



General Assembly

Seventy-sixth session

6th plenary meeting
 Wednesday, 22 September 2021, 11 a.m.
 New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Shahid (Maldives)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Vongnorkeo (Lao People's Democratic Republic), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

Address by Mr. Željko Komšić, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Acting President: The Assembly will hear an address by the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Željko Komšić, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Željko Komšić, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Komšić (*spoke in Bosnian; English translation provided by the delegation*): The topic of this year's debate addresses many current issues that truly present some of the key challenges that affect the future path we will tread as a global society and as individual countries forming their own national and international policies. The degree of our commitment to prioritizing the common values we have chosen to protect will therefore determine we succeed in fulfilling our shared aspirations.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has taught us an important lesson on how easily the existing international system can be shaken, but it has also shown us on how strong and resilient our multilateral and international institutions must be for them to be able to respond to crisis situations. All of a sudden, international relations were threatened while human rights were restricted. Multilateralism seemed to have collapsed. The gap between rich, developed countries, on the one hand, and less developed, poorer countries, on the other, has proven to be greater than ever in terms of access to medical equipment, medicines and vaccines. For the sake of social and economic recovery, the only thing left to do under such circumstances was to hope that the resilience of national economies and health systems, as well as international institutions, including the bodies of the United Nations, could combat the pandemic and discover and distribute vaccines.

At the same time, I would also like to emphasize the importance of bilateral cooperation and assistance from neighbouring or friendly countries, which in many regions, including my own, were the first countries to provide concrete aid and signs of solidarity — well before multilateral institutions could respond to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. That gave us hope and showed the importance of good bilateral relations. It also justified investing in regional cooperation capacities. Accordingly, I would like to commend some of the numerous regional organizations from the Western Balkans that have helped sustain the economy and facilitate the flow of people and basic goods under the new circumstances. I am primarily referring to

In accordance with decision 75/573, and without setting a precedent for mandated high-level meetings planned for future high-level weeks, the official records of the General Assembly will be supplemented by annexes containing pre-recorded statements submitted by Heads of State or other dignitaries, submitted to the President no later than the day on which such statements are delivered in the Assembly Hall. Submissions in this regard should be made to estatements@un.org.

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the Central European Free Trade Agreement and the Regional Cooperation Council of South-Eastern Europe.

The pandemic has changed the world and affected the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Under the new circumstances, the SDGs need to be seen in a whole new light. However, one of today's most important issues, which is closely related to the notion that global society needs to fulfil the SDGs, is how to properly respond to the needs of the planet. Climate change and global warming, both visible and scientifically proven through the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), are key issues that are restricting the path to sustainable development. According to the 2018 IPCC special report, our efforts to slow global warming and combat climate change are generally not yielding the results we need to achieve by 2050, and this year's report issues the same warning.

Climate change is no longer a matter of warnings from the scientific community. It is a crisis situation that is already upon us. Finding answers to climate change is a costly process, but it will cost even more if we do not take the need to accelerate climate-change mitigation activities seriously. We have taken on that commitment because the survival of humankind, dependent as it is on mitigating temperature rise, is a value that we must defend at all costs. We did not choose that value; it chose us.

I believe that, in the long run, this necessary response will cost the less developed and developing countries — the countries that continue to rely on energy derived from fossil fuels — the most. As a rule, those countries do not have sufficient capacity or resources to make a rapid and equitable transition to green energy sources. That will affect their ability to achieve the SDGs in the medium term. Therefore, financial support for the implementation of the green agenda is extremely important, with contributions from the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as well as such regional associations as the European Union (EU).

In addition to the obligations set forth in the Paris Agreement, additional standards are imposed by the EU and accepted by countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina as part of the process of stabilization and association with the Union. In my country, Bosnia and Herzegovina, approximately 40 per cent of our electricity generation is derived from our green-energy

capacity. However, the gradual shutdown of thermal power plants, and therefore most of our mines, which we must undertake in the next 25 to 30 years, will cause a shortage of electricity that can hardly be replaced in a timely fashion by our green-energy capacity if we are to also preserve rivers and ecological biodiversity in accordance with international norms. These are some of the real circumstances and challenges that we face, and many other States present in this Hall, I believe, face similar challenges. Nevertheless, Bosnia and Herzegovina stands behind its promise to contribute to reducing greenhouse-gas emissions.

One of the consequences of the slowdown in sustainable development that we are facing is the flight of the working-age population to developed countries. According to available statistics, nearly 10 per cent of the population has emigrated from Bosnia and Herzegovina since the last census, in 2013, mostly from the population of working age as well as young families with children. That is why I would like to draw attention to the fact that, in addition to the well-known wave of economic migrants from the Asia, the Middle East and North Africa towards my country — and we have tried to provide humanitarian aid, food and accommodation for them — we are also facing the outflow of our own population, which will cause additional social problems for our society. Our people are leaving Bosnia and Herzegovina in search of better business and life opportunities. They are also seeking security in more orderly societies that more actively promote and protect human rights values. They are drawn by the prospect of living in an environment where their knowledge and work can create a life of certainty for them within a rational social order.

It is for that reason that I want to emphasize the protection of human rights as the next great value. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has already established it as a principle. In Europe, we also have the European Convention on Human Rights, implemented under the auspices of the Council of Europe, while the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union came into effect in 2009. Recently, however, support for human rights values seem to have weakened, as we are seeing them applied selectively and approached on the basis of double standards. I consider such trends a serious threat to the preservation of our system for protecting human rights.

The intensification of ethnic politics in my country, based on exclusion and ethnic chauvinist tendencies,

along with growing religious intolerance and faltering secularism in the Western Balkans region, is extremely worrying. After living through the 1992-1995 war, the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina are very sensitive to such social disturbances, especially considering the genocide determined to have been committed in Srebrenica by the verdict of the International Court of Justice in The Hague and confirmed by the judgments of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.

In that regard, I would like to emphasize to the Assembly that my country is considered not only a successful example of peacebuilding but also one of the maintenance of peace and development of institutions in the context of its United Nations mandate. The Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina is part of the international peace agreement in Bosnia and Herzegovina known as the Dayton Peace Agreement. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights are also integral parts of our Constitution. However, in the past few years, attempts to degrade basic human and civil rights and eliminate individual citizens as subjects of human rights have put increasing pressure on our society. Bosnia and Herzegovina's complex system of institutions, based on the Peace Agreement, has made it difficult to reach the political consensus needed to enable my country to move on from Dayton Agreement, which ended the war, to becoming a functioning State with prospects for joining the European Union and NATO in a way that embraces all the values that democracy, the rule of law and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms demand.

In order to illustrate the selectivity with which our international human rights instruments are being applied, I want to consider this very important area of the protection of human rights from the point of view of the country I come from. I believe that we all share the view that the protection of human rights in every sector of society is a necessary condition for the creation of stable democracies in which peace and prosperity prevail. However, viewing this through the prism of the political system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, I would like to take this opportunity to share with the Assembly a few important elements that are unfortunately part of the other, negative, darker side of the story.

The General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, initialled in Dayton and signed in Paris in 1995, is in force in Bosnia and

Herzegovina. As annex 4, the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina is an integral part of the Agreement. Its preamble states clearly and unequivocally that among other things, it is based on the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. While it is understood that accession to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights does not impose a direct legal obligation on acceding countries, it is unquestionably a system of values that among other things aims to create a society both within and beyond the countries themselves that is founded on the equality of every human being on the planet with regard to their basic human rights.

Unfortunately, that system of values based on the equality of every individual within a society does not exist in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I also want to point out that in five judgments against Bosnia and Herzegovina, an international court, the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, has established the existence of systemic discrimination or inequality among my country's citizens. That inequality is reflected in several areas of life, including politically — because not all citizens have equal rights in the electoral system — but also because those same citizens do not have equal rights and opportunities in social life, such as the right to work. The political system in Bosnia and Herzegovina is such that it gives preference to someone's ethnicity. Based on their ethnicity, my country's citizens have more or fewer rights, depending on which part of the country they live in. I would like to take this opportunity to remind the Assembly that discrimination based on a person's ethnic origin is one of the forms of racial discrimination set out in paragraph 1 of article 1 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, adopted by the United Nations in 1965.

The complexity of this issue is evident in the attempts to discriminate among and impose inequality on Bosnia and Herzegovina's citizens, even through international diplomatic activity, by emphasizing some citizens' ethnicity and demanding greater rights for ethnic communities supported by neighbouring countries, and always to the detriment of fundamental human rights. What that means is that the collective rights of some, which are not expressed in international law, are being placed above the human rights of individuals. Let me say that such things are unacceptable.

Furthermore, the diplomatic activities of various actors call for additional discrimination on ethnic grounds in order to create an atmosphere conducive

to a process for self-determination within those ethnic communities, with the ultimate goal being the dissolution or disintegration of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the annexation of parts of its territory by neighbouring countries. That foments inequality in human rights, which completely devalues and ignores the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Those same factors negate the judgments of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, which identified the existence of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and even joint criminal enterprises, and further established that all those heinous crimes were committed on the basis of differences in the ethnicities of the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. That negates one of the Universal Declaration's fundamental human rights, the right to life.

Without any moral qualms, war criminals are glorified and rewarded, and in my view that is in direct contradiction to another principle of the United Nations, which is ending impunity for war crimes. That raises other questions, which demand clear answers. How should we deal with the political and national factors that are negating the decisions of courts established by the United Nations, and how should we address specific cases where verdicts convicting the perpetrators of crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and ethnic cleansing are denied? Can those who deny such verdicts and hide perpetrators of genocide and war crimes even be a part of the international legal order? That question goes directly to the heart of the foundations of international law and the United Nations Organization itself.

At the same time, the principles of universal jurisdiction are being abused for political purposes outside the prescribed procedures and agreements that have been concluded between the States and that clearly specify the modalities for prosecuting war-crime suspects who must be held accountable. Those war-crime suspects are citizens of the countries that have primary responsibility for this. Using universal jurisdiction in a selective and political way deeply compromises the principles of criminal law and legal security, and therefore of human rights. It also undermines confidence in judicial mechanisms.

On the other hand, the various policies aimed at imposing discrimination and inequality on the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina represent an attempt to invade my country's constitutional and legal system

of my country in order to secure a so-called golden key or golden share in the country's management and decision-making. There is no way they should be permitted to do this by any international law, including the Charter of the United Nations. These efforts on the diplomatic front, which deny individuals their fundamental human rights in order to achieve obvious goals based on some imaginary collective rights, do not represent good-neighbourly relations. They are aimed at concealing the strategic goal of appropriating parts of the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

These trends clearly ignore the principles of human rights established by a number of texts of international law, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is the politically dangerous goals behind them that are daily destabilizing the Western Balkans and that are aimed at the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. That is evident in their efforts to impose inequality among citizens based on their ethnicity, which, let me remind Member States once again, is a form of racial discrimination, and to create ethnically pure territorial areas. The point of explaining this is to give real examples of how there can be a political agenda behind the neglect of human rights and the creation of an environment of inequality among individual citizens, and that can lead to the destabilization of entire regions such as the Western Balkans. Besides being completely unacceptable, it is also very dangerous.

I am discussing the situation in my country in the context of the importance of the mechanisms of the United Nations. By means of two resolutions, including Security Council resolution 1031 (1995), the United Nations established the institution of the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina to monitor the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement. The United Nations itself is therefore obligated to protect the international order by protecting acts of international law, one of which is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I therefore believe that this is the right place to emphasize our expectation that the international community's new High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina will take into account the importance of protecting our international legal acts and their fundamental values. That is one of his most important tasks.

Otherwise, if the international community in Bosnia and Herzegovina wants to abandon the implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we have to ask if the Universal Declaration is even necessary if

its implementation is selective. Should we even bother to talk about the protection of human rights in general if in the specific case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the United Nations still has an executive mandate through the Office of the High Representative, we do not show by example that we are willing to stand up for shared values such as the protection of human rights and the equality of every citizen in relation to those who are different and other?

Despite all the differences within Bosnia and Herzegovina, including among the international community represented by the Peace Implementation Council in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which assists the High Representative, I believe that the sole guiding light for my country's future political development, as a pledge to preserve its peace and future, should be respect for the values of human rights. All the people of my country, regardless of their identity, ethnicity, religious affiliation or lack of one, should have the same rights. If not, we will end up in an Orwellian society, where it is accepted that ultimately some people are more important than others. That will always jeopardize a society's stability and undermine peace and security. From this rostrum, I urge the institutions of the United Nations to insist on the importance of protecting human rights in every area of their activities.

Lastly, I would like to express my support for the efforts of the Secretary-General, who with the help of his staff and the United Nations agencies has managed to preserve the role of the United Nations in the difficult circumstances of the pandemic. I would also like to thank the President for his effort this year to provide us with an opportunity to exchange views in person on the world's problems today as well as to discuss our social actions in the countries we come from. I believe that next year we will have a general debate under better epidemiological circumstances. That certainly requires that we promote the necessity of vaccination as the only scientifically proven way to avoid not just fatal consequences for human health but also severe economic consequences for society.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Željko Komšić, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Jordan to introduce an address by the King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Mr. Safadi (Jordan): It is my honour to introduce a pre-recorded statement by His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex I and see A/76/332/Add.2).

Address by Mr. Andry Nirina Rajoelina, President of the Republic of Madagascar

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

Mr. Andry Nirina Rajoelina, President of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Andry Nirina Rajoelina, President of the Republic of Madagascar, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rajoelina (spoke in French): At the outset, I would like to convey a message of solidarity from the Malagasy people with every nation and family that has been hard hit by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. In these particularly difficult times, we reiterate our support and commitment to Secretary-General António Guterres for the leadership that he has shown in steering our Organization through the pandemic.

For this seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly, we have gathered here at United Nations Headquarters to reflect together on strategies capable of addressing the effects of COVID-19. Our goal is to find ways and means to relaunch the economy after the coronavirus disease. And the well-being of our populations should be the focus of all our reflections.

The theme of the session, “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”, encourages us to act together to build a post-crisis world at the multilateral level.

The entire world has been through a period of profound upheaval in the past two years, weakening our economies and inflicting considerable social effects. The weapon in this war is neither guns nor nuclear bombs but an invisible enemy, a virus, that has spread rapidly from country to country and continent to continent. Many have succumbed — 4.5 million people have lost their lives. It is a painful reality and a devastating toll.

The impact on the job market has been terrible. The numbers from the International Labour Organization speak for themselves: 255 million people have lost their jobs in the pandemic. The countries that are worst affected are those whose economy is based mainly in the informal sector. That has helped drive people into poverty and worsened living conditions. The middle classes are disappearing and too many families are sliding into a precarious existence. The global economy is currently in a serious recession. There are predictions of a drop of nearly 5 per cent in per capita income, which will push millions into extreme poverty. Health inequalities around the world have been exacerbated. As we have confronted this war, we have seen that we are not all equal. And some countries, such as Madagascar, have had to be bold and resourceful. We have relied on the intelligence of our scientists and our traditional pharmacopoeia. Our homegrown solutions have been our best ammunition in this fight.

The fact that when we talk about developing countries such as Madagascar, it is always the negative and grim side that is conveyed and highlighted in the international arena, should make us think. When we talk about the African continent, we always tend to see the reality as gloomy. It is time for that perception to change. We must stop perpetuating such prejudices and go beyond the preconceived ideas. The analyses that we have seen of the COVID-19 situation predicted a health disaster on the African continent. But ultimately, Africa and the so-called vulnerable countries have proved those predictions wrong. Like Madagascar, those countries have been better able to absorb the impact of COVID-19 and to emerge with positives. In order to recover from this shock wave, Madagascar decided

to adopt an optimistic approach by implementing its development vision.

Today we are writing the story of a profound transformation. COVID-19 has not prevented us from continuing our efforts to catch up from Madagascar’s development lag. In the area of health infrastructure, for instance, our goal is to establish health care for all and to bring it closer to the people by building hospitals and basic health centres in every region and district of Madagascar. We have also just built and inaugurated the largest soccer stadium in the Indian Ocean region, and we will continue to build sports infrastructure, including stadiums, gymnasiums and a national elite sports academy. We are investing in sport, because sports brings people together.

We are also building a new city, Tanamasoandro, which will be the showcase of the Indian Ocean. We are putting in place solutions to modernize the capital’s public transport system through the construction of an urban train network, which is well under way, and work on a cable car system will also begin this year. We are building thousands of social housing units for the people and distributing plots of land called “green ownership” to support agricultural entrepreneurship, as well as expanding Madagascar’s industrialization by establishing sugar and cement factories. Our goal is to produce locally everything that the Malagasy people need on a daily basis. On the social front, 2.5 million people, or 500,000 families, have benefited from cash transfers during the coronavirus.

NutriSud, our first factory producing nutritious food aimed at combating infant malnutrition, will be inaugurated in a week. Madagascar is building. We have a vision, a *velirano* or commitment, and a programme, and we are moving forward. The country is entering a new era. We can see and feel it. A new generation of leaders driven by a sense of patriotism and a pragmatic vision are driving the change. The sceptics are not our friends, but we are moving forward with determination with partners and friendly countries that believe in Madagascar’s emergence.

While the world was struggling with the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate crisis also struck with full force. One climatic tragedy has followed another, with a series of deadly floods and storms in Europe, Africa, North America and South-East Asia, along with devastating forest and bush fires in Latin America, on the American West Coast, in Australia and on the

African continent. Among the disasters caused by climate change we are also seeing rising sea levels and growing desertification. Madagascar is affected by the consequences of climate change, too. In the south of the country we have recurring waves of drought, water sources are drying up and subsistence activities are becoming almost impossible. My compatriots there have paid a heavy price in the climate crisis, a crisis that they did not create.

Today, to save the Malagasy in that part of the country, we are betting on strategic actions to bring radical and sustainable change, including through the construction of a major pipeline to supply water to the southern region in order to irrigate the land and enable its inhabitants to grow crops and indeed to live. A pipeline project of this size has never been undertaken. It is a historic challenge based on our State's unprecedented commitment to resolving the situation in the southern part of the Grande Ile. Realizing this major project will enable a genuine renaissance there in the area of agriculture and animal husbandry so as to create jobs and promote community resilience. We have already effectively established basic infrastructure in the areas of health care, education, energy and security, as those are fundamental rights for all. As leaders and rulers, it is our duty to protect our people.

In the fight against climate change, all our efforts will be in vain if the lax application of sanctions and measures to combat climate change continues. This crisis is forcing us to make a paradigm shift. If we do not act, the crisis will continue and will get worse. Madagascar calls on every State to act in an equitable manner commensurate with its polluting activity.

The cornerstones of a robust recovery are sovereignty and national unity. One of the main issues at stake for Madagascar in those areas is the question of the Iles Éparses or Nosy Malagasy, a hurt that is still deeply wounding to my country and my people. France made commitments regarding the decolonization of Madagascar in San Francisco in 1945. Our independence was restored only in 1960 — in other words, 15 years later. But our decolonization is unfinished, because the issue of the Iles Éparses has still not been resolved, despite two General Assembly resolutions. The first, resolution 34/91 of 1979, called on France to immediately initiate negotiations with Madagascar on the reintegration of the islands, which had been arbitrarily separated from Madagascar. In 1980, in resolution 35/123, the Assembly expressed its

regret that those negotiations had not been initiated and called for them to start as a matter of urgency.

Today, 42 years after the adoption of those resolutions, I am working with my French counterpart, President Emmanuel Macron, through the holding of a joint commission between our two countries. I have great faith in the possibility of a positive, fair and peaceful outcome for these efforts. I urge our Organization, the United Nations, to play its part in ensuring their success in a benevolent and coherent manner. Madagascar has neither the power nor the weapons, much less the intention, to declare a war. The only thing we have is faith in the legitimacy of our aspirations and in our right to decide the fate of our territory.

It is time we put into practice the solidarity that is the foundation of our Organization. Let us pay more attention to our most vulnerable populations so that we can act more effectively to help them and ensure their well-being and development. Today I want to advocate for them and speak on their behalf. Our exchanges and reflections are valuable and essential because we must act together. Let us show responsible leadership and promote cooperation, which is the driving force of our organizations and of the institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that are supporting and helping us to come through this difficult economic period and to realize our projects and ambitions for growth and development. In that connection, I would like to thank the IMF, which responded to the appeals of countries with fragile economies by providing the support necessary to mitigate the economic and financial fallout of the pandemic. The IMF's facilitation of funding disbursement has benefited Madagascar directly.

Let us strengthen the role, authority, effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations by building on the progress made. Let us focus on what unites us and brings us together rather than what divides and separates us. It is now, in these circumstances, that we need the mutual support and unity that are the foundation of our Organization. The United Nations, as a whole, unites countries to form a harmonious world. I therefore call here and now for the solidarity of humankind, the unity of nations and shared hope for our world. May God guide and support us. Blessed be our homeland.

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

Mr. Andry Nirina Rajoelina, President of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

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

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

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

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

President Akufo-Addo: I would like to warmly congratulate the President on his assumption of his post at the helm of the General Assembly, the Assembly of humankind, and to wish him well in the management of our affairs. I also want to congratulate the Secretary-General on his unanimous reappointment to a second term. The Common Agenda that he has outlined provides us with a powerful framework for effectively tackling global issues in these first decades of the twenty-first century. The presence here in New York of 102 leaders of nations participating in the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session tells of our resolve to return the world to normalcy. We are not there yet, but we are making considerable progress.

Back in 2017, when I made my first appearance at the General Assembly (see A/72/PV.11) as the newly elected President of Ghana, I said that neither Ghana nor Africa wanted to be scars on anybody's conscience. I said that we wanted to build economies that are not dependent on charity or handouts, because long and bitter experience has taught us that no matter how generous the charity, we would remain poor. Between 2017 and 2020, Ghana recorded an average growth rate of 7 per cent, among the highest in the world. In 2020, when the global economy and that of sub-Saharan Africa contracted by 3.5 per cent and 2.1 per cent respectively, Ghana was one of the few countries that produced a positive growth rate. That is a testament to

our determination to build a Ghana beyond aid. One year on, although infection rates and deaths in our region are relatively lower, the impact of the virus on economies and livelihoods has been damaging. The latest numbers from the African Development Bank indicate that African economies, which contracted by 2.1 per cent in 2020, have yet to return to pre-pandemic levels. More than 30 million Africans fell into extreme poverty in 2020, and nearly 14 million may do the same in 2021. The social impact has been devastating. More than 103 million African jobs have been lost. Women, who account for 40 per cent of total employment, have been the hardest hit.

When we listen to the scientists, it is evident that vaccination is the way to protect populations and revitalize societies. If we are to vaccinate 70 per cent in the shortest possible time, as is being done elsewhere in the world, it means that some 900 million Africans have to be vaccinated. The African Export-Import Bank structuring of the African Vaccine Acquisition Task Team's \$2 billion acquisition of 400 million Johnson & Johnson vaccines is part of the African Union's historic coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccine development and access strategy. It is a critical milestone in our collective fight against the pandemic in a continent that is bearing the worst brunt of vaccine nationalism. The African Vaccine Acquisition Task Team vaccine programme, which is partly manufactured in South Africa, is the single largest and most far-reaching trade transaction since the entry into force in January this year of the African Continental Free Trade Area. It is eloquent testimony to the benefits of domestic production and pooled procurement in Africa, as envisaged by the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement.

Ghana agrees with the call of the Rome Declaration on global health for voluntary licensing and technology transfers to boost vaccine production. The African Union is working with the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Trade Organization and other global partners to expand its vaccine manufacturing and deployment. We in Ghana have so far received 5 million doses, which have been administered to front-line health workers and those classified as most at risk. Five million is not a figure to be sneered at, particularly when we consider the situation in many other African countries. We are grateful that our efforts to manage the pandemic and vaccine distribution have been recognized and that we have received these amounts of

vaccines. We are still hoping to vaccinate 20 million of our people by the end of the year.

One unfortunate development seems to have emerged in recent measures related to entry into some European countries, suggesting that those countries do not recognize Covishield, the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine manufactured in India. What is intriguing here is the fact that this vaccine was donated to African countries through the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility. The use of vaccines as a tool for immigration control would be a truly retrogressive step.

The last time there was such an upheaval in the world was during the Second World War, and it led to the establishment of a new world order. This Organization, the United Nations, and the other Bretton Woods institutions were created to maintain international peace and security, help rebuild the shattered post-war economy and promote global economic cooperation. Even before the pandemic outbreak, many had concluded that the current structure of global economic cooperation, designed some 77 years ago, had proved inadequate to financing infrastructure and economic transformation in developing countries. Given the incapacity of the global financial system to produce the outcomes needed to finance sustainable development, we need a constructive review. COVID-19 provides us with a great opportunity to rethink global economic cooperation based on the principles of mutuality, equity, sustainability and collective prosperity envisaged in the Sustainable Development Goals.

There is no question that if the famous gathering in San Francisco were to take place today, the Charter of the United Nations would be significantly different. In much the same way, if the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the WHO were created today, they would be radically different institutions from those that were set up after the war, since many of the countries in today's world, especially in Africa and the Caribbean, were not present in San Francisco. The pandemic has also shown us that great advances in science and technology notwithstanding, we still have a lot to learn and discover about the human body and about life. So far, in spite of the grisly predictions of dead bodies littering the streets of Africa, and in spite of the fact that we have less access to vaccines than the developed world, Africa seems, mercifully, to have escaped the worst of the COVID-19 death rates — and for that, we thank God.

Ghana would like to share a few thoughts that we believe should form the basis for the new global cooperation. First, we need to strengthen the funding of the existing global health organizations. That should include a greater, more predictable base of multilateral funding for the WHO and the regional centres for disease control, which play a central role in global health security. It will require dedicating an additional 1 per cent of gross domestic product to funding global health. That is an investment in a global public good, not aid.

Secondly, we must develop more resilient finances to build back better and for future preparedness. Across the African continent, revenues have fallen by as much as \$150 billion as economies are still reeling from the impact of the pandemic. African Governments have already spent scarce reserves fighting the pandemic and providing social protection to the millions of households affected. Ghana has been advocating for ensuring that innovative financing also addresses structural challenges, beyond responding to immediate fiscal needs, by providing mechanisms to facilitate investments in health infrastructure, technology, the environment and people that will foster resilience and equitable recovery.

The IMF's unprecedented \$650 billion Special Drawing Rights (SDR) allocation offers a unique opportunity to provide additional financial resources to address the vast and surging inequities that the pandemic has revealed, and a crisis to come. Africa's allocation is some \$33 billion. If ever there was a time for an African Marshall Plan, it is now. The SDR infusion should be seized on as a catalytic effort to enable Africa to leapfrog to the next level of human development and ensure sustained global prosperity. African leaders have advocated for a prudent and transparent channelling of 25 to 35 per cent of SDRs — that is, between \$160 billion and \$250 billion from wealthier countries to vulnerable ones, \$100 billion of which should be dedicated to Africa. We welcome the support that has been expressed for some degree of SDR redistribution by the European countries represented at the Africa Summit in France, the IMF, the Group of Seven and the Group of 20 (G-20).

The proceeds of channelled SDRs should fund vaccine acquisition and manufacturing, climate and green investments and a pan-African stability mechanism, like the European Stability Mechanism, designed to safeguard financial stability on the

continent. Part of the redistribution should also help fund the recapitalization of the African Development Bank and the African Export-Import Bank to support industrialization, private-sector job creation and the African Continental Free Trade Area initiative.

Thirdly, we must reposition key multilateral organizations and international financial institutions, such as the United Nations, the other Bretton Woods institutions and the G-20, to reflect inclusiveness, support country investments in global public goods and ensure fast-tracked financial support to build back better and prepare for future pandemics. For instance, the key to the G-20's effectiveness is that it achieves representative coverage of the global population and economy with a sufficiently diversified number of leaders at the table to enable speed and flexibility in deliberation and decision-making. Admitting the African Union to an expanded Group of 21 would have the same galvanizing effect within Africa that the European Union's participation in the G-20 has within Europe, strengthening policy coordination and coherence across the 54 African economies. With the African Union at the table, the Group would suddenly have representation for an additional 54 countries, 1.3 billion people and \$2.3 trillion in output. That extraordinary increase in representation would add just one seat to the table and about 10 minutes to the discussion. However, it would redefine global policy coordination to enable a more prosperous, inclusive and sustainable world to emerge.

Fourthly, we in Africa are as committed as any to the fight against climate change. We believe, however, that the fight can be better advanced if we can maintain a crucial balance between economic, political and environmental imperatives — positions that we will be articulating in Glasgow at the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which will form part of the new global compact.

Lastly, now more than ever, we must defend democracy, constitutional rule and human rights in the world. In the past 24 months, we have witnessed assaults on democracy around the world, sometimes even in developed countries where we had assumed that a consensus on a democratic form of Government was established.

In West Africa, recent events in Mali and Guinea have undermined democratic governance in our region.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the regional body of whose Authority of Heads of State and Government I have the honour to be the current Chair, is unreservedly committed to maintaining democratic Governments in the ECOWAS community. That is why both Guinea and Mali, founding members of the Community, have been suspended from its organization pending their restoration of democratic governance. We welcome the support of the United Nations for the measures taken. ECOWAS has given Guinea six months to restore democratic governance and requested the immediate release of President Alpha Condé. On my visit to Conakry last Friday, the military leaders indicated their willingness to see to his imminent release, and it is our hope that they will keep to their word. The Authority has also made it clear to the military Government in Mali that it is not prepared to negotiate an extension to the February deadline for the holding of democratic elections, since with political will, the essential steps to be taken can be effective within the ECOWAS-sanctioned timetable. It is better that a Government with a democratic mandate be in place as soon as possible in order to implement the necessary reforms for the future stability and growth of Mali, thereby enhancing capacity for the all-important fight against terrorism in Mali and the wider Sahel.

We in Ghana are highly resolved to continue to defend democracy and constitutional rule and uphold human rights. We will work to strengthen the institutions that support democracy in our country and our region. We will continue to support the United Nations and other international organizations to help remind us that indeed, no man is an island entire of itself.

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

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

Address by Mr. Gotabaya Rajapaksa, President, Head of the Cabinet of Ministers, Minister for Defence and Minister for Technology of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President, Head of the Cabinet of Ministers, Minister for Defence and Minister for

Technology of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Gotabaya Rajapaksa, President, Head of the Cabinet of Ministers, Minister for Defence and Minister for Technology of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Gotabaya Rajapaksa, President, Head of the Cabinet of Ministers, Minister for Defence and Minister for Technology of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rajapaksa: I am honoured to represent Sri Lanka at this gathering today. I would first like to congratulate Mr. Abdulla Shahid on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session. He has long been a friend of Sri Lanka, and we look forward to working closely with him in the year ahead. I would also like to take this opportunity to convey our appreciation for Mr. Volkan Bozkır's stewardship of the General Assembly during the previous session and to commend Secretary-General António Guterres for his leadership in these difficult times.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has had a devastating impact on humankind. I sympathize deeply with all who have lost their loved ones during the pandemic. I thank front-line health-care and essential workers around the world for their dedication and commend the World Health Organization (WHO) for its crisis response. I also greatly appreciate the rapid advances made by the scientific and medical communities in devising vaccines and treatment protocols to combat the virus. At the same time, we must recognize that it is urgent that we overcome the challenges surrounding the production, distribution, deployment and acceptance of vaccines if we are to prevent the spread of dangerous new virus strains. Ensuring that everyone, everywhere, is vaccinated is the best way out of the pandemic.

Although still a developing nation, Sri Lanka has been very successful with its vaccination programme. We have already fully vaccinated nearly all those above the age of 30. Everyone over the age of 20 will be fully vaccinated by the end of October, and we will start vaccinating children over 15 years of age in the near future. The rapid progress of vaccinations was enabled

by coordinated efforts between health-care workers, armed-forces and police personnel, Government servants and elected officials. In collaboration with the WHO, Sri Lanka is establishing a regional knowledge hub to facilitate the exchange of lessons learned from COVID-19 and to support countries in recovering better. Sri Lanka also benefited greatly from financial and material support provided by bilateral and multilateral donors in order to manage the pandemic. I thank those nations and institutions for their generosity. The increased global cooperation that we have seen during this ongoing crisis is very encouraging. However, there is still more to be done.

The economic impact of the pandemic has been especially severe for developing countries. That has placed the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals at considerable risk. It will be vital to ensure that more initiatives that include development financing and debt relief are undertaken through international mechanisms so as to support developing nations and help them emerge from this uncertain situation.

Sri Lanka too has suffered greatly due to the pandemic. In addition to the tragic loss of life, our economy has been deeply affected. The lockdowns, together with general movement restrictions, reduced international travel and slower global growth, have affected nearly every sector of our economy. Tourism, one of Sri Lanka's highest foreign-exchange earners, which supports nearly 14 per cent of the population, has been devastated. This industry, together with small and medium businesses in many other sectors, has received Government support through interest moratoriums and other financial-sector interventions. Daily-wage earners and low-income groups were also supported through grants of cash and dry rations during lockdowns, adding significantly to State expenditure. In addition to their immediate impact, these economic repercussions of the pandemic have limited the fiscal space available to implement our development programmes.

As devastating as the consequences of the pandemic have been to humankind, the world is facing the even greater challenge of climate change in the decades to come. As emphasized in the recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the unprecedented effects of human activity on the health of the planet is deeply worrying. Addressing the grave threats posed by climate change and the loss of biodiversity requires decisive and urgent multilateral

action. As a climate-vulnerable country, Sri Lanka is deeply aware of the dangers of climate change. Sri Lanka's philosophical heritage, deeply rooted in Lord Buddha's teachings, also emphasizes the vitality of preserving environmental integrity.

It is in those contexts that Sri Lanka is a Commonwealth Blue Charter Champion and leads the Mangrove Restoration Action Group. Through its adoption of the Colombo Declaration on Sustainable Nitrogen Management, which seeks to halve nitrogen waste by 2030, Sri Lanka has also contributed to global efforts to reduce environmental pollution. Having participated virtually in the Pre-Summit held in April, I trust that the United Nations Food Systems Summit later this month will result in actionable outcomes to promote healthier, more sustainable and equitable food systems globally. Such outcomes will be crucial to human health as well as the health of our planet.

Sustainability is a cornerstone of Sri Lanka's national policy framework. Because of sustainability's importance for soil fertility, biodiversity, waterways and health, my Government completely banned the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and weedicides earlier this year. We are incentivizing the production and adoption of organic fertilizers, as well as investments in organic agriculture. I appreciate the encouragement that we have received from many global institutions and nations for our efforts to create a more sustainable agriculture in Sri Lanka.

The conservation of our environment is one of our key national priorities. We aim to increase forest cover significantly in the coming decades. We are also working to clean and restore more than 100 rivers countrywide and to combat river and maritime pollution. We have banned single-use plastics to support ecological conservation. Sri Lanka recognizes the urgent need to reduce the use of fossil fuels and support decarbonization. Our energy policy is aimed at increasing the contribution of renewable sources such as solar, wind and hydropower to 70 per cent of our national energy needs by 2030.

My country welcomes the support of the international community as we engage in the task of reviving our economy and implementing our national development programme. We intend to make full use of our geostrategic location, robust institutions, strong social infrastructure and skilled workforce to attract investment and broaden trade relationships. My

Government is focusing on extensive legal, regulatory, administrative and educational reforms to facilitate that and to deliver prosperity to all our people.

Sri Lanka has enjoyed a universal adult franchise since pre-independence. The democratic tradition is an integral part of our way of life. My election in 2019 and the parliamentary elections in 2020 saw Sri Lankan voters grant my Government an emphatic mandate to build a prosperous and stable country and uphold national security and sovereignty.

In 2019, Sri Lanka experienced the devastation wrought by extremist religious terrorists in the Easter Sunday attacks. Before that, we suffered from a separatist terrorist war for 30 years, until 2009. Terrorism is a global challenge that requires international cooperation if it is to be overcome, especially on matters such as intelligence-sharing. Violence has robbed Sri Lanka of thousands of lives and decades of prosperity in the past half century. My Government is committed to ensuring that such violence never takes place in Sri Lanka again, and we are therefore acting to address the core issues behind it. Fostering greater accountability, restorative justice and meaningful reconciliation through domestic institutions is essential to achieving lasting peace. So too is ensuring more equitable participation in the fruits of economic development. It is my Government's firm intention to build a prosperous, stable and secure future for all Sri Lankans, regardless of ethnicity, religion or gender. We are ready to engage with all domestic stakeholders and to obtain the support of our international partners and the United Nations in this process. However, history has shown that lasting results can only be achieved through home-grown institutions reflecting the aspirations of the people. Sri Lanka's Parliament and judiciary and its range of independent statutory bodies should have unrestricted scope to exercise their functions and responsibilities.

In keeping with the theme of our general debate today, if we are to truly build resilience through hope, we must all strive towards the common good. It is the role of the United Nations to facilitate that by treating all sovereign States, irrespective of size or strength, equitably and with due respect for their institutions and heritage. I request the United Nations and the international community to ensure the protection of the Buddhist heritage of Afghanistan. I call on the Member States of the General Assembly to work together in a spirit of true cooperation, generosity, goodwill and

mutual respect to foster a better and more sustainable future for all humankind.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President, Head of the Cabinet of Ministers, Minister for Defence and Minister for Technology of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Gotabaya Rajapaksa, President, Head of the Cabinet of Ministers, Minister for Defence and Minister for Technology of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Majesty King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, King of Saudi Arabia and President of the Council of Ministers of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia to introduce an address by the King of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud (Saudi Arabia) (spoke in Arabic): It is my honour to introduce a statement by His Majesty King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, King of Saudi Arabia, President of the Council of Ministers of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the King of Saudi Arabia.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex II and see A/76/332/Add.2).

Address by Mr. Alejandro Giammattei Falla, President of the Republic of Guatemala

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

Mr. Alejandro Giammattei Falla, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Alejandro Giammattei Falla, President of the Republic of Guatemala, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Giammattei Falla (spoke in Spanish): It is an honour for me to address the General Assembly for the first time during the general debate of the Assembly's seventy-sixth session.

I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly at its the seventy-fifth session, Mr. Volkan Bozkır, for having presided over this body in an exemplary manner under adverse circumstances caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic (COVID-19). I also take this opportunity to congratulate the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session, Mr. Abdulla Shahid, and reiterate the commitment of the Secretary-General and the States members of the Assembly to finalizing the agenda for this session.

The year 2020 presented unimaginable challenges for the entire world. Today, almost two years into the pandemic, a global effort has resulted in the development and distribution of safe and effective vaccines. However, immunizing a critical mass of the world's population faces a host of challenges, including dangerous strains of the virus, inequitable access to vaccines, and global competition for a limited supply of doses, to which the most powerful economies have gained access while forgetting that their hoarding of vaccines could become a risk to themselves if we, the smaller and poorer countries, do not reach the same level of immunity. Furthermore, we are witnessing the onslaught of climate change around the world, which has exacerbated weather phenomena whose disastrous effects have resulted in the loss of life and extensive damage to agriculture and infrastructure.

In the face of the foregoing, as an international community, we must transform ourselves and demonstrate that multilateralism and international cooperation are effective in efforts aimed at moving forward. Accordingly, I recognize the relevance of the theme that has been chosen as the focus of our deliberations: "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". Despite the adverse conditions that humankind is confronting, we have all shown resilience. The pandemic has demonstrated the enormous capacity of human beings to overcome hostile conditions and survive.

Just after my Administration took office, it was faced with the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected and continues to affect thousands of Guatemalans,

having a strong impact on the economy and modifying social and cultural dynamics, for which it was necessary to respond in accordance with our capacities and implement priority actions to address the most urgent needs.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those friendly countries and international organizations that, in recent months, have given us their unconditional assistance to strengthen the mass vaccination campaign for the Guatemalan population. This is in addition to the efforts we are making as a country, with special emphasis on people, their environment and the means for their integral development, highlighting their right to health and life.

My Government has established as a first priority the public policy that supports the protection of life from conception and the institutionalization of the family. This policy unifies State efforts to guarantee the respect for and fulfilment of fundamental rights as well as attention to immediate needs, from the very moment of conception until adulthood, through various social, health and education programmes aimed at meeting the country's human development indices.

We are also concerned with environmental conservation. Guatemala is recognized as one of the countries worldwide with the highest risk of and vulnerability to climatic events. Despite this, we continue to recover from the damage caused by natural disasters, which has forced us to strive to rehabilitate public services and infrastructure and agricultural production. We have brought care to entire communities following Hurricanes Eta and Iota, which severely hit us last year in a span of 15 days, practically one after the other. It is important to develop recovery-oriented actions in addition to cooperating with and receiving assistance from friendly countries.

In terms of energy, despite the pandemic, Guatemala has been affected by the constant increase in fuel prices. For this reason, policies are being implemented to promote the use of renewable energy sources and such transitional fuels as natural gas for the development of productive activities in the country. This will allow the reduction of dependence on international prices, which tangibly supports Sustainable Development Goal 7, on affordable and non-polluting energy. This also contributes to mitigating climate change through the reduction of greenhouse-gas emissions. It has also increased the proportion of the population with access

to electricity to 93.5 per cent, benefiting both urban and rural areas.

Another priority for us is the fight to eradicate hunger and achieve food and nutrition security. The pandemic has caused great human losses and compromised and affected food systems. We continue to make progress in our "Great National Crusade for Nutrition", having implemented programmes in support of Guatemalan families such as the Fortified Complementary Food programme, through which more than 2,491 metric tons have been distributed throughout the country, especially to children between six months and five years of age. Just over 32,000 home and school gardens have been established, enabling families to grow their own food and market surpluses. Food support has been provided to 194,000 families through various food assistance programmes, and we encourage producer families to organize so that they can sustainably produce quality food. By the end of 2021, we expect to generate a commercial flow of 339 million quetzals — approximately \$45 million — in sales from family farming to the school meals programme run by the Ministry of Education.

Another priority is the protection of the migrant population. Guatemala is no stranger to the migration crisis, and we express our concern at the inappropriate and contradictory messages that are used by drug trafficking and human trafficking networks to encourage irregular migration, especially when such messages come from the highest levels of government. In this sense, the only way to stop the flow of irregular migration is to build walls of prosperity that allow human beings to improve their living conditions in their own countries. I therefore call on destination countries to increase foreign direct investment and improve access for our products to their markets.

Another priority is economic reactivation and growth. Despite the adverse effects of COVID-19 and the various natural phenomena that have affected us, we have managed to maintain a stable economy, which, according to estimates by the Bank of Guatemala, attained growth of more than 4 per cent of our gross domestic product this year. Thanks to these efforts, our country has become one of the best destinations for international investment, this year attracting \$851 million in foreign direct investment for more than 55 projects and generating just over 14,000 formal jobs for our citizens. We have increased exports this year by

\$7.765 billion, which represents growth of nearly 21 per cent over the January to July 2020 period.

As a Government, we are working hard to create jobs, increase foreign investment and develop trade so that we can reduce poverty levels by strengthening micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises. Through the “white seal” programme to combat poverty, products from small Guatemalan producers are promoted and consumer awareness is raised by exporting products from rural areas directly to international markets without intermediaries, so that they generate higher incomes for producers. I take this opportunity to invite friendly countries to learn about this programme and contribute to the small producers participating in it. Opening new markets in this way has been an effective method of reducing and fighting poverty.

Another priority is security. The Central American region faces a constant struggle against transnational organized crime, particularly drug trafficking. We have undertaken various actions in coordination with the specialized bodies of the United Nations, as well as with friendly countries, whom I thank for their goodwill in jointly tackling this scourge. Nevertheless, our region continues to suffer from this enormous scourge, which has cost countless lives. Drug trafficking corrupts our societies and greatly affects our economy, forcing us to divert resources to fight against it. These resources could be used for other purposes to improve human development indices.

Drug trafficking is an evil we suffer from because of the demand for drugs, particularly from the United States of America. However, so far this year alone, we have seen how Venezuela, where 95 per cent of the aircraft entering our country or neighbouring countries originate and transporting drugs to this country, is doing. That is why we have taken on the great responsibility of fighting this evil. Proof of this is that, since the beginning of our Administration to date, 15 drug trafficking structures have been dismantled, and we have managed to destabilize 6 more. We have arrested 2,855 people in relation to this crime, 52 of whom are or have been subject to extradition proceedings for drug trafficking and 7 of whom are or have been subject to extradition proceedings for other crimes committed in different countries. Some 19,953 kilos of cocaine and 7,066 pounds of marijuana have been seized. Some 1,565,811 coca plants, 4,299,800 marijuana plants and 25,929,475 poppy plants have been destroyed. As of yesterday, we counted 114 days

in which no flights carrying illicit substances landed in our territory, which is the longest period without this happening, demonstrating our commitment to the fight against illicit drug trafficking.

With regard to the maritime transit of illicit substances, according to international agencies, there has been an ostensible reduction in the transit of these substances in our territorial waters of the Pacific Ocean, thanks to the ongoing presence of the Special Naval Forces. It is worth noting, however, that these successes seem not to be acknowledged or valued by consumer countries, which bear the greatest responsibility for the unhealthy drug-trafficking chain. It is for this reason, in this Hall, that I demand that these countries be more effective in combating money-laundering and that they do more to see the capital resulting from drug trafficking repatriated, because, in the end, as paradoxical as it may sound, the drug trafficking money is held in the bank accounts of those who distribute the drugs in the consumer countries.

Guatemala has been hit hard by the effects of climate change. Faced with this harsh reality, as President pro tempore of the Central American Integration System, I come to ask the members of the General Assembly to recognize Central America as a region highly vulnerable to the impact of loss and damage resulting from natural disasters, to acknowledge the need for agile, quality climate financing, and to grant access to parametric insurance that will help us to rebuild infrastructure that we are forced to reconstruct year after year. It is a call for understanding and solidarity from the industrialized countries, which are largely responsible for climate change, the consequences of which have a negative impact on the Central American region, even though it emits only 0.35 per cent of world’s greenhouse gases. In contrast, our region contributes to the absorption of carbon emissions thanks to the capacity of our forests.

The disastrous effects of climate change can be mitigated if the collaboration and contributions of the developed countries could be counted upon. Such mitigation could take the form of a compensatory social mechanism that would undoubtedly lead to an improvement in our human development indices. Rest assured that we will make this vulnerability visible with concrete actions at the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The revitalization of the United Nations with a view to adapting to contemporary global realities is important. It is therefore imperative that the maintenance of international peace and security remain its primary purpose, with the Security Council fulfilling that responsibility without ideological bias. I call on its members to be more objective and more equitable.

Guatemala is honoured to have a long history as a troop-contributor to the Organization's peacekeeping missions. Today, once again, we call on the Security Council to act in a manner consistent with its functions, including a responsible use of the veto and avoiding exacerbating international crises.

I firmly believe that the reform of the United Nations remains an unfinished piece of business. We therefore reiterate the need for continued support through United Nations funds and programmes for the neediest people and that the Organization invest specifically in concrete processes for their development. I also draw the Assembly's attention to the fact that Taiwan could provide its experience, capacities and knowledge to the strengthening of multilateralism, taking into account the challenges we face today. We wish Secretary-General António Guterres every success in his second term, and I urge him to prioritize reforming and modernizing the Organization.

I am pleased to note that during its first year of membership in the Economic and Social Council, Guatemala has pursued the sustainable development agenda and achieved the coordination of shared efforts to make the work of that body more effective under its motto: "Inclusive development for all", considering the Council to be point of convergence for creating the conditions that will generate the development we all long for.

As a country with a vocation for peace, Guatemala reiterates before the Assembly the need for complete, irreversible and transparent disarmament. We condemn any nuclear test or threat of the use of force with this type of weapon, which puts at real risk and imperils the continuity of life on our planet.

We reiterate our conviction that the International Court of Justice plays an important role as the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, and we reaffirm our commitment to permanently and definitively resolving before that Court the territorial, insular and maritime dispute we have with Belize, a country with which we

aspire to enjoy a privileged relationship with a view to finding peaceful solutions for shared problems.

Before concluding, despite the hard blow that the pandemic has been for all of us and despite some painful times, my country has been celebrating the bicentennial of our independence. It has been a difficult road, but the challenges have been met in the best possible way. We have had to see this event as a watershed in our history and take on the challenge of confronting the decades of backwardness that is reflected in high rates of poverty and malnutrition, in an obsolete health system and in the urgent need for an educational reform to reduce the digital divide and ensure excellence in public education.

Two hundred years after our independence, we are certain that the future requires greater integration, greater participation, greater growth and greater efforts by everyone, in the forms and areas set forth in the international agenda in the last decade with a view to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In this way, we can move forward, keeping in mind that that will only be possible if we understand the urgent need to build a world where equity is tangible and the human aspiration to improve their living standards is met as a result of the solidarity between the most developed countries and least-favoured countries, without conditionalities, pressure or attempts by the former to violate the sovereignty of the latter as the price of support, aid or cooperation.

We must understand that we cannot overcome the challenges that the inhabitants of this planet face if we do not understand that assistance, cooperation and interaction among nations must be effective, dynamic and sustainable — and never subject to anything that puts endangers the principles of the self-determination of peoples, respect for democracy, and the non-intervention in the internal affairs of other countries.

Many of the smaller nations, such as ours, need to understand that achieving a developed world is about allowing and sharing so that trade is fairer and the warm, friendly and fraternal hand of those who have the most is felt by those who have the least.

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

Mr. Alejandro Giammattei Falla, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. David Kabua, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Marshall Islands to introduce an address by the President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Ms. Kabua (Marshall Islands): I have the distinct honour to introduce the pre-recorded statement of His Excellency Mr. David Kabua, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex III and see A/76/332/Add.2).

Address by Ms. Maia Sandu, President of the Republic of Moldova

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

Ms. Maia Sandu, President of the Republic of Moldova, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Ms. Maia Sandu, President of the Republic of Moldova, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Sandu: A few weeks ago, my country, the Republic of Moldova, celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of its independence. I want to take this opportunity to once again congratulate my fellow citizens on this important milestone for us. Together, we chose democracy and freedom over corruption and State capture. It is my great honour today to address this high-level United Nations meeting on their behalf.

There are some who claim that multilateralism is no longer relevant in this day and age and that we can no longer work together efficiently to counter global challenges because we are compelled to look inward as a result of our own overwhelming domestic problems.

Our world, however, faces extraordinary challenges in both magnitude and kind that in my view we can only solve together.

Most of today's global challenges spill over national borders, since our world is more interconnected than ever before. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, climate change, growing international security issues and the fragility of the international rules-based order all require joint efforts in the quest for sustainable solutions. These problems cannot be solved alone. We need genuine, concerted international efforts to provide truly sustainable solutions for our future. My country is experiencing some of those challenges first-hand, and I have come before the General Assembly today to convey our willingness and readiness to work with United Nations institutions and the international community to find sustainable solutions to the challenges that are affecting us both collectively and individually. Let me go through the four challenges one by one.

First, there is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has been our generation's biggest challenge to date. Like most other States, the Republic of Moldova has been hit hard, but our own experience in dealing with the crisis has been filled with hope and gratitude — gratitude for the tremendous global endeavour of solidarity that supported my country's work to contain the virus, and hope that solidarity can make us all more resilient. Thanks to our external partners, my fellow citizens were able to start the vaccination process as early as March. We now have a sufficient supply of vaccines for all our citizens. Our health-care system has received significant international support. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the European Union (EU), its States members, the World Health Organization, the entire United Nations family and all our friends and partners for their continued help in fighting the pandemic worldwide. As more countries gain access to vaccines, our greatest task ahead is to promote immunization, relaunch our economies and reopen our societies. That can be achieved only through collective effort.

Secondly, with regard to climate change, another major challenge that we are all facing, we are living through its consequences as we speak. Extreme weather, record high temperatures and floods are affecting every country. For the Republic of Moldova, climate change means severe droughts every few years, along with floods and ruined crops and livelihoods. The Republic

of Moldova's footprint in terms of climate change has been slight, and we are committed to keeping it that way. As we seek to modernize our economy, we pledge to do so sustainably. Expanding our forests, transitioning to a green and circular economy, promoting clean energy, preserving water and land resources and promoting responsible and sustainable production and consumption is our way forward.

Thirdly, in the area of international security, we see increasing numbers of crises arising in many parts of the planet. In our interdependent world, their aftershocks can be felt across the globe. With regard to our own region, we are seriously concerned about the deteriorating security situation in the Black Sea area. In that regard, I would like to stress once again that the Republic of Moldova is a State committed to peace. We remain firmly committed to identifying a peaceful, political solution to the conflict in the Transnistrian region of our country, based on Moldova's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We will also continue to promote confidence-building measures with a strong emphasis on protecting fundamental rights and freedoms in the Transnistrian region, which is a pressing issue for my country.

In the spirit of Moldova's constitutional neutrality and of international law, I would like to reiterate that our position on the complete and unconditional withdrawal of Russian forces remains unchanged. That includes the removal or destruction of ammunition from the Cobasna stockpiles, which pose a security and environmental threat to the region as a whole. We are counting on the support of the international community in that endeavour.

The erosion of democracy and the declining trust in the State that it produces is another important global challenge that I would like to address. It is particularly relevant for my country. Democracy remains our universal ideal and a core value for our State. Rebuilding citizens' trust in public institutions, cleaning up the influence of vested interests in the State and delivering decent public services is the cornerstone of Moldova's further democratic progress and modernization. Democracy is being threatened by several factors, one of which is the spread of disinformation. While new social-media platforms have been an important tool for mobilizing and spreading democratic practices in many regions of the world, they are also enhancing disinformation, which, in worst-case scenarios, may

seriously disrupt key democratic processes such as elections. We need to maintain a global conversation and to look jointly for concrete solutions to the dangers that disinformation poses to the rules-based international order.

Another factor that erodes democracy is corruption, which undermines people's trust in their States. While no country is exempt from it, corruption disproportionately affects poor States. It makes the State and its institutions weaker, more vulnerable and less stable. In the recent past, corruption turned Moldova into a captured State. It became a threat to democracy and our national security. Crooks used us as a transit country to launder money through our institutions before depositing it abroad. We have managed to get rid of those corrupt regimes, and our main task now is to strengthen our justice and law-enforcement systems. We are committed to doing so, but fixing one end of the problem does not make the problem disappear.

A system in which criminals extract wealth and assets from countries with weak institutions, store the capital in offshore accounts and then find safe haven in other countries is both unsustainable and unfair. Designing international rules for asset recovery could bring more fairness to the global stage and justice for weaker States. As an international community, we need to design, apply and rigorously monitor systems to promote international transparency and accountability. We need to join efforts to combat money-laundering and investigate illicit financial flows. We need to make better use of asset-seizure tools and work together to suppress organized crime. The magnitude of the challenge is so extensive that we need the serious involvement of all international and national actors. We need an effective collective response in order to safeguard democracy.

Together we can propose better and more sustainable solutions to global challenges. They should be citizen-oriented first and foremost. In last year's elections, the citizens of Moldova said clearly that our country can do better. Despite multiple setbacks, our people continue to fight tirelessly for our young democracy and our European future. With a strong mandate for change, we are beginning to clean up the corruption in the State. We are reforming the justice sector. We are launching a significant infrastructure build-up. We are working on connecting Moldova to the rest of Europe through bridges, improved railways and electricity and gas interconnectors. We are part of free-trade areas both

with the EU and our neighbours to the East. We can provide excellent business opportunities to both. We have a highly educated and hard-working population. We are becoming a good place for investment. We have ambitious plans for the digitalization of the economy and the public sector. Protecting the environment is a central part of our reform process. Only a year ago, these were just hopes. Today we are starting to transform those hopes into reality.

We come from different places and have different national agendas, but our lives are interlinked. The global challenges that I referred to bring us closer than ever. Their complexity can be overcome only through collective efforts in search of sustainable solutions. Such solutions are easier to find in today's world because we have at our disposal not only great minds but also the necessary tools.

We salute the report of the Secretary-General, entitled *Our Common Agenda*, as a forward-looking blueprint for enhanced global cooperation to effectively address our common challenges. Only through solidarity and closer international cooperation will we — the States Members of the United Nations — be able to overcome current and emerging challenges and attain the vision of a world where people live in peace and prosperity in harmony with nature.

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

Ms. Maia Sandu, President of the Republic of Moldova, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Luis Lacalle Pou, President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay.

Mr. Luis Lacalle Pou, President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Luis Lacalle Pou, President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Lacalle Pou (*spoke in Spanish*): Almost two years ago now, the world changed completely, affecting every nation all over the world — rich, poor, big, small, developed and non-developed. There was no plan, which compounded the situation, and every country dealt with the pandemic with different approaches. And we are familiar with the results, which have differed from country to country, although some implemented similar measures.

The coronavirus disease pandemic has finally and starkly revealed our strengths and our weaknesses. We should acknowledge the outstanding work of researchers and scientists, of our health-care systems, which were overwhelmed, and our teachers and professors, who came up with ways to continue to provide education. The way work was done was extraordinarily transformed. In short, humankind demonstrated its ability to adapt in the face of such a large-scale crisis. Let me say that we saw the best version of humankind. In return, however, the pandemic exposed the inequities and structural disparities between countries, as well as the democratic soundness and aptitude for freedom of various Governments and societies.

Our country, Uruguay, has an enormous aptitude for democracy and very much values individual freedom as the purest state of the individual, which demonstrated during the pandemic, as if it were not obvious, that freedom means different things when we have unequal access to the necessary tools. What it has made clear is the false dichotomy between the presence of the State and individual freedom. Furthermore, in the countries where the State has done a good job of protecting people, the most vulnerable individuals can access the tools they need to exercise their freedom. I believe that we should take a moment to reflect on that point. While we are discussing the domestic policies of each of our countries, those policies nonetheless have international repercussions.

We cannot conceive of freedom without responsibility and solidarity for each of us in our own environments. In my country, Uruguay, we demonstrated that by exercising responsible freedom, we could manage much of the pandemic without major reversals. We had community solidarity when we undertook major activities, but we also saw it reflected in actions unknown to the wider public that nonetheless had a positive impact. At the international level, in which countries participated in one way or another, we entrusted part of our development to them. We should

be clear in that regard, particularly where vaccines are concerned. There was a race against time to develop vaccines, and they were developed in record time. Here I should say that I do not want to talk about patents or formulas but about access to the vaccines. There was a shortage of vaccines, and their distribution was not equitable. Every country was forced to purchase its own vaccines. I believe it is important to underscore that, because we all know that the vaccination process is vital to restoring freedom in our countries.

I would like to mention three other points that have had an impact on people's freedom. During the pandemic, Governments needed to protect their people. Our first priority was to protect our fellow countrymen. However, we also made sure that such protection did not become protectionism. We needed the freedom to trade and compete for excellence. We needed access to markets. Our country is now in that process, the process of reopening up to the world. We need cooperation with all the countries, blocs and major Powers.

In addition, I could not let today's meeting go by without addressing the issue of human rights violations perpetrated by Governments that are members of the Organization. Obviously we respect the principle of non-intervention, but we must also understand that we cannot ignore such violations. We must denounce them. The abuse of power undermines those freedoms. Authoritarian Governments that are feared by their peoples and restrict their freedoms end up impoverishing their people for several generations.

Lastly, and on a point that has already been mentioned here by several Heads of State, when it comes to freedom in the future and the health of the planet, we have delivered statements, participated in conferences and made commitments. Now is the time for action. Others have also stressed that point at this rostrum. Financing mechanisms are also crucial so that countries can have access to and make progress on the issues of sustainable development and environmental protection.

I would like to conclude with an optimistic view of the current situation. As a young man, I opposed the philosophy of Thomas Hobbes and the concept that man is a wolf to man. Time has shown that he was deeply wrong. For those who have not read his book, I would also recommend a book by the Swedish author Hans Rosling, *Factfulness*, in which he clearly demonstrates humankind's positive evolution. That is why, after the Assembly, each of us will return to our countries and

our daily duties in the domestic arena. But let us not lose sight of what we have said and heard here. Every action in every corner of the world involves us all. If there is a lesson to be drawn from the pandemic, it is that we are all one.

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

Mr. Luis Lacalle Pou, President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mrs. Kersti Kaljulaid, President of the Republic of Estonia

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

Mrs. Kersti Kaljulaid, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Mrs. Kersti Kaljulaid, President of the Republic of Estonia, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Kaljulaid: I am so sorry that we have not been able to meet together for so long. I feel especially sorry that the conversations we started with many of those here on digital development and digital underdevelopment have been discontinued. But brainstorming sessions, hackathons and similar events have continued online, in particular delivering fresh ideas at lightning speed on how to best overcome or circumvent the circumstances into which we were all suddenly thrown.

I am proud that we all rushed online globally to reach out to each other, provide educational support, develop e-court services and to the extent that we could, deliver via contactless systems. My special acknowledgement goes to the Chief Prosecutor of Kenya, who has made sure that Kenyan people can turn to the courts and receive verdicts even when they are unable to travel or meet. Kenya will not turn back, because even when travel is safe again, why should someone make a trip of hundreds of kilometres to be heard? That is an encouraging example. Through the tears we have shed for our lost ones and from the despair and devastation, solutions have emerged that

will enable our societies to become better and more egalitarian. I hope all Governments that have seen the benefits of online service provision will continue down that avenue. It helps people from rural areas and women with small children who are unable to go and queue at Government offices. It helps people with special needs have better access to what societies can offer them.

There is another positive takeaway from the pandemic. If we truly concentrate our financial and scientific efforts globally on a problem, we can overcome it, but only if we really feel its urgency. I feel encouraged about the fight against climate change, which is at least as dangerous to the human race as a pandemic. That urgency is now widely accepted. We will overcome climate change someday. The day will come when humankind will be able to look back and find that we have reduced the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. That will not be the day when we see planet Earth calming down. The unexpected storms, the heatwaves in places with otherwise moderate temperatures and the snow in regions that are not used to its cold bite will continue even when we have stopped the trend of rising emissions. However, it will be the day we give back hope to our children. From that point on, they can hope that the planet will slowly get better again.

If we can now stop climate change by following the attitudes of more supportive Governments towards the weak in societies and finding the same fervour that we all had in the quest for vaccines, future generations will recognize this decade of this century as the great recovery. If we fail, it will be seen as the beginning of the end. I hope it will be the former, but even if that hope is justified, there are many other urgent problems that we need to focus on while keeping the big picture in the forefront of our minds.

Last Saturday, people in more than 160 countries across the globe united to clean up the world. In the past three years, more than 50 million people across the world have joined that initiative. World Clean Up Day, launched by Estonians in 2008, is now one of the largest civic movements of our time, uniting approximately 160 countries around the world for a cleaner planet. The simple act of cleaning has become a force that binds together people and groups who would otherwise never dream of working for the same goal. It is a great example of the grassroots power of people united by technology and the will to do something themselves to save our planet. But while our people can organize themselves

and do much by and for themselves, they may not be able to do it all, because conflicts still ravage many countries and new ones have emerged. Wars continue to be fought from Ukraine to Syria. Authoritarian regimes such as Belarus, for example, have come up with new hybrid tools to attack democratic societies with innocent people. Those who suffer the most continue to be the most vulnerable in our societies — women, children and adolescents.

When I visited Afghanistan in April, I had the opportunity to meet people who had grown up in a society of reconstruction and hope for the future. The women worked as midwives and had the chance to go to school and work, take care of their own families and assist others with their knowledge and experience. Today, their future looks grim, to say the least, as does the situation in the whole country. Their humanitarian needs are enormous. Approximately half of Afghanistan's population, more than 18 million, is in urgent need of humanitarian assistance, including women and children. As the United Nations Global Advocate for Every Woman Every Child, it makes me sad that the progress seen during the past two decades in Afghanistan could be reversed so quickly. While despairing for Afghan women's right to participate in society in any normal way, we must not forget that the opportunities for women and children globally have been hard hit by the pandemic. Even the most developed countries are not exempt.

The statistics on women's participation in the workforce and their proportion among the unemployed, the number of women unable to receive ante- or postnatal care and the number of children deprived of school meals are the silent testimony, a dark shadow, of the pandemic — the shadow pandemic. The situation was not good even before the coronavirus disease hit. For example, we were not on track to reach our Sustainable Development Goal of zero hunger by 2030. The data gathered by the H6 Partnership institutions, with which I work as United Nations Global Advocate, predict that we will have to rethink many of our development strategies in order to gain the ground lost in pandemics and then some. The shadow pandemic of starvation and the lack of access to education and medical care will continue, at least until we manage to vaccinate the global population, and then it will take yet more time to reverse the negative trends. Estonia is contributing at least 900,000 vaccine doses. Almost every adult in Estonia who gets a shot donates one to someone else

globally. Without vaccinating the global population, there will be no way to even start the recovery from the shadow pandemic. We are all responsible for the future, and we all have to do our part.

On 17 September, Estonia, together with our Baltic friends Latvia and Lithuania, celebrated our thirtieth anniversary of joining the United Nations. Thirty years is a bit more than one human generation. Today Estonia is an elected member of the Security Council. Over the years, we have not only been consumers of security but also responsible security contributors in various regions of the world, from the Sahel to Afghanistan to Iraq.

In March 2019, as the president of the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, Estonia led the adoption of a ministerial declaration whereby countries all over the world agreed to create a global environmental data strategy by 2025. The strategy foresees the development of common data standards and an increase in the quality of environmental data. It also aims to foster cross-border data-sharing and interoperability and improve countries' environmental monitoring capacities and data analysis methods. To support the process, Estonia is launching a global alliance—the “data for the environment alliance”—that will bring together countries interested in improving the quality and accessibility of environmental data and developing digital solutions. Since environmental problems cross national borders, we should do away with all borders when using environmental data. The alliance will be launched during the fifth United Nations Environment Assembly in February 2022. Every country can make a difference, regardless of its size.

In the nineteenth century, the importance of a nation was based on its natural resources and territory. In the twentieth, it was based primarily on military force. Today, a country's main resource is its people — not merely as tools of production, but as individuals with rights and freedoms, as well as their unbounded imagination, ingenuity and entrepreneurship. Only truly free people are creative enough to thrive in the twenty-first century, and only democracies can give their people that freedom. That is why democracy, human rights and the rights of nations are the most important tools for peace and prosperity. Long-term peace and prosperity can be born only of respect for basic rights.

In Estonian minds, the technological transformation cannot be separated from respect for those basic rights and freedoms. The digital transformation and the integrated data economy present one of the greatest opportunities for our future and can make our countries more efficient. That is particularly important for small countries with limited resources.

There is also another important aspect of digitalization that we can never forget, which is digital technologies as an equalizer. Last year, in order to prevent the emergence of digital inequality and division, Estonia and Singapore co-sponsored a global declaration on the digital response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, entitled “Close the Digital Divides: the Digital Response to COVID-19”. Of course, the value we can extract from tools is contingent on their utility — the manner in and the purpose for which those tools are used. We must not help repressive States become more efficient. Instead, we have to help those that want to use digital tools for the benefit of their citizens, not their detriment and oppression.

It is important for Estonia that the basis of our cooperation is formed by shared values, principles and interests, all of which fundamentally hinge on trust, especially trust created through digital means. At the recent Tallinn Digital Summit, we discussed how to utilize trust, transparency and the free flow of data to make large-scale, cross-border infrastructure investments trustworthy. The collective concern of Governments and international organizations demonstrated the need for a shared framework to underpin our cooperation — Trusted Connectivity. The framework articulates the common vocabulary, interests, values, principles and standards we need to safeguard democracy and ensure that democratic countries respond to the global demand for physical and digital infrastructure by offering an alternative of a higher quality and higher standard to those connectivity providers that do not share our love of free societies. Estonia has been among those working to create a normative framework for responsible State behaviour in cyberspace since its early days. At its heart is international law, including the Charter of the United Nations in its entirety, international humanitarian law and human rights law. As the host nation of the independent *Tallinn Manual*, which is starting its third run, we emphasise that wholeheartedly.

As an elected member of the Security Council, we were pleased to host the Council's very first official

discussion on cybersecurity earlier this year (see S/2021/621), which enabled us to raise awareness on threats to international peace and security stemming from the malicious use of cyberspace and to create momentum for the implementation of our existing framework. Discussions on cybersecurity and cybercrime must ensure that we make a concentrated effort to implement the rules of the road that we already have. We cannot go down that road without bringing companies and civil society along.

Legal frameworks are of the utmost importance, but laws alone do not protect us. We also need empathy, democracy, the rule of law, good governance and the flexibility to adopt changes caused by COVID-19, among other things. Countries are exporting what they actually are and what happens inside their own country. Countries that repress their people also spread fear to other countries and societies. That is why we have to talk about the repression in Belarus. We must stand in solidarity against the aggressive and destabilizing behaviour of Alexander Lukashenko's regime and continue to believe that the will of the Belarussian people should be the main guideline for shaping the future of the Republic of Belarus.

That is why we cannot forget about the occupied Crimean peninsula or the situation in Eastern Ukraine. Ukraine has our strong and unwavering support for its sovereignty and territorial integrity and for the non-recognition policy of Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea. Security is indivisible. Ukrainian security is also ours. As an elected member of the Security Council, we continue to keep the issue of Russia's aggression in the Donbas and the illegal annexation of Crimea on the Council's agenda.

That is also why we must talk about migration flows affected by instability and unrest in different continents. That is why Estonia supports the idea of a summit for democracy, hosted by President Biden. That is why Estonia, for its part, is hosting the next Global Conference for Media Freedom in order to boost the synergies of the Internet and media freedom in a context where journalists and media workers are more and more dependent on Internet freedom and modern technologies. Advancing media freedom also goes hand in hand with combating disinformation. That is why we continue to support the rights of women and girls around the world. There can be no democracy, security or development without half of humankind.

When looking at the future, we need to talk about the rights and protection of children, particularly in situations of conflict. In Afghanistan, at least 45 per cent of the population is children under 15 years of age. They need protection, access to education and health care, or we will add to the never-ending cycle of conflict.

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

Estonia, as an elected member of the Security Council, has placed special emphasis on the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in peace processes and on the fight against sexual and gender-based violence. We have tried to give a voice to women human rights defenders by inviting them to brief the Security Council. We were also able to draw attention to the ever-deteriorating situation of children in armed conflicts, which has been further amplified by COVID-19. But we know that is by no means enough.

Tangible action is needed more than ever. The United Nations relies on cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character. However, solidarity is achieved in practice only if we follow the principles of solidarity every single day. There is great potential for solidarity in the United Nations, regardless of the problems we are collectively facing. If there is a will, there is always a way. We remain ready to serve the United Nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Estonia for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Kersti Kaljulaid, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Chandrikapersad Santokhi, President of the Republic of Suriname

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Suriname.

Mr. Chandrikapersad Santokhi, President of the Republic of Suriname, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour

to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Chandrikapersad Santokhi, President of the Republic of Suriname, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Santokhi: I would like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session, and to assure him of my country's full support during his presidency. I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge His Excellency Mr. Volkan Bozkir for his sterling leadership of the Assembly during the very challenging previous session and to wish him well in his future endeavours.

The unpredictable turns of the global political and economic landscape have shown that multilateral cooperation, international solidarity and concrete action are needed more than ever. Indeed, we should all work together to deliver for the people and the planet prosperity, peace and partnerships. All of those interconnected challenges can be considered a puzzle, the pieces of which can be found in various countries. I urge all of us to work together to solve that puzzle and secure the future of our planet. With that, we will demonstrate leadership, humanity, political responsibility and commitment. Now is the time for solidarity, unity and global leadership.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has clearly highlighted the fact that in times of crisis, so-called international solidarity has little or no meaning. Multilateralism and international solidarity have come under pressure. The pandemic revealed weaknesses in the effectiveness of our international mechanisms and global legal infrastructure. Regrettably, the principle of collective effort and responsibility was replaced by a more individual approach — that of protecting the nation first. However, I want to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the countries and organizations that expressed solidarity and provided valuable support to my country and people in the battle against the pandemic at a very early stage. Our thanks go especially to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, India, China and the United States of America.

The weaknesses exposed in our health systems must be addressed with innovative measures, the use of modern technology and international cooperation. As we go forward, I want to underscore the importance of using science and technology for peaceful purposes. We must also pay attention to the long-term social

and psychological aspects, the widening education gap and digital divide, as well as unequal access to vaccines. Moreover, many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, known as a middle-income region, regrettably have not benefited from the various COVID-19 multilateral debt-relief solutions.

We must develop a post-COVID-19 strategy, with a focus on developing an effective approach to improving vaccination levels in our societies, rebuilding the economy and establishing a COVID-19 recovery fund, with the support of international financial institutions and the private sector. We cannot go back to what we have been used to. We must rather focus on how we organize ourselves for a new normal, with COVID-19 as part of our lives, and on removing barriers to facilitate business and investment.

Beyond the severe impact of COVID-19, we have been challenged by financial and economic deficiencies, including a high debt burden. In that regard, access to concessional financing is critically important to rebooting our economy. We currently face unrealistic, unfair and counterproductive classification instruments. Suriname looks forward to new substantive methods of financial support, based on the socioeconomic reality of the countries concerned. At the same time, the vulnerabilities of countries should be taken into account. I call on all to support the multidimensional vulnerability index, as proposed by small island developing States, and to remove bureaucracy in supporting those States. It is in the interests of us all.

Suriname supports the call for a stronger and more effective United Nations. A restructured and revitalized United Nations must ensure that the Organization remains the source of redress for the international community and home to international justice and equitable decision-making. It is my firm belief that societies should be organized based on democratic values, good governance, an independent judiciary and respect for human rights. In achieving those objectives, we must allow countries, especially in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, to develop sustainable economies without obstacles. Isolation and trade blockades, such as in the case of Cuba, in my own region, undermine those principles and are not conducive to the achievement of those goals. I therefore call for continued dialogue and negotiations to resolve differences and conflicts within the framework of the Charter of the United Nations.

Climate change remains a serious challenge and an existential threat that requires the attention of us all. In recent months, we have witnessed its worldwide impact in the form of deadly floods, widespread forest fires and significantly increasing global temperatures. No country or region has been spared its wrath. In the case of my country, Suriname, and other countries with low-lying coastal areas, we are committed to fighting climate change because we are particularly vulnerable, even though we have contributed the least to the problem.

Suriname is a high-forest low-deforestation country, with forest coverage of approximately 93 per cent. Suriname significantly contributes to the mitigation of the effects of climate change. We are one of the few countries rated carbon-negative in the world. Yet we are not fully benefiting from global arrangements associated with sound forest management. The time has come to acknowledge the unique challenges faced by high-forest low-deforestation developing countries and to improve and maximize their fair access to climate finance.

As we prepare for the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 26), in early November this year, in Glasgow, we must bear in mind that noble ideals with strong political commitments do not mean much if not supported with new financial resources. COP 26 should therefore result in ambitious and actionable commitments.

Suriname calls on developed countries to recommit to the \$100 billion pledge to support developing countries, as agreed in the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement. In this regard, I stress the importance of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization and the need to support its activities aimed at protecting the Amazon rainforest and its biodiversity.

One year ago, the new Government of Suriname, under my leadership, took office and had to deal with several financial and economic challenges. Amid the climate change challenges, and the COVID-19 pandemic, my country is also confronted with a challenging fiscal choice between servicing an increased sovereign debt or spending more on health, education and the livelihoods of our citizens. In order to get the tremendous foreign debt under control and make our economy healthy again, my country had decided, to develop a comprehensive recovery plan, which, at staff

level, has been approved by the International Monetary Fund, and we look forward to board-level approval as soon as possible.

Suriname is also at the cusp of attracting substantial foreign direct investments, particularly in the extractive industries, agriculture and tourism. For this purpose, an enabling environment is being prepared, including the development of a local content policy and a new investment code, to facilitate these investments. Accordingly, I am inviting the international business community to invest in my beautiful country and contribute to sustainable development and the earmarked transition towards a green economy.

In closing, I stand in this Hall, at the stronghold of multilateralism and international solidarity, and call on all of us to play our part in moving from words into action. We need a new more agile, equitable and effective multilateralism, based on the new realities the world is facing today — a multilateralism that is efficient, with collective leadership, a solution-based approach and serving the needs of all countries.

It is our obligation, as the leaders of today, to build a better world and planet for those living today, but more so for those generations still to come.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Suriname for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Chandrikapersad Santokhi, President of the Republic of Suriname, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Julius Maada Bio, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Julius Maada Bio, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Julius Maada Bio, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Bio: I congratulate the President of the General Assembly on assuming the responsibility of steering the work of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session. I assure him of Sierra Leone's fullest support during his tenure.

I also commend his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Volkan Bozkır of the Republic of Turkey for the effective and efficient conduct of the Assembly at its seventy-fifth. We deeply appreciate his efforts in galvanizing a multilateral approach to containing the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and handling its multifaceted impacts through several high-level meetings.

I also congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr. Antonio Guterres, on his reappointment. I assure him of Sierra Leone's continued support as he leads and coordinates the United Nations response to persistent global challenges. Sierra Leone associates itself with his call, among other equally important matters, for prioritizing the COVID-19 response, vaccine access and equity, tackling poverty and inequality, the impact of climate change, and promoting gender equality and human rights protection and promotion.

Our collective aspiration for a safe, equitable and prosperous future has been challenged over the last few years. As the world wrestles with the tragedy, trauma and adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Sierra Leone appreciates all COVID-19-specific resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council. Sierra Leone is also fully supportive of all policy initiatives that advance multilateral cooperation on fighting the pandemic and implementing measures to mitigate its long-term effects on lives and livelihoods. We believe that our collective commitment through multilateral partnerships will see our world through the throes of this pandemic, build resilience and recover sustainably. 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" — is therefore most appropriate and timely.

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted lives and economies, constrained development owing to the repurposing of development finance and the withholding of private capital, escalated the threats of climate change and food insecurity, broadened inequities and injustice, and increased fragilities. Nations risk

not meeting the Sustainable Development Goals and building resilience against future shocks. However, amid premature pessimism that the familiar world order has unravelled, Sierra Leone sees possibilities for renewed optimism and new growth. As a nation, we are grateful to the United Nations and the friendly countries and multilateral institutions that have worked with us to navigate the stormy period since March 2020.

In Sierra Leone, through our Quick Action Economic Response Programme, we are building fiscal resilience by investing in agriculture, developing human capital and expanding productivity through economic diversification. But we believe our post-COVID recovery will be anchored in increased private-sector investments, international trade and development financing in growth sectors. In that regard, we have created a conducive business ecosystem, amicably resolved business disputes, ratified international trade and labour instruments and continued to make progress in the fight against corruption because it is good for business and governance.

Our structured health preparedness plan, which has been implemented with close attention to the science and data, has helped save lives and protect livelihoods. Mindful of the need to save lives and preserve human dignity, Sierra Leone has been proactive in interrupting transmission chains, curtailing infection, minimizing deaths and mitigating the effects of COVID-19 on our population. We commend the global solidarity around the provision of COVID-19 vaccines to our nation. We thank in particular the People's Republic of China, France, the United States, the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility and other multilateral institutions. We are ramping up vaccination rates and gaining greater vaccination coverage for our population. The worst of the delta variant may be behind us, but we will remain ever vigilant.

Throughout the COVID-19 period, we have done more to improve human capital development, support the most vulnerable of our citizens and communities, build strong institutions, create more inclusive democratic spaces, build infrastructure and ensure public service delivery. In our view, resilience is not to be hoped for but worked for, diligently and purposefully. We no longer wish to be perceived as a nation that is saddled with the tragedies and failures of the past. We no longer wish to be seen and spoken about as a nation recovering from problems ranging from civil strife to Ebola and from bad governance and economic gridlock to food

and climate insecurity. We are a nation striving ever harder to fulfil our enormous potential.

Our peaceful democracy has matured. Predictable, regular and peaceful elections are the norm. Civil-society actors are partners at all levels of governance and of the delivery of public services. We have established an independent commission for peace and national cohesion to foster social cohesion and further consolidate peace in our country. We continue to remove threats to democratic freedoms and human rights. We have repealed a half-century-old seditious-libel law. No politician or rights activist is in prison for expressing his or her beliefs. No journalist is in prison for the practice of journalism in Sierra Leone. We have abolished the death penalty in our nation.

Throughout the COVID-19 period, we have promoted the right to education through creative solutions, including nationwide distance learning and hybrid education technologies. We have added 800,000 more learners and increased domestic education financing to 22 per cent of the national budget, and learning has continued throughout the pandemic period. Our policy of radical inclusion grants tuition-free and safe access to quality education to all learners, including pregnant girls, parent learners and children from poor and rural areas or living with disabilities. Coupled with comprehensive school safety measures, a revamped curriculum, hybrid education technologies, credible transition examinations, school meals, school health and other forward-looking policies, we are making steady progress in Sierra Leone. We seek partnerships to further expand these investments in education, technical training, higher education and entrepreneurship. Only then can our young people seize opportunities to expand the economy, innovate, take advantage of the technologies of the fourth industrial revolution and create new possibilities for our nation.

In our efforts to ensure the right to health we have simultaneously battled COVID-19 and other disease burdens such as malaria, HIV and tuberculosis, thanks to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. The Gavi Alliance has supported the provision of more vaccines. We are reducing maternal and child mortality across the country and look forward to more partnerships to make even more progress. With respect to the right to work, we have regularly paid salaries through the COVID-19 period and provided support for vulnerable populations. There is greater Internet penetration and we are increasing energy access

throughout the country through a mix of sources, including solar power.

Sierra Leone associates itself with international efforts to protect the rights of women, get more women ready for the workforce, expand their access to resources and promote gender empowerment and equity. Building resilient and inclusive post-coronavirus societies involves increasing access to justice in a safe and secure society. In Sierra Leone, we have expanded legal aid services to poor and underserved people and established special courts to fast-track cases in the areas of sexual offences, social security, corruption and small claims, among others. Sierra Leone urges global solidarity with regard to access to justice and remedies for survivors of sexual violence. That builds on our domestic efforts against sexual and gender-based violence. In that regard, I have directed the Permanent Mission of Sierra Leone to the United Nations to sponsor a stand-alone resolution on the issue in the General Assembly. Let this be the year that the United Nations gives all survivors of sexual violence the remedies they deserve. We will also continue to work closely with partners on cybersecurity and digital public goods, as well as to curb irregular migration of persons. We have complemented international action with local initiatives and cooperation models.

The perils of climate change in land degradation, erratic rainfall patterns and rising sea levels and temperatures loom large. Together they threaten food and water security, fish resources and energy access. Sierra Leone is on board with all global climate-action commitments and looks forward to participating in the upcoming Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Glasgow and the fifteenth Conference of Parties of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. We are integrating climate-smart policies and projects into our development priorities. Last year, we established a statutory agency to enhance our capacity to deal with the full cycle of disaster management. However, as with other least developed countries, the climate financing gap remains a key challenge to the implementation of our mitigation and adaptation measures. Accordingly, Sierra Leone joins other least developed countries in calling for a green climate fund to meet the \$100 billion target to support the mitigation and adaptation plans of developing countries. Through that we can create new green jobs, especially for young people and women,

encourage sustainable and inclusive communities and build resilience to climate-change shocks.

In spite of that progress, our subregions in Africa are dealing with peace deficits arising from violent extremism, piracy and other forces of instability. Our continental organization, the African Union, and our subregional Economic Community of West African States are fully engaged. We urge the United Nations to increase its collaboration and partnerships with those bodies and Governments in order to usher in a more peaceful subregion. My country provides leadership to the conflict-affected and fragile countries of the Group of Seven Plus (G-7+). We emphasize the nexus between peace and development and reaffirm our joint call for a global ceasefire and the pursuit of peace through national dialogue and reconciliation. Only then will our nations be able to emerge from fragility into sustainable development.

While the COVID-19 pandemic is universal, it has disproportionately affected countries such as ours in the G-7+ group. The world's poorest nations face the grim challenges of global economic downturns, reduced foreign aid and larger trade deficits. The success of global recovery efforts will therefore depend on the recovery of the countries in fragile situations. We have undertaken voluntary national reviews and peer reviews as self-assessment tools for taking stock of the progress we have made and the challenges with which we must contend. We believe that through our ongoing reforms we can transition from fragility to a sustainable and resilient future. By investing in human capital development and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions, we believe that future is attainable.

A fairer and more equitable post-COVID-19 world order is possible when all nations and regions of the world can dialogue as equals. We must eradicate hierarchies of power and discuss our common concerns and shared aspirations as equals. Sierra Leone notes the remarkable progress that the United Nations and Member States have made on the issue of decolonization. We therefore encourage Member States to map out fresh approaches to advancing the decolonization agenda, in line with the mandate contained in resolution 1514 (XV). A post-COVID world order requires more partnership and collaboration with input from all nations on all continents across the world. We cannot exclude the voices of the 54 nations and 1.2 billion members of

the world's population who live in Africa. We cannot justify that exclusion with power structures set up 75 years ago. We must reaffirm our common values and address our shared aspirations as equals.

We can start to redress these gross imbalances by reforming the Security Council to make it more broadly representative, efficient and transparent and thereby enhance the legitimacy of its decisions. Sierra Leone recognizes the commitment that has been demonstrated to injecting new life into the discussions on reform of the Security Council. As Coordinator of the African Union Committee of Ten Heads of State and Government on reform of the Security Council, Sierra Leone is pleased to note the progress made during the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly in acknowledging Member States' wide recognition of and broad support for Africa's legitimate aspiration to playing its rightful role on the global stage. As asserted in the African Common Position, articulated in the Ezulwini Consensus and Sirte Declaration, redressing that historical injustice against Africa is an urgent priority. Africa demands no fewer than two permanent seats with all the rights and prerogatives of permanent members, including the right to veto, if the veto is retained, and two additional seats in the Security Council's non-permanent category. On behalf of African Union member States, I urge all members to demonstrate their renewed commitment to reforming the Security Council and making it more representative, inclusive, democratic, transparent and accountable.

Let me conclude by reiterating that Sierra Leone will work with partners to enhance the multilateral rules-based order, collaborate on our shared post-COVID global agenda and build back better and more sustainably.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Julius Maada Bio, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker for this meeting. We will continue the general debate at the next plenary meeting, which will start at 3 p.m.

The meeting rose at 2.50 p.m.

Annex I

Address by His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

[Original: Arabic and English]

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful,

Mr President, Mr Secretary-General, Your Excellencies:

It is a special pleasure to be part of this General Assembly, as our countries join in a common cause—to act on shared concerns; to be alert to serious global threats; and to move forward, faster, to the world that our people deserve, leaving no one behind.

I do not need to elaborate upon what we all know; today's most critical challenges are global in scope—the deadly pandemic, climate change, violent conflicts exploited by global extremists, destabilising economic fault-lines, a continuing, global refugee crisis.

Our countries have a vast shared interest in responding effectively. That requires collective action, and the emphasis must be on action. Positive change cannot be willed into being. Our work must be coordinated and structured to deliver real-world impact.

Jordan has long supported a collective approach. Since our country was founded a hundred years ago, we have worked closely with regional and international partners to support peace, progress, and mutual respect worldwide. We know the hardships and difficulties, but we also see the tremendous opportunities to build a better world.

My friends,

Global partnership is critical to resolving one of the longest-standing conflicts in modern history — the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The bitter war on Gaza this past year was a reminder that the current situation is simply unsustainable. And the suffering we continue to see points us once more to the critical need to keep supporting UNRWA, as it continues to fulfil its UN mandate and provide vital humanitarian services to 5.7 million vulnerable Palestinian refugees.

But how many more homes will be lost? How many more children will die, before the world wakes up? Genuine security for either side — indeed, for the whole world — can only be achieved through the two-state solution, a solution that leads to the establishment of an independent, sovereign, and viable Palestinian state on the basis of the June 1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side-by-side with Israel in peace and security.

And Jerusalem is at the heart of this peace. Billions of people around the world hold this Holy City dear.

For our part, Jordan will continue working to preserve the historic and legal status quo of Jerusalem and its Islamic and Christian Holy Sites, under Hashemite Custodianship.

I believe Jerusalem's holiness to Muslims, Christians, and Jews can and must bring us together. With international help, the Holy City can be, not a cause of division, but a symbol of unity for all to see.

My friends,

Elsewhere in the region, Lebanon is facing a dire humanitarian and economic situation. Desperate living-conditions are looming for millions — family tables without food, homes losing electricity and water, workplaces unable to operate. In this time of great need, we owe the Lebanese people our full support, to enable them to rise from this crisis. And that demands a well-planned, well-executed international response, engaging all of us.

And the world must not forget the millions of refugees in host countries like Lebanon. Jordanians well understand what a serious impact this has. For generations, our country has sacrificed to help millions of refugees fleeing injustice and danger. The wellbeing of these millions and the communities that host them remains an international responsibility. It is vital to keep up support for UNHCR, the World Food Programme, and others that care for and offer hope to refugees and their host communities.

My friends,

Leaving people in need, innocents in jeopardy, and conflicts unresolved plays into the hands of global extremists, who exploit the despair, frustration, and anger these crises leave in their wake.

Although we may have won some battles, the fight against terrorism and extremism is not yet over. Our action — collective, global action — remains essential.

To address the totality of the problem and the need, Jordan continues to work closely with our partners. Through the Aqaba Process, a holistic approach, we have helped bring together concerned leaders, to coordinate, exchange best practices, develop new strategies, and more.

My friends,

If humanity faced no other threats at all, we would still need to unite to face the most existential of our time — the global climate crisis. As one of the water-poorest countries in the world, Jordan is painfully aware of the threat. Our National Green Growth Action Plan is designed to ensure energy efficiency and strengthen our resilience in water and agriculture.

But no country can combat climate change on its own. And that is a powerful reminder of the need to develop new ways to respond as one world, one humanity, to all the crises and challenges we face.

It is for this reason that Jordan has been calling for regional networks of resiliency to pool our resources and respond quickly and smoothly to needs as they arise. And we stand ready to utilise our country's strategic location — at the crossroads of Asia, Africa, and Europe — to facilitate the broadest international response.

But every country has strengths and capabilities to offer; every region has capacities to speed forward the larger global response; and every international body has powers to contribute, to guide, reinforce, and coordinate global action.

In this General Assembly, together, we can re-think, re-calibrate and re-direct our world away from danger.

We know the threats; we know the opportunities. Now, together, let's take the actions we need.

Thank you.

Annex II

Address by His Majesty King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, King of Saudi Arabia and President of the Council of Ministers of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

[Original: Arabic and English]

In the name of Allah most gracious, most merciful

Your Majesties, Your Highnesses, Your Excellencies,

Mr. President of the General Assembly, Mr. Secretary-General of the UN,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

May Peace be with you.

In the beginning, we would like to congratulate Mr. Abdulla Shahid for having been elected President of the seventy-sixth session of the UN General Assembly, and I wish him success in fulfilling his duties. I also would like to thank his predecessor Mr. Volkan Bozkır for his efforts during his term as president of the previous session. I would like also to congratulate the UN Secretary-General for having been re-elected for a second term, applauding his unique efforts to improve the efficiency of the UN institutions in order to achieve the goals of its charter.

Mr. President,

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a founding Member of the UN. Ever since its signing the charter in San Francisco, the Kingdom has been committed with the UN objectives and principles which aim to preserve international peace and security, bring about peaceful settlements to conflicts, respect sovereignty and independence, and avoid interfering in the internal affairs of other countries. The challenges facing the international community today necessitate the strengthening of international multi-lateral cooperation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has proven that the path to sustainable recovery depends on our cooperation, all together, in a collective framework. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia played a vital role in leading the international response to this pandemic during its G-20 presidency last year. The Kingdom supported the global efforts to face this pandemic with \$500 million, in addition to providing \$300 million in aid to assist the countries' efforts to combat the pandemic.

Despite the economic difficulties, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia remains committed to its substantial humanitarian and developmental role in assisting the most needy countries, and those affected by natural disasters and humanitarian crises. In 2021, the Kingdom is the largest provider of humanitarian and developmental aid in the Arab and Muslim worlds, and among the top three donor countries internationally.

The Kingdom is keen on the recovery of the global economy. This is clearly reflected in the Kingdom's pioneering efforts in cooperation with its OPEC+ partners, and within the G-20, to address the severe consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in order to strengthen the oil markets' stability and balance of supplies in a way that maintains the interests of suppliers and consumers.

Mr. President,

The Kingdom is aware of the importance of combating the efforts to face the mutual challenge of climate change and its adverse impacts. Therefore, the Kingdom has launched unique initiatives that are important to the region and the world, most prominent of which are the Saudi Green Initiative, the Green Middle East Initiative, and the Circular Carbon Economy which together will effectively contribute to achieving the global targets in these sectors.

The essence of the Kingdom's Vision 2030 is to achieve prosperity, build a better future, and create a leading economy as well as dynamic society engaged with the world. Five years since the inception of Vision 2030, we have made tremendous headway in supporting local industry, developing infrastructure, information technology and energy solutions, investing in many other sectors as well as empowering women and youth, and improving the quality of life for all.

In this spirit, the Kingdom's foreign policy pays utmost attention to strengthening peace and security, supporting dialogue and peaceful solutions, and creating the right conditions conducive to achieving development and meeting peoples' aspirations for a better tomorrow in the Middle East and around the world. This spirit manifested itself in the Kingdom's success in sponsoring agreement among the GCC member states, and our effective contribution to the Friends of Sudan group, as well as our support for Iraq's efforts to restore its recovery and status.

The Kingdom also strongly supports the efforts aiming at bringing about a binding peaceful settlement for the Renaissance Dam problem in a way that protects Egypt's and the Sudan's water rights. The Kingdom supports the UN-sponsored peaceful solutions for the crises in Syria and Libya, and all the efforts aimed at achieving peace and stability in Afghanistan to meet the aspirations of the Afghan people and preserve the rights of all members of their society.

Mr. President,

We emphasize that peace is the strategic option for the region through a just and permanent solution for the Palestinian issue based on the relevant international resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative in a way that ensures the rights of the Palestinian people to establish their independent state within the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The Yemen Peace Initiative presented by the Kingdom in March of this year is capable of ending the conflict, stopping the bloodshed, and putting an end to the suffering of the fraternal Yemeni people. Unfortunately, the terrorist Houthi militia continues to reject the peaceful solutions, opting instead for the military option to control more Yemeni land, and carrying out daily aggression against civilian objects inside the Kingdom, and undermining international navigation and global energy supplies. The Houthi militia is using the suffering of the Yemeni people and their dire need for humanitarian aid, as well as the risks presented by the deteriorating condition of the vessel *FSO Safer* as tools for bargaining and extortion.

Mr. President,

The Kingdom has always abided by the principles and resolutions of the international legitimacy, paying respect to the national sovereignty of all states, and rejecting the interference in the internal affairs of other countries. The Kingdom reserves the legitimate right to defend itself against the attacks launched by ballistic

missiles, and explosive-laden UAVs and boats. The Kingdom categorically rejects any attempt to interfere in its internal affairs.

Iran is a neighbouring country. We hope that our preliminary talks with it lead to tangible outcome to build trust, paving the way to achieve aspirations of our peoples in building relations of cooperation based on the compliance with principles and resolutions of the international legitimacy, respect for sovereignty, and avoid interfering in the internal affairs of other countries, as well as its cessation from all types of support for terrorist groups and sectarian militias that have brought only war, destruction, and suffering to the peoples of the world.

The Kingdom stresses the importance of maintaining a WMD-free Middle East. Accordingly, the Kingdom supports the international efforts aimed at preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons. The Kingdom expresses its grave concern over Iranian actions which are contradictory to its commitments and pose stark contrast to what Iran always claimed that its nuclear program is intended for peaceful purposes.

The Kingdom will continue to counter the extremist ideology that is based on the rhetoric of hate and exclusion. The Kingdom is steadfast in combating the practices of terrorist groups and sectarian militias that bring destruction people and nations. The Kingdom underscores the importance of the international community standing firmly against all those who support, sponsor, finance, and harbour terrorist groups and sectarian militias, or use them as a means to spread chaos and destruction, furthering their hegemony and influence.

May peace be upon you.

Annex III

Address by Mr. David Kabua, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands

Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, Excellencies,

It is my great pleasure to bring you the warm greetings of Yokwe from the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Small and vulnerable nations such as my own are in dire need of a stronger United Nations. While we are not naive to the difficult challenges facing us all, we cannot forget that the UN was created not only to be inclusive of global diversity, but also to ceaselessly work to achieve common ideals of democracy, free and secure societies, and basic universal human rights. If we cannot remember the mistakes which led to the last century's open global military conflicts, than my fear is that we are doomed to repeat them.

Leadership must come from all who are committed to act — small and large nations alike. We cannot abide by attempts to rewrite the script on universal human rights. And my own Pacific islands region faces an emerging security threat in the form of geopolitical competition by the world's largest powers — are we again to be caught in the middle of a tug-of-war? Throughout my nation's young history, we have remained true to the pursuit of an independent and free democracy which assures basic and individual human rights, even as we tackle steep development challenges. As island leaders, we must remain firmly in control of our commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific, and stand apart from any who would seek to have us trade our core values for easy inducement. I welcome the recent Japan-Pacific Islands Defense Dialogue as a key confidence-building measure against authoritarian influence.

Yet it is an open question if the UN and international community can adequately speak to this emerging threat, and if our closest traditional partners can answer our call with a true partnership which goes well beyond media statements, but one which makes a dramatic difference in our local communities.

Mr. President,

The Marshall Islands remains committed to building a stronger Pacific Islands region one which can answer to these deep challenges to democracy, security and development, including the threats of rising seas upon our low-lying atoll nation. Yet the means to address this must be through institutions which place our voices and leadership aspirations equal among others. We cannot take a backseat to our own affairs. Even as the Marshall Islands is currently transitioning away from the Pacific Islands Forum — under the final authority of our parliament — we also are committed more than ever to joint action which advances democracy, security and human rights in our region.

In this regard, I welcome the strengthening of the Micronesian Presidents Summit in the North Pacific, and we look forward to forging a common voice which addresses emerging security threats, and directly reflects the shared values of our cultures and democratic Constitutions.

Mr. President,

I support the firm commitment by the UN Secretary-General to advance UN system reform discussions into clear management actions. I want to underscore the urgent need for tangible and text-based efforts towards UN Security Council reform.

I am particularly pleased to support the opening later this year of a new UN Multi-Country Office in the Federated States of Micronesia, dedicated to serve the five North Pacific island countries. This is a vital opportunity to strengthen the fragile bridge between national and global goals, and affords the international system a key opportunity to focus on the unique structure of our nations. We welcome the increased focus by the United Nations, and commit to doing our part to better integrate UN-level assistance into national planning and implementation. In particular, I also emphasize the importance of including practical assistance to address nuclear testing impacts within the upcoming UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.

Mr. President,

We gather at the United Nations still in the midst of the global pandemic on COVID-19. The international community still faces deep challenges to upscale international cooperation to supply and distribute vaccines, particularly to the most vulnerable peoples. However, I am pleased to report our own robust success towards the goal of achieving vaccination of nearly every eligible person in our nation. In particular, I wish to thank the United States of America for its strong and early outreach to ensure that the Marshall Islands was not left behind in vaccination efforts. We proudly remain COVID-free, even as future risks remain great.

However, our borders remain largely closed, as we lack the full capacity to address the potential of even small outbreaks. While our core economic driver of fisheries is only starting to recover, our nation remains forced to cut back effort in core development areas, at a time when we clearly should have been moving forward. It is vital that the international system continue to strengthen efforts to social and economic impacts of COVID measures in small and remote island nations.

Mr. President,

Climate change remains the greatest threat to the security and well-being of our region — especially to low-lying atoll nations like my own. We simply have no higher ground to cede. The tireless leadership of small island developing states, and wider circles of partners, makes clear that an overwhelming global majority demands the Paris Agreement must be delivered in actions, not empty words. This year's Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC offers a vital opportunity for the world to make good on the promises of the Paris Agreement to raise ambition. We remain in support of the United Kingdom's leadership as host, no matter the challenges posed by the global pandemic. We have put forward our own commitment for stronger action — both on our own national commitments on emissions and adaptation, as well as expectations for meaningful leadership by the international maritime sector for greater ambition — but we cannot act alone. This year is the moment to rebuild higher ambition, and the world, especially the most vulnerable, cannot afford failure to hold temperature rise to below 1.5°C. Earlier promises of stronger climate finance remain unfulfilled, and even if delivered, must be far more accessible to those most in need. As sea-levels continue to rise unabated, there is now an immediate threshold between unfulfilled promises and meaningful action. A Special Rapporteur on climate change is needed to strengthen the focus and human rights lens on those most vulnerable, where there are often no easy solutions. The world simply cannot delay climate ambition any further.

Mr. President,

The Republic of the Marshall Islands has our legacy roots as a strategic UN Trusteeship, where — despite our warnings at the time - two Trusteeship Council resolutions remain the only instance in history where any UN organ ever specifically

authorized nuclear detonations. This was part of a wider nuclear weapons testing program of 67 atmospheric tests conducted by the United States as administering authority, between 1946 and 1958 — delivering the equivalent of 1.6 Hiroshima-sized shots every day, for 12 years. The legacy of these tests remains a very contemporary threat — in our waters, our lands and our bodies. We have recently formed a National Nuclear Commission to coordinate effective responses, and we continue to view these impacts through a human rights lens.

Despite our commitment, we simply lack the capacity to fully address our local needs. We tirelessly underscore that no people or nation should ever have to bear a burden such as ours, and that no effort should be spared to move towards a world free of nuclear weapons and nuclear risk, through any and all effective pathways.

Mr. President,

We welcome recent progress to restore the UN Oceans Summit, now planned for next year to be co-hosted by Kenya and Portugal. We look forward to the Our Ocean Summit next year hosted by Palau. As a nation whose wider territory is 99 percent oceans, leadership is an undeniable priority. Global action on oceans cannot be limited only to piecemeal approaches. Far stronger political will is needed — and as large ocean nations, we are leading by example. Joined by our regional neighbours, we have defined our fixed maritime boundaries even in the face of rising seas. We have worked with the Parties to the Nauru Agreement to move the world towards fully traceable and sustainable tuna stocks. As the world's largest tuna port, we have led with our own national action to spur sharp progress on COVID vaccination for foreign fishing crews. Together with the Forum Fisheries Agency, we remain committed as a region to ensuring basic minimum social and human rights standards for the crew, observers and vessels which fish our waters and visit our ports. But this remains incomplete without the stronger commitment from distant water fishing nations, many of whom are also global superpowers. Human rights apply in the ocean — without exception — just as much as they apply on land.

Mr. President,

More than 75 years after the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the world remains at a loss to turn these aspirations into realities. There are many complex rights situations around the world which deserve more careful attention and diplomacy than generic approaches can afford. Yet far too often, nations seek to avoid accountability, and try to hide behind political muscle or use sovereignty, colonial legacies or development challenges as excuses for forced disappearances, extrajudicial killings or to suppress basic political expression. This is simply not a “win-win” solution for anyone.

On the basis of our own history and experience, we remain committed to ensuring the voices of the most vulnerable are better heard. The international community should have learned from far too many prior mistakes that politics must not cloud our judgement nor be a barrier to action. On Myanmar, the General Assembly has spoken loudly by adopting resolution 75/287 earlier this year, with only one objection, urging the armed forces to halt lethal force and respect the free will of the people.

In addition, the Marshall Islands is proud to have joined cross-regional joint statements at the UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council expressing strong concern regarding human rights issues in the Xinjiang region of the People's Republic of China as well as recent developments in Hong Kong. If a truly independent visit by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights still remains unscheduled, we

would strongly encourage all available options to be pursued to deepen the HRC's analysis and assessment.

Mr. President,

The devastating global Covid pandemic demands collective action from all countries, stakeholders and peoples, if we are to achieve a resilient recovery. The democratic government of Taiwan should be allowed to participate in an equal and dignified manner within the UN system, including the WHO, ICAO and the UNFCCC, as well as activities related to the SDGs. There is absolutely nothing in General Assembly resolution 2758 (XXVI) which prevents this inclusive approach, and this resolution affords nothing to hide behind, as it expresses no position on Taiwan. As a people-centric institution, the UN cannot ignore the Taiwanese people or continue to use their nationality to exclude them from attending public meetings or public tours at its headquarters. The shameful silence must end.

Mr. President,

To effectively address the grave challenges before us all, the international community needs strong leadership and true commitment to human rights and security. It is evident to all that a major course correction is required to rebuild political trust and cooperation. Yet this challenge also offers a vital opportunity to reshape the world closer to the common values of democratic freedom embedded in the UN Charter.

Thank you and kummol tata.
