



# General Assembly

Seventy-fourth session

**6<sup>th</sup>** plenary meeting  
Wednesday, 25 September 2019, 3 p.m.  
New York

Official Records

*President:* Mr. Muhammad-Bande ..... (Nigeria)

*The meeting was called to order at 3.50 p.m.*

**Address by Mr. Lenin Moreno Garcés,  
Constitutional President of the Republic of Ecuador**

**The President:** The Assembly will now hear an address by the Constitutional President of the Republic of Ecuador.

*Mr. Lenin Moreno Garcés, Constitutional President of the Republic of Ecuador, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Lenin Moreno Garcés, Constitutional President of the Republic of Ecuador, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Moreno Garcés (spoke in Spanish):** There are principles of coexistence among human beings that are recognized as universal. Such principles are valid in both times of peace and times of conflict among States. I would like to cite some examples: respect every nation as you would have yours be respected; never tolerate abuse against anyone, while always helping those in need to the extent you can; violence breeds only violence, and its effects pass from one generation to the next; peace among countries is born from tolerance and the cultivation of common interests.

It is therefore worth asking the following question: if no conflict among States has ever been eternal, why not build peace as soon as possible? Those and other visions of coexistence among peoples, which apply

to life among States and societies, are enshrined, in different words, in the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. They are the pillars that support the spacious General Assembly Hall that houses and shelters us today.

The United Nations and its multilateralism exist because those principles are effective and constitute the guidelines for a peaceful and harmonious coexistence, as well as promoting the individual interests of States and guiding their interactions with one another. The Organization is a living example that multilateralism is still a completely essential tool. It shows how cooperation can be consolidated across borders and regions, that the peaceful settlement of disputes is always on the table — an alternative to the horrors of the violence of war — and that human beings must jointly respond to the problems of our time, that is, sustainable development, climate change, the protection and conservation of nature, the building of non-discriminatory and fully inclusive societies, dialogue among cultures and differing opinions.

Under those principles, which are inscribed in the Charter, signed in San Francisco, the General Assembly can work for a better world and seek to develop them and their different facets, country by country, region by region, conflict by conflict. When international cooperation lapses, wars endure and injustices seem eternal, that is usually because States have lost their way or do not have the political will to correctly apply the United Nations principles.

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More than ever, multilateralism and the United Nations system are today under considerable attack and subject to harmful criticism. We are witnessing sustained attempts to weaken international cooperation and devalue the work of the United Nations. I therefore call on all States to meet and address those urgent challenges, which are worth repeating and expanding on — climate change, sustainable development, protracted humanitarian crises, large-scale human rights abuses, widespread poverty, growing inequalities and threats to international peace and security, to name a few.

Dialogue is the foundation of the multilateral action that nourishes the United Nations and that we ourselves should continue to advocate. What drives relationships among States is one joint frame of mind when analysing problems, respect for all points of view and, above all, the subsequent formation of consensus agreements. Without dialogue and a shared spirit of democracy, we cannot understand each other; neither can we understand each other with imposed unilateralism.

The same can of course be said of national societies. In Ecuador we are promoting an initiative for reaching agreement, so that all members of society are able to identify areas that unite them and overcome issues on which they have differing opinions. Enough of focusing on what separates us and what sets us apart. Let us look instead at what unites us, what identifies us and what allows us to nurture a greater common well-being.

Seeking national agreement among all the actors of our society is of course not straightforward. Indeed, agreement arises when difficulties are overcome together, when we find common ground and leave the door open to compromise and innovation when seeking solutions. If there is no agreement, that raises the question of where and what is the alternative. National agreement is the best antidote to outrage and unilateral intolerance and to disrespect for human rights; it facilitates the creation of societies that are democratic in practice and not just by design or proclamation.

National agreement has another name at the international level, but the same spirit. We call it multilateralism. The multilateral approach promoted by the United Nations is the best tool for societies to jointly build the better world for which we all yearn and of which we all dream, in order to face the problems that, due to their cross-cutting nature, affect us equally, such as the eradication of poverty, the quality of education,

the protection of the planet and the inclusion of those who are defenceless.

We all live in the same neighbourhood — planet Earth — which is limited in size and resources and is contending with a constantly growing population, as well as challenges to the environment, wealth inequality and the urgent desire to achieve adequate levels of well-being and respect for human rights. It is a world where the temptation remains to impose individual visions and interests through the use of force.

The concerted action of States continues to be the only tool for ending those violations. We must all feel part of the global solutions needed for global problems. Climate change, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the pollution of oceans, the erosion of human rights, restrictions on world trade and the marginal importance of fair trade are issues that we all face and cannot be adequately resolved without the contribution and political will of all countries.

Disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament and the future prohibition of weapons of mass destruction, is a goal for coexistence, especially in regions of ongoing or latent conflict. When we focus on current conflicts and conflict zones, there is one unchanging common denominator: the risk of the use of weapons of mass destruction. Ecuador therefore deposited its ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, not, of course, because our country can, or even wants to, possess such arms, but because it is clear that the uncontrolled possession of that type of weaponry can result in deliberate or accidental use. If that were to occur, the brutal effects would not be restricted to those waging an atomic war but would affect the entire world. We would all be the victims of radioactive contamination for centuries. We and our descendants would be exposed to harmful agents that cause catastrophic disease and genetic deformities.

Global problems affect and hurt us all. Even if some do not impact us immediately, the fact of belonging to the human race means that we are implicated. Let us share empathy with victims and think about the suffering of those societies facing such issues directly. Terence said it well, and his wisdom persists, “Nothing that is human is alien to me”. Dialogue, multilateral action and national agreement in Ecuador have not just appeared out of thin air. A nation’s backdrop defines its actions and those of its social actors, which, to use a sporting term, delimits the playing field. I am talking

about people's fundamental rights, which appear in the Constitution of Ecuador, the universal Charter of the United Nations and the international treaties that protect political, economic, social and cultural guarantees, including rights in relation to the natural world. Indeed, one year ago, Ecuador became only the fifth country in the world to ratify the 18 United Nations conventions on the protection of human rights. If there is one thing that I hope my Government will be remembered for, it is its deep conviction and work for the protection, promotion, respect and effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Reinstating democratic institutions in Ecuador, respecting the opinions of the people and the media, safeguarding the actions of opposing politicians and civil organizations and eliminating bureaucratic entities that were once designed to expand State power at the expense of civil society are all issues that are being addressed by my Government and are in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Goals 4, 5 and 16 — relating to inclusive, equitable and quality education; gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls; and the promotion of fair, peaceful and inclusive societies.

That is of course no simple task. It takes a lot of work to overcome a culture of fear, break with institutional and legal ties and stand for freedom of opinion and expression. However, with determination and perseverance, we managed to dismantle a State of propaganda, overrule a gag law on journalists, eliminate an institution trying to silence the press and remove an intelligence service that, instead of protecting our collective interests, was devoted to recording the private conversations of Ecuadorians, snooping in the lives of opposition politicians and hacking electronic communications and other people's databases. We succeeded in that task, and I feel great pride at having let the fresh air of democracy into a closed establishment of intolerance, abuse and the vain quest for power for power's sake.

Here are the reliable facts. Last year the Special Rapporteurs on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression of the United Nations and the Organization of American States visited Ecuador, together with the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples and the Special Rapporteur on the right to physical and mental health. Ecuador has returned to participating in inter-American human rights forums, and we signed

the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure. That does not constitute just another signature; it is in line with our resolute action taken to become the first country in our region to sign the Convention that protects one of the most vulnerable and defenceless groups of our society, our children.

Another vulnerable group is migrants. We have already welcomed almost 500,000 Venezuelan brothers and sisters, the victims of the worst exodus on our continent. It is the task of the United Nations to seek a definitive solution to the crisis in Venezuela. Our Venezuelan brothers and sisters tell us on a daily basis that there is no food, health care or medicine and that education is suffering. They are leaving their land out of despair at seeing one another die before the half-hearted and distant gaze of the world. None of them are abandoning their beloved land, relatives and friends willingly; they are doing it because they are being forced out by a diaspora initiated by a high-handed Government lacking any humanity.

Despite its lack of resources, Ecuador accommodated all who arrived on our territory until last month. Today, in this venue of world democracy, I call on Members to sit down and talk with the victims of the conflict to help them escape a catastrophe caused by an irresponsible and de facto Government. For its part, Ecuador will host the session of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in November, something that would have been unthinkable only two years ago. In the same month, we will also host the Global Forum on Migration and Development, of which my country currently holds the chairmanship.

As I mentioned, Ecuador continues to multiply its progressive efforts in the fields of human, economic, social and cultural rights. While doing as much as possible within the usual budgetary limitations, through our *Toda Una Vida* development plan and *Las Manueles* mission, we are effectively implementing comprehensive programmes that protect all human beings, from the very moment of conception until God decides to close our eyes and the Creator calls us to his side. While civil and political rights are being implemented without delay, economic, social and cultural rights, as recognized by international treaties, are being implemented gradually. Nevertheless, they have a special significance for developing nations; their relevance and the work of promoting them is crucial for most of the world. Such rights must also rise above

political and ideological positions, given that they appeal to universal values.

Protecting the planet, our greater home, is imperative. In Ecuador we have already implemented an energy efficiency law. A circular economy pact was signed with the manufacturing sector to create a modern plastics economy. We have also eliminated taxes on the import of electric vehicles, and we have established preferential credits for sustainable mobility, while using renewable energy for public transport.

At the beginning of this month, at the presidential summit for the countries of the Amazon, I said that we should take a leap forward in the areas of evolution, development and progress. That is a concept that has become selfish, consumerist and predatory. We still cherish the hope that in the face of those negative trends affecting human coexistence, there are also signs of solidarity, brotherhood and mutual respect. Let us try to strengthen those virtues among nations.

The international community must systematically intensify its actions aimed at cultivating solidarity; preserving fraternal ties and good neighbourliness; and respecting not only the environment, but also diverse cultures, countries on the other side of oceans and victims of conflict. Such conflicts are caused by both man and natural disasters, which are increasingly destructive, due to the harmful effects of global warming. The only way that cooperation and solidarity among nations can shape international life is, to put it simply, for us to put those concepts into practice, while of course continuing to pursue concrete efforts that emphasize, as I previously said, what unites us and what we have in common, not what separates us.

Economic, social and cultural human rights should become pillars of the management systems of authorities. We dream and hope that one day we will measure development based on the number of disabled people who have been fully included, the absence of gender-based violence and what values and principles are taught in the classroom, the press, on the streets and at the polls. It is up to us and our conviction to be able to stop seeing the ethical values of civilization as utopian and unattainable goals that are simply paradigms, but instead as aspirations of where to arrive, where to start and, fundamentally, of how to behave.

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

*Mr. Lenin Moreno Garcés, Constitutional President of the Republic of Ecuador, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

#### **Address by Mr. Jimmy Morales, President of the Republic of Guatemala**

**The President:** The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guatemala.

*Mr. Jimmy Morales, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Jimmy Morales, President of the Republic of Guatemala, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Morales** (*spoke in Spanish*): Seneca said that none of us love our homeland because it is great. We love it because it is ours.

I thank Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés for having successfully presided over the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. I also congratulate the President of the Assembly, Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, who is already promoting a highly proactive global debate.

Guatemala is a strong advocate of the rule of law and democratic ideals. In that spirit, this year we are holding free elections that are based on international standards of electoral democracy. It is important to also highlight that for the first time in Guatemala's political history we implemented voting from abroad, which sets a precedent for guaranteeing the right to vote outside our borders. Guatemala now has stronger institutions with technical capabilities to be able to fulfil its role in society.

In the area of education, the average number of full school days was increased from 163 days, in 2015, to 198 full school days, this year, which is also unprecedented in Guatemala's recent history. Educational coverage was also increased to include 3,122,000 students, and I can proudly say that we quadrupled our investment per day in school meals. For that, we rely on the parents of each school, who guarantee the transparency of the programme, focusing on the education and health of our children.



For the first time ever, the State provided over 1,000 schools with technological equipment in a single year and fully complied with the delivery of educational materials and school texts in Mayan and Spanish, something we have never done before. Over time, financial resources have also been transferred to all educational programmes and we have guaranteed access to free Guatemalan education. In addition, we implemented the *Acompañame a Crecer* programme, which seeks to aid development in early childhood for children from zero to age 4 who have not previously been in public education. Moreover, for those who have been unable to study in the regular education system, a certification-of-skills system was initiated that recognizes and certifies the knowledge and skills of people who work in a trade learned throughout their lives, both for Guatemalans in Guatemala and those living in the United States of America.

On another area of development, we prioritized the Open Government Partnership for the period 2016 to 2018, which resulted in a national policy on transparency and combating corruption. My Government Administration has focused on fostering a culture of transparency and good governance. We launched the Presidential Commission for Open Public Administration and Transparency, which goes hand in hand with the Government's fourth national open action plan for the period 2018 to 2020.

In terms of security, we have taken firm steps that have led to highly positive indicators. We have reduced the homicide rate for every 100,000 inhabitants, which has maintained the most favourable downward trend of the past 20 years. That was possible thanks to a cleanup of our security forces and ensuring their greater professionalism and efficiency.

The national civil police managed to dismantle dangerous criminal gangs that were engaged in extortion, kidnapping, vehicle theft and property crime. This year the number of police officers increased from 31,000, in 2015, to 42,000 national civil police, who are now better equipped and have higher wages.

In the area of infrastructure, we inherited a collapsed road network, with 60 per cent of roads in poor or terrible condition. However, after solving budgetary, administrative and judicial problems, which plagued a large number of contracts, today we can say that 72 per cent of road surfacing has a rating of good to optimal, according to the assessment carried out by the

national competitiveness programme. We hope to end this year with more than 85 per cent of roads in optimal condition, which would allow the next Government to not only reach 100 per cent but also to build the many more roads that the country still needs.

In terms of the environment, we have increased the protection of our forests, which are part of the world's lungs. We are planning to reforest 1.2 million hectares of trees by 2032, in which my Government has invested \$50 million per year, the equivalent of \$200 million in forest incentive programmes. I want to take this opportunity to express our dismay at the recent fires in the Amazon rainforest.

As the Assembly is aware, Guatemala has vast water wealth and we have therefore formulated a process to protect and decontaminate our rivers, lakes and seas. We now represent a benchmark for the world in this area, thanks to the creation and implementation of biofences — handcrafted tools that stop large amounts of floating debris. There are currently 196 biofences installed throughout the country. If anyone is wondering what a biofence is, they are simply handmade pieces of mesh made from plastic waste that serve as a barrier to waste floating in water currents. We have found the invention to be effective, and countries on ours and other continents are now extremely interested in cooperating with Guatemala in that area. The Assembly can rest assured that we will not hesitate to support other members, because we are committed to preserving natural resources. That tool is one of Guatemala's legacies to humankind.

Speaking of legacies, I wish to share with the Assembly that we recently released the results of the twelfth national population census and seventh housing census to the people of Guatemala. After 17 years of waiting, we settled a historic debt with Guatemala that translates into real statistics for engineering our development model. The twelfth population census is one of the first in the region to be conducted and framed within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It was carried out using the United Nations Population Fund's international standards.

In matters of foreign policy, Guatemala and Belize concluded the peaceful process of submitting Guatemala's territorial, insular and maritime claim to the International Court of Justice. That is a historic milestone for Guatemala, Central America and the world, which has resulted in a peaceful and definitive

solution to the years of dispute between Guatemala and Belize. The peoples of Guatemala and Belize conducted popular and peaceful consultations with positive results and a desire to finally resolve the dispute before the International Court of Justice. Relations between Guatemala and Belize have never been better, and we are determined to continue strengthening them. I extend my deep and sincere thanks to the group of friendly countries that supported Guatemala and Belize in the process, where dialogue — the basis of true democracy — prevailed.

I am also pleased to share with members that, in November last year, Guatemala successfully held the twenty-sixth Iberoamerican Summit of Heads of State and Government in Antigua. It was one of the best attended in history and enabled us to develop cooperation policies under the slogan “A Prosperous, Inclusive and Sustainable Iberoamerica.”

At the international level, Guatemala believes that all countries, in particular those that embrace democracy and the principles that gave life to the United Nations, have the right to belong to this great Organization. We believe that the experience and capabilities of the Republic of China on Taiwan can contribute to strengthening multilateralism from this Organization and its specialized agencies.

The Guatemalan Government reaffirms its commitment to migration policies that place human beings at the centre of development and prosperity. We are eager to collaborate with comprehensive immigration governance that respects the human rights of migrants at all times. We firmly share the ideals of safe, orderly and regular migration. For that reason, we are coordinating efforts with different countries to mitigate the actual causes of such migration. However, in order to mitigate irregular migration, we must assume that shared responsibility in a responsible manner, because all countries have a role to play in today’s reality, and only by working together can we take firm steps to safeguard our nations.

Our presidential Administration has been based on a strategic plan, which is scheduled until 2032. That trajectory for the country aligns our general Government policy for the period 2016 to 2020 with the 2030 Agenda, and every one of our public policies involves fulfilling the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

In the view of the State of Guatemala it is essential to maintain peace, the nation’s security, sovereignty

and respect for the rule of law. A culture of respect for States’ sovereign decisions must prevail. That applies to the same Secretariat that violated our democratic principles of self-determination.

The reason for the existence of the Organization is to maintain world peace and global harmony and to strengthen modern States. However, the Secretariat of this great multilateral Organization polarized Guatemalan society through the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG). The Commission violated the principles of national sovereignty, disrespected the laws of our country, undermined institutional autonomy, put social peace at risk and challenged the governance of the nation. However, the saddest and most worrisome fact is that it did it with the consent of the United Nations, under the guise of fighting corruption and impunity. That gave it the perfect discourse to politicize justice and judicialize politics, which we Guatemalans do not allow; we have been a free, sovereign and independent country since 1821.

Moreover, when speaking of independence and national sovereignty, I wish to inform the Assembly that although the mandate of CICIG has ended, the consequences of its actions in Guatemala must be thoroughly investigated. Under the leadership of Iván Velásquez Gómez, the Commission used the image of the United Nations for political purposes in Guatemala. Iván Velásquez Gómez turned criminal prosecution into a tool of selective persecution and political harassment, violating universal rights, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the American Convention on Human Rights, as well as violating the political Constitution of the Republic of Guatemala. Moreover, he disregarded the principle of presumption of innocence, the right to self-defence and the judicial guarantee of due process, abusing the honourable position entrusted to him.

My first question to the Assembly is: was CICIG a United Nations body? The answer is no. I quote the agreement that gave rise to the CICIG,

“as a non-United Nations organ, functioning solely in accordance with the provisions of this agreement.”

I must therefore ask once again: to whom was CICIG accountable? To the Secretariat, donor countries or the Guatemalan Government? Interestingly, the agreement

does not state to whom it was accountable. To answer that question, we must therefore reflect on the following. When the country where CICIG operated submitted its concerns about the abuses committed by CICIG to the Secretary-General, why were those concerns ignored, given that Guatemala is a founding State and Member of this Organization? Who is to blame for those human rights violations in Guatemala, seeing that several people died as a result of CICIG, many others were unjustly imprisoned and others remain in custody without having given their provisional statement? It is worth clarifying that the closure of CICIG will have no repercussions on the judicial processes in which it participated, since all proceedings that were initiated will continue at the request of the legally competent authorities in Guatemala.

I am clarifying these facts because the former head of CICIG has unfortunately dedicated himself to discrediting my country, with success, taking advantage of the international position he held to promote an agenda full of political and ideological interests that are alien to the principles of the United Nations. His actions divided the Guatemalan population, however, above all, he betrayed the confidence that our country placed in him to fight criminal structures, supposedly his main task. Instead, he turned CICIG into a criminal structure that co-opted Guatemalan justice.

It is most unfortunate and very worrying that international officials who serve States, are devoting themselves to discrediting our country before the international community. That is disloyalty. Guatemala opened its doors to the United Nations in order for it to support us to better fight corruption and impunity. However, the low morale and unprofessionalism of the former CICIG Commissioner led him to commit a series of actions that upstanding Guatemalans are not willing to tolerate or forget. His thirst for power compelled him to move from the judicial field to the political sphere, to which I can attest, while publicly supporting former prosecutor Thelma Aldana, a presidential candidate in our most recent elections. Incidentally, former prosecutor Aldana is currently a fugitive from justice for several reasons. It was she who said that no one is above the law, and so we hope that she soon returns to Guatemala. No one should ever be able to take advantage of the position they hold to promote personal interests, even more so when they represent the United Nations or its actors, which must ensure the independence, impartiality and objectivity of justice.

With regard to the role of the press in my country, I will limit myself to respectfully citing His Holiness Pope Francis, who recently said:

“We need a journalism that is free, at the service of truth, goodness and justice; a journalism that helps build a culture of encounter.”

Guatemala appreciates the valuable support of the international community, but wishes to make it known that not a single penny donated to CICIG was administered by the Guatemalan Government. For the sake of transparency, we believe that it would be appropriate for the Secretariat to provide the Assembly with detailed information about every single penny of its resources that was spent, from CICIG's establishment in Guatemala until its closure. To guarantee transparency, it would be worth hiring one of the world's most prestigious auditing firms. I am sure that such accountability before Member States would be very positive and highly valued by the friendly donors who relied on an unprecedented United Nations effort that failed in Guatemala.

Who will provide explanations to the relatives of the CICIG victims? Some individuals died in jail as a result of abusive pre-trial detention; others were deprived of their freedom for years and then acquitted for lack of evidence. That is a serious matter. However, there is something even more serious and extremely critical that we must not forget: the use of false witnesses and media slander, which are despicable and condemnable acts — even more so when they came from this Organization, which promotes respect for human rights.

Those are all serious violations of the human rights of Guatemalans, which should not remain unpunished, much less so because they were committed by a Commission that fought against impunity. Nor can those facts weigh heavily on donor countries, whose good faith was betrayed. Accountability should not only apply to Member States, but also to CICIG and any agency, commission or authority operating under the auspices of the members of the Assembly.

Last August, Iván Velásquez Gómez submitted a report that was completely devoid of truth from the start. Given that the country's national and international laws were violated, as well as the human rights of its citizens, I therefore urge the Assembly to produce an objective and exhaustive report of the actions of CICIG in Guatemala, with the participation of countries that

can guarantee its accuracy. As Jesus of Nazareth said, the truth will set you free.

Against the backdrop of fighting organized crime and drug trafficking in Guatemala, a terrorist act was perpetrated in my country on 3 September. Three members of the Guatemalan armed forces were massacred in a northern community of the country. Following that incident, we made the decision to decree a state of siege in 22 of the country's municipalities. In that regard, I wish to express the rejection by the Republic of Guatemala's Government of an attempt to promote an independent investigation by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). We believe that such action is another example of the abuses that United Nations agencies have committed in my country. In that context, the Guatemalan Government wishes to express to OHCHR that it will not allow it or any other United Nations agency to carry out activities outside of their mandate. I would ask the Assembly to take note of those abuses committed in Guatemala. The investigation and clarification of that terrorist act is the strict responsibility of the Office of Guatemala's Public Prosecutor through the corresponding prosecutor's office, with the help of Guatemala's security forces and legal system.

I now turn to an extremely important issue — that of coffee, which is of paramount importance to Guatemala, as a producer. I take this opportunity to propose the creation of more favourable mechanisms for this commercial activity. We also advocate for better conditions, prices and access to more fair markets for the well-being of our economies. We urge the International Coffee Organization to comprehensively, transparently, respectfully and fairly address that issue.

At the regional level, the worrisome crisis that persists in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela compels us to consider and support the various efforts to restore democracy in that South American country. As a member of the Lima Support Group, we have strongly supported efforts to search for dialogue among all parties, in order to guarantee the rule of law in Venezuela.

It has been a great honour for me to have spoken to the Assembly, and I thank God for giving me the opportunity to strengthen Guatemala's multilateral relations with the rest of the world. I wish all members the best, and our country will continue to play its

historic role by faithfully complying with the Charter of the United Nations.

I conclude, as I began, with Seneca, who said that none of us love our homeland because it is great; we love it because it is ours.

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

*Mr. Jimmy Morales, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Address by Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces of the Republic of Kenya**

**The President:** The Assembly will now hear an address by the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces of the Republic of Kenya.

*Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces of the Republic of Kenya, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces of the Republic of Kenya, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Kenyatta:** I am indeed delighted to participate in the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. I take this opportunity to congratulate the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, a son of Africa and the Federal Republic of Nigeria. You, Sir, can count on the full support of Kenya. I also take this opportunity to commend your predecessor, Ambassador María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, who, throughout her tenure, remained steadfast in her promotion of, and commitment to, a rules-based international system and multilateralism.

The theme of this year's session, "Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion", is timely. It helps us to engage with a range of complex and intertwined global challenges that confront humankind today. We, collectively, have a solemn duty to ensure that the world is a better place for future generations.



We must bequeath our children a politically stable, environmentally healthy and socially cohesive world. We, the leaders gathered in this great Hall, are and must be the bridge to that future world.

Our actions today will determine whether that future is bleak and depleted of resources, with higher poverty levels and fragmented warring nations, or whether we bequeath to our children better living standards and prosperous, vibrant and cohesive societies that are endowed with sustainably managed resources. Never have we, the global leaders, faced such a stark choice — to either redeem the future or destroy it. That prosperous future we envisage calls us all to take bold actions that give meaning to the theme of this year's session of the General Assembly. In that regard, allow me to reflect on a number of actions that can contribute to our desired future.

First, we must put people at the core of development. We must support our populations, in particular young people, in being productively engaged, shaping the future rather than falling victim to it. In that regard, we must accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Critical to that is the generation of big, disaggregated data, which can help us to plan targeted interventions and monitor their implementation.

In Kenya we have invested heavily in education and health in an effort to achieve social inclusion, develop knowledge and competencies and secure the future by not leaving anyone behind. We have now achieved a 100 per cent transition from primary to secondary school and free secondary school education for all day scholars. To enhance equal opportunity, we have also provided re-entry for girls who drop out of school after falling pregnant. We provide free sanitary towels to all girls attending school, and Kenya's children now enjoy an average of 10.7 years of schooling, the highest in our region.

To drive its economy, Kenya is tackling the burden of disease and is on a path to achieving universal health coverage by 2022. We provide access to a health benefits package that prioritizes primary health-care interventions, reduces the cost of medicine and increases the number of people with insurance coverage.

Secondly, development cannot occur without sustainable peace. Many complicated factors have led to multilayered threats to peace in the Horn of Africa in the past three or so decades. They are exacerbated

by the disruptive effects of climate change, which introduce ecological vulnerabilities into a very delicate security context. The ability of terrorist organizations to execute their plans with impunity has added another dimension to the security terrain in our region.

A commitment to pursuing peace and security remains at the core of our foreign policy, and I am pleased to say that our combined efforts to advance peace and security in the region continue to bear fruit. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Sudan on arriving at a path to sustainable peace, which it negotiated internally with the help of the African Union. Kenya shares the optimism of the people of the Sudan, and we believe that the transitional process will pave the way for democratic elections in 2022. And I warmly commend the role of women in the Sudan in driving and facilitating an excellent outcome laden with lessons that makes the entire African continent proud.

I am also encouraged by the progress made in South Sudan. Security has improved, with a decrease in violence across the country, since the signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. I am convinced that pending issues can be resolved in a consultative and collaborative manner. I commend Mr. Riek Machar for travelling to Juba for a face-to-face meeting with his brother and colleague President Salva Kiir in order to engage on the outstanding issues. Kenya supports the creation of an all-inclusive transitional mechanism and institutions for undertaking the required political processes and reforms. That will ensure a smooth transition to the next phase of the peace process.

In the same spirit, my administration continues to reach out to the Federal Republic of Somalia in an effort to find an amicable and sustainable solution to our maritime boundary dispute. In that regard, I welcome the decision on 3 September of the African Union Peace and Security Council urging both parties to engage. As we all know, the Charter of the United Nations privileges the use of negotiation as the preferred mechanism for the settlement of disputes. Similarly, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea provides for the amicable delimitation of maritime boundaries between States. It is in that normative framework that Kenya calls for the dispute to be resolved through negotiation. We remain hopeful that the Federal Government of Somalia will be amenable and committed to the quest for a mutually acceptable and sustainable solution.

Thirdly, we must act together to protect our shared destiny. Pressure from population growth, diminishing resources and climate change puts stress on natural resources such as water, food, arable land and energy. We leaders must turn to sustainable resource-management models to help restore the balance in our ecosystem. I congratulate the Secretary-General on convening the Climate Action Summit. We must implement and scale up affordable solutions that will help us leapfrog to sustainable and more resilient economies that can reduce greenhouse emissions and push global warming below 1.5°C. Kenya and Turkey were the co-leaders of the infrastructure, cities and local action aspect of the Summit, whose aim is to build better climate resilience initiatives for the urban poor. We urge countries to put their vulnerable and poor urban communities at the centre of their climate action plans.

Together with 13 other Heads of State and Government and the Special Envoy for the Ocean, Kenya is a member of the High-level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy, which seeks to develop and support solutions for ocean health and wealth in policy, governance, technology and finance. In the Horn of Africa we are witnessing a confluence of climate change and conflict. Cyclical droughts pressure food supply, cause competition over land, water and other resources and become drivers of conflict. We welcome the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's special report on *Global Warming of 1.5°C*, which points to the urgent action needed to avert catastrophic global climate change. For its part, Kenya has embarked on programmes for sustainable, proactive climate action. We have banned the use of single-use plastics and intensified our national tree-planting campaigns in order to restore our water catchment areas. We aim to increase our forest cover from the current 7 per cent to 15 per cent by 2022. We are also focused on the development of clean energy. Today Kenya is among the top 10 global producers of geothermal electricity. We recently launched a 300-megawatt wind project, the single largest wind power project in Africa, and have several renewable energy generation projects in the pipeline.

The fourth area in which we must secure a better future is financing for development. We estimate that we need between \$2.5 trillion and \$3 trillion annually to finance the SDGs and climate action and to target the critical needs of our global population. We have to introduce innovative financing models that

reorient private capital and create new instruments and modalities that strengthen the regulatory framework in order to de-risk investments. In 2017, recognizing the untapped potential for raising capital by issuing bonds to ordinary citizens, the Government of Kenya, in conjunction with private-sector players, launched a mobile-based Government bond, M-Akiba. With as little as \$30, Kenyans can now participate in the Government securities market. We have provided financial facilitation through a revolutionary micro-, small- and medium-enterprise credit-financing scheme, Stawi — which means “prosper” in Kiswahili — that enables small business enterprises to overcome constraints, including a lack of collateral and perceived good credit risk.

The fifth area is the use of technology to drive development. The digital revolution offers opportunities to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs in multiple ways, including e-commerce, online jobs, improved service delivery, increased transparency, improved targeting for social safety-net programmes and greater financial inclusion. In Kenya, taking advantage of mobile-phone financial services, we have more than tripled financial inclusion from 26 per cent in 2006 to 82 per cent this year. In May, we launched Kenya's digital-economy blueprint for developing a digitally empowered citizenry living in a digitally enabled society. We hope to champion the growth of an African-wide digital economy.

Finally, the agenda outlined requires more, not fewer, partnerships and more, not less, collaboration and international cooperation. We must therefore re-energize and reform the multilateral system in order to guarantee our common future. We must reaffirm the values of the Charter of the United Nations, which embraces a common humanity, safeguards a rule-based international order and underscores equality and respect for all humankind.

I applaud the Secretary-General for his continued reform efforts. Kenya is honoured to host the United Nations Office in Nairobi, the only one of its kind in the global South, and looks forward to facilitating the establishment and hosting of the regional United Nations global service delivery model centre. We also welcome the positive response of the General Assembly to the concerns raised by Member States calling for better coordination on urbanization, human settlement and environmental-governance matters. In that regard, in March Kenya was proud to host a successful fourth

session of the United Nations Environment Assembly and, together with France, the third session of the One Planet Summit, as well as the first session of the UN-Habitat Assembly in May. Kenya fully supports the strengthening of governance and Member States' oversight of the UN-Habitat Assembly.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the African Union for its endorsement of Kenya's candidature for the Security Council for the period from 2021 to 2022. Our pursuit of solutions to global challenges has convinced us that we are well placed to contribute constructively to the Council. When the world had given up on our region, we in Kenya opened our doors to millions of people fleeing insecurity. To this day we host hundreds of thousands of refugees. Our investment in negotiations in the Sudan led to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, and we continue to support stabilization efforts in both the Sudan and South Sudan. When the world had turned away from Somalia, we engaged and invested in the Eldoret and Mbagathi peace processes, which led to the formation and hosting of the Transitional National Government in Kenya and, ultimately, the formation of the Transitional Federal Government in Somalia.

Over the years we have contributed more than 40,000 peacekeepers and engaged in post-conflict reconstruction and development efforts across the world. We therefore hope that our experience, competencies and unrelenting quest for peace and prosperity in our neighbourhood, on our continent and in the wider world will persuade the entire United Nations membership to support the African Union's candidate for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council during the elections scheduled for June 2020. I request the vote of each and every State Member of the United Nations family.

In conclusion, I invite everyone here to Kenya in November, when, together with the Kingdom of Denmark and the United Nations Population Fund, we will convene the Nairobi Summit on the International Conference on Population and Development. It is our opportunity to reaffirm the recognition of people's rights, choices and well-being as the path to sustainable and integrated development. Our deliberations in Nairobi will undoubtedly further secure our future and shared destiny.

**The President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President and Commander-in-Chief

of the Defence Forces of the Republic of Kenya for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces of the Republic of Kenya, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

#### **Address by Mr. Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia**

**The President:** The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Namibia.

*Mr. Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Geingob:** We are gathered here as leaders of the global community, as we have done for the past 74 years, since the signing of the Charter of the United Nations in San Francisco. The United Nations has been a beacon of hope for those who yearn for freedom, independence, peace, decent livelihoods and dignified lives. It has been a daunting task to deliver on the hopes of all the world's people. Although there have been shortcomings, we have avoided a return to the darkness that necessitated the birth of this Organization. Through multilateralism, we have consistently steered the world away from the precipice of calamity by placing a premium on peace.

Peace is a deep-rooted commitment to the principles of liberty, justice, equality and solidarity among all human beings. It is also a harmonious partnership of humankind with the environment. Those statements emanate from the International Congress on Peace in the Minds of Men, held more than 30 years ago at the initiative of UNESCO, when the people of the world anticipated a twenty-first century in which the ethos of international solidarity and harmony would reach a crowning moment.

Today, as we debate our theme, "Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion", we see a need for introspection. Considering the realities of the world today, we must ask ourselves if we can eradicate poverty, act consequentially on climate change or achieve socioeconomic inclusion without peace. We

must ponder those burning questions as we look ahead to celebrating the seventy-fifth anniversary of our Organization next year.

Mr. President, you hail from a sister country of ours whose principled and generous contribution to Africa's decolonization process is unquestionable. I want to congratulate you and your country, the Federal Republic of Nigeria, on your unanimous election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session, and to assure you of Namibia's support and cooperation during your tenure. I also want to express Namibia's appreciation to your predecessor, Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, for her sterling stewardship of our Organization during her term of office.

I would like to commend the Secretary-General for his excellent stewardship of our Organization, which, under his able leadership, continues to be at the forefront of safeguarding the welfare and security of the people and nations of the world. *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2019*, his detailed discussion of progress towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, indicates that poverty is still on the rise worldwide, compounded by multiple factors, including natural disasters. That threatens the economies of our nations and jeopardizes the aspirations of developing nations, exacerbating inequalities and plunging our people into further poverty and despair.

Despite those realities, Namibia is making inroads into eradicating poverty and reducing inequalities in income and wealth. Our Government allocates a high percentage of resources to the social sectors, including universal access to education and a highly subsidized health-care system, with the aim of reversing the effects of a skewed economy. Those investments have attained a measure of success. Within a period of 22 years, poverty in Namibia declined from a 70 per cent baseline to 18 per cent in 2016, with 400,000 of our citizens lifted out of poverty since our independence. According to the June 2017 World Bank report *Does fiscal policy benefit the poor and reduce inequality in Namibia?*, Namibia's gradual decline in poverty is attributable to a targeted policy framework that includes "a well-developed programme of cash transfers to vulnerable segments of the population". The administration of social safety nets has been a cornerstone of our multi-pronged fight against poverty.

Namibia remains one of the most unequal societies in the world, which attests to the deeply embedded structural nature of the problems we inherited from apartheid oppression. The status quo is not sustainable, and Namibia is taking steps to build a more inclusive society. At this juncture, I want to draw attention to the difficult situation that so-called higher-middle-income countries are encountering. That classification is based on a country's gross domestic product, which in Namibia's case, when divided by our small population, results in a high per capita income and our labelling as a rich country, ignoring the fact that a majority of our people, however, are still suffering from the hangover of apartheid. It is therefore a flawed formula that requires urgent reconsideration.

This year has brought the reality of climate change to the shores of every continent. We have witnessed numerous weather events around the world that have caused immense destruction and human suffering. We want to express our solidarity with all the people whose lives have been upended by these adverse events. Namibia is currently in a state of emergency owing to a severe, widespread and prolonged period of drought that has had a damaging effect on the livelihoods of our people. I declared the emergency, and I would like to thank all the countries that have responded and come to our assistance. With that in mind, Namibia hereby reiterates its commitment to the implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities should guide our commitment to tackling global environmental challenges.

In the quest for global peace, the African Union (AU) and the United Nations are solid partners in conflict resolution. That cooperation has helped to silence the guns in many parts of Africa. Those efforts are informed by our understanding that without peace our ability to realize the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the recently launched African Continental Free Trade Area will be undermined.

We cannot talk about leaving no one behind when we live in a world in which the people of the Western Sahara and Palestine have indeed been left behind. Informed by the anti-colonial struggle in our region and the international solidarity extended to us during our struggle, the Southern African Development Community convened a solidarity conference in March in South Africa for the Polisario Front and the people of Western Sahara, at which we reiterated our unwavering



commitment to the people of Western Sahara's right to self-determination and freedom. Similarly, the people of Palestine have a fundamental right to self-determination and independence. We must achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians, with the establishment of two States that coexist in an atmosphere of peace and security.

With regard to Cuba, we are disappointed that we have regressed from the thawing of relations that we witnessed a few years ago. We renew our call for the lifting of the outdated economic and financial embargo on Cuba and further call for lifting the sanctions on Zimbabwe, in support of its pursuit for economic development, unity and prosperity. We also want to express our solidarity with the Government and the people of Venezuela and to commend the Kingdom of Norway's mediation efforts in that regard.

The seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations next year will present an opportunity for concluding the reform of the Security Council. In order to reposition the Council to effectively address the new and emerging challenges of international peace and security, we must conclude the intergovernmental negotiation process. In that regard, Namibia reiterates the African common position on Security Council reform, as articulated in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration, and extends its appreciation to the Member States that have embraced it.

I have a deeply held conviction that inclusivity spells harmony, while exclusivity spells conflict. If we exclude one group or one race, there will be conflict, and if we are inclusive in governance and other areas, there will be harmony. We therefore cannot afford to leave out the majority of the world's population in our pursuit of prosperity. Without the full involvement of women and young people, we are missing an opportunity to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. It is that understanding that guides Namibia's commitment to reaching gender parity at the highest levels of governance and leadership. I want to state from this rostrum that following our upcoming elections on 27 November, we hope that our Parliament, which is currently 47 per cent women, will reach a 50/50 gender balance. Moreover, as I hope to be re-elected and form a new Government, I also want to say from this rostrum that my Cabinet will also have to achieve a 50/50 percentage. We are approaching the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) on women and

peace and security, which was originally adopted under Namibia's presidency of the Security Council (see S/PV.4208). As we prepare to assess the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, we welcome the increased participation of women in United Nations and AU peacekeeping operations.

*Ms. Beckles (Trinidad and Tobago), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

A few days ago, young people converged here to demand consequential climate action that can safeguard the planet. They presented innovative ideas and expressed their desire and commitment to spearheading the process of finding lasting solutions to this existential threat. Their actions reflect their concern for the future of this planet. The process of finding solutions must be inclusive in order to leverage the participation of young people. We heed the call of those young people. The future is in their hands. Next year we will gather here to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the establishment of this global parliament of the people. It is my hope that the outcomes of those deliberations will galvanize concrete efforts to arrest and reverse the existential threat of climate change. Namibia is a country that can attest to the effects of climate change, as it is indeed a reality in our country. Let us draw inspiration from the poignant words of Martin Luther King, Jr., who said,

"If we are to have peace on earth, our loyalties must ... transcend our race, tribe, class and our nation; and this means we must develop a world perspective."

We have a responsibility to establish a world that transcends racism, tribalism and nationalism. We must bequeath to our children a world that is more peaceful, inclusive and prosperous, a world in which they can access opportunities to employ their gifts and talents, each according to his or her ability. The future hinges on their participation, and we must ensure that they are no longer on the fringes of decision-making, but instead at the forefront in galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion.

In conclusion, as I have said, the future is in the hands of our young people. They should not attack us, because we are working together, as we are doing now. We are taking care of this world in order to leave it in their good hands.

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

*Mr. Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Address by Mr. Laurentino Cortizo Cohen,  
President of the Republic of Panama**

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

*Mr. Laurentino Cortizo Cohen, President of the Republic of Panama, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Laurentino Cortizo Cohen, President of the Republic of Panama, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Cortizo Cohen** (*spoke in Spanish*): Today our region and the entire world are facing great regional and global challenges, and we will be able to find solutions to them only if we act collectively rather than individually. We can make progress only by joining forces. The United Nations is made up of the nations of the world. If we are truly united, nations can achieve a more just and secure world of human dignity. If we call on nations freely and without imposing demands, together we can build the future. If small and large nations live together in equality and with respect, and if we hold on to the notion of making a lasting peace that is shared and universal, we will have a more fraternal world.

This is the first time that I have come to the United Nations. I am from Panama, where we live on a strip of land that, in the space of 35 minutes, spans two oceans, the Atlantic and the Pacific. Our country's aim is to serve humankind. That is our historical and geographical destiny.

Panama's story contains many pages, some written and some as yet untold. It is much more than the story of one canal. It chronicles the Afro-Antillean hands that built it and all the migrants who linked two oceans with their blood and effort. It contains the first trans-isthmus railroad that joined two oceans and facilitated world trade, as well as Geisha coffee, which is cultivated by

the Ngäbe-Buglé Indians and is the best-quality coffee in the world.

The book recounts our efforts for peace, dialogue, negotiation and consensus. One page is about the dream of Simón Bolívar, who wrote that if the world were to choose its capital, it would assign that great destiny to the Isthmus of Panama. Its pages tell of the struggle of generations of Panamanians and the global support that culminated in the signing of the Torrijos-Carter Treaties. I am referring to Jimmy Carter, former President of the United States, and Omar Torrijos, then Head of the Government of Panama, who led the negotiations between two nations, one large and one small, and who were able to reach an agreement and achieve a historic reparation — the restoration to Panama of our Canal and our territorial integrity. There is another page in that book that Pope Francis wrote this January, at the end of World Youth Day, which reads, "Panama is a country of a noble people." Those are Panama's stories.

It is a privilege to be here and to address the citizens of the world and the people of Panama, proudly representing my homeland. Global problems require multilateral solutions. As it has done in the past, Panama is ready to contribute to the resolution of conflicts, especially in our region. Right now our nation, our home, is working on a particular conquest — the fight against poverty and inequality. It is a great challenge for Panamanians, but we have decided that together we can do it. Poverty and inequality harm human beings, damage families and close off the future for young people, not just in Panama but all over the world. For every word I utter here, thousands are dying in unjust wars, without doctors or medicine. A few are earning millions, and millions are surviving on very little. Leaving people to die in misery is inhumane, and there is no room for such indifference. Let us move from words to deeds. Let us join forces. By fighting poverty and inequality and fulfilling the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, we are addressing corruption through the effective administration of justice.

Our most important task is transforming education. We have children who go to school and do not learn. We need education systems where students learn to think, work in a team, solve problems, harness creativity, take care of the environment and appreciate art and culture and science and technology. Education frees us from poverty and empowers people to achieve a dignified life. Education means social peace, while creating opportunities and making us more equal in our diversity.

Education means human dignity. Sharing knowledge is a universal goal of sustainable development, from early childhood to the best universities in the world. We should be generous in sharing knowledge rather than selfish in monopolizing it.

We have heard the concerns and warnings that were expressed at the Climate Action Summit loud and clear. Our verdant tropical forests are the most beautiful in the world. In Panama there are more than 10,000 varieties of plants and 1,000 species of birds. The biodiversity of the planet is in our hands. We must all work together for change in order to reduce the danger of our extinction. There are 1 million species at risk of dying out. We must expand multilateral initiatives to strengthen the climate change regime, and we must fulfil the agreements we sign. Our culture is changing. We are at a historic crossroads and we must redefine our own existence. We must redouble our efforts.

We invite the whole world to Panama. We offer more room for dialogue and regional and global understanding. I am not talking about a never-ending dialogue but rather those that unite and resolve. We facilitate good investments and have the best air, maritime, seaport and telecommunications connectivity in the region. We are the hub of the Americas. Panama is a land of innovation, science and technology and a place for universal encounters with knowledge.

There is a place in the world called Panama. It is written in the pages of our history that we never allow ourselves to be conquered by adversity. We know that better times are coming. That is what we want and aspire to for Panamanians and for all humankind. I want to reiterate that Panama is a country of noble and good people. Those are the pages of the story that we will continue to write. Today we are facing great challenges, but we can succeed in moving forward only by joining forces. The time is now.

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

*Mr. Laurentino Cortizo Cohen, President of the Republic of Panama, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

## **Address by Mr. Carlos Alvarado Quesada, President of the Republic of Costa Rica**

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Costa Rica.

*Mr. Carlos Alvarado Quesada, President of the Republic of Costa Rica, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Carlos Alvarado Quesada, President of the Republic of Costa Rica, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Alvarado Quesada (spoke in Spanish):** In Germany, there was once a mayor of Cologne — at 41, he was a young leader for his times — who held the view that peace in Europe depended on the relations between Germany and France. He said that could be achieved only by developing strong economic and political ties that would unite the interests of both nations. Today that proposition would surprise no one, but what is different about it was that Konrad Adenauer, that young mayor, was advocating it from his mayor's office about 100 years ago, in the 1920s, as he sought better relations between the countries of the Rhine basin. The idea did not prosper at the time, much less with the outbreak of the Second World War, which led to the events we are all familiar with that resulted in the promulgation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the creation of this formidable Organization that is the United Nations, where I have the honour to speak today.

Similarly, in 1960 some other visionary leaders in Central America began the process of creating the Central American Common Market, the oldest integration effort on the continent, which helped to jointly drive the development of Central America with a view to improving its inhabitants' living conditions.

The leaders who preceded me in Costa Rica were also ahead of their times. As early as the second half of the nineteenth century we announced that education for children would be free and compulsory, and in 1941 we established the foundations of a universal social-security system. Seventy years ago we abolished our army and declared that we would be at peace with the world forever. At the time, it was said that it would be impossible for a country to survive without an army, and yet here I am, 70 years later, proof to the contrary.

In 1981 we opened the University for Peace to the world. All of that was possible only in a multilateral world that fights for peace, international law and human rights. Our continent's ideas also showed themselves ahead of their times with the adoption of the American Convention on Human Rights, known as the San José Pact, and with the creation of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

Would it have been possible to advance the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the creation of the United Nations, the implementation of the Marshall Plan, the Alliance for Progress, decolonization or the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons as proactive steps towards building a better world? Or was it inevitable that they were responses, aimed at preventing new wars and other global threats? Might it have been possible to avoid so much pain and loss?

Ideas can be ahead of their time. Rather than waiting, we should take the initiative to mobilize joint projects for peace and progress for humankind as a road to building a better shared future for all through multilateralism. The freedom of the human spirit compels us to act. We should not be condemned merely to be reactive to potential painful events that might occur or that we know could occur in the future. It is our responsibility today to anticipate the direction that history will take and to take advantage of opportunities, without allowing a new economic, environmental or conflict crisis to be the new lever that compels us to adopt the necessary changes.

Contemporary thinkers such as Rob Riesen, Yuval Noah Harari, Joseph Stiglitz and others agree that today we are seeing parallels with the world of the 1930s. Despair, frustration, resentment and the lack of a sense of belonging create a breeding ground for regimes that trample on people's rights and wage war in the name of perverse and spurious ideals. In an era of profound transformation that is forcing us to rethink the very foundations of our social contract, a simplistic discourse of "isms" is echoing around and penetrating societies from within, gathering popular support in democratic and legal systems, and within our democracies we have been unable to provide similarly agile and concrete responses to inequality and a lack of opportunity.

We must also anticipate history with strength and courage, so as not to repeat the mistakes of the past. In our discussions over the past few days during the

Climate Action Summit, we have discussed the urgent implementation of global mechanisms to address our current challenges, and we have analysed the positive results we have had where we have been able to implement innovative ideas.

Based on its history, Costa Rica supports multilateralism as a tool to confront common threats and build a joint future for our planet. Advocating for multilateral solutions to common global causes does not mean that we must agree on each and every detail. We must do it while respecting each other's differences, with dialogue and an understanding that our shared objective transcends individual differences. We are capable of agreeing on coordinating our actions and contributions for the common cause, as was achieved in the founding Charter of the United Nations, the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

No home is more shared than the planet we inhabit and no cause is more global than the fight against the climate crisis. No one can escape its effects and no contribution is too small, because only the sum of the actions of all countries and all people will enable us to address it. We are honoured that the international community has entrusted Costa Rica with organizing the preparatory meeting for the twenty-fifth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which we are hosting between 8 and 10 October, in preparation for the twenty-fifth Conference of the Parties, to be held in December by our brother country Chile. Our commitments must be clear, concrete and forceful.

In February, in our resolve to do our part, we launched a national decarbonization plan for Costa Rica to achieve a modern, green, digital, resilient and inclusive economy free from the use of fossil fuels by 2050, in line with our ambitious environmental goals, taking the disruptive approach that has been characteristic of our country. In the same way that we have shown that it is possible to achieve 99 per cent clean and renewable electricity and to reverse deforestation processes, going from 20 per cent forest cover in the 1980s to what is now more than 50 per cent, we are working towards the goals of decarbonization, biodiversity conservation and the implementation of nature-based solutions. That is what the young people and many others who have been demonstrating on a weekly basis in so many countries are demanding.



The effects of the climate crisis, inequality, poverty and, in many cases, violence drive migratory flows of millions of people around the world that represent a challenge for the international community. From the point of view of human rights, we must provide united and sophisticated responses. Central American migration could be eliminated by bringing economic and social development to our countries' rural areas, which is where most migrant populations come from. The best investment in migration is to establish good, fair and well-paid international markets for the agricultural and pastoral products produced in rural Central America and thereby improve well-being in those areas. That could be done through the combined efforts of many countries and partners by means of good, fair market prices, technology, added value and cooperation. That is the best and most humane solution to the tragedy of economic migration.

An African proverb says that when two elephants fight it is the grass that suffers — or these days we could say we all suffer. Humankind has already endured an era of bipolarity, and we know what the legacy of that was. The turbulence affecting the global economy today is hampering economic growth, especially in the most vulnerable countries, as the employment and entrepreneurship opportunities linked to production disappear. In addition to its economic impact, that puts pressure on democratic institutions. Democracies are affected by restrictive environments and austerity regimes that are designed to maintain macroeconomic balances but also limit plans for reducing inequalities and concentrated wealth. Less spending on weapons and accumulation and more investment in fighting poverty, inequality and climate change is the smartest thing that the world can do today. Let us once more get ahead of history in that regard.

The information society and digitization have created an additional area of pressure. Participating in the fourth industrial revolution is not optional. We are being forced to rethink the future of work, the conceptualization of learning and the sustainability of employment-based social protection institutions, as the International Labour Organization and its Global Commission on the Future of Work have begun to do. The world must not let its cohesion weaken. We must bridge the gap between the excluded and the included of the world. Managing technological change to advance decent work and close technological and gender gaps

will be key to getting ahead of history and preserving the democratic and social fabric.

The establishment of a global initiative for digital inclusion and literacy, as well as inclusion itself, would be the smartest thing we could do for humankind. We should not be erecting more barriers because of our differences but rather reaping an abundance of human enrichment and understanding through our marvellous diversity. As in any natural ecosystem, human diversity enables us to complement one other and makes us stronger, and our cohesion lies in the respect, understanding and empathy we have for one another. We, the States that make up this Organization, have the tools to do that, and young people are demanding it.

Democracy, peace, the defence of international law, human rights and international humanitarian law are all facing challenges. In Nicaragua, there is a clear need to restore social peace. Costa Rica has denounced the violence, the disrespect and the ongoing, constant, State-sponsored violations of human rights suffered by those who oppose the Government, which have drastically increased the number of refugees that we receive from that country. National dialogue and an inclusive, transparent and internationally supervised electoral process are crucial.

As a global community, we must seek a peaceful and expeditious settlement to the situation of grave political, humanitarian and human rights violations into which the ruling regime has plunged our brother people of Venezuela. The human rights violations are confirmed in the latest report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the human rights situation in Venezuela (A/HRC/41/18). We must also put an end to the economic blockade of Cuba, whose adverse effects are inflicted on its population, and concert real efforts to deal with the political and social crisis in Haiti. In all those cases, let us get ahead of history.

Strengthening inclusion, especially with regard to gender equality, women's economic and political empowerment and the fight against all forms of discrimination, with an emphasis on those based on race, religion or sexual orientation, is vital to ensuring respect for human rights and sustainable development. Costa Rica is committed to advancing the rights of people of African descent who face clear conditions of disadvantage. In October we are hosting a high-level meeting on accelerating global action for ensuring the

rights of people of African descent. Epsy Campbell Barr, the Vice-President of Costa Rica, who is the continent's first woman of African descent to occupy that post, will assume that responsibility on behalf of my Government.

More than ever in today's world we need people and leaders who are courageous in both heart and mind, and our responses must strengthen our welfare and peace institutions, support a free press, promote truthful information, protect the security of people's private information, devise ethical algorithms and protocols and, above all, improve the lives of all people, hopefully lifting their spirits. The hands engraved almost 50,000 years ago in cave paintings, whether in the Sulawesi caves in Indonesia or in the El Castillo cave in Cantabria in Spain, illustrate our shared path as human beings. They are the same hands of the same species. The Egyptian and Mayan pyramids and the stone spheres of the Diquís in my country are examples of the civilizations that we have built and that taken together are the legacies of a single humankind.

Our mission as leaders today is to get ahead of history and to learn from it so as not to end up like Sisyphus. Getting ahead of history means having courageous and innovative proposals so that when the day comes, we can together overcome the challenges that threaten our planet and one day fulfil intimate dreams such as those of the Costa Rican poet Jorge Debravo, when he wrote, "I ask for tenderness, dinner, silence, bread, home ...", or the big shared dreams that unite us, such as in the poem by the great American writer Ray Bradbury in which he wrote,

"I work for that  
Short man, Large dream  
I send my rockets forth between my ears  
Hoping an inch of Good is worth a pound of years  
Aching to hear a voice cry back along the  
universal mall:  
We've reached Alpha Centauri!  
We're tall, O God, we're tall!"

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

*Mr. Carlos Alvarado Quesada, President of the Republic of Costa Rica, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Address by His Excellency Mr. Faiez Mustafa Serraj, President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord of Libya**

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord of Libya.

*Mr. Faiez Mustafa Serraj, President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord of Libya, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Faiez Mustafa Serraj, President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord of Libya, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Serraj (spoke in Arabic):** I would like to begin by taking this opportunity to congratulate President Muhammad-Bande on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. I wish him every success in leading the work of the Assembly. I also want to express my thanks and appreciation to Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés for her exceptional work during her presidency of the previous session. And I thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his ongoing efforts to achieve the goals and purposes of the United Nations — maintaining international peace and security, supporting stability, advancing development and promoting human rights.

I have come to address the Assembly regarding my country's cause. Libya is experiencing an extraordinary situation and an extremely serious crisis resulting from damaging foreign interference that has led to institutional and political division. The crisis has been exacerbated to such an extent that the capital and its suburbs have been under military attack that has external funding and support, with serious negative consequences for our citizens' security, safety and welfare.

It is no exaggeration to say that the quest for security, stability and civil peace in Libya is a critical issue not just for our country but for the stability of the region and the world. The assault on the capital and its suburbs was led by a rebel soldier, the self-styled Khalifa Haftar, in what he says was a holy jihad. It took place on 4 April, the same day that the Secretary-General visited Tripoli, and at a time when

the country was excitedly and hopefully preparing to hold an inclusive national conference aimed at finding a political solution to the problem of Libya. Just days before the conference, Khalifa Haftar destroyed the aspirations of the Libyan people — and the efforts of the international community — with his attempt at a coup, incidentally not his first, against the legitimate Government. In February 2014, via a television transmission, he declared that he had suspended Parliament, the Government and the Constitutional Declaration. However, the coup failed, and now Haftar is once again trying desperately to militarize the country and block our path to building a modern civilian State, mocking the Libyan people's revolution and the sacrifices they have made to free the country from dictatorship and the rule of one individual.

This war criminal has been encouraged to carry out his aggression with military and financial support that he has received from certain States over the years in flagrant violation of the Security Council resolutions banning the importation of arms into Libya. This support deluded him into believing that he could enter the capital in two days. However, his delusions were dashed, and the world has begun to realize that he claims falsely that he is strong and leading a bloody militia seeking power.

Thanks to our brave army's repeated victories and other supportive forces, we have defeated his aggression and have seen a change in the attitude of some countries, which supported us once Haftar's intentions and lies were revealed and his failure was confirmed. Unfortunately, however, there are other countries that continue to interfere directly in our affairs and support the aggression, such as the United Arab Emirates, whose media recently allowed Haftar to freely broadcast his hate speech and incitement to kill Libyans. Furthermore, French Javelin missiles were found after the liberation of the city of Gharyan, the aggressor's base of operations. We are also puzzled by the positions of some other States, particularly our neighbour Egypt, which interferes in our affairs and lectures Libyans on democracy, the civilian State, the economy and wealth distribution. We denounce attitudes such as these that lend support to the war criminal and the plotters of his coup, in flagrant violation of relevant Security Council resolutions.

We affirm that we will continue to deter the aggressor and defeat him, despite any support he may receive. We consider his supporters morally and legally

responsible and will strive to prevent anyone from shedding Libyan blood. Our army and other supportive forces, through the Volcano of Rage operation, are bravely registering one victory after another. We want to pay tribute to all our brave heroes and pray that the souls of our martyrs will rest in peace. Despite the pain, their heroic epics will remain alive in the memory of our homeland and its future generations.

The aggressor's plans are clearly apparent in the areas under his control by force. His human rights violations include extrajudicial killings, forced disappearances — such as that of Ms. Siham Sergiwa, a member of Parliament, and other national figures — the suppression of opinions and elimination of political opposition. The aggression has resulted in fatal casualties among young Libyans, numbering some 3,000 so far, and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of others. The aggression forces have committed serious violations that have been documented and that qualify as war crimes under international law, including actions in Tripoli and its suburbs and in the city of Murzuq. There have been random bombings of civilian neighbourhoods and attacks targeting civilian airports, hospitals, ambulances and infrastructure as well as practices such as child recruitment. The list goes on.

Behind all of this is the war criminal himself and everyone who supports him with financing and weapons. We therefore reiterate our request that Khalifa Haftar's name be put on the international sanctions list and his supporters held legally responsible and accountable for their killings and destruction. In that context, we are asking the United Nations to quickly dispatch a fact-finding mission to investigate and document these flagrant violations, just as we have asked the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to speed up her investigations in that regard.

The aggressor has tried to sway public opinion by saying that he is fighting terrorism. That is a false claim. It is the forces of the Government of National Accord, as part of the international coalition to combat terrorism, that have fought and defeated the terrorist organization Da'esh and liberated Sirte from its elements. We continue to cooperate strategically with the United States and to work together to root out the remnants of terrorism, wherever they are. We will keep fighting until we eradicate all the terrorists and terrorism. Our soldiers who fought that terrorist group

are the ones who are now pushing back the treacherous aggression against the Libyan capital and other regions.

In the face of his failing allegations, the aggressor is trying to promote the idea that the war is between eastern and western Libya. This is based on a totally false premise, because there are no disputes in Libya in terms of social and religious infrastructure. The war is actually between the advocates for a civilian State and those who want to militarize it. It is therefore high time that the country's eastern region was represented by an elite group of intellectuals, politicians and effective social elements who can work with the representatives of other regions in order to achieve a consensus political solution that guarantees rights and a peaceful transfer of power within the framework of a modern civilian State.

We want peace and accord. We have repeatedly stressed that there can be no military solution to the conflict in Libya. Neither can it have a winner. There is one loser in this conflict, and that is Libya. We are ready to prevent bloodshed for all Libyans, and I want to take this opportunity to urge all the young people who have been persuaded to participate in a war without a cause, a war waged on behalf of one person who is obsessed with power, to lay down their arms, return safely to their homes and stand with their homeland.

We want to live in peace and connect with other States of the world in cooperation and mutual respect. We reject all interference in our domestic affairs. In that regard, we welcomed the adoption on 12 September of Security Council resolution 2486 (2019), extending the mandate of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, which affirmed its continued commitment to the Libyan Political Agreement and to ensuring that Member States stop dealing with parallel institutions. It also stressed the importance of completing the constitutional process and holding elections. We are firmly committed to dialogue and the political process within the framework of new mechanisms that take account of the consequences of the 4 April aggression. We reiterate that we will not sit down again with Haftar. He is a war criminal, not a partner for peace.

In June, I proposed an initiative for holding a national conference to include representatives of all Libyans who support a democratic civilian State, which would culminate in the holding of legislative and presidential elections based on a legal foundation established by the conference. There can be no place at the dialogue table for anyone wanting to militarize the

State and to consign us to years of underdevelopment and terrorism. In that regard, we have held a series of national consultations that have included all sectors of Libyan society, including representatives of the political, social and cultural sectors as well as women, young people and military leaders. We will continue to hold such meetings to bring together representatives of every region, and we will include civil society in order to consolidate a comprehensive national vision for ending the crisis. At this critical time we therefore welcome the position of the members of the parliamentary session held in Tripoli and of the State Council, which holds them responsible for rolling back the enemy, establishing democracy and fostering a modern civilian State.

Resolution 2486 (2019) has a number of positive aspects, in particular its reference in paragraph 1 to the consolidation of the Government of National Accord's governance and security arrangements, and including support for the economic reforms that we adopted in September of last year. In that context, we should point out that we have taken steps to implement decentralization by transferring responsibility for many services to elected municipal councils, thereby providing such services directly to our citizens.

Despite the claims of some to the contrary, we want to emphasize that the national budget is being disbursed in a fair and balanced way to all areas of Libya, without exception, distinction or marginalization. The salaries of all public service workers are being paid from the budget. In that regard, I would like to point to the serious financial violations on the part of some illegal parallel institutions and to warn the world that they deal in coinage outside legal channels. I also want to issue a warning against selling Libyan oil outside the legitimate framework. Our oil belongs to all Libyans, and its management is the responsibility of Libya's National Oil Corporation alone. The Government of National Accord is the only authority entitled to oversee the State's financial and economic institutions. We therefore renew our call for the speedy establishment under the supervision of the United Nations of a technical committee from the specialized international institutions to review the operations of the Central Bank in Tripoli and its branch in Al Bayda.

As we all know, security and a prosperous economy are linked. They are two sides of the same coin. We have therefore been eager to complement our economic reforms with reform of the security sector



by implementing security arrangements aimed at establishing an overall system based on security forces and a regular police force that function according to professional criteria. Before the aggression we had made positive steps in that regard, which led to a considerable improvement in the security situation and the return of several diplomatic missions to Tripoli. We were also able to contain all the armed groups, launch a programme and mechanisms for collecting weapons and integrating former militants into our national security and military institutions, and to provide work opportunities and rehabilitation to those who want to reintegrate into civilian life. We will not surrender the State's monopoly on weapons, and we do not accept the existence of armed groups within our civilian State.

In the midst of this crisis, my country is facing another critical challenge, that of illegal migration and the considerable flow of irregular migrants through Libya in their quest to reach Europe via the Mediterranean Sea. This dangerous situation has major repercussions for us, including on the economic, security and social fronts. The aggression has only exacerbated the problem, and has resulted in many deaths because people have either been drowned at sea or lost in the desert. Migrants have become easy prey for terrorist organizations and human traffickers. The aggressor militias worsened this tragedy when they bombed a migrant shelter centre, killing and wounding dozens, including women and children. The international community met it with silence and evaded any direct condemnation of the perpetrator of that ugly crime.

This issue of migration is one of great concern for both Libyans and Europeans, but we are its victims, not its cause. In that regard, we have continued to cooperate with migrants' destination countries and with all regional and international efforts to address the problem. It is essential that all countries work together, whether they are countries of origin, transit or destination. We must focus not just on the security dimension but also on migration's many other aspects, as well as fostering development in countries of origin in order to eliminate poverty and unemployment while encouraging stability and survival.

As a transit country for migrants, Libya is in urgent need of political support commensurate with the challenges and dangers we are dealing with so that we can establish the institutions required to control borders, limit the problem and minimize its impact, and I am appealing for that support. What we have

received is completely disproportionate to what has been provided to other States facing migration-related problems that are far less intense than Libya's. In that regard, we highly appreciate the efforts by the Coast Guards who continue to help save the lives of thousands of migrants at sea despite limited capacities and the embargo imposed on us. In our opinion, the solution still lies in efforts to support my country's stability. A stable Libya will be able to secure its borders and provide job opportunities to hundreds of thousands of legal workers, in accordance with Libyan labour law.

Human rights and the rule of law are critical issues to which my country attaches great importance. The changes that have taken place since 2011 have created the conditions for achieving comprehensive reforms in that regard, and several measures and decisions promoting human rights have been adopted. The Government of National Accord is also coordinating with the judiciary to create an environment conducive to its critical and important role, ensuring the principle of impunity and empowering law-enforcement agencies to do their job as required. In that regard, we look forward to cooperating with the relevant specialized United Nations agencies and receiving their technical support in that area.

Despite the difficult circumstances, we are keeping track of everything taking place around us. We are contributing everything we can in support of every possible positive measure that serves peoples' interests and the cause of peace. In that context, we want to express our concern about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, which constitutes a threat to international peace and security.

My country supports reform of the Security Council and an increase in the numbers of its permanent and non-permanent members, as well as promoting the rights of non-member States that are directly affected by the issues on the Council's agenda, including the right to participate directly in the Council's activities. My country also stresses the importance of recognizing the right of the countries of the African continent to permanent representation on the Council.

The issue of peace in the Middle East is extremely important. In the face of the many crises afflicting the region, we have spared no effort in supporting the Palestinian people and their right to establish an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with the Arab Peace Initiative on the settlement

of the Palestinian question. My country also supports all efforts aimed at finding a peaceful solution to the situations in our brother countries of Syria and Yemen, in order to protect them from the dangers of disintegration and division as a result of destructive conflict and to realize their peoples' aspiration to live in dignity under a democratic system that respects the law and preserves human rights.

In conclusion, I want to take this opportunity to appeal from this international rostrum to every State concerned about Libya's stability to cooperate with our Government of National Accord and with the United Nations initiatives. We urge them to uphold international law and help the Libyan people on their path to peace, security and consensus. It is time for our country to achieve stability and for our people to enjoy security and begin the process of reconstruction. There has been enough bloodshed and enough wasted money and time.

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord of the State of Libya for the statement he has just made.

*His Excellency Mr. Faiez Mustafa Serraj, President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord of the State of Libya, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Address by Mr. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana**

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

*His Excellency Mr. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Akufo-Addo:** Ghana presents its compliments to the President, a worthy representative of our great neighbour the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and congratulates him heartily on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. We also want to express our appreciation to the President of the seventy-third session for her work and

to commend the brave theme that has been selected for our consideration during this session.

I note that there is a United Nations-accepted definition of poverty, which, like everything undertaken by our Organization, tries to find a form of words that is acceptable to all of us. However, it is probably fair to say that those of us who live in States generally referred to as developing countries are somewhat bemused by arguments and complicated definitions of poverty. For us, poverty is a daily reality that we live with and feel, for far too many of our people are burdened with it, and it robs us of the dignity that should be the inherent right of every human being. We know that our performance as Governments will be judged by how successful we are in reducing and eventually eradicating poverty in our countries. As individual sovereign countries, the responsibility is ours not only to aim at reducing poverty but to actually create prosperity for all our citizens. We in Ghana are certainly engaged in fighting to eradicate poverty from our country. If the world wants to marshal all its undoubted energies to support that fight, there can be no better way to start than an acknowledgement and a consensus among the nations of the world that poverty anywhere degrades us all, whether in the developed or developing world.

Luckily for us, technological advances are short-circuiting the path that leads us out of poverty, and it is no longer the long and tortuous road it used to be. A mere 20 years ago, mobile phones were a rarity that some feared would become a developed-world status symbol and another sign of the technology gap between rich and poor. Today the poorest person in the most inaccessible place in the poorest country has a mobile phone — often a smartphone. In many ways, that has transformed our lives. In the year 2000 in Ghana, there were 90,000 mobile-phone subscribers; today there are more than 41 million. That has led to a remarkable change in the communications within our country and with the outside world. A sizeable and growing proportion of the population has been and continues to be brought into the formal banking sector by the mobile phone.

The application of technology can be the tool to set us on the road to prosperity. The modernization of agriculture through the application of technology could well turn out to be the fastest way to make the turnaround we seek. The young people of the world, especially in Ghana and Africa, have demonstrated their ingenuity and innovative prowess, and we need to

enlist them fully in the fight. It would of course be an easier battle if trade practices were seen to be fairer and more equitable. The question still remains whether the rich nations are prepared for an equitable and fair trade order. It appears that they are not, and we must therefore continue to fight for a fairer world economic order.

It should not be lost on anyone that the minerals on which the world depends to move industry and manufacturing are mostly available in Africa, and yet we who own those fundamental resources by birthright have remained poor, while our minerals have brought vast wealth to nations and peoples outside our continent. It is also worth pointing out that not only do we not get a fair share of the wealth once it is extracted, our lands, environment and oceans are often left devastated by the process, and the competition to gain control over those minerals has often led to insecurity in our countries. I do not seek to blame outsiders for our problems, but since we are being urged to find multilateral solutions, I believe it is worth pointing out that unfairness in the economic order undermines the fight against poverty. Indeed, the flight of capital is continuing the foreign exploitation of Africa, represented by colonialism and imperialism. The report of the High Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa, chaired by a highly respected former President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, has raised the lid on what many had always suspected but did not have the figures to support. According to that report, Africa is losing more than \$50 billion annually through illicit financial outflows. Collaboration is certainly needed among the nations of the world to stop that rape of Africa.

The African Continental Free Trade Area, which recently came into effect and whose secretariat Ghana has the honour of hosting, is a major collective effort by Africa to get to grips with mastering its own development. It will be the world's largest free-trade area since the formation of the World Trade Organization, and will provide us with a vehicle to improve our trade among ourselves and an opportunity to exploit our abundant wealth and resources for the benefit of our peoples, as well as giving us protection in dealing with other trading blocs.

The fight to eradicate poverty is intrinsically linked to quality education, the second of the issues identified for special attention in the theme of this General Assembly session. Wherever quality education is available, there is usually prosperity. Throughout the ages, education has been the most equitable source of

opportunities and has provided the fastest and most reliable route out of poverty. We in Ghana acknowledge that we need an educated and skilled population to be able to compete effectively in the world economy. We are therefore taking the courageous step of spending a substantial part of our national revenue — indeed, a third of our nation's budget — on education.

We can and should also employ technology to accelerate the provision of quality education to as many people as possible. Very soon, we might not have to enter classrooms or even the hallowed grounds of famous universities to gain access to the knowledge that used to be exclusively available in those institutions. It is possible now for our young people to listen to lectures and watch experiments by famous scientists and scholars on their smartphones and laptops, without ever setting eyes on or physically entering an Ivy League university. But to be able to benefit from these opportunities made possible by technology, we have to raise our infrastructure to a basic minimum level. We must provide reliable electricity and Internet services to the people in our towns and villages, so that they will truly be able to reap the benefits of the technology that brings quality education to all. We can then have a realistic expectation of a prosperous future.

The general debate of the General Assembly of the United Nations is usually convened at a time of year when extremes of nature are on display around the world. Maybe we are being urged to take notice, as well as — hopefully — to take practical and proactive steps to curb the human activities that are endangering our planet. Our world is enriched by its diversity of cultures, religions and beliefs, which add spice to our lives, but there are scientific and mathematical truths that do not change with space or time. We would all do well to uphold those truths. Now that the scientists have spoken on the realities of climate change, I believe it is time to direct our energies to what we can and should do to counteract the danger and end unnecessary arguments. Nature has been brutal this year, demonstrating to us that our climate is changing and that we are probably pushing our world towards destruction. The devastation wreaked by Cyclone Idai, Hurricane Dorian and the extreme summer temperatures across Europe surely provides the evidence, if any were still needed, that it is time to take action to bring our world back from the precipice.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the historic landing on the moon, a seminal event that

celebrated scientific achievement and humankind's triumph. The image that has stayed with me since I was 25 years old, and that still brings me true awe and wonder, is that picture of the Earth taken from the vantage point of the astronauts, clearly showing the truth of the one world that we inhabit. We may try to delineate our borders more clearly or make clearer distinctions on the basis of colour, race, language and creed, but that picture tells us that the natural path is to be inclusive.

In no way is this meant to paper over the many difficulties in our part of the world that we must work to overcome, or to suggest that because some parts of the world are developed and prosperous we can pretend that all is well with us, too. In my part of the world, we do not argue over what constitutes poverty. We know it, live with it and feel it because it is a daily reality. As the old saying goes, birds sing not because they have answers but because they have songs. There might not be any one answer to the theme of this seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly, but the hope is that the discussions will point us towards the possibility of a new world, in which collaboration between nations and peoples is on such a scale that we can dream of a sustainably prosperous world and achieve it too.

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

*Mr. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

#### **Address by Mr. Gitanas Nausėda, President of the Republic of Lithuania**

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

*Mr. Gitanas Nausėda, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Gitanas Nausėda, President of the Republic of Lithuania, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Nausėda:** It is a great privilege for me to address this great institution for the first time on

behalf of the Republic of Lithuania. I have come with the message that my country is deeply committed to the core values and principles of the United Nations. The responsibility to seek peace, protect human rights and work for the general welfare is our main goal, rooted in our difficult history. Lithuania suffered painful losses during the two World Wars. It experienced two brutal totalitarian regimes, Nazism and Stalinism. After regaining independence almost 30 years ago, we rebuilt our democratic State institutions, created an effective market economy and joined the world's major political, economic and cultural organizations.

History is a great teacher. It teaches us not to repeat the mistakes of the past and it inspires us to move on to new heights. One month ago, we commemorated the eightieth anniversary of the infamous Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. That criminal conspiracy led to the Second World War and the occupation of the three Baltic States. Every year on that same day we also celebrate a moment of great triumph. Thirty years ago, the people of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia joined hands in a 650-kilometre-long Baltic Way, strongly condemning the Pact. That was an important step in our struggle for freedom, and we will never forget it.

Lithuania has always strongly supported and promoted multilateral cooperation. Effective, rule-based multilateralism upholds the world order and contributes to international peace and security. A determination to adhere to international law is often the last barrier separating our countries from unpredictable, and therefore dangerous, disorder. In this world of many uncertainties, we need multilateral mechanisms more than ever before.

Against this background, the Charter of the United Nations plays an exceptional role, as it commits all nations to working together towards a better world for all. We therefore fully support the steps taken by the Secretary-General to reform the United Nations in order to make the Organization more resilient and more capable of addressing difficult global challenges.

We need a stronger United Nations to respond more effectively to protracted conflicts and humanitarian crises in the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa and other regions. We also need active engagement on the part of all States Members of the United Nations to eliminate and prevent large-scale crimes against humanity and to find long-term political solutions.



Unfortunately, in this world rife with crises, Europe is no longer an exception. The illegitimate use of force and serious violations of sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity have become part of everyday life in Europe. Russia, a permanent member of the Security Council, encouraged by the feeble international response to its 2008 aggression against Georgia, is attempting to further destabilize countries in its environs. Russia's appalling military actions against Ukraine have been continuing for five years now.

Lithuania strongly condemns that prolonged violation of international law and urges the aggressor to respect the Charter, the Helsinki Final Act and its bilateral agreements with Ukraine. We will continue to support Georgian and Ukrainian independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. We will never recognize the illegal annexation of Crimea or the occupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. We hold that the implementation of the Minsk agreements is an absolute precondition for normalizing relations with Russia.

Some political leaders are floating the idea of creating a new geopolitical space from the Atlantic Ocean to Vladivostok, drawing Russia in. It may sound interesting, but do we have common ground for it? Do we have shared values? The answer, unfortunately, is no. We have to remember the hard lessons of history. There was a time when left-leaning intellectuals welcomed Vladimir Lenin's ascent to power during the Russian Revolution. There was a time when the independence-seeking Baltic States were being instructed not to rush so as not to harm Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika. Both times it all ended with innocent blood being shed.

As a matter of principle, we should not endorse unions in which some States become the subjects of history and others just objects. As of today, Russia has done nothing to inspire our confidence. Could this change? Yes, it could. We would be the first to welcome this turn of events, with a democratic Russia respecting international law and the sovereignty of other countries.

Today we need to realize that open disrespect for international law endangers global security. It is often accompanied by drastic violations of human rights and undermines our efforts to build prosperous societies. We know that there can be no peace or security without responsibility. We have repeatedly seen that impunity breeds fresh violence. Those who have committed

crimes against humanity must know that they will not go unpunished.

Lithuania is one of the countries that are still waiting for justice. During the brutal events of January 1991, Soviet military tanks attacked peaceful protesters in newly independent Lithuania. Fourteen civilians were killed and more than 800 injured. Twenty-eight years later, the Lithuanian court convicted 67 former Soviet officers and military personnel for war crimes and crimes against humanity. However, Russia continues to shield the perpetrators from justice and has even initiated criminal proceedings against the Lithuanian judges and prosecutors who investigated the case. We see this as impermissible interference in a sovereign State's delivery of justice.

Knowing the true significance of justice, we will continue working to ensure the universality and indivisibility of human rights. Lithuania's key priorities as a candidate for the Human Rights Council for the period from 2022 to 2024 will be women's and children's rights, as well as the protection of freedom of expression. We hold that every nation, small or large, has a right and a duty to strive for a better world for all. During Lithuania's presidency of the Security Council in 2015, we reinforced our commitments regarding the use of small arms and light weapons as well as the protection of journalists in zones of conflict. Responding to violations of international law, we kept the Council's attention on the ongoing aggression against Ukraine.

Lithuania will continue its active participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations as well as its contribution to military training and humanitarian actions in Mali, the Central African Republic and Somalia. We actively support all efforts to strengthen United Nations peacekeeping forces, including Action for Peacekeeping and the Secretary-General's initiative to fight sexual exploitation in military conflicts. Recognizing the irreplaceable role played by women in building and maintaining peace, we will work to expand women's engagement in peacekeeping operations.

Our common efforts to seek security and justice create the preconditions for fighting poverty, income inequality, social exclusion and the climate crisis. Only lasting stability across societies and nations as well as greater democratic inclusion of all citizens will ensure the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. That is why I launched the idea of a welfare

State in Lithuania as a strategic concept for the next five years of my presidency. That initiative is built on the core principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals. The most difficult challenge is to translate it into reality. Only specific and streamlined action can bring us closer to success.

At the international level, I call on everyone to identify the greatest threats to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and to come up with adequate solutions. In Lithuania's view, violations of a rules-based global order, the transformation of cyberspace into a new arena for an arms race and disrespect for international environmental and nuclear safety standards, as well as neglect of climate change, should be considered the most serious risks.

Our commitment to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change remains critical to Lithuania's long-term strategy. Our climate change mitigation policy is based on the sustainable use of renewables and increased energy efficiency.

Along with developing wind and solar energy, we are also determined to switch from fossil fuels to biomass in the heating sector. In only five years, Lithuania has built an effective network of small biomass boilers, demonstrating that cities and towns can easily transform their district heating, and that the local energy potential can be exploited in a sustainable way and green jobs rapidly created. We presented the sustainable heating initiative, supported by a number of countries, at the Climate Action Summit 2019 and we are ready to share our experience with all interested parties.

In the upcoming United Nations discussions on environmental issues, we will speak in favour of enhancing climate and security elements. We speak out loudly against the threats and negative environmental effects posed by chemical weapons dumped at sea. Technological development makes it possible to reach the seabed more easily, and that entails new risks. Lithuania will not remain silent and for the fourth time will submit a draft resolution aimed at assessing those risks. We hope that our efforts will encourage the international community to become more engaged in creating a safer, cleaner and more sustainable environment both on land and at sea.

We build a better future only by acting together. Our shared spirit of humanity commits us to treating each other with integrity and to treasuring and

protecting our planet. I believe that inventiveness and international collaboration will enable us to turn the emerging challenges into new opportunities and to contribute to universal prosperity.

I would like to conclude my address by quoting former Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

*"We will not enjoy development without security, or security without development; ... we will not enjoy either without universal respect for human rights."*

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

*Mr. Gitanas Nausėda, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Address by Mr. Michael Higgins, President of Ireland**

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Ireland.

*Mr. Michael Higgins, President of Ireland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Michael Higgins, President of Ireland, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Higgins:** Gathering as we are on the eve of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, undertaking a range of summits on addressing climate action, financing for development, health, the Sustainable Development Goals and the immediate challenges facing small island developing States, we can be in no doubt not only as to the complexity and interdependence of the world that we inhabit today but also about the interacting crises now facing us that cannot be avoided — an ecological crisis affecting our very existence and a global crisis of deepening inequality and a loss of social cohesion that creates a crisis of institutional credibility. These crises all have their origin in a global failure in relation to inclusively meeting global human needs.

On occasions such as this, we all are challenged to ask ourselves at the deepest level if we are being true to the values and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Are those values and principles informing our practices as States Members of the United Nations? Are

they being invoked to face the challenges that we are debating this week?

For so many, such questions evoke life-and-death realities. As we meet, the United Nations and its agencies are under attack, whether through underfunding or withdrawal of support, and now so often by the explicit promotion of the narrowest version of a theory of interests by some of the most powerful, which is the very antithesis of the multilateralism that the Charter demands.

Ireland believes in the United Nations, supports its aims and is anxious to become ever more involved in its work. We must therefore not be hesitant in speaking of how over the years the United Nations and multilateralism have driven major advances for people across the world, building programmes for poverty alleviation, better health care and education, women's empowerment and freedom from violence.

It is multilateralism, too, that has enabled us to develop mechanisms for conflict resolution, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. The progress made in the development of international law is a testament to the significant steps for humankind that we can take when the international community works in harmony. This week we must therefore defend, reinforce and advocate for the strengthening of multilateralism.

For us in my country, Ireland, the United Nations anchors our foreign policy. Its Charter, institutions and personnel constitute a prism through which we view our situation in the world and how we wish our practices to be perceived and judged in the world. We view the United Nations as that special institution where newly free nations have found a home after their struggles for independence and their emergence from the shadows, legacies and distortions of imperialism. We see the United Nations as a forum that has been provided to give a voice to the voiceless, the marginalized and those lacking power and wealth. For so many, it is the only such forum available to them — and it is all the more important for that.

For Ireland, too, the United Nations is also a great peace project, one that strives for fair and sustainable global development, for the resolution of conflicts, both ancient and new, and for the support of the many fleeing war, persecution, famine and natural disasters. I suggest that for all of us the United Nations must be a house of hope. It is a house where words have sought to matter, where words must carry hope. We must think

of what hope was felt, for example, in the galleries of those who came in their early days of independence to the United Nations.

Remembering this legacy, I could not speak here today in good faith or with authenticity in relation to the Charter without acknowledging that the international order is now again under grave pressure. The very idea of a rules-based order is being called into question and undermined. The international institutions — admittedly flawed and imperfect — that have been nurtured since 1945 and have brought much benefit to our peoples are the subject of questioning, withdrawal of support and even attack.

The partnership, cooperation, mutual trust and respect that are at the heart of multilateralism are embedded in the rule of law and in values that aim to protect all individuals on this planet and their rights, aspirations and dignity, values that do not have a single origin in time, culture or belief system. Multilateralism is, of course, in its best practice, a system that acknowledges its foundation on a principle of compromise, of shared vision, of finding the capacity to put oneself in the language, thoughts, culture and concerns of “the other”. It allows the large and small, the powerful and weak, to coexist in shared concern and joint prospect for the betterment of a shared world.

However, throughout the ages, as history has shown us, too many times the error that lay in the thinking of those who suggested that individual action, aggression or, as some might see it, adventurism was a better way forward than the cooperative world multilateralism offers. The call to more closely align our perspectives has never been more apposite. Our challenges have never been of such a global and momentous nature, and never more than today have the challenges and, frankly, the threats the world faces called out for us to recognize our collective responsibilities, including those of intergenerational justice.

To choose not to address those risks and challenges globally and multilaterally would be reckless. To reject the norms of collective, mutually respectful action taken together in favour of aggressive individual action, or to retreat to an old, false rhetoric of war, promises misery in the form of a continuity of instability, imbalance, social inequality and exploitation in every aspect of a potential shared life. It offers chaos and, almost inevitably, further conflict.

Ireland does not believe that conflict is endemic to any region of the world, to any people, class of values or belief system. We believe there are no conflicts that cannot be resolved when a real commitment is made to an understanding of the other, and when this understanding of the other is based on mutual work on agreement on post-conflict opportunities, the acceptance of alternative narratives of shared values, and, of course, the institutional support that gives continuity of peace processes. This is what informs our view of conflicts in the Middle East region, including the Israel-Palestine conflict. Ireland has experience of prolonged and at times seemingly intractable conflict and of the painstaking work and compromises that pave the way for a peace settlement. For this reason, the Israel-Palestine conflict resonates deeply with the Irish people.

From our own experiences, we have a deep sense of the centrality of national identity and a sense of belonging and how that persists through decades and centuries. Such a reality cannot be ignored, suppressed or circumvented. Peace processes have to find a way for different identities and narratives to coexist by creating a space where they no longer have to compete in a zero-sum game and by finding a way, through peace processes, to address historic and contemporary injustices. In the case of Israel and Palestine, we are more than ever convinced that the needs of both peoples can be fully achieved only through two independent, secure and sovereign States, coexisting side by side, in mutual recognition and peace.

Both peoples have so much to gain from this aspiration to creating a new and stable equilibrium. We do not say this lightly. We know from our own experience that it will be an immensely challenging task to achieve, requiring enormous courage and difficult compromises. No peace process is ever simple, linear or without cost. But the only way to achieve lasting peace is through negotiations between parties. Ireland and our European Union partners have made consistently clear that we will not recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders, including those with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties. We, as an international community, must again ask the leaders on both sides of this conflict to sit down, face to face, without delay. We must restate that a negotiated peace agreement, based on two States, will command unprecedented support, goodwill and an international determination to assist

and protect and defend that peace with all the means at our disposal.

In the absence of progress on the ground, we in this Hall have a collective responsibility to bring forward ideas drawing on our own experience to try to create and maintain momentum. On our own island, well before the negotiations that led to the Good Friday Agreement, we established a permanent secretariat to sit in continuous session, and it still sits today. Such structures can allow for the continuity of even the smallest achievements, the transcendence, too, of what might appear to be impossible differences, and the emergence of original proposals.

The challenges facing the international community today, interconnected and truly global as they are, are numerous, but none is more urgent than climate action. The devastating impact of Hurricane Dorian in the Bahamas tells us that the need for action is staring us in the face. We must show solidarity and support for the Bahamas and all countries on the front lines of the climate emergency that we are now experiencing. Climate change is moving so much faster than the efforts we are expending or enlisting to address it. Climate action is essential, of course, if we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The cost of inaction is catastrophic, far greater than what it will cost us to set out on a truly meaningful, corrective path. With the Paris Agreement, we have both the framework and the foundations to move forward.

The debate on climate action in some respects has not only continued to provide hope for those of us who place our faith in the multilateral system. It has been revelatory in demonstrating how global issues can be inclusive and how the voices of the small and less powerful can hold sway and provide such a powerful lead. In this regard, the role being played by, for example, small island developing States (SIDS) is exemplary. Drawing on their expertise and their stark experience, small island developing States have led the debate on climate change. As President of Ireland, I say to the representatives of small island developing States that they are challenging the status quo with very good reason, because their cultures and their very existence are at risk. They have a unique moral authority to speak out, for they are paying an immediate and intolerable price for a problem they did not create.

The international community must recognize vulnerability and value it as a driver for action. The



commitments set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are collective commitments. That is where the strength of the United Nations lies. But our greatest challenge is in delivering the consciousness and the will to realize that the damaging, dysfunctional connection with which we have lived for four decades now between ecology, economy and society has brought us to the edge of a precipice. We need a paradigm shift in our thinking as to how we will combine ecology, economy and social life so as to be able to meet the greatest of human needs.

That connection with which we have lived for so long has not only been exploitive, it has failed on its own terms. We must embrace the paradigm shift that is necessary if we are to achieve the sustainability to which we committed in 2015 here in New York. We must see and promote the connection between the measures needed to respond to climate change, measures that will end the exclusions of global poverty and also meet the sufficiency needs of a global community in terms of food, nutrition, education, health and housing.

We will need to work together to muster the moral, intellectual and political courage to prevail in that to which we have committed to achieving, in the full knowledge that we will be opposed, at times divided, and that attempts to undermine us will be made by powerful, heavily resourced interests that cannot be held to account and that can purchase media space, interests that have often stolen concepts and language itself and that will seek to do so again.

We must all, both North and South on our shared vulnerable planet, muster the courage to take action. After all, even allowing for scientific innovations and improvements, we will have to make radical changes in the way we live, particularly those of us in the North. We cannot go on consuming as we are doing now, in which we are being consumed by our insatiable consumption.

There are grounds for hope for our making an appropriate response, I suggest. In many respects, and in so many places, the people have been giving public leadership in their response to assessments of the seriousness of the situation facing the global environment. Young people in particular have shown courage, innovation and resolve.

I agree with Secretary-General Guterres when he says that schoolchildren have grasped the urgency of climate action better than some global leaders. Having accepted the science, with which they are now more

familiar than older generations, and understanding the consequences of our present models, they see not just the prospect of their futures but the ways of life and the biodiversity on which our planet's life depends disappearing due to inaction and short-term thinking.

Young people and citizens of all generations are asking us now for more than a reassuring verbal response to climate change. They are seeking that authenticity that is revealed when words are turned into action. The citizens made aware are our allies for hope, responsibility and change. It is wrong to ask the United Nations as an institution to carry alone the burden of an authenticity that is the responsibility of us all. That responsibility is on all of us as leaders and citizens to encourage those with whom we share this fragile planet to create a yearning for that "vast and endless sea" of which the French writer Saint-Exupéry spoke — a yearning for peace, justice and freedom for all from fear.

The challenges are enormous. So many young people worldwide are not allowed to achieve fulfilment, in employment, education or training. One in four are affected by conflict or violence. Millions of girls become mothers while they are still children themselves. We must create an environment in which young people, all of our people, are seen as citizens with equal rights and as members of our societies with full rights of participation.

Young people are now at the leading edge of the rapid technological revolution we are living through, and this is important, for much of the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and other international commitments can be delivered only with technological steps forward. For this to happen, we must ensure that technological advances serve all of humankind and that societies and their needs are the arrows, not the targets, for technology and its applications.

While technologies have made the world more connected, we can also witness the ways in which they can be misused to spread xenophobia or hateful rhetoric. It is essential that the fruits of new science and technology be used for the promotion and preservation of peace and not for a renewed pursuit and prosecution of war. This calls for a global-level institutional initiative that is effective and accountable in a multilateral way.

Ireland seeks to demonstrate its commitment to multilateralism in many practical ways. In the field of peacekeeping today there are more than 600 Irish

Defence Forces personnel, women and men, deployed in United Nations missions, including more than 450 women and men on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. United Nations peacekeeping has deep public support in Ireland, and we are proud as a people to be the highest per capita European Union contributor of troops to United Nations peacekeeping, with deployments to missions across the Middle East and Africa.

Ireland also remains strongly committed to the development work of the United Nations while, of course, realizing that development has to be redefined to adjust to new circumstances of sustainability. It cannot be an introduction or an extension of what is failing.

To give direction to our commitment, we launched a new international development policy with a realigned focus on four priorities: gender equality, climate action, good governance and the combat against poverty, all to be delivered within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals.

An important element of our development policy is a small island developing States strategy, developed following research and consultation with our SIDS counterparts. It was an honour for me, as President of Ireland, to meet in Ireland with more than 30 Permanent Representatives of small island developing States when the strategy was launched earlier this year.

Ireland's development policy also focuses heavily on humanitarian assistance and responses that are urgent and cannot be postponed. We will continue contributing to fragile and conflict-affected States with the goal of easing the plight of civilians in such places as the Central African Republic, Palestine, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen, and elsewhere. As we do so, we acknowledge that this is a response to what is urgent and cannot be postponed. We do not see humanitarian response as an alternative to the deep structural changes we need in relation to trade, debt, technology transfer and migration. They are simply inextricably intertwined.

As for migration, how we respond to the needs of those forced to leave their homes due to conflict and instability is a moral test of our times and our common humanity. I had the pleasure recently of hosting the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, in Ireland. I introduced him to four families that have sought refuge in Ireland. At that meeting, at which Mr. Grandi once again spelled out the vital work that his Office is doing, all of us present

were reminded that we are challenged to give authentic expression to what we mean by hospitality and to give meaning by our actions to our words.

I am very conscious of the fact that the most acute poverty is in zones of conflict and that displacement of our fellow global citizens is increasing, whether because of conflict, climate change or ethnic prejudice and hate. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees tells us that almost 71 million people have been forcibly displaced from their homes worldwide, with 26 million cross-border refugees.

It is important that the United Nations and all of us acknowledge the generosity of the many States that shoulder a heavy burden on the front line of this issue, States such as Bangladesh, Chad, Ethiopia, Iran, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Pakistan, Turkey and Uganda. The peoples of these States humble us all by hosting great numbers of persons displaced by conflict in their neighbourhood regions, and in its turn Ireland will continue to support refugees and those vulnerable host communities that have set a worthy example, reminding us of what shared humanity should mean.

I applaud the leadership that Secretary-General Guterres continues to show on migration. Migration is central to our Irish consciousness. We are a migrant people on a migrant planet. We have always been so — from our origin, through our Great Famine, and into the modern period. Our country, which has historically seen people leave in their millions, is now a country of net immigration. Today, one in six of our population was born outside Ireland. We have been transformed from a place that people were forced to leave to one that now has the opportunity to be a real place of welcome.

I fully agree with the Secretary-General when he says that the only way for migration to be sustainable and safe rather than irregular and inhumane and dangerous is for it to be undertaken out of volition and not necessity, which means having integrated policies. The vast majority of the world's migrants move between countries in a safe and orderly way. However, unregulated migration exacts a terrible human cost in lives lost at sea and across deserts and lives ruined at the hands of traffickers, unscrupulous employers and other exploiters. But then, too, how rarely it is that we hear of the positives, for example, the contribution of migrants to the economies and societies of so many Member States, or that 10 to 12 per cent of the global

gross domestic product in any one of the last years was provided by migrants.

But whether their movement is voluntary or forced, all human beings must have their dignity upheld. A starting point for all of us — as the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (resolution 73/195) makes clear — is that in a world where so much of migration is made inescapable and necessary, it must be well managed and safe, not irregular and dangerous, which is something that can be achieved with goodwill and cooperation.

This session of the General Assembly will see some key moments for disarmament. We will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation Nuclear Weapons (NPT) at its tenth Review Conference. Proud of Ireland's role in developing the NPT, I reiterate our commitment to a successful Review Conference in 2020. I hope that it sets a level of ambition for the total elimination of nuclear weapons, the only guarantee of our safety. It is for this reason that Ireland is a strong supporter of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

One of the greatest challenges we are facing today as global policymakers is how to anticipate and deal with such complex risks as those associated with new weapon technologies. While such advances in science and technology as artificial intelligence are progressing rapidly, with countless potential benefits to society, the international community must recognize and respond to the risks and threats posed by the incorporation of these new and emerging technologies into weapons and weapons systems. It is difficult for me to reconcile the rhetoric for peace I formally hear from countries with the same countries' ever-increasing efforts aimed at acquiring a greater share of global armament sales.

Ireland is deeply concerned about the devastating impact of conflict on civilians. The protection of civilians and full compliance with international humanitarian law face new and greater challenges as warfare increasingly moves from open battlefields to urban settings. The use of explosive weapons in populated areas is a particular cause for concern. Ireland is proud to lead efforts to agree a political declaration among States, setting out how we as an international community can ensure full compliance with international humanitarian law. Indeed, I look forward to inviting States to Ireland next spring to agree on a political declaration focusing on

the protection of civilians from the effects of explosive weapons in urban warfare.

Like many Member States, Ireland is also clear on the need to reform the Security Council. For any entity to have legitimacy, it must reflect the make-up of the world in which it exists and the people of the world in which it exists. Quite simply, as we all know, many areas of the world are either insufficiently represented on the Security Council or not at all. In particular, we continue to witness the historically unjust underrepresentation of Africa, which was still ruled by colonial Powers when the United Nations came into existence and the Security Council was established. We have heard so many powerful speeches from an Africa that wants to be an Africa that can be humane. I think Africans must be allowed to have a fair say in Council decisions affecting their own continent.

We also want to see consideration of a designated role for small island developing States. The increasing effect of climate change on international peace and security gives this proposal even greater urgency.

And just as the Security Council should reflect the composition of the United Nations membership, I want to repeat Ireland's deeply held view that political reform of the Council must lead to a greater sense of participation, responsibility and ownership among the membership, something that we believe would be a positive for the functioning of the United Nations more widely, as well as more just. As we have said before, if the power of evidence and argument is to mean anything, then Ireland will keep trying to build a coalition for change.

Ireland will always value how the United Nations brings and can bring out what is best in us. We will continue to seek opportunities to test ourselves against what we aspire to be, including the achievement of the requirements of a new paradigm that combines ecology, social justice and economy — to which I would add cultural diversity — in a way that achieves sustainability and social cohesion and sufficiently meets global needs. These are the values that are the driving force behind Ireland's candidacy for the Security Council for the 2021-2022 term.

We do not seek the support of the nations of the world to advance any narrow version of enlightened self-interest. We seek support for the opportunity to once again be measured against aspiration, by the ideals of the Charter and our ability to contribute and

help shape societies seeking to achieve equality, deepen democracy, build an enduring peace, and do so with a shared purpose and a consistent transparent practice.

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

*Mr. Michael Higgins, President of Ireland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Address by Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, President of the Republic of Mali**

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

*Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, President of the Republic of Mali, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, President of the Republic of Mali, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Keita** (*spoke in French*): At the outset, as I take the floor before the General Assembly, it is my duty to convey the fraternal and cordial greetings of the people of Mali, from Kayes to Kidal, from Taoudenni to Sikasso. I also extend my most heartfelt congratulations and wish every success to Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, who has been elected as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session, and to assure him of Mali's full cooperation. I would also like to commend Ms. Maria Fernanda Espinosa Garcés of Ecuador for having led the General Assembly at its seventy-third session with remarkable aplomb. Finally, I would be remiss if I forgot to mention my dear friend Secretary-General António Guterres, whose commitment to the ideals of peace, security, development and respect for human rights continues to shine brightly.

Among other highlights, our current session will be marked by the celebration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. No commemoration could represent a better opportunity for Mali to reaffirm its commitment to the values and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and our conviction that only collective and concerted action will enable us to meet the many challenges of our times, achieve our ideal of peace and

meet our shared goals of security and development for all. This is particularly true with regard to the theme of the seventy-fourth session of the Assembly, "Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion". Nothing is more urgent than stepping up our work in all these areas if we are to address the root causes of instability in some of our countries.

There is no nation in history whose trajectory has not been affected by trying times. Mali is undergoing that painful experience today, given that since January 2012 it has been facing a daily terrorist threat that aims at nothing less than shaking its deepest foundations. We must believe in the saying that bad times show us who our true friends are, as Mali is in no way lacking in that area. The multifaceted political, diplomatic and military support of the international community for Mali attests to the truth of that adage more than anything else. Whether with regard to containing the terrorist groups, combating their barbarism or rebuilding our sundered unity, there has been no shortage of support, and I welcome it. To a large extent, it is owing to that support that we achieved the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, emanating from the Algiers process, to which I remain particularly committed.

One of the major achievements brought about by the Agreement is the absence of clashes between the Malian defence and security forces and the signatory groups, as well as the gradual restoration of trust among the Malian parties. In addition, we have already reintegrated more than 2,000 former combatants, 1,000 of whom have been trained, into our reconfigured forces in anticipation of the establishment of the new Malian national army.

Within the framework of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process we have made progress with its activation, which was established through our own deliberations and is now referred to as the "accelerated DDR". We welcome that, since it is clearly a prerequisite for the restoration of State authority over the entire national territory, but we cannot ignore the fact that there is still a long way to go to achieve lasting peace and reconciliation in our country.

To that end, we must implement the political and institutional reforms provided for in the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. In this regard, I am pleased to underscore that after two unsuccessful



attempts, in 2017 and 2018, Mali is actively preparing for the timely holding of an inclusive national dialogue leading to national reconciliation and the entrenchment of democracy in our country. At the same time, in order to ensure the normal functioning and stability of institutions, for which I hold primary responsibility, we considered it appropriate to extend the terms of office of the deputies in the National Assembly until 2 May 2020 so as to enable them to adopt a set of political and institutional reforms to be recommended during the national inclusive dialogue.

On 24 July, with a view to achieving peace and national reconciliation, I promulgated the *Loi d'entente nationale*. While it exempts those who committed or were complicit in crimes during the painful events in Mali dating back to January 2012 from criminal prosecution, the law does not apply to war crimes, crimes against humanity, rape and crimes not subject to a statute of limitations. Moreover, it stipulates measures providing for the acknowledgement of and reparation for victims who were directly or indirectly affected by the painful experience that our people underwent, building on the remarkable work accomplished by Mali's Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission, which has enabled the voices of more than 14,000 people in our country to be heard.

It is with the same level of concern for achieving national reconciliation and therefore reducing inequality, which undermines national cohesion, that the National Assembly adopted legislation this year establishing a northern development zone in Mali, as provided for by the Algiers Agreement, and that subsequently the Government created a sustainable development fund, endowed with \$72 million, as the financial instrument for implementing the regional development strategy in northern Mali. To date, \$20 million has already been disbursed to finance urgent priorities in the regions of Kidal, Ménaka, Timbuktu and Gao.

While such diverse progress has been made possible through the common will of all the Malian parties to the Agreement, it has also been possible thanks to the support and guidance of partners from the international community. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the vital work of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), which operates in an environment that I know is particularly complex and difficult. The Mission has paid a very high price in Mali, and I would like to pay tribute to the courage and sacrifice of the

men and women of MINUSMA, as well as of the other international forces deployed in Mali, to whom, on behalf of the people of Mali, I want to say that we owe a particularly heartfelt tribute for their contribution to the maintenance of peace and international security in our region, and not just in Mali.

Nevertheless, within the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), we are fully aware that security alone cannot bring about the lasting peace that we seek. Many challenges remain, including, unfortunately, the implementation process of the Agreement. These challenges include the extremely volatile security environment, marked by a resurgence of attacks by terrorist groups, violent extremists and drug traffickers on our civilian populations, the Malian defence and security forces and those of our international partners. But they also include the persistent challenges linked to our development. That is why, in parallel with the security component, we are working together to implement the Priority Investment Programme, which includes 40 projects in the areas of defence, security, governance, infrastructure and human development, in order to appropriately address the root causes of instability, while creating economic, social and development opportunities for our people, in particular our young people.

Another equally important challenge involves the availability of adequate financial resources for the implementation of the Agreement. That is why, while I am grateful to our partners for the efforts already made, I must still urge them to honour their pledges made at the international conference for the economic recovery and development of Mali, held in Paris, in October 2015, under the auspices of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and at the G-5 Sahel partners and donors coordination conference for the financing of the G-5 Sahel Priority Investment Programme, held in Nouakchott on 6 December 2018.

I also take this opportunity to welcome the Alliance for the Sahel, which aims to federate and coordinate the commitment of our partners in six priority areas of action — youth employment, rural development and food security, energy and climate, governance and decentralization, access to basic social services, and security — which will cost €6 billion over the period from 2018 to 2022.

Notwithstanding the efforts made to stabilize and develop the regions of northern Mali, I cannot ignore the

worrying situation in the centre of our country. Quite the contrary, in fact, and I want to point out that the two major challenges facing Mali today are inextricably linked. After having succeeded in destabilizing our northern regions, terrorists and other criminal groups have tried to extend their areas of influence and illicit activities to the centre, by exploiting disputes between human groups that had hitherto been able to manage them in a non-violent manner, in accordance with our civilizational values.

It is also worth stressing that the motives of those terrorist groups have little to do with religion and even less with development. I note that Mali has been Islamized since the eleventh century. Their goal is to create spaces to expand their criminal activities, including trafficking in drugs, arms, human beings and illicit goods, taking advantage of the State's weak presence, particularly the defence and security services, in the regions concerned. The clashes, too hastily dubbed "intercommunal tensions", that have, alas, afflicted the regions of Ségou and Mopti, have affected the entire Malian nation, beyond these areas. I have therefore instructed the Government to take a series of political, security, regulatory and judicial measures to restore order and security in the affected areas.

As part of those efforts, security measures in the field have been strengthened and new security outposts set up in strategic areas, and several hundred local youth have joined a special programme to reduce intercommunal violence. The efforts also include the recovery of many weapons, the ongoing disarmament of militias, development actions and the provision of basic social services to the populations. All these operations are designed to better meet our governance and security challenges. With a view to coordinating all the efforts and to involving all national stakeholders, including political, traditional and religious leaders and regional managers, in their implementation, in June I appointed Dioncounda Traoré, the former Acting President of Mali during the transition, as my High Representative for Central Mali.

The crises in the northern and central regions of Mali have caused massive movements of thousands of our compatriots. Whether they are refugees in neighbouring countries or internally displaced persons, their return in safety and dignity to their places of origin is a major concern of my Government, which has undertaken the implementation of major programmes aimed at the long-term improvement of the living

conditions of Mali's entire population. Health care, through supplementary health insurance schemes, is one such programme. The International Organization for Migration, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs are helping us in our efforts through regional emergency-response plans for the Timbuktu, Gao, Kidal and Mopti regions. The same can be said of our membership in the African Risk Capacity Insurance Company Limited, whose treaty Mali ratified in 2016, and which has enabled us, for the past four seasons of insurance contracts, to deal with the consequences of climate hazards.

In addition to these specific measures, which are born of emergency, I am tempted to say, other, more structural measures are being taken, first among them regarding youth employment. Because I believe in the young people of Mali, I have decided to devote my second term to promoting youth, as our hope for today and certainly the architects of our future. Similarly, I believe deeply in the women of Mali and their invaluable contributions to our country's stabilization and development processes. I will continue to appoint them in large numbers to senior decision-making posts, in keeping with the 2015 law on the promotion of gender in decision-making bodies in Mali.

In the light of the importance of inclusive and sustainable development in the theme of the current session, I should not overlook the allocation in 2018 of funds to build approximately 3,000 social housing units for middle- and low-income people. The Malian diaspora is also always on my mind. Furthermore, I want to highlight the positive efforts of the African Development Bank (AfDB), to whose Desert to Power initiative we recently subscribed in Ouagadougou, and which will ensure greater energy availability to meet our industrial-building needs. When we consider that a country such as Mali, which grows a large quantity of cotton, produces only 2 percent of its own energy, the importance of energy generation is clear, especially for our textile industry. This AfDB initiative is therefore very welcome.

Despite the national and regional challenges I have just mentioned, the people and the Government of Mali remain very attentive to the situation in Africa and the rest of the world. We continue to be deeply concerned about the situation in Libya, which is still having a negative impact on the entire Sahel region. I call on all Libyan stakeholders to prioritize dialogue

and peaceful solutions with a view to finding a lasting and rapid resolution to the crisis. Similarly, Mali is following with concern the situation in the Middle East, particularly in the occupied Palestinian territories. The Malian people reaffirm their full support for to our brother Palestinian people in their legitimate struggle for self-determination. The Government of Mali calls for a resumption of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations in order to achieve a solution where two States live side by side, as many have urged today, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions and within secure, internationally recognized borders. Furthermore, Mali calls for an end to the deadly violence that unfortunately continues to afflict the brother peoples of Syria and Yemen and to cause humanitarian disasters.

On international migration issues, Mali, as a country of origin, transit and destination for migrants, reiterates its commitment to multilateral cooperation and international solidarity. In this regard, I would like to make a strong call for respect for the rights of migrants, in accordance with the relevant provisions of international conventions, in particular the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular migration (resolution 73/195), adopted in December 2018 in Marrakech, and the global compact on refugees.

Mali reiterates its call for reforming the Security Council to make it more representative and inclusive, which is a matter of simple justice. Through me, Mali reaffirms its commitment to the common African position on the reform, in accordance with the Ezulwini Consensus.

As a country of the Sahel mainly engaged in agriculture, livestock and fisheries, Mali remains deeply concerned about climate change, one of the major challenges to the survival and development of humankind. My country is suffering the full brunt of the effects of climate change, characterized by the spread of desertification and its impact on fauna and flora, the drying up of our rivers and streams, hotter weather and repeated floods. That is why I would like to reaffirm Mali's commitment to the implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. To that end, and in the context of the Secretary-General's Climate Action Summit, we will submit to him and the co-leaders of his Climate Finance coalition, France, Jamaica and Qatar, a concrete proposal to trigger and accelerate a wave of low-carbon investment by redirecting global savings towards infrastructure and industrial and agricultural production processes in line with the objectives of the

Paris Agreement. Additionally, Mali will work within the African Union to systematically integrate climate change into the cooperation between the continent and each of its strategic partners.

Mali welcomes the processes under way in the Sudan, in particular the formation of a Government of national unity resulting from the agreement between the military and opposition leaders, which has also led to the establishment of a Sovereign Council to lead the transition in that sister country.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize strongly that 75 years after its creation, the United Nations continues to demonstrate its relevance to our common quest to save future generations from the scourge of war and its collective efforts aimed at achieving that end. In so doing, I would like to remind the Assembly that peace is priceless. We must therefore cherish it, because without it there can be no humanity or coexistence. These are the values and attitudes that should give meaning to our existence and enable individuals and human communities to see the light in our future, as President Emmanuel Macron of France put it yesterday (see A/74/PV.3).

We must therefore make the quest for peace not a religion but a culture, with all of the connotations that possesses in terms of respect for diversity, recognition of the other, empathy, solidarity and, in a word, brotherhood — brotherhood, which we need more than ever in order to give meaning to our human condition.

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

*Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, President of the Republic of Mali, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Address by Mr. Taneti Maamau, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of the Republic of Kiribati**

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will now hear an address by the President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of the Republic of Kiribati.

*Mr. Taneti Maamau, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of the Republic of Kiribati, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Taneti Maamau, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of the Republic of Kiribati.

**President Maamau:** I bring warm greetings from the Government and the people of the Republic of Kiribati, on whose behalf I am very proud and honoured to address the Assembly today. In His wonderful holy name, *Kam na bane ni Mauri* — may all be blessed.

I would like to join previous speakers in congratulating President Tijjani Muhammad-Bande on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. I wish him every success as he guides our deliberations over the next few days and for the remaining 12 months. On that note, I wish to assure him of Kiribati's support, both morally and in kind, on any initiative that seeks to make our planet Earth a cleaner, greener and safer home. This is at the core of Kiribati's 20-year vision in our efforts to transform our nation into a better Kiribati home and implement the globally agreed 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We appreciate the Secretary-General's recent visit to the Pacific but want to highlight the need for a more balanced presence on the part of the multi-country office for the islands in the northern Pacific. At this point, I would like to pause to express our deepest condolences to our brothers and sisters of the Bahamas on the loss of many lives and the tremendous damage to homes caused recently by Hurricane Dorian.

The theme of this year's session, "Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion", is a reminder of the fact that for our national development action to be effective, we need a stronger global political alignment at the multilateral level in order to ensure that support and assistance are delivered to those who matter the most and according to their needs and priorities.

Poverty and inequality remain humankind's biggest dilemma and challenge. The social and economic security of any nation can be strengthened only if the support system addresses people's needs and empowers them at the household level. It is therefore critical that United Nations programmes target the family at that level, where the fragmentation of values creates a fault line in our societies.

The Kiribati Government has made a substantial investment in subsidizing copra, targeting households and coconut farmers. In our narrow economy, the goal is to benefit not only those who are in poverty but those who have been deprived of the opportunity to improve their social and economic status. This is driven by our strong desire to uplift the economies and lives of the 49 per cent of our people on our outer islands, who for years have been deprived of their share of development.

The Government invested A\$32 million in 2017 and A\$31 million in 2018 in the copra industry. To ensure sustainability, we are assessing the policy impact, as well as farmers' voluntary contribution to superannuation for retirement savings, supported by financial literacy measures. Strengthening the inclusion of marginalized and often forgotten segments of the community is core to our egalitarian culture, with a A\$4 million senior-citizens and special-needs subsidy programme this year. This underlines our values and our recognition of the importance of our elders in our traditional cultural system, and we are very proud that we have taken steps to duly recognize their importance legally.

To further demonstrate the commitment to leaving no one behind, our investment in outer island infrastructure, including wharfs, jetties, roads and airstrips, is now also under way. The Government has already provided A\$60 million, A\$30 million in 2017 and earmarked another A\$30 million for 2020, and we thank the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank for their additional financing of A\$40 million for outer-island maritime infrastructure. These investment projects address our isolation challenge by enabling trade and the mobility of people, goods and services, as well as by strengthening the delivery of public services while reducing the cost of accessibility.

Something more fundamental to Kiribati, as a group of island atolls, is our basic right to water. We are fully leveraging our partnerships; the A\$58 million South Tarawa water supply and sanitation project will be co-funded by the Green Climate Fund, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. My Government contributed 12 per cent to this project, consisting of a cash contribution and in-kind provisions. It is clear that we cannot wait, for the damage caused by climate change is a daily experience in our lives. This life-changing project will provide a 24-hour clean water supply for all residents of South Tarawa, the capital, for the first time this week by harnessing our ocean to provide clean drinking water.



We also acknowledge the Government of New Zealand's support in contributing A\$700,000 to our sanitation component, which will transform hygiene and sanitation standards for our people at the household and community levels. Those bold infrastructure projects highlight our ownership of our development challenges in co-investing our own funds, owing to our atolls' scattered geography, which makes infrastructure more expensive, due to the high logistical costs, risks and challenges. Those critical investments will be game-changers for Kiribati's development curve. We acknowledge the support of our development partners. Equally important are the lessons learned from our partnerships, and the importance of respecting a nation's right to do what it sees as serving its best national interest.

Education is the backbone of a nation in inspiring the future of its citizens. We have embraced that through our investment in the education sector, with it having the third-largest share, at 23 per cent, of the 2019 fiscal recurrent budget of A\$28 million, which is equivalent to 11 per cent of our gross domestic product.

In addition to that, we acknowledge the Australian Government's support to the Kiribati Education Improvement Programme and other donors throughout the educational value chain, with a development budget allocation that is equivalent to 28 per cent of our gross domestic product, making education the third-largest sector for development intervention after infrastructure and copra. In 2016, we also introduced our new free education policy, ending the national quota system and for the first time enabling all I-Kiribati students who achieve a pass grade to pursue their full studies with Government's support.

With a fragile population of 110,000, almost half of whom are young people, I am convinced that such an investment will yield a population dividend that will raise our nation. Removing constraints by, for example, providing transport to school for students, has also improved school attendance rates. My Government is expanding its vocational and technical training in the country's rural areas. It is our aspiration to drive inclusive education by improving access to education and by ensuring quality education for all.

We have also invested A\$1 million in our preschool-level education for teachers, who have the important responsibility of nurturing and educating our young ones. That new early-childhood education initiative

is a key catalyst for intergenerational transformation towards sustainable development.

The alarming dilemma of our present time, that is, climate change, is without question of great importance to Kiribati and our Blue Pacific. The signs validated by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) special report *Global Warming of 1.5°C* were already evident to us before such reports were even released. We have already secured green-climate funding for one project and are now strengthening access to climate finance, which we have earmarked through our climate change policy and our integrated Kiribati joint implementation plan. That will drive the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals to secure the future of our young people and generations to come.

The current negotiations on the draft international legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction are of key importance to Kiribati and the Pacific. We urge that any outcome of those negotiations should in no way jeopardize the health and wealth of the long stretch of oceans defining the Blue Pacific, on which our livelihood depends. Our maritime boundaries are critical to the Pacific region, mapping jurisdictions over our waters, continental shelf, exclusive economic zones and resources. The recent IPCC report is clear that the rising sea levels have the potential to profoundly shift the baselines, thereby altering legal entitlements regarding the spatial extent of our delineated boundaries endorsed by the United Nations.

The IPCC reports serve as a catalyst for informed decisions on action by Governments, and now multilateral policies for actions to ramp up our commitment to implementation. The same boundaries should also apply to our upper airspace, with the State having a role in its management consistent with International Civil Aviation Organization policies. That is critical to securing the future of Kiribati and the Blue Pacific in this world.

From a small island perspective, the overengineering of the development of small island States is a risk. With regard to the theme of galvanizing multilateral support, I implore the Assembly to consider the complex web of bilateral and multilateral support pouring into small fragile countries such as ours without the capacity to coordinate all that support more effectively.

Kiribati will start to take control of that situation, as it is beginning to stretch our already scarce Government resources, risking diluting the impact of development. Forty years after becoming a sovereign nation, these consolidation and maturity processes will be a critical pivot for our small nation, where we aspire to reflect the perfect harmony of our Kiribati dance in the way that we administer and align the coordination of our agile development process.

I note the term “island paradox”, describing Kiribati’s precarious situation, whereby it has graduated from being a least developed country and yet is in a permanent state of fragility and vulnerability while maintaining a relatively high gross national income per capita.

We live in a paradox every day, with the blue ocean that we have now coined as our regional approach to climate consciousness at the very core of who we are in Kiribati. In truth, we are essentially being categorized as an anomaly in the system of classification of nations. Perhaps the members of the Economic and Social Council and United Nations scientists should visit, see and experience the island paradox of Kiribati. I challenge members to come to the islands, in particular to hear the voice of our young people calling, “We are not sinking, we are fighting”, as they joined the voice of millions of children around the world in their climate change strike last Friday. It is amazing how those young children mustered their efforts to address the world leaders and even attend. I want to acknowledge the presence of that brave young girl from Sweden, Greta Thunberg. I join and echo the voice of our young people and raise the challenge, particularly to those who have an enormous ability to do so, to act rightly, to act now and to be seen by the young watchful eyes as a good neighbour in our one home, where we all live.

Furthermore, the turbulence that we continue to face in our world today has emerged because of continued greed and hunger for power and dominance. We have had our own taste of that at the national level in the form of the legacies of the Second World War, in particular the battle of Tarawa, phosphate extraction on the island of Banaba and nuclear testing in the eastern part of our country and on Christmas Island.

The consequences continue to have an impact to this day, including through implications for our people’s health. The destruction of our land continues to deprive our people of their right to live freely, and many are still

living with unresolved issues. Those are some of the unaccountable practices and breaches of human rights that warrant compensation from those responsible. As a champion of anti-corruption, Kiribati will continue to pursue fair settlements and compensation for our people, who continue to suffer the consequences of those unjust practices.

We believe that the real and true test of the success of the United Nations is to be measured not in the number of treaties concluded or resolutions adopted but rather in how much it improves the lives of the most vulnerable, oppressed and disadvantaged people on the ground. That is why we gather here each year. Our theme, “Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion” calls for a true reform of our multilateral system.

The business of a development business exists because of its customers. We the countries are the customers in that regard, and any reform of the multilateral system must therefore consolidate the various multilateral interventions into a coherent country-centric programme. I wish to conclude by sharing with everyone in this Hall our traditional blessing, *Te Mauri Te Raoi Ao Te Tabomoa*, which means “peace, health and prosperity upon us all”.

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of the Republic of Kiribati for the statement he has just made.

*His Excellency Mr. Taneti Maamau, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of the Republic of Kiribati, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Address by Mr. Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe**

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

*His Excellency Mr. Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

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

Mnangagwa, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Mnangagwa:** Allow me to congratulate Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. Zimbabwe is confident that under his able stewardship, the General Assembly will accelerate towards achieving our Organization's objectives. May I also commend his immediate predecessor, Ambassador María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, for having successfully presided over the seventy-third session of the General Assembly.

I am addressing the General Assembly today following the sad passing of the founding father of our country, the late former President, His Excellency Comrade Robert Gabriel Mugabe.

Zimbabwe is in transition and is determined to overcome the reality that we were a collapsed economy with a collapsed currency, owing to the illegal economic sanctions imposed on our country. Since I took over the leadership of Zimbabwe, much has been accomplished, including indicative recovery, stabilization and growth. Immense progress has been made towards macroeconomic and fiscal stabilization as well as high-impact projects that pave the way for private-sector-led growth.

Embedded in our aspirations is a strong sense of urgency for us to eradicate poverty, achieve quality and relevant education, create employment for women and youth, and mitigate the cross-cutting impact of climate change on our society and economy. Our people deserve better and we are committed to delivering on their aspirations.

Zimbabwe's engagement and re-engagement with all countries of the world so that it can return to its rightful place within the comity of nations is yielding notable progress. Our arms remain outstretched, and our heart is one of genuine friendship and cooperation, for all who are willing to join the new and exciting journey of Zimbabwe's rebirth. In our desire to deepen the democratic space in our country, we have established an open political platform which we have invited all political parties to share in a frank debate and dialogue on aspects of our social, political and economic reforms. Comprehensive and far-reaching reforms are being implemented by my Government for the benefit, protection and economic prosperity of our people in line with their ever-changing aspirations.

In addition, with fiscal austerity and discipline we have balanced our books and achieved a budget surplus, which is unprecedented in my country. It will take time for the impact of change and reforms on the general lives of our people to become apparent, but we are headed in the right direction. We will continue to put in place social safety nets to cushion the lower strata and most vulnerable members of our society and appeal for further multilateral support in that regard.

Those achievements have been made despite the remaining albatross of the illegal economic sanctions, which constitute a denial of the human right of the people of Zimbabwe to develop and improve their quality of life. Furthermore, they are slowing down our progress, inhibiting our economic recovery and punishing the poorest and most vulnerable.

As the United Nations, let us boldly honour the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The wrongs of the world must be set right. Unfair practices must be challenged. Injustice, racism and all forms of oppression of humankind by humankind must be opposed and rejected. My country applauds the Southern African Development Community, the African Union and all who stand with us in demanding the immediate and unconditional removal of those illegal sanctions. Those who imposed illegal sanctions must heed this call and lift them now. Cooperation is a win-win game. Sanctions are a lose-lose game. Zimbabwe deserves a restart.

Zimbabwe is also reforming laws and regulations governing trade, investment and the ease and cost of doing business. Restrictions on shareholding across all sectors of the economy have been removed and some public entities are being privatized. The new national investment policy reflects the commitment of my Government and Administration to opening up the economy.

In line with our modernization and industrialization agenda, we are enhancing the quality of our education to make it more relevant with regard to modern technology and innovation. Greater focus is now being placed on science, technology and innovation, while incubation hubs and industrial parks are being established throughout the country. Increased collaboration among industry, small and medium enterprises and the education sector in support of responsive and relevant human capital development is being facilitated and encouraged. Our education system is now focused on

producing relevant products, goods and services that respond to the ever-changing needs of our country and the world at large.

In our quest to deepen constitutionalism, the rule of law, democratic practices, good corporate governance, transparency and accountability, the capacity of our institutions that protect democracy continues to be enhanced. The anti-corruption drive is being accelerated by my Government by supporting and strengthening institutions that help in the fight against that cancer.

Notable progress has also been achieved in the area of political and legislative reforms. The alignment to date of most of our laws with the Constitution is almost complete. We commend the support that we continue to receive from the United Nations Development Programme and other stakeholders. Outdated media laws on access to information and the protection of privacy and the former Public Order and Security Act have been repealed. New laws in those areas have been enacted.

Let us accelerate our quest to end poverty by 2030. In the spirit of leaving no one behind, synergies and greater coherence in the implementation of all global frameworks on sustainable development are imperative. The theme of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly, “Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion”, is most appropriate and timely.

As the climate crisis continues, the world is changing before our eyes. For us in southern Africa, Tropical Cyclone Idai recently served as a reminder that the impact of climate change and the damage it does to humankind and life on Earth are dire and irreparable. It left many thousands of people dead, injured or displaced and a trail of destroyed infrastructure. We are continuing to recover from the disaster and the cost of reconstruction and recovery is estimated at approximately \$600 million for Zimbabwe alone. Let me take this opportunity to thank all well-wishers from around the world for the solidarity and support that we received for relief, recovery and reconstruction and other forms of assistance in the aftermath of Cyclone Idai.

Our country is an agro-based economy. The agriculture sector contributes between 15 and 20 per cent of our gross domestic product and approximately 60 per cent of raw materials for industry. The impact of climate change has affected not only our agricultural

productivity and food security but also our hydropower-generation capacity and overall economic recovery, growth and development. Consequently, my Government has since declared a state of national disaster.

The importance of a reinvigorated and responsive multilateral system to promote global partnerships for peace and development cannot be overemphasized. Zimbabwe will continue to do its part in working towards the attainment of world peace and sustainable development.

The reform of the United Nations system to make it more representative, empowered and responsive in fulfilling its mandate is long overdue. Zimbabwe remains firmly committed to the common African position, as set forth in the Ezulwini Consensus.

I would like to conclude by reiterating that Zimbabwe is carrying out reforms and undertaking a collective journey towards a better and more secure future. A great task lies before us, and the road ahead is long, winding and sometimes very bumpy, but our potential and determination to succeed is just as tremendous. I urge the world to be patient with us, support us and join us on this new and exciting journey. Together we will realize our common vision to build a common future free of poverty, hunger and conflict, and a safe planet that can benefit all of our peoples.

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

*His Excellency Mr. Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

#### **Agenda item 8 (continued)**

##### **General debate**

##### **Address by Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait**

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

*Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, was escorted to the rostrum.*



**The Acting President:** I have great pleasure in welcoming His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

**Sheikh Al Sabah (Kuwait)** (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, it is my pleasure to sincerely congratulate the President and his friendly country, the Federal Republic of Nigeria, on his election to lead the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session, and to assure him of our full support in facilitating his work. I also want to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for his predecessor's outstanding efforts during her presidency of the previous session and to pay tribute to the enormous efforts of the Secretary-General in leading our deep-rooted Organization.

Anyone who has studied the work of the United Nations over the past seven decades and more has arrived at an essential conclusion, which is that the United Nations has been able to address many of the serious challenges and chronic crises that the world has faced. It is the safe haven that works to put an end to differences and ensure a logic of peace based on diplomacy in order to save succeeding generations from the scourge of conflicts and wars.

Since its inception, the State of Kuwait has maintained a foreign policy based on the foundations of peace. As Kuwait's recent non-permanent membership of the Security Council drew to an end, we concluded that through our direct involvement and interaction with the overall issues, both chronic and urgent, we became more aware of the importance of reinforcing dialogue and pluralism in order to address global challenges. The United Nations is the ideal place for addressing such issues. In that regard we reiterate Kuwait's position, which supports the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations with a view to ensuring the continuity of the work of the Organization and the effectiveness of its output and, in turn, guaranteeing the implementation of its ambitious mandate for the maintenance of international peace and security.

This year the Arab Gulf region has been hit with a series of acts of terrorism and subversion that have threatened freedom of navigation in that vital region of the world and undermined the flow of energy supplies. They include the recent attacks on 14 September on the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and particularly those that targeted its vital installations. We once again strongly condemn those terrorist attacks and reaffirm

Kuwait's full support for all the measures that Saudi Arabia is taking to preserve its security and stability. We also once again urge the international community to assume its responsibilities for ensuring and protecting freedom of navigation in this important part of the world and committing to compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. That in turn would help to maintain international peace and security.

The Palestinian question occupies a central and pivotal place in the Arab and Islamic worlds. If it continues to go unresolved, it will increase the tensions and instability in the region. It is therefore vital that we continue making every possible effort to relaunch serious negotiations within a specific time frame aimed at achieving a just and comprehensive peace that is based on the principle of a two-State solution, the terms of reference of the peace process, the resolutions of international legitimacy and the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative.

It is also crucial to end the Israeli occupation and establish an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, within the pre-1967 borders. Furthermore, all of Israel's practices violating the sanctity of religious sites, and all of its settlement activities on occupied Palestinian territories, must come to an end. At the same time, we emphasize that any settlement, deal or unilateral solution outside the framework of those terms of reference will only prolong the Palestinian question and exacerbate its consequences.

The developments in the Syrian crisis, which has entered its ninth year with all its human suffering, are a true testament to the lack of an international consensus on the issue and the absence of a dialogue between the parties. That has been the main reason for the protraction of this bloody conflict. From this rostrum, we reiterate our firm position that there can be no military solution to the crisis and stress the importance of working on a political settlement in line with the relevant Security Council decisions, particularly resolution 2254 (2015), and the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex), in order to meet the aspirations and ambitions of our brother people of Syria.

The continuing crisis in Yemen represents a remarkable indication of the reality of how to deal with the relevant resolutions and outcomes of the Security Council. However, despite the resumption of the negotiations among the parties to the crisis and the

conclusion of the Stockholm Agreement at the end of last year, the stalemate and the non-implementation of the Agreement still prevail. We want to emphasize that there can be no military solution to this crisis, either. We support the efforts of the United Nations to facilitate the political process and reiterate our readiness to host our Yemeni brothers for another round of consultations in Kuwait under the Organization's auspices, with a view to reaching a comprehensive and definitive political agreement, which should be based on the three agreed terms of reference — the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference, and the relevant Security Council resolutions, specifically resolution 2216 (2015) — in order to end the crisis and preserve the security, stability and territorial integrity of Yemen.

Based on the principle of consolidating good-neighbourly relations as promoted in the Charter of the United Nations, we once again call on the Islamic Republic of Iran to undertake serious confidence-building measures aimed at starting a dialogue built on respect for the sovereignty of States and non-interference in their internal affairs in order to reduce tensions in the Gulf region and maintain the safety of maritime navigation. That could help to establish relations based on cooperation and mutual respect, reflecting the aspirations of all the States of the region to live in security and stability and ensure their peoples' welfare and development.

There can be no doubt that the growing problem of terrorism and violent extremism is one of the most formidable and dangerous challenges facing the international system. The Middle East in particular has suffered from the subversive acts of terrorist groups, foremost of which is Da'esh, which has used Islam as a cover for its destructive intentions. That has been a direct reason for the appeals to the international community to intensify its efforts to combat that very real threat in all its forms and manifestations, to cut off its resources, eliminate its funding and implement international and regional conventions on combating terrorism. In the light of that imminent danger's potential for worsening in several countries of our region, particularly Yemen, Libya, Syria, Somalia and Afghanistan, we should consider the experience of our brother country of Iraq, which suffered the most from Da'esh's atrocities, and where such efforts had a concrete impact on eliminating the terrorist group from

Iraqi territory. The international community played a major role in that regard, in cooperation with the Iraqi Government.

Four years ago, we adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, one of the most remarkable and important achievements of the United Nations and a complement to the Millennium Development Goals. It is people-centred and aimed at enabling countries to achieve the desired outcomes. In taking on its international responsibilities in that regard, the State of Kuwait submitted its first voluntary national review for 2019 regarding the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals during the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. It is a demonstration of the political will of the leaders of our country, as specifically instructed by His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, to strengthen our commitment to international partnership and solidarity as part of our Government's policies in the short-, medium- and long-term. The aim is to achieve the highest possible levels of sustainable development and to objectively link them to Kuwait's Vision 2035 and the 2030 Agenda.

We in the State of Kuwait strive to create an environment conducive to attracting high-quality investments from all over the world. We are extremely pleased with the remarkable progress that has been achieved over the past years. That progress is the result of intensive effort and the enactment of a number of laws and measures undertaken by Kuwait. They have yielded the desired positive effects. We look forward to promoting the State of Kuwait's position through international indicators, including the ease-of-doing-business index issued annually by the World Bank Group.

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

*His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, was escorted from the rostrum.*

*The President returned to the Chair.*

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

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

*Mr. Nikol Pashinyan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The President:** I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Nikol Pashinyan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

**Mr. Pashinyan (Armenia):** At the outset, I would like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session. I wish to assure you, Mr. President, of Armenia's full support for your leadership during this seventy-fourth session. I also want to express our profound gratitude to Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session, for her effective leadership and important legacy.

This is my second opportunity to represent my country in this Hall as Prime Minister of Armenia. Momentous changes have been taking place in our country since my previous appearance at the General Assembly (see A/73/PV.7). Parliamentary elections were held in Armenia last December. For the first time in about 25 years, those elections and their results were fully accepted by our public and not contested by any political party. They received the best possible assessment from international observers, who hailed them as free, fair and transparent. That was a major achievement of the Armenian people's non-violent velvet revolution of 2018.

Armenia's peaceful revolution received praise and recognition from the international community. International media groups acknowledged Armenia's role in the global democratic surge as providing hope for global democracy. In recognition of our democratic achievements, *The Economist* magazine proclaimed Armenia "country of the year" in 2018. Our determination to advance democracy and reforms is solid, uncompromising and unwavering. It is based on the strong mandate of our people, to whom we are accountable in delivering reforms, securing justice, improving economic and social conditions and developing our nation.

Our democratic transformation and zero-tolerance policy on corruption are not without resistance from corrupted former elites, whose vast financial resources are directed at escaping justice. Our Government has not pursued a single case of property redistribution. At the same time, our resolve to press forward with reforms and ensuring justice is unwavering. Our mass media are completely free of Government control or interference. However, some are not free from meddling and control by the same old circles in the former Government and are fabricating fake news and spreading mistrust in the public domain about the origins and purposes of the velvet revolution.

Despite such challenges, our resolve to promote and protect the freedom of the media is unrelenting. We have witnessed plenty of suspicion about the nature and purposes of our revolution. Some believe that the revolution was instigated by global competitors in our region. Others have asked, "if they are not behind this revolution, who else could have done it?". From this rostrum, I would like to firmly state once again that the velvet revolution in Armenia was carried out by its proud citizens in a manifestation of their will to reject corruption and the abuse and monopolization of power, as well as the consistent falsification of elections and political fraud.

There is absolutely no need to reproach the free expression of will of the Armenian people, who are their country's ultimate sovereign in the sight of the international community. The political transformations in Armenia represent the fulfilment of a dream to have a free, democratic and happy country — a dream that was born in the late 1980s, at the end of the Cold War, and that led our people to independence.

Armenia's non-violent people's velvet revolution is proof of the potential of democratic change in the contemporary world. Yet the revolution was just the beginning of our mission and probably the easiest part of it. We are currently in a new, more important and difficult stage of our mission. We would like to prove that democratic transformation in Armenia is sustainable. We are proud to have already delivered some concrete results. Our economy is growing steadily and quite rapidly, thanks to a very important ideological transformation that has occurred in our country.

The individual effort of every citizen does matter. That principle is the most important driving force of our economic revolution, and the most important

mission of our Government is to inspire and convince our citizens to trust their talent and ability to make real changes. Individual efforts have been the main driver of the success of our political revolution. Before the revolution, only a small group of people believed that individual efforts could bring about political changes in our country, but today that is a commanding idea for the overwhelming majority of Armenian citizens. Our overall goal is therefore to accomplish an economic revolution in exactly the same way that the political revolution was achieved earlier.

The reform and strengthening of institutions are the most powerful instruments we possess in addressing the challenges that democratic Armenia is facing today. Immediately after coming to power, we initiated a package of drastic measures to establish the democratic institutions that never previously existed in our country, such as efforts to establish an independent judiciary, anti-corruption bodies and a level playing field for all economic and political players. The empowerment of women is another area in which we have taken bold steps to register visible results.

The most important part of our institutional reforms is education. We believe that only through promoting education can we make our democracy irreversible and achieve sustainable economic growth. Our vision is to make lifelong education a nationwide activity for all layers of our society, from children to adults. The Armenian Government is determined to continue its institutional reforms, but we also count on the support of the international community to stand with the young Armenian democracy to address its challenges. We need to have access to international best practices to save time and resources. We need to avoid the mistakes previously made by other democracies in order to make our democratic reforms more fruitful and efficient.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all our international partners who are fully committed to assisting our reform agenda. In particular, we are grateful to the United Nations and its programmes and agencies, as well as regional partners such as the European Union and the Council of Europe. As I mention the United Nations, our global Organization embracing the whole of the international community, I hope that all members of that international community would like the Armenian democracy to succeed.

Unfortunately, the world has not become a safer place for all of us this year. It is difficult to find any

region in the world that has not been destabilized or affected by tensions in its neighbourhood. Two of the four international borders of Armenia, including the border with Turkey, have been closed for almost three decades. By refusing to establish diplomatic relations with Armenia, overtly assisting Azerbaijan against Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh, Turkey remains a serious security threat to Armenia and the Armenian people, who have experienced the deep tragedy of genocide and continue to face the fierce denial of truth and justice.

The various degrees of tension existing in relations among our neighbours and strategic partners create very challenging circumstances for us. Russia is our key strategic partner and ally, while Georgia and Iran are our strategic neighbours, and we have a strategically significant agenda and partnership with the United States, the European Union and its Member States. We observe with concern the various disagreements among our friends, strategic partners and allies.

Those realities present us with significant challenges because we face the persistent risk of not being correctly understood by some of our friends — or even worse, by any of them. We are doing our best to remain a reliable partner and a good friend to all of them without damaging our relations with any of them, without promoting relations with one partner at the expense of another. We will continue to invest every effort into making our region's geopolitical environment safer.

The peaceful settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict is of crucial importance to the stability and security of our region. Since my very first day in office I have been taking steps in that context, and I publicly stated that any solution to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict must be acceptable to the peoples of Armenia, Nagorno Karabakh and Azerbaijan. It is noteworthy that I was the first Armenian leader to voice such a position about the settlement of the conflict. I was heavily criticized in my country for proposing such a formula to resolve the conflict, which places the three parties of the conflict on an equal footing.

Nevertheless, I strongly believe that this is the only way to achieve a peaceful and lasting settlement of the conflict because it offers a possibility for compromise, mutual respect and balance. I introduced the formula not only publicly but also within the negotiations being conducted under the auspices of the Organization for



Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group co-chairmanship.

In order to enable us to move forward, I expected a similar statement from Azerbaijan. However, Azerbaijan's highest authorities have maintained their position, which is based on a solution to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict that is acceptable only to the people of Azerbaijan. What does that really mean? It means that the Azerbaijani authorities have no intention of resolving the conflict.

Instead, they want to defeat the people of Nagorno Karabakh. They do not want to seek any compromise. What they aim at is revenge for their unsuccessful attempted aggressions against the people of Nagorno Karabakh in the 1990s and in 2016. That is why they are inflaming anti-Armenian sentiments among their people and spending enormous resources on armaments, and why anti-Armenian hate speech has become official policy in Azerbaijan.

In fact, the Azerbaijani authorities want to bring back the Soviet-era status of Nagorno Karabakh, but that is a futile effort because the people of the Soviet-era Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Region declared their independence and exercised their right to self-determination, as did Azerbaijan in seceding from the Soviet Union. That position of Azerbaijan is tantamount to claiming the restoration of the former Soviet Union.

The Azerbaijani Government presents the Nagorno Karabakh conflict as a territorial dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan. We totally disagree with such an interpretation of the conflict. It is not a dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan. It is not about territorial claims. It is about people, about real men and women and their right to live in their homeland as their ancestors lived over many centuries. Unfortunately, the Azerbaijani authorities do not want to talk to those people or negotiate with them because they want to have the territories but not the people. To be more precise, they want the territories without the people.

It is very important to explain the reason why I am referring to that part of the story. Do the members of the Assembly think that I want to contribute to the tension in our region? Of course not. On the contrary, I want to make it clear that the conflict of Nagorno Karabakh is a very complicated and painful issue for the peoples of the region and that it is impossible to settle it without hard and consistent work — without a compromise, mutual respect and balance. I therefore wish to invite

my Azerbaijani counterpart, President Ilham Aliyev, to accept the formula that will create the conditions for a breakthrough in the peace process. Any solution to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict must be acceptable to the people of Armenia, the people of Nagorno Karabakh and the people of Azerbaijan. We need to work together to translate this formula into reality.

A few days ago, we celebrated Armenia's Independence Day. Twenty-eight years ago, Armenia became a full member of the international community as a sovereign nation, regaining its place and role in the global arena. We are benefactors of international cooperation and contributors to fulfilling its security, development and human rights agenda. We greatly value effective multilateralism. We work with all our partners, both at the international and regional levels, to advance global security, fight against international terrorism and champion non-proliferation, nuclear security and peacekeeping operations. Armenia participates in international peacekeeping operations in Lebanon, Mali, Kosovo and Afghanistan, and has been conducting a humanitarian mission in Syria delivering medical assistance and providing humanitarian mine clearance for the benefit of the civilian populations affected by the crisis.

The benefits of effective multilateralism are strongly reflected in our global efforts aimed at advancing cooperation in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In Armenia, the process of incorporating the SDGs into our national plans complements the launch of an ambitious transformational national strategy for 2050, which involves 16 megagoals that embrace all the SDGs.

The priorities of advancing education, innovation, smart development and an inclusive and participatory political and economic environment illustrate the interlinkages that exist between development and human rights. Further advancing the role of women and youth is also of critical importance for Armenia. We will continue to focus on all these issues in both our domestic and international agendas.

Enhancing our integration of economic and environmental policies is very important. Having registered a 1.3°C average annual temperature increase, Armenia is already confronting the negative effects of climate change. To address this global challenge, we have been working to develop an innovative climate-finance

mechanism, which is part of Armenia's national pledge for the United Nations Climate Action Summit.

Promoting sustainable development and human rights should be an inclusive process. Sustainable development should be made accessible to everyone, regardless of political status or geographical location. No one should be left behind, including the people of Nagorno Karabakh, who should have access to the same tools of sustainable development that are available to others. Nagorno Karabakh should be able to benefit from international financial and technical assistance, so as to strengthen human rights, eradicate poverty, improve education, respond to climate change and build an inclusive society.

As a democratic country and a reliable member of the international community, Armenia will continue to make its contribution to international cooperation in order to maintain global peace and security, promote sustainable development and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms. We are committed to maintaining a constructive dialogue with all international partners to address common challenges and bring progress and prosperity to our nations. We are against dividing lines and the policy of confrontation. We are against closed borders, which in the twenty-first century are considered redundant and unacceptable and yet still continue to exist in our region.

As a nation that has experienced the horrors of genocide in the past, we stand for promoting mutual understanding and peace in our volatile region. Escalation and arms-race policies based on illusory hopes for military superiority have no future in the South Caucasus. The peoples of our region deserve to live in peace and prosperity, freely exercise their human rights and freedoms, and build a brighter future for themselves and their children.

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

*Mr. Nikol Pashinyan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, was escorted from the rostrum.*

**Address by Mr. Andrej Babiš, Prime Minister of the Czech Republic**

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

*Mr. Andrej Babiš, Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.*

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

**Mr. Babiš (Czech Republic):** Thirty years ago, my country, the Czech Republic, and the entire region of Central Europe, regained freedom. This year we are celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the Velvet Revolution. Václav Havel, whose name has become known to the whole world, grew to be the symbol of that revolution. In 1989, we were under the rule of a foreign empire. Our country, once known for its strong industry, was struggling. Its landscape and nature were being destroyed, and its political system was unresponsive to citizens.

Yet, 10 years later, our country was able to join NATO, and, in 2004, the Czech Republic became a member of the European Union (EU). The communist regime was replaced by a democracy that now boasts a thriving civil society and a booming economy. For 30 years now we have enjoyed the freedom to elect our representatives, express our opinions, exchange our ideas and partake of a free and independent media.

The Czech people have forged a great nation. We are talented, hardworking, and we do not give up easily. We are very proud of the heritage of the First Czechoslovak Republic, which was established in 1918. In fact, between the two world wars, the Czech Republic was among the most advanced and prosperous countries in the world. Our automotive, engineering, food, textile, footwear and military industries ranked among the best in the world. Such companies and brands as Bata, Škoda Auto, JAWA Moto and the Czechoslovak arms manufacturer Zbrojovka ČZ have remained famous to this day.

Unfortunately, after the collapse of communism, our inexperienced elite made mistakes and wasted a lot of time and resources when it could have been learning from other countries. But we got back on track thanks to the efforts and goodwill of our citizens, our small and large companies and our entrepreneurs and workers. Today the Czech Republic is the seventh-safest country in the world. Our economy is growing fast, we have the lowest unemployment rate in the EU, our economic growth is well above the EU average, and the ratio of our public debt to gross domestic product (GDP) is

the fourth-lowest in the European Union. Our public finances are in very good shape, and in many respects we can serve as an example. The Czech Republic is ranked seventh among the countries listed in the 2019 SDG Index in *The Sustainable Development Report 2019*. In the 2019 Social Progress Index's latest assessment of 149 countries, the Czech Republic ranks twenty-fourth in terms of quality of life, which is an improvement by two places compared to last year. The most recent *Allianz Euro Monitor* ranks the Czech economy as the fourth most stable in the EU. All of those successes confirm both our ambitions and our skills.

We have a clear vision for 2030 that is based on ensuring major support for research, development and innovation. Accordingly, as a Government, we approved an innovation strategy under the motto "Czech Republic: the country for the future". Under that motto we will present a national economic strategy in which we will link science, industry, energy and education and include the application of the most advanced technologies, from the full digitization of the economy to the implementation of artificial intelligence in many sectors. By the way, the very word "robot" is a Czech invention, coined by the Czech writer Karel Čapek back in 1921. Our goal is to become a European leader in innovation and artificial intelligence and a country that can serve as an example to the rest of the world.

Thirty years after being liberated from the communists, the countries of Central Europe have become great neighbours. Our regional group, the Visegrad Group, of which the Czech Republic currently holds the presidency, represents 65 million citizens from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary. We share common values and understand one another's problems, and therefore have been successful in promoting our interests and positions within the EU. I strongly believe that our region can make a major contribution to making Europe stronger. We want to be more active in addressing Europe's major challenges. We want a strong and united Europe. The European Union is the second largest economy in the world and has essentially become its most successful peace project. I am very fond of the idea of making war unthinkable and materially impossible, despite the fact that the notion is more than 60 years old. Unfortunately, the European Union is not very efficient at the moment, and I would like to change that. In my view, we should be more active in addressing foreign policy, international trade, and migration from the Middle East

and Africa. More precisely, all Member States, not just the largest, should actively engage with the President of the European Commission, as has been the case in the past five years.

In future, the EU's highest political body, the European Council, where European Presidents and Prime Ministers meet, should act as a European coalition Government. It should seek solutions and give very clear guidance on the EU's major challenges. Those challenges include, first, the issue of Brexit, for which a fair and functional deal between the United Kingdom and the EU must be found. The second is trade relations, specifically with the United States, and in my view it is regrettable that the previous trade talks between the EU and the United States, which is a natural ally of ours, have led nowhere. I believe the EU needs a major new trade agreement with the United States as soon as possible, similar to the one that President Trump promised the United Kingdom in his address to the Assembly (see A/74/PV.3). The third issue is the completion of the EU internal market, where the potential for European GDP growth is 1.7 per cent, the equivalent of €235 billion. Fourthly, we must address external security, and specifically the issues of regaining control over migration flows — including migration from the African continent — relations with Turkey, the situations in Syria and Libya and our relationship with Russia. We also need a strategy for further integration of a broader Schengen Area and the enlargement of the EU. As a key global player in recent years, the EU must work more efficiently and strive to be more functional.

We all realize that in the near future the consequences of climate change may affect our countries more than ever before. The effects will be not only environmental but also economic, social and ultimately political. We have a huge task ahead of us. Like all EU countries, the Czech Republic fully supports the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and we will fulfil our commitments. We are significantly reducing our greenhouse-gas emissions and this year, for example, we hosted the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting in Prague for the first time and adopted the Prague Declaration, which emphasizes scientific cooperation for a better understanding of how climate change works and how we can deal with it. The Czech Republic is also fully committed to the quest for a long-term strategy for achieving carbon neutrality.

As a whole, the European Union is ready to substantially change its economy to achieve carbon neutrality, but it cannot solve that burning issue without the help of the rest of the world. Europe cannot remain alone as the most ambitious actor in its struggle to adapt its economies to imminent climate change. We have only one planet, and its protection must be a common endeavour shared by all. Those who contribute the most to the environmental pollution that leads to climate change must find the political courage to participate in the solution. At the same time, we cannot and will not harm the very best of our economies. Although the EU has half a billion inhabitants, on its own it cannot be the solution in a world in which more than 7.5 billion people live. And soon there will be many more. The EU is leading by example and must therefore say loud and clear that other nations must take the necessary political decisions. The main economic models for the European Union's plans to reduce emissions by 80 per cent by 2050 estimate the average annual cost to be at least \$1.4 trillion. The cost of significant emission reductions is extremely high because we are dependent on fossil-fuel alternatives such as solar and wind energy, which are generally not efficient enough.

In that respect, therefore, the young protesters are right. The world is failing to tackle climate change. But their approach, which emphasizes even greater commitments to reduce carbon emissions, will also fail, because green energy is still not ready. The sun and wind currently provide less than 1 per cent of the world's energy and already require \$129 billion annually in subsidies. The world should invest more in green-energy research and development so that the price of renewables falls below that of fossil fuels and naturally encourages an energy transition. We must also be open-minded in looking into other zero-carbon sources such as nuclear energy. My country's only other option is the nuclear one, and we must keep the sovereignty of our energy mix intact.

Climate change is a popular topic around the world these days, and the arguments are correct in many ways. Greta Thunberg has made many interesting observations, but I am not sure that emotional displays, hysterical theatrics and sometimes even aggressive speech lead to a rational discussion, and it is an unfair generalization to say that nobody is doing anything. That is not true. Many of us are doing what we promised in our commitments, and Greta Thunberg should differentiate more carefully between them, because

otherwise, she is not being helpful. We should keep in mind that while Europe decreased its carbon-dioxide emissions by 20 million tons in 2018 and Europe's share of global carbon-dioxide emissions is only 9 per cent, the rest of the world increased its carbon-dioxide emissions by a factor of 52, to 1.02 billion tons. Recent analysis has shown that only a few of the 185 States that ratified the Paris Agreement in 2015 are actually fulfilling their commitments. It is crucial that nations honour their commitments, and as members of the United Nations, we have a joint responsibility for our planet.

However, as leaders of our respective countries, we also have a responsibility towards our own citizens and economies. It is unfortunate that in our discussions we sometimes forget that the European economy is very dependent on its industry. Our citizens have given us a mandate to ensure that we maintain prosperous economies and protect our environment. Our citizens also expect us to provide them with productive and sustainable jobs that they will not lose due to decreased competitiveness, which will occur if our countries adopt tougher, more ambitious measures to combat climate change than the rest of the world does. After all, we cannot ignore the fact that in many cases, reducing emissions simply means exporting jobs to other countries. That is unacceptable. The economy of the Czech Republic is heavily dependent on industry, and although we are investing a great deal in new technologies, decreasing our dependency on coal and strengthening low-emission energy sources, we must consider technological, economic and sociological factors as well as environmental ones.

Adapting to climate change and working on mitigating its negative effects is the main task ahead of all of us. But we must also focus on other challenges, which are complex and interconnected. Let us not forget that more than 800 million people are still starving this year. Approximately 785 million people lack basic access to drinking water. This year alone, more than 5.5 million children aged under five are going to die. Around 750 million adults are illiterate, two thirds of them women, and around 250 million children still have no opportunity to attend school. People living in extreme poverty make up 8.6 per cent of the global population.

The whole area stretching from North Africa to the wider Middle East is a region rife with conflict and instability. Wars in Syria and Yemen, conflicts in Afghanistan and Libya, and civil strife in Africa



and Latin America all result in terrible suffering and hardship for an enormous number of people. Those problems affect us all and cannot be ignored. In that regard, the United Nations has a unique responsibility, and it is especially true for the Security Council, which is responsible for maintaining peace and security around the globe. The question is, of course, whether the Council is fit for the task, as its current practices are sometimes slow and do not provide a flexible response.

Today migration is the one of the main issues worldwide. Since the large migration crisis in 2015, it has been a major political issue for the European Union and for my country. Although we have reduced the second wave of migration by deepening our cooperation with Turkey to try to decrease the influx of migrants from conflict zones in the Middle East and Afghanistan, it is definitely not a systemic solution to the problem. It is not enough to tackle the consequences and effects of these crises. Above all, we must address and eliminate their causes. Refugees must be motivated to return home, and that will only happen when their homes give them hope again. That is why we support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They will help us to eradicate the reasons that lead people to flee war zones or leave economies that are unable to provide them with decent lives.

The problem of migration must be addressed at its roots. We want people to have a better and safer life at home. We therefore support the long-term direct stabilization of turbulent areas, through rapid humanitarian aid and continuing development cooperation, which the Czech Republic provides in many places around the world. That is also why we support open and free international trade, which is a source of economic growth and the best instrument for reducing poverty.

We are now engaged in Africa much more actively than before. The Czech Republic has opened an embassy in Bamako, and we are helping to stabilize the security situation in Mali, although unfortunately many people incorrectly think that we care only about our interests in Central and Eastern Europe. We have introduced a new financial programme for our entrepreneurs, which makes it much easier to invest in developing countries, because investment is the key to employment and development.

For a long time we have been active in Syria, where we were the only EU country to maintain an open embassy headed by an ambassador throughout the conflict. To date, 5.6 million people have left Syria and 6.2 million have had to leave their homes. I think that Europe must find a common language for discussion with President Erdoğan. It is important to encourage him to pursue a concrete plan for refugees from Syria, and it is essential to establish peace in the region and make the region liveable again by building apartments, hospitals and schools instead of refugee camps. We must begin discussions with Turkey to that end. I am fully aware of President Erdoğan's recent statement that he will release 1 million Syrian refugees to Europe if there is no buffer zone in northern Syria. I personally support his plan for a secure corridor in Syria. I think we can improve the situation if we in the EU continue to discuss the issue with President Erdoğan. And we cannot forget that we have to be able to speak to Syria.

One of the main slogans of our 1989 revolution was "Back to Europe". Thirty years ago, the Czech Republic returned to where it historically belonged. Today it is therefore playing its part within the United Nations and globally. I hope we can work on that together.

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

*Mr. Andrej Babiš, Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.*

**Address by Mr. Xavier Espot Zamora, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra**

**The President:** The Assembly will now hear an address by the Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra.

*Mr. Xavier Espot Zamora, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The President:** I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Xavier Espot Zamora, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

**Mr. Espot Zamora** (Andorra) (*spoke in Catalan; Spanish text provided by the delegation*): I would like to begin this address to the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session by congratulating you, Sir, on your election as its President and by

recognizing your wisdom in choosing the theme for this session, “Galvanizing multilateral efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion”.

Preparations will soon begin for the celebration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, a great assembly of all the peoples of the world that was born with the primary aim of preventing violent conflicts between countries after two devastating world wars. A few years after its birth, the United Nations expanded its scope and began to focus on improving people’s living conditions, and if we review the themes of the last few sessions, we will realize that the issue of development has become a key element of the multilateral agenda. I say “of the multilateral agenda”, not just the agenda of the United Nations, because the 17 Sustainable Development Goals have the virtue of aligning the priorities and lines of action of various regional and sectoral forums. For example, the Principality of Andorra has assumed the Pro Tempore Secretariat of the Ibero-American Summit for two years under the slogan “Innovation for sustainable development — Target 2030”.

Returning to the theme of this session of the General Assembly, the idea is to mobilize multilateral efforts in favour of development and sustainability in every area. In order to achieve sustainable development, joint action by all actors in society is essential. For that reason, Andorra recently adopted a national strategic plan for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, an inclusive document that will speed up our implementation of the Goals set forth by this Assembly.

Without an improvement in people’s living conditions, any policy aimed at preventing violent conflict would be a weak one. In the words of Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of this Organization from 1997 to 2006, “[i]f war is the worst enemy of development, healthy and balanced development is the best form of conflict prevention”. This notion of healthy and balanced development is what we now call “sustainable development”. Similarly, sustainable development cannot be understood without the prior existence of just and peaceful societies. And there are no just and peaceful societies without effective respect for human rights. In that regard, Andorra once again reiterates its full support for the International Criminal Court as one of the main independent and impartial bodies fighting impunity for the most serious

crimes. A year ago, we welcomed the expansion of the Court’s jurisdiction over crimes of aggression, and we will continue to resolutely support the extension of its jurisdiction.

Poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion are the four objectives that probably best address the challenges that the international community is currently facing. The case of poverty is paradigmatic, because all our global challenges are related to it. Mass migrations and forced displacement are caused by extreme poverty and war; the consequences of global warming are felt with greater intensity in the poorest communities; the reach of digitization, which can be an opportunity to reduce inequalities and alleviate the lack of infrastructure in various parts of the world, varies greatly depending on the degree of development; and such persistent problems as violence, terrorism and violent extremism feed on poverty and marginality.

The second of the development goals that the President of the General Assembly has set as priorities is quality education. There is no question that there can be no better weapon for empowerment and overcoming poverty than expanding access to quality education. This is an issue that has been the focus of much of Andorra’s action in multilateral forums over the past few years. That is undoubtedly because ours is a small country with few natural resources. A country that depends almost exclusively on the strength and talent of its people knows very well the positive impact that quality education can have. In Andorra three public, free and freely chosen education systems — French, Spanish and Andorran — have co-existed for three decades and have shaped a multilingual society prepared to cope with globalization. Andorrans are traditionally trilingual, as we speak Catalan, our own language, along with Spanish and French. Furthermore, we have long since incorporated English as an international language, and the large community of persons of Portuguese origin living in our country means that the Portuguese language is increasingly significant. It is not uncommon to find young people in our country capable of speaking five languages fluently, our own and four others, which opens doors for them to communicate with hundreds of millions of people around the world.

Moreover, we understand that in order to face the challenges of an increasingly globalized world, we must make a firm commitment to education to create a democratic citizenry that respects human rights,

cultural diversity and the environment. In recent years, Andorra has promoted inclusive educational policies aimed at providing our young people with the tools they need to develop their potential in a multicultural and global world. That is why today I reaffirm my country's commitment to working together with the international community to advance all the efforts we need to promote quality education as a tool that guarantees equal opportunities.

Action on climate is a multilateral action par excellence. In a global world, no great challenge can be met without cooperation among countries, and no great goal can be achieved unilaterally. But while we can make significant progress in reducing inequalities or promoting education at the national level, it is utterly impossible to address the issue of climate change from a purely unilateral perspective, because the environmental policy of a single country, however ambitious it may be, is totally ineffective without action at on a global scale. An example that I know well is that global warming is a direct threat to the delicate ecological balance of a high-mountain country such as Andorra. It jeopardizes the long-term survival of the ski sector, which is one of the pillars of our economy. But no matter how hard we try, Andorrans alone cannot reverse that trend — not Andorra nor any other country, no matter how big or powerful.

I realize that implementing effective measures to combat climate change can be difficult and costly, especially for the major industrial Powers. But major global challenges require major global commitments. If I may draw a parallel, I would like to remind the Assembly that 10 years ago a severe financial crisis forced us to lay the foundations for new international rules of the game, and many financial centres such as Andorra had to make great efforts to advance their transparency and cooperation in fiscal matters. It has not been an easy path for us or for any other small country similar to ours. But if we were able to commit to that task a decade ago and fulfil those commitments, the large industrialized countries should now also be able to deliver on the agreements we have all signed.

The world is urging us to act decisively and forcefully in the face of our climate emergency. Every Friday, hundreds of thousands of young people around the world are demanding that we safeguard their future — not their economic progress or the benefits of the welfare state, but their future in the most literal and basic sense, the very existence of human life on Earth.

It seems to me that we are at a critical juncture, when the debates on the scientific evidence of climate change have ended and the discussion about who has a greater responsibility to act has been set aside. We have a road map, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which was solemnly signed in this very Hall in April 2016. All that remains is therefore to implement the content of the Agreement at the national level, which, I would like to point out, is not an optimal agreement but a minimal one, with a scope that I am sure will have to be expanded in the future.

Over the past two years, Andorra has begun to implement an ambitious plan to convert our development model into a sustainable one that contributes to limiting global warming. In our country, the two main sources of carbon-dioxide emissions are transportation and heating. That is why we have deployed a direct incentive plan to replace our car fleet with electric vehicles, implemented a ride-sharing programme and renovated our public transportation network to make it more sustainable. From 1 January next year, all buildings in Andorra must have virtually zero energy consumption. At the same time, we have launched an ambitious public and private investment plan to increase national electricity production, which currently covers only 20 per cent of the demand, with the aim of covering 33 per cent by 2030 and 50 per cent by 2050. On top of that, our goal is for at least 75 per cent of our own electricity production to come from renewable sources.

The Andorran Government also intends to forge partnerships with civil society in order to restructure linear production models into circular economy models that do not generate waste or negative externalities. Specifically, we want to engage private actors to demonstrate that sustainability does not hinder economic development but rather provides an opportunity to drive new sectors of activity, expand the industries dedicated to recovery, repurposing and recycling, and generate wealth and jobs. It is not a question of having to choose between economic development and sustainability. We have moved beyond that. The point is to understand that in the long term the only possible economic development is sustainable development.

When the theme for the Assembly at its seventy-fourth session was selected, we were also urged to mobilize multilateral efforts for inclusion. Unlike poverty reduction, quality education or climate action, inclusion is not in itself a Sustainable Development Goal but rather a goal that cuts across the 2030

Agenda for Sustainable Development. In my opinion, inclusion is even more important because it is inherent in the concept of sustainability — no action, policy or institutional order is sustainable if it is not inclusive. Inclusion is like trust. It is a kind of cement that holds societies together.

Many of the countries represented in this Hall are representative democracies that are based on parliaments and executive branches that represent the diverse wishes of their citizens by channelling and structuring the will of individuals into Government programmes that respond to people's desires and needs. The General Assembly is the fullest expression at the international level of the idea of representative democracy because the activities of the United Nations also serve to channel and structure the intentions and lines of action of its various Member States. Yet that idea, the idea of representative democracy, is in danger and has been besieged by anti-democratic and populist movements that challenge multilateralism and appeal to underdeveloped direct democracies. The response to the crisis of the representativeness of institutions does not have to mean less representativeness or fewer institutions, but it does require institutions that are truly effective in responding to people's needs and in which people can see themselves reflected. Very often, those who most criticize institutions for being unrepresentative are precisely those who most weaken them through their actions.

The response to the crisis of representative and multilateral institutions does not have to be an anti-institutional reaction. Let us ask ourselves. Was the world a better place before the United Nations came into existence? Was Europe a better place before the existence of the European Union? Were our countries better off before national parliaments came to be? The answer is obvious. Given the institutional crisis, what we need is to improve our institutions, not further incapacitate them. Reforming or adapting democratic institutions to make them more representative is a challenge at both the national and global levels, and it has always been a challenge. This year, Andorra celebrates 600 years of the uninterrupted existence of the General Council, the Parliament that has represented the will of the Andorran people since 1419. Over those six centuries, our institutions have made many changes to better reflect the reality of our country. Some changes have taken hundreds of years, while others have evolved much faster. Only 25 years ago, just one

of the 28 members of our Parliament was a woman. Today half of Andorra's parliamentarians are women.

Our history shows that institutions endure better when they are flexible rather than rigid. That is why we support the Secretary-General's initiative implementing a double reform of the United Nations, making it both more flexible and more effective. We also have a road map to measure our effectiveness. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals would address most of the concerns and aspirations of the vast majority of the world's inhabitants.

One of the great challenges of our time is to respond to the many people who feel excluded from representative democratic institutions and development processes. In Andorra we are working to promote inclusion. We are implementing our recently enacted law on equality and we are working on a law on effective equality between men and women, which directly and constantly combats the wage gap and glass ceilings, since the workplace is the real battleground for equality and inclusion, not only for women but also for traditionally disadvantaged groups such as people with disabilities or young people who have not completed secondary school.

Despite a unilateral and nationalist retreat in various parts of the world, the real response to the great questions of our time is effective and inclusive multilateralism — effective, so that we can move forward on a path of sustainable development on the economic, social and environmental fronts, and inclusive, because progress that works for only a few becomes unsustainable and the institutions that represent the will of only a few become weak. Andorra, committed to a path towards peace, harmony and integrated diversity, will always support the United Nations in building a multilateral order that ensures sustainable development and inclusion.

**The President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Xavier Espot Zamora, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra, was escorted from the rostrum.*

**The President:** I now call on His Excellency Mr. Heiko Maas, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany.



**Mr. Maas** (Germany) (*spoke in German; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): Here in New York over the past few days, we have all heard a great many speeches — at the Climate Action Summit, the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, the countless side events, and of course here at the speech-making marathon known as the general debate.

If we were to analyse all the speeches, we would probably find that one term, “sustainability”, crops up more often than any other. Some think the term is nothing but hype, a marketing trend or a bit of greenwashing for the post-material elite. And as long we do nothing more than talk about sustainability, none of that will change. While we here in New York are talking about sustainability, we risk losing the race against climate change. The Earth is ablaze. While we are talking about sustainability, men, women, and children are suffering from starvation and epidemics. While we are talking about sustainability, people are dying as a result of wars and conflicts that we have been trying to resolve for years without success. Syria, Mali, Ukraine, the Middle East, Afghanistan, Yemen, Iran, Myanmar, North Korea — the list is far too long. It is time to do more than just talk about sustainability. It is time to act sustainably, including in foreign and security policy.

A sustainable foreign policy is one that seeks lasting solutions to conflict and involves all stakeholders in order to ensure both acceptance and stability. It focuses on prevention rather than merely reacting to events. It relies on viable agreements, not speedy deals at others’ expense. All who love their countries will be committed to cooperation, because only if we work together will we all have a future. A sustainable foreign policy is a multilateral foreign policy. The United Nations is founded on that very principle, which is also the guiding principle for German and European foreign policy. I would like to provide four examples that make that clear.

First, concerning the situation in the Middle East, the attacks on two oil facilities in Saudi Arabia have shown us how fast things can escalate. Iran bears the responsibility for them, as we Europeans have made clear publicly and also at our meetings with the Iranian Foreign Minister. The only way to ease the tension is to hold talks between the United States and Iran, but that will happen only if no unrealistic preconditions are placed on such a dialogue. There is something else that

we emphasized today at our meeting with Iran, Russia and China. We want to continue to adhere to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and the goal of an Iran with no nuclear weapons, simply because it creates security and a basis for further talks with Iran on other topics that are important in that context. Ultimately, diplomacy means not getting bogged down in a logic of despair. But it also means sticking to mutual agreements. That is why we expect Iran to meet the obligations it entered into with us and the entire international community with regard to the JCPOA and to respond positively to our current European efforts to make progress on a diplomatic solution.

Secondly, with regard to Afghanistan, we very much regret that the terrible attacks by the Taliban sabotaged the talks with the United States in Doha. Germany closely followed and supported the talks from the outset. We are convinced that a sustainable solution to the conflict can come about only through political compromise. That is the only way we can ensure that peace endures in the long term. We owe that to all who have been engaged for a peaceful Afghanistan over the past 18 years, in some cases paying with their lives. For that reason, an agreement with the Taliban can also be only a first step. What we would then need would be intra-Afghan peace talks. Germany is ready to support those talks, not least in order to ensure that everything that the United Nations and the entire international community have worked for over almost two decades is not lost — a constitutional order, a minimum of stability, human rights and the rights of women and girls in particular.

Thirdly, with regard to Ukraine, over the past two years, the Minsk process has more or less come to a standstill. Right there, in Europe, we have seen an aggression that has cost more than 13,000 lives. We will not simply sit back and accept it. The people in Ukraine want peace. President Zelenskyy has said that very clearly and made it one of his priorities, which has provided a new impetus. Take the bridge in Stanytsia Luhanska, for example. For four years it was a ruin. Now it is being rebuilt. Military equipment and soldiers are being withdrawn. At first glance it is a small step, just one piece of the disengagement called for by the Minsk process, but it is a huge step for the people who use the bridge each and every day. We want to seize that momentum. Together with France, we are working hard within the Normandy format to finally find solutions to issues that have been on the table for almost four

years. After all, pursuing a sustainable foreign policy also means persistently pursuing goals, step by step. Standing still is not an option.

Lastly, with regard to Syria, now in its ninth year of war, the idea of sustainable peace might almost seem naive, and yet today there are grounds for cautious hope. The creation of the Constitutional Committee is a first important step towards a political process. It will be crucial to ensure that the Committee begins work quickly and implements resolution 2254 (2015). Only when we finally get down to tackling the causes of conflict and address the Syrian people's desire for social, economic and political participation can there be lasting peace in Syria. And reconstruction will be sustainable only when political progress is visible. Until then, Germany will not take part. Another element that is at least as important is justice. How can thousands of traumatized, tortured and displaced Syrians and victims of poison-gas attacks believe in peace if their tormentors go unpunished? The predominant impression now, and not only in Syria, is that even the worst crimes are not punished. International criminal law is under massive pressure. That is why, before the end of this week, we will establish an alliance against impunity, designed to strengthen international criminal jurisdiction. Without justice there can be no reconciliation or peace.

Those four examples show that sustainable foreign policy demands stamina, resilience and resolve. Above all, it means working together reliably. When we do cooperate, we are making progress, often outside the glare of publicity. In the Sudan, after 30 years, there is at long last hope of a truly new beginning. I was there recently and I assured those in positions of responsibility that we will continue to support the transformation through mediation, in the Security Council, as a troop contributor to the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur and as a donor. And it is not only in the Sudan that we support peace processes. I am therefore pleased to announce that Germany is doubling its contribution to the Peacebuilding Fund this year, from €15 million to €30 million.

In Mali, United Nations Blue Helmets, including almost 1,000 Germans, are working to secure a fragile peace on a daily basis. The prerequisite for lasting stability is that the people regain confidence in the local security forces. That is why together with France we have established a partnership for security and stability in the Sahel, and we call on all Member States to join us.

A solution has yet to be found in the conflict in Libya. We support the United Nations and the tireless efforts of Special Representative Salamé. An international process involving the supporters of the parties to the conflict is the only way forward. We want to take on responsibility in that regard, too, and together with the Special Representative, we have launched a process intended to lead to achieving peace.

Germany has now been a non-permanent member of the Security Council for nine months, and the impression I have is that far too often, crises and conflicts are not discussed in the Council until shots have been fired and people are dying. That is the very opposite of sustainable policymaking, because at that point it is already too late. The Security Council must move from being a crisis-response body to a crisis-prevention body. And, finally, it must also examine the causes of conflicts. That is why we put climate and security on the agenda at the very beginning of our term and will ensure that it remains there. Climate change has long ceased to be merely an ecological challenge for humankind. More and more often it is a matter of war and peace. Climate change is no less than a question of humankind's survival. If people no longer have access to clean drinking water, if entire harvests are ruined by persistent drought and conflicts break out over the few remaining resources, the wars of the future will be climate wars. Climate protection must therefore become an imperative in a sustainable foreign policy.

During our membership of the Council we are also focusing on the role of women. Sexual violence continues to be used as a tactic of war. That is abhorrent and perverse. With the adoption of resolution 2467 (2019) in April, we were able to help ensure better support for survivors of sexual violence, but more is at stake here. Stable peace is 33 per cent more likely to be achieved if women are involved in the process. We are therefore committed to seeing an increase in the number of women peacekeepers. Only eight of every 100 seats at peace talks are currently occupied by women. That is nothing short of negligent. To put it simply, peace efforts will not work if 51 per cent of the world's population is excluded. We will therefore continue to do whatever we can to fight for an equal world. That is not just a matter of justice but one of human decency and human reason.

We will also continue to fight in the Security Council for disarmament and arms control. It was thanks to us that in April the subject of nuclear-arms control was

put back on the Council's agenda for the first time in seven years — I repeat, seven years — although if one thing is absolutely clear it is that we can build security only if we work with and not against one another. That is why many States are calling strongly and with increasing impatience for a return to concrete, realistic steps towards disarmament, especially in the nuclear field, and that is why those States that have yet to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty must finally do so. Following the launch of the disarmament initiative at an international ministerial meeting held in Stockholm in June, we would like to place nuclear disarmament issues firmly on the international agenda ahead of the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. I am looking forward to welcoming the supporters of the initiative to Berlin next year.

Collaboration, compromise and the defence of our joint rules and institutions are what we understand by sustainability in foreign policy. More than most other countries, Germany has benefited from the rules-based order over the past 70 years. Peace, prosperity, free trade and a world open to the outside, as well as a liberal society within, are inextricably linked to multilateralism. Never going it alone again — that is a lesson from our history. Precisely because it was Germany that 80 years ago unleashed fire and destruction in Europe and the

world, we must assume a special responsibility today for an order that secures peace. That is why we set up the Alliance for Multilateralism last year. We do not agree with the idea that if everyone thinks only of themselves, everyone has been thought of, because in the end that means only “everyone against everybody else”. The truth is that not one of the major issues of the future confronting us today can be resolved by one country acting alone. Only if we work together will we find answers to globalization, the digital revolution, migration and human-induced climate change.

Cooperation is not a betrayal of one's own country. Rather, it creates the prerequisites for our countries' security and prosperity. In the past 12 months, countries from all parts of the world that share that view have joined together in the Alliance for Multilateralism. Tomorrow, more than 50 of my colleagues will be meeting here in New York to agree on concrete steps to strengthen international law and human rights and to discuss disarmament, crisis prevention, peacebuilding and global issues for the future, such as cybertechnology and climate change. That is multilateralism in practice. That is sustainable foreign policy. Sustainable development is not a principle of lofty discourse or an elite approach that only the wealthy can afford. On the contrary, we can no longer afford not to act sustainably.

*The meeting rose at 10.15 p.m.*