



General Assembly

Seventy-second session

16th plenary meeting
Friday, 22 September 2017, 12 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Lajčák (Slovakia)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Sauer (Finland),
Vice-President, took the Chair.*

The meeting was called to order at noon.

Agenda item 8 (continued)

General debate

**Address by Mr. Allen Michael Chastanet,
Prime Minister and Minister for Finance,
Economic Growth, Job Creation, External
Affairs and the Public Service of Saint Lucia**

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Growth, Job Creation, External Affairs and the Public Service of Saint Lucia.

Mr. Allen Michael Chastanet, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Growth, Job Creation, External Affairs and the Public Service of Saint Lucia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Allen Michael Chastanet, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Growth, Job Creation, External Affairs and the Public Service of Saint Lucia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Chastanet (Saint Lucia): Saint Lucia congratulates Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and assures him of the full support and cooperation of our delegation during his tenure.

We thank his predecessor, His Excellency Ambassador Peter Thomson of Fiji, for his able stewardship of the Assembly during the past year.

For small island States like my own in the Caribbean region, the promise of the United Nations is being tested today more than ever. The world is experiencing extraordinary changes at a breathtaking pace — changes that are reshaping the way we live, the way we work, our planet and the very nature of peace and security.

I arrived in New York earlier this week after a tour of the devastation wrought by Hurricane Irma on islands in the Caribbean, and for the entire week I have been engaged in discussions focused on the region's recovery efforts. I have also watched, from afar and with a heavy heart, further destruction to my region — with Hurricane Maria's crushing blow to the sister islands of Dominica and Puerto Rico, claiming many lives and saddling those islands with hundreds of millions — if not billions — in damage.

I have also listened in dismay to the silence of many, and the weak acknowledgement by others, regarding the crisis in our region. It has awakened in me the fear that we may be on our own to chart a path forward for our region. While some continue to doubt and deny the assessments of science, it is impossible to avoid the facts of climate change. In less than a month Dominica, Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Cuba, the British Virgin Islands, Anguilla, the Dominican Republic, Saint Bart, Saint John, Saint Thomas, the Turks and Caicos, Sint Maarten, and Saint Martin have

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all fallen victim to the ravages of the hurricanes, which have left death and carnage in their wake. I can also add Florida and Texas. The impact has been without discrimination.

Let us acknowledge the fact that small island developing States have repeatedly warned the international community that a failure to respond adequately to climate change would betray our children and condemn future generations to certain doom. I dare say that we do not have the luxury to be silent on that front anymore. We must act now. The effect of natural disasters does not have a diplomatic solution. What is needed is tangible action. The future is now, and the challenges are profound. What is fast becoming the new normal is the intensification of extreme weather events, which demands from us real solutions in real time. No longer can we depend on the old mechanisms with their dense bureaucracies that delay or limit a nation's ability to safeguard its citizens during a crisis and slow the rebuilding effort.

I remind all here that Saint Lucia, along with most of our sister States of the Caribbean Community, is anchored at the heart of hurricane alley, with our people on the front line, and all too often we are the first to endure the ravages of Mother Nature's fury when the storms come off the Atlantic Ocean. Today, as we look to the world for leadership and partnership, we thank France, China and Germany for their continued leadership on climate-change issues. The Government and the people of Saint Lucia offer their most sincere condolences and whatever support that we can to those in need.

The ties that bind our peoples run deep; the pain of one is the pain of all. We ask that the global community follow that ethos. We never forget that we are one global ecosystem that demands that we all be our brother's keeper. Our Nobel Laureate, Sir Derek Walcott, has spoken to the sense of responsibility to one's neighbour that is rooted in our cultural DNA and the imperative of helping, not out of a sense of duty but out of a sense of community. That was exemplified by Mr. Orlando Smith, the Premier of the British Virgin Islands, as Dominica faced the imminent threat of Hurricane Maria. Mr. Smith, whose own island had already been brutalized by Hurricane Irma, offered his unwavering support to the Prime Minister of Dominica, Mr. Skerrit. Even in our destitution, we in the Caribbean open our hearts and our means to those in need.

I pause here to share our condolences to others in our hemisphere, notably Mexico, which has long been of support to us, but now faces a mounting death toll from the earthquakes that have struck that country.

I stand here and ask that we revisit many of our lofty goals, as we see the lack of equity that is at the heart of all of our discussions and seek to address it. Multilateral discussions on development, resilience and the sustainable development of our countries should be grounded in what is equitable and just. We must acknowledge that the United Nations will never succeed when only a few prosper and many, whose number is growing, do not. How can we, when the progress we make is fragile and unequal? How can we, when we indulge our differences to the exclusion of the work we must do together? How can we, when inequity remains the driving force of our international system, propelling some forward and leaving far too many behind? How can we, as leaders, talk about sustainable development goals, when the people of our countries continue to struggle just to survive?

Fundamentally, our global reality is an increasingly integrated one. No one is spared the perils of the convulsions in our world. Our economies, natural environment and people are all connected. We in this hemisphere are not impervious to the impact of the wars and the starvation that are taking place in the Middle East and Africa, the persecution that is taking place in Asia and the rise of nationalistic tendencies taking place in Europe. We are stacked in a global row of dominoes, where a disruptive event in one country begets similar or worse events in neighbouring countries. It spreads, impacting us all and testing our social, political and economic systems.

We live in a world of imperfect choices — choices between clinging to the old systems that do not serve us any longer and rethinking new ways to secure a better future. We must not turn away from the hard choices. We must not fear change. Our challenges are real, serious and numerous. We, the United Nations, must get better at the policies that strike at the root of the problem and ground our 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in one word: equity.

I must repeat a point stated earlier. In a time when inequity pervades every aspect of our international order, what hope do we have of successfully implementing the SDGs when the deck is stacked against many of our people? How do we ensure that all citizens have their

most basic needs satisfied, such as food on their plate, when we struggle from crisis to crisis? We must agree that there should be a minimum standard of living for each and every one of our citizens. We must maintain basic standards that provide adequate health care, education, housing, security and economic opportunity for every citizen of our countries. Without establishing such standards, we cannot engage in any meaningful discussion or plan of action.

That is what will stem the flow of migration. It will offer opportunities to be productive members of society. It will dull the urge that drives some to crime and others into the arms of groups that foment evil. Any overhaul of the United Nations system must be founded on the principle of equity. Without equity as a foundation, Sustainable Development Goals are dreams that go away when we open our eyes to the constant state of crisis confronting us.

I take this moment to assure the Secretary-General of my country's support for the effort needed to reform the Organization in order to address the new era and its responsibilities. At the heart of any reform of such a nature, we, nations both large and small, must play our role in protecting the rights of individuals everywhere. In the face of mounting challenges, we must seek the courage and wisdom to act boldly and collectively and revise outmoded programmes that are so glaringly inadequate for the needs of our time.

We have to harness new ideas and technologies and invest in the individuals and the generations who will build our future. We must see more in terms of outcomes and less in terms of bureaucracy. We must come here to make a difference and be able to return to our homes ready to deliver on the promises that we have made. The mobilization of the leadership of the world to come here will be all for naught if we do not deliver. We must come here to make a difference and not get carried away by name-calling. Rather, we must ground our discourse in mutual respect and a commitment to deliver to those we lead.

We must understand and acknowledge that when times change, so must we. Our claims to fidelity to the words of the Charter of the United Nations mean nothing if we do not create new responses to old and new challenges. We must be a source of hope for the poor, the sick and the marginalized so that we can ensure peace and a decent life for all our citizens on a sustainable planet. That requires that we constantly

advance the principles of the Charter. The commitments that we make to each other must be honoured, which will, in turn, strengthen our mutual trust.

Within and beyond the Organization, we must look more honestly at how we categorize each other and how the development and donor community rank us. How can we call a country a middle-income country, based solely on its gross domestic product per capita, when we know that its location renders it vulnerable to natural disasters that have the capacity to bring it and its people to their knees?

It is unconscionable to see our peers forced to beg and plead for goodwill and to have to depend on commercial loan rates to rebuild broken economies, all because the traditional system is so unyielding, archaic and sometimes heartless in its design. That model must change to one that affords small and developing nations the real opportunity to survive and thrive in an increasingly cold global environment. The model has to change in order to afford all of us the opportunity to build back the infrastructure that can secure our futures and those of our people and have it be stronger and more resilient.

In closing, the people of my region are resilient. We are a people and a region committed to working together in order to rebuild stronger and better. In challenging times, we do not hesitate to commit our scarce resources to one another. We truly are our brothers' keepers.

We have also been very fortunate to receive support from friends near and far as we seek to make a better world for those who will follow us. In our case, friendships like those that we have with Taiwan, Cuba and Mexico, among others, allow us to envision a positive future. I ask that, while we may come from different places and with different priorities, we must never forget that we share a common future — a future that will be secure only if we meet the threats, challenges and opportunities that confront us together, with greater cooperation and understanding.

Our generation's task is to engage in a common effort towards a common purpose as we answer the call of our times. Let it be said by our children's children that we were tested and that we did not fail, but rather that we delivered to future generations a better world. We have that obligation to our people and to our world.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Growth, Job Creation, External Affairs and the Public Service of Saint Lucia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Allen Michael Chastanet, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic Growth, Job Creation, External Affairs and the Public Service of Saint Lucia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Bruno Eduardo Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (spoke in Spanish): Allow me to reiterate to the Secretary-General Cuba's support for his work at the helm of the United Nations and as a guarantor and advocate of international peace.

I would like to express my deep condolences to the relatives of the deceased and the victims of hurricanes Irma and Maria, as well as our readiness to increase our cooperation, to the extent of our modest possibilities, with the brother peoples and the Governments of Dominica and Antigua and Barbuda, which are small Caribbean islands that suffered terrible devastation, along with the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Saint Martin, Sint Maarten, the Virgin Islands and Anguilla. I call upon the international community to give the highest priority to the situation and to mobilize resources to assist the small Caribbean island States and territories that have suffered such devastation.

We would like to convey Cuba's warmest feelings of solidarity to the people and the Government of Mexico, particularly the victims and their relatives who were affected by earthquakes, and we reiterate our readiness to assist their people and support their recovery efforts with our modest efforts.

We also want to express our sorrow to the people of the United States, as well as our heartfelt condolences to the relatives of the deceased and to all victims of Hurricane Irma.

I speak on behalf of the people of Cuba, who are currently carrying out a colossal effort to recover from the severe damage caused to housing, agriculture, the power system and other services by Hurricane Irma. Despite the all-encompassing preventive measures — including the evacuation of more than 1.7 million people — and the full cooperation of all citizens, we suffered the loss of 10 people.

The grave damage to services, the loss of social and personal goods, and the hardships endured by families that spent many hours without electricity and/or water only strengthened the unity and solidarity of our noble and heroic people. The moving scenes of rescuers saving a girl and returning her to her mother, a little boy picking up a bust of José Martí from the rubble, students helping families they had never met before, soldiers from the Armed Forces and the Ministry of the Interior doing the toughest jobs, and local leaders heading the most difficult tasks have become all too familiar.

During a visit to the area that suffered the most severe devastation, President Raúl Castro issued an appeal that read:

“These have been difficult days for our people, who, in just a few hours, have seen how what was built with great effort could be destroyed by a devastating hurricane. The images received during the past few hours are powerful, as is the spirit of resilience and victory of our people, who come back fighting in the face of every adversity.”

On behalf of the Government and the people of Cuba, I sincerely appreciate the genuine expressions of solidarity and affection expressed by numerous Governments, parliaments, international organizations and representatives of civil society. I would like to convey my profound gratitude for the numerous offers of assistance that we have received.

I still have vivid and emotional memories of the imposing presence of Fidel Castro Ruz, Commander-in-Chief of the Cuban Revolution, and the great validity of the ideas he expressed to the General Assembly. On behalf of our people and Government, I would like to express our gratitude for the expressions of respect, affection and admiration that we have received from so many.

Last Tuesday, President Donald Trump came here to convince us that he proposes to promote the prosperity of nations and persons. But in the real world the wealth possessed by eight men together is equivalent to the wealth shared by the 3.6 billion human beings who make up the poorest half of humanity. In terms of turnover, 69 of the 100 biggest entities in the world are transnational companies, not States. The turnover of the world's 10 biggest corporations is higher than the public revenues earned by 180 countries combined. Seven hundred million people live in extreme poverty, and 21 million

are victims of forced labour. In 2015, 5.9 million children died of preventable or curable diseases before reaching the age of 5. A total of 758 million adults are still illiterate.

Eight hundred and fifteen million people suffer from chronic hunger — tens of millions more than in 2015. Two billion are undernourished. Even if the precarious decreasing growth rate of recent years rebounds, 653 million persons will continue to face hunger by the year 2030. Given current trends, we will not be able to eradicate hunger by the year 2050.

There are 22.5 million refugees. Humanitarian tragedies associated with migrant flows are worsening and increasing amid the clearly unjust current international economic and political order. The construction of walls and barriers, as well as the laws and measures adopted to prevent the waves of refugees and migrants, have proved to be cruel and ineffective. There is a proliferation of exclusive and xenophobic policies that violate the human rights of millions of people and fail to solve the problems of underdevelopment, poverty and armed conflicts — the main causes of migration and refugee claims.

Military expenditures have increased to \$1.7 trillion. That reality contradicts those who claim that there are not enough resources to eradicate poverty. Despite all the rhetoric, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development lacks the means for its implementation, owing to the egoism and lack of political will of the United States and other industrialized countries.

What is the miraculous solution that President Donald Trump recommends to us in the absence of the financial flows of the Marshall Plan? Who will contribute the resources for that? How can that be reconciled with the “America First” idea advanced by President Reagan decades ago and by Trump today? The President of the United States ignores and distorts history and believes that a chimera is a goal to be pursued. The production and consumption patterns of capitalism are unsustainable and irrational and will inexorably lead to the destruction of the environment and the end of the human species.

Can anyone forget about the consequences of colonialism, slavery, neocolonialism and imperialism? Could the several decades of bloody military dictatorships in Latin America be referred to as an example of successful capitalism? Does anyone know of any form of neoliberal capitalism that has benefited

us all, as opposed to that which destroyed the Latin American economies in the 1980s?

It is urgent and essential for the United Nations to work to establish a new participatory, democratic, equitable and inclusive international economic order, as well as a new financial architecture. They must take into account the needs and particularities of developing countries and the asymmetries that exist in world trade and finance as a result of centuries of exploitation and plundering. Industrialized countries have the moral obligation, the historical responsibility and sufficient financial and technological means to do that.

However, not even the rich will be able to enjoy the forecast prosperity if climate change is not stopped. Cuba regrets the decision taken by the Government of the United States, which has historically been the principal greenhouse-gas-emitting country on the planet, to withdraw that country from the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. In 2016, and for the third consecutive year, the records for the average global temperature increase have been broken, which confirms that climate change is a threat to the survival of humankind and the sustainable development of our peoples. We reiterate our solidarity with the small island developing States, especially those in the Caribbean and the Pacific, which are the most affected by climate change and for whom we request just, special and differentiated treatment. We also support the priority attention accorded to the needs of sub-Saharan Africa.

The United States Government has come here to tell us that, in addition to prosperity, the other two “beautiful pillars” of the international order are sovereignty and security. We all share the common responsibility of preserving the existence of human beings in the face of nuclear weapons. An important contribution to the achievement of that goal was the historic adoption and signing, under the auspices of the Assembly, of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which bans the existence, use and threat of use of such weapons, which have the capacity to annihilate the human species.

The United States has strongly opposed that treaty. It announced that it will invest \$700 billion in military expenditures, and it is developing an extremely aggressive nuclear and military doctrine, based on the threat of the use of force and the use of force. NATO member States have violated international peace and security and international law by promoting

military interventions and unconventional wars against sovereign States. As the Commander-in-Chief of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro Ruz, pointed out:

“When this philosophy of despoilment disappears, the philosophy of war will have disappeared” (*A/PV.872, para. 188*).

The unlawful imposition of unilateral coercive measures and the use of financial, judicial, cultural and communication tools to destabilize Governments and deny peoples their right to self-determination have become commonplace. I believe that the militarization and the covert use of information and communication technologies to attack other States have increased, while several developed countries strongly oppose the adoption of international treaties that would regulate cooperation aimed at securing a safe cyberspace.

The President of the United States manipulates the concepts of sovereignty and security to his exclusive benefit and to the detriment of all others, including his allies. The attempt to resort to military threat and force in order to stop the irreversible global trend towards multipolarization and polycentrism will seriously jeopardize international peace and security, which should be defended and preserved through international efforts. The principles of sovereign equality, respect for the territorial integrity of States and non-interference in their internal affairs should be respected. The Charter of the United Nations and international law do not allow for reinterpretation.

United Nations reform should pursue the principal goal of responding to the pressing needs of people and the great disadvantaged majority. Multilateralism should be protected and reinforced so as to resist the imperial interests of domination and hegemony. The democratization of the Security Council, both in terms of its composition and its working methods, is a most urgent task. It is also essential to strengthen the General Assembly and recover the functions that have been usurped.

Patriotism, which was invoked in the statement of the United States, is a perversion of humanism and of love and loyalty to the homeland and the enrichment and defence of national and universal culture. It embodies an exceptionalist and supremacist vision of ignorant intolerance in the face of diverse political, economic, social and cultural models.

In developed countries, the loss of the legitimacy of political systems and parties has worsened, and voter abstention is on the rise. Legal and illegal corruption is spreading. There is the extreme case of the so-called special interests, or corporate payments, in exchange for benefits, in the country that spends the highest amount of money in electoral campaigns and where, paradoxically, a candidate with the lowest number of popular votes can be elected or be entitled to govern with the negligible support of voters.

There has been an increasing and unheard-of use of science and technology to exercise hegemony, mutilate national cultures and manipulate human behaviour, as in the case of so-called big data, or psychometry, used for political and advertising purposes. Seven Western consortiums keep strict control over what is being read, seen or heard on the planet. Technologies are being monopolized. The governance of digital networks is dictatorial and discriminatory, and despite appearances the digital divide between rich and poor countries is increasing. Opportunities and the rights of youth, migrants and workers are being curtailed, and their human rights are being openly and systematically violated.

The day before yesterday, the United States Vice-President, Michael Pence, ridiculously ignorant of the functions of the Security Council and attempting to establish new prerogatives, said that the Security Council should modify the composition and methods of the Human Rights Council, which “does not deserve its name” because “a clear majority of the Human Rights Council’s members fail to meet even the most basic human rights standards”.

I assume that Mr. Pence is not including his own country in that category, which in fact deserves to be included because of its pattern of the systematic violations of human rights, such as the use of torture, arbitrary detentions and imprisonment, as occurs in the Guantanamo naval base, the assassination of African Americans by law-enforcement agents, the killing of innocent civilians by its troops, xenophobia and repression against immigrants, including minors, and its limited compliance with international instruments.

We reaffirm our strongest condemnation of all forms and manifestations of terrorism, and we reject the application of double standards in combating them.

The urgent quest for a just and lasting solution to the conflict in the Middle East is based on the exercise

of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to the existence of a free and independent State within the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The situation in the Western Sahara requires an effort, in accordance with United Nations resolutions, to ensure the Saharan people's ability to exercise self-determination and to ensure respect for their legitimate right to live in peace in their own territory.

Cuba reaffirms its support for the quest for a peaceful and negotiated solution to the war in Syria, without any foreign interference and with full respect for its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Threats to international peace and security stemming from the expansion of NATO's presence along the borders of Russia are on the rise. We continue to reject the unilateral and unjust sanctions imposed against that country.

We demand respect for the so-called nuclear agreement signed with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

We reject the threat to totally destroy the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, home to 25 million human beings. War is not an option on the Korean peninsula; it would threaten the existence of hundreds of millions of people in that area and in neighbouring countries, and it would lead to a nuclear conflagration of unpredictable consequences. Only through dialogue and negotiations will it be possible to achieve a lasting political solution, which should take into account the legitimate concerns of all parties involved. We support the total denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, without foreign interference, with full respect for the sovereign equality and territorial integrity of the States concerned and strict adherence to the principle of the non-use or threat of use of force.

Today, new threats are looming over peace and stability in Latin America and the Caribbean, in open disrespect for the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, signed in Havana by the Heads of State and Government of our region in January 2014 at the Second Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

We reiterate the statement made on 14 July by President Raúl Modesto Castro Ruz concerning the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela:

“The aggression and putschist violence against Venezuela harms all of ‘Our America’ and only serves the interests of those set on dividing us in order to exercise their control over our peoples, unconcerned about causing conflicts of incalculable consequence in our region, such as those we are seeing in various parts of the world.

“Today, we have warned that those attempting to overthrow the Bolivarian and Chavista revolution through unconstitutional, violent and putschist methods will shoulder a serious responsibility in the eyes of history.”

We strongly reject the military threats against Venezuela, including the United States executive order that designates Venezuela a threat to the national security of the United States, and the unilateral, unjust and arbitrary sanctions applied against it.

We reiterate our unwavering solidarity with the Bolivarian and Chavista people and Government, and with its civic-military union led by Constitutional President Nicolás Maduro Moros. We denounce and condemn the Nicaraguan Investment Conditionality Act initiative promoted in the United States Congress as part of an interventionist approach intended to impose an economic embargo against the people and the Government of Nicaragua, to whom we reiterate our support.

We express our solidarity with former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, victim of political persecution intended to prevent him, by means of judicial disqualification, from running for direct elections. Lula, President Dilma Rousseff, the Workers' Party and the Brazilian people will always find Cuba on their side.

We reaffirm our historic commitment to the free determination and independence of the people of Puerto Rico.

We support the legitimate claim of Argentina for sovereignty over the Malvinas and the South Sandwich and South Georgia Islands.

Cuba will continue to contribute to the extent possible, and at the request of the parties involved, to efforts to achieve a stable and lasting peace in Colombia.

We will uphold our commitment to share our modest achievements with the peoples of the South, including the efforts of the 40,000 aid workers deployed in 64

countries, who are fighting today for the life and health of human beings.

On 16 June, the President of the United States, Mr. Donald Trump, announced the new Cuba policy of his Administration, which represents a setback in bilateral relations and undermines the basis established two years ago for a move towards a new type of relationship between our two countries that was characterized by respect and equality. The United States Government has decided to tighten the economic, commercial and financial embargo by imposing new obstacles to the already limited possibilities that the United States business community has to trade with and invest in Cuba as well as additional restrictions on United States citizens wishing to travel to our country.

Those decisions have ignored the support on the part of broad sectors in the United States, including the majority of Cuban émigrés, for the lifting of the blockade and the normalization of relations. They only serve the interests of a group of individuals of Cuban origin based in south Florida, which is an increasingly isolated minority group that insists on harming Cuba and its people for having decided to defend, at all costs, its right to be free, independent and sovereign. Today, we reiterate our condemnation of the measures aimed at tightening the blockade and reaffirm that any strategy intended to destroy the Cuban Revolution will fail. Likewise, we reject the manipulation of the human rights issue against Cuba, which has much to be proud of and has no need for lessons from the United States or from anyone else.

We wish to express our strongest condemnation of the disrespectful, offensive and interventionist statement against Cuba and the Cuban Government made three days ago from this rostrum by President Donald Trump (see A/72/PV.3). We remind him that the United States, where flagrant human rights violations raising deep concerns in the international community are being committed, does not have the slightest moral authority to judge my country. We reaffirm that Cuba will never accept any preconditions or impositions, nor will it ever renounce any of its principles.

With regard to the alleged incidents that have allegedly affected United States diplomatic officials in Havana, we categorically affirm that the Cuban Government rigorously and seriously abides by its obligations under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations to ensure the protection and integrity of all

diplomats without exception, including those of the United States, and that Cuba has never perpetrated nor will it ever perpetrate actions of that sort, nor has it allowed nor will it ever allow its territory to be used by third parties for such purposes.

Based on the preliminary results of the investigation, carried out with priority and with a high technical component, following instructions issued from the highest level of our Government, the Cuban authorities, having taken into account data provided by United States authorities, have not found any evidence whatsoever that could confirm the cause or the origin of the health disorders referred by United States diplomats and their families. The investigation seeking to clarify that issue is ongoing, and in order to be able to reach a conclusion, it will be crucial to be able to count on the cooperation of the United States authorities. It would be unfortunate if a matter of that nature were to become politicized.

As has been expressed by Cuban President Raúl Castro Ruz, Cuba is willing to continue negotiating all pending bilateral issues with the United States, on the basis of equality and absolute respect for the sovereignty and independence of our country. We will maintain a respectful dialogue and cooperation in areas of common interest with the United States Government. Cuba and the United States can cooperate and coexist, respecting our differences and promoting everything that benefits both countries and peoples, but no one should expect Cuba to make concessions that affect its sovereignty and independence.

The Cuban people will not cease their demand for the lifting and total elimination of the economic, commercial and financial blockade and will continue to denounce the strengthening of that policy. On November 1, Cuba will once again present to the General Assembly the annual draft resolution entitled “Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba”.

While inequality — the opulence of a few and the marginalization of many — is growing in today’s world, the Cuban people will keep up its struggle to achieve the most just society possible. We will continue to steadily advance down the path of revolutionary transformation that has been sovereignly chosen by all Cubans to further improve our socialism.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Khemais Jhinaoui, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tunisia.

Mr. Jhinaoui (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, and wish him every success in his tasks.

I thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his efforts to advance the lofty United Nations principles by promoting the pivotal role of our Organization, maintaining international peace and security, and promoting sustainable development.

I cannot fail to commend the efforts of Mr. Peter Thomson as President of the General Assembly at its previous session, particularly with regard to the implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The theme of this session, “Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet”, is in line with the priorities of the Tunisian Government for the coming period. In that respect, Tunisia has, since 2011, made great strides towards democratization and in promoting the rule of law and State institutions. That includes adopting a Constitution that promotes the values of democracy, human rights, women’s rights and youth rights. We also held our first fair and transparent legislative and presidential elections in 2014.

As a young democracy, we are pursuing measures aimed at strengthening constitutional institutions and structural reforms at all levels, in accordance with a clear vision and consensus that include all components of Tunisian society. Achieving development, fighting corruption, promoting investment and reducing unemployment, as well as promoting good governance, while focusing at the same time on combating the scourge of terrorism and extremism, have presented many challenges on which we have focused our national capacities. We are confident that brotherly and friendly countries and the United Nations will continue supporting us in our efforts. We appreciate in particular the significant pledges made by many parties to support development in Tunisia at the International Conference to Support Tunisia’s Economic, Social and Sustainable Development, Tunisia 2020, organized in Tunisia on 29 and 30 November 2016.

I note that Tunisia, in its fight against terrorism, has had to redirect a significant portion of its resources originally allocated to development. We are confronting that scourge by doubling the budget for our military and security forces. Thanks to the unity of the Tunisian people — a society that is premised on justice, equality and openness — and their commitment to democracy, we have been able to combat terrorism and foil its schemes. That has enabled us to restore security and stability and improve many economic indicators in our country.

Tunisia today is secure, like the majority of the countries in the world. It is endeavouring to promote its young democracy and its economy through significant reforms aimed at establishing a better business environment by attracting foreign investment and promoting tourism, as well as by seeking comprehensive development and meeting the needs and demands of our young people with regard to employment and a decent life.

The scourge of terrorism derives its strength from proliferating hotbeds of tension, conflict and violent extremism. That exacerbates the challenges facing the international community’s fight against that menace, which excludes no region and recognizes no borders. Terrorism is also linked to all types of organized crime, the influx of refugees and migrants, human trafficking and the consequent large-scale violations of universal human rights.

Combating terrorism requires international cooperation and comprehensive and inclusive strategic partnership. We are confident that boosting the economy and development of our country, while working to ensure social peace and security, requires the active engagement of the international community at large in supporting our implementation of all the ambitious goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular those that address environmental challenges, while mitigating the impacts of climate change on the economies of developing countries and the livelihoods of their people. We have therefore mainstreamed those goals in our national development plan for 2016-2020, and we have embarked upon implementing them in collaboration with the competent international agencies and regional structures — in particular the African Union, given the nexus between those goals and Agenda 2063 for African development.

We are also preparing to release our first national report on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals for the consideration of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. In that respect, we would like to reiterate that it is important to take into account the priorities and specificities of each region and country when dealing with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Optimal utilization of all international and regional mechanisms, especially those dedicated to the financing of development, technology transfer and capacity-building, would support the efforts of African nations to achieve steady economic growth and sustainable development so as to put an end to poverty, marginalization and epidemics and work towards peaceful, just, inclusive and prosperous African communities.

We believe that environmental considerations are important in achieving sustainable development for all the world's nations. We therefore signed the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in 2015, and we voluntarily committed to reducing our gas emissions by 41 per cent by 2030. Our commitment has also been demonstrated by the nationally determined contribution devoted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Tunisia upholds the principles of international legitimacy and supports all efforts aimed at maintaining international peace and security, in particular by strengthening our contributions to United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations. Therefore, efforts to promote the principles of justice and equality in international relations would benefit from improvements in the effectiveness of the United Nations work and its organs, in particular the Security Council, so that the Organization can better assume its crucial responsibility of maintaining international peace and security.

The security and stability of the Arab region is an integral part of the world's stability. We therefore call for immediate political settlements of issues in our region, in particular the Palestine issue, which requires a comprehensive solution that brings justice to the Palestinian people, ends their suffering and enables them to recover their legitimate historical rights — especially the establishment of an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with international parameters and the Arab Peace Initiative.

I seize this opportunity to reiterate our ongoing concern over the Libyan crisis, and we reiterate Tunisia's commitment to stand by our Libyan brethren and urge them to bridge their differences and swiftly find a comprehensive political settlement to the crisis there. Within the framework of our mediation efforts among Libyan protagonists, our President Essebsi launched an initiative in December 2016 for a comprehensive political settlement of the Libyan crisis. Tunisia, believing in the role of neighbouring countries, has been keen to ensure positive engagement with Algeria and Egypt on the issue, so that we join our efforts to help the Libyans to end their differences and proceed with the political solutions sponsored by the United Nations.

It is important to unite international efforts on the Libyan situation, so that we can ensure progress on the political path and achieve convergence among Libyans under the supervision of the United Nations and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Libya. That is especially true given that our Organization is the guarantor for implementing commitments and is capable of adapting any amended agreement in accordance with Security Council resolutions. We seek in that connection to prevent any vacuum, which could worsen the anarchy and instability.

We commend the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ghassan Salamé, and we support the road map that he put forward on the holding of the High-level Meeting on Libya on 20 September and his call for the Dialogue Committee — comprising the Libyan House of Representatives and the State High Council — to launch a new round of talks in Tunisia within the framework of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya and, under his supervision, to introduce the consensual amendments to the Libyan Political Agreement of Skhirat. We hope that that step will act as a springboard for reconciliation and consensus in Libya.

We reiterate today that it is important to reach a comprehensive and immediate political settlement to the situation in Syria, and we urge the Syrian parties to give priority to the vital interests of their nation with a view to reaching a consensus that preserves the unity and territorial integrity of Syria, putting an end to the catastrophic humanitarian tragedy endured by the Syrian people and addressing the serious ramifications of that conflict at the regional and international levels.

We are gravely concerned at the exacerbation of the security and humanitarian situation in Yemen. That calls for redoubling international efforts to push forward political consultations aimed at finding a solution to that crisis in a manner that preserves the territorial integrity and resilience of the country, and puts an end to the humanitarian suffering endured by the Yemeni people. With regard to Iraq, we commend the fact that that brotherly country, in collaboration with the international coalition against Da'esh, has made significant progress in its war against terror. We reiterate Tunisia's solidarity with Iraq in combating that serious scourge.

Regarding the situation of the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, we reiterate our condemnation of the flagrant violations of human rights against that minority. We appeal to the international community to shoulder its responsibilities and to swiftly intervene to provide the necessary protection, ensure access to humanitarian assistance and save those people from the atrocities that they have been enduring.

We are confronted with many serious challenges and issues, such as hotbeds of tension, conflicts, combating terrorism and extremists, addressing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, supporting human rights, implementing development goals and reforming the United Nations, among other crucial matters. The role of the United Nations is, thus, central in finding solutions to deal with those challenges. There is also a great responsibility that we need to bear in confronting the challenges caused by international transformations, for which we need to shore up our efforts. On this occasion, I would like to commend the efforts of the Secretary-General to develop the United Nations system, particularly with regard to the repositioning of the United Nations development system and the promotion of a preventive approach in resolving international conflicts and maintaining international peace and security.

In conclusion, we reiterate Tunisia's resolve to continue to contribute actively to international action aimed at finding sound approaches and solutions to those difficult issues in a manner that preserves human dignity and enables the nations of the world to devote their efforts and resources to achieve comprehensive and sustainable development in a world of tolerance and intercultural solidarity among nations.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand.

Mr. Pramudwinai (Thailand): I believe that I speak on behalf of everyone here when I say that our hearts and prayers are with everyone in the small States of the Caribbean, now facing the devastating effects of a series of hurricanes. Our deepest sympathy and prayers are also with the people of Mexico, who have suffered immensely from the deadly earthquake on Tuesday.

Over the past few days, the words "we the peoples" have been echoed in the General Assembly many times. Thailand shares the view of Secretary-General Guterres and many Member States that we need to focus more on people and less on bureaucracy. The United Nations must be less about debates and more about actions that truly impact changes on the ground.

In the General Assembly this year, it is gratifying to hear world leaders focusing on people. The life, survival and prosperity of a nation depend on the quality of life of its people. When people live decent lives, they thrive and, in turn, nations and our planet prosper. On the other hand, if people still have to struggle in their daily lives, have nothing to eat, nowhere to sleep, no schooling or health-care access, then the advancement of nations would be an unrealizable ambition. That is why we must focus on people.

In fact, we have long focused on the people of Thailand. Our late King, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, told us to listen to the people and to learn from them. He said that those living in the community know best about their conditions and needs. Development must not be top-down but bottom-up and must vary according to specific contexts. His Majesty laid the groundwork for the people-centred approach through the "sufficiency economy" philosophy, which stresses self-development and places emphasis on everyone's potential to mould their own future and live in harmony with nature. When each person can contribute meaningfully to his or her community, the life of the nation will surely be good.

Based on the sufficiency economy philosophy, the Royal Thai Government envisions the lives of our people and the life of our nation as stable, prosperous and sustainable. Our key national frameworks, namely, the 2017 Constitution, the 20-year National Strategy Framework and the twelfth National Economic and Social Development Plan, have all been formulated to

focus on people first. Thailand has stepped up efforts to put in place a decentralized area-based development policy to empower those who will be affected and create a space to appreciate local wisdom and knowledge.

At the same time, Thailand is seeking to utilize science, technology and innovation to strengthen human capabilities and foster an enabling environment in our development paradigm. Currently, we aim to build a value-based economy under the Thailand 4.0 policy. The value-based economy encompasses various types of economy: a circular economy, in which resources are utilized efficiently and in an environmentally friendly manner; a distributive economy, where development is inclusive; and an innovative economy, where growth springs from ideas and knowledge. The value-based economy under the Thailand 4.0 policy requires human wisdom even more than high technology. That is why we are focusing on our people and putting human life-cycle development as our priority.

Since 2002, we have successfully embarked upon our universal health coverage system. That system represents an investment in our people and our future. At present, 99.87 per cent of the population enjoys some kind of health coverage. The Universal Health Coverage system has helped prevent more than 100,000 households from falling into poverty over the past decade. As Chair of the Foreign Policy and Global Health Initiative, Thailand will present a draft resolution at this session of the General Assembly to mark 12 December as World Universal Health Coverage Day. We hope to receive support from Member States in that regard.

Another recent example of how we focus on people is our national strategy to eliminate HIV/AIDS. By 2030, Thailand aims to reduce new HIV infections, lower the number of HIV/AIDS-related deaths and reduce discrimination related to HIV and gender. We are also proud to say that in 2016 the World Health Organization recognized Thailand as the first country in Asia, and the second country in the world, to eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis.

The world is going through a critical time and is facing a series of shared challenges, such as extremism, terrorism, ongoing conflicts and irregular migration, along with environmental degradation, climate change and natural disasters. Another grave concern is the nuclear threat, which is looming over us and feels more real now than ever before. It is at times like

this that humankind is truly being tested. Two days ago Thailand signed and deposited our instrument of ratification to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We are proud to be among the first countries to do so. We wish to call on others to do the same. By doing so, we are sending a message to our children and grandchildren that we care.

Thailand shares the international community's grave concern about the situation on the Korean peninsula, where we encourage all parties to find a peaceful solution, along with the full implementation of Security Council resolutions.

Thailand is also deeply concerned about ongoing violence and conflicts elsewhere in the world, including the situation in Rakhine state, which recently caused hundreds of thousands of people to leave their homes. We are fully aware of the complexities of humanitarian situations, which cannot be solved overnight. Those situations call for long-term political and socioeconomic solutions. Sustaining peace and sustaining development must go hand in hand.

In order to enable people to have decent lives, we must build inclusive societies where everyone has a sense of belonging and feels that his/her voice is heard and their views taken into consideration. We must empower the most vulnerable in our societies — those suffering in poverty, women, children and persons with disabilities — and leave no one behind. Their rights and dignity must be respected. They must be protected by law and have equal access to justice. Only then can we realize a truly inclusive society with sustainable peace and development.

To sum up, my delegation would like to leave the Assembly with three key messages.

First, multilateralism and the United Nations in particular, has a great role to play in fostering the quality of our people's lives. The United Nations must take transformative steps to live up to today's reality and expectations. Development programmes, financial and technical assistance, peace operations, security sanctions, resource mobilization, and environmental protection programmes must all truly enhance the quality of life of the people. The work of the United Nations must have real impact on the ground. The United Nations must be able to identify challenges based on the needs and particular situations of each country, and must be able to adapt its work in a responsive and flexible manner. It must also address the root cause of

each problem, especially by addressing structural gaps and focusing more on prevention rather than on curing symptoms.

We look forward to hearing more details on the United Nations development system reform and how it would impact action on the ground, enhance resource efficiency and synergize the work of regional commissions and United Nations country teams. We also wish to hear about innovative resource mobilization and enhanced partnerships with all stakeholders, especially the private sector, academia and civil society. Partnerships, particularly with science, technology and innovation communities, would bring about the transformative push that is required in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Secondly, we must learn to mobilize each of our diverse individual strengths. We must ensure that local wisdom and community knowledge are appreciated and integrated into our efforts. We must create a culture of partnerships that is based on mutual trust and respect. For our part, Thailand recognizes and appreciates the diversity of strengths of each stakeholder. We value the sharing of knowledge and experiences. It is in that spirit that Thailand has launched the sufficiency economy philosophy for the SDGs partnership so as to encourage the sharing of the sufficiency economy philosophy in advancing the SDGs. As part of our efforts to promote South-South cooperation, last year Thailand supported the reopening of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation for Asia and the Pacific in Thailand and has provided human resources to the Office.

Last but not least, focusing on people is not only about working on their external conditions. The first step of a successful transformation is to work on their mindsets, especially those of children and youth. We must not forget them, and their voices must be heard — the future belongs to them. Therefore, we must ensure that children today grow up to become citizens of the world with global mindsets.

Everyone can be an agent of change. If people have a decent life and feel content with what they have, eventually they will want to give and share. Our role as Governments is to support people, create an environment that enables them to be able to give and share, and let people drive change.

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

Ms. Bishop (Australia): The United Nations was founded in response to the horrors of the Second World War. Nations resolved to prevent a repeat of that catastrophic global conflict. Over the decades since, we have worked together to build an international rules-based order that ensures that disputes can be resolved peacefully and the interests of less powerful nations can be protected from the overt or coercive pressure of more powerful States. That order dictates how nations should behave towards each other. It has supported and enabled the greatest economic expansion in human history. There have been times over the past seven decades when the rules-based order has been under pressure. We are now in a time when the challenges to that order are increasing.

The Security Council is the custodian of international peace and security. Yet the authority of the Council is being challenged, undermined and even ignored. The most egregious example of that is North Korea. The regime of Kim Jong Un is openly defying the Security Council. Its illegal nuclear and missile programmes violate multiple Security Council resolutions. The security of millions of people is at risk as a result of North Korea's refusal to abide by international laws and norms.

The International Monitoring System of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty confirms that North Korea is the only State that is currently testing nuclear weapons, and the only State to do so this century. The Security Council has responded with tough new economic sanctions. It is crucial that all Member States, especially the five permanent members, which have a particular responsibility, strictly implement those sanctions so as to compel North Korea to abandon its illegal programmes.

The authority of the Council must be defended and upheld. Australia will play its part in helping to resolve that crisis. We have already put in place a range of autonomous sanctions beyond those mandated by the Security Council. We will explore further options should North Korea continue its flagrant disregard of the views of the international community, as upheld by the Security Council.

The rules-based order is also being challenged by non-State actors, terrorists and violent extremists. Global terrorism and the extreme Islamist ideologies driving it must be confronted and defeated. Many nations, including Australia, have suffered terrorist

attacks. We can most effectively combat and defeat terrorism if we work together, sharing our knowledge and resources. Our work has continued this week at meetings of the Global Counterterrorism Forum and the United States-led coalition against Da'esh.

The use of chemical weapons presents another serious threat to the rules-based order. We know that they were used in Syria. Australia supports the work of the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in identifying those who deployed such appalling illegal weapons. That work must continue. Australia chairs the 42-member Australia Group, which works to prevent the spread of chemical and biological weapons.

Our rules-based order has been supported by institutions and, over the decades, United Nations peacekeepers have become the defining image of the United Nations response to conflict and security threats. Fifteen peacekeeping missions are currently deployed across four continents. Often, they are the only authority preventing civil breakdown and lawlessness in countries that are already suffering from conflict, poverty and despair.

Australia has been a long-term supporter of United Nations peacekeeping. Last week in Canberra, we commemorated the seventieth anniversary of the first such mission, noting that, in 1947, Australia was the first nation to deploy into the field military observers to monitor the ceasefire in the then Dutch East Indies. We have contributed to 20 more United Nations peacekeeping missions.

We support the work that is under way to ensure that United Nations peacekeepers are better trained, better equipped, more effective and act with greater integrity. Peacekeepers operate in dangerous and unpredictable environments and represent one of the most important global investments in peace and security.

Australia welcomes the new Secretary-General, who has committed to reforming the United Nations in order to make it more effective as the defender and upholder of the rules-based order. Australia fully supports Secretary-General Guterres in that endeavour. The United Nations must focus on conflict prevention, as that is more effective than dealing with the tragic consequences of conflict. United Nations management systems must be made more efficient and accountable. There must be more women in senior positions. In order

to achieve reform, Secretary-General Guterres needs the full support of Member States.

The standing of the United Nations is maximized when we work together for the common good. Recent successes prove that to be true, such as the global Arms Trade Treaty, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sustainable Development Goals. If we are to meet the challenges of our age, we must be guided by a spirit of cooperation and compromise. Central to our task is achieving sustainable and inclusive development. The United Nations must play a more effective and agile role.

The development system of the United Nations should be more focused on sustainable economic development aimed at providing employment opportunities and facilitating partnerships with the private sector. Economic development and security are interlinked. One cannot be achieved without the other. Each country has to find its own model for prosperity and stability. However, there are many lessons to be learned from other nations, and much support is available for nations that are seeking to establish regulatory frameworks, particularly with respect to supporting private investment that helps economies to grow and generates employment. Economic resilience can also be undermined by natural and man-made disasters.

With the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Declaration and the World Humanitarian Summit's grand bargain, there is a blueprint for global action that addresses the problems that can be addressed only by working together on the challenges we face, which do not respect national borders. That includes climate change, diseases, including malaria, the management of our precious water resources, and modern slavery. It is an unpalatable truth that forced labour, child labour, human trafficking and modern slavery are rampant in the world. Australia has strongly committed to working with the international community to urgently address those egregious crimes. Last month, Australia and Indonesia jointly launched the world's first regional business-Government partnership aimed at addressing modern slavery, and we have continued our advocacy on that issue with other nations this week. We will end such abhorrent practices. I want to pay tribute to Andrew, Nicola and Grace Forest for starting the Walk Free Foundation and inspiring our work.

Australia is a strong supporter of the Paris Agreement, and here at the United Nations we have voiced our support, specifically on risk mitigation for coral reefs, which are among the most valuable environments on our planet. They support more biodiversity than almost any other ecosystem, are vital to the world's fisheries, protect our coastlines and generate significant tourist revenue. Coral reefs sequester four times more carbon than forests and are a vital element in our global efforts to reduce emissions. Worldwide, more than 30 coral reefs are listed as World Heritage Sites, and 29 are under stress. As the custodians of the Great Barrier Reef and with our extensive experience in reef management, we seek to bring our expertise to other locations. We hope to serve on the World Heritage Committee next year.

Australia has worked with other countries on each of those issues during the past week. We are mindful that no matter how much we work on building strong, resilient societies, crises will still occur. Australia has been a strong contributor to relief efforts in Iraq and Syria, as well as in South Sudan, Somalia and Yemen, where there are significant numbers of displaced people at increasing risk of famine. Australia is also supporting those displaced by conflict in Rakhine state, Myanmar. We are contributing to funding life-saving food for up to 300,000 people.

Australia also seeks to serve, for the first time, on the Human Rights Council, starting in 2018. I am grateful for the strong support from so many countries for our candidacy. If elected, we will be a principled and pragmatic member of the Council. Australia would be the first nation from the South-West Pacific on the Council. We will promote an agenda relevant both to our region and to the planet. Empowering women and girls so that they can reach their full potential lifts a country's productivity and underpins stability. We will support the freedom of expression. The number of journalists and human rights defenders detained, abused or killed each year should be of grave concern to us all. We will support good governance and strong democratic institutions. Similarly, we will promote strong, independent national human rights institutions in order to raise awareness of human rights, address violations and hold to account those responsible for abuses.

Australia is proud to be the home of the world's oldest continuous culture, and we will strive to advance the human rights of indigenous peoples around the

globe. Australia reaffirms its commitment to the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We will also work with other members to enhance the effectiveness of the Human Rights Council, so that its work can make a meaningful difference to the lives of individuals around the world. The Council must remain relevant to the broader international agenda, while making a contribution to building stable, prosperous and compassionate societies.

We all strive for an environment in which countries can grow and prosper and in which individuals can aspire to a life unburdened by the threat of violence, an environment driven by a shared vision of peace, compassion and community. For its part, Australia will work with others to protect an international order that ensures that all States can pursue their interests securely and supports cooperative responses to global challenges.

The United Nations can become an even more powerful force for stability in an uncertain world. It can live up to the ideals and universal principles on which it was founded. The people of our world expect the Organization to inspire the best in human nature, and that is our duty.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Péter Szijjártó, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary.

Mr. Szijjártó (Hungary): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly. For those of us from Central Europe, it is highly significant that a Central European candidate was elected to such an important position. It shows that Central Europe is a strong region that has attained success through policies that are based on rationality and common sense. His election, along with the fact that Poland was elected to the Security Council as a non-permanent member, serves as proof that the Visegrad Group is strong and capable of speaking with a loud, united voice.

Now, as we convene at the General Assembly, it is evident that we are living in extremely challenging times. Economic, political, defence and military relations are changing extremely rapidly. Coming from Central Europe, I would like to highlight three very important issues from our perspective: migration and the threat of terrorism, the relationship between the East and the West, and the rights of national minorities.

Europe currently finds itself on the front lines of significant global changes. Since the end of the Cold War, Europe has never had to face as many challenges as it does now. As a result of the migration crisis, Europe is facing the most serious threat of terrorism in its history. The European Union is facing its toughest challenges since its foundation. Western Europe used to be the most secure, safest and most peaceful region globally. A couple of years ago, we watched the news on television about terror in the Middle East, and we were sure that such events would surely never take place in Europe. To the contrary, the fear of terrorist attacks has become a part of everyday life. Between 2015 and 2017, Europe suffered 30 major terror attacks, which took 300 innocent lives. Churches, airports, beaches and concerts have become sites for execution, which can take place within a couple of seconds. That development is a direct consequence of two phenomena.

The first is the massive influx of illegal migrants. During the past two and a half years, 1.5 million illegal migrants have entered European Union territory without any kind of control, checks or regulation. That has definitely provided an opportunity for terrorist organizations to take advantage of that flow and send their terrorists and fighters to the European continent.

Secondly — and here I will surely offend some by breaking taboos and challenging dogma — we must admit that the earlier social integration procedures in the Western part of Europe have failed. Some of the attempts to integrate migrants who arrived in Europe previously have been totally unsuccessful and, in many places in Western Europe, parallel societies have been constructed.

We must honestly admit that we are shocked, after the barbaric terrorist attacks in Europe, the massive violations of national and international laws and regulations, and the loss of thousands of lives on the Mediterranean Sea and elsewhere, that there are still leaders of international organizations and representatives of powerful countries who claim forcefully that migration is a favourable phenomenon that is to be encouraged. That is extremely irresponsible and unacceptable behaviour. Encouraging waves of migrants endangers tens of thousands of people — there are those who risk their lives to reach a place where they think they might find a better way of life, and those who are put at risk of becoming victims of the terrorists who seek to take advantage of those migratory waves.

Hungary's position is quite clear. All States have the fundamental right and responsibility to ensure the security of their own people, all States have the fundamental right and responsibility to protect their own borders, and all States have the fundamental right and responsibility to make decisions on their own — including as to whom they allow to enter their territory and whom they do not.

Hungary has made enormous efforts to comply with its international obligations. We have spent €800 million on protecting not only ourselves and the border of Hungary but also the external border of the European Union and the external border of the Schengen Area. We have also built physical infrastructure and mobilized human resources. Again, altogether that has cost €800 million.

I must remind the Assembly that this is not the first time in history that we have had to protect the Western part of Europe as well as ourselves. But of course, as we are a Christian country, we accept our responsibility to help those in need. Hungary's principle is to provide help when it is needed, and that is why we help and assist Christian communities in the Middle East so that they can stay or return once conflicts are over.

We have spent almost €2 million rebuilding 200 houses in the Iraqi township of Telsqof, making it possible for more than 1,300 people to return. We have spent €4 million on building schools, covering medical expenses and ensuring that Christian communities are able to stay and flourish. We offer 100 scholarships on an annual basis to youngsters whose families are being persecuted in the region.

We understand that the rights of people should be restored when they have been violated. We must work to help people stay as close to their homes as possible, and we have to help people return to their homes as soon as possible. We call for more support for countries that have taken care of refugees from war-torn areas, such as Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and the Kurdish region of Iraq. However, we are all aware that a complete and definitive solution for the migration crisis can emerge only by tackling the root causes, which includes overcoming military conflicts beyond Europe's borders and eliminating terrorist organizations.

I would like to turn now to my second point, namely, the relationship between the East and the West. I represent a small Central European country, and we are all aware that major international conflicts can

be resolved through agreements between the super-Powers of the West and the East. This is why pragmatic cooperation between East and West is necessary if we wish to eliminate the most dangerous terrorist groups worldwide. Hungary is therefore proud to contribute 200 troops to the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham.

Cooperation between the East and the West is necessary if we wish to overcome the war and create peace in Syria, thereby making it possible for people to return and in order to decrease the migratory pressure on Europe. It is necessary to create peace in Libya and ensure stability there for the future. It is also necessary to address the extraordinary challenge posed by a communist dictator who is threatening the world with a nuclear programme, violating all possible international regulations and values.

We Central Europeans read this from history: whenever there is a conflict between the East and the West, Central Europe will certainly lose out. We do not want to be losers anymore. That is why we call for a better and more pragmatic relationship and cooperation between the East and the West based on mutual trust and respect for each other and for international law.

In my third, and final, point from a Central European angle, I would like to highlight the importance of the rights of national minorities, which is a highly sensitive issue for Hungary, as millions of Hungarians live outside our borders. The rights of national minorities are among the most highly protected in international relations. There is an international consensus — we believe, at least — that the rights of national minorities must be respected by all members of the international community, and discrimination against any kind of minority is simply unacceptable.

One of the most important elements of national minority rights is the right to use and receive education in one's mother tongue. Why is that so important? Because the best way to create difficulties for national minorities is to prohibit them from using their native language by law. It is not an accident that language rights are also enshrined in a variety of guiding documents and international standards on the matter, such as the 1992 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, the three principles on language and education of UNESCO and the various recommendations of the United Nations

Forum on Minority Issues on the implementation of the Declaration. Those documents describe a similar basic approach for State authorities to meet their human rights obligations involving language.

Unfortunately, the Parliament of Ukraine adopted a new law on education on 5 September. That new law drastically curbs the already acquired level of minority rights in education and language use. The new law takes away the right to receive an education in their mother tongue from all children older than 10. It is a shame that we are seeing that kind of legislation adopted in the twenty-first century in a country that is making great efforts to make quick progress on the economic integration process of its Association Agreement with the European Union. That law clearly discriminates against the minorities living in Ukraine.

Article 1 of the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education clearly states that,

“[t]he term ‘discrimination’ includes any distinction, exclusion, limitation or preference which, being based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, economic condition or birth, has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing equality of treatment in education”.

It is obvious that the new Ukrainian law on education clearly violates those United Nations conventions and international norms. We therefore stress that it would establish a very dangerous precedent if the United Nations were not to act and remained silent in that regard. We strongly urge the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to begin investigating the new Ukrainian law on education and use all the means at his disposal to address the serious violations of fundamental minority rights brought on by the new Ukrainian law.

Hungary will always stand by Hungarian communities, regardless where they live in the world, and we will never let them down. That is our obligation. That is our responsibility, and it comes from our heart, as well.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Abdelkader Messahel, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Algeria.

Mr. Messahel (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express my warmest congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Miroslav

Lajčák on his election to the presidency to the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. We assure him of my country's full support. I would also like to express my appreciation and gratitude to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson, Foreign Minister of Fiji. I thank him for the excellent work that he performed during the past session

At each session of the General Assembly, we repeat our diagnosis of the miserable state of the world. Unfortunately, this session is no exception, given that it is being held in a context in which protracted crises continue, new and bloody conflicts are breaking out and hotspots are waiting for settlements that are harder to achieve than ever before. Our time is also marked by the fragile ecological balance of the planet owing to all of the damage that it has incurred. We add to that extreme poverty, backwardness and diseases that continue to kill millions, as well as threats spreading across borders, such as terrorism and the associated organized crime, which directly affect the safety and stability of our countries.

The challenges that we face cannot be underestimated, nor can they be ignored. In every situation, we must not doubt our ability to confront those challenges and overcome them. In the words of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, which he shared with the General Assembly as President at its twenty-ninth session in 1974:

“[o]ur responsibility is less to turn our backs on reality than, rather, to face up to it rigorously and vigilantly”. (*A/PV.2233, para. 27*)

Despite the fact that the United Nations can be improved in more than one area, it remains the only crucial means at nations' disposal and has been described by President Bouteflika as representing a monument of harmony and solidarity among all the nations of the world.

I would like to express our satisfaction with the topic of this year's session, namely, “Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet”, which powerfully encapsulates the challenges that we are facing today. In confronting numerous crises, hotspots and the terrible human tragedies that they leave in their wake, we can only question our collective conscience over the deep-rooted causes that have led to the failure of the collective security system that was designed by the founding fathers of our Organization as a fortress that would forever protect future generations from the scourge of war. We must

therefore work in unison to reform the Organization so that it can fully shoulder the responsibilities that it was established to assume, whether in terms of preventing conflict, promoting peace or respecting human rights, or in realizing the right to self-determination.

The time has come to implement a fundamental reform for the Organization, including its structure and management, and, in the reform process, we must primarily focus on the Security Council as a starting point. We must remedy the historical injustice embodied in the absence of African representation in both categories of membership of that organ. Membership must be expanded so that it represents the important actors in the international arena.

I believe that there is also growing consensus on the need to revitalize and strengthen the authority of the General Assembly, which for the first time has interacted directly and innovatively in the process of the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General, thereby confirming its trust in him and his legitimacy to fulfil his mandate. That selection was unanimous. The appointment of Mr. Guterres, whose personal and professional characteristics we admire, was unanimous, which confirms the appropriateness of the new procedure.

Algeria remains committed to certain basic foreign-policy principles that are derived from the Charter of the United Nations, namely, respect for the independence and territorial integrity of States, non-intervention in other countries' internal affairs, the peaceful settlement of conflicts and the right to self-determination. Algeria will continue to act in accordance with those principles and will always support political rather than military solutions in the settlement of conflicts, be they in Syria, Yemen, Mali, Libya or elsewhere.

With regard to two of its neighbours, Algeria is convinced that the people of Mali must choose dialogue and negotiations if the country is to overcome the difficulties that lie in the path of implementing the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. In order for Libyans to preserve their unity and territorial integrity, it is crucial that they settle their differences under the supervision of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, with the support of neighbouring countries. On the other hand, we in Algeria believe that the Western Sahara issue is a matter of decolonization, which falls within the purview of the United Nations. Accordingly, we believe that there can be no viable

solution if the people of Western Sahara are not able to exercise their legitimate right to self-determination. In that regard, Algeria hopes that the appointment of Mr. Horst Köhler as United Nations Personal Envoy for Western Sahara will help to bring about the resumption of negotiations between the two sides to the conflict, namely, the Kingdom of Morocco and Frente Polisario, and assist in moving the country along the path towards decolonization, in accordance with the principles of international legitimacy and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Algeria would like once again to express its regret over the inability of the international community to put an end to Israel's occupation of Arab territories. We reiterate our support for the Palestinian people as they strive to regain their legitimate national rights and establish their independent State with Al-Quds as its capital.

Combating terrorism and violent extremism, which is a source of terrorism, unfortunately remains a priority on the international agenda. The terrorist threat has been far-reaching in nature and continues to be so. We are reminded of that fact by the tragedies caused by the numerous terrorist attacks in the Middle East and Sahel regions, not to mention the long list of such attacks perpetrated this year in other parts of the world. Extremism is spreading at an ever-faster rate owing to the emergence of the Internet and social networking sites. The Organization's strategy for combating violent extremism must therefore take that reality into account. It must also prompt countries to combat the spread of Islamophobia at the individual and collective levels.

We also note that the repatriation of foreign terrorist fighters requires the international community to mobilize greater efforts to counter the dangerous threats that they bring back to their countries of origin. Algeria is fully aware of the dangers of terrorism and transborder organized crime in its immediate vicinity. Algeria maintains the highest degree of caution internally and on its borders, thereby enhancing its commitment to combating those phenomena at the regional and international levels.

Algeria's experiences have been recorded in two published collections, one of which pertains to democracy and the role of national reconciliation in combating terrorism and violent extremism. The evolving nature of migration, be it legal or illegal, will inevitably offer opportunities to benefit our economies

and societies. However, some forms of migration cause extreme harm to those involved, as well as to the countries connected with the phenomenon.

By virtue of its geographical location, Algeria is at the forefront in dealing with unregulated migration. In the past, Algeria was a country of origin and a transit country, but today Algeria is a destination country for such human flows. As a result, it understands the complex nature of the issue. We believe that it is important to continue to work together to find comprehensive, integrated and balanced solutions based on a fair division of responsibilities, with a view to preserving the dignity of those who have been forced by fear or poverty to take the dangerous road of migration, exposing themselves to the risk of abuse by organized transborder criminal gangs.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the third International Conference on Financing for Development have offered some important gains, and we must mobilize all ways and means to fulfil and preserve them. We believe that we have an excellent tool in our hands, namely, the United Nations Development Programme and related entities, for helping developing States to formulate policy and undertake domestic development efforts.

Before I conclude, I would like to inform the General Assembly of some of the domestic activities that Algeria has been undertaking.

Pursuant to the directives of the President of the Republic, in July 2016 we adopted a new development plan that aims to expand our emerging national economy with an eye on the 2030 horizon. The plan involves the rational management of financial resources so that the gains achieved through social justice and national cohesion may be preserved. In that regard, Algeria has committed itself to implementing Agenda 2030 by mobilizing national efforts and taking advantage of the capacities of all partners, including civil society. Those efforts, which involve all sectors, seek to diversify the national economy and achieve sustainable development.

Having realized the need to enhance the rights and independence of women and in the light of the attention that the United Nations gives to those issues, I would like to reiterate Algeria's commitment to the subject of women's rights. The Algerian Constitution was amended in 2016 to enshrine that deliberate approach, and that has been reflected in the improved situation of women in rural areas, in local councils,

in both chambers of Parliament, as well as in the top positions in the State. That won Algeria an award from the African Union in 2016, as part of its Human Rights Decade. Algeria received another award in 2017 in the area of enhancing the rights of women.

Youth constitute three quarters of the population and are considered another major priority of the Algerian State, which, in a constitutional amendment, established a High Council for Youth. Moreover, Algeria has for years been working hard to take advantage of that important human resource, which is of such socioeconomic importance. The educational sector has also witnessed important efforts by Government authorities to offer education to youth, that important part of society.

Algeria has been ranked third in Africa and first in the Maghreb area in human development.

It is also worth mentioning that in August Gallup Inc., an international institute for opinion polls, ranked Algeria sixth on its list of safest countries in the world.

Those are the points that I wanted to leave with the membership on behalf of Algeria as we commence our work at the seventy-second session of the General Assembly.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Amina Chawahir Mohamed, Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs and International Trade of the Republic of Kenya.

Ms. Mohamed (Kenya): I am delighted to address the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I convey to all warm greetings and best wishes from the President of the Republic of Kenya, His Excellency Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta, whom I have the honour to represent here today. The President is committed to the agenda of this session and its overall objectives.

I congratulate the President on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I also congratulate His Excellency Mr. António Guterres on his participation for the first time in the General Assembly as Secretary-General. I would say to him that I am encouraged by his commitment to empower the world's women and girls, because, as he said,

“Parity at the United Nations will improve performance at the United Nations”. (*A/72/PV.1, p.3*)

He can count on Kenya's support for that commitment.

The world faces enormous challenges ranging from poverty, global terrorism, climate change, conflicts and inequality, to the unfolding threats to the liberal order that have governed the world in the post-war era. At stake in all those challenges is the well-being of the people, the vast majority of whom are suffering the brunt of those challenges and whose livelihoods are becoming increasingly uncertain. Describing the state of the world at the time of the Industrial Revolution, the English writer Charles Dickens said: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” That is still an apt way of describing the state of the world today with all of its challenges and opportunities.

Kenya welcomes the theme of the seventy-second session, “Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet”. Kenya agrees with and supports the priorities for action that the President has outlined to guide the focus on people, namely, peace and conflict prevention; migration; the Sustainable Development Goals; climate action; and human rights. Those priorities are urgent and deserve the attention not only of Governments but also of the private sector and civil society. Kenya acknowledges the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals as an appropriate response to the pressing challenges that we face today. We played a key role in the formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals as co-Chair of the Open Working Group, and we remain committed to translating that transformative agenda into tangible action for our people without leaving any one behind.

However, we recognize that achieving the Sustainable Development Goals will be as much about the effectiveness of development cooperation as it will be about the scale and form such cooperation actually takes. There is a lot of talk about partnerships today, but not enough of the practical, on-the-ground support needed to make partnerships effective in practice. As a country, we have stepped up efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. In the health sector, for example, our Government now offers free maternal health-care services across our country. We next intend to cover health-care services for women, children and adolescents. Confirming that commitment two years ago, President Kenyatta said:

“I pledge to take the needed sustainable actions to end all preventable deaths of women, children and

adolescents within a generation and ensure their well-being, and we hold ourselves accountable for our collective progress towards that goal.”

Together with the United Nations family in Kenya, we have also established a Sustainable Development Goal partnership platform that seeks to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Kenya. The platform brings together the Government, development partners, the private sector, civil society and the United Nations. The platform has created diverse Sustainable Development Goal accelerator windows, of which primary health care has been the first. That partnership has resulted in a drastic reduction in maternal and child deaths. We intend to transform primary care to pave the way for universal health coverage for all of 46 million Kenyans by 2021, thereby ensuring, as we pledged, that no one is left behind.

Climate change in our region is disrupting the livelihoods of millions of people and generating conflicts over dwindling resources, especially land and water. Climate change today costs Kenya’s economy approximately 3 per cent in gross domestic product annually. Kenya has enacted legislation to implement the Paris Agreement in order to address that problem. We have committed to a 30 per cent reduction in greenhouse-gas emissions by 2030, relative to the business-as-usual scenario, and subject to the necessary financing, technology transfer and capacity-building, as agreed in Paris. The capacity of our planet to sustain life is under threat, and the need to address climate change is not a choice; it is an urgent imperative.

We commend the United Nations for the steps that have been taken to strengthen and upgrade the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in accordance with the Rio +20 Declaration. We welcome the step towards universal membership and the efforts to enhance the financing and ability of UNEP to fulfil its unique coordination mandate within the United Nations system. I am happy to say that, since its establishment, the United Nations Environment Assembly has helped the world refocus on the environment. Through the work of the Assembly, which is now the de facto world parliament for the environment, decisions that contribute to the well-being of our planet are now being universally respected.

I call upon the States Members of the United Nations to strengthen UNEP so that it can effectively

respond to global environmental challenges. In that regard, Kenya insists on the implementation of the decision by Heads of State, now enshrined in the Rio Declaration, to consolidate the headquarters functions of UNEP in Nairobi at its headquarters in Kenya. That matter is of grave concern and continues not to receive the attention it deserves. The importance of having UNEP in Kenya, which lies in the global South, cannot be overemphasized.

Kenya welcomes the creation of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and looks forward to robust and productive engagement with it. We expect the Office to support all other United Nations bodies in developing initiatives that are responsive to the efforts of Member States. Our priorities are targeted counter-engagement in radicalization clusters, the disengagement of defectors, strengthening intelligence and law enforcement, and deploying whole-of-Government approaches and socioeconomic tools in line with a global strategy.

My delegation supports the Secretary-General’s commitment to the reform agenda of the United Nations. The United Nations must embrace reforms in order to adjust to the global landscape of the twenty-first century and be more accommodative, more democratic and more effective in order to be fit for purpose for our modern world. Of particular concern to Africa is the fact that the Security Council continues to be dominated by a small club of countries, which totally excludes the rest of us. That exclusion continues to undermine the legitimacy and efficiency of the Security Council, while its operations, on the other hand, raise issues of accountability and transparency. Therefore, it is imperative that the United Nations embrace reforms on all of the five core areas that have been identified. We call for Africa’s representation in both the permanent and non-permanent categories of the Security Council, as stated in the African Common Position.

Early in September, we held a high-level meeting to discuss best practices in relation to implementation of the New Urban Agenda, as well as measures to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and financial capability of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT). At the meeting, Member States committed to engaging in the UN-HABITAT process. They called for better coordination of urban matters across the entire United Nations system and for an urban assembly to replace the 58-member Governing Council at its headquarters in Nairobi. We welcome

the confidence that the membership has expressed in our country.

It is no secret that UN-HABITAT is among the least-funded agencies of the United Nations. The Assembly needs an adequate budget in order to enable it to effectively carry out its mandate. Kenya looks forward to engaging constructively in the follow-up discussions in the Second Committee during the current session of the General Assembly.

Kenya has played a prominent role in the search for peace and security in various countries, especially in Somalia and South Sudan. Thanks to our collective efforts as an international community, tremendous progress has been made in Somalia. In particular, the credible elections that took place last year and the formation of a broad-based Government marked a watershed moment that laid the foundation for a stable, democratic transition in Somalia. In order to consolidate the gains already made and prevent a relapse into conflict, we support the strengthening of the African Union Military Observer Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). We also welcome Security Council resolution 2372 (2017), which extends AMISOM with revised core tasks.

We urge the United Nations to give greater support to the Mission, particularly in terms of sustained funding, in order to enable it to deal with major security threats ahead of the envisaged troop drawdown. Furthermore, we strongly believe that support of the reconstruction process, including enabling the Government to provide basic services, will improve confidence and help prevent conflict in Somalia in the future.

Meanwhile, the humanitarian situation in South Sudan remains of concern and needs urgent attention. We urge the international community to provide much-needed resources in order to help save lives that are being ravaged by famine. It is our expectation that the Government of South Sudan will ensure the protection of civilians and humanitarian workers. We also call on the international community to support the efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development revitalization process to re-energize the peace process by bringing together all parties to the conflict.

We also remain concerned about the situations in Libya, the Central African Republic, Syria and Iraq. We urge the international community to continue working diligently to ease the challenges that those sisterly nations face. In the same vein, we support the

Secretary-General's continued efforts to find a lasting solution for the Palestinian people, based on a two-State solution.

Since the 1960s, Kenya has hosted huge numbers of refugees from neighbouring countries. We have been generous hosts, but lately the presence of refugees has brought attendant challenges. Those challenges include smuggling, banditry, human trafficking and the infiltration of refugee camps by terrorists. In the light of those challenges, the Kenyan Government, together with the Somali Federal Government and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and without abdicating its responsibility for refugees, signed a tripartite agreement on the voluntary repatriation of refugees in 2013. Although it has been moving slowly, the repatriation process has since been conducted in conformity with international obligations. We expect the international community to join hands with us in supporting the initiative, as it will enable refugees to rebuild their lives and regain their human dignity, away from the squalor of refugee camps.

Kenya welcomes the President's decision to convene a high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. As a country, we enacted the Counter Trafficking in Persons Act in 2010, which domesticated the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, including its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. That high-level meeting will provide a much-needed, integrated global platform to increase public awareness, share good practices and address loopholes that aid slavery and trafficking, including ensuring effective border management, capacity-building for immigration officers and the efficient monitoring of local and international employment agencies.

Kenya welcomes the historic adoption on 7 July of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Although nuclear-weapon States are absent, the overwhelming majority of Member States support the Treaty. That demonstrates our concerns about the danger that the use of such weapons poses to humankind, about which we were all reminded by the unfortunate nuclear detonation that took place on 3 September. The adoption of the Treaty gives us renewed hope that it is possible, if we work together, to rid the world of nuclear weapons.

Finally, Kenya is a firm believer in multilateralism. We acknowledge the remarkable role that the United Nations has played in sustaining peace in our world and in providing a global platform for cooperation and solidarity among nations. We know that the United Nations can do better. We believe that the Sustainable Development Goals and the Agenda for Sustainable Development have given the United Nations a blueprint for creating greater peace in our world and for making globalization and development fair and equitable for all. That is the future that we want for ourselves and for future generations.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Gudlaugur Thór Thórdarson, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iceland.

Mr. Thórdarson (Iceland): We live in a world of opportunity. Never have we had such potential to end poverty, hunger and violations of human rights, and focus on people striving for a decent life. We can either succeed or we can fail. It is a choice; it is a decision. It is our responsibility and it is our task. This task is not just about numbers or statistics, but real-life people. There is purpose and worth to each and every life. Let us not forget.

Our task is not easy. But the most important things in life are never easy. The right path is always difficult, and we definitely face difficulties. The consequences of climate change, bad governance, terrorism and conflict have made our world seem more dangerous, less predictable and more chaotic, as our Secretary-General has put it. It is our common responsibility to safeguard the progress we have made since the establishment of this institution and to make good on our promises of prosperity for all.

The world's economic and social progress has, in large part, been driven by science and rational action, based on evidence. We must hold firm to that approach. Only policy, grounded in facts and evidence, can help us deal with such common threats as climate change and create a world that truly reflects our values. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provide the blueprints for our success. Now we must deliver. Droughts, sea-level rise, ocean acidification and other consequences of climate change have wide-ranging implications for all our communities. Climate change is nowhere as visible as in the Arctic, with far-reaching consequences in the other parts of the world. The melting of the polar ice in

the North causes higher sea levels in the South. What happens in the Arctic does not stay in the Arctic. In fulfilling our Paris Agreement obligations, we aim to reduce emissions by 40 per cent by 2030 collectively with our European countries. Iceland remains committed to that goal.

Since the establishment of this institution, a rule-based international order has been the foundation for peace and prosperity. The assault on the rule of law by certain Governments undermines the stability of the international system. We condemn in the strongest terms the illegal actions of North Korean leaders and call on them to accept generous offers to return to the negotiating table. During the past weeks, we have at last seen a united Security Council act firmly but constructively to push for dialogue and confidence-building measures, while staying firm on strengthening sanctions in the face of continued provocation.

The use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Government against its own people was a blatant violation of international and humanitarian laws and demanded a firm response by the international community. Complex internal conflicts have led to displacement and suffering on a massive scale, with famine looming in many areas, including Yemen. The issue of Western Sahara remains unresolved with tensions rising. The disregard for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine is another serious assault on the international rule-based order.

The Security Council bears primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. Along with several other countries, Iceland has encouraged the Security Council to include long-term perspectives in its mission mandates to lay the foundations for lasting peace.

The modern era has also seen the rise of non-State actors — something our system did not plan for. Terrorists have sought to undermine trust and tolerance within and among our communities. Alongside improvements of the United Nations anti-terrorism mechanism, we must identify the drivers of violent extremism and terrorism. At the heart of conflict and violent extremism lies a failure of development. That is where the 2030 Agenda must play a vital role.

The 2030 Agenda is indeed a remarkable achievement. It is grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as human rights, peace and development are inseparable and essential to

the successful implementation of the Agenda. I take very seriously the Secretary-General's warning that disregard for human rights is a disease, and it is a disease that is spreading — north, south, east and west.

The violation of freedom of expression, of rights to free assembly, of the fundamental rights of women — all undermine the 2030 Agenda. Extrajudicial killings, repression of minorities and the denial of the right to legitimate opposition set back sustainable development, sometimes by generations. Here I would like to express deep concern at the completely unacceptable situation of the Rohingya population in Myanmar.

Iceland knows first-hand the massive potential that lies in gender equality. With UN-Women as a key partner, Iceland is a dedicated proponent of women's human rights. We actively work to engage men in the fight for gender equality and, indeed, our Prime Minister is a HeForShe IMPACT Champion. We support the United Nations Population Fund and the SheDecides initiative for sexual and reproductive health and rights, and continue to promote women's participation in the peace and security agenda.

I commend the Secretary-General for his commitment to gender equality within the United Nations and his determination in addressing the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers and United Nations staff — a betrayal of the civilians under their care and of the values of the United Nations.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Iceland was one of the poorest countries in western Europe. Now, we are one of the richest. Why? The answer to that question is the key to our approach to the task at hand of delivering for the people of this world who are striving for a decent life, and making sure that everyone can benefit from this world of ours — the world of opportunities. Iceland's path from rags to riches is a textbook example of the power of free trade. We gained access to large foreign markets where we could sell our products, and by doing so we changed our fortunes.

Every year, we gather here in the capital of free trade and talk about the importance of ending poverty in the world. We can talk the talk, but can we really walk the walk? We can really do something about this. We can open our markets. We can let the poorer countries trade freely with our consumers. Let us trade, and let us keep in mind that free trade is not only the exchange of goods or services for money. Free trade is forming relationships. Free trade is people interacting,

travelling and understanding each other, regardless of colour or religion. Free trade is the most powerful tool to establish and maintain peace.

While the markets of the richest countries in the world remain closed to the poorest countries, it is truly our obligation to provide development assistance. A large share of Iceland's bilateral assistance goes to the least developed countries, mainly in sub-Saharan Africa. We focus on our areas of expertise, such as energy and fisheries, while at the same time ensuring a horizontal emphasis on human rights and gender equality.

To share our knowledge and experience, Iceland hosts United Nations University (UNU) programmes on fisheries management, geothermal energy and land restoration, in addition to its UNU gender programme. Through projects and partnerships with the International Renewable Energy Agency, Sustainable Energy for All and the World Bank, Iceland works actively to increase the utilization of sustainable geothermal energy. We also support the work of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to increase food security and mitigate climate change through land restoration.

Continuing a tradition of leadership in oceans affairs, Iceland actively contributed to the United Nations Ocean Conference earlier this year. Our many commitments include reducing marine litter and plastics in the ocean, an issue on which Governments, businesses and individuals must cooperate. Allow me to welcome the Secretary-General's appointment of Mr. Peter Thomson as his Special Envoy for the Ocean. We look forward to working with Mr. Thomson.

Unlocking the transformative potential of people and the private sector is key to success. In financing for development, we must be clear that development cooperation, while vital, is only a small part of what is needed. Good governance, strong institutions, human rights and equal opportunities are essential to inclusive economic progress, which eventually depends on the political will of leaders. Creating an environment in which doing business is easy and investment makes sense is key to growth.

Iceland strongly believes in the potential of globalization and international trade as an engine for economic growth and poverty reduction. We must continue to promote a universal, rules-based, fair, multilateral trading system under the World Trade

Organization. At the same time, we must be aware of the measures necessary to enable the least developed countries to participate on fair terms. If we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, this is not the time to erect trade barriers.

The dire situation of the 65 million people driven from their homes by conflict, economic hardship and climate change urgently requires a solution. How we, as an international community, address migration will define us for future generations. The forthcoming process towards global compacts for refugees and for safe, orderly and regular migration will give us the opportunity to establish new and comprehensive approaches to that current challenge. Those approaches must be grounded in humanitarian law and respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants, especially children. As host communities, we should not forget the positive contribution that migrants can make to growth and sustainable development.

Iceland has received an ever-increasing number of refugees, in addition to providing generous assistance to United Nations agencies working in the countries that neighbour Syria. We will continue to do our part. Our forefathers, scarred by the Second World War and economic depression, had the foresight to set up the United Nations and the Bretton Woods Institutions.

Just as this great building was renovated so successfully a few years ago, so too must the United Nations be made fit for purpose in the modern era. We strongly support the work of the Secretary-General in management reform, development reform and his sustaining peace agenda.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Margot Wallström, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden.

Ms. Wallström (Sweden): In 1954, former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld stated that the United Nations was not created to bring us to heaven, but to save us from hell. The need for a United Nations that seeks to save us from humankind's worst impulses remains. However, in these days of uncertainty, we must also learn from and build on what is positive in our world and the United Nations.

In his important address on Tuesday (see A/72/PV.3), our Secretary-General laid out the threats and challenges that we face and how we can overcome them. Delivering a peaceful and prosperous future

will depend on collective action. This is the moment for multilateralism, not unilateralism. We must grasp it or risk the consequences. The United Nations is at the centre of that effort. It is a tailor-made space for the world to find solutions to the common challenges of our time. Despite the sometimes justified criticisms, it is clear that we still believe in the power of the United Nations. If we did not, Presidents, Prime Ministers and business and civil-society leaders would not be here this week. I believe that we all recognize that, in the face of global challenges, going it alone is no longer an option.

The United Nations, founded to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to promote better standards of life in larger freedom, has prevented a repetition of the catastrophic wars that preceded its founding. Extreme poverty has fallen to a historic low. Life expectancy continues to climb. Millions of people are reached every year with life-saving humanitarian assistance.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the sustaining peace agenda are powerful illustrations of what we can achieve together. Those agreements are the strategies for our common future. We must now ensure that the Organization has the structure and the tools needed to support countries to deliver them. The broad support for the Secretary-General's reform agenda illustrates the importance that we attach to an effective United Nations, its role at the centre of multilateralism and as a platform for the delivery of our common commitments. The scope of the reforms being proposed by the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General reveals the complex tasks at hand.

The peace and security architecture must better prevent conflicts and sustain peace. The United Nations development system must be radically reoriented to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Moreover, to deliver those changes, modern management skills and systems will be essential. More importantly, we must recognize that those reforms cannot be pursued in isolation from one another. People do not experience life in pieces — their needs must be central. Peace and security, economic and social development and the protection and promotion of human rights are mutually reinforcing. As a response, all pillars of the United Nations system and our own bilateral efforts must also be interlinked and mutually reinforcing. That calls for new ways of working and thinking.

Sweden fully subscribes to the principles for reform that were articulated by the Secretary-General: a country-level and people-centred perspective, gender parity, decentralized responsibility and decision-making, and reformed budget procedures. Secretary-General Guterres and Deputy Secretary-General Mohammed have our full support in their efforts.

On our part, we, as Member States, have a responsibility to act coherently, avoid micromanagement and ensure long-term, stable and adequate financing. More flexible funding is necessary. We firmly believe in core and unearmarked funding. We cannot allow ourselves to cherry pick to accommodate domestic interests; that will not give the Organization the stability it needs.

I am proud to say that Sweden will increase its development cooperation budget by approximately \$350 million in 2018, bringing our budget to its highest-ever level and delivering on our commitment to devote 1 per cent of gross national income to official development assistance. In addition to words, we will support the Secretary-General's efforts with kronor by making available additional flexible funding for reform.

In the immediate term, faced with record levels of humanitarian need, the humanitarian system requires urgent funding to save lives and end suffering. In the longer term, investing in the 2030 Agenda and the sustaining peace agenda will build resilience.

Let me focus now on three particular areas in the remainder of my remarks.

First, nine months ago, Sweden joined the Security Council. As the General Assembly elected us to the Council, it is only proper that I report back to its members on what we have been doing on their behalf. Our approach to the Council is simple. While we each come with our own national perspective and will not always agree, as Council members we are bound together by a responsibility to the Charter of the United Nations and the world.

To that end, Sweden works with all members to deliver meaningful outcomes from the Council's discussions. We work closely with the other elected members, which represent the broader membership and bring important perspectives. We are also talking with many members of the Assembly as part of our commitment to speaking with countries on the Council's agenda, not only about them.

Delivering real outcomes for those who need them is a responsibility that goes beyond our national interests. Needs are growing. The number of major conflicts is on the rise. However, as the Secretary-General has said, neither war nor peace is inevitable; they result from the choices that we make. Many of the conflicts on the Council's agenda have come about not because we failed to see them coming — the signs were there — but because we failed to respond early or quickly enough.

Moreover, prevention means not only choosing to heed the warnings when they come, but investing in peaceful societies to avoid the causes of conflicts emerging in the first place. As leaders within our communities and as national leaders, we must choose peace, invest in peace and deliver peace. The United Nations system must be configured to support us.

Sweden has made conflict prevention a central pillar of our Council membership. We have underscored the need for the Council to recognize the primacy of politics in peacekeeping mandates and the need for long-term political strategies that aim to prevent conflict and sustain peace by addressing root causes. I believe we are making progress. That is evidenced by the Council's support for a peaceful resolution of the crisis in the Gambia, for the peace process in Colombia and for the transitions in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, as well as its cooperation with the African Union to bring stability to Somalia. As Chair of the Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, Sweden has sought to strengthen the protection of children in conflict zones. The protection of children today prevents conflicts tomorrow.

Nonetheless, we have to do more. The situation in Myanmar is a haunting example of where the root causes of conflict went unresolved, with tragic consequences. It is now urgent that the violence end and that the population be protected, human rights respected and a dignified return allowed. Humanitarian access is essential. Sweden supports the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. We urge the Myanmar Government to implement those recommendations without delay.

In Syria, prevention also failed. The price paid by the country and its citizens has been unimaginable and horrific. Sweden will continue to work through the Council for nationwide humanitarian access and a political solution, which is the only option for long-term peace and a better future for Syria.

In South Sudan, the civilian population has also borne the brunt of a nearly four-year, devastating conflict. I welcome the recent initiatives of South Sudan's neighbours. I urge the Government and all other parties to increase humanitarian access, lay down their arms and engage in a meaningful process to end the conflict.

We continue our long-standing engagement in trying to advance the Middle East peace process. As the Secretary-General said during his recent visit to the region, the two-State solution is the only way forward. Only a negotiated settlement between the parties and an end to the 50 years of occupation can achieve the goal of Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security. We need to resolve the conflict once and for all. Doing so will have implications for peace that go beyond the Holy Land and the Middle East itself.

Perhaps the greatest threat to international peace and security is the unacceptable and repeated provocations of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in pursuit of a nuclear-weapons programme. We call upon the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to cease further testing, fulfil its international obligations and turn to a path of sincere dialogue on denuclearization. All States must implement the measures that have been decided upon by a united Security Council. Sanctions must be combined with political efforts to pave the way for a peaceful solution. We welcome the Secretary-General's pledge to make his good offices available to that end.

Lasting peace requires the involvement of the entire population, meaning that the full, equal and effective participation of women must be hardwired into all of our efforts towards sustaining peace. That brings me to my second point — women and peace and security.

As a representative of the world's first feminist Government, that issue is close to my heart. From speaking with many members of the Assembly, I realize that I am far from alone in my strong conviction that women's participation in peace and security efforts is essential for sustainable peace. Ensuring women's participation must be at the centre of the United Nations reform efforts.

Sweden is working tirelessly to put the women and peace and security agenda into action in all aspects of the Security Council's work, from including gender reporting in mission mandates, to adding listing criteria for sexual and gender-based violence in sanctions regimes. Sweden's feminist foreign policy

is an agenda for change that is aimed at increasing rights, representation and resources for all women and girls, based on the reality of their lives. We urge all countries to form their own feminist policy and ensure that everyone — women, men, boys and girls — is treated equally.

My third and last point regards our common responsibility for global development. The 2030 Agenda provides the pathways to achieve the peaceful, sustainable and equitable societies we want. All countries — rich and poor — share the responsibility of turning that promise into a reality for millions of people around the world. It will not be done by Governments alone. All stakeholders from across society have a part to play. Ensuring that the United Nations development system is transformed to support those efforts will be critical.

Measuring our progress against the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will be essential, both for decision-making and accountability. Sweden has developed a set of national goals, linked to the SDGs and our national budget, which we are using to measure the development of our society. As we all know, the strength of the 2030 Agenda is in the inherent interlinkages between all 17 Goals. Each Goal is equally important and interdependent. Nonetheless, I would like to highlight two of those Goals.

First, I will address the Goal of reducing inequality. Globalization has opened the world, strengthened economic growth and lifted hundreds of millions out of poverty. However, we have failed to allocate the benefits of globalization equally. We must do better. As part of our contribution, in 2016 Sweden, together with an initial core group of States, businesses and trade unions, launched the Global Deal for Decent Work and Inclusive Growth. The Global Deal is a partnership developed with the International Labour Organization and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, with a focus on enhanced social dialogue and sound industrial relations, which are crucial to reducing inequality.

The second Goal I would like to mention is that of healthy oceans and seas. Oceans connect us all. Without water, there is no life. Therefore, the deteriorating condition of our oceans must ring alarm bells for us all. Sweden was pleased to co-host, with Fiji, the Ocean Conference that took place in June. The multi-stakeholder participation and all the commitments

made highlighted the fact that saving the oceans will require all sectors of society to play their part, and that they are ready to do so.

The oceans are also affected by and, in return, affect our climate. We are already seeing the devastating impact of extreme weather events. Climate change will increase the frequency and intensity of such events. Left unchecked, climate change will wash away development gains and increase instability and conflict. To the few who still doubt the overwhelming evidence that climate change is real, I ask: are they really willing to take the chance? Especially when we see that new technologies offer the opportunity to simultaneously reduce emissions and grow economies. Sweden is already proving that is possible and has set a goal of zero net greenhouse emissions by 2045.

All countries must join the effort to achieve the decisive transformations needed to reduce emissions and prevent the worst effects of climate change from happening. With 160 States parties to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change so far, the global commitment remains strong.

In his address on Tuesday, the Secretary-General told us that we must act as one, because only together, as united nations, can we fulfil the promise of the Charter of the United Nations and advance human dignity for all. He is right. The expression “we are all in this together” has perhaps never been so apt. As our world becomes more integrated, so do the challenges and threats we face. We cannot go it alone; we must stand together. Multilateralism is the only path to peace and prosperity.

The meeting rose at 3.05 p.m.