to facilitate its conditions. We reject all the military provocations and interfering economic sanctions that have been taken against Russia, as well as the hate campaign unleashed against the Slavic people, believing that such actions, far from adding to peace, fuel the fire of war. In my country’s opinion — and I am sure that public opinion is on our side — there is no such thing as good wars and bad wars.

“After the United States invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, international trust was broken and the contradictions typical of an imperialist and supremacist logic became more acute. Since then, we have seen blood spilled with impunity in Iraq, Yemen, Haiti, Somalia, Libya and Syria, to name just a few milestones in the shameful tragedy that is destroying indispensable international law.

“Notwithstanding what has been said, in Venezuela we have reasons to be optimistic. That is because we have learned to trust the people — its intelligence, its benevolence and its attachment to justice and true life. But it is necessary to recognize that the dominant world order faces multiple crises competing in their lethal potential, converging and articulating with one another. The climate crisis aggravates the food crisis, the health crisis deepens the social crisis, the energy crisis intensifies

the economic crisis, and the latter endangers world peace.

“Transversally to all this, the no less pernicious crisis of truth is upon us, now exacerbated by information contamination and fake news. We are facing a regime of representation, misrepresentation and suppression of reality imposed by the algorithm of new communication technologies at the convenience of the most powerful. The manipulation of information and emotions is only part of the problem.

“We are witnessing a global state of surveillance and digital control that violates citizens’ rights to privacy and truthful information, turning our democracies into infocracies, as the South Korean philosopher Byung Chul-Han states in his most recent book. The death of truth is the clearest symptom of the decline of a civilization and the preamble to perpetual conflict. Let us not allow the truth to succumb at the historical moment when we have the best chance of applying it, together with reason and sensitivity, as an antidote to collapse.

“The peoples of America, Europe, Asia, Africa and Oceania know that, due to its transcendent and definitive nature, we must face this multidimensional crisis with humanity by going to the heart of the problem. Where is the telluric fault that is shaking the building of the prevailing order? It lies in the crisis of the Western supremacist, imperialist model of civilization, which denies, attacks and tries to suppress the other and the differences among us, and that does not recognize other models or other political, economic, religious or cultural paradigms foreign to its own.

“Despite Western arrogance, we are experiencing a post-imperial change of era, and the global North must recognize that the reigning unipolar and colonialist order is not capable of responding satisfactorily to the problems and needs that it has created to the detriment of humankind, animal life and the planet. The latter is, from our originary worldview, the living being most exploited, violated and destroyed by capitalism in all its historical phases.

“We are not just engaging in ideological reflection, nothing more. The climate crisis, which is already irreversible, could be the confirmation that a change of model is imminent.

“The North must accept the indisputable emergence of new Powers and new leadership, such as China, Russia, India, Iran and Türkiye. It has to be open to the possibility of being part of a multipolar, pluricentric world that is free of hegemony. It is urgent that there be an ethical change among the old Powers to build a common new world without colonizers or colonized, in which we work together towards the solutions that our peoples demand of us. There is no time for arrogance or useless confrontations or skirmishes.

“In very unique circumstances 207 years ago, the freedom fighter Simón Bolívar, in his prophetic Jamaica Letter, invoked the wisdom of the West.

““And shall Europe, the civilized, the merchant, the lover of liberty allow an aged serpent, bent only on satisfying its venomous rage, devour the fairest part of our globe? ... Is Europe deaf to the clamour of her own interests?” (*Selected Writings of Bolívar*, Volume 1, p. 107)

“In that regard, I wonder whether European and North American leadership is deaf. We ask ourselves that today, as we are on the brink of a crisis that could be the last crisis for humankind.

“Venezuela hopes that the Assembly will listen to reason, wisdom and prudence, recognize and respect the rights of the peoples of the world and address the injustice committed against the Saharawi and the Palestinian people by denying them the right to a homeland. We hope for an end to the illegal economic sanctions and political persecution against Nicaragua and against our brotherly Cuba, Iran and Russia. We hope that the Argentine people will be compensated and that their rights over the Malvinas Islands, taken with blood and fire by the imperial logic that we have denounced, will be restored.

“Only through dialogue, only through words and reason shared among equals, can we build the bridges we need to heal the wounds and leave behind the abyss that instils fear in humankind.

“It is with that belief, and not to comply with the protocol of the general debate, that I send this message. My focus is on the streets, where the ordinary men and women of Abyei, New York, Istanbul, London, Damascus, Ramallah, Tehran, Cape Town, Moscow, Beijing, Managua, Havana,

Caracas and many more places are not looking for answers but rather for a call to be part of the building of a new humanity. Because I believe in the power of words and in those men and women who refuse to give up hope, I am sure that this call will not fall on deaf ears.

“Let us have the good sense to recognize that the hegemonic global model is coming to an end, and let us arm ourselves with the necessary enthusiasm to build a new multicentric, multipolar, intercultural and balanced world.

“Let us change what needs to be changed and let us have the courage to be reborn in the face of new times and new challenges. Another world, another life, is not only possible — it is today more urgent than ever.”

That statement was written by Nicolás Maduro Moros in Caracas on 24 September.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Vladimir Norov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Mr. Norov (Uzbekistan): I congratulate His Excellency Mr. Csaba Kőrösi on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session. I also take this opportunity to thank His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid for his successful leadership of the seventy-sixth session of the Assembly.

The world today faces a deep crisis of trust at the global level and an intensification of numerous challenges to stability and security, a growth of geopolitical confrontation and an increased risk of bloc mentality.

The expansion and aggravation of armed conflicts in various parts of the world are destabilizing international trade and economic ties, which have not yet recovered from the consequences of the pandemic. The challenges of ensuring food and energy security are increasing. The global climate shocks, the growing shortage of natural and water resources, and the spread of infectious diseases all contribute to the aggravation of conflicts and the emergence of humanitarian crises, and they also threaten the foundation of life.

Clearly, no country can avoid global risk and challenges or tackle them alone. Constructive dialogue and multilateral cooperation, based on consideration and respect for the interests of all countries, are the

only way out of the dangerous spiral of crisis. Effective international cooperation is essential if the world is to become more stable, predictable and prosperous.

Under the current conditions, we strongly believe it is important to strengthen the central role of the United Nations in addressing global and regional challenges. The United Nations should evolve in order for it to respond effectively to the transformation taking place.

The establishment of intercivilizational and intercultural relations and dialogue is also extremely important for finding coherent approaches and solutions and relieving global tensions, uncertainty and unpredictability.

With that in mind, at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit that was held in Samarkand on 16 September, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, put forward the Samarkand Solidarity Initiative for Common Security and Prosperity. Its goal is to contribute to the restoration of mutual trust and stability in international relations, as well as to strengthen solidarity through the establishment of broad dialogue free from geopolitical rivalry, ideological contradictions and disputes. We propose to jointly exchange views on the practical implementation of that initiative at the Samarkand forum to be held in 2023, with the participation of United Nations representatives, political leaders, the public business community and academia.

This year, we adopted the Development Strategy for New Uzbekistan for 2022-2026, which aims to deepen the democratic process, ensure the rule of law and improve living standards. The strategy is based on the outcomes of the reforms carried out in our country over the previous five years and is designed to advance the comprehensive implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. In particular, by 2030 we intend to halve the level of poverty, increase the effectiveness of the social protection system to respond to all those in need, strengthen food security and become one of the world's upper-middle-income countries.

Currently, Uzbekistan is on the eve of an important political event: a constitutional reform. The key goal of updating the Constitution is to ensure sustainability and responsibility in the process of the fundamental transformation of the State system and public administration in a way that will respect and protect the honour and dignity of the people and guarantee their inviolable rights and freedoms. The idea of

human honour and dignity will be deeply enshrined in the Constitution.

Norms on the complete abolition of the death penalty, the Miranda rule and habeas corpus, as well as environmental human rights, will be introduced in the Constitution. The constitutional amendments will become directly applicable and aim to guarantee and protect the interests of people of all backgrounds. In particular, the prohibition of forced labour and the other worst forms of child labour and the protection of the employment rights of pregnant women and women with children will be guaranteed at the constitutional level. Furthermore, the introduction of norms that ensure the openness, transparency and accountability of State agencies has also been proposed.

The amendments to the Constitution were reviewed by the public and will be put to a referendum.

We fully endorse the initiative of Secretary-General António Guterres to hold the Summit of the Future in September 2023. Uzbekistan greatly appreciates the successful outcome of the historic Transforming Education Summit, which demonstrated the commitment of the international community to advance efforts to achieve the rapid restoration and modernization of the education system by increasing funding and innovation.

Uzbekistan has already achieved tangible results in that area. Over the past five years, enrolment in higher education increased from 9 to 29 per cent, and the rate of enrolment of children in preschool education increased from 27 to 67 per cent.

Young people should play a key role in the processes that are directly related to their fate and future. To that end, Uzbekistan plans to convene the first meeting of the Youth Council of the countries of Central Asia and South Asia in 2023, which will become a platform for new ideas and specific initiatives. We count on the support of the United Nations in convening that important forum.

From 14 to 16 November in Tashkent, we will host jointly with UNESCO the World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education. That forum will facilitate the exchange of best practices to ensure universal, equitable and quality education. We invite the Ministers of Education of Member States to participate in that high-level forum.

Thanks to the joint efforts of the Central Asian States, a fundamentally new political atmosphere has been created in our region. Launched at the initiative of Uzbekistan, the mechanism of consultative meetings of the Heads of State of the region has become a vivid symbol of a new era of regional cooperation. At the most recent consultative meeting, held on 21 July, the truly historic Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighbourliness and Cooperation for the Development of Central Asia in the Twenty-First century was agreed. The international recognition of the deepening partnership of the countries of the region is reflected in a number of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly in support of strengthening peace, stability and regional cooperation in Central Asia.

We rely on the further support of the international community in the process of rapprochement and cooperation among the countries of Central Asia and the integration of the region into the global economy and transport networks.

We express our gratitude to Secretary-General António Guterres for supporting our initiative to hold an international conference on the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia, which was held in March in Tashkent. Taking into account the outcomes of that forum, we propose the establishment of a United Nations counter-terrorism regional office in Central Asia in order to successfully implement the Global Strategy and continuously monitor the implementation of the updated Joint Plan of Action of Central Asian States.

The prospects for the development of Central Asia are inextricably linked to ensuring peace in neighbouring Afghanistan. We are concerned about the decline in the international attention being placed on that country, which is experiencing a deep humanitarian crisis. We consider it extremely important to prevent the isolation of Afghanistan, which is being left to address its existing problems on its own. That will undoubtedly have negative consequences for regional and international security.

The International Conference on Afghanistan, which was held in July in Tashkent with the participation of the delegation of the interim Government, showed the interest of the world community in the development of coordinated approaches towards that country.

We are convinced that the overall priority of the international community should be to restore

the Afghan economy and ensure its integration into regional economic processes and the implementation of infrastructure and socially significant projects. To solve that problem, the support of the United Nations, international financial institutions and donor countries is needed.

Uzbekistan is making a feasible contribution to international efforts to assist Afghanistan. Uzbekistan has established an international transport and logistics hub in the border city of Termez, which is actively used by United Nations agencies to provide humanitarian assistance to the country. We propose that a special humanitarian support fund for Afghanistan be created in Termez and that financial resources be allocated to it in order to overcome the social crisis and implement educational programmes for young people and health-care projects.

Resolution 76/295, on strengthening connectivity between Central and South Asia, which was adopted in July 2022 at the initiative of Uzbekistan, prioritizes the involvement of Afghanistan in economic cooperation and its transformation into a bridge connecting the two regions. The practical implementation of those ideas will be facilitated by the implementation of transregional infrastructure projects, such as the construction of the Termez-Mazar-i-Sharif-Kabul-Peshawar railway. The solution to the problem of involving Afghanistan in regional trade and economic relations will be facilitated by the proposed establishment by Uzbekistan, with the support of the United Nations, of an interregional centre for connectivity in Tashkent.

Today the negative consequences of climate change are acutely apparent in our region. We stand ready to actively participate in multilateral efforts to promote the topical issues of the green agenda and the processes that curb climate change.

Uzbekistan has assumed the additional obligation of reducing greenhouse-gas emissions under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and is implementing a comprehensive strategy for the transition to a green economy and the development of renewable energy. In 2021, the President of Uzbekistan launched a broad initiative called “Yashil Makon” or “Green Nation” through which 1 billion trees and shrubs are to be planted across the country over the next five years.

The Aral Sea is the largest environmental crisis in our region. Over the past five years, 1.7 million hectares of forest plantings have been introduced on

the drained seabed. I take this opportunity to thank the General Assembly for adopting the resolution declaring the Aral Sea region a zone of ecological innovation and technologies (resolution 75/278). This year, under the auspices of the United Nations, we plan to host in Nukus the first Aral Sea international forum. In 2023, we will host the fourteenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, as well as a meeting in Uzbekistan of the Committee to Review the Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. We invite the Member States and United Nations agencies to take part in these events at the highest level.

This year we celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of Uzbekistan’s membership in the United Nations, which is the only universal structure for maintaining international peace and security. We reaffirm Uzbekistan’s commitment to the United Nations Charter and express readiness to deepen multifaceted cooperation with the Organization.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Amery Browne, Minister for Foreign and CARICOM Affairs of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Mr. Browne (Trinidad and Tobago): Trinidad and Tobago congratulates you, Mr. President, on your election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session, and we commit ourselves to fully supporting you. I also wish to express gratitude to your predecessor, whose leadership and dedication demonstrated that to be a great leader, one does not have to come from a large country.

In our maiden statement to the General Assembly as a newly independent nation in 1962, our first Permanent Representative, the late Sir Ellis Clarke, declared that Trinidad and Tobago embraces the solemn responsibility that comes with membership in this Organization (see A/PV.1122). I stand before the General Assembly today, in our sixtieth year of independence, on the anniversary of the day on which we became a Republic, to reaffirm Trinidad and Tobago’s unequivocal acceptance of our obligation to honour the responsibility of membership in the United Nations.

Over the decades, Trinidad and Tobago has anchored its multilateral engagement on the founding purposes and principles of the United Nations. We have nurtured these principles by maintaining a strong

tradition of democratic governance that respects constitutionally enshrined fundamental human rights and freedoms and promotes strict adherence to the rule of law. Accordingly, Trinidad and Tobago is bound by duty to uphold these principles unconditionally and to defend them whenever there is evidence of breach.

That is why Trinidad and Tobago cannot accept or ignore any unilateral attempt to violate the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of any State. The violation of Ukraine's internationally agreed borders constitutes a flagrant violation of the United Nations Charter and of international law. It is a clear threat to international peace and security, and the only credible solution is to end this aggression immediately. We therefore call on the Russian Federation to immediately abandon its action and resume negotiations with the Ukrainians in good faith in order to find a peaceful and durable resolution.

Our collective experience over the last seven months has laid bare the urgent necessity for the Security Council to be reformed to reflect current geopolitical realities. And as the international community celebrates the twentieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Rome Statute, which established the International Criminal Court (ICC), evidence and events around the world confirm that, if in fact the court did not exist, it would have to be created in order to ensure accountability for increasing acts of impunity.

Trinidad and Tobago is proud of our long-standing involvement with the ICC through the pioneering work of our distinguished former Prime Minister and President — from the little island of Tobago — the late Arthur N. R. Robinson. The mission of the International Criminal Court and its record as an independent tribunal engenders the fullest support of Trinidad and Tobago.

As the war in Ukraine rages, fuels such as coal are making quite a resurgence, and the commitments made in Glasgow are at risk of being severely derailed. At the same time, climate commitments made by developed countries are definitely not on track. Droughts, wildfires, floods and cataclysmic hurricanes and typhoons are realities that small island States know all too well. Meanwhile, slow-onset events such as the deterioration of coral reefs and the influx of sargassum seaweed threaten our fragile ecosystems and the livelihoods of all people, especially of fisherfolk and those dependent on tourism. Accordingly, Trinidad and Tobago calls for the full and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement.

A dedicated facility to address loss and damage under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change financial mechanism is an absolute necessity. These actions must be prioritized because what is at stake is the very existence and viability of small island States.

The added burden of rampant global inflation and the crises of food, fuel, feed and fertilizers have placed an extraordinary strain on our economies and our people, further imperilling our ability to attain sustainable development across the globe.

On the critical issue of achieving food security for all people, the international community must work together to accelerate global food production. In this regard, leaders of the country members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) have not just been calling for action, but they have been acting in solidarity and with decisiveness. In August, Trinidad and Tobago was pleased to host the second CARICOM Agri Investment Forum and Expo as part of our region's commitment to reducing its food-import bill by 25 per cent by the year 2025.

Trinidad and Tobago is firmly committed to working with CARICOM and other partners towards restoring peace and stable democratic governance in Haiti. Our objective must be to work with the Haitians to secure their long-term progress and future. We therefore call upon the United Nations system and the international donor community to urgently strengthen their rule and engagement with Haiti. We encourage them to provide the necessary assistance to quell the ongoing and devastating gang violence and to urgently improve the humanitarian situation in that beautiful country.

In the Caribbean, our efforts to build safe and peaceful societies are being completely undermined by transnational organized crime, human trafficking, the illicit trade of drugs and a steady flow of illegal firearms from source countries far beyond our region — all of which contributes to unacceptably high levels of gang violence within our communities. We are further committed to strengthening our cooperation with regional and international partners to address these challenges, which threaten the very stability of our societies.

Violent extremism, international terrorism and the use of technology for criminal purposes remain clear and present dangers. In combating these phenomena, Trinidad and Tobago attaches the highest value to

collaborating with the United Nations and other international partners. We must bear in mind that in addressing extremism there must be no compromise to the constitutionally protected rights and freedoms of our citizens.

In all of these complexities, we must recognize the critically important role of women as agents of positive change. To that end, Trinidad and Tobago will once again submit the biennial resolution on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. We encourage all Member States to co-sponsor and support this forward-looking resolution.

But while we assiduously work to encourage and ensure the inclusion of women in places and spaces of decision-making, we must continue to insist that the rights of women and girls are fully respected at all levels of society. Violence against women and girls continues to be a menace, destroying lives and impeding overall progress towards balanced and inclusive sustainable development. Addressing this must be a priority, and, in Trinidad and Tobago, a growing number of stakeholders, including the private sector, have now joined the national effort to make our society safe for women and girls.

The last two years in particular have demonstrated that the structure of the international economic and financial system is not fit for purpose. The system as designed actually undermines developing countries in their pursuit of sustainable development. It cannot be business as usual. A transformative global agenda, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, necessitates a transformative economic and financial framework that is compatible with the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Without such a shift in the global architecture, even the best efforts at the national level will not produce the results that we need in the global South. Trinidad and Tobago calls on the international community to adopt tailored measures and solutions to address the fundamental financing challenges that developing countries face, with particular attention to the least developed countries and small island developing States. One such measure is the adoption of a multidimensional vulnerability index, which we consider to be an utmost priority.

Our history cannot be rewritten or erased. We therefore continue to call for reparatory justice for the unpaid debt resulting from centuries of enslavement

of African people, for the historical crimes of native genocide visited upon the indigenous peoples of this world and for the exploitative legacy of colonialism that has directly resulted in the persistent underdevelopment of Caribbean nations and so many others.

We continue to call for abandoning and destroying all nuclear weapons as the only means of guaranteeing the avoidance of total annihilation of humankind.

We continue to call for the unconditional lifting of the unjust economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on the people of Cuba, and for the full integration of Cuba into the international economic and political system.

We also continue to call for a long-lasting and mutually agreed two-State solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict, which will guarantee Palestinians a permanent homeland and recognize Israel's right to exist in peace and security.

To get the 2030 Agenda back on track, all stakeholders — whether large or small, powerful or otherwise — must embrace the value of multilateralism. Clearly, we are not quite there yet. In this regard, I echo the words of one of Trinidad and Tobago's greatest calypsonians, David Rudder, who in his iconic song "Rally 'round the West Indies", wrote

"Soon we must take a side or be lost in the rubble
In a divided world that don't need islands no more
Are doomed forever to be at somebody's mercy?
Little keys can open up mighty doors".

This world needs little islands. We bring a perspective that is valuable and beneficial and necessary. Trinidad and Tobago continues to offer the point of view of a small, sovereign democratic nation harbouring a big ambition, namely, to unleash the creativity and resourcefulness of our diverse people, especially our youth, to make the most positive contribution to society, community and the world. As a relatively young nation, Trinidad and Tobago's people are our greatest source of power and energy. It can be felt in the rhythm of our beautiful Tassa drums and in the melodies of our national instrument, the steelpan.

Our achievements stand as testimony of what can be achieved when a small nation punches above its weight. Our citizens have served as judges at the ICC and at the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, and we have given the world experts of the calibre of Lennox Fitzroy Ballah and Anthony Amos Lucky. We

have contributed extensively to the work of the United Nations, serving on the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and a range of subsidiary bodies and organs.

Trinidad and Tobago looks forward with enthusiasm and optimism to our next 60 years of membership of the United Nations. We continue to deepen engagement and partnership with our neighbours in the Caribbean and with all members of the international community in order to achieve our common objectives and thereby strengthen international peace and security. As we write the next chapter in our nation's history, I can share with the Assembly that Trinidad and Tobago offers itself to serve as President of the General Assembly during its seventy-eighth session. Being tasked with such a defining role by the Assembly would truly be an honour and responsibility that the Government and the people of Trinidad and Tobago shall embrace with commitment and impartiality. In the best traditions of multilateralism, let us therefore join our strengths for the benefit and upliftment of all humankind. Let us build a truly global community where no one is left behind.

In conclusion, I offer the General Assembly the inspiration found in the words of the national motto of Trinidad and Tobago, which declares: "Together we aspire; together we achieve".

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Thórdís Kolbrún Reykfjörð Gylfadóttir, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland.

Ms. Gylfadóttir (Iceland): I would like to start by congratulating Mr. Csaba Kőrösi on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, for his leadership, as well as those whose daily work is dedicated to the ideals of the United Nations.

We meet in critical times. This Hall, the venue for so many historic events, is in and of itself a testament to some of the ideas that this Organization, one of the most important in world history, is built on. In this Hall, during this session, we are equal. Whether we represent a global super-Power or one of the more than 70 Member States, like mine, with less than 1 million inhabitants, in this Hall we all have the same number of seats at the table, we each have a vote and we all have a voice and the right to let it be heard from this rostrum.

At the hand of the President of the General Assembly, there is a gavel — a simple wooden hammer, an instrument so light and non-threatening that it could hardly be of any use as a weapon. Nevertheless, the person who holds it can take control of the deliberations of the most powerful women and men in the world. The striking of that small hammer against a simple block of wood compels respect for the rules that the Members of the United Nations have agreed to abide by in this Hall. It is a symbol of order. And it is therefore fitting that the inscription on the gavel says "Með lögum skal land byggja", in Icelandic, as it was donated by Iceland to this great Organization. It means that "society shall be built on the pillars of law". It is a quote from an ancient Icelandic text of law, and the next line elaborates with the statement that the land will indeed be desolated if lawlessness or unjust law are allowed to take hold. In the global context, we are all acutely aware, not least the smaller States, that a world not governed by rules will be a world dominated by force.

We meet at a time when a powerful country, a permanent member of the Security Council, has decided to challenge the norms and international laws that have served the world so well since world leaders, with the horrors of two World Wars vivid in their memory, decided to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and the untold sorrow that it brings to humankind. The post-World War order has not prevented problems and conflicts from arising. Mistakes and questionable decisions have been made. The sorrows and horrors of war and conflict have indeed been a part of too many lives in too many parts of the world. But, by and large, wars of territorial expansion have simply not been allowed.

In my part of the world, my generation does not hold memories of the horrors of a global war. We grew up believing that peace among nations can almost be taken for granted. Well, it cannot. However, the global system has provided an answer to the critical questions of how problems are solved. That construct is now under threat, and it is our duty as leaders, not least those of us who are young, to make sure that the fortunes of the past decades do not lead us into dangerous complacency. We must advocate for the multilateral system at every opportunity and convince the peoples of the world that, despite its flaws, it is vastly and completely superior to any other method of resolving issues and disputes between States. Of course, we must continue to reform our organization and make it more fit for purpose and

more representative in order to meet growing and more complicated new challenges. Iceland fully supports the vision of the Secretary-General put forward in *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982) on how we can revitalize our work and strengthen the multilateral system so that it can best serve future generations.

Russia's unlawful and brutal full-scale invasion of Ukraine came as a shock, a rude awakening to how the world might look if the ability to destroy, rather than the capacity to create, is allowed to determine the fate of nations. The absolute and sickening brutality that Russia has shown, as evidenced in newly liberated areas, is beyond comprehension. It represents an absolute breakdown of civilization. Therefore, before I say anything else about world affairs, I will say that, for the sake of humankind, Ukraine must win. Russia's aggression must be defeated, and the crimes perpetrated in its name must be accounted for and punished. The irresponsible words of Russia's President these past few days are a chilling reminder that giving in to bullies and rule-breakers will only encourage more bullying and further rule-breaking. For the sake of humankind, this madness must stop.

The number of people who are faced with food insecurity, poverty and hunger is increasing at a terrifying rate due to the lingering effects of the pandemic and the pandemic response, armed conflict and climate change. The number of people facing acute food insecurity has soared to 345 million this year, with no end in sight. Natural catastrophes linked to climate change are becoming more relentless and severe, as evidenced by the recent flooding in Pakistan and the droughts in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel, for example. Iceland will continue to increase its funding for humanitarian assistance, working primarily with United Nations entities. Iceland is committed to shouldering its responsibility, as demonstrated by our increase in humanitarian and development assistance.

We face a climate crisis that will not go away on its own. It is paramount that all countries make every effort to accelerate our fight towards better climate resilience. Iceland is committed to doing its part and has set ambitious targets of achieving carbon neutrality and full energy conversion no later than 2040. We increased our contribution to climate financing, with a strong focus on a balanced approach to mitigation and adaptation, and we are committed to do more.

There is a public health crisis in many countries. The coronavirus disease pandemic showed how fragile health-care systems really are when tested. This problem will not go away on its own, as the demographic realities of many countries paint quite a serious picture. In many places there is also a mental health crisis. The pandemic exposed many faults in the way we tackle global crises, and we will be dealing with those consequences for a long time. While rich countries were able to vaccinate their entire populations, that protection was denied to the most vulnerable in the poorer regions of the world. Meanwhile, it will be a matter for future historians to judge if the economic sacrifices made during the pandemic were worth the benefits, or if the widespread curtailment of individual liberties that we saw, with increased social isolation, were the wisest response to the crisis.

An English poem published almost 500 years ago says that no man is an island — indeed. But not only is no man an island, no country is an island — not even the countries like Iceland that are actually islands. The decisions made in one part of the world can have great consequences, intended or unintended, across the globe. Of course, that applies in particular to the oceans, which cover 70 per cent of our planet's surface and whose waters do not respect any national boundaries.

For Iceland, sustainable fisheries and a dynamic blue economy are critical. It is our responsibility to ensure the sustainable use and health of our oceans for the benefit of all. Tackling marine pollution is a priority, in particular plastic waste, and we welcome the important steps taken in Nairobi earlier this year in that regard. Allow me also to highlight the renewed spirit that the 2022 United Nations Ocean Conference, in Lisbon, brought us, including increased recognition of the importance of food from the ocean in our food systems and for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Peace.

For 40 years, our constitution of the ocean, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, has served as a solid foundation for international cooperation on everything related to the oceans. It is a prime example of a diplomatic success that has stood the test of time and continues to serve us well. With new environmental challenges, along with increased awareness and scientific knowledge of the importance and vulnerability of the ocean, the time is ripe to conclude negotiations on a new agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity

in areas beyond national jurisdiction. Iceland welcomes the progress made during the negotiations last month and is determined to do its part to reach an agreement.

The role of the United Nations and its institutions in these crises is therefore of the utmost importance. While the current and impending crises we are facing must be dealt with, we must not neglect the Sustainable Development Goals. The year 2030 is fast approaching, yet we are nowhere near the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Peace. Iceland aims to shoulder its responsibility, as demonstrated by the increase in official development assistance.

We must also not give up on our aim of a world free of nuclear weapons. The failure to reach consensus on advancing the implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons — only a month ago, in this very Hall — is further testament to the irresponsible behaviour of the Russian Federation — the lone opponent of the final document and the only State that has lowered the threshold for using nuclear weapons by explicitly threatening to resort to such weapons of mass destruction.

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” The world cannot afford to deny anyone the opportunity to contribute to the solutions that we collectively need. Too widely, we are witnessing an increase in the repression of religious and ethnic minorities, racism, anti-Semitism and violent nationalism. Autocratic tendencies and voices that seek to intensify political polarization are on the rise. Iceland remains committed to countering the regression we have witnessed in the rights of women and girls in too many places around the world. The rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex persons across the world have either never been secured or have regressed.

The values and principles embodied in the United Nations Charter, international law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are not only important in and of themselves; they are absolutely critical if we are to harness the individual creativity, entrepreneurial spirit and innovative mindset that we so desperately need to rely on in our quest for human-made solutions to our human-made problems. Those ideals are another example of how the method of solving problems is a more pressing matter than the resolution of any individual problem. And we know that the answer

to humankind’s challenges lies in the human spirit itself — if it is allowed to live out its truest potential.

The job of leaders is not easy when times require sacrifices. We are all aware of the challenges that open societies face. The freedom of expression means that it is possible to spread lies and false information. That is a real problem that we need to address. Free societies need to become more resilient, with a strong, well-educated and well-informed public being the first and best line of defence against those who seek to manipulate with lies, conspiracy theories and hate-mongering.

However, when we worry about the misuse of the freedom of expression in open societies, let us not forget that the truly terrifying misuse of information is when Governments claim a monopoly on truth. Relentless propaganda and brainwashing by official sources in corrupt Governments with evil intentions can lead to a truly terrifying result. That is what we have seen in Russia, where all forms of public debate and independent thinking have been criminalized. A society where people hesitate to criticize — let alone ridicule — authority, the official truth or the established narrative is not truly free.

For the peoples of the world to be able to find the transformative solutions that the world so desperately needs, people must be able to challenge the status quo. They must be free to express their opinions and debate freely on even the most sensitive issues. They must also be free to create art, even if the art is distasteful. Those are the values that the defenders of Ukraine want to secure for their children. Those are the values that Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya is demanding for the people of Belarus. Those values are being denied to Afghan women and girls under the Taliban regime. Those are the values that do not accept that Mahsa Amini was beaten to death in Iran for wearing a hijab incorrectly.

Let us not forget that the Russian Government is guilty of horrific abuses not only on the international scene. Brave Russians resist to Putin’s system and the thousands who showed up on the streets of Russia earlier this week are all subject to harsh punishments, wrongful imprisonment, persecution and often worse.

The almost 500-year-old short poem by John Donne that I quoted before includes another famous line. As it discusses how interconnected the world was in 1524, it reads: “and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls”, meaning that we should view it as our duty to respond to common challenges, and not look

the other way or wait for others to act. We must answer the call.

Even if the challenges that we face were not created by the younger generations, and they were not created by the poor of the world, all of humankind will nevertheless have to take part in overcoming them. Whether we like it or not, and whether we deserve or not, it falls to the leaders of today and tomorrow to face our common reality. Whether we like it or not, and whether we deserve it or not, we must do that together. We must all answer the call. We must answer the call to stand with Ukraine. We must answer the call to defend the multilateral system. It is also us who must answer the call to defend our nature and fight back against climate change and combat poverty and deprivation. Finally, we must answer the call to defend the rights of individuals and give them the opportunity to contribute to the solutions that are so desperately needed. If we do not, we have failed.

I am grateful for the opportunity to address the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session and to once again be reminded that the possibility for nations to come together and exchange ideas and views in a civilized manner remains the norm in international relations, and that those who break the rules are almost universally condemned. The noble aim of the Organization — to spare the world from the sorrows of war — is perhaps now more relevant than ever before. Order in the world must be restored.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Jean Victor Génés, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of the Republic of Haiti.

Mr. Génés (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to begin by conveying to the President the warm greetings of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Haiti, His Excellency Mr. Ariel Henry, who had to cancel his participation in the general debate at the last minute because of the sociopolitical situation in the country. I therefore have the honour to read out the address that he was to have made from this rostrum.

“I would like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, President of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh ordinary session. I hope that, under his wise leadership, this year’s work will be a complete success. I would also like to commend the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, for his dynamic leadership of the world Organization and his renewed

commitment to the cause of Haiti despite the many challenging problems and other conflicts that affect the world.

“I have the honour today to address this Assembly in the specific context of major challenges that our States repeatedly face, which we must constantly address and find appropriate solutions for the good of humankind. The United Nations, whose mission is to preserve the ideals of international peace and security, is the proper forum in the context of multilateral diplomacy to deal with and overcome those challenges, in accordance with the principles of international law and the values enshrined in its Charter, while respecting the right to self-determination of peoples.

“Global peace and security are at risk. I call on the parties to all the conflicts that are causing disruption and suffering to the citizens of the world to stop the fighting and find negotiated solutions to their differences. There are too many victims, too much destruction, too many consequences for other countries and too much collateral damage. It is imperative to return to respecting the common rules of international law and living together.

“The sharp rise in the cost of basic foodstuffs on the international market is weakening the economies of many countries, especially developing countries, and is pushing hundreds of millions of human beings around the world into instability and food insecurity. The temptation is great for each country to try to monopolize the available resources to provide for its population. We saw the results of such behaviour in the control over vaccines during the coronavirus disease pandemic. In these difficult times, the rule must be solidarity among peoples.

“My country, like many others in the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean and elsewhere, remains highly vulnerable to climate hazards, rising sea levels and increasingly violent and frequent natural disasters. The passage of a single cyclone can wipe out the efforts of decades of hard work and investment. My country has unfortunately experienced devastating earthquakes and cyclones. That is a concern for the countries of the subregion. Within the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), we are looking at this issue.

“It is imperative, indeed urgent, for the international community to demonstrate imagination, selflessness and altruism to commit our planet and our respective countries to a new kind of international relationship. We are all interdependent and the problems of one can quickly have immediate consequences for others. For example, conflicts between two countries or too much poverty in others lead to major migratory movements that can destabilize several neighbouring countries, or even more distant ones.

“In that respect, the theme of the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly, “A watershed moment: transformative solutions to interlocking challenges”, takes on its full meaning in the case of my country. This is an opportunity for me to talk, from the rostrum at the United Nations, about the challenges facing Haiti in the context of an institutional crisis and to speak about my Government’s efforts and responses to address and overcome them.

“I am speaking at a time when my country is going through a multidimensional crisis, whose consequences threaten democracy and the very foundations of the rule of law. It is a sociopolitical crisis, compounded by insecurity, which further exacerbates the country’s situation and undermines the State apparatus. It remains a matter of great concern for my Government and for the international community.

“Haiti is at a crossroads — an extremely difficult, but decisive crossroads for its future. My Government is faced with a rather complex equation that needs to be solved, and that requires the effective support of our partners. My Government’s priorities are to restore security and public order without delay; reach a broader consensus around a political agreement among as many sectors as possible in the short term in order to achieve peaceful governance; create a climate conducive to the holding of general elections as soon as possible, with a view to returning power to elected representatives freely chosen by the Haitian people in order to restore democratic institutions; and address economic and social issues in order to improve the material living conditions of the vast majority of the population.

“On the question of security and the restoration of public order, I will not be telling anyone anything new by saying that the activities of armed gangs create a dangerous environment that is ruining the daily lives of the Haitian population. That is an unacceptable situation, which has reached worrisome dimensions. Clashes among rival gangs have resulted in a high number of victims among the population, forcing them to flee their homes to escape the terror of the bandits.

“In my capacity as Head of the Superior Council of the Haitian National Police, given the complexity of the situation, I took measures to render the police more effective and better prepared to deal with the insecurity. I proceeded, within our means, to strengthen the operational capacities of the police institution and improve the working conditions of police officers. The strengthening of police operations led to some good results, reducing violence by armed gangs, particularly in the metropolitan area. However, much remains to be done to combat and eradicate that scourge.

“That was acknowledged in the Secretary-General’s most recent report (S/2022/481) on the activities of the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH). The report notes that the efforts of the Haitian National Police led to the arrest of several individuals suspected of being involved in kidnappings and murders. The report also recognizes the limitations of the National Police and the lack of capacity and expertise of BINUH, in its current composition, in terms of the number of experts and degree of specialization, to deal with the unprecedented level of crime in the country.

“I want to reaffirm here my determination to put out of action those who want to perpetuate the chaos and prevent the normalization of the situation. My Government, at great sacrifice, made available the necessary resources to provide the National Police with adequate means to effectively carry out its duties. The delivery of armoured vehicles and equipment that it lacks is delayed. I truly regret that the orders placed to better equip the National Police are so late in being delivered. The National Police is capable of doing its job, but it needs strong support from our partners and appropriate training on the ground with the help of partners from the international community in order to put an end to such a situation.

“I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Security Council resolution 2645 (2022), which prohibits the transfer of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition to non-State actors and prevents their trafficking and use for illicit purposes.

“In addition, several Member States have pledged bilateral support to the Haitian National Police, including financial assistance. To that end, a basket fund was set up to assist the National Police in combating gang violence. I commend the Governments that already contributed to that fund, and we encourage other partners to do so. We need their continued solidarity now more than ever. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to our key international partners that made commitments at the various high-level meetings on security in Haiti. I thank them openly on behalf of the Haitian people and Government.

“The circumstances of my accession to the leadership of my country required that I immediately engage in a dialogue with all sectors of Haitian society in order to build sufficient consensus around a political agreement for peaceful and effective governance during the interim period. I am convinced that frank, sincere and inclusive dialogue remains the best formula for achieving a lasting solution to the current crisis.

“Despite the political differences that persist among the political actors, I continue to encourage dialogue. Initiatives involving various segments of society are under way. I hope to see all those efforts succeed in the near future. They primarily concern the restoration of fully operational democratic institutions through free, transparent and inclusive elections, as well as an agreement on a collective approach to constitutional reform.

“With regard to the political dialogue already under way, Haiti is seeking international support to make the process more credible and build confidence among the actors concerned. In that context, I fully support the efforts of the CARICOM and the International Organization of la Francophonie to provide their expertise and engage with us to resolve the crisis, with the discreet yet effective support of the United Nations. The Organization, which has long and extensive experience on the ground in Haiti, must continue to

support the political and electoral process, taking into account the realities on the ground and the need to give priority to national solutions.

“I have heard the public’s calls. I have listened to the demands of my compatriots protesting the high cost of living. It is a constitutional right to protest and make demands in a peaceful manner. However, I strongly condemn the looting and vandalism, as well as the attacks on churches, schools, universities, hospitals, politicians, economic actors, diplomatic missions and international organizations. I also condemn those who ordered, organized and financed it all. Sooner or later, they will have to answer for their crimes — before history and justice.

“The actors in Haiti need to understand that politics must be done differently. That is why I remain available and open to continuing the dialogue with all stakeholders in the country, so that together we can open the path to reconciliation in order to repair the torn social fabric and find a lasting solution to a crisis that is pulling the country towards the abyss. Good governance goes hand in hand with the fight against corruption, smuggling and trafficking of all kinds. My Government has taken steps in that direction. Our budgetary discipline and sound management of public revenues recently led to the establishment of a staff-monitored programme in my country with the help of the International Monetary Fund.

“My Government’s major reform of its customs service is beginning to bear fruit and show results. It has enabled us to enhance monitoring and carry out seizures of weapons, ammunition, counterfeit currency and drugs. In the process, we have seen customs revenues double in record time. Not everyone was happy with that strategy, and we have good reason to believe that the unrest and attempts at destabilization represent the retaliation of fraudsters, whose activity has been reduced considerably.

“The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime—a United Nations programme—has provided us with experts to assist in customs administration throughout the reform. The Office needs more resources in order to be more effective, as well as to contribute to the modernization of our customs

system and ensure the sustainability of the reforms under way.

“With regard to justice and human rights, my Government assumed office in a delicate political context, following the heinous and tragic assassination of President Moïse on 7 July 2021. Justice must be done to him, his family and the Haitian people. I would like to acknowledge the words of President Gustavo Petro Urrego of Colombia who, not long after his address to the General Assembly from this very rostrum (see A/77/PV.4), apologized to the Haitian people for the involvement of Colombian mercenaries in the murder of President Moïse. That is a transnational crime involving the nationals of several countries. Investigating it is difficult and complex. I want to thank all the countries involved for their cooperation.

“Many other crimes and massacres have to date gone unpunished, and murderers are still at large, some of whom have had the audacity to place themselves, weapons in hand, at the head of demonstrations over the past few days. I am also aware of cases of human rights violations against peaceful Haitian citizens, a direct consequence of the climate of insecurity that prevails in the country. Respect for human dignity is the foundation of the fundamental rights of every individual. I am determined to respect, and ensure respect for, international and regional commitments aimed at preserving human rights.

“In that regard, working to end prolonged pretrial detentions, which is a situation to which many detainees awaiting trial are subjected, remains a priority. The fact that it occurs reflects the weakness of our judicial system, which must be reformed. In that regard, I commend the efforts of civil society actors and the personnel of the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti, which continue to promote and contribute to the improved administration of justice in the country.

“Contrary to what some of my opponents have said, I have no desire to stay in power for longer than necessary. My Government’s main focus is to re-establish constitutional order and return the leadership of the country to elected officials who are freely chosen by the Haitian people through free, transparent and inclusive elections. I continue

to encourage dialogue aimed at reaching a political agreement on the holding of free presidential, legislative and local elections as soon as the minimum conditions are established.

“It is essential that the elections be held in a climate of security and social calm. That is an essential condition for ensuring the broadest possible participation of people of a voting age, which is the only way to guarantee the legitimacy of newly elected officials and ensure political stability. I have begun discussions with the various stakeholders on the establishment of the body responsible for organizing the elections, and those discussions should be concluded shortly. That body must be able to quickly prepare a timetable for political actors on both the constitutional referendum and the holding of elections. We would greatly appreciate the technical support and expertise of our usual partners in that process, while of course respecting the freedom and sovereignty of Haitians.

“With regard to economic and social issues, I often say that poverty, precariousness and the lack of future prospects for our young people, *inter alia*, are the root causes of the repeated crises my country is experiencing. It is important that, even in the short time in which my Government has been called upon to assume such responsibilities, we address economic and social issues in order to improve Haitians’ material conditions of existence. A sustainable solution to the phenomenon of insecurity also requires long-term socioeconomic development. There is a direct relationship between the level of crime and the situation of extreme poverty.

“We must also give hope to our young people by creating stable and decent job opportunities so as to offer them alternatives to plan and build their futures without being forced to risk illegal and clandestine travel. Safe and legal migration can be beneficial to countries’ economic development, as stated in the Declaration on Migration and Protection, to which 20 Governments of the region, including Haiti, subscribed on 10 June at the ninth Summit of the Americas.

“In addition to the sociopolitical crisis and the phenomenon of insecurity, natural disasters are a major handicap to Haiti’s development. The most

recent earthquake on 14 August 2021 dealt another blow to the national economy. The economy's poor performance for three consecutive years exposed the country to a serious humanitarian crisis.

"There are 4.9 million people, or 46 per cent of the population, in need of humanitarian assistance this year. With the support of our partners, the Government has been able to assist over 450,000 people in three earthquake-affected areas. Damage and losses caused by the earthquake have been estimated at more than 11 per cent of the country's gross domestic product. We hope that the promises made by our partners at the international donors' conference held under the auspices of the United Nations and the Haitian Government in Port-au-Prince in February will be fulfilled.

"Insecurity, political instability and natural disasters have contributed greatly to the poor performance of the country's economy, which has experienced negative growth for three consecutive years. This non-exhaustive summary of the situation explains the deterioration of the living conditions of the majority of the population, whose social and economic rights are constantly being violated. The Haitian population, especially the vast majority who live in precarious conditions, has the right to a decent life.

"It is true that humanitarian aid has never contributed to a country's development. We must create the conditions to attract investment. It is the responsibility of my Government to work to improve the situation — we are well aware of that fact, and we are working on it.

"Haiti is at a crossroads, a decisive moment in its history. We are working on transformative solutions to the challenges we face. From this rostrum, I wish to join President Biden, who has a solid understanding of the Haitian crisis, in making a solemn appeal to the international community to stand with Haiti and the Haitian people. I also wish to thank all those Heads of State and Government of our great family of nations who have expressed their concern about the situation in my country and have offered Haiti their support. Much remains to be done to emerge from the crisis and move towards the social and economic progress to which the Haitian people aspire."

Address by Mr. Bernard Gomou, Prime Minister and Head of Government of the Republic of Guinea

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Head of Government of the Republic of Guinea.

Mr. Bernard Gomou, Prime Minister and Head of Government of the Republic of Guinea, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Bernard Gomou, Prime Minister and Head of Government of the Republic of Guinea, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Gomou (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): At the outset of my remarks, I wish to convey the warm congratulations of His Excellency Colonel Mamadi Doumbouya, Chair of the National Committee of Reconciliation and Development, President of the Transition, Head of State and Supreme Leader of the Armies of the Republic of Guinea, upon Mr. Csaba Kőrösi's successful election as President of the United Nations General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session. I also wish to pay a well-deserved tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Abdulla Shahid, for the outstanding work accomplished during his mandate.

I wish to express the appreciation and the deep gratitude of the Guinean authorities to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. António Guterres, for the dynamic exercise of his mandate.

The Guinean delegation's participation in this meeting allows us to provide information on the situation in our country and our assessment of the international situation. The Republic of Guinea, after having set the tone for independence in Africa, particularly in francophone countries, has nevertheless experienced dark times in its governance, and unfortunately the regime that ruled during the previous decade was no exception to the rule. That period was marked in particular by an extreme politicization of State bodies, violations of the rule of law and financial mismanagement.

Ultimately, the constitutional change abolishing the two-term limit for the presidency, orchestrated by the previous President, triggered sociopolitical unrest in a nation in which development had already been paralysed, despite the country being on the path to becoming the top producer of bauxite in the world.

Faced with that catastrophic situation and the need to prevent abuses of power, the country's defence and security forces, united within the National Committee for Reconciliation and Development, made a decision. On 5 September 2021, in an expression of solidarity and patriotism, they decided to assume their responsibility to establish a Government of integrity that would benefit the Guinean population, particularly its women and youth, with the aim of achieving inclusive and sustainable development. The population supported those ideals and communicated their expectations during consultations between the National Committee for Reconciliation and Development (CNRD) and the country's stakeholders. A stock-taking exercise was conducted to reach agreement on appropriate solutions to the challenges identified and to revive the country. The goal was an institutional correction to build strong and legitimate institutions that could stand the test of time and human frailty; the re-establishment of the foundations of the State to infuse a sense of ethics into public life and restore the State's authority; a correction aimed at breaking with old practices to reform, modernize and renew the Administration; a gathering of the people as a whole to conduct public affairs in complete transparency; and respect for all commitments at the national and international levels.

In that respect, the following progress was made. The transition charter was drafted and published. A civilian transitional Government was established. The National Transition Council was established. The Court to Repress Economic and Financial Crimes was established to combat corruption and the diversion of public goods and to restore trust between the population and those in power. Looted State property was recovered. All proceedings are based on the full independence of the justice system. That is why the transitional President stressed, when he took power, that justice would be the compass of the life of our nation.

National symposiums, called days of truth and forgiveness, were held, and a report on the subject was submitted on 24 August. On that occasion, the Head of State entrusted me with the task of disseminating the report and following up on the recommendations that emerged from those days.

An inclusive consultation framework was established with the support of technical and financial partners. That is a platform that makes it possible for all the country's stakeholders to exchange views on the conduct of the transition.

To carry out the transition in an inclusive and peaceful manner, the above-mentioned institutions have, in the exercise of their respective mandates, deployed missions within and outside the country to gather the opinions of Guinean citizens on the management of the transition and the country's future. A proposed timeline was therefore agreed by consensus in order to prevent the people of Guinea from falling back into cyclical transitions.

With regard to the length of the transition, I wish to highlight the fact that a key issue of the negotiations between the Republic of Guinea and the Economic Community of West African States was the content of the transition, which covers 10 points, including a general census of the population and housing and an administrative census for civil registry purposes. Those two exercises will take 24 months to complete, and 12 additional months will be necessary for the holding of the three scheduled elections. I cannot stress enough the imperative to conduct a quality census to establish an indisputable electoral registry that will guarantee transparent electoral processes and results that are universally accepted. It should be recalled that the issue of the electoral registry has always been a point of contention and has led to various elections being contested in recent years.

In view of the outcome of the inclusive consultation framework and in line with his policy of outreach, the President of the transition created the framework for inclusive inter-Guinean dialogue, which has been placed under my authority. We hope that reluctant stakeholders will feel a burst of patriotic pride and join the dialogue. There is no obstacle today to inclusive dialogue in Guinea. It is important to note that, without any pressure being exerted, the members of the CNRD, the Government and the National Transition Council decided of their own free will that they would not run for office during the upcoming elections. That decision is constantly reaffirmed.

In terms of justice and human rights, the Guinean Government, in its respect for human rights, in addition to the judicial reforms under way, has made the organization of the trial for the events of 28 September 2009, during which there were victims, a national priority. In that regard, the transitional President decided to organize, after 13 years of waiting, day after day, the opening of the trial in cooperation with the International Criminal Court and the Human Rights Council.

On the economic front, strong measures have been taken to stabilize the macroeconomic framework to strengthen the country's resilience. The development of an interim reference programme for the period from 2022 to 2025 will undoubtedly contribute to improving the living conditions of our people.

We would like to reassure all public and private investors of our Government's determination to guarantee conditions conducive to a better business environment. An overhaul of public finances and reforms in the mining sector, in particular the setting of the index price of bauxite, will make it possible for the population to benefit from the dividends of the growth in that sector. We are committed to ensuring a careful consideration of the problems faced by the people of Guinea in order to find solutions that are sustainable for them — hence the imperative to establish the rule of law and strong institutions for a successful transition, which would be a clear guarantee of Guinea's stability and, by extension, that of the West African subregion. We will also continue to cooperate with all our partners and respect our commitments in a spirit of openness and mutual trust and respect.

The seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly is taking place at a time when the world is facing a number of social, political and economic challenges at the dawn of a new multipolar world order. The theme chosen for this session, "A watershed moment: transformative solutions to interlocking challenges", calls on all countries of the world to show more unity in action and more solidarity in order to resolve the complex challenges generated by the coronavirus disease crisis and the crises affecting regions providing basic food stuffs, agricultural inputs and petroleum products.

In that regard, my country appreciates the Secretary-General's initiatives on international peace and security and the path to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. It also reiterates the need to redouble our efforts to achieve this goal, through preventive diplomacy, respect for human rights and international solidarity in the fight against climate change and debt forgiveness for the least developed countries.

My country shares the concerns of the international community on the issues of peace, security, development and human rights being examined by the United Nations and renews its traditional position on the search for peaceful and consensus solutions to

these issues. This is an opportunity for my delegation to point out that, with regard to peace operations, since 1961, the Republic of Guinea has deployed and continues to deploy military contingents as well as police and gendarmerie personnel in various peace missions throughout the world. It is on the strength of all this experience that the President of Guinea, Colonel Mamadi Doumbouya, an avowed pan-Africanist, has decided to deploy, in addition to the Guinean contingent in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali operating in Kidal, Mali since 2013, an additional contingent to replace that of Benin, whose mandate expires in 2023. Furthermore, my country reiterates its commitment and insists on the fight against climate change and irregular migration.

We are convinced that the United Nations remains indispensable to our world. However, it needs to be reformed in order to be fairer, more inclusive and better able to respond to the legitimate aspirations of the world's peoples. It must adapt to the realities of the world, meet the many challenges facing humankind and maintain its central role in global governance. In this context, the Republic of Guinea attaches importance to the implementation of the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration, which underpin the African Common Position, as declared by His Excellency Mr. Macky Sall, President of Senegal and Chairperson of the African Union, on Security Council reform.

The Republic of Guinea has adopted the same perspective as the United Nations in terms of inclusive dialogue, including with the Economic Community of West African States, being the guiding principle for our transition, strengthening the rule of law and promoting human rights and accountability with a view to mending a weakened national fabric. On behalf of the Guinean people, we thank our partners, in particular the United Nations system and bilateral and multilateral donors, for their support in this process.

Finally, my country reiterates its support for multilateralism, multilingualism and the revitalization of United Nations bodies, which are yet another asset for an international cooperation that is mutual, beneficial, inclusive and supportive of humankind and sustainable development, which is so much sought after and desired by the Member States. May God bless Guinea and the Guinean people. May God bless our planet.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Head

of the Government of the Republic of Guinea for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Bernard Gomou, Prime Minister and Head of the Government of the Republic of Guinea, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Reem Bint Ebrahim Al Hashimy, Minister of State for International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates.

Ms. Al Hashimy (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid for his outstanding management of the work of the General Assembly at its previous session. I would also like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Csaba Kőrösi on his assumption of the presidency of the Assembly at this session, and I wish him every success.

At the threshold of a new era for the world order, the United Arab Emirates has chosen to embrace peace, recovery and prosperity within an open global system based on a robust network of international relations providing new tracks for joint cooperation in the fields of economics, sustainable development, advanced technology and scientific research. That is the approach adopted by my country in the implementation of its foreign policy, which governs our bilateral relations and multilateral engagements in general and is guiding us throughout our current membership in the Security Council.

We are well aware, however, of the magnitude of the significant challenges before us today, as well as the increasing level of polarization that looms over the international system. That is the result of a growing number of crises and new conflict hotspots around the world, together with a dangerous escalation in the activities of armed groups while people around the world are suffering immensely from food and climate crises. Those challenges not only threaten the gains made by humankind, but they also have a severe impact on poor and developing countries and their ability to meet the needs of their peoples.

Such issues call into question the effectiveness of the current international order. However, it is that very system, which was built on the ruins of the Second World War, that has significantly contributed to strengthened international security and stability. What we need today is to restore confidence in the existing international

system and the legitimacy of its institutions through enhancing its efficiency and building its capabilities to address the current crises and overcome the existential challenges of the twenty-first century. The United Arab Emirates believes that, together, all the countries present in this Hall, with the requisite determination, can achieve those ends by combining our capabilities to chart a better future for our peoples. Accordingly, I would like to emphasize a number of issues that demand our attention in the coming period.

Recent developments underscore the need to respect international law, in particular, the United Nations Charter. That law must be applied consistently without double standards or selectivity, which is imperative for achieving stability and security in our international order — an order based on respect for the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of States. In that context, we reiterate our demand for an end to Iran's occupation of the three United Arab Emirates islands — Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa — whose United Arab Emirates sovereignty has been proven by history and international law. Despite the sincere calls of my country to peacefully resolve this conflict over the past five decades, we note that Iran has not responded. However, we will never relent in voicing our legitimate right over those islands, whether through direct negotiations or through the International Court of Justice.

We must spare no effort to overcome the fatigue that has become the most obvious characteristic of current international approaches to addressing crises. We need to find permanent, comprehensive and fair solutions to the escalating armed conflicts around the world and to address the repercussions of turmoil on the international scene. Therefore, the next stage requires us to adopt innovative solutions in order to enhance the effectiveness of our international system and enable countries and regions with conflicts to play a constructive role in addressing the challenges of our era.

For decades, the Arab world and African continent have been hit hardest by crises. As a direct result, we have learned difficult yet critical lessons. We must prioritize diplomatic solutions, dialogue and de-escalation in order to ease tensions, prevent new conflicts from emerging and combat extremist ideologies.

The recent positive developments in our region aimed at building bridges are prominent examples of

overcoming previous differences and forging new partnerships based on cooperation in various fields and supporting critical sectors such as health, education and industry, as well as strengthening the role of women.

We stress our firm position on the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the agreed international terms of reference. We welcome the affirmation by the Prime Minister of the State of Israel in his statement from this rostrum regarding support for the vision of the two-State solution (see A/77/PV.8).

We also look forward to advancing all political processes in our region and paving pathways to peace. However, that should be complemented by strengthening the united international position that rejects interference in the internal affairs of Arab countries. That type of interference undermines conflict resolution, fuels extremism and terrorism and constitutes a flagrant violation of the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of States.

In the light of the increasing frequency of crises, it becomes imperative to enhance the role of regional and international organizations by holding consultations and providing them with the necessary tools, resources and expertise in order to enable them to effectively respond to current challenges. Regional organizations are more familiar with local contexts and better positioned to support mediation efforts. We have seen that repeatedly, including through the efforts of the African Union, whose initiatives we applaud and support.

As we all know, the maintenance of international peace and security requires a world free of weapons of mass destruction, particularly in the Middle East and the Korean peninsula. It also requires promoting dialogue to reduce tensions and to address regional and international concerns in that regard.

It is impossible to speak of a secure and stable international order in the absence of a firm international position rejecting terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and committed to holding the perpetrators and financiers of terrorism accountable. Recently we have seen an increase in the flow of weapons and fighters of different backgrounds into conflict zones, in addition to the emergence of groups with high combat and military capabilities. Those fighters subsequently return to their countries of origin without having mechanisms to control them. In

addition, the situation becomes increasingly dangerous owing to terrorists' use of missiles and drones to launch cross-border attacks.

Those developments reflect the evolving nature of terrorism and require efforts to prevent conflict zones from becoming a safe haven for terrorists and to update and develop means of deterrence and adopt international rules and regulations that prevent terrorists from obtaining advanced weapons and technology. That threat manifested itself clearly in the Houthi terrorist group's heinous and hostile attacks earlier this year against the capital of my country, Abu Dhabi, as well as against the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. At the same time, other terrorist groups, such as Da'esh, Al-Qaida, and Al-Shabaab, seek to develop their capabilities and reorganize their ranks, which directly threaten the gains made as a result of international cooperation in the war against terrorism.

As Governments, we must lead our people by example by establishing the values of tolerance and peaceful coexistence in the face of increasing attempts to spread hate speech around the world. In addition, and in the light of humankind's shared destiny, it is imperative that we acknowledge the need for joint action. We must harness our shared capabilities and energy to implement comprehensive solutions and responses that rise to the level of the existential challenges that we face today and are not limited to a specific country or region.

There is no clearer example of that than the implications of climate change. People around the world are exposed to devastating floods, heat waves and drought, all of which exacerbate humanitarian crises and security threats, especially in areas most vulnerable to climate change. All those facts confirm that the fate of our planet is at stake. We must therefore forge partnerships, promote joint action and commit to supporting climate action by adopting the renewable energy agenda, providing adequate funding for climate action and supporting developing countries in building resilient communities.

It has become clear that investing in renewable energy means investing in the economy, international peace and security and future generations. In that regard, we must take advantage of available opportunities to create practical, rational and thoughtful solutions to the climate crisis, including during the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United

Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in the sisterly Arab Republic of Egypt in November. We urge all Member States to actively engage in that meeting. While my country prepares to host the twenty-eighth session next year, we are working to build partnerships, ensure inclusivity and focus on areas in which we can achieve meaningful results to address the phenomenon of climate change.

Furthermore, focusing on climate change will relieve the food crisis around the world. The Agricultural Innovation Mission for Climate, launched by the United Arab Emirates in cooperation with the United States, aims to improve food production and reduce hunger levels around the world. Simultaneously, we must intensify food assistance to all peoples and ensure the continued flow of global food supplies, while also looking for practical ways to secure supply chains in the light of the current geopolitical divisions.

Despite the gravity of the current challenges and the importance of addressing them, we must not disregard the need to ensure long-term stability and prosperity. In that regard, my country is building a diversified, knowledge-based economy that relies on scientific and technological progress as well as peaceful and secure communities. Two years after Abraham Accords, several initiatives took place this year to promote regional integration and strengthen cooperation in the development and economic fields

across our region. We are witnessing today the rise of a community for progress in the Middle East, which will bolster joint cooperation with regard to the major global priorities.

In young people we see the best ability to mobilize such efforts, as demonstrated by their resilience and innovation in the face of the current crises, as well as their unparalleled passion to connect with their peers around the world and find sustainable solutions to global challenges. We will therefore not give up on the potential of young people or our investment in them to ensure that they remain pillars and leaders of the future. We also believe that the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in various fields contributes to advancing societies, thereby ensuring their stability now and in the future.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates reiterates that it will continue its approach to humanitarian, diplomatic and development support for all peoples affected by crises and disasters, regardless of their religion, ethnicity, political affiliation or culture. We will continue to work with all friends and partners to build the capabilities and capacities of Governments and peoples across all fields for the universal common good. That approach remains the beacon of our efforts throughout all forums.

The meeting rose at 8 p.m.