



General Assembly

Seventy-sixth session

16th plenary meeting
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New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Shahid (Maldives)

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

Agenda item 8 (continued)

General debate

Address by Mr. Naftali Bennett, Prime Minister, Minister for Community Affairs and Minister for National Digital Affairs of the State of Israel

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister, Minister for Community Affairs and Minister for National Digital Affairs of the State of Israel.

Mr. Naftali Bennett, Prime Minister, Minister for Community Affairs and Minister for National Digital Affairs of the State of Israel, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Naftali Bennett, Prime Minister, Minister for Community Affairs and Minister for National Digital Affairs of the State of Israel, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Bennett (Israel): Israel is a lighthouse in a stormy sea — a beacon of democracy, diverse by design, innovative by nature and eager to contribute to the world despite being in the toughest neighbourhood on Earth. We are an ancient nation of people who have returned to our ancient homeland, revived our ancient language and restored our ancient sovereignty.

Israel is a miracle of Jewish revival. *Am Yisrael Chai* — the nation of Israel is alive — and the State of

Israel is its beating heart. For far too long, Israel has been defined by wars with our neighbours, but that is not what Israel is about. That is not what the people of Israel are about. Israelis do not wake up in the morning thinking about conflict. Israelis, like everyone else, want to lead a good life, take care of our families and build a better world for our children.

That means that, from time to time, we might need to leave our jobs, say goodbye to our families and rush to the battlefield to defend our country — just as my friends and I have had to do ourselves from time to time. They should not be judged for it. Israelis remember the dark horrors of our past but remain determined to look ahead to build a brighter future.

There are two plagues that challenge the very fabric of our society at this moment. One, of course, is the coronavirus pandemic, which has killed more than 5 million people around the globe. The other has also shaken the world as we know it. It is the disease of political polarization. Both the coronavirus pandemic and polarization can erode public trust in our institutions. Both can paralyse nations. If left unchecked, their effects on society can be devastating. In Israel we faced both but, rather than accept them as a force of nature, we stood up. We took action, and now we can already see the horizon.

In a polarized world, in which algorithms fuel our anger, people on the right and on the left operate in two separate realities, two separate spheres, each in their own social media bubble. They hear only the voices that confirm what they already believe. People end

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up hating each other. Societies are torn apart because people do not hear each other. Countries that are broken from within can get nowhere.

In Israel, after four elections in two years and with a fifth looming, people yearned for an antidote — calm, stability and an honest attempt at political normalcy. Inertia is always the easiest choice, but there are moments in time when leaders have to take the wheel just before reaching the cliff, face the danger and drive the country to safety. That is exactly what we did.

Approximately 100 days ago, my partners and I formed a new Government in Israel — the most diverse Government in Israel's history. What started as a political accident can now turn into a purpose, and that purpose is unity. Today we sit together around one table. We speak to each other with respect. We act with decency and carry a message: things can be different. Although we harbour extremely different political opinions, we sit together for the good of our nation.

It is okay to disagree. It is okay — in fact, I would say it is vital — that different people think differently. It is even okay to argue, as healthy debate is a basic tenet of the Jewish tradition. I can also say that it is one of the secrets to the success of the start-up nation. We just need to enter one of the companies to see that debate under way. Debate is the power of innovation. What we have now proved in Israel is that even in the age of social media, we can debate without hate.

The second great disease we all face is the coronavirus pandemic, which is sweeping the world. To overcome it, we will need to make new discoveries, gain new insights and achieve new breakthroughs. That all begins with the pursuit of knowledge. The State of Israel is on the front lines of the search for that vital knowledge.

In Israel we developed a model that fuses the wisdom of science with the power of policymaking. The Israeli model has three guiding principles. First, the country must stay open. We all paid a huge price: an economic price, a physical price and an emotional price — we just have to ask our kids — for bringing life to a standstill in 2020.

But, my friends, to bring economies back to growth, children back to school and parents back to work, lockdowns, restrictions and quarantines are not the way forward: they cannot be sustained in the long term. Our model, rather than locking people down in

passive sleep-mode, recruits them to the effort. They can be part of the effort. For example, a few weeks ago we asked Israeli families to carry out home-testing of all children so we could keep schools open — and indeed schools stayed open. I can now tell the General Assembly that we are going to distribute dozens of those self-tests to all Israeli parents. They can be part of the fight.

The second rule is to vaccinate early. Right from the start, Israelis were quick to get vaccinated. We are in a race against a deadly virus, and we must try to be ahead of it. In July, we were the first to learn that the vaccines were waning, getting weaker, which is what brought about a surge in Delta cases in Israel. It was then that my Government decided to administer a third dose of vaccine — the booster — to the Israeli public. It was a tough decision, given that at the time the Food and Drug Administration had not yet even approved it.

We faced a choice: to either drag Israel into yet another set of lockdowns and further harm our economy and society or to double down on vaccines. We chose the latter. Israel pioneered the booster shot. Now, two months later, I can report that it works. With a third dose, we are seven times more protected than with two doses, and 40 times more protected than without any vaccine. The booster works. As a result, Israel is on course to escape the fourth wave, without a lockdown and without doing further harm to our economy. Israel's economy is growing, and unemployment is declining. I am glad that our actions have inspired other countries to follow up by administering the booster.

The third rule is to adapt and move quickly. We formed a national task force that meets every day; I lead it. The task force is intended to bypass slow governmental bureaucracy, make quick decisions and act on them right away. A trial-and-error approach is key. Every day is a new day, with new data and new decisions. When something works, we keep it. When it does not, we discard it and move on.

Running a country during a pandemic is not only about health; it is also about carefully balancing all aspects of life that are affected by the coronavirus disease, especially jobs and education.

While doctors provide an important input, they cannot be the ones who run the national initiative. The only person that has a good vantage point of all of consideration is the national leader of any given country.

Above all, we are doing everything in our power to provide people with the tools needed to protect their lives. The ancient Jewish text, the Talmud, says: “Whoever saves one life, is as if he saved an entire world”, and that is what we aspire to do.

While Israel strives to do good, we cannot lose sight for one moment of what is happening in our neighbourhood. Israel is quite literally surrounded by Hizbullah, Shia militias, Islamic Jihad and Hamas — on our borders. Those terror groups seek to dominate the Middle East and spread radical Islam across the world.

What do they all have in common? They all want to destroy my country, and they are all backed by Iran. They get their funding from Iran, they get their training from Iran, and they get their weapons from Iran. Iran’s great goal is crystal clear to anybody who cares to open their eyes: Iran seeks to dominate the region — and seeks to do so under a nuclear umbrella.

For the past three decades, Iran has spread its carnage and destruction around the Middle East, country after country. Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Gaza — what do all those places have in common? They are all falling apart, their citizens are hungry and suffering and their economies are collapsing. Like the Midas touch, Iran’s regime has the Mullah touch: every place Iran touches fails.

If anyone thinks Iranian terror is confined to Israel, they are wrong. Let me share some news. Just this year, Iran made operational a new deadly terror unit — a start-up with swarms of killer unarmed aerial vehicles (UAVs) armed with lethal weapons that can attack any place at any time. They plan to blanket the skies of the Middle East with that lethal force. Iran has already used those deadly UAVs — known as Shahed-136 — to attack Saudi Arabia, American targets in Iraq and civilian ships at sea, most recently killing a United Kingdom citizen and a Romanian. Iran plans to arm its proxies in Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon with hundreds, and eventually thousands, of those deadly UAVs. We can ignore that, but experience tells us that what starts in the Middle East does not stop there.

In 1988, Iran set up a death commission that ordered the mass murder of 5,000 political activists, who were hanged from cranes. That death commission was made up of four people; Ebrahim Raisi, Iran’s new President, was one of them. Raisi also oversaw the murder of Iranian children. His nickname is the butcher of Tehran,

because that is exactly what he did: he butchered his own people.

One of the witnesses to that massacre stated in her testimony that, when Raisi would finish a round of murder, he would throw a party, pocketing the money of those he had just executed minutes earlier, and then would sit down to eat cream cakes. He celebrated the murder of his own people by devouring cream cakes. And now this very Raisi is Iran’s new President. That is who we are dealing with.

Over the past few years, Iran has made a major leap forward in its nuclear research and development, production capacity and enrichment. Iran’s nuclear-weapons programme is at a critical point. All red lines have been crossed, inspections ignored and all wishful thinking proven false.

Iran is currently violating the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguard agreements — and it is getting away with it. They harass inspectors and sabotage their investigations — and they are getting away with it. They enrich uranium to the level of 60 per cent, one step short of weapons-grade material — and they are getting away with it.

Evidence has been ignored that clearly proves Iran’s intentions with respect to nuclear weapons in secret sites in Turqez Abad, Tehran and Marivan.

Iran’s nuclear programme has hit a watershed moment, and so has our tolerance. Words do not stop centrifuges from spinning. There are those in the world who seem to view Iran’s pursuit of nuclear weapons as an inevitable reality and as a done deal, or else they have just become tired of hearing about it. Israel does not have that privilege. We cannot tire. We will not tire. Israel will not allow Iran to acquire a nuclear weapon.

I want to tell the Assembly something. Iran is much weaker and much more vulnerable than it seems. Its economy is sinking. Its regime is rotten and divorced from the younger generation in Iran. Its corrupt Government fails even to bring water to large parts of the country.

The weaker they are, the more extreme the actions they take to hide their weakness. And I am telling everyone: if we put our minds to it, if we are serious about stopping it and if we use all our resourcefulness, we can prevail. And that is exactly what we are going to do.

Not everything is dark in the Middle East. Alongside worrisome trends, there are also rays of light. First and foremost are the growing ties that Israel is forging with Arab and Muslim countries — ties that began to be established 42 years ago through Israel's historic peace agreement with Egypt, continued 27 years ago through Israel's peace agreement with Jordan and more recently continued further through the Abraham Accords, which normalized our relations with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Morocco. More such ties will follow.

At the ripe young age of 73, Israel's value and unique place in the world are coming to be understood by more and more nations. Some friends have stood with us since our founding. The United States of America is a long-time, trusted friend of Israel, as we saw yet again just a few days ago in the United States Congress.

Alongside our old friends, we are gaining new friends — in the Middle East and beyond. Last week, that manifested itself with the defeat of the racist, anti-Semitic, Durban Conference. That Conference had originally been intended to oppose racism, but over the years had turned into a conference that promotes racism against Israel and the Jewish people. The world has had enough of that. I want to thank the 38 countries — 38 — that chose truth over lies and skipped the Conference. And to those countries who chose to participate in that farce, I can say only that attacking Israel does not make them morally superior; fighting the only democracy in the Middle East does not make them “woke”; and adopting clichés about Israel without bothering to learn the basic facts is just plain lazy.

Every Member State in this Hall has a choice, not a political choice but a moral one. It is a choice between darkness and light — between the darkness that persecutes political prisoners, murders the innocent, abuses women and minorities and seeks to end the modern world as we know it and the light that pursues freedom, prosperity and opportunity.

Over the past 73 years, the State of Israel — the people of Israel — have achieved so much in the face of so much. And yet I can say with full confidence: our best days are ahead of us. Israel is a nation of great hope, a nation that has brought the heritage of the Torah to life in modern-day Israel, a nation of an unbreakable spirit.

“A bit of light dispels much darkness.” The lighthouse amid the stormy seas stands tall, stands strong and her light shines brighter than ever.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank Prime Minister, Minister for Community Affairs and Minister for National Digital Affairs of the State of Israel for the statement just made.

Mr. Naftali Bennett, Prime Minister, Minister for Community Affairs and Minister for National Digital Affairs of the State of Israel, was escorted from the rostrum.

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

Mr. Makei (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Exactly two decades ago, the United Nations and its leader received the Nobel Peace Prize. At the reception ceremony, former Secretary-General Kofi Anan said that we had “entered the third millennium through a gate of fire”. Unfortunately, the fire has not been fully extinguished. For several decades now, we have witnessed unprecedented levels of protracted global turbulence and unpredictability. That is a logical outcome of the fact that our planet has been functioning outside the systems and obligations enshrined in the universal principles of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations,

Today's world is governed by economic egotism, political ambition, imperialist blackmail instincts, crises, conflicts and orchestrated chaos. Some States attempt to impose on other sovereign States artificial templates for socioeconomic development, as well as barbarous policies of sanctions against undesirable Governments, economic terrorism and the kind of policy that seeks to return our peaceful world to confrontation among great-Power alliances.

That all has very little in common with the just and harmonious world order that people have been striving to build for so many decades. It is a clear sign of an obsessive and harmful wish to provoke confrontation around the world. Blatant interference by self-appointed oracles in the internal affairs of other sovereign States has now become the norm on the international stage. The negative trend in global security persists, including through hybrid wars and the malicious criminal use of modern information technologies, which fuel extremism, terrorism and fake news. Today electronic gadgets can be used to undermine national peace and harmony in any State and remove its leadership from power.

Moreover, for more than a year and a half the world has been held hostage by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. It has taken the lives of millions of people, led to irreversible social and economic loss and revealed negative global dynamics on many levels. We fully support the work being undertaken by the World Health Organization to strengthen its response to health emergencies. At the same time, we stress the importance of not politicizing the issue, including through research into the origins of COVID-19.

In recent years, Belarus has repeatedly drawn the attention of the international community to the need for a new global dialogue on security, which is not merely due but overdue. Such a dialogue would be designed to resolve the most important issue — to establish a new, effective and genuinely fair international order. We urge the super-Powers to begin such a dialogue in order to acknowledge their responsibility for the fate of the planet and carry out the civilizational mission conferred upon them.

It is also important to think about the economic components of the new order. Unfortunately, economic globalization does not work in the interests of all the people on the planet. In that regard, we see great potential for the regional integration processes of the global economy. We call that approach the “integration of integrations”. In May, in partnership with Barbados and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Belarus held a high-level online meeting on harnessing interregional integration to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Leaders of major regional economic organizations enthusiastically supported the strengthening of such interregional cooperation.

The year 2021 marks an important date in the history of Belarus and brotherly countries. It is the eightieth anniversary of the beginning of the Great Patriotic War. Nazi atrocities led to the deaths of millions of people throughout the world. During the hostilities of those years, one third of Belarus’ population perished in the struggle against the fascist invaders and their allies, who committed genocide against our people. We are regrettably witnessing today a number of dangerous trends to distort the moral and legal ramifications of the outcome of the Second World War by equating victims with executioners and liberators with aggressors, while doubt has been cast on the rulings of the Nuremberg Tribunal.

We have consistently and resolutely opposed any attempt to whitewash the actions of the Nazis and justify their heinous crimes. Accordingly, this year a new law was adopted in Belarus that criminalizes the rehabilitation of Nazism. Criminal proceedings have also been set in motion with regard to the facts pertaining to the genocide perpetrated against the Belarusian people during the Great Patriotic War.

As a founding country of the United Nations, Belarus will seek to resolve this issue on the international stage by reiterating the fundamental principles that led to the establishment of the Organization. Incidentally, some of the criminals who committed atrocities against the Belarusian people and whose hands are soaked in blood continue to live quiet lives in neighbouring countries. They are even occasionally honoured as heroes.

Despite the annual calls at the United Nations for greater security, multilateralism, solidarity and mutual assistance, the world is in the throes of confrontation. Belarus has also involuntarily been drawn into the vortex of the geopolitical war. Our country has continued to be targeted by belligerent pressure from the West as a whole for more than one year, owing to the fact that Belarus failed to act out the highly polished script of yet another colour revolution to coincide with the presidential elections.

To date, Belarus has been subjected to a large-scale hybrid war from all sides. We have been impressed by its authors’ creativity in their use of eloquent but hypocritical terms to justify their destructive actions, such as “measures to support democracy”, “sectoral restrictions”, “the promotion of people’s welfare” and “State sovereignty”.

Their meaning, however, is clear. The West remains unable to come to terms with the choice of the majority of Belarusians, as the choice of the Belarusian electorate has upset the plans of individual strategists. The blitzkrieg to change the Government in Belarus has failed. Moreover, the West quickly lost the support of the street, where protests had been organized and inspired externally. It was a miscalculation. Belarus remains on pace in its successful development process and in making its own way.

Today the Belarusian people are united in their choice of a strategic course towards building a strong, sovereign and prosperous State. That is the focus of the inclusive constitutional reforms that are currently

concluding in Belarus and involve all segments of the population of the country.

In order to further demonize Belarus, present the country as a source of tension in the region and justify its destructive behaviour against our State, the West fabricated a conflict situation involving refugees on the western border of Belarus, while forgetting about its own international obligations towards our country and the refugees' countries of origin. Millions of refugees are today trying to flee from all parts of the world to reach the haven of Europe and escape the hunger and disasters brought about by the same Europe and the West as a whole in various countries and regions.

However, as it turns out, no one wants the refugees in Europe. It has already gotten to the point that, in Poland, a neighbour of Belarus, and in the Baltic States, refugees are not only deliberately beaten but murdered. Their corpses are then secretly dragged across the border at night into Belarus. Those are not isolated cases but have become the norm in our Western neighbours' conduct. Is that not the height of cynicism and desecration, coming from human rights activists who boast of a higher level of civilization and try to teach others how to live?

The topic of refugees is once again becoming increasingly relevant, as a result of the irresponsible policies of the West as a whole. The situation in Afghanistan clearly confirms that. Furthermore, it is futile to shift the blame onto another party by accusing Belarus of unleashing a hybrid war against the European Union, as the leaders of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and other countries mendaciously stated from this rostrum. Even the average citizen understands that Belarus, with its population of 10 million people, would be objectively unable to wage not only a hybrid war but any kind of war against the 500-million-strong European Union, even if Belarus had the strength of Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Since April, we have proposed that the European Union hold consultations on the issue of illegal migration, but there has been no response. Furthermore, in violation of previous agreements, the European Union stopped funding all projects related to combating illegal migration. If one responds to an invitation to engage in dialogue by building an iron curtain made of barbed wire, then the blame lies with the obstructionists. We have always adhered to — and will always adhere

to — the policy of good-neighbourliness, based on the simple adage that neighbours are a gift from God.

Belarus has always been and remains committed to mutually beneficial cooperation with all States, even with those with whom we diametrically disagree. However, we will build our relations on the principles of respect and equality, without blackmail and preconditions. Belarus has always been on the front line in efforts to combat trafficking in persons at both the national and international levels.

This year, together with a wide range of co-penholders and like-minded States, Belarus will submit to the Third Committee an annual draft resolution entitled "Improving the coordination of efforts against trafficking in persons". The annual resolution is key to collective international efforts to promote stability throughout the world. We urge States to co-sponsor the Belarusian draft resolution and support its adoption. We welcome the convening of the high-level event on combating trafficking in persons to be held at the United Nations in November.

We must not ignore another topic that has been discussed interminably owing to the speculations that surround it — human rights. One would think it represented a constructive agenda for everyone. The human rights issue, however, is today not only a dangerous toy in the hands of incompetent and short-sighted politicians but has also become a genuine weapon used against undesirable and disobedient countries. Democracy moulded on Western models and inopportunistically implanted in various countries of the world has benefited no one. On the contrary, it sows chaos and instability.

As mentioned earlier, Afghanistan is a recent example of such thoughtless policies on the part of several so-called citadels of democracy. Yet their consequences are now being borne by the entire world community. Even an adherent of democracy such as President Macron of France was forced to admit, just one month ago, that it is impossible to impose democracy from outside, including through the use of weapons. Attempts by a number of so-called developed countries to monopolize the claim to democracy, arbitrarily designate other countries' level of democracy and, depending on the latter, offensively label sovereign States clearly reminds us of the methods used by the Nazis, who also divided the world into those who should rule and those who should be slaves.

Unilateral restrictive measures continue to be another technique preferred by Western States. Without getting to understand various processes under way in a range of countries, irresponsible politicians, probably owing to their lack of imagination, are always at the ready to impose sanctions if something is not to their liking. The harmful effects of such a policy have long been known. The use of unilateral restrictions flagrantly violates international law, does irreparable damage as a result to the entire system of international relations and increases the potential for conflict and enmity in international relations.

Belarus expresses its solidarity with other countries that have come under the yoke of the sanctions policy. We support the brotherly people of Cuba, who for so many years have suffered under the unjust economic blockade imposed by the arbitrary will of one State. It is very clear that ordinary citizens are the main victims of unilateral sanctions measures. Restrictions on trade, currency and the banking and transport sectors have a negative impact on people's well-being, adversely affect the development of private initiative, reduce educational opportunities and jeopardize food security.

Unilateral sectoral sanctions against major exporters of vital raw materials used in agriculture, including against exporters of potash fertilizers, not only create shortages of those valuable products on the world market, while substantially increasing prices, but also pose a direct threat to ordinary people in vulnerable countries, primarily in Africa, Asia and elsewhere. Listening to the representatives of all the continents in the General Assembly Hall during this session is all that is needed to demonstrate that point.

Almost 1 billion people are starving in the world today, and owing to the short-sightedness of a handful of States that impose unilateral economic sanctions on entire sectors of the economy related to food, many hundreds of millions more may be left without food. The practice of imposing arbitrary financial and economic sanctions as an instrument of political pressure must be eradicated forever, and the United Nations should work to that end.

The United Nations has a key role to play in addressing the challenges and threats facing us all. At the same time, it is a matter of concern that the United Nations is increasingly becoming a theatrical stage for individual States rather than a platform for cooperative action. The United Nations is moving

towards the further commercialization of its agenda and increasingly mirroring Western policy. The United Nations is thinking more and more like the West, while trampling on the important principles of solidarity and multilateralism. In the context of the United Nations motto "to leave no one behind", Belarus believes that it is imperative to uphold consensus and consider the views of every State.

We would also like to note another disturbing trend. Recently, under the specious pretext of promoting the effectiveness of the work of the General Assembly, certain States have taken destructive measures to arbitrarily interpret and review the established working methods of this organ. Targeted efforts centred on the so-called promotion of civil society voices within the General Assembly is no exception. We view such actions as an attempt to provide non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which, by the way, have often been established and sponsored by countries with a vested interest, with the same status enjoyed by the sovereign States Members of the United Nations. That is categorically unacceptable.

We would like to remind everyone of a key principle of the United Nations — one State, one vote. We oppose the dilution of the sovereignty of Member States through the establishment of puppet participants in the form of non-governmental organizations, which will be able to drown out the views of independent States. The unchecked deluge of the United Nations system with NGOs' views will not only prevent the voices of Member States from being duly taken into account, or even heard, but will also make it more difficult to reach consensus, which has become more and more difficult for the General Assembly with every successive year. The participation of civil society in the work of the United Nations should be based on existing procedures.

In one of his speeches, Martin Luther King very wisely said something that is more relevant than ever: "We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools". More than ever, the world needs solidarity, mutual assistance and the marshalling of collective efforts to overcome all differences. In order to avoid becoming fools and plunging the world into the chaos of yet another war, which would be the last in human history, we call on everyone to show their wisdom, as well as the courage to put aside our ambitions in order to live up to the expectations that the delegates to the San Francisco Conference 76 years

ago conferred upon us — to build a system of stable and predictable international relations.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Awad Ahmed Binmubarak, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Republic of Yemen.

Mr. Binmubarak (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express my sincere congratulations to Your Excellency, Mr. Abdulla Shahid, as well as to your friendly country, the Republic of Maldives, on the occasion of your election to the presidency of the of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session. I wish you every success.

I would also like to thank your predecessor, Mr. Volkan Bozkır, for his remarkable efforts during the previous session. I congratulate as well His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres on his reappointment for a second term to lead the United Nations. I also thank him for his efforts in steering the Organization, in particular amid the coronavirus disease pandemic, towards strengthening its role in maintaining international peace and security and implementing the Organization's noble mission of achieving global peace and prosperity.

It is my pleasure to convey the appreciation and gratitude of His Excellency President Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi, President of the Republic of Yemen, to the Secretary-General and the United Nations for the efforts made to achieve comprehensive and sustainable peace in Yemen. The Organization has sought tirelessly to address all challenges, especially the humanitarian ones. I also take this opportunity to express the sincere congratulations to the great Yemeni people on the anniversaries of the eternal September and October glorious revolution, as they coincide with the convening of this high-level meeting.

The 26 September 1962 revolution was launched to abolish the unjust, authoritarian and hateful Imami regime forever and to recover the legitimate rights of the Yemeni people. The international community recognized the nascent Yemeni Republic at the seventeenth session of the General Assembly, during which, on 20 December 1962, the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Muhammad Zafrulla Khan, expelled the dynastic delegation from this very Hall to be replaced by the delegation of the Republic of Yemen, which assumed its rightful place in the General Assembly. At the time, the then Head of the

Yemeni delegation delivered his first statement (see A/PV.1202). It marked the first diplomatic victory for the new republican regime, which espoused modern values. It was a day not made with the rays of the sun but with our own hands.

The seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly is being held while Yemen has been living through difficult and harsh conditions for the past seven years due to a war that has been forced on our people by Houthi coup militia, with logistical and military support from the Iranian regime. The aim is to destabilize Yemen and the region and create sectarian entities and affiliated armed militias. That confirms that Iran was and remains part of the problem rather than part of the solution in Yemen.

The coup d'état of 21 September mounted by Houthi militias against the constitutional legitimacy transformed a spring of freedom, dialogue and the peaceful transfer of power into an autumn of suffering, injustice, oppression, the destruction of the political environment, the suppression of public freedoms, raids on houses, explosions at schools and places of worship, the persecution of opponents and the torture of citizens, while it transformed Sana'a, a city of history, civilization and peaceful coexistence, into a large prison for the Yemeni people.

Since 2011, the United Nations has played a critical role in the political transition in Yemen, starting with the interim period, according to the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism. That was followed by the Comprehensive National Dialogue, which included all segments of Yemeni society and the development of a draft Yemeni Constitution, pursuant to the outcomes of the Dialogue. It was to have been put to a referendum by the Yemeni people, adopted and employed for the holding of elections according to the new constitution.

The Houthi coup d'état threw a wrench in the wheel of the interim phase and led to an all-out war against the Yemeni people. The Special Envoys of the Secretary-General for Yemen continued playing their role. I take this opportunity to welcome once again the appointment of Mr. Hans Grundberg as the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen.

We emphasize the importance of giving our full support to him, in the hope that his efforts will achieve a just and lasting peace on the basis of the terms of reference of a political solution in Yemen,

guided by the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, the outcomes of the Comprehensive National Dialogue and the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2216 (2015).

The war forced on our people led to a humanitarian catastrophe, tore apart Yemeni society and triggered waves of mass displacement and refugees, oppression, forced disappearance and unprecedented destitution for decades. Time and again, we have extended our hands in the interest of peace to spare our people scourges and disasters. We spared no effort to support and facilitate the efforts of the United Nations and of the former Special Envoy and his predecessors to save the country and achieve lasting and comprehensive peace and put an end to the coup d'état, the war, the suffering of the Yemeni people and the tragic situation in Yemen.

We agreed to any format that respects the fundamental principles of Yemen and its immortal republican regime, which renounced the dynastic theocratic regime that discriminated among social groups. We made several compromises to achieve peace over the past six years. We even accepted all initiatives and proposals aimed at ending the coup d'état, in particular the initiative by former Special Envoy Mr. Martin Griffiths and the one proposed by the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which is based on a comprehensive ceasefire.

That was one of the most important humanitarian steps to help address all humanitarian and economic issues, including the reopening of the Sana'a airport; facilitating access for oil products through the port of Al-Hudaydah, in line with the Stockholm Agreement; and the resumption of the political process.

However, all those efforts were regrettably thwarted by the complete intransigence of the Houthi terrorist militias supported by the Iranian regime. They even took advantage of the situation for mobilization and escalation. They attacked several governorates and cities. They went as far as to perpetrate more massacres against civilians in several governorates and cities in Yemen. The governorate of Ma'rib, the cradle of history and civilization, has been victim to indiscriminate military attacks by Houthi militias for months, using ballistic missiles, drones and heavy weaponry against residential neighbourhoods, with complete disregard for the lives of civilians and displaced persons, who

fled from areas under their control and are estimated to number more than 2 million.

Those terrorist militias continue to target civilians and civilian infrastructure in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. They also destabilize areas, such as in the most recent aggression on Shabwah governorate, which is a symbol of pride and resilience and a model of stability and development in Yemen. They also launched attacks on the governorates of Al-Bayda, Abyan and Dhale. Recently, they also destroyed the civilian Al-Makha port after it initially opened as the only port on the western coast and in Taiz governorate, which has been under siege for six years.

The intentions of the militias and their position regarding peace are clear. They do not realize that weapons and violence will not sow the seeds of peace but will instead create vicious circles of conflict and war that will serve only to claim more lives and lead to more vengeance. That means that the international community must play its role in putting an end to arrogance and the suffering of our people by exerting effective and decisive pressure on the leaders of the coup d'état and their sponsors in order to implement Security Council resolutions, end the bloodshed and destruction and create an environment conducive to the provision of humanitarian aid to all Yemenis.

Allow me, from this rostrum, to pay tribute to the heroes of our military forces and resistance for their sacrifices —across every Yemeni plain, mountain and valley, especially our heroes in Ma'rib and Shabwah, who defend the country and its dignity.

The crimes and violations against human rights perpetrated by Houthi militias in Yemen are inconceivable. On Saturday 18 September, they carried out the extrajudicial execution of nine Yemenis, including a minor, in an abhorrent and heinous manner, very similar to the crimes perpetrated by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Al-Qaida. Scores of Yemenis languish in prisons, awaiting execution if the world does not make a move to save them. That is only the tip of the iceberg. Thousands of politicians, activists and journalists languish in prisons and clandestine dungeons.

Meanwhile, the Yemeni Government stresses its commitment to international humanitarian law and the rights of its citizens, in particular women's rights. We underscore our respect for Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security. We have

taken several measures and adopted a national plan on women and peace and security. We hope to implement it with the help of a number of international partners.

My country has endured economic and humanitarian hardship since the coup d'état by the Houthi militias against constitutional legitimacy. Owing to the deteriorating national economy, the decreasing number of job opportunities and the devaluation of our currency, the national economy contracted by more than 50 per cent over the past seven years. Citizens' low purchasing power is now the main driver of famine, which threatens millions of Yemenis.

In that regard, we would like to thank our sisters, brothers and friends, international organizations and donors for their support, which helps alleviate the humanitarian tragedy endured by Yemen. However, Houthi militias spare no opportunity to practise extortion, harassment and siege. Their practices have taken many forms throughout the protracted war and have exacerbated the economic challenges and obstacles facing the Government and State institutions, while preventing them from carrying out their tasks, providing services to Yemenis and realizing normalization in liberated areas.

The Houthi militias continue to impose more taxes and customs fees, even among Yemeni cities. They then use that income to drive the war machinery, which has prevented the Government from paying withheld salaries in governorates under the control of the militias for more than five years.

In many instances, through their leaders, the militias try to gain access to basic goods, including humanitarian aid and domestically produced natural gas from Ma'rib governorate, which continues to be attacked by Houthi militias. All their revenue, estimated at more than \$3.8 billion per year, in addition to the significant amounts generated by warlords who are affiliated with the militias as a result of controlling the black market in oil products, is invested in recruiting thousands of children to take part in the war, including by diverting food supplies given to their families via international aid.

Moreover, the ongoing major efforts of the Government to mitigate the destructive economic impact of the war remain insufficient. We always welcome the humanitarian support provided by the United Nations and the donor community. However, we are of the view that the best sustainable solutions

are support for the Yemeni economy, resilience and the creation of job opportunities. In that regard, we again call on the international community to take practical steps, the most important of which are the following.

First, greater pressure should be exerted on the Houthi militias to deposit the money received at the Central Bank so as to regularly pay the salaries of civil servants. In addition, they should cease to impose exorbitant levies under various pretexts, such as to support the war effort. They should stop funding their various religious events and stealing money from salaries transferred to the Central Bank's Al-Hudaydah branch, under the supervision of the United Nations, in excess of 60 billion Yemeni rial.

Secondly, support must be provided for the Yemeni economy. The devaluation of the national currency must be halted through the institution of many measures, including the funding of various international projects, while the programmes of all organizations and agencies working in Yemen should be channelled through the Central Bank.

Thirdly, development priorities and needs must be mainstreamed into all humanitarian aid activities to spur early recovery by focusing on socioeconomic activities and implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.

Fourthly, we urgently and swiftly need a package of financial support for Yemen, including a deposit into Yemen's Central Bank, to end the economic fallout and currency devaluation in Yemen, as well as the exacerbation of economic burdens on Yemeni citizens.

Mr. Salovaara (Finland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

My Government is grateful for international efforts and to the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility for providing countries with vaccines against coronavirus disease. We are especially grateful to the friendly countries that donated to Yemen nearly 1 million vaccine doses. However, the number of doses still falls short of expectations. We look forward to an increase in the number of doses provided by donor countries to ensure that no one is left behind. The world will not be safe from that disease until all countries get the vaccine in a balanced way, especially the least developed countries and those that suffer from conflicts.

I call upon the international community to seriously and urgently work to avert a potential catastrophe being caused by the *FSO SAFER* oil tanker, as Houthi militias

continue to deny access for United Nations teams to maintain and repair the tanker despite the fact that the Security Council held two meetings on that issue.

The Yemeni Government strives to unify all national efforts. The sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has made appreciable efforts to unify various initiatives, which resulted in the signing of the Riyadh agreement. A technocratic Government that includes the participation of most political segments was formed and relocated to the interim capital, Aden, to start a new phase in an attempt to achieve peace in Yemen and meet all our people's needs.

However, the Government faced security and economic challenges that significantly obstructed its work. I would like to stress from this rostrum the importance of implementing the security and military section of the Riyadh agreement and of the Government's return in its entirety to the interim capital, Aden, in order to realize its tasks, above all to achieve peace in Yemen.

The Republic of Yemen underscores its steadfast position on the Palestinian question and the rights of the Palestinian people, above all the establishment of an independent State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. We call upon the international community to continue supporting the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which will enable it to provide services to Palestinian refugees. We strongly condemn the ongoing Israeli settlement policies in Palestinian territories and the daily violations against Palestinian people and Muslim and Christian holy sites.

In conclusion, I wish this session of the General Assembly every success. I hope that the United Nations will be more effective in serving humankind and that its resolutions can address the major challenges it faces. I also wish all Member States and their societies progress and prosperity, as I wish the entire humankind happiness and well-being.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Khalifa Shaheen Almarar, Minister of State of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Almarar (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid on his election as President of the of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session. We are confident that, together, we will

make further progress in addressing urgent international issues and building a safer and more sustainable world in which our peoples can look to the future with hope and confidence.

The United Arab Emirates believes that this year is a historic juncture nationally, as my country celebrates the golden jubilee of its establishment with the announcement of the Principles of the 50, which provide a socioeconomic development road map for the years ahead.

This year is also a critical juncture for the international community as we all strive to overcome the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, secure supply chains for all peoples and help them recover from the medical, economic and security impacts of the pandemic.

My country will also host Expo 2020 this year, which will open in a few days' time. More than 190 countries will take part. We hope that this international event will help usher in the next phase of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and support international efforts to generate hope and optimism. It will provide a platform to connect minds, develop innovative solutions for the most urgent international challenges and lay the groundwork for a brighter and more prosperous future.

Today we need wise leadership to promote multilateralism and develop a united international position to meet common global challenges. Genuine political will to overcome this difficult historical juncture is also imperative. That requires putting differences aside and strengthening relations in order to focus on the future and security of our peoples, while upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. In that regard, we welcome the Secretary-General's vision to strengthen multilateralism in a manner that serves our shared interests as set out in his report *Our Common Agenda*.

As a priority, we must generate international momentum in order to develop peaceful solutions to conflicts and avert political crises before they escalate. In that context, the United Arab Emirates will continue its long-standing support for the efforts of the United Nations and the international community to achieve real progress in political processes.

We believe that creating an environment conducive to peace and stability, especially in our region, requires the implementation of a comprehensive and lasting

ceasefire, especially in Yemen, and the maintenance of the ceasefires in Libya and Syria, as well as the departure of all foreign forces. In order to succeed in our efforts to end the cycle of conflict in the Arab region, the unacceptable regional interventions in Arab affairs, in particular in Syria, Yemen, Libya and Iraq, must cease. Such illegal interventions have obstructed political processes, exacerbated humanitarian crises and undermined the stability of the region and the world.

The United Arab Emirates relies on a clear international position that rejects regional interventions in Arab affairs and supports Arab countries in overcoming all obstacles to peace and stability in the region. We reiterate that ensuring full respect for the sovereignty of Arab countries and reaching comprehensive political solutions under the auspices of the United Nations remain the only way to end the crises in the Arab region.

In that context, we believe that there is an opportunity to achieve sustainable peace in Yemen, which will be possible only by reaching a comprehensive political solution that includes a ceasefire to ensure stability for the brotherly people of Yemen and neighbouring countries. We have seen genuine initiatives that aim to end the war in Yemen, the most recent of which was put forward by the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

For such efforts to be successful, all parties must demonstrate commitment and determination. The Houthi militias continue their provocative and aggressive actions, obstructing the political process and hindering the efforts of the United Nations. We reiterate here the importance of committing to the Riyadh agreement and its implementation in order to unify the Yemeni people.

Supporting stability in the Arab region also requires an end to the occupation of all Palestinian and Arab territories, including the establishment of an independent Palestinian State along the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, in order to achieve the two-State solution. We reiterate our call for ending the construction of settlements, the displacement of Palestinians and all other illegal practices.

One year after signing the Abraham Accords, we are encouraged by the establishment of new relations in the region, which have improved the prospects for peace and reconciliation. Through those relations, we seek to

stimulate economic growth and achieve prosperity and stability for the peoples of the region, especially the younger generations, who deserve to look to the future with optimism and hope.

The ongoing conflicts in the region, which have been exacerbated by the pandemic, threaten to contribute to a future in which extremist and terrorist groups such as the Houthis, Da'esh, Al-Qaida, the Muslim Brotherhood and Hizbullah continue their recruitment of new generations of young people to fuel violence and hatred. Accordingly, we will pursue our unrelenting efforts to counter those scourges wherever they may exist.

We must continue to build on the progress achieved in the fight against Da'esh in Syria and Iraq by strengthening regional and international cooperation and constantly refining our methods, while respecting international law. In that context, we stress the need to protect the security of energy supplies and the freedom of navigation and trade routes, while simultaneously working on de-escalation. The targeting of vital infrastructure and facilities has direct repercussions for the economy and for international peace and security.

Similarly, we must ensure that the Middle East is a region free of weapons of mass destruction. That should be the goal of all countries that are committed to protecting the international order. Reaching a common understanding with Iran that addresses all regional and international concerns remains a fundamental requirement and should start with de-escalation to achieve regional and international peace and stability.

We cannot ignore Iran's development of its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes or its interference in the region. Therefore, any future agreement with Iran must address the shortcomings of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and must involve the countries of the region. That is a legitimate and fair request by countries that are seeking to safeguard their security and peoples. We will continue to call on Iran to respect international law and the principle of good-neighbourliness and to resolve disputes through peaceful means.

We reiterate our demand that Iran put an end to its occupation of the three United Arab Emirates Islands of the Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa. My country will never cease to demand its legitimate sovereignty over those islands, which have been occupied by Iran since 1971, in flagrant violation of

international law and the Charter of the United Nations. My country will continue to call on Iran to agree to resolve that dispute peacefully, whether through direct negotiations or referral to the International Court of Justice.

The United Arab Emirates stresses the importance of de-escalation and overcoming the challenges that many countries face worldwide. In that regard, we stress the urgent need to strengthen security and stability in Afghanistan in order to fulfil the aspirations of its people, in particular those of its women and young people, and end their prolonged suffering in return for peace and prosperity.

As we follow the rapidly changing developments in Afghanistan and assess the political, security and humanitarian repercussions, the United Arab Emirates stresses the importance of ensuring the access of humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people in order to preserve their dignity and protect their rights. In the light of our efforts to promote tolerance and provide humanitarian assistance to all peoples in need, without discrimination, my country continues to support international humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan and to send urgent medical and food assistance, while facilitating efforts to safely evacuate Afghans and people from other countries through the United Arab Emirates.

We also emphasize the importance of maintaining security and stability in Africa. We stress the need for a comprehensive approach that addresses all security, humanitarian and development concerns throughout the continent. The African Union has undertaken vigorous and exemplary efforts that require further international support, especially in countering extremism and terrorism and promoting mediation and dialogue in order to resolve existing disagreements.

We need to strengthen our cooperation in promoting tolerance and building peaceful coexisting communities, including by countering hate speech. We celebrated the International Day of Human Fraternity for the first time this year. The United Arab Emirates is encouraged by international calls to promote interfaith and intercultural dialogue. We also reiterate that achieving sustainable peace requires the active participation of women and young people, given their vital role in preventing and resolving conflicts and building prosperous societies.

In the same vein, the United Arab Emirates is keen to strengthen its humanitarian response as part of its foreign policy and to contribute, alongside the international community, to alleviating the dire humanitarian situation in areas affected by conflicts and disasters. As a priority, we must strengthen multilateralism in order to help people respond to the pandemic, starting with the equitable distribution of vaccines, sustained humanitarian assistance and cooperation and rebuilding a sustainable economy. That will require building institutions to cope with the challenges ahead, as well as strengthening the work of regional and international organizations, in particular the United Nations, which plays a pivotal role in building resilient societies.

Particular emphasis should also be placed on future preparedness and investment in advancing security, peace and prosperity. The United Arab Emirates will therefore continue its approach towards promoting development and prosperity through an ambitious vision that combines economic development with technology and innovation.

The evident link between political issues and economic growth is crucial for our region as it looks towards the future. We stress the importance of granting people access to advanced technology. Although it is negatively exploited by some, advanced technology is a vital tool for achieving peace and addressing urgent challenges, such as climate change. My country will continue to work with its partners in the next phase to transform challenges into opportunities and harness our potential to achieve peace.

In that context, climate change remains one of the most pressing challenges, especially due to its increasingly serious repercussions. We believe that, if we intensify our international efforts, we will be able not only to reduce those repercussions and adapt to them but also to achieve many economic benefits for countries by investing in solutions that mitigate the effects of climate change. We therefore stress the need to develop a suitable global response at the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26) and all relevant meetings.

At the same time, we view the Paris Agreement on Climate Change as an exceptional opportunity to support economic growth and create job opportunities. For its part, the United Arab Emirates will work with

its partners to find solutions and explore opportunities that reduce the effects of climate change, including by hosting COP28. We also commend the tireless efforts of the International Renewable Energy Agency in Abu Dhabi to help countries to adopt renewable energy and provide solutions that address the challenges of climate change.

In conclusion, I would like to express to Member States the gratitude of the United Arab Emirates for its election as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the 2022 to 2023 term. During our membership of the Council, my country will use its experience, expertise and approaches to build bridges to address the most pressing challenges, including extremism and terrorism, regional crises, epidemics and climate change, as well as to address issues involving women and youth and to strengthen their role in achieving peace and security.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Fayssal Mekdad, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session and to wish him every success in the discharge of his duties. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, for his efforts within the framework of his mandate to achieve the aspirations of Member States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

Over the past two years, the world has experienced unprecedented circumstances. Hospitals reached full capacity, millions of lives were lost, economies contracted, poverty and hunger soared, cities were forced into lockdown, curfews were imposed, universities and schools closed their doors and we grew afraid of approaching one another. All that was caused by an invisible virus that continues to evolve and mutate, threatening to claim more lives all over the world.

In those difficult times, there was a glimmer of hope. Extraordinary efforts were made and significant breakthroughs were achieved by a number of countries at the medical and human cooperation levels. However, there was a dark side too, as some countries used the pandemic as a way to settle political scores and accuse other countries of creating the virus, while some

countries selfishly ignored the needs of other countries, choosing to believe that they were living alone on an isolated island.

Even worse, some took advantage of the pandemic to scale up their unilateral coercive economic measures against countries and peoples that differ from them, despite the catastrophic humanitarian impact of such measures. The repeated appeals by United Nations and humanitarian organizations calling for such measures to be waived or reduced fell upon deaf ears. If the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) can claim one life in the absence of so-called sanctions, it can claim many more lives when such sanctions are in place.

The Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights said,

“Sanctions are bringing suffering and death to countries like Cuba, Iran, the Sudan, Syria, Venezuela and Yemen”.

As noted also by a group of independent United Nations human rights experts,

“Sanctions that were imposed in the name of delivering human rights are in fact killing people and depriving them of fundamental rights, including the rights to health, to food and to life itself”.

We welcome the theme of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly, “Building resilience through hope”. Nevertheless, I wonder whether some will heed that theme. Will they really build capacities sustainably and respect the rights of people? Will they learn from the lessons of the past? Will certain Governments abandon their flawed policies that have jeopardized security and stability worldwide? Those questions require clear and decisive answers if the theme of this general debate is not to remain a mere slogan for media and political consumption that is far removed from the actual reality.

As members are well aware, my country, Syria, was one of the countries most affected by terrorism and terrorist crimes, which were perpetrated with military, financial, media and logistics support from countries known to sponsor terrorism. I cannot adequately describe how much our people have suffered as a result. Innocent people were killed, safe people were displaced, infrastructure was destroyed, the resources of the country were looted and terrorism caused humanitarian crises in a country that was proud of the

achievements made by its people in different fields, in which the development rate reached more than 9.5 per cent in 2010 before the start of the terrorist war against Syria.

However, thanks to the sacrifices and heroic deeds of our people and army, and with the valuable support of our allies and friends, we have made exceptional achievements in combating and eradicating terrorism. History will show that the Syrian people not only defended themselves, their country and their civilization in their struggle against terrorism but also defended all humankind.

That noble fight will continue until all Syrian territories are freed from the scourge of terrorism, State authority is re-established and security and stability are restored nationwide. That is our national and constitutional duty and a non-negotiable right. We will not succumb, regardless of the external aggression and pressure and the lies and accusations that are promoted. We say to those who continue to wager on terrorism and invest in it that their bet is a losing and destructive one. Such terrorism will turn against them sooner or later. Innocent people will pay the price in the end, as they have in different countries of the world. We must never let that happen again.

In that regard, it seems that one of the speakers at this rostrum a few days ago is still totally detached from reality, harbouring illusions that he can turn back time, that his money can cover up his failures and crimes or that his continued investment in terrorism in Syria can achieve the goals of his masters.

Syria has seriously and positively engaged in the Astana process, hoping it would contribute to the fight against terrorism and the country's security and stability. However, the Turkish regime has shown time and again that it is not committed to either the outcomes of the Astana process or the Sochi agreements on Idlib, in the north-west of Syria. Instead, it continues to support and protect the terrorist groups that operate in that region, especially the Al-Nusra Front, which was designated by the Security Council as a terrorist organization. As a result, the region has become an incubator for foreign terrorists, as confirmed by the reports of relevant Security Council committees.

In addition, the Turkish regime has perpetrated — and continues to perpetrate — war crimes and crimes against humanity in the territories it occupies in Syria. It has carried out Turkification

and forced displacement policies, while oppressing the people of the region, who reject that occupation. It also inflicted collective punishment on people, deliberately and repeatedly cutting off the water supply of more than 1 million Syrians in Al-Hasakah and its surrounding residential areas. The Turkish regime also reduced the water level of the Euphrates River to less than half the level agreed upon between the two countries in a 1987 agreement, resulting in grave humanitarian, ecological, health and agricultural consequences.

All those violations and crimes require urgent and serious action by the Security Council and the Secretariat to bring them to an immediate end.

We reiterate that any foreign presence on Syrian soil without the consent of the Syrian Government is illegal and constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, as well as all Security Council resolutions on Syria, which declare a strong commitment to Syria's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity. Such a foreign presence hinders counter-terrorism efforts and threatens regional stability and security.

Therefore, the forces of Turkey and of the United States, which continue to occupy Syrian territories under false pretexts and to loot the natural resources belonging to the Syrian people, must cease those activities immediately and without any preconditions. Just as Syria wiped out terrorism from most of its territories, we will work to end the occupation with the same resolve and determination, using all possible means under international law. History shows that Syria always prevails in driving out occupiers, sooner or later.

As for the few that seek to implement secessionist agendas in north-east Syria, we warn them against harbouring such illusions, which have been rejected by the Syrian people. They align themselves with those that plot against the unity of Syria's soil and people and will be dealt with accordingly. They must abandon their delusions, wake up and learn from recent lessons, namely, that betting on external occupying forces over their own people is doomed to fail and will only bring them humiliation and harm their country and people — if they still consider themselves part of the Syrian people.

In tandem with fighting terrorism, the Syrian Government has always been open to any genuine, sincere and impartial political efforts aimed at helping

us overcome this crisis inflicted upon the Syrian people and State, despite the obstacles placed in our way by those countries that have absolutely no interest in Syria's stability. While unwavering in our commitment to our national principles, the Syrian Government participated in the Geneva talks, the Moscow consultations and the Astana meetings.

We also facilitated the convening of the Constitutional Committee by helping reach agreement on its composition and rules of procedure. In that regard, we reiterate that the process must be Syrian-led and Syrian-owned, with absolutely no external interference. The Constitution and all related issues fall within the exclusive prerogative of Syrians and must be decided by Syrians alone. We also stress that the Special Envoy for Syria must focus on his role as a facilitator and report on proceedings in an honest, unbiased and objective manner.

We have repeatedly emphasized that Syria's doors remain wide open for the safe and voluntary return of all Syrian refugees to their homeland. All relevant institutions in Syria are tirelessly working towards that goal by rebuilding and rehabilitating infrastructure and services in areas reclaimed from terrorism, or by putting the necessary procedures in place to facilitate the return of people and meet their basic needs.

To that end, a number of decrees have been issued with a view to ensuring the safe and voluntary return of the people concerned. Regrettably, while the Syrian State and its allies are making honest efforts on the humanitarian issue, others continue to take advantage of the pain and suffering of Syrians to advance an agenda that has nothing to do with humanitarian objectives or the interests of Syrians. In that regard, we stress the need for the humanitarian action undertaken in Syria to respect the State's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity and to be approved by and coordinated with the Syrian State, in line with resolution 46/182. We also stress the need for humanitarian activities to be expanded to incorporate development assistance and early-recovery and resilience projects, which would provide water, sanitation, health care, education and housing services.

We stand ready to do what it takes to ensure humanitarian access to beneficiaries in Syria. The so-called cross-border aid mechanism must be shut down following incidents involving all kinds of corruption and inefficiency — I repeat, incidents involving all

kinds of corruption and inefficiency — especially the diversion of aid to terrorist groups instead of the people who actually need it.

The Syrian Arab Republic stresses once again that the use of chemical weapons is condemned and completely unacceptable under any circumstances, by anyone, anywhere and at any time. That is Syria's position, and that is why Syria voluntarily acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and fulfilled all relevant obligations in record time, in just days, knowing that certain countries have continuously maintained such weapons since the Second World War. They know who I mean and are present here in this very Hall. Syria has cooperated continuously with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to close that file as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, certain countries have sought to explicitly politicize that dossier. They continue to make baseless accusations against Syria, relying on information from terrorist groups and their supporters, which should come as no surprise. They even doubted Syria's cooperation with the OPCW, in addition to taking advantage of reports that lack credibility and professionalism. They get their information from the Internet, and Members are aware of who is publishing such information on the Internet.

Those countries have also manipulated the provisions of the CWC to create illegal mechanisms and take a decision imposed by Western countries against Syria at the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the States Parties to the CWC. That decision constitutes a dangerous precedent for the OPCW and a threat to all States parties.

Since 1967, Israel has continued to occupy a cherished part of Syria's territory — the Golan Heights. Therefore, the Syrian Arab Republic remains firmly committed to exercising its right to fully recover the occupied Syrian Golan, up to the line of 4 June 1967. All decisions and measures taken by Israel, the occupying Power, to alter its natural and demographic features or to impose on it Israeli laws, control and administration are null and void and have no legal effect under international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, notably, resolution 497 (1981).

We can no longer accept the totally unacceptable failure by the United Nations and the international community to compel Israel to implement those resolutions and cease its grave systematic violations

of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, in particular its settlement policy and support for terrorism. It must stop practising persecution, racial discrimination and arbitrary detention against the Syrian citizens under its occupation. Israel plunders the Golan's natural resources and repeatedly carries out acts of aggression and violations against Syria's sovereignty. Israel must be held accountable for such rogue behaviour and must not enjoy impunity. That is important for maintaining regional security and stability and to uphold our rights, justice and international law.

Despite what we have been through in Syria over the past few years, the Palestinian question remains the central national question for Syria, which will spare no effort in supporting the fraternal Palestinian people in their struggle to reclaim their occupied territory and regain all their legitimate rights, especially the right to establish their independent State on their territory, with Jerusalem as its capital, the right to full membership in the United Nations and the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland, in line with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions.

Syria also calls for an end to Israel's war crimes and crimes against humanity in the occupied Palestinian territories, especially killings, settlement activities, states of siege, arbitrary detentions, forced displacements and racial discrimination. Syria holds those countries that support Israel responsible for the implications and persistence of those crimes.

My country reiterates its full support for, and solidarity with, the position of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the face of the illegal and irresponsible measures by the United States against it, especially with regard to the withdrawal of the United States from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. In that regard, Syria also condemns the economic embargo imposed on Cuba for decades and the American militarization of the situation in the Korean peninsula.

My country also demands an end to all forms of economic terrorism imposed by the United States and its Western allies against Venezuela, Iran, Belarus, Nicaragua and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and my country, Syria, in accordance with international law and United Nations resolutions. In that regard, I must also express our support for Russia's and China's approach to upholding international law, maintaining security and stability and promoting

development worldwide in the face of the hegemonic attempts and external interference policies of certain countries.

In conclusion, I stress the need to promote dialogue and understanding among our States based on mutual respect, common interests, sovereign equality and respect for international law. That will build a new, more balanced, democratic and just world and contribute to achieving the common aspirations of our peoples and the development, prosperity and stability to which we all aspire. That must be done free from the policies of certain Governments that are based on military and political interference, support terrorism and impose unilateral coercive measures, in contravention of all the values espoused by humankind and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Some countries need to understand that we live in a single, interconnected world and that no country can serve its interests and ensure its security at the expense of the interests and security of other countries.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Iceland to introduce a statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development Cooperation of the Republic of Iceland.

Mr. Valtýsson (Iceland): I have the honour to introduce a pre-recorded statement by His Excellency Mr. Gudlaugur Thór Thórdarson, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development Cooperation of the Republic of Iceland.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex I and see A/76/332/Add.11).

The President returned to the Chair.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ramtane Lamamra, Minister for Foreign Affairs and National Community Abroad of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria.

Mr. Lamamra (Algeria) (spoke in Arabic): At the outset, it is my pleasure to sincerely congratulate Mr. Abdulla Shahid on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session and to wish him every success. I would also like to pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Volkan Bozkır, for effectively managing our work at the previous session and for all the constructive initiatives adopted under his commendable presidency.

I must also reiterate my sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, and congratulate him again on his reappointment and his leadership in preparing and managing the Secretariat's work in all areas, in particular peace, security and sustainable development, as well as the protection and promotion of human rights.

The current session is being held at a time when our world faces numerous challenges that cast a shadow over all aspects of human life. There can be no doubt that the most important existential challenge we face today is the coronavirus disease (COVID-9) pandemic, whose rapid spread and lethal nature have affected millions of people worldwide and transcended all geographical borders without distinction among rich or poor countries.

That situation confirms more than ever before the urgent need to strengthen international cooperation and solidarity and to activate the mechanisms of multilateral action in a more efficient way with a view to jointly tackling the pandemic and laying the foundation of a new post-COVID-19 world that leads to justice and fairness and ensures the equal participation of all States Members of the United Nations without distinction.

The theme of this session, "Building resilience through hope", reflects the necessary elements to promote the essential multilateral actions in order to transcend this stage in the history of humankind. In that context, despite the great challenges it poses, the pandemic has also provided us with a historic opportunity to correct the mistakes of the past and learn lessons that will allow us to move forward in building a prosperous future for all humankind.

To that end, it is incumbent upon us to proceed with the comprehensive reform process of the United Nations system in order to improve its performance and strengthen its ability to fulfil the responsibilities entrusted to it under the Charter of the United Nations, with a focus on revitalizing the central role of the General Assembly and reforming the Security Council in order to guarantee greater transparency and equitable geographical representation and put an end to the historical injustice endured by the entire African continent.

The exceptional and dangerous situation that the international community faces today amid the COVID-19 pandemic must not lead us to forget the political and security crises, the hotbeds of tension and

the development challenges that afflict many regions of the world, especially in Africa and the Middle East.

Algeria, as a model country in achieving peace and cooperation, has been following with great interest the recent developments in sisterly countries. We underscore our strong support for seeking peaceful political solutions to conflicts and crises that are free of any kind of foreign interference. That validity and the importance of that approach has been consistently confirmed on the ground.

My country has been keen to engage in many regional and international efforts to address the root causes of conflicts and disputes and restore stability in their regional and international contexts by upholding the values of dialogue, negotiation and national reconciliation. Algeria will continue to defend the just causes of those peoples who struggle to reclaim their legitimate fundamental rights, including the inalienable right to self-determination, in particular in Palestine and Western Sahara.

In that context, Algeria expresses its deep concern at the obstruction of the prospects for a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question, as well as at the Israeli occupation's continued repressive practices against our brethren, the Palestinian people, and its total denial of the peace process and United Nations resolutions. Algeria reiterates our call on the international community, especially the Security Council, to assume its historic and legal responsibilities to compel the occupying Power to end its occupation of all Palestinian territories and enable the Palestinian people to establish their independent State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Algeria also reiterates its adherence and commitment to the Arab Peace Initiative, which aims to consolidate the two-State solution and liberate all occupied Arab lands, including the Syrian Golan.

With the same determination, Algeria reiterates its position in support of the right of the Sahrawi people to self-determination and calls on the United Nations to assume all its legal responsibilities towards the Sahrawi people and to guarantee their inalienable rights.

The holding of a free and fair referendum to enable the proud Sahrawi people to decide their fate and determine their political future by themselves cannot forever be held hostage by the intransigence of an occupying State, which has repeatedly failed to fulfil

its international obligations, especially those clear and explicit ones that emanate from the settlement plan drawn up by the United Nations in partnership with the Organization of African Unity, as well as those arising from all other relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

International legitimacy has been declared through Security Council resolutions, as it was through the International Court of Justice four decades ago, in issuing its advisory opinion confirming the genuine nature of the conflict in Western Sahara as a matter of decolonization that can be resolved only through the application of the principle of self-determination.

It is on the basis of the same principle that Algeria, as a neighbouring country and observer of the political process led by the United Nations, has always sought to be a source of peace, security and stability for our neighbours. We consider that the right of the Sahrawi people to self-determination is inevitable, firmly established and not subject to statutory limitations. In that context, Algeria supports the decision taken by the summit of the African Union Peace and Security Council to launch direct negotiations between the Kingdom of Morocco and the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, since both States share membership in the African Union, with all the duties and obligations of that shared membership vis-à-vis the principles and objectives of the African Union.

Under the leadership of the President of the Republic, Mr. Abdelmadjid Tebboune, and by virtue of our glorious history of struggle, our position and our Arab, African, Islamic and Mediterranean affiliation, Algeria remains faithful to the objectives and principles of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries; we remain committed to the firm values and principles of the United Nations; and in all our endeavours, we remain committed to dialogue as the basis for resolving all crises and disputes. Algeria continues to oppose unilateral coercive measures, such as those imposed on developing countries as a means of exerting political and economic pressure outside the norms of international law.

Algeria's approach to resolving disputes and conflicts is reflected in its positive contributions, in particular in sisterly Libya, where we support the national dialogue process among our Libyan brothers under the auspices of the United Nations. We seek to revitalize the mechanism that unites Libya's

neighbouring countries, which held its last ministerial meeting in Algeria, in order to contribute to achieving the desired stability in Libya through the holding of general elections in accordance with the road map arising from the process of Libyan political dialogue.

We do so in order to uphold security and safety in Libya and its neighbouring countries, which are directly affected by whatever happens in that brotherly country. Algeria is prepared to facilitate more and contribute directly to support dialogue and peaceful settlement in sisterly Libya. Algeria is prepared to continue its efforts and support our Libyan brothers, while enabling them to benefit from the Algerian experience in the area of national reconciliation. That commitment has been reaffirmed many times by President Tebboune.

With regard to the situation in Mali, Algeria remains committed to continue its central role in leading the Implementation Monitoring Committee of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, which emanated from the Algiers process. We express our satisfaction at the positive developments in that context, despite the many challenges and difficulties arising from the geographical spread of terrorist threats, which undermines the security and stability of sisterly Mali and its neighbouring countries in the Sahel and Sahara regions.

Algeria remains committed to working hand in hand with our Malian brothers to achieve all the goals and principles of the Algiers Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and looks forward to holding presidential elections and the achievement of the goals of the transitional period. In that regard, we reiterate our call on the international community to support our Malian brothers and help make that process a success by fulfilling its commitments in the area of economic and social development.

The situation in those two countries has a direct and reciprocal negative effect on stability in the Sahel and Sahara regions as a result of the exacerbation of the terrorist threats there and all the grave repercussions thereof. In the light of that situation, President Tebboune, in his capacity as coordinator of the fight against terrorism and violent extremism in Africa, recently proposed an initiative to the current presidency of the African Union that aims to activate joint action measures to strengthen the struggle of the African Union against the scourge of terrorism.

In the same constructive spirit, Algeria continues its efforts to put an end to disagreements and promote strategic partnerships among African and Arab groups. We also stress the need to be committed to African unity and to avoid all factors that disrupt or negatively affect that unity, which remains a prerequisite to achieving the various strategic goals that the countries and the peoples of the African continent strive to realize by implementing Agenda 2063.

In that regard, Algeria responded to our brothers' request in Ethiopia, Egypt and the Sudan to establish a political climate that would enable those sisterly countries to overcome their differences and prioritize cooperation, good-neighbourly relations and common interests. That is Algeria's contribution to making the African mediation a success.

Since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, Algeria has made great progress towards achieving them and is ranked first among African and Arab countries on the 2019 Sustainable Development Index for the implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

With respect to environmental issues, Algeria remains concerned about the worsening of problems in various relevant environmental contexts, in particular the phenomenon of desertification, which has affected my country for decades, the continuing escalation of climate disasters, such as floods, droughts and scarce rainfall and their negative economic and social repercussions, as well as other damage caused by environmental disasters and climate change, in particular the alarming levels of biodiversity loss. Despite its limited capabilities, Algeria has spared no effort in tackling the various challenges posed by those climate and natural developments. Environmental issues have become an important part of the public policies pursued today by the State at various levels and in various sectors.

At the same time, my country continues to make steady progress in consolidating democracy in the new Algeria, based firmly on the rule of law and social justice, following fundamental constitutional amendments and legislative elections, while preparing itself for the forthcoming and important local elections.

The process of democratic change is embodied in the Government action plan, which was adopted a few days ago and includes five key points — strengthening the rule of law and ensuring good governance; modernizing

the justice system; promoting freedoms, dialogue and consultation; establishing a free and responsible civil society, including the freedom of assembly, the freedom to hold peaceful demonstrations and the freedom of the press; and fighting corruption and modernizing public administration and employment. All those political reforms reflect the will of the people and the State of Algeria to enhance human rights in the broadest sense throughout our country.

With regard to the economic sphere, the Government seeks to strengthen the foundations of economic recovery, modernize the banking and financial system, reform the public trade sector and the governance of public institutions and improve the business environment in order to make it more attractive to investors and more conducive to the development of institutions and entrepreneurship.

The existential challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic have demonstrated the inevitable common fate of all humankind and stressed the joint work of the international community to ensure a better future for everyone. That is why humankind today has a precious opportunity that it must seize — not to change the past but to ensure an effective move towards a new era in which all humankind may live a dignified life free of fear and need.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Oliver Joseph, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Business and CARICOM Affairs of Grenada.

Mr. Joseph (Grenada): It is an honour to address you, Sir, and this organ in my capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Business and CARICOM Affairs of Grenada. I extend congratulations to the President on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session. We reiterate our confidence in him and his team to lead this session and we offer our support for the work ahead this year, under the theme, "Building resilience through hope — to recover from COVID-19, rebuild sustainably, respond to the needs of the planet, respect the rights of people and revitalize the United Nations".

I also join my esteemed colleagues in commending and thanking the outgoing President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session, His Excellency Mr. Volkan Bozkır, for his able stewardship of the General Assembly during the past year.

I take this opportunity to congratulate Secretary-General António Guterres on his reappointment to serve and lead this institution for another five years. I applaud his tireless efforts and commitment in addressing the growing global challenges, including the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the climate-change crisis, as we collectively pursue sustainable solutions.

As we continue to grapple with COVID-19, its death toll, the negative impact on our economies, the social fallout and the inequitable access to vaccines, particularly for small island developing States (SIDS) like Grenada, all of which undermine the stability and survival of our peoples, the theme for this year's session could not have been more appropriate.

COVID-19 has indeed wreaked immense havoc on economies across the world, with a particular intensity and lasting effect on small economies such as ours. Prior to the first case of COVID-19 on the island in March 2020, the Grenadian economy had been on an upward trajectory since 2013, growing at an average rate of 4.5 per cent per year. That growth was mainly driven by robust activities in the construction, tourism and private-education sectors.

That upward trend in output was disrupted by the pandemic, with preliminary estimates showing that the economy contracted by 13.7 per cent in 2020. Stark declines were recorded in several sectors, most notably tourism and air transport. Unemployment rose from a record low of 15.1 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2019 to 28.4 per cent in the second quarter of 2020, with 14,000 jobs lost as a direct consequence of the pandemic. The socioeconomic fallout from the pandemic has been especially severe for vulnerable groups, particularly women, young people and the unskilled, who are overrepresented in the tourism and informal sectors, which were hardest hit by the pandemic.

Sixteen months after the first COVID-19 case was reported on the island, the local economy continues to experience the lingering effects. For the first six months of the year, economic activity was below pre-COVID-9 levels but slightly above the levels for the comparable period in 2020. Data for the first quarter of 2021 show periods of declines in most sectors, including hotels and air transport. However, there are indications of improved economic activity relative to 2020, as evidenced by the second-quarter data available for most sectors.

Visitor arrivals also increased during the second quarter of 2021 relative to the same period in 2020. That trend is expected to continue in the second half as vaccination roll-outs increase and cross-border travel improves globally. Enhanced implementation of the Public Sector Investment Programme should further stimulate the economy and increase investor confidence.

Following the spike in the second quarter of 2020, the unemployment rate fell to 18.5 per cent in the fourth quarter but increased slightly in the first quarter of 2021 to 19.5 per cent, which is the most recent data available.

The rate of recovery globally and locally is slower than initially projected. Inequity in vaccine access, slower than anticipated vaccination rates, vaccine hesitancy, the emergence of new COVID-19 variants, second and third waves of the pandemic in several countries, trade disruption and rising commodity prices and freight costs are factors that hinder global, and therefore local, economic recovery.

Nonetheless, the Government of Grenada continues to implement policies and measures to protect lives and safeguard livelihoods during this period of extreme uncertainty. The priorities for the 2022 budget are based on the Government's strategic policy agenda for recovery, transformation and resilience, which is set out in its medium-term action plan for the 2022-2024 period. The various actions in that multi-year action plan are the vehicles through which the national sustainable development plan 2020-2035 is being implemented. The 2022-2024 medium-term action plan sets out the strategic actions for implementation, the entities responsible, the performance indicators and the alignment with relevant Sustainable Development Goals, under each national goal and outcome of the national sustainable development plan.

It is imperative that we continue to stress and address the reclassification of our status by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation Development, which has resulted in the marginalization of the quantum of development assistance to the region. That is clearly problematic. We again urge advocacy and support from organizations, including those under the umbrella of the United Nations, towards the dismantling of those unfair rulings. We reiterate that economic data such as gross domestic product per capita does not reflect the true nature of the vulnerability of Caribbean States. We therefore repeat our call for the creation of

a multidimensional vulnerability index that adequately addresses those vulnerabilities. We strongly urge that it be completed no later than the end of 2022.

Small and vulnerable to natural disasters and the effects of climate change, we continue to call for advocacy where the international financial institutions are concerned to allow us to effectively face the development challenges posed by the pandemic and regain access to concessional financing.

We take this opportunity to thank all States, including Cuba, Mexico, Argentina, the People's Republic of China, the United States of America, the United Kingdom and others, which continue to provide direct medical assistance to Grenada to deal with the pandemic.

CARICOM member States, including Grenada, have reaffirmed our commitment to tackling the phenomenon that is climate change. We call for continued support and assistance, not only with mitigation but also with building human-resource capacity, which should be complemented by sustainable growth and transformation. Increased resource capacity and resilient infrastructure will clearly assist with risk reduction and resilience.

Like many small island developing States, Grenada faces extreme risks in the agriculture sector that not only affect our food security but also have negative impacts on our main export crops, fruit crops, forestry, livestock and fisheries. In order to respond to those impacts and increasing threats, Grenada is moving quickly to implement climate-smart agriculture as one of our climate change adaptation strategies for reducing impacts. We therefore have an urgent need to access additional resources to guarantee the survival of our agricultural sector through climate-smart practices.

We have to grapple not only with climate change but also with ensuring the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources. That continues to be one of Grenada's top policy items. Our Government has adopted an ambitious "Blue Growth" agenda to sustainably utilize our vast maritime territory, which is more than 70 times the size of our land space, and its countless resources, which represent a significant contribution to our gross domestic product.

Grenada looks forward with great hope to the United Nations Ocean Conference to be held in 2022 and to advancing long-overdue global ocean action through

science-based innovative solutions for sustainable development as we embark on the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

We cannot discuss climate change in isolation from health. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Grenada calls for advocacy for an enabling environment to promote and adopt the "One Health" agenda at the global level, an approach that recognizes the connection between well-being, prosperity and a healthy environment. As we seek to prevent, detect and respond to future pandemics, non-communicable diseases, including mental health, must also be examined. Our planetary health and climate change require an integrated policy and, among other things, cooperation, leadership, governance and political will, as well as the sharing of resources and expertise to find better and more urgent solutions.

Let me categorically state that Grenada, as part of the Caribbean Community, strongly condemns racism, intolerance and discrimination in any form, as well as acts and crimes associated with racism and discrimination. Grenada welcomes the General Assembly's unanimous adoption, on 2 August, of resolution 75/314, entitled "Establishment of the Permanent Forum of People of African Descent", a momentous undertaking on the anniversary of the abolition of slavery across CARICOM, almost 200 years ago.

Even as contemporary issues demand our focus and attention, Grenada and the Caribbean Community remain conscious of the history and impact of slavery. From our standpoint, we understand all too well the challenges faced in turning global political commitments into meaningful reality. We therefore call for greater international attention to that issue. The international community cannot address sustainable development without considering its interconnectedness with human rights.

It is with immense pride that I also highlight the historic and successful inaugural Africa-CARICOM Summit, graciously hosted by the President of the Republic of Kenya, on 7 September 2021. Moreover, with the establishment of a CARICOM Mission in Kenya, it is our sincere hope that the Caribbean and African regions will continue to build on and deepen our bonds of friendship and cooperation.

Every year, Grenada reiterates the counterproductivity of the economic, commercial

and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba and the inhumane socioeconomic hardships it places on the people of the Republic of Cuba, a country that has provided a wealth of humanitarian assistance around the world, including during the onslaught of COVID-19, but is nevertheless hindered from participating in the global economy. We again thank our sister island nation of Cuba for its solidarity and its invaluable contribution and support to Grenada, our region and the world in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and for its support in many other areas.

Grenada votes annually with the overwhelming majority of the General Assembly in support of General Assembly resolutions calling for the removal of the embargo against the Government and the people of Cuba. We again issue another clarion call this year for the complete removal of that embargo and for respect for the rights of the Cuban people. We also call for the readmission of Cuba, unhindered, to the economic, commercial and financial community of nations.

Grenada also calls for a stronger global response for Haiti's recovery and for an increased response to other humanitarian and security crises unfolding around the globe.

As I conclude, Grenada reiterates its steadfast support for the pursuit of international peace and security and believes that law and security are fundamental for the facilitation of the peaceful settlement of disputes, a vital component to achieving and maintaining international peace and security. Grenada reiterates its call that the United Nations membership reflect on its governing principles, as set out in its Charter.

It is against that backdrop that we, the community of nations, working in tandem in our relentless pursuit of the achievement of the goals of the Organization, can relish in hope — for a more just and inclusive society; for rebuilding sustainable societies that adequately respond to the needs of our shared home, Earth; to reinvigorate and revitalize our United Nations and that, by standing together, with mutual respect, we prove to be resilient to and overcome the challenges of today.

Now is the time to turn hope into meaningful action, for the benefit of all our peoples.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Eritrea to introduce an address by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea.

Ms. Tesfamariam (Eritrea): I have the honour and privilege to introduce the pre-recorded statement of His Excellency Mr. Osman Saleh Mohammed, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea.

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex II and see A/76/332/Add.11).

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Alzayani, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Mr. Alzayani (Bahrain) (spoke in Arabic): We are delighted to congratulate Your Excellency, Mr. Abdulla Shahid, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session. We wish you every success in managing its work. We also thank the former President, His Excellency Mr. Volkan Bozkır, for his efforts and the efficient and effective manner in which he managed the work of the previous session.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the accession of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the United Nations. The leadership, the Government and the people are proud of our achievements in cooperation and partnership with this international Organization with a view to achieving the objectives and fulfilling the purposes of the United Nations in the service of all humankind. We also express the Kingdom of Bahrain's appreciation for our close cooperation with the United Nations. We underscore our determination to continue contributing to the activities of the United Nations and to support its efforts and programmes for the benefit of the countries of the world, while protecting the rights of its people to security, peace, stability and prosperity.

Today we stand in this Hall and witness the first steps in our recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, following last year's virtual session, which proved that international cooperation and global partnership are essential for addressing the risks arising from the pandemic. They are also essential for addressing the effects of the pandemic on human safety and public health. The Kingdom of Bahrain, under the leadership and the wise guidance of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, was well-prepared to face the repercussions of the pandemic. We made every effort to protect citizens and residents alike

and to provide the necessary health care for all, without discrimination.

National efforts spearheaded by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, played a vital role in the speed of the response and development of pre-emptive strategies and plans to address all scenarios. Before the announcement of the first case of infection in the Kingdom in February 2020, all measures were taken to protect society from the risks posed by the pandemic.

The Kingdom of Bahrain also followed a strategy of tracing, testing and treating and minimizing close contact so as to limit the spread of the virus in society, under the supervision of the national medical task force for combating the coronavirus, which was established to prepare plans and protocols to address the development of the virus. An integrated media strategy was also developed for optimized media engagement to meet the challenge of all possible scenarios pre-emptively and instantaneously. The COVID-19 alert level traffic light system, an advanced mechanism with clear criteria consisting of four levels, was adopted. Based on those levels, the various sectors of the Kingdom of Bahrain remain operational or closed, while maintaining the freedom of movement and keeping all air, land and seaports open as we work to combat the pandemic.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has provided more than 2.5 million doses of the coronavirus vaccine free of charge to its citizens and residents. Its national vaccination campaign has succeeded in vaccinating 74.8 per cent of the total population as of August, and 93 per cent of the total population are eligible to take the vaccine. Bahrain has also conducted more than 6 million polymerase chain reaction tests — one of the highest numbers of tests per capita in the world. In addition, the Kingdom of Bahrain was one of the first nations to implement several treatment protocols for the virus.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has adopted a series of measures to protect the health of citizens and residents and preserve the economy and the livelihoods of citizens. We launched a financial and economic stimulus package worth more than 4.5 billion Bahraini dinars, equivalent to approximately \$12 billion, or one third of the gross domestic product of the Kingdom of Bahrain. The aim of the package was to support the economic sectors affected by the pandemic, the private

sector and citizens, as well as to support wages and protect jobs.

The Kingdom has also strengthened its cooperation and coordination with the World Health Organization to address the repercussions of the pandemic. We are also proud of the fact that the World Health Organization has designated Manama as the first Healthy City in the Middle East region.

The Kingdom of Bahrain stresses the importance of the pivotal role of the United Nations in addressing vital international issues and strengthening the foundations of international peace and security for the good of humankind. We also underscore the Kingdom's commitment to all international conventions and laws and to working to achieve the goals and fulfil the purposes of the United Nations. My country strives to strengthen its cooperation and partnership with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in order to promote and protect human rights in the Kingdom. We fully support efforts in that area.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs recently signed a declaration of intent with the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator in the Kingdom of Bahrain to participate in preparations for the national human rights plan, which we hope will serve as a comprehensive framework for the initiatives, projects and goals my Government intends to implement in the area of human rights protection.

My country is keen to promote and protect human rights in compliance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. To that end, we have worked to advance Bahraini women, integrate their needs into the development process and ensure implementation of the principles of equal opportunities and equality, including equality of salaries and wages, in order to achieve equal partnership in building a competitive and sustainable society.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has also maintained its tier one status in the annual United States State Department trafficking in persons report for the fourth consecutive year. My country's Government also approved a law on alternative penalties, thereby providing a qualitative leap forward in reform and rehabilitation. The law is compatible with modern criminal justice policies for the protection and promotion of human rights.

My country's Government seeks to ensure that its action plan and economic vision are in line with the Sustainable Development Goals and the main pillars, policies and initiatives that consider the delivery of benefits to human beings as the primary goal and the fundamental purpose of development.

We focus on three priorities — strengthening the basic pillars of the State and society, achieving financial sustainability and economic development and securing an environment conducive to sustainable development. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator in the Kingdom of Bahrain signed a strategic and sustainable development cooperation framework agreement to enhance the growing cooperation between the Kingdom of Bahrain and the United Nations in various areas and at various levels.

The Kingdom of Bahrain shares the international community's interest in climate change and its effects on human life and in the efforts being made to mitigate its impact on the environment. We therefore look forward to the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

My country's Government has also developed an integrated plan to increase the share of renewable energy in the Kingdom's energy mix, as part of our sustainable development strategy. The plan also seeks to reduce carbon emissions, as part of international efforts to counter climate change, under the directive of His Majesty the King, in order to improve the country's environment and climate situation. In that regard, we reaffirm the support of the Kingdom of Bahrain for the pioneering Saudi initiatives — the Green Saudi and Green Middle East initiatives.

The Middle East region remains in a state of instability and insecurity. The people of several nations in the Middle East endure difficult conditions caused by wars, crises and conflicts that have resulted in loss of life and millions of refugees and displaced persons. They have also caused the destruction of cities, villages and infrastructure, turning the lives of those people into a painful tragedy of daily suffering that drives away opportunities for peace, security and stability. The Kingdom of Bahrain calls on the international community to focus its efforts on achieving security, stability, peace and prosperity in the Middle East by adhering to the purposes and principles of the Charter

of the United Nations, which include non-interference in the internal affairs of countries, the commitment to good-neighbourliness, mutual respect and the peaceful settlement of disputes, in addition to strengthening international cooperation.

The Kingdom of Bahrain is determined to preserve the unity of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, in the light of its important role in maintaining the security and stability of the region. The Kingdom therefore stresses the importance of the commitments included in the Declaration of the Al-Ula Summit, held in the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia earlier this year. Those commitments will promote interdependence and coordination and lead to greater cooperation and integration among member States.

The Kingdom of Bahrain chose the path of peace as an approach and a strategic option for establishing lasting and comprehensive peace in the region and consolidating a culture of tolerance and peaceful coexistence, for the benefit of the peoples of the region and the world and to combat extremism, intolerance and hatred. The signing by the Kingdom of Bahrain of the Declaration of Peace, Cooperation and Constructive Diplomatic and Friendly Relations with the State of Israel is in line with the vision of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa to promote the principle of peaceful coexistence and consolidate a culture of peace, love, fraternity, dialogue, cooperation and mutual respect, the noble goals endorsed by all monotheistic religions and enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

In that context, my country stresses the need to achieve a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. As we adhere to basic Arab principles, primarily preserving the rights of the brotherly Palestinian people to live in a secure, stable and prosperous nation, we call on the international community to work for a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question that meets the aspirations of the brotherly Palestinian people to establish an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the principle of the two-State solution, as well as resolutions of international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative.

My country also supports the initiative of the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to establish a ceasefire in Yemen in order to reach a political solution to the Yemeni crisis, in accordance with the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism,

the outcomes of the Comprehensive National Dialogue Conference and the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2216 (2015), to end the suffering of the brotherly Yemeni people.

My country condemns the Houthis' continued targeting of civilians and civilian facilities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by systematically and deliberately launching ballistic missiles and booby-trapped drones, in explicit violation of international humanitarian law.

The Kingdom of Bahrain calls for an urgent settlement of the issue of the Renaissance Dam and stresses the importance of reaching a fair and binding agreement on the issue of filling and operating the dam in a manner that preserves the water rights of the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Republic of the Sudan and that contributes to maintaining peace, security and stability in East Africa.

We call for respecting the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Libyan State, as well as for supporting the efforts of the interim executive authority, ceasing interference in Libya's internal affairs, withdrawing foreign forces and mercenaries from Libyan territories and holding elections that reflect the will of the brotherly Libyan people.

We also renew our support for the legitimate rights of the sisterly Kingdom of Morocco over its southern provinces, in accordance with the autonomy initiative, and we support its efforts to find a political solution to the Sahara issue within the framework of the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Morocco and its development initiatives in that region.

The Kingdom of Bahrain, under the directives of His Majesty the King and based on its belief in the principle of human solidarity, has taken the initiative to contribute to efforts to evacuate American citizens and Afghan nationals from Afghanistan and to send numerous humanitarian assistance and relief shipments to alleviate the suffering of the brotherly Afghan people.

The Kingdom of Bahrain stresses its support for the Afghan people and the choices they make themselves, without any foreign interference in their affairs. We also underline the need to reach a peaceful political solution among all parties and components of Afghan society in order to achieve peace and security in Afghanistan and to meet the aspirations of its brotherly Muslim people for a free, dignified, stable and prosperous life.

The Kingdom of Bahrain calls for the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East region. The Kingdom reaffirms its support for international efforts to prevent Iran from acquiring the ability to develop a nuclear weapon. We stress the need for Iran to fully cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency in order to ensure the maintenance of regional and international security and stability.

The Kingdom of Bahrain, in cooperation with allies and friendly countries, has made continuous efforts to pursue the sources of terrorist financing and money-laundering. We have been able to make outstanding achievements in that regard, and our country has been ranked first in the Arab world on the Basel Anti-Money Laundering Index.

In that context, we renew the commitment of the Kingdom of Bahrain to continue its efforts under the Global Coalition to Counter the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and all other extremist terrorist organizations and to dry up their sources of financing. We stress the importance of partnership and international cooperation in combating terrorism and confronting extremist ideology.

The Kingdom of Bahrain underscores that overcoming the challenges and difficulties facing the international community, maintaining international peace and security and achieving sustainable development, with its noble humanitarian goals, require us to harness efforts and increase our capabilities to enhance cooperation and effective international partnership and to consolidate the values of peaceful coexistence, solidarity and fraternity for a brighter and more optimistic future for the peoples of the world.

In conclusion, I am pleased to express the Kingdom of Bahrain's appreciation for what the President has set out in the programme of his presidency for the work of the of the General Assembly at the current session. May the seventy-sixth session be full of hope — hope for accomplishing work that benefits humankind and achieves prosperity and hope for realizing security and peace throughout the world.

Mr. Adom (Côte d'Ivoire), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of San Marino to introduce a statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, International

Economic Cooperation and Telecommunications of the Republic of San Marino.

Mr. Beleffi (San Marino): I have the honour to introduce the statement by His Excellency Mr. Luca Beccari, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Economic Cooperation and Telecommunications of the Republic of San Marino.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Economic Cooperation and Telecommunications of the Republic of San Marino.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex III and see A/76/332/Add.11).

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Oman to introduce a statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman.

Mr. Al Hassan (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am honoured to introduce His Excellency Mr. Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamood Albusaidi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman, who will deliver the Sultanate's pre-recorded message to this international body.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex IV and see A/76/332/Add.11).

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Edite Ramos da Costa Ten Jua, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Communities of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe.

Ms. Da Costa Ten Jua (Sao Tome and Principe) (*spoke in Portuguese; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): At this historic time marked by countless challenges, I am greatly honoured to address the General Assembly for the first time in my capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Communities of Sao Tome and Principe. The general debate of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session provides me with the opportunity to congratulate Mr. Abdulla Shahid on behalf of my country, Sao Tome and Principe, on his election as President of the

Assembly. He can count on our full support during his term, which we hope will enable the Organization to move towards resolving the most urgent issues that continue to affect our people and planet.

We also congratulate the outgoing President, Mr. Volkan Bozkır, for his commitment to conducting the work of the previous session, especially in the context of the upheaval caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. It also gives us great pleasure to commend Mr. Antonio Guterres on his reappointment as Secretary-General, which Sao Tome and Principe supported, and on his tireless efforts to strengthen the role of the United Nations in promoting peace, democracy and the protection of human life worldwide and combating poverty in all its forms.

As we are currently confronting multiple crises, we enthusiastically welcome this session's theme — "Building resilience through hope — to recover from COVID-19, rebuild sustainably, respond to the needs of the planet, respect the rights of people and revitalize the United Nations". Indeed, as the COVID-19 pandemic has shown, an effective multilateral system and solidarity among countries are key to resolving the enormous and challenging problems that continue to confront humankind. Our generation cannot avoid or procrastinate in fulfilling our responsibility to provide global responses that demand, frankly speaking, the adoption of mainstreamed and collective commitments.

The United Nations represents the hope of millions of people who are now intently looking to us with the belief that something new and better is about to unfold for the world. It is incumbent upon us to develop the capacities to formulate the solutions expected of us, which would bring light to the countless people whose lives are a journey of suffering and uncertainty.

Sao Tome and Principe, which is located in the Gulf of Guinea, enjoys a privileged position in international geopolitics and great potential owing to its geography. Despite such advantages, the country is undergoing an economic and financial transition, as it is in the complex process of transitioning to the status of a medium-income country in line with internationally accepted standards. In the light of the complexity of the situation and in addition to the new paradigm for international relations owing to COVID-19, which continues to take a toll on humankind, we believe that the economic situation of the most vulnerable countries in Africa, in particular in Sao Tome and Principe, will

be overcome only if multilateralism and cooperation among countries, ranging from the most fortunate to the least developed, are strengthened.

As it fulfils its role to create hope for the world, we commend the United Nations for its decision to convene the high-level Food Systems Summit on 23 September. Sao Tome and Principe has made progress in the area of food systems, but a significant portion of its population continues to fall short in meeting its daily dietary needs. We are nevertheless pleased to acknowledge the support of various development partners, in particular the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, which, in cooperation with the Government of Sao Tome and Principe, has been working to raise the nutritional level of our most vulnerable populations.

Poverty is the greatest scourge facing humankind, and it is no mere coincidence that combating poverty figures foremost among the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We have recently witnessed remarkable progress in the most diverse areas, which should set the foundation for meaningfully improving the quality of life for all. However, the harsh reality is quite different. The eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions must be the top priority of political commitment in the concert of nations, particularly the United Nations.

It is well known that the direct consequences of poverty lead to tragic situations, such as hunger, soil degradation and the unchecked exploitation of natural resources. It also leads to armed conflicts, the displacement of populations, the overcrowding of many urban centres and migration flows from the South to the North. With regard to migration flows, especially from the South to the North, we believe that the status quo is unacceptable. Therefore, we believe that we must combine efforts among destination countries, coordinated policies on hosting refugees and adequate support for migrants' countries of origin in order to bring the situation under control, or at least to mitigate its impact, thereby restoring dignity to the people who find themselves in such circumstances.

We believe that peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies are in the interest of us all. In particular, in our view the current session of General Assembly provides the members of the international community gathered here today with the opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to the just aspirations of humankind and the purposes of the United Nations.

We also bring to this session our wish that the Organization create more binding mechanisms to ensure solidarity with the victims of war and terrorism and demonstrate the political capacities to develop lasting solutions to old and new conflicts, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Syrian conflict, the Libyan conflict, the establishment of terrorist groups in the Sahel and the actions of the terrorist group Al-Shabaab in East Africa and Boko Haram in Central and West Africa. The persistent political and military instability in many African countries calls on and demands of us all to make a concerted effort to silence the weapons in order to enable a negotiated solution through permanent dialogue and end the suffering of all those concerned once and for all.

With regard to the situation in the Sahara, we welcome the United Nations appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel to help the parties reach a political solution to their regional dispute, based on the relevant United Nations and African Union resolutions. We therefore call on the parties to commit themselves to that political process and see it through.

In addition to the consequences of violent extremism, the world is facing additional challenges as a result of the devastating effects of climate change, which are posing serious obstacles to the achievement of the SDGs, to which we all committed ourselves in this very Hall in 2015. We therefore commend the United Nations for its leadership role in combating climate change and call on everyone to show greater commitment to that common cause, which, like the COVID-19 pandemic, is of concern to all countries, without exception.

Natural disasters are occurring more frequently, on a larger scale and with greater intensity, while leading to the loss of life, especially in the least-developed regions of our planet. It is evident that global efforts must continue under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. We must all share that responsibility, as it is incumbent upon all of us to safeguard the greatest good — the life of both our own and future generations.

We deeply believe in the Organization as the forum to address our causes — an entity whose role is to establish the foundation on which to structure and systematically address our shared challenges and to lead the harmonization of our world vis-à-vis cultural

differences, Government models and systems and economic choices. In filling that role, it is fully able to establish the foundation for cooperation and exchanges to generate wealth, prosperity and lasting peace for all.

Sustainable development has become a prominent subject in the debates of the General Assembly at its recent sessions, which clearly demonstrates our spirit of inclusion. However, in order for the spirit of inclusion to become a tangible reality, we must ensure that the much-vaunted reform of the Organization become a reality through the inclusion of Africa in the Security Council, thereby including the continent in global decision-making.

As a small island developing State and with all the constraints that come with that status, the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe pursues policies that are adapted to its reality with respect to multicultural diversity, the dignity of people and human rights. With an economy highly vulnerable to external shocks, Sao Tome and Principe has faced enormous challenges in achieving the SDGs but has made efforts to meet their targets.

Nevertheless, we must acknowledge that, for those efforts to be effective, it is essential that we be able to count on the international community to provide the development-financing mechanisms announced at various international forums. We cannot make lasting democratic achievements without sustained economic growth. It is worth recalling that Sao Tome and Principe is scheduled to graduate to the middle-income country category by December 2024. That designation acknowledges the efforts and progress made but also opens the door to enormous challenges.

We therefore passionately appeal from this rostrum for the support of the international community to not only walk together with us on this arduous path of transition from the least developed country to the middle-income country category but also to provide the necessary support to fully achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Access to development credit remains a necessary response to reopening the global economy, as it will mitigate the risk of illegal financial flows and contribute to good governance. The African continent continues to lag behind across all human development indices. However, Africa remains a continent of opportunities to attract partners that can leverage the enormous mineral resources, vast arable lands, forests and rivers for the

benefit of its populations, especially the vast number of young people, who represent the largest demographic of the population.

I conclude my remarks by reaffirming Sao Tome and Principe's unequivocal commitment to contribute, as part of the international community and to the best of our ability, to strengthening the multilateral system and building a better world for all. May God bless us all.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Kandia Kamissoko Camara, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs, African Integration and the Diaspora of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire.

Ms. Kamissoko Camara (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, on behalf of the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. Alassane Ouattara, who could not make the journey here and whom I have the honour to represent, I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to Mr. Abdulla Shahid on his commendable election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session. I also wish him every success in carrying out the challenging yet inspiring task that has been entrusted to him.

I also thank the outgoing President, His Excellency Mr. Volkan Bozkır, for his outstanding leadership of the work of the previous session in a difficult context marked by the persistence of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

Lastly, allow me to warmly congratulate His Excellency Mr. António Guterres on his well-deserved reappointment at the helm of our Organization. I also commend his leadership and unwavering commitment to the promotion of international peace and security, human rights and sustainable development throughout the world.

Since its outbreak in 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly disrupted our way of life and exacerbated the multiple fragilities that our world already faced. Therefore, the theme of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly, "Building resilience through hope — to recover from COVID-19, rebuild sustainably, respond to the needs of the planet, respect the rights of people and revitalize the United Nations", serves as a call to act collectively to translate the ideals of peace, shared prosperity and solidarity that led to the creation of the United Nations into concrete actions, thereby emphasizing the essential nature of multilateralism.

Despite the constant efforts made by States, the international community and the scientific world to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, the health crisis persists. It has assumed worrisome proportions with the emergence of new variants that are more contagious and just as deadly as previous ones. Those new variants pose a real challenge to the implementation of response plans, both globally and in developing countries.

There is no doubt that, at this stage in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, vaccines offer real hope. We must therefore scale up national initiatives and further strengthen collective action through cooperation and the pooling of resources, as well as by ensuring equitable access to vaccines for all. That will require adequate funding for current initiatives, the waiving of patents and the development of vaccine production capacities, particularly on the African continent, which to date has not been sufficiently served.

In that connection, I am pleased to welcome the implementation of the World Health Organization's Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan to address immediate health needs, the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility mechanism, the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan and the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund, as well as the African Union's African Vaccine Acquisition Trust Team initiative. However, those mechanisms can achieve the expected results only in a climate of peace, security and stability.

That is why, in view of the persistence of conflict in certain areas around the world, in particular in Africa, which compromises the efforts made by our States in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, Côte d'Ivoire wishes to reiterate its support for the appeal made by the Secretary-General in March 2020 for a global cessation of hostilities.

The implementation of the response plan in Côte d'Ivoire is being carried out with determination. That plan includes health and humanitarian components as well as an economic component, which provides for massive support to the private sector in order to preserve jobs and curb the social impact of the health crisis.

In the same vein, on 15 February my country launched a large-scale vaccination campaign against COVID-19, with the support of our bilateral and multilateral partners. As of 15 September 2021, more than 1.5 million people had been vaccinated. Our goal is to reach 60 per cent vaccination coverage of the

population over 18 years old by the end of December 2021, while maintaining a daily rate of at least 20,000-30,000 doses.

In view of the magnitude of the unprecedented collateral and adverse effects of the pandemic, particularly at the economic, social and humanitarian levels, which constitute potential sources of instability for States, the consolidation of peace and the strengthening of social cohesion remain at the heart of the Government of Côte d'Ivoire's priorities. Moreover, having overcome the sociopolitical upheavals it experienced in recent years, Côte d'Ivoire continues to be resolutely committed to a virtuous and irreversible process of national reconciliation and social cohesion across all political and social spheres.

Our commitment to strengthening the national reconciliation process has never wavered, despite the many complex challenges obstructing the path to its implementation, because we are convinced that our ambition to make Côte d'Ivoire an emerging Power once again that is united in its cultural, political and democratic diversity and open to the world depends upon the success of that process. That is why the Government of Côte d'Ivoire continues to work, with all the active forces of the nation, to further consolidate its current national reconciliation dynamics, for which no sacrifice is too great.

From that perspective, the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. Alassane Ouattara, met with his predecessors, Mr. Henri Konan Bédié, on 11 November 2020, and Mr. Laurent Gbagbo, on 27 July 2021. The outcome of those meetings was an agreement on the need to maintain dialogue and combine their efforts to promote national reconciliation, which is an essential condition for the preservation of lasting peace and stability in Côte d'Ivoire. That is a prerequisite for any harmonious and sustainable development process in the interest of our courageous people.

Those meetings, which will be followed by several others in order to restore trust among all political stakeholders, are the continuation of a series of bold measures that President Ouattara has taken to pursue and strengthen the process of establishing a peaceful sociopolitical environment that was initiated in 2011.

At the institutional level, those measures involve the creation of a ministry devoted to national reconciliation, a Chamber of Kings and Traditional Chiefs responsible for launching mediation missions for the prevention and

management of crises and conflicts, and a Senate whose role is to ensure the dynamic stability of our democracy.

At the operational level, those measures involve the compensation of the victims of the 2010-2011 post-electoral crisis; the mass return of refugees, including high-ranking political figures; and the pursuit of an inclusive political dialogue with the opposition and civil society, which made it possible to organize inclusive and peaceful legislative and senatorial elections and pardons for people convicted of acts of violence committed during the 31 October 2020 presidential election.

The national reconciliation process, which contributes to strengthening the rule of law in Côte d'Ivoire and its irreversible progress towards an emerging economy, will continue to be based on an independent justice system, a sustained commitment at the highest level of the State and strong national ownership. Côte d'Ivoire knows that it can count on the multifaceted support of the United Nations and the entire international community in that process.

If we want to succeed in the Decade of Action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals for the benefit of our people, it is imperative that we redouble our efforts to reduce poverty, preserve the environment and create conditions conducive to mobilizing financing for development.

In the context of improving the well-being of our people, the issues of health, education and social inequalities require our sustained attention. We must therefore promote resilient health systems that ensure both universal health coverage and better preparedness to face future threats, in accordance with the commitments made in the political declaration of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on universal health coverage adopted on 23 September 2019.

The health sector therefore remains one of the priorities of the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, which has devoted a significant share of the national budget to that sector over the past 10 years. In that connection, we have launched an ambitious universal health coverage project to guarantee access to quality health care and services at a lower cost for all residents of Côte d'Ivoire, which is a source of relief for the population and has been in operation since 1 January.

Along with health, education is one of the sectors that has been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Indeed, the pandemic has accentuated the inequalities and disparities within and between States, which have consequently undermined the achievement of the goal of ensuring education and training for all. In that respect, we believe it is urgent to take action to strengthen the resilience of the education system by improving equity, inclusion and digital connectivity. The Government of Côte d'Ivoire, which since 2015 has made schooling free and compulsory for all children aged 6 to 16, will spare no effort to reach the goal of a 100 per cent enrolment rate.

In addition to health and education, the promotion of the well-being of populations is at the heart of our concerns. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, whose achievement has been hindered by the health crisis, should contribute to that. The Decade of Action launched by the Secretary-General is therefore an urgent invitation to intensify our efforts in the fight against poverty. For its part, Côte d'Ivoire has strengthened its national strategy with a view to gradually building a social protection system for the most vulnerable populations, in particular through the establishment of a direct cash transfer programme.

The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified our vulnerabilities and made us aware of the need to initiate vigorous actions to restore the balance of biodiversity and ensure the sustainability of our planet. That requires that we respect our commitments and adopt new management, production and consumption models that are more respectful of the environment. That is why my country has acceded to the main international legal instruments and developed sectoral management strategies for the conservation of natural resources.

As a signatory to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, Côte d'Ivoire is committed to reducing its carbon dioxide emissions by 28 per cent by 2030 and increasing the share of renewable energies in its energy mix to 42 per cent. In order to promote sustainable solutions to environmental challenges, my country has taken measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change in the areas of agriculture, integrated coastal management, renewable energy and the modernization and resilience of road transport, which is a major emitter of carbon dioxide.

In that regard, we would like to thank our bilateral and multilateral partners, who have supported us in our desire to build a safe and healthy environment for ourselves and for future generations. Côte d'Ivoire

expresses the hope that the upcoming fifteenth session Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, and the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which will be held in Côte d'Ivoire and Scotland, respectively, will offer excellent opportunities to renew our common commitments and propose concrete and urgent actions to save our planet.

The financing of the Sustainable Development Goals remains a major concern for our countries. Today more than ever, the capacity of our States to mobilize the resources needed to finance the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 of the African Union is strongly affected by various health, socioeconomic, technological and environmental factors. Indeed, the global growth crisis, which is linked in particular to the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the debt burden and the lack of liquidity, is drastically limiting our budgetary leeway.

In view of that situation, it is imperative that we conceive new strategies for mobilizing sustainable financing, both internally and externally, in accordance with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, in order to invest in socioeconomic infrastructure and fight more effectively against poverty, insecurity and inequality. In that regard, we invite the private sector to become more involved in financing sustainable solutions.

In that context, I would like to welcome the various initiatives that have already been taken in that direction, in particular the Group of Twenty initiative for the final extension of the debt service suspension measure until the end of 2021 in order to enable beneficiary countries to mobilize more resources to deal with the health crisis and its collateral effects; the historic decision by the International Monetary Fund to allocate \$650 billion in special drawing rights to member countries, in line with the commitments made at the Paris summit on the financing of African economies on 18 May; the organization in Abidjan, on 15 July, of the twentieth International Development Association replenishment advocacy meeting, which provided an opportunity to exchange views on common challenges, particularly in the area of improving human capital, job creation and economic recovery.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our partners, both bilateral and multilateral, who are

stakeholders in these initiatives and who are supporting my country in the implementation of its national development plan 2021-2025, which aims to enable a structural transformation of its economy.

However, I would like to renew our plea for increased official development assistance, debt cancellation and the promotion of innovative financing, in support of national efforts to mobilize resources to build together a safer and more resilient world. We cannot build this resilient and stable world without resolutely addressing the serious transnational threats to peace and security posed by terrorism, violent extremism, organized crime and cybercrime.

From this rostrum, I would therefore like to make an urgent appeal for increased mobilization given the danger posed by the terrorist threat to our countries, especially the poorest ones. In addition to those threats, internal and regional conflicts persist in several parts of our planet. The international community must continue to pay attention to the situation in the Middle East, Afghanistan and the Western Sahara.

With regard to the question of Western Sahara, Côte d'Ivoire would like to affirm its support for the negotiation process under the aegis of the United Nations by calling on the parties to show compromise in order to settle this dispute, particularly in the context of the relevant Security Council resolutions and the spirit of the Moroccan autonomy initiative.

Today the multifaceted and complex security challenges in some regions of the world have been intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic. This is the case in the West African subregion and in the Sahel, where, since the beginning of the health crisis, there has been an upsurge in terrorist attacks, which are increasingly deadly. In Côte d'Ivoire, we have recorded no less than five attacks since the beginning of this year, resulting in numerous victims. Fortunately, several other terrorist attacks have been foiled thanks to the vigilance and valour of our defence and security forces.

Because of their cross-border nature, these threats to the peace and stability of our States require increased subregional, regional and international cooperation. The effective implementation of the priorities set out in the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime would be a decisive step in that regard.

In that context, my country signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime on 3 June, within the framework of the United Nations Countering Terrorist Travel Programme, which aims to prevent and detect terrorist offences and other serious crimes through the use of advance passenger information and passenger name records.

Similarly, in partnership with France, the International Academy for Combating Terrorism has just been set up in Jacqueville in the south of the country, with the objective of creating a community and a culture of combating terrorism in Africa.

During the celebration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations last year, we made 12 solemn commitments to “build the future we want for the United Nations”. The implementation of those commitments cannot be delayed given the ongoing COVID-19 health crisis and its multiple adverse effects.

I would therefore like to reaffirm before this Assembly my country’s commitment to the values of multilateralism, which remains the best approach to our common quest for solutions to contemporary global challenges and issues. We must therefore promote an inclusive, supportive multilateralism with strong partnerships that reaffirms the key and unifying role of the United Nations. That requires a courageous reform of our common Organization, which we want to be stronger, more democratic and more proactive in order to achieve the noble objectives entrusted to it.

Côte d’Ivoire reiterates its commitment to the necessary reform of the Security Council in order to adapt it to the realities of the world in the light of the profound geopolitical and economic transformations that have taken place in recent decades. My country reaffirms its full support for the common African position expressed in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration, which call for the reparation of the historical injustice done to Africa and for an egalitarian reform of the Security Council.

Côte d’Ivoire remains optimistic about our ability to overcome our current differences, achieve a new architecture of the Security Council and further unite our efforts in the service of maintaining international peace and security, protecting human rights and promoting sustainable economic development for the benefit of all.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Brunei Darussalam to introduce a statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Brunei Darussalam.

Ms. Sulaiman (Brunei Darussalam): I have the honour to introduce The Honourable Mr. Erywan Pehin Yusof, Second Minister for Foreign Affairs of Brunei Darussalam, who will address the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly through a pre-recorded video statement.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Second Minister for Foreign Affairs of Brunei Darussalam.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex V and see A/76/332/Add.11).

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation and Mauritians Abroad of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

Mr. Cheikh Ahmed (Mauritania) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, it is my pleasure to express my warmest congratulations to His Excellency Mr. António Guterres on his reappointment to a second term as Secretary-General. I am confident in the success of the great efforts and endeavours that he is making to reform and steer the Organization in the service of peace and security. I also extend my congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session. I wish him every success in his noble tasks. I would also like to extend my deepest gratitude and thanks to His Excellency Ambassador Volkan Bozkır, Permanent Representative of the sisterly Republic of Turkey, for the great efficiency and professionalism with which he managed the previous session of the General Assembly.

This session is being convened for the second successive year at a time when our world is being subjected to a health crisis brought about by the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its variants amid increasing ramifications and challenges. The statistics are frightening. Infections worldwide have reached the terrifying number of approximately 250 million, while deaths have exceeded 5 million,

which is also a terrifying number as compared to the toll at this time last year.

As for the other economic, social and humanitarian challenges and consequences of the crisis, they are even more serious than those of the health crisis itself at the global level, but even more acute and dangerous in developing and poor countries due to the fragility of their economies and their inability to endure crises of this kind — and for such long periods — which greatly threaten the lives of the people in those countries.

The measures taken by the world to date to address the pandemic and its repercussions are below expectations and not up to the crisis yet. That requires that we all redouble and coordinate our efforts to enable developing and poor countries to access vaccinations in sufficient quantities. They must get help to boost their technical capabilities to speed up the pace of vaccination, on the one hand, and to contain the economic, social and humanitarian damage of the crisis, on the other hand.

In that context, and from this rostrum, we reiterate the call made by His Excellency President Mohamed Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani at several regional and international occasions for the complete and definitive cancellation of the external debt of countries of the African continent in order to enable them to overcome the economic impacts caused by the novel coronavirus disease pandemic.

Guided by President El Ghazouani, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania has adopted many measures that made it possible to limit the spread of the pandemic and mitigate its effects on the population, especially the most vulnerable. The most important measures taken include launching extensive vaccination campaigns throughout the national territory, with the rate of vaccination shortly standing at 15 per cent of the entire population; imposing preventive measures on all national territory, which are strictly monitored; providing basic commodities to the local market, preventing speculation in them and reducing their prices, which rose globally due to the pandemic; providing essential medicines with fixed prices; bearing the burden of health insurance of 120,000 households, which is about 600,000 people from among the poor and vulnerable groups; and providing direct financial aid for thousands of vulnerable and poor households affected by the economic recession due to the crisis.

(spoke in English)

The convening of this General Assembly session represents an opportunity to study ways to raise the performance of our Organization to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, which aim to address the major challenges related to the environment, climate, health, education, security, stability and development. From that standpoint, His Excellency President Mohamed Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani announced a holistic economic revitalization plan, which seeks to address the negative effects and overcome the challenges and constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is an integrated economic programme aimed at achieving the necessary conditions for a new economic recovery that gives the private sector the space and incentives to play a key role. The programme seeks to create more job opportunities and conditions for an optimal use of our natural resources in the fields of agriculture, animal development, mining and fisheries. Among the main themes of the programme are strengthening infrastructure that supports growth; strengthening the capacities of the social sectors and supporting demand; upgrading and supporting the productive sectors to achieve food self-sufficiency; supporting the formal and informal private sectors; combating desertification and drought; and supporting employment opportunities.

The programme is being implemented in parallel with other programmes within the Government's plan, launched by the General Delegation for National Solidarity and Fight against Exclusion, which aims to combat various forms of fragility and to ensure universal access to basic services, such as electricity, drinking water, health and education, combating poverty and promoting social solidarity.

Work is also being done to train and equip young people with the necessary skills to enable them to enter the labour market and contribute to the development of the national economy, as well as to enable women to play their role by involving them strongly in political life and the conduct of public affairs. Work is also under way to consolidate the principle of the separation of powers and the independence of the judiciary, to consolidate national unity and strengthen social cohesion and to moderate political life through extensive consultations with various national actors, building the rule of law and freedoms and laying the foundations of good governance.

(spoke in French)

In terms of security and the fight against terrorism, in cooperation and consultation with our regional partners, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania has strived to develop an effective and efficient strategy to combat terrorism and the various forms of extremism as part of a comprehensive approach that takes into account the security aspects, religious dialogue and the economic and social dimensions in order to neutralize terrorism and dry up its sources of financing, while taking into account strict respect for human rights.

During Mauritania's presidency of the Group of Five for the Sahel, the Coalition for the Sahel was launched at the Nouakchott summit in June 2020. That framework aims to broaden support to the Sahel countries, which in recent years have experienced a drastic deterioration in the security situation, forced migration, climate change and signs of an acute food crisis.

This year, unfortunately, due to the significant lack of rainfall and its spatial dispersion, the already structural food crisis is likely to worsen. In the Sahel, about 14 million people are suffering from food shortages, while 29 million are in need of emergency humanitarian assistance.

As its current Chair, my country considers the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel initiative to be of critical importance for the future of its 11 member States and for the living conditions of their peoples.

The upcoming twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change should be an opportunity to mobilize partners to realize the commitments made in Paris in January in to meet the glaring needs of the peoples of the Sahel, who are desperate in the face of the vicious spiral of an unpredictable climate and growing insecurity. The transition — and I would say, above all, access — to clean and cheaper energy is fundamental in that respect.

In that context, it is the moral obligation of our international partners to help the Sahelian States meet those challenges. But it is also clear that the political leaders of our subregion must uphold their promises of good governance and the promise to ensure a return to constitutional order to better meet the aspirations of their citizens and improve their living conditions, namely, in fragile areas.

(spoke in Arabic)

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania stresses its unwavering support for all just causes throughout the world and in all international forums. From this rostrum, my country reaffirms the right of the Palestinian people to live in dignity and sovereignty in an independent and viable State with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative and relevant international resolutions and in the framework of a two-State solution, namely, two States living side by side in peace and stability.

My country also reaffirms its commitment to its unwavering position regarding the conflict in the Western Sahara. We have not taken any particular side; we maintain excellent relations with all. We support the United Nations efforts and all the relevant Security Council resolutions aimed at achieving a lasting solution agreed upon by all. In that context, my country urges the Secretary-General to appoint without delay a special envoy to resume the process that came to a halt two years ago following the resignation of the former envoy.

My country also reiterates its support for international efforts to successfully conclude the transitional period in sisterly Libya and guarantee its unity and territorial integrity.

My country also reaffirms the need to make serious efforts to reach a political solution that maintains the unity and independence of the sisterly Syrian Arab Republic, the dignity of its people and its right to live in security and peace.

Finally, my country reiterates its support for the legitimacy of brotherly Yemen. We call for a peaceful solution to the conflict pursuant to the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and relevant Security Council resolutions.

The Acting President *(spoke in French)*: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Hassoumi Massoudou, Minister of State, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of the Niger.

Mr. Massoudou (Niger) *(spoke in French)*: At the outset, allow me to extend my warmest congratulations to the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session on his election and my wishes for his success. My delegation stands ready to support him in fulfilling his noble mission.

Allow me also to pay a well-deserved tribute to Mr. Volkan Bozkır for the excellent manner in which he conducted the work of the seventy-fifth session, despite the constraints caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. I would also like to congratulate Mr. António Guterres on his re-appointment as Secretary-General and commend him on his leadership in managing the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular his call for equity and solidarity with developing countries, as well as his tireless efforts to strengthen our Organization's capacity to meet the aspirations of our peoples for security and prosperity, within the framework of strengthened multilateralism.

This session is being held at a time when the international community faces the adverse socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of the advances achieved by developing countries have been severely compromised, particularly in the context of the implementation of Agenda 2063 of the African Union and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the United Nations.

In addition, given the spread of new variants of the virus and the slow distribution of vaccines in developing countries, the prospects for recovery and growth in the short and medium terms may also be jeopardized if vigorous efforts are not made to step up measures to combat this grave pandemic. I remain convinced that mass vaccination is the only way to contain the pandemic and ensure the recovery of the global economy.

In that regard, I would like to welcome the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) mechanism, which has made it possible to collect and distribute doses of COVID-19 vaccine to developing countries. I would like to express our appreciation to all those who contributed to that initiative.

The measures taken by the Government to address the pandemic in the Niger have helped not only to control the spread of the pandemic but also to mitigate its socioeconomic impact. Therefore, despite the weakness of the economy and the persistence of other impacts, in particular with respect to security and climate, the Government took bold measures to maintain a positive growth rate of 3 per cent in 2020.

Allow me to commend the efforts of the Group of 20, the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in favour of a moratorium on

the debt of the most fragile States, many of which are already at risk of debt distress. Obviously, a moratorium on debt alone will not be enough given the immensity of the challenges to be met — hence the urgent need to design and implement a new paradigm to provide for the development needs of the most fragile countries.

In the same vein, I remain convinced that the recovery of economies will also depend on the quality and dynamism of the partnerships, as well as the liberalization of trade among developing countries. We must therefore take advantage of all the potential offered by South-South and triangular cooperation in the areas of technology, culture and trade. It is for that reason and in order to meet the aspirations of the African peoples, in accordance with Agenda 2063, that the African Continental Free Trade Area was established, with my country leading the process until the launch of the operational phase on 7 July 2019 in Niamey.

Despite the delay in its entry into force owing to the upheaval caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and other challenges, we are confident that the African Continental Free Trade Area will enable Africa to establish a single market, sustain economic growth and create prosperity through, among other things, the creation of jobs for young people, of whom more than 10 to 12 million join the continent's labour market each year.

In addition to the disastrous socioeconomic consequences, the COVID-19 pandemic has also amplified the challenges facing the countries of the Sahel, namely, climate change and the security crisis. While in some regions of the world climate change has resulted in floods, forest fires and rising sea levels, in other regions, such as the Sahel region, it has resulted in extreme weather events, including recurrent droughts, the degradation of agricultural land — for example, the Niger loses 100,000 hectares per year — and floods and locust infestations.

As stated by His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Bazoum, President and Head of State of the Republic of the Niger, at the meeting of the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change, held in Niamey,

“[i]f we are to win the fight against climate change, we need more political will. We must, at the strategic and operational levels, promote the implementation of synergistic and coherent actions to make our people more resilient in the face of

climate shocks and emerging challenges, in the spirit of the Paris Agreement”.

In that regard, the latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which was just published, is a call for mobilization to action. By clearly affirming that human action is an undeniable factor of climate change, the report calls on us to act immediately to meet the challenge of maintaining the level of global warming at 1.5°C.

The next conference of the parties to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 26), which will be held in Glasgow in November, should meet that requirement, in particular through the development of a common position that will enable us to overcome the remaining challenges.

Those challenges include the financing of adaptation policies, as well as technology transfers to developing countries. It is the Niger's hope that the high-level COP26 meeting in Glasgow will serve as a platform to reaffirm political will to fight against the effects of climate change. For its part, as co-Chair, with Ireland, of the Security Council's informal expert group on that important issue, the Niger is working to ensure that the Council adopt a resolution to that effect to reflect the importance it attaches to that issue.

It is our conviction that the fragility linked to climate change is an aggravating factor in conflicts and humanitarian crises. My country, the Niger, which is surrounded by hotbeds of instability that severely impact security, is very well aware of that correlation. Indeed, since the events of 2011 in Libya, which facilitated the proliferation of weapons in the Sahel region, our countries have been facing attacks from terrorist hordes in the Lake Chad basin in the east and in the so-called three-border region in the west.

Despite its limited resources and the size of its territory, the Niger has demonstrated resilience, safeguarding its territorial integrity and stability, thanks to the foresight of its Government and the courage and determination of its defence and security forces, as well as the invaluable support of its bilateral and multilateral partners, to whom I would like to express my sincere thanks.

It is also thanks to the recent successes we have achieved in fighting terrorist armed groups

that we have begun the resettlement of persons displaced by the violence perpetrated by those armed groups. In that regard, I would like to inform the Assembly that, last June, approximately 5,935 people from the locality of Baroua, in Diffa, and 19 other surrounding villages returned to the lands that they had left in 2015. They did so thanks to a pilot programme that will also eventually repatriate approximately 130,000 displaced persons from the Diffa region in the east and Borno state in western Nigeria. The same programme is being implemented in the Tillabéry region.

In leading our fight for peace and security, we are not giving up our fight for the development of our country. We remain convinced that terrorism and organized crime are only the consequences of multiple challenges that must be overcome, in particular those of poverty and inequality. Ultimately, it is not only military action that will allow us to definitively defeat terrorism but also our ability to implement development programmes to meet the basic needs of our people. The redeployment of the State administration and public services in the affected areas is an essential follow-up to military action.

In that light, we must duly take into account the gender and youth dimensions in the different processes of restoring peace. In fact, in conflict areas, women and children are the first victims of terrorist groups, who deliberately target civilians and schools, as is the case in the central Sahel region, where villages are frequently attacked and thousands of children are deprived of education as a result.

Therefore, since 2017, nearly 5,000 schools have been closed due to terrorist attacks, disrupting the education of more than 700,000 children and preventing more than 20,000 teachers from practicing their profession. As a result, it is crucial that we fulfil our collective responsibility to build a world of peace and security in which all children can flourish.

Given the gravity of the situation, the Niger calls for concrete action to protect schools. To that end, Security Council presidential statement S/PRST/2020/8, on the protection of schools against attacks, which was adopted in September 2020 when my country held the presidency of the Security Council, deserves to receive greater attention from the international community. I would also like to commend all the initiatives undertaken by other Member States on that issue.

While 2021 continues to be marked by the pandemic and security challenges, it has been a decisive turning point for the strengthening of democracy in the Niger. Indeed, thanks to the maturity of the people of the Niger and their commitment to democracy, the Niger was able to achieve the first peaceful political transfer of power in its history, from one democratically elected president to another democratically elected president.

Therefore, in his programme, also known as Programme Renaissance Act III, the new President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Bazoum, is committed to consolidating all the achievements made during the two mandates of his predecessors and making the necessary adjustments, based on the lessons learned and the imperatives of the moment.

One of the priorities of the President's programme is the education sector, based on the conviction that the development of human capital remains the key to building a prosperous that is committed to the values of peace, democracy and the rule of law.

That is why the President of the Republic has made a commitment to all the people of the Niger to personally ensure that the education sector is at the centre of all the government's actions during the next five years, with technical and other support from all the schools' partners, whether national or international.

The Government has already launched a project entitled "Improving learning for performance in the education sector", with the support of the World Bank at a cost of \$140 million. The implementation of that project will lay the groundwork for a qualitative transformation of our national educational system, while adapting it to our specific development needs.

Last year, in the midst of a health crisis, we celebrated the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations. It was a moment of reflection but also of taking stock. While the United Nations has been able to avoid large-scale conflicts during the past seven decades, it is clear that the central instrument of global governance that it represents must reform and adapt to the new realities and challenges of the twenty-first century.

In that respect, one of the main lessons we must learn from the current pandemic remains, without question, the need to revisit our way of seeing the world, our way of working and our way of organizing ourselves. More than ever, we need a more inclusive multilateralism that is nourished by cooperation and

sharing and that takes into account the diversities that make up the richness of humankind.

Therefore, the revitalization of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council, as well as of the international financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, must be pursued tirelessly and to completion in order to respond to the imperatives of the contemporary world.

With regard to the reform of the Security Council, the Niger reiterates its commitment to the African common position as expressed in the Sirte Declaration and the Ezulwini Consensus.

As a member of the Security Council since January 2020, my country has endeavoured to make its contribution to the building of a peaceful world. With regard to African issues, which are numerous on the Council's agenda, including the situation in the Sahel and the situations in the Middle East and Palestine, Syria, Libya, Myanmar and Afghanistan, our priority has always been to take into account the urgent needs of civilian populations, in particular women and children, who are the first victims of conflicts and humanitarian disasters that have unfortunately become recurrent.

In conclusion, my country is of the view that the time has come for the international community to take into account the new challenges that our world and that threaten international peace and security. Just as we have done in the fight against the pandemic, we must resolutely tackle the challenges of climate change — that other pandemic with devastating effects; the fight against terrorism and cybercrime; and many other problems specific to our century.

In the Niger, we believe that our commitment to defending the ideals of the Charter of the United Nations and the values of peace and solidarity that it embodies will allow us to successfully pursue that fight to build a world of peace, justice and prosperity.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of France introduce an address by the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the French Republic.

Mr. De Rivi re (France) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to introduce His Excellency Mr. Jean-Yves Le Drian, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the French Republic, who will deliver the statement of France.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the French Republic.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex VI and see A/76/332/Add.11).

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Lejeune Mbella Mbella, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cameroon.

Mr. Mbella Mbella (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): I have the cherished duty and great honour to deliver the following statement from His Excellency Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon, who instructed me to do so on his behalf before the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session. I quote:

“At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session and to assure you of the full support and cooperation of the delegation of Cameroon. There can be no doubt that your wealth of experience ensures that you will guide our work successfully.

“I should also like to commend the remarkable work achieved by your predecessor, Mr. Volkan Bozkır, and to express our appreciation of the positive outcomes achieved during his term in office, against the backdrop of major challenges compounded by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

“I would also like to extend my hearty and warm congratulations to Mr. António Guterres on his re-election to the helm of the United Nations Secretariat for a second term. He will therefore have the opportunity to follow up the outstanding progress achieved during his previous term, including in terms of reforms and the reorientation of the United Nations development system. I should also like to assure him of my country’s commitment to supporting him in strengthening the United Nations and implementing the global peace and sustainable development agenda.

“It is with conviction that I take the floor on Cameroon’s behalf in this general debate on the theme ‘Building resilience through hope — to recover from COVID-19, rebuild sustainability, respond to the needs of the planet, respect the rights of people, and revitalize the United Nations’.

“The timeliness of this theme is clear as humankind tackles the COVID-19 pandemic, whose devastating social and economic consequences are jeopardizing the gains made in fighting poverty and towards attaining the Sustainable Development Goals we set ourselves to achieve by 2030.

“Now is the time for a resounding call to reinvigorate human solidarity so that we may together embrace the future that will be ours to share.

“To secure ‘the future we want’, we cannot afford to continue shying away from the numerous significant commitments undertaken at recent conferences on the environment and on climate change, in particular, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for sustainable development.

“The COVID-19 pandemic affords us an opportunity to forge concerted, lasting and comprehensive responses to the multiple threats and complex global challenges that face our planet and humanity.

“It is important to urgently make up for lost time in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — a delay due to the non-fulfilment of commitments and exacerbated by COVID-19. To that end, our political will must remain steadfast. We need to strengthen multilateralism through committing in practice to solidarity and by providing the Secretary-General and the United Nations system with the modalities and adequate and predictable resources to manage our common home.

“In that regard, I believe the reform of the Security Council remains relevant. Africa should be represented on the Council with two permanent seats and all the associated rights, as well as two additional non-permanent seats, as claimed by our continent in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration.

“Promises must cede the way to firm commitments if we are to truly achieve equal access to COVID-19 vaccines and support low-income countries on the path of science and technology, thus enabling them to tackle the multiple challenges they face.

“Let us move on to action — to reform the global economic system and to make trade fairer.

“My country takes this opportunity to welcome the proposed global minimum tax rate for multinational companies, in the hope that it will come into effect as soon as possible.

“Humankind is currently plagued by the following scourges: climate change, conflicts in many regions of the world, increasing terrorism, cybercrime, sea and ocean pollution, non-peaceful uses of outer space, social-media abuse, forest-ecosystem degradation, biodiversity loss, maritime piracy and the tragedy of migration.

“My country welcomes the forthcoming twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Stockholm+50 Conference. We will contribute our support towards ensuring the success of those conferences. It is imperative that our bilateral and multilateral partners uphold their commitments to providing developing countries with the financial and technological resources required to implement programmes for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

“In an ever more globalized world, no one will be safe until adequate steps are taken to ensure security. Let me recall that my country still wages a war in the north against Boko Haram terrorists, while enhancing cooperation with other countries of the Lake Chad basin. By contributing troops to United Nations peacekeeping operations, Cameroon is demonstrating its steadfast commitment to international peace and security.

“We continue our efforts in the north-western and south-western regions of our country seeking to end the sociopolitical tensions fuelled by armed

groups. In that regard, we have put in place a comprehensive plan comprising: a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme; a humanitarian-assistance plan; a reconstruction plan for those two regions; a national commission for the promotion of bilingualism and multiculturalism; and a special status that confers on each of the two regions in question a regional assembly, a house of chiefs, a regional executive board and an independent public conciliator.

“All of those gains have been possible thanks to the major national dialogue we convened. The Government’s actions are already yielding tangible results, with a gradual return to peace. Despite some sporadic acts of banditry perpetrated by armed gangs, the situation is improving by the day. Our defence and security forces are deployed on the ground to protect the population and their property with professionalism and respect for human rights.

“More generally, Cameroon has embarked on an extensive programme of reforms aimed at reaching emerging economy status by 2035, in keeping with the sustainable development programme of the United Nations and the African Union Agenda 2063. I take this opportunity to thank our bilateral and multilateral partners for the assistance they provide us in this endeavour.

“Ours is a moment beset by numerous challenges but also one of ample opportunity. We must learn from this moment and work together in solidarity to bring about a world of peace, security and well-being for each and every one among us. Cameroon is resolutely committed to that endeavour.”

The meeting rose at 3 p.m.

Annex I

Address by Mr. Gudlaugur Thór Thórdarson, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development Cooperation of the Republic of Iceland

Mr. President, excellencies, ladies, and gentlemen,

As we gather to discuss the state of global affairs, today's challenges may seem overwhelming and almost impossible to overcome.

However, as an optimist and a strong believer in multilateral cooperation, I have for the past five years stressed in my message to the General Assembly the importance of seeing the world of opportunity, the potential of our cooperation. My message today is no different: we cannot let global challenges divide us. On the contrary, we must for all sake unite.

We have our work cut out for us. Around the world, calls for human rights, peace, and stability are too often ignored. And the threat of climate change is no longer a distant phenomenon: it is here, and it is intensifying.

But only together, can we respond and recover. To build a more just and peaceful planet for all of us, we need all nations united, our United Nations.

Mr. President,

While in most developed countries we are turning a corner in our fight against the COVID-19, same cannot be said about all of the world. It is critical that we work together to ensure that vaccines reach all countries and peoples — rich and poor — and as soon as possible. Not only is this a fundamental matter of global solidarity, but also in the interest of us all.

Iceland is firmly committed to play its part. We have already contributed 1 billion Icelandic krona to the COVAX initiative and have started vaccine sharing through the same mechanism.

If anything, the pandemic has taught us that we are stronger together than apart.

It has also exposed the dangers of isolationism, disinformation, and distrust.

These lessons should not go to waste. It is critical that we demonstrate the strength and the honesty needed to learn, both from our successes and our failures, to better prevent, prepare, and respond to future crisis of this magnitude.

Mr. President,

While the consequences of the pandemic have been disastrous for our world, the effects of climate change are bound to be even worse.

The science and the signs are clear and sobering, and the plans are already in place. We need to respond now and honour our commitments from Paris as we set our eyes on Glasgow.

For our part, Iceland's ambition is to go beyond the Paris commitments.

This includes a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by more than half by 2030, complete carbon neutrality by 2040 and becoming fossil-fuel free by 2050.

All of Iceland's electricity and close to 85 per cent of Iceland's total energy consumption comes from renewables. We aim to close the gap with electrification of transport and green hydrogen and e-fuels for heavy transport and machinery, fishing, shipping and aviation. Our long-term energy policy also focuses on substantially increasing energy efficiency and multiple use of energy resources.

Capturing and binding carbon is also an important pillar of our efforts, where we use both tried and tested nature-based solutions and innovative technologies.

Iceland is home to the world's largest plant that extracts carbon dioxide directly from the air and turns it into rock through the so-called Carbfix method. This technology has been developed out of the geothermal energy industry and will be applicable in many corners of the world to capture and store CO₂ as solid-state rock.

Focusing on our own homework, however, is not enough. High-income countries must support lower income ones to advance their climate ambitions too. I am pleased to share that Iceland's contribution to international climate finance has more than doubled from 2018.

But Iceland's main contribution in the fight against climate change will continue to be our knowledge and experience in the use of green energy solutions. This is a global crisis, and we must rely on each other's expertise and knowledge.

Iceland is ready to play its part. As a Global Champion for Just and Inclusive Energy Transition, Iceland actively promotes the goal of achieving sustainable energy for all. Iceland has for decades contributed to this global agenda, through research, training, sharing of experience, and cooperation. As a Global Champion, we are now scaling up our efforts even further.

Mr. President,

The health of the World Oceans — our Blue Planet — is increasingly under pressure. Climate change, mismanagement, and pollution are leading to food insecurities, an alarming fall in biodiversity, and depletion of natural resources.

We must take concrete steps to make regional and international cooperation on Ocean Affairs stronger. And we must base our actions on the best scientific advice and the Law of the Sea — the very constitution of the Ocean.

Much can be learned from successful regional cooperation. The Arctic Council is a great example, which brings together governments, indigenous peoples, science, and various stakeholders to share knowledge and shape policy and action.

During Iceland's recent chairmanship of the Council, a special emphasis was placed on protecting marine and coastal ecosystems, resulting in a regional action plan to address marine litter in the Arctic. A small but important step in the right direction. Iceland is also among the group of countries pushing for a global agreement to fight marine plastic pollution.

Nature is firmly on our agenda in the coming months, including at the COP meetings on climate change, biodiversity, and desertification, as well as the UN Ocean Conference. Ecosystem restoration, both on land and in the oceans, is yet another pressing global issue that must be tackled in unison by the international community. We need to connect the dots and focus on stronger commitments and more robust implementation.

This is the Decade of Action. The time to act is now.

Mr. President,

In recovering from the pandemic, we cannot revert to business as usual. We need to do better, and build a greener, bluer, and more equitable and sustainable future. The groundwork has already been laid with the 2030 Agenda. The Sustainable Development Goals are our global compass, and the Decade of Action reminds us of the urgency at hand.

Iceland is committed to promote SDG implementation at home and abroad. The Global Goals guide our growing official development assistance, under the overarching objective of poverty reduction and a strong focus on human rights, including gender equality, rights of children and LGBTI.

Recognising the essential role of broad ownership and involvement for development success, Iceland is also supporting private sector partners and civil society in their development and humanitarian work, making full use of their strength and know-how. Without the participation and inclusion of the private sector we will not achieve our goals.

Iceland's own experience speaks volumes about the value of inclusiveness and equality for sustainable development, particularly the importance of working for gender equality for economic and social progress.

Advances have been made globally, but there is still a long way to go. Gender parity is too far off, gender-based violence is rampant, and millions of girls are married off as child brides. Men and boys must join forces with women and girls to advance gender equality globally, from the locker rooms to the halls of power.

Overall, human rights and liberal democracy — enabling people to share thoughts and ideas freely — are essential drivers for sustainable development, along with free trade and open markets. Including everyone, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation, or race, means more hands and minds pushing for social and economic progress for all.

Mr. President,

Building back better requires greater respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, and gender equality — the critical cornerstones for a better and more just future.

Indeed, investing in development, peace, and human rights will, at the end of the day, always be less expensive than having to address the dire consequences of poverty, war, and injustice.

Regrettably, today's conflicts, humanitarian and political crises are too often rooted in lack of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

This year, we have witnessed a ruthless military coup in Myanmar, where democracy and civil rights have been done away with altogether. The situation in Afghanistan is highly troubling, with reports of attacks, serious violations of international humanitarian law, and human rights abuses, including push back against women's rights. The Taliban and other parties must respect international law, seek an inclusive political settlement, and ensure humanitarian access and safe passage for all, or else be held accountable.

In too many places, we have seen a serious decline of respect for civil and political rights. We need to stand by those who risk their lives and liberties every day for calling out these injustices and engaging in an open, democratic debate. We have a collective duty to promote and protect the human rights and freedom of all.

The role of the Human Rights Council has never been as important as now. We need to engage in an open dialogue on how to correct the course and head towards greater respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, everywhere and always. The run-up to the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration for Human Rights in 2023 should be used to reinvigorate our collective commitments to human rights.

Iceland is firmly committed to continue actively promoting and defending human rights. We have therefore decided to run for a seat on the Human Rights Council for the term 2025-2027.

Mr. President,

The complexity of modern conflicts and crises continues to grow with the marriage of emerging factors, such as climate change, cyber threats and disinformation, and the old foes of authoritarianism and tyranny.

While encouraging steps have been taken to preserve and build peace, including in Iraq and Libya, the overall trend is nothing short of disappointing.

This year's surge of violence in Palestine and Israel underlined the importance of finding ways to reinvigorate the Middle East Peace Process. Its current stagnation will only serve to deepen existing disagreements and feed senseless extremism.

Finding political solutions to the situations in Syria, Yemen, Ethiopia, and now Afghanistan is also essential, as military might alone can never deliver peace and stability.

The same holds true for Russia's persistent and unlawful violations of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and Georgia, which continues to undermine regional stability.

The UN's role in pursuing diplomacy and providing humanitarian and development assistance is indispensable. We are all responsible for creating and safeguarding the space for diplomacy and humanitarian work.

Still, the Security Council carries special responsibilities on behalf of the wider UN membership. The Council needs to act with greater foresight based on a broader view of security, and we welcome its recent deliberations on cyber security, climate security and the pandemic. At the same time, it is about time that we instil new life in the Security Council reform discussions, which need to become more substantive, and results focused.

Prevention needs to be our highest priority, given human cost and long-term implications of conflict, instability, and tensions. Safeguarding the key agreements that brought us out of the wasteful arms race of the Cold War, not least the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, is particularly important.

Mr. President,

There is no international platform that compares to the United Nations. No other body can bring together different nationalities, religions, and political views — literally under one roof.

It symbolises humanity's greatest aspirations and represents a beacon of hope, not least for those stricken by conflict, poverty, inequality, and discrimination.

The UN Charter and international law need to continue to be our lodestars. Without them, we will be lost and swayed by those seeking narrow national interests and zero-sum games.

But, to stay relevant, it is critical that the UN evolves with the times.

We need more transparency and openness within the UN system and among Member States.

And, perhaps most importantly, we need to bring the UN closer to the people of the world.

The UN75 Declaration provides us with a strong vision and framework for the future. I also welcome the Secretary-Generals report on Our Common Agenda on present and future challenges,

Mr. President,

Today's challenges may seem overwhelming, seen from the perspective of individual nations acting alone.

Still, united in hope and will, and by delivering on our commitments, we can meet these challenges and deliver on the promises set out in the UN Charter to safeguard peace, human rights, and development.

Our future depends on it.

Thank you.

Annex II

Address by Mr. Osman Saleh Mohammed, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea

Your Excellency, Abdulla Shahid,

President of the General Assembly;

Your Excellency António Guterres,

Secretary general of the United Nations; Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to address this august Assembly of States — albeit virtually — on behalf of the President of the State of Eritrea, H.E. Mr. Isaias Afwerki.

In this regard, allow me to congratulate Your Excellency, on behalf of the Government and People of Eritrea, on your election as the President for the 76th Session of the United Nations. You have our full support as we are aware of the enormity of your responsibilities.

I also wish to express our deepest gratitude to your predecessor, His Excellency Volkan Bozkır, for his astute leadership and successful conclusion of the 75th session.

Mr. President,

These are crucial, and in many respects, unprecedented times. Our global community is facing triple challenges of enormous gravity; i) the COVID-19 pandemic whose deadly virulence continues unabated in many places; ii) spiralling climate change that threatens our very survival; and, iii) growing risks of dangerous international rivalry and commotion rooted on dynamic changes in the global balance of power.

These grave challenges have accentuated some basic truths. They have amplified the flaws and inadequacies of conventional wisdom on certain economic models. They have exposed structural deficiencies in the parameters of global and domestic governance hitherto portrayed as universal and unassailable both in terms of their universal validity and applicability.

Leaving aside the deleterious consequences of the Cold-War, misguided policies pursued in its immediate aftermath by Special Interest Groups in the US and Europe to maintain and consolidate a Uni-Polar global order did not usher in a period of international stability and prosperity that would, as it was argued, cascade down to different parts of the world to promote steady social and economic progress. As it happened, even in advanced countries, income disparity between the rich few — less than 1 per cent of the population — and the majority of other citizens has become ludicrously huge and morally reprehensible with unhealthy social ramifications.

At the international level, heavy-handed policies of containment and encirclement to forestall healthy strategic competition and mutual progress based on symmetric, equitable, and rules-based international system has, and is stoking, a climate of confrontation and instability with all the risks that this may entail in the period ahead.

In the event, it is incumbent on all of us to climb down from our high horses and ponder on these issues in a holistic manner; with requisite earnestness and sincerity.

As I intimated above, our world is still dealing with the deadly pandemic. The theme for the 76th Session — “Building resilience through hope — to recover from COVID19, rebuild sustainably, respond to the needs of the planet, respect the rights of people, and revitalize the United Nations” — is, in this sense, apt and optimistic. But as you know well, the realities facing humanity today are dire and many.

Let me take the opportunity to convey my condolences to and express my solidarity with all Member States and all the families of those who have lost loved ones due to the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Mr. President,

Whether meeting internationally agreed development goals, combating the growing threat of climate change, or responding to the range of threats to international peace and security, the enormity of today’s global challenges call for a stronger United Nations that is more representative, transparent and most importantly, effective.

As we stated last year, the pursuit and ideals of enduring global peace, stability and prosperity are squarely predicated, and can only flourish, on the edifice of a robust global organization that can measure up to all these challenges. This indelible fact is more evident than ever before.

In the event, allow me to renew our call for the strengthening and revamping of the UN system whose authority and efficacy have been corroded in past decades. Unfortunately, multilateral institutions have been rendered impotent, due to the unilateral actions of a select few.

Mr. President

In the Horn of Africa, economic problems due to the COVID pandemic have been compounded by a dangerous conflict that stems from decades of misguided policies by certain major players as I will elaborate later.

To this one must also add growing tensions we have witnessed in the past months in the wider region on issues of border dispute and the Renaissance Dam. In Eritrea’s view, these are not intractable problems beyond direct resolution by the parties concerned through political goodwill and good-faith negotiations to advance mutual and long-term benefits to all the principal stakeholders. In regard to the Renaissance Dam in particular, acrimonious and internationalized forums will likely hinder an enduring and comprehensive arrangement that addresses the requirements of the principal riparian States — i.e. Ethiopia, the Sudan, and Egypt — within a framework of robust and long-term cooperation and available technological options and solutions.

Mr. President,

As Your Excellency will recall, the Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship that Eritrea and Ethiopia signed in July 2018 had ushered in a new epoch of hope and optimism. The significance of this historic achievement was vividly visible in the massive euphoria that it generated among the peoples of Eritrea and Ethiopia.

But the TPLF group could not accept and fathom the present realities. It thus embarked on multiple acts of subversion both to scuttle the Eritrea-Ethiopia peace process and to regain power in Ethiopia through forceful means.

It must be recalled here that while in power in Ethiopia, the TPLF continued to occupy, for almost two decades, sovereign Eritrean territories in flagrant violation of international law and the Arbitral Award of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission. Throughout this time, the TPLF continued to wage intermittent assaults against Eritrea in order to provoke a major war. And while the Eritrea-Ethiopia Peace Agreement stipulated Ethiopia's unequivocal adherence to, and implementation of the EEBC Border Verdict, the TPLF continued to obstruct good-faith enforcement of this solemn agreement.

In Ethiopia too, the TPLF resorted to various illicit subterfuges to roll back the positive process underway through popular will. And as a culmination and dangerous escalation of its subversive measures, it unleashed a massive War of Insurrection against Ethiopian's Northern Command with the express aims of neutralizing this biggest contingent, confiscating its weaponry, to thereby forcefully seize power in Ethiopia. TPLF's aims included subsequent military acts of aggression against Eritrea.

The grave danger that this reckless and illicit acts by this rogue group to Ethiopia, Eritrea and the Horn of Africa region as a whole is too evident to merit further elaboration. But what we find inexcusable is the position of certain countries, notably the US and its European allies, to defend the TPLF's illicit and dangerous acts of insurrection and mayhem and marshal all the tools in their disposal to rehabilitate it at any cost. I will not waste your time here to recount the false narratives they have floated to create moral equivalence between the principal culprit and those compelled to take deterrent and reactive action warranted by international law and established State practice.

This act in itself underlines the structural inadequacy of the global governance system that I intimated earlier in my speech. Eritrea has suffered enormously by similar previous acts. These should not recur again. The injustices meted on Eritrea by powers who feel they can trample the sovereignty of nations and peoples at their whim must indeed come to an end.

I thank you

Annex III

Address by Mr. Luca Beccari, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Economic Cooperation and Telecommunications of the Republic of San Marino

Mr. President,

Mr. Secretary-General,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of San Marino, I would like to congratulate H.E. Mr. Abdulla Shahid on his election as President of the 76th Session of the UN General Assembly and to wish him a fruitful work.

The Republic of San Marino supports the priorities of your programme mentioned in your inaugural address and ensures you, Mr. President, full cooperation in all works of the General Assembly.

I would also like to express my Country's gratitude to the outgoing President, H.E. Mr. Volkan Bozkır, for the important work carried out during the 75th Session.

I also would like to extend my special thanks to the Secretary General, H.E. António Guterres, for his energy and determination in leading the United Nations in these difficult and challenging times and in the reform processes of the Organization.

San Marino welcomes the appointment of H.E. António Guterres for a second term as Secretary-General. We offer him our warmest congratulations and full support.

Mr. President,

The COVID-19 pandemic brought an unprecedented health, economic and social crisis. Health systems in many countries have been driven to the edge of collapse. The Pandemic has taken 4 million lives. Tens of millions of people are being pushed back into extreme poverty and hunger, erasing the modest progress made in recent years. More than 1.6 billion students were out of school. Many, particularly girls, may never return to school, contributing to a surge in child marriage and an increase in child labour. The livelihood of half the global workforce has been severely affected.

The coronavirus did not affect the world equally. In fact, it exposed and exacerbated existing inequalities and injustices in medical assistance around the world. Fatality rates have been highest among marginalized groups in advanced economies. In developing countries, COVID-19 hit even harder the most vulnerable.

Knowing all this, how can we stay hopeful when looking at the economic recovery before us? If this is how we dealt with the health emergency so far, how can we be sure that the economic policies that we are collectively called to implement in the upcoming years will not accentuate the existing gaps?

One thing is for sure. If we do not address these gaps, they will aggravate our current global challenges, such as migrations, access to the labour market and to education, just to name a few, and will ultimately result into amplified geopolitical instability.

Mr. President,

San Marino paid a very high price to this crisis. We reached one of the highest rates of mortality in the world. We finally recovered from this scourge thanks to a valuable reaction from our Authorities, who put in place policies based on the principle of equity. We succeeded also because of an extraordinary sense of solidarity of our People and of other Countries.

Yet, even for us, being a relatively wealthy nation in the middle of Europe, this crisis represented an exceptional struggle.

San Marino enjoys relative financial prosperity and logistical capacity. Yet, just because we are a small State, we faced alarming problems in terms of procurement of vaccines.

When finally we were able to overcome such problems by obtaining enough vaccine doses and completing a swift vaccination campaign for our population, we were actually just about to meet a different face of inequality: the inequality related to freedom of movement.

As you all know, today freedom of movement between and within countries is a prerogative that depends on what vaccine your Government was able to obtain. You might have thousands of antibodies and test negative for COVID, and yet not being allowed to enter a certain country, to enter a museum, or a sports centre, and so on.

You might understand why this is deeply troubling for a Country like mine, which is just 60 square kilometres.

This is why San Marino makes an urgent appeal to our family of Nations.

We must learn lessons from this crisis in order to fill the existing economic and social gaps and be better prepared for similar existential threats in the future.

We must secure even access around the world to COVID-19 vaccines, tests, treatments and support, in order to prevent virus' mutations and new clusters of infections.

The COVID-19 crisis underscored the indispensable role of international cooperation through the United Nations to overcome a shared global challenge.

In these critical times, we must strengthen, more than ever, the political will and leadership to support multilateralism and reinforce the rules-based international order.

In this increasingly globalized and interconnected world, it is imperative to build a flexible system that is able to adapt on the different peculiarities of our Countries and to react quickly to multiple challenges at the same time, to be responsive to the needs of people, everywhere, ensuring that geopolitical interests do not prevail and that no one is left behind.

Mr. President,

The peace and security international context became increasingly fragmented.

The nature of conflicts is evolving due to the growing interconnections between scarce natural resources, climate change, socioeconomic vulnerabilities, disinformation and cyber-attacks.

Despite our efforts, in many areas of the world vulnerable populations are still facing the threat of mass atrocities.

The Government of the Republic of San Marino is deeply concerned for the ongoing crisis in Afghanistan, Myanmar, Syria, Yemen, Palestine and elsewhere.

The situation in Afghanistan is of particular concern.

San Marino supports any effort aiming at providing humanitarian assistance to

Afghanistan and calls on all parties to allow full, safe, and unhindered access for the United Nations, its specialized agencies and implementing partners, and all humanitarian actors engaged in humanitarian relief activity.

We also reiterate the importance of protecting human rights including those of women, children and minorities.

In this respect, we cannot but support the UN Security Council Resolution 2593 (2021) and thank the Secretary-General for having convened the High-Level Ministerial Meeting on the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan on September 13 and for his continuous efforts on this matter.

We also support the commitment of the Secretary-General to strengthen the UN system's ability to tackle different conflicts from a prevention-oriented perspective, as well as seeking to invest more in preventing crises.

The Government of the Republic of San Marino is worried about a deteriorating international security environment and for the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

In its long history, my Country has always stood for a world free of weapons of mass destruction. We are particularly concerned about the rising nuclear risks. The catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons constitute an existential threat to humanity and for this reason, the Republic of San Marino is a strong supporter of the new Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Mr. President,

There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has endangered the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to its very core. We don't have to let this crisis hinder our ambitions and hopes, because the principles underpinning the Sustainable Development Goals are essential to build back better in the post COVID-19 recovery.

Last year we entered in the Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs by 2030.

Now, it is critical to accelerate responses to the world's serious challenges.

With the presentation of its first Voluntary National Review on July 13, San Marino renewed its commitment to a better, fairer and more sustainable world, not only for the benefit of its citizens today but also for future generations, in our Country and everywhere else.

Mr. President,

The collective fight against climate change represents the gravest emergency of our time. This must be the top priority of our efforts.

As the impacts of climate change are becoming more visible, biodiversity loss will also become pervasive and ultimately devastating. If current trends continue, the

Earth could lose the natural wealth of its ecosystems, which would in turn jeopardize global food security, water supplies, and livelihoods.

We are witnessing the grave impact of climate change on the Small Island Developing States in the Pacific, but also in other parts of the planet.

People of the world, in particular young people, demand urgent action in order to rebuild the fundamental aspects and relationship with the environment.

We will be able to reach this goal only through the full implementation of the Paris Agreement, but also by promoting important investments in adaptation and resilience.

Emerging from COVID-19 pandemic could represent an opportunity to work better on the green transition in sectors of energy, transport, tourism, aviation, agriculture, industry and infrastructure.

Mr. President,

The situation for people with disabilities has further worsened: the pandemic has deepened the difficulties in accessing education, healthcare and in participating in the life of their communities.

The international community has the duty to address this situation.

San Marino attaches great importance to the promotion and protection of rights for people with disabilities and we are honoured that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has recognized as a promising practice the guidance on triage produced by the Bioethics Committee of San Marino, which prohibited discrimination on the basis of disability.

Realizing the rights of persons with disabilities is central for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and for our promise to leave no one behind.

We need to build accessible, inclusive and non-discriminatory societies, where people with disabilities can fully participate in the political, social and economic aspects of the community, where they are involved in the decision-making process and where their value is fully recognized.

Mr. President,

The United Nations must adapt quickly not only to the new global challenges, but also to the new opportunities offered by an increasingly interconnected world, in order to be more effective in carrying out its mandate.

Therefore, reforms are crucial to future world stability and maintenance of international peace and security, and must remain at the centre of our actions.

The Republic of San Marino is following with interest the revitalization process of the UN General Assembly, which must continue to be a reference point, a forum for the exchange of ideas and for conducting discussions, in which solutions based on a strong consensus may be achieved.

Similarly, the Security Council reform should be an objective of all member States. As we have stated on previous occasions, our Country believes that intergovernmental negotiations favour the search for an agreement based on a broad and strong political consensus, able to reflect the interests of all negotiating groups. San Marino calls for a reform that makes the Council more democratic, transparent,

efficient and accountable. This goal can be achieved only through a continuous dialogue among the States and the awareness that overcoming the respective initial positions is essential to negotiate the broadest agreement possible.

Mr. President,

To address the many and complex challenges of today, Member States must assume their responsibilities and the United Nations must be more effective and flexible in order to be able to fulfil its mandate, which is to protect the citizens of the world.

San Marino is a State with a strong identity thanks to its century-old history of peace and freedom. Our State is small, but proud to bring its contribution to the United Nations Community.

Thank you for your attention.

Annex IV**Address by Mr. Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamood Albusaidi,
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman**

[Original: Arabic and English]

Excellency, President Abdulla Shahid,

At the outset, it gives us pleasure to extend my congratulations to you and your friendly country, the Republic of Maldives on your election, as President of the Seventy-sixth Session of the United Nations General Assembly. We are confident that you are capable of conducting the work of this session with much wisdom and skill.

We also like to express our thanks and appreciation to your predecessor, His Excellency Volkan Bozkır of the friendly Republic of Turkey, for his efforts while presiding over the previous session.

We would also like to place on record our appreciation for the efforts of His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres, wishing him every success in his second term of office, and assuring the Sultanate of Oman's continued cooperation with him, and other Member States to achieve the noble aims of the United Nations, the foremost of which is the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. President,

Crises and challenges represent opportunities for countries in testing their readiness and enhancing capabilities. Despite the great challenges and changes inflicted by the novel coronavirus pandemic "COVID-19" on our daily lives; but thank goodness that did not discourage us from confronting those challenges, addressing their repercussions, and working toward recovery.

In the Sultanate of Oman, the availability of vaccines had a great impact in strengthening our national efforts to address this pandemic, and consolidating hope for its elimination and gradual return to normal life. My country has been able, through preventive measures and a national vaccination campaign for all targeted ages, to limit the spread of the epidemic, reduce the number of infections and deaths, and the rate of hospitalization, which has enabled the return of economic, social and commercial activities to normalcy, and opening of all travel and movement exits, while putting in place the necessary preventive measures.

As we continue our efforts to confront this pandemic, we call on the international community to enhance cooperation and solidarity, and we appeal to vaccine-producing and donor countries to do their utmost to ensure a fair distribution for all countries and individuals, particularly in less developed regions that suffer from limited facilities and medical capabilities, which would bring about international cooperation and societal solidarity, and ensure a decent life for human beings across the globe.

Bearing that in mind, we seize this opportunity to salute those in charge of health systems, especially in the first line of defence, in all countries of the world and international organizations for the enormous efforts and sacrifice that they are making for the sake of all mankind.

Mr. President,

Under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, the Sultanate of Oman continues to adhere to the established and main principles of its foreign policy, which are embodied in the policy of good-neighbourliness, non-interference in the internal affairs of others, respect for international laws and norms, enhance cooperation among States and opportunities for dialogue. We firmly believe that resolving differences in the spirit of reconciliation and tolerance is a civilized conduct that leads to better and more lasting results, than can be achieved through conflict. Simply put, dialogue is better than war.

We, in the Sultanate of Oman, are part of this interconnected world; we share interests and destiny with its people. We rejoice for its contentment and grieve for its impairment. Therefore, we strive with our full energy and capabilities to contribute in assisting peace issues at all regional and international levels. We are committed to our stances with honesty, objectivity, steadfastness on our values and principles, as well as a balanced and constructive approach in dealing with all issues.

From this standpoint, my country welcomed and supported the positive developments that resulted from the Al-Ula summit that was held in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the success of the reconciliation efforts led by the brotherly State of Kuwait.

We also affirm our support for the just Palestinian Cause and the demands of the Palestinian people for independence and the establishment of their State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with international law, Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

With respect to the Yemeni crisis, my country is continuing its tireless endeavours, and working with the brotherly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, both the United Nations' and American's envoys for Yemen, and the concerned Yemeni parties with the aim of ending the war through a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire on all sides, and fully resuming humanitarian efforts, in order to provide for the needs of the brothers in Yemen. In particular, medication, health care, food, fuel and housing. We join our voice with everyone who believes in the inevitability of reaching a comprehensive political settlement to the existing crisis, in a way that restores security, stability, and normalcy to brotherly Yemen, while maintaining the security and interests of countries of the Region.

We would also like to express our hope that the Vienna talks on the Iranian nuclear program will lead to the desired consensus among all parties, because we firmly believe that this will be in the interest of the Region and the world.

Like the rest of the world, we have followed the recent developments in Afghanistan; we would, therefore, like to express our hope that all Afghan parties will work for reconciliation and give priority to the higher interests of the Afghan people and their aspirations for security, stability, economic and social development, and building positive relations with regional neighbours and the international community.

Mr. President,

My country condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and in the meantime, supports efforts and strategies to eradicate this haunting menace that contradicts religious and human values and morals, and threatens security and stability in the entire world.

In addition, the Sultanate of Oman calls for ending threats to international maritime trade and for full compliance with treaties, agreements and international law to ensure freedom of maritime navigation in a manner that secures the flow of trade among countries and enhances economic growth opportunities. We call upon all Member States to fulfil their commitments undertaken through treaties and agreements related to disarmament, in particular, those agreements and treaties relating to nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, in order to ensure global stability.

Mr. President,

My country has sought to translate its international commitment in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (SDGs), by integrating its three economic and social axes, and the 17 SDGs into the Sultanate's strategies and developmental plans. We also consider those SDGs, as key components of the Oman's Vision 2040 and its implementation plans.

We are fully aware that the road to sustainable development is still long and bumpy, and that achieving the commitments we made depends on our ability to face challenges, which requires joint international and regional cooperation. In this context, we recognize that a renewed commitment to social justice represents the real basis for action at the national and international policy levels. Therefore, we welcome and support the investment and economic diversification programs, which are among the priorities of development plans in the Sultanate of Oman; thereby, contributing to the maximization and dissemination of benefits and opportunities for our partners and society.

Like other countries of the world, my country pays great attention to the risks of climate change that affect the ecological and agricultural systems, and the economic infrastructure. Hence, to confront climate change and limit its increasing effects, the Sultanate of Oman has implemented its Draft National Strategy for adapting to climate change and mitigating its effects. This strategy includes reports on the expected impacts of the most important sectors of development and the appropriate adaptation measures for them.

My country recently submitted its second Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) report to mitigate Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions, as part of its commitments to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The world is witnessing new transformations as a result of scientific and technological progress, which calls on us, once more, to emphasize the importance of strengthening the global- partnership in this field, so as to maximize the use of advanced technologies and keep pace with them, as part of the sustainable development goals, and face contemporary challenges, the most important of which are those that threaten the climate.

Mr. President,

There is no doubt that women have a great role alongside men in building a social fabric that ensures the sound education of young people, on whom, the hopes of nations are held. As you may know that the youth are the hope of the present and the pillar of the future, upon which countries depend to achieve development. Therefore, it was necessary for governments to place among their priorities the attention attached to youth and to provide everything that would advance their

capabilities. I affirm my country's commitment to empowering women and youth to acquire the capabilities and knowledge they need to actively participate in the process of construction, development, creativity and prosperity.

In conclusion, Mr. President,

We have urgent issues, facing the International Community that must be addressed through international cooperation, in order to reach the aspirations of humanity, in terms of stability, harmony and prosperity. Hence, we believe that consolidating the real concept of partnership and common destiny among all peoples and societies is the best way to realize those hopes and maximize the prestigious position that the United Nations yearns for achieving and sustaining.

Thank you, for your kind attention, and peace be upon you!

Annex V**Address by Dato Seri Paduka Awang Haji Erywan bin Pehin Datu Pekerma Jaya Haji Mohd Yusof, Minister for Foreign Affairs II of Brunei Darussalam**

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim

Mr. President,

Mr. Secretary-General,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh and Peace Be Upon You All

Let me at the outset, convey the warm greetings of His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam to this august assembly.

I would also like to congratulate His Excellency Abdulla Shahid on assuming the Presidency of the Seventy-Sixth Session of the General Assembly, and wish him much success in his new role.

I wish to also congratulate Secretary-General António Guterres on his re-appointment. This serves as a testament of Member States' confidence towards his able leadership, and I welcome his continued dedication and commitment towards serving the international community.

Mr. President,

For more than 18 months, Brunei Darussalam, and the rest of the world, continues to face the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. After a year of being free of local transmissions, Brunei Darussalam now faced another wave of the pandemic.

In our efforts to control the spread of the virus and its variants, the Government of His Majesty has swiftly implemented several measures, similar to other countries, including restricted movements and international travel as well as ramping up vaccination efforts.

Although our experience is one of many that demonstrates the need to remain vigilant, it is still vaccinations that is key to controlling the spread and ensure the safety of our people.

However, the current global system of vaccine distribution remains to be of much concern. Although over 3.5 billion doses of vaccines have been distributed globally, 75 per cent of these vaccines only go to 10 countries. On top of that, low-income countries are only able to vaccinate less than 2 per cent of their population.

It is therefore urgent for Members States to work together with pharmaceutical companies to ensure that COVAX are able to fulfil its commitments to supply and deliver equitable, accessible and affordable vaccines for all.

The message of the Secretary-General rings true — no one is safe until everyone is safe.

As we recover from the pandemic, another long-term challenge that is emerging due to repeated lockdowns and quarantines, is the issue of mental health.

If remain unaddressed, our next generation of workforce and the generation after that will be greatly affected, ultimately resulting in the slowdown of the global economy and developmental progress.

In this regard, we welcome the inclusion of an indicator on preparedness for providing mental health and psychosocial support during emergencies in the Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan by the World Health Assembly.

In our region, Brunei Darussalam is working closely with Australia and Malaysia in adopting the East Asia Leaders Statement on Mental Health Cooperation in October at the 16th East Asia Summit.

This will help strengthen regional efforts towards addressing mental health, and encourage other member states to take concrete collective action in promoting better mental health in the region.

At the crux of it all, the people's health and well-being are fundamental to build back better and stronger towards a resilient global community.

Mr. President,

In addressing the adverse impacts of the pandemic, it has not only compromised ongoing national development plans but also the resources of many countries, notably the small developing states, and recently there have been reports that the effects of the pandemic will inevitably delay progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda.

In this regard, we must ensure that our recovery efforts prioritise the recovery of our economies by ramping up trade and investments so that livelihoods and employment can recover quickly.

This means we must continue to uphold free and open trade and investments, encourage greater technological collaboration and transfer, as well as strengthen global developmental cooperation to ensure no country is left behind.

In pursuing our recovery plans from the pandemic, it is also timely for us to incorporate green initiatives.

This is because the threat of climate change continues to exist during the pandemic, and the recent forecast of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report is not positive at all.

We already made commitments under the Paris Agreement, and all that remains is for us to uphold and implement them.

In this important 'climate year', we welcome the UK's Presidency and hosting of the COP26, and their calls for the world to come together, deliver, and raise climate ambitions where possible. We look forward to a meaningful outcome at the COP26 in Glasgow, that would set the tone and direction for global efforts in the future.

In our region, we are launching the ASEAN Framework for Circular Economy to close the loop on finite resource wastage while enhancing economic growth and reducing pressure on the environment.

Mr. President,

ASEAN, under the Chairmanship of Brunei Darussalam this year, with the theme — We Care, We Prepare, We Prosper — intends to make good on the promise of building resilience through hope.

The alignment with the General Assembly's theme shows the importance of ensuring that there is hope for our people and planet in the future.

Our ASEAN deliverables also demonstrate our commitment to maintaining regional peace and security.

This is why this year, when the situation in one of our fellow ASEAN family member could affect the stability of the region, ASEAN Leaders quickly met and agreed on the Five-Point Consensus to ensure a peaceful return to democracy in that member state in accordance to the will and interests of its people.

The Five-Point Consensus, among others, also calls for an immediate cessation of violence as well as for the commencement of dialogue among all parties concerned and to allow for the provision of humanitarian assistance.

To this end, on behalf of ASEAN, I would like to express our deepest gratitude to our external partners, including the United Nations, for their assistance and also for the generous contributions accorded at the Humanitarian Pledging Conference last month.

We welcome the continued support of the international community in ASEAN's efforts.

Mr. President,

The question of Palestine remains very much in our thoughts for over seven decades. Up until now, there has not been any concrete resolution.

We continue to see forced eviction, destruction of homes and expansion of illegal settlements by the Occupying Power. This has not only deprived the Palestinians of their basic human rights but also have denied them of any chance for their right to self-determination.

The UN Security Council has a special responsibility to call for cessation of all violence, and fulfil its obligations of upholding international peace and work towards finding a comprehensive and lasting peace on the basis of the two-state solution.

We also call on the international community to remain resolute in their commitment to safeguarding the two-state solution towards achieving an independent state of Palestine based on the pre1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Mr. President,

Brunei Darussalam stands here today to reiterate our support and commitment to preserving international peace and security, promote prosperity and sustainable development, underpinned by the adherence to international obligations and rule of law, as enshrined in the UN Charter.

Let us move forward in this new normal, with the renewed spirit of upholding multilateralism and continued hope to achieve international peace, prosperity and security for all of our people.

Thank you.

Annex VI**Address by Mr. Jean-Yves Le Drian, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France**

[Original: English and French]

President of the General Assembly,

Secretary-General,

Heads of State and Government,

Heads of Delegation,

By reminding us of the extent to which our destinies are linked — for better and for worse — the pandemic crisis has reminded us of the value of what has united us at this organization for over 75 years. The will to cooperate, the primacy of law over force, unconditional respect for the human person: the principles of our Charter have not lost any of their meaning. In fact, quite the opposite.

Today's crises and challenges have made them even more essential.

Our security, our health and our planet are now common goods, which together we must strive to preserve. This imperative is not abstract, it is not an ideal.

It is, in very concrete terms, the perspective of each of our choices.

And just as definitively, it is our punishment each time we are divided, each time we give up, each time we are powerless.

Because in a world of exchanges and interdependencies, a world with environmental emergencies, a world facing worrying attitudes of brutalization and the constant temptation of unilateralism, everything that we do together — and conversely, everything that we fail to do — involves us all. We must be aware of this and learn lessons from it. Together.

Although the foundations of the multilateral system have remained solid in the face of attacks in recent years, too many uncontrolled risks are building up. On behalf of France, my first message to you today is thus one of responsibility.

Our first shared responsibility is to maintain international peace and security.

And it is in danger when power games are heightened, when bloc mentalities reappear, when our regulatory frameworks collapse, when attempts at fait accompli policies increase.

That is why France is calling for a P5 Summit to set out a joint action programme.

To enable the Security Council to fully exercise its mandate.

And to start dialogue on the key issues of arms control and our collective security.

And that is why we are taking action and will continue to do so for peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific with our willing partners in the region and other Europeans alongside us. As an Indo-Pacific nation, France has major interests in the region, as does Europe which has just set out a strategy in this area.

International peace and security is thus at risk each time a crisis breaks out or reaches a new level. In Afghanistan, our duty is to provide the people with necessary

humanitarian assistance and it is in our common interest to have clear political and security requirements with regard to the regime in Kabul: all links with terrorist organizations must be severed.

Twenty years after the events of September 11, we know what a rebuilt haven for terrorists would mean for us.

In the Levant and the Sahel, we must, for the same reason, continue to fight the terrorist threat, work to restore dialogue where it has broken down and give the people new prospects for the future by working towards stability and development.

Recently, the President of the French Republic, Emmanuel Macron, travelled to Baghdad to support the Iraqis' determined efforts to come together and restore their sovereignty.

In the Sahel, we are adapting our military structure to retain our long-term action capabilities, to meet the expectations of our regional partners and to remain fully available to our international partners, those from the Coalition for the Sahel and those serving within MINUSMA. These efforts, which are producing real results, as can be seen by the recent killing of Abu Walid Al-Sahrawi, are not sustainable without political stability and respect for the democratic process. I particularly have in mind the timetable for elections in Mali, which must be strictly observed.

In Libya, there is now a credible path to restore unity and sovereignty in the country, provided that all parties fulfil their obligations, the foreign mercenaries withdraw, the ceasefire remains in place and elections are held as planned on 24 December.

France hopes that the Security Council, Libya's neighbours and those which have influence over the country can collaborate to achieve our shared objective of completing the ongoing transition. This is the aim of the international conference to support the political process and restore sovereignty in Libya, which we will host in Paris on 12 November.

Whether in the divided Middle East, along the contact line in Ukraine, in Nagorno-Karabakh or the South Caucasus, where the risk of conflict still cannot be ruled out, we must prevent tensions, uphold international law and collectively support the implementation of concrete political solutions. With regard to the Iranian nuclear programme, we must be absolutely unequivocal. Iran cannot be allowed to think time is on its side, because the more dangerous its nuclear programme becomes, the greater the risk of a major crisis.

The positions taken by the United States yesterday cannot justify Iran's continued violation of its JCPOA commitments.

France will take all necessary action to encourage dialogue. But the only possible path remains an agreement to establish that Iran is once again fulfilling its obligations. It is therefore essential that negotiations resume very quickly.

Violations of international humanitarian law also constitute a serious threat to international peace and security.

Particularly when humanitarian and medical personnel are targeted, even as they are providing emergency relief to populations. We must therefore equip ourselves with the means to better prevent these crimes and punish those who are

guilty of committing them — in Syria, Yemen, Niger, the Central African Republic, Ethiopia and everywhere else.

Our responsibility — ladies and gentlemen — is also to build pragmatic and inclusive responses to the major global challenges that determine our shared future.

Starting with the COVID-19 challenge which is not yet behind us.

We need to be very clear: the health of some depends on the health of all. We must therefore pursue efforts that, through the ACT-A initiative, have already provided 255 million vaccine doses to 141 countries. We cannot allow the vaccine divide between the North and the South to widen any further.

Because the very meaning and credibility of multilateralism is at stake.

And because we know that if immunity is not global, there will be no immunity.

There is an urgent need to accelerate deliveries to ensure that each vaccine delivered is administered properly and to strengthen our production capacities on all continents.

France will continue to work in close cooperation with its partners, especially those in Africa.

Our commitment to provide 60 million doses will be achieved by the end of the year.

And we are proud to contribute to the financing of a project to transfer technology to South Africa, which should help Africa develop autonomous production capacities of mRNA vaccines.

International solidarity must also prevail when it comes to the other challenge of the pandemic crisis: the challenge of economic recovery.

A response to the emergency was provided with the debt deferment initiative that we took at the G20 and the establishment of a common framework that can now be used for its implementation.

But we must go further by building a new pact with Africa that President Macron called for at the Summit on the Financing of African Economies in May 2021.

The G20 must commit to ensuring that the allocation of special drawing rights we decided upon in the IMF is swiftly supplemented by the reallocation of a portion of them to countries which need them most.

France is ready to transfer 20 per cent of its SDR allocation to African economies to strengthen the resilience of societies and support the transition to a sustainable development model and meet our objectives for the climate and the environment.

The environmental emergency must be at the heart of each of our future choices.

Without succumbing to fatalism, because the IPCC experts have told us that if we swiftly lower our emissions, we can still limit warming to 2°C or even 1.5°C. We must act urgently, but it is not too late! However when we act it must be with no half measures, because — as the Secretary-General has firmly stated — we are now on a catastrophic pathway due to insufficient commitments that are leading us to global heating of 2.7°C for which we will all, without exception, pay a heavy price.

COP26 which will begin on 1 November will therefore be a moment of truth.

Each of us must shoulder our responsibility and provide a contribution that is commensurate with what is at stake. Namely human lives, international stability, and the future of the generations to come. We must rally around the objective of climate neutrality by 2050 before it is too late. Here again, France will show its solidarity by providing €6 billion a year and devoting more than a third of its financing to climate adaptation.

This fight for the climate must go hand in hand with the fight for biodiversity. In Marseille at the IUCN World Conservation Congress, held in early September, we made strong commitments, that we must now implement, particularly the symbolic project of the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and Sahel.

We must also put climate finance to work for biodiversity, as the connections between the two topics are now well recognized.^[1] During this time of global economy recovery, we must lastly ensure that our trade practices are fully compatible with our international solidarity efforts and our climate and environmental objectives. By providing new levers in accordance with WTO law, such as the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism that we wish to establish in Europe to fight carbon leakage, in the same way that we wish to fight imported deforestation and violations of social rights across our value chains. And by working, at the same time, on a tangible “greening” of the multilateral trade framework at the WTO ministerial meeting this year, starting with an ambitious agreement for regulating fisheries subsidies. The future of our oceans depend on it.

We also have a responsibility with regard to the very principles of multilateralism, of which we are the guardians.

The responsibility, first of all, to preserve our ability to act in the name of these principles and promote a truly multilateral order.

In this regard, Secretary-General, I would like to commend your action and your efforts to inject new impetus into the United Nations system. We will work by your side throughout your second term.

While supporting our collective institutions, including in their reform efforts, we must also continue to develop project multilateralism.

That of the Alliance for Multilateralism, which we launched two years ago with my German colleague and which was able to play its full role from the start of the pandemic.

And the International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas, which is doing an outstanding job in Iraq, Syria, Mali and Afghanistan, in cooperation with UNESCO.

We have the responsibility to defend these principles where they are wavering.

In Afghanistan, where the achievements of the last 20 years cannot be erased. Particularly when it comes to the access to education and the rights of women and girls.

And everywhere where the universal scope of human rights is being challenged.

Because universal human rights are the first political and legal translation of the unity of humankind, without which this organization, our organization, would have no foundation. This is a commitment — I would like to recall — that the United

Nations Member States freely consented to sign and respect. These principles that unite us, we have the responsibility to keep them alive today, by upholding them up to and including the digital realm.

We have seen increasingly irresponsible behaviours flourish, without managing, unfortunately, to provide an international normative response to regulate them and to ensure that the rights and freedoms of all are respected.

The introduction of a minimum universal 15 per cent tax for multinational companies will help achieve this.

We therefore call on all States to support this vital measure.

France and its European partners even intend to adopt actual legislation on digital markets. We encourage our international partners to follow us down this path, and we invite them to work with us to establish a new digital public order in the wake of the Paris Call and the Christchurch Call to Action, which, since 2019, has enabled us to take decisive action to remove terrorist content from the Internet.

Collective responsibility in international peacekeeping and security; shared responsibility in tackling today's major challenges; responsibility of each of us with regard to what unites us: for France this is what the historic turning point we are experiencing calls for. We must all rise to the challenge. While our country is preparing to take over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the first half of 2022, you can — ladies and gentlemen — count on our de-termination to fully assume our share of this three-pronged responsibility.

Engaging us in all the security, solidarity and equality combats.

To rebuild, with you, our shared world.

Thank you.
