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Fifty-first Session

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President: Mr. Razali Ismail (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 9 (continued)

General debate

The President: I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovakia, His Excellency Mr. Pavol Hamžík.

Mr. Hamžík (Slovakia): I would like to express my sincere congratulations, Sir, on your election to the presidency, and my best wishes for success in the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

I wish also to thank your predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, for his leadership and his personal contribution to the positive achievements of last year's session.

Last year we commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. That was a good opportunity not only for historical reflection and drawing lessons from the past, but also for setting out new priorities and tasks for the years to come. It is obvious that the United Nations, if it is to meet expectations, has to adapt itself to meet new challenges. Slovakia supports all efforts that will contribute to the enhancement of democracy, transparency and efficiency in the work of the United Nations.

The need for the reform of the United Nations is also confirmed by its current difficult financial situation. This state of affairs can be resolved only if all Member States

meet their financial obligations in a timely manner and pay their arrears, and if a new formula for determining a more adequate scale of assessments based on a country's capacity to pay is adopted. In this context, Slovakia appreciates the European Union proposal for the financial reform of the United Nations and welcomes an open and pragmatic discussion in this regard.

Let me stress that Slovakia, which has paid its contributions to the United Nations regular budget in full and on time, is also ready to bear its fair share of responsibilities in financing United Nations peace-keeping operations. Now, more than three years after our admission to United Nations membership, it is high time Slovakia was fairly allocated to an appropriate group for the financing of United Nations peace-keeping. Bearing in mind the available economic data and comparing them with those of several other countries of the Central European region, we are fully convinced that Slovakia should be allocated to Group C, and we see no compelling reason for further postponing this decision. Of course, such a decision would be without prejudice to a comprehensive review process of the method to be applied for the apportionment of the expenses of United Nations peace-keeping operations. But the contributions of any Member State for 1993-1997 should be assessed only on the basis of the scheme applicable in that period.

In the context of United Nations institutional reform, great attention is focused on the Security Council. Slovakia supports Security Council reform and is of the opinion that the expansion of its membership should

reflect the principle of equitable geographical representation. The membership of the Group of Eastern European States has recently more than doubled, and this fact should be duly taken into account in the Security Council reform process. Countries able to bear global responsibility should be granted the status they deserve in the Security Council. On the other hand, expansion of the membership should hamper neither the efficiency nor the decision-making process of the Security Council, so the increase should be a rather limited one.

Several inspiring proposals have been submitted to the United Nations. Slovakia is of the opinion that we should look for the positive elements contained in those proposals and make maximum efforts aimed at reaching a generally acceptable solution. Practice has shown that an increased role for small and medium-sized countries in the Security Council can contribute favourably to the effective implementation of its decisions, thus improving the authority and the democratic character of that body.

Slovakia actively supports the United Nations efforts to maintain and strengthen international peace and security. After three years of difficult negotiations, the Slovak Republic has finally become a full-fledged member of the Conference on Disarmament, thus filling the vacancy caused by the dissolution of the former Czechoslovakia.

Slovakia, as a country using nuclear power solely for peaceful purposes, unequivocally supports all steps which prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and create conditions for their eventual elimination. Therefore, we welcomed last year's decision of the fifth Review Conference to extend indefinitely the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. This September we voted for the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Last Monday I had the honour to sign it on behalf of the Slovak Republic. We hope that it will soon enter into force and become law in international relations, thus making the world safer.

The world community is also paying close attention to another important disarmament agreement — namely, the Chemical Weapons Convention. Slovakia has already ratified this important instrument and supports a speedy resumption of the ratification process so that it can enter into force.

We consider the problem posed by anti-personnel landmines a serious one. We therefore welcome initiatives aimed at a ban on the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of this kind of weapon. For our part, we have

already unilaterally declared a moratorium on the export of these devices, which cause casualties mostly among the innocent civilian population.

Peace-keeping operations continue to be a major part of United Nations activities. Slovakia sees their further development through the enhancement of elements of preventive diplomacy, with a significant strengthening of their humanitarian dimension and a broader incorporation of civilian components at all stages. Practical evidence of Slovakia's efforts to implement the basic United Nations goals is our participation in the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES) and the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM III).

Slovakia, as a troop-contributing country, understands the significance of appropriate protection for United Nations personnel. Therefore, we have already ratified the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. The brave men and women in blue helmets deserve stronger protection. We call upon all other States which have not yet become parties to the Convention to ratify it as soon as possible.

The European continent was the theatre of two world wars in the past. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to pay great attention to the issues of security and peace in this part of the world. Underestimating the gravity of the situation caused an immense human tragedy for millions of innocent people in the territory of the former Yugoslavia. The Dayton Agreements, and above all their successful implementation, represent a turning point towards a peaceful settlement of this traumatic conflict, not only for its direct participants but also in a global context. The international community also plays an irreplaceable role in this process through United Nations mechanisms. Slovakia is ready to get fully involved in the reconstruction of the destroyed economies of the countries of the region. We welcome Security Council resolution 1074 (1996), adopted just two days ago.

Maintaining peace and security in other parts of the world is of no lesser importance. Preserving the continuity of the peace process in the Middle East is an important part of that. We must not allow the peace process to end and the results achieved so far to be destroyed.

We observe with concern the growth of instability and the spread of conflicts on the African continent. Slovakia supports all efforts by the United Nations, the

Organization of African Unity and other organizations involved in the search for peaceful solutions for eliminating crises and violence.

Slovakia supports the efforts of the Secretary-General to achieve a durable solution to the question of Cyprus that will guarantee respect for the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and unity of the country, in compliance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. My country is prepared to continue its mission of good offices by organizing meetings of the political party leaders of both Cypriot communities.

As far as humanitarian assistance is concerned, we emphasize the need for the efficient mutual cooperation of all involved entities, together with a strengthening of the coordinating role of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. Early warning as one element of preventive diplomacy and the rapid reaction of the international community in response to an emerging crisis situation are factors which significantly affect overall results. The role of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in the reconstruction of territories suffering from military conflicts, including in demining, is important.

International conflicts and internal strife are not the only threats to international security and the stability of States. Increasingly, acts of terrorism and organized transnational criminal activities undermine democratic societies and become their joint enemies. We strongly support international cooperation aimed at their suppression and elimination. We will study with interest several timely initiatives put forward during this General Assembly session, such as the initiatives of Poland, the United Kingdom and the United States. We are convinced that granting observer status to INTERPOL in the General Assembly will have a positive impact on the activities of both organizations in this field and will enable closer cooperation.

Human rights will undoubtedly continue to be high on the United Nations agenda. Full respect for human rights is a prerequisite for freedom, justice, stability and peace. We commend the efforts to increase the efficiency of the United Nations human rights programmes, the work of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and his policy goal of transforming the Centre for Human Rights into an overall coordinator of human rights policy and action within the United Nations system.

In less than four years of statehood, Slovakia has established a system of democratic institutions. All

commitments under the relevant human rights instruments have been incorporated into its legislation. Our country respects the rule of law and guarantees all citizens within its jurisdiction respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including for the individual rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic minorities.

We have established an inter-ministerial coordinating committee for women's issues as an advisory body to the Slovak Government. It is designed to initiate and monitor the implementation of the conclusions and recommendations of the Fourth World Conference on Women.

Family issues are very closely interlinked with the rights of women and the rights of the child. In today's world, the family requires better protection and promotion. A strong family is a basis for a sound society. An international centre for family studies has been established in the Slovak capital. We are interested in signing a memorandum of understanding between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the United Nations on the promotion of family issues through the Bratislava International Centre for Family Studies and the United Nations.

Sustainable economic and social development is a *sine qua non* for full enjoyment of human rights and the decent life of mankind on all parts of the globe. We welcome the new, integrated and comprehensive focus of the United Nations on these issues, as reflected in the series of United Nations conferences and summits held during the term of office of the current Secretary-General. He deserves his share of credit for their success. Now and in the years to come, we have to concentrate on the implementation and review of the recommendations, conclusions and plans of actions adopted in Rio, Vienna, Cairo, Copenhagen, Beijing and Istanbul. We consider the convening of a special session of the General Assembly in 1997 to review the implementation of Agenda 21 a timely course of action. As a new member of the Commission on Sustainable Development we will pay special attention to these activities.

The Economic and Social Council should play a key role in fostering international activities for sustainable economic and social development; its coordinating role is needed. We support efforts to enhance the efficiency of the Economic and Social Council and to streamline its procedures. Its sessions should be more focused on topical issues. The relationship with its functional committees requires further reflection and improvements.

Unnecessary duplication in the work of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council should be avoided. The consideration of economic issues in the Second Committee and social ones in the Third Committee seems nowadays an increasingly artificial separation. As these issues are interlinked, it would only benefit us to find a proper remedy for this artificial separation. This may require a new redistribution of responsibilities among the Main Committees.

A close interconnection between environmental issues and economic development is reflected in the process of economic transformation in Slovakia. Economic development in Slovakia has reached a new level, and the foundations for the transition to a market economy are now firmly laid. This can be seen in the positive economic results achieved in 1995, when Slovakia ranked second among the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, with a real annual gross domestic product growth of 7.4 per cent.

The Slovak economy is closely linked with the development of regional and world economies. As a founding country of the World Trade Organization, Slovakia is actively participating in the ongoing integration process and the formation of a new trade system on the regional and multilateral levels. In this context, the cooperation of the Central European Free Trade Agreement countries may be an example worth following in the integration of countries into the multilateral trade system and global economy. We see the Central European Free Trade Agreement not only as a vehicle to promote trade between its partners, but also as a step on the road to full integration into the European Union in the future, which is one of our foreign-policy priorities, together with membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

We welcome the positive results of the ninth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), which stressed the need for the improvement of cooperation with the WTO and the Bretton Woods institutions. The reform of its intergovernmental structure, the focus on a smaller number of priorities with a view to integrating developing countries into the international trade system, should lead to a renewal of the status of UNCTAD in the global economy.

The forthcoming Ministerial Meeting of the WTO in Singapore will be a good opportunity to further strengthen the Organization's regulatory role. Slovakia also places particular importance on cooperation with other United

Nations agencies. We are interested in actively contributing to the improvement of their functioning.

I am convinced that the United Nations will prove its viability in the future, as it has so far, and confirm its unique role in the community of nations. The Slovak Republic is prepared to do its utmost for this goal.

The President: The next speaker is the Deputy Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands, His Excellency the Honourable Danny Philip.

Mr. Philip (Solomon Islands): As we begin the second half of the United Nations first century, we are presided over by a diplomat whose distinguished career has included service in four of the world's five great regions. He has demonstrated skill and ready humour in his work as the Permanent Representative of Malaysia. I note with some amazement his most recent achievement: getting this Assembly to begin each meeting promptly on schedule. This bodes well for our efforts here.

Mr. Freitas do Amaral of Portugal presided over the fiftieth session of the General Assembly with the intellect and distinction characteristic of his career as a parliamentarian and teacher of law. We are in his debt.

Last year, I saluted the Secretary-General, as well as the women and men of the Secretariat, the specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations for their extraordinary work during this difficult time in the Organization's history. The Solomon Islands applauds them all. It is difficult to persevere in the face of harsh and unjustified criticism and insufficient financial resources while engaged in the complex task of revitalizing the United Nations to meet the needs of a world in rapid transformation.

This morning, on behalf of the Solomon Islands, I signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). I was especially pleased to do so because nuclear-weapons testing and disarmament are critical issues for the people of my country. During the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, the Solomon Islands worked with its sister States of the South Pacific Forum and the Pacific basin for the adoption of resolution 50/70 A on nuclear testing. Noting the international alarm over recent nuclear tests and the potential negative effects of underground nuclear testing on health and the environment, the General Assembly deplored all nuclear testing and called for its immediate cessation.

The islands and atolls of the Pacific Ocean were the sites of nuclear tests for 50 years. Peoples were displaced and fragile environments destroyed. We welcome the end of the nuclear-weapons tests, but when will the States who conducted them accept their responsibility for providing long-term damage assessments and aid for resettlement and the restoration of economic productivity?

Solomon Islands also welcomes the signature of Tonga, as well as the signature and ratification by the Republic of Vanuatu, of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty and the signing of its Protocols by France, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

Last November, the judges of the International Court of Justice heard two weeks of argument to assist them in rendering the Advisory Opinion requested by the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session on the question: Is the threat or use of nuclear weapons in any circumstances permitted under international law? The Solomon Islands worked closely with the Marshall Islands and Western Samoa in developing and presenting to the Court, in cooperation with other States, the case that the use of even the smallest nuclear weapon would violate international law, particularly humanitarian law. The landmark Opinion rendered by the Court on 8 July largely supported our position. Regrettably, the nuclear Powers that argued against us at the International Court of Justice see it otherwise. We look forward to the debate on the Advisory Opinion, which is on the agenda thanks to the initiative of Malaysia.

The indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the creation of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones in Africa and South-East Asia, the finding of the International Court of Justice, the General Assembly's adoption of the CTBT — whatever its shortcomings — and the report of the Canberra Commission indicate that a momentum exists for establishing targets and timetables for the elimination of all nuclear weapons. Although the majority of States support this, such States have no forum in which they can develop their ideas and formulate a strategy. Solomon Islands proposes the creation of a forum of non-nuclear-weapon States. Committed to the elimination of nuclear weapons, the forum would seek agreement on a unified approach to the full implementation of article VI of the NPT and monitor progress towards that end. Moreover, the forum would work to give effect to arrangements such as the southern hemisphere nuclear-weapon-free zone and linked regional nuclear-weapon-free zones that could evolve into a global nuclear-weapon-free system.

Solomon Islands endorses the statement made here last week by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Marshall Islands on behalf of the South Pacific Forum. Solomon Islands, a member of the South Pacific Forum ministerial committee on New Caledonia, welcomes the progress facilitated by France and the relevant parties in implementing the Matignon Accords.

For the small island States of the Pacific, the environment, development and international trade are matters of critical concern. The development of comprehensive arrangements for the sustainable management of our region's fisheries is urgently needed. Solomon Islands will soon sign and ratify the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks.

The special session of the General Assembly to be convened in 1997 to review Agenda 21 is also of great importance to Solomon Islands. We seek practical ways to improve ongoing regional efforts to meet the Agenda's goals.

The second assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is a call to the international community to speed up negotiations, recognizing that such a global problem demands a collective solution. Solomon Islands continues to support the Alliance of Small Island States Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. If lower greenhouse gas emissions are not achieved soon, the very survival of small island developing States will be threatened. Moreover, the sustainable management and conservation of our forests are essential for the biological diversity and economy of the country.

In the Pacific, where healthy coral reefs are essential for effective coastal zone management, we are collaborating in the international coral reef initiative and will take part in our region's Year of the Coral Reef in 1997. As valuable as these efforts are, what remains to be done is formidable. The recent report to the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development on activities to implement the Barbados Programme of Action in the Pacific region shows the range and magnitude of the problems the citizens of the small island developing States face.

The future of the Solomon Islands must depend on a people-centred development strategy that uses a bottom-

up and top-down process of decision-making. With a population of fewer than 400,000 people of diverse ethnic and linguistic origins, 80 per cent of whom live in rural settings on hundreds of islands arrayed over 1,600 kilometres of ocean, no other system is workable. A major change in our system of provincial government is designed to maximize rural community participation in planning and decision-making. Overseas development assistance could, therefore, be directed to where it is most needed. We are fostering public health, literacy and electrification. That is why the recent completion of our first solar-powered village is important for us. In implementing the Habitat Agenda, we are encouraging self-reliance in village development. Solar and other renewable energy resources, such as water and wind, will further our economic, education and health development plans.

Several weeks ago, the Internet reached the Solomon Islands. Personal computers in a growing number of our secondary schools and the possibility of lap-top computers in the hands of teachers and students give new hope for my country's future. We are now using the World Wide Web to introduce the country to potential investors and tourists.

Peace in our region is essential for sustainable development. Solomon Islands encourages the efforts of Papua New Guinea to resolve its Bougainville crisis through constructive dialogue with all the parties concerned. The confidence-building measures have reduced the tension across the border between Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands.

Solomon Islands, which patiently follows the debates on reforming the United Nations, recognizes the difficulties inherent in making the Organization more effective. We support an increase in the non-permanent membership of the Security Council on a regional basis and thank Italy for its valuable proposal. If the number of permanent members is also to be enlarged, the responsibilities of permanent membership and the criteria for the use of the veto must be established and made transparent.

The fiftieth anniversary Declaration called for the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, the universal organ of the States Members of the United Nations. Proposals have been put forward and debated. Calls for reducing the length of the agenda continue to echo through these halls. Yet, in the past few weeks, we have seen how vital the General Assembly can become when a delegation skilfully and vigorously presses forward with a great issue and effectively marshals the support of many Member States. I refer to the extraordinary work of

Ambassador Richard Butler and his Australian colleagues in mobilizing overwhelming support for the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). When the will and commitment are present, the General Assembly can act with brilliant effectiveness, winning the applause of a world hungry for security, peace and prosperity.

Such an achievement need not be rare. As the universal organ of the Member States, the General Assembly should be a force for democracy, transparency and universality. For example, the Charter permits the General Assembly a much larger role in the selection of the Secretary-General than it has exercised in the past. Confronted as we are with public action in this matter by one of the great Powers, should we not now seek to make the process truly democratic and open? Can we afford to leave this essential issue to last-minute bargaining behind closed doors? Twenty-five years ago, the General Assembly at its twenty-sixth session adopted resolution 2837 (XXVI), which recognized the unquestionable value of the general debate and said that it should continue to be held every year and that the time devoted to it should be utilized to the maximum.

The general debate offers a glimpse of how Member States see the state of the world and the United Nations. Listening to the statements in this great Hall, one is struck by the spectrum of ideas and opinions they present. Discussion would enhance their value for us, but we have not established appropriate venues at which the views offered here could be thoroughly explored. Can we afford to deny ourselves the benefit of engaging our colleagues intellectually?

To move the General Assembly towards universality, Solomon Islands believes that substantially reducing the floor rate in the scale of assessments, as has been proposed, would not only enable several countries in our region to seek membership of the United Nations but would help many developing countries to pay their annual assessments in full and on time.

Two themes have clearly emerged in our general debate: Whatever its weaknesses, the United Nations is indispensable; but without sufficient resources and a decisive commitment to true multilateralism, the Organization cannot fulfil its obligations to the peoples of the world. Solomon Islands and the other small island developing States need this Organization. Whether the issue is investment, law enforcement, trade embargoes, fishing rights, hazardous waste dumping, natural disasters,

autonomy, independence or any combination of these, the people of the small islands turn to the United Nations for support.

We and others spoke out on behalf of the Republic of China on Taiwan, which, barred from the United Nations and seeking unification with the People's Republic of China, is attempting to enlarge its contribution to the developing world through this Organization. Solomon Islands hopes that unification negotiations based on the proposals each party has put forward can begin in the near future.

The United Nations is dealing with important issues: the Agenda for Development, the programmes of action approved at the world conferences, technical assistance, the Secretary-General's preventive diplomacy, the evolving international system for protecting human rights. In this respect Solomon Islands especially thanks the International Committee of the Red Cross for its efforts to rid the world of anti-personnel landmines and for its work caring for the displaced and searching for missing persons, including Kuwaitis and Greek Cypriots who have still not been heard from, and many other people who have "disappeared".

These are life and death matters even for those of us who live on distant islands. Through a commitment to equity, democracy and tolerance based on multilateralism and universality, an effective United Nations will serve us all for generations to come.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Hungary, Mr. László Kovács.

Mr. Kovács (Hungary): May I, at the outset, extend the congratulations of my delegation to you, Sir, upon your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. In your endeavours, based on your rich diplomatic experience, you may count on the assistance and support of the Hungarian delegation.

Let me also pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, for his extremely able leadership throughout our historic fiftieth session.

The diversity of challenges facing the community of nations, the difficulties associated with finding proper responses and the importance of building up supportive national and international constituencies are hardly likely to send multilateralism into oblivion. Yet, in this time of change, and despite the forceful tendencies of globalization, interdependence and integration, no single applicable

approach is at hand for political leaders. Given its unique role and capacities, the United Nations can be the principal vehicle by which the international community selects and addresses problems requiring a universal response.

This Organization, however, cannot and should not micro-manage the solution to all the urgent problems of our contemporary world. Times have changed and so must the United Nations. In several instances, the international community may act much more efficiently through regional organizations or specialized agencies. What is essential, however, is that the nations forming this Organization stand up with one strong voice when the purposes and principles of the Charter are put to the test. Violations of international law, human rights and fundamental freedoms should be matched with legitimate and adequate responses by the international community, acting through the United Nations.

The issue of multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation remains a legitimate concern for the United Nations. Last year, we were pleased by the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. This important step not only constituted a major building block in the complex web of our non-proliferation and disarmament efforts, but served as a catalyst to forge consensus around the future direction and dynamics of this process. As a result of sustained and responsible work in the Conference on Disarmament, it became possible to finalize the text of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Hungary stood fully behind this compromise text, which captures the diversity of views and approaches while still constituting a coherent and forward-looking document.

Opening the Treaty for signature was, indeed, a landmark. Hungary was among the first countries to sponsor resolution 50/245. I signed the Treaty on the day after it was opened for signature. This Treaty is not the end of the process. There is a need for further systematic and progressive efforts towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and the CTBT must be given its due place in that process. In this context, we join those who call for its smooth entry into force, thereby allowing the disarmament process to proceed.

Hungary also consistently seeks to contribute to the strengthening of stability and security through cooperative efforts at both regional and bilateral levels. Building upon our intensified relations with the European Union, we look forward to the early beginning of negotiations on our

accession to the European Union. We hold the firm view that the enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) will expand stability and security in Europe and will strengthen trans-Atlantic partnership and solidarity. Hungary, in its bilateral relations with neighbouring countries, is striving to contribute to the establishment of conditions enabling them all to be full partners in the institutions of Euro-Atlantic integration. We remain convinced that, with an enlarged NATO and an expanded European Union, the United Nations will have even more efficient and helpful regional partners.

The crisis in the Balkans has proved to be a painful and dramatic litmus test of the resolve of the international community. The United Nations has also had to draw its own conclusions from the tragedy. The mission of the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium is currently making progress on the road to the peaceful reintegration of the region into Croatia, while securing respect for the human rights of all its inhabitants and the rights of national minorities in the region. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the role and determination of the Implementation Force (IFOR) is indispensable for guaranteeing the implementation of the Dayton Agreement. The cooperation, through IFOR, between NATO, the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe in responding to the different facets of this major challenge is an innovative paradigm for future conflict resolution and crisis-management efforts.

We strongly believe that a solid international presence is required to allow democracy and stability to take firm root in the region. Hungary continues to provide the necessary logistical and transit facilities to IFOR forces and United Nations peace-keepers and is contributing to the strength of both IFOR and the United Nations International Police Task Force. The return and reintegration of refugees and displaced persons — including those who found shelter in Hungary — pose a continuing challenge to the international community. The establishment of democracy and the rule of law should be accompanied by reconstruction and rehabilitation, thereby facilitating the conditions of safe and orderly return. Citizens should be assisted by the international community in their efforts to create and activate democratic institutions in which good governance and accountability will force war criminals out of the political mainstream. We see the work of the Tribunal in The Hague as an essential component of the Dayton peace process and the cooperation extended to it as an important indicator of the willingness of the parties to

follow through on both their Dayton commitments and their obligations under the Charter.

Experience of the recently held elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina suggests that keeping to the schedule agreed at Dayton was a sound decision. We remain concerned, however, at the ethnically divided voting results. This only highlights the urgency of proceeding without undue delay to the building-up of a unique institutional infrastructure for the country and of facilitating the holding of municipal elections in a more stable political environment.

We are now in a period of reflection with regard to United Nations conflict-prevention and crisis-management capabilities. In our view, the United Nations, as it continues to live up to its responsibilities under the Charter, ought to craft its response strategies more carefully. The preventive capacity of the United Nations should be further strengthened. A sound early warning system, combining political, military, humanitarian, human rights and economic areas, would broaden the base of options and enhance the chances for success in the early detection of conflict situations. An early international monitoring presence in itself has a major deterrent effect. In-depth information on a given situation would catalyse diplomatic efforts and help trigger a broad consensus on the course of action.

Mr. Turnquest (Bahamas), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Specialized agencies and regional organizations, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, are of primary importance in defusing sources of tension through creating appropriate and efficient response mechanisms. The United Nations, while fully discharging its responsibilities under the Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security, can authorize and thus give legitimacy to these endeavours as well as to actions to be taken by ad hoc coalitions of the able and willing. The building-up of regional peacekeeping and peace-building capacities, as well as the increase of the operational character of some key activities of specialized agencies, are among the avenues that have to be more fully explored.

The reform agenda of the United Nations has been put in motion against the background of these new challenges and opportunities. Despite considerable progress in identifying the main areas of change within the different negotiating structures, we are seriously

concerned that the overall reform process has lost most of its dynamics. While we should not allow that individual consensual elements of the reform process be held hostage to progress in unrelated issues, there seems to be an evident need to reach a political agreement, at least on the basic philosophy of the major premises of the reform agenda. Hungary is aware of the difficulties that make real progress so hard to achieve. It stands ready to help reinvigorate the momentum for change and to make genuine United Nations reform an early reality.

Promotion of the international protection of human rights is a fundamental component of my Government's foreign policy and one of the essential tasks conferred upon the United Nations by its founders. Despite the remarkable results achieved in the standard establishment and building-up of implementation machinery, there is still much to do in maintaining our determination to act in defence of human rights, wherever abuses may occur. Chronic underfunding, lack of efficient coordination and the sometimes evasive or uncooperative attitude of several Governments only underline this urgency, which was finally recognized when human rights were made one of the programme priorities of the United Nations. In our view, the United Nations, despite the important advances made, such as the establishment of the post of High Commissioner for Human Rights, is still not sufficiently equipped to deal with the latest and gravest of human-rights challenges: those emanating from ethnic conflict, civil strife, government breakdown and the collapse of the rule of law.

The importance of safeguarding and monitoring the observance of the rights of national or ethnic minorities is still too often disregarded and put in the context of political expediency. Lack of full respect for the rights of minorities, together with the absence of necessary political, legal, institutional and administrative guarantees, are among the root causes of many of the conflicts on our agenda.

Today, as we witness the growing importance of human-rights operational activities, the timeliness of the concept of preventive peace-building comes to mind. This implies not only an enhanced human-rights preventive and monitoring capacity of the United Nations, but also the right combination and use of the assets at our disposal, from early warning to preventive protection. The practice of financing some United Nations human-rights field operations from the peace-keeping budget and a greater coordinating role for the High Commissioner for Human Rights may be two of the avenues which deserve our full attention.

I wish to underline the fact that the way in which the United Nations tackles the crucial global problems mankind is facing will greatly determine the quality of the imminent next century. Let me refer, in this context, to the importance of some of the problems on the agenda of this session. Sustained efforts to combat international terrorism, transnational crime or illicit drug trafficking are required from all of us in order to preserve the international legal order, the present achievements and further potential of democracy and development. The United Nations has an important role in coordinating efforts to ensure that those involved in terrorist activities find no safe haven and expect a vigorous response from the international community. Transboundary criminal activity and drug-related money-laundering require the strict application of the law by strong, independent judiciaries. Our task is to make use of the advantages of multilateral cooperation in this field.

The Republic of Hungary stands ready to work in partnership with Member States to promote efficient multilateral action and to translate into deeds the noble ideals set forth in the Charter of the United Nations.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nigeria, His Excellency Chief Tom Ikimi.

Chief Ikimi (Nigeria): On behalf of the Nigerian delegation, I convey to Mr. Razali Ismail our congratulations on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. His election is a recognition of his wide-ranging experience, candour and diplomatic skills. It is also a tribute to his great country. We are confident that, under his presidency, the work of the General Assembly will be highly successful.

May I also convey the appreciation of my delegation to his predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas Do Amaral of Portugal, for the admirable manner and great sense of commitment with which he conducted the affairs of the fiftieth session of the Assembly. Nigeria also commends Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali for the energy, sense of purpose and direction which he has brought to bear on the office of the Secretary-General in the meritorious service of our Organization.

When we met last year to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, we observed that a number of developments on the political and economic scene had affected relations between States and modified the configuration of power at the global level. We

recognized that the United Nations continues to be a viable instrument for the conduct of relations amongst States. We rededicated ourselves to the principles and objectives of the United Nations Charter, including, in particular, the promotion of social and economic development and the maintenance of international peace and security. In this endeavour, the United Nations has a central role to play. Member States, in line with their obligations under the Charter, have a duty to assist the United Nations in carrying out this responsibility. This requires the political commitment of all Member States and in particular of those upon which the Charter confers special status.

Some of the developments which have occurred on the international scene include the globalization of the world economy, the upsurge in market economies, the rise in economic growth in a number of countries and the growing trend towards political pluralism and democratization. However, new forms of conflict, new nationalisms, terrorism, an increasing incidence of poverty and global social decline have cast a sombre shadow on international peace and security, as well as on economic growth and development. The growing incidents of conflict, whether in Europe, in Africa or in the Middle East, and the slow pace of their resolution, are helping to exacerbate international tension and undermine confidence among States. The United Nations has a duty in this regard to redefine its role and sharpen its peacemaking and peacekeeping tools in order to effectively address them.

Peace is indivisible. The burden of peace, therefore, should be shared by all in a mode of global responsibility and partnership. Let me add also that the maintenance of international peace and security is not an exclusive responsibility of the United Nations. Regional and subregional arrangements have important roles to play and have demonstrated their commitment.

Although many regions of the world are now witnessing one form of conflict or another, with varying degrees of implications for the United Nations system, no region perhaps is more afflicted by this menace than Africa, both in the number of conflicts currently raging and in their unimaginable negative effects on the people. The individual and collective efforts of African States to achieve socio-political transformation have been threatened by these conflicts. In spite of this, the States of Africa have continued to make concerted efforts at regional and subregional levels to address this situation. The unique role being played by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Mechanism for Conflict Prevention Management and Resolution is important and should be supported by the

international community. Nigeria welcomes the cooperation between the OAU and other regional organizations and the United Nations in the field of preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping and peacemaking.

In our own subregion, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) undertook an unprecedented initiative in crisis management by establishing a peacekeeping force, the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), in Liberia six years ago. In spite of the difficulties we have encountered in the process, we remain committed in our endeavour to help the Liberian process reach its logical conclusion. In this regard, Nigeria shares the view of many observers who have described the revised Abuja peace agreement of August 1996 as providing the best legal framework for the resolution of the Liberian crisis. I am pleased to report that the implementation of the Agreement revised at Abuja last August is now on course. A new Council of State, headed by Mrs. Ruth Perry, has been installed. Since her installation, Mrs. Perry has enjoyed the considerable confidence of the other members of the Liberian National Transitional Government and indeed of most Liberians. I take this opportunity to appeal to all Liberians to extend cooperation to the new leadership in the interest of peace in their country. Let me assure the Assembly that it is the determination of my Head of State, General Sani Abacha, Chairman of ECOWAS — in collaboration with other leaders in our region and with the support of the international community as a whole — to ensure the resolution of the Liberian crisis.

It is our expectation that the Liberians themselves will assume their destiny in favour of peace, national reconciliation and national reconstruction. We therefore renew our appeal to the international community to provide much-needed financial, material and logistic support to enable ECOMOG and the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) to effectively discharge their respective mandates. Meanwhile, we acknowledge with appreciation the renewed cooperation and assistance with the ECOWAS effort of some of the members of the international community.

Of great importance to the search for peace in the various troubled spots of the world is the urgent need to control the instruments of war. It is a matter of deep regret that the end of the cold war has not ushered in in its wake any appreciable reduction in the global arms build-up. As the arms build-up and the proliferation of conflicts are mutually reinforcing, there is an urgent need for the international community to contain the trend. The

threat posed by existing stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction and conventional armaments is yet to be removed.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), a priority item on the disarmament agenda of the United Nations, has been adopted. In spite of the imperfections of this Treaty, the Nigerian Government was able to support it and will be signing it in due course. Its adoption, which puts an end to the further qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons and arsenals, represents a significant first step towards the goal of nuclear disarmament. It is our expectation that the Conference on Disarmament, the single multilateral negotiating body on disarmament, will now take the next logical step to negotiate such disarmament within a time-bound framework. The nuclear-weapon States have a clear responsibility and duty to cooperate with the Conference on Disarmament to negotiate such a treaty.

The adoption of the Treaty of Pelindaba creating a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa has been an important contribution to confidence building in Africa, in addition to being a collateral disarmament measure. In view of the overwhelming support enjoyed by the Treaty beyond the African continent, it is recommended that other regions undertake similar efforts by establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones or zones of peace. While it is commendable to observe that the majority of nuclear-weapon States have since signed the protocol to the Treaty, we take this opportunity to urge other States that have not yet done so to do so, in order that the full objectives of the Treaty can be achieved.

Peace and development are mutually reinforcing. A just and enduring peace can only be founded on the general welfare and socio-economic progress of all peoples and all nations. It is indeed disconcerting to note that while the countries of the North are becoming more affluent, the countries of the South, which contain the majority of the world's population, are getting more impoverished. We must collectively recognize and accept the fact that the deepening crisis of development faced by developing countries can only undermine the new world order which we seek to create.

Africa, in particular, has continued to experience the crippling impacts of external debt, deteriorating terms of trade, increasing barriers to trade, declining investment and financial inflows, and capital flight. African countries recognize that the primary responsibility for finding a solution to the economic difficulties facing the continent lies with themselves. Hence they have sought to put in

place sound macro-economic policies and adopted very painful programmes of economic reform. However, their best endeavours have continued to be constrained by the prevailing unfavourable international economic climate. We believe that development cooperation should engender genuine interdependence, mutual interest and benefits in the context of global partnership, rather than the old mode of a donor-recipient relationship.

We must recognize the central role of the United Nations in engendering the process of global development. In this regard, my delegation calls for faster progress in the ongoing work on the Secretary-General's Agenda for Development. In the same spirit, we of the African continent urge the international community to deliver on its promises under the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF). We have just taken part in the mid-term review of its implementation. We recognize that UN-NADAF has had a poor record of implementation. None the less, the United Nations system and the international community at large must deliver on their various commitments.

Nigeria considers as complementary the Secretary-General's United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa, particularly as it envisages collaboration and coordination of efforts between the international community, the Bretton Woods financial institutions and the United Nations development agencies on the issue of development. In recognition of its role as the centre for the harmonization of the actions of nations, the United Nations successful hosting of major global conferences on development — from New York in 1990 through Rio in 1992, Vienna in 1993, Cairo in 1994, Copenhagen and Beijing in 1995, to Istanbul in 1996 — deserves our special commendation. The faithful implementation of the decisions and programmes of action of these conferences would assist in bridging the yawning gap between the developing and the developed economies and constitute a substantive benefit to development. Accordingly, we endorse and will continue to give our unqualified support to the hosting of a special session of the General Assembly in 1997 to review the implementation of Agenda 21.

It is hardly necessary to recall that contemporary international relations were founded on the basis of respect for the principles of sovereign equality of States, non-interference in the internal affairs of other States and peaceful co-existence. It is therefore a matter of great concern that these hallowed principles are increasingly being eroded by some powerful States. The United

Nations should serve as the bulwark against the imposition of the will of the strong over that of the weak.

Today all countries are engaged in a universal quest for human dignity. It is no longer sufficient for us to be content that our nations have been liberated from oppression and foreign domination. It is now universally acknowledged that the full meaning of national sovereignty cannot be realized unless the individual citizen is free to exercise his true conscience. The rise of this new international conscience is a legitimate extension of the earlier emergence of the new international morality which threw colonialism into disarray.

There ought to be no conflict between national sovereignty and the fundamental rights of the individual. We welcome the growing international concern with human rights, but unless we are careful to strictly define the parameters of what actions justly constitute human rights and what are excesses threatening the security of the State as well as the safety and well-being of the citizens, we could unwittingly be doing a disservice to the essence of human freedom and dignity. We must therefore guard against the use of human rights as a pretext for advancing the individual or collective interests of one section of the international community against those of the other.

In today's world, the collation, delivery and management of information has become an essential component of development. Countries which are better endowed technologically have tended to use that endowment to the disadvantage of the less endowed. There is a need therefore to establish a New World Information Order, which respects the mutual sensitivities of States and protects the values of their differing cultures.

Most developing countries lack the resources and technological capacity for the requisite information delivery. This, in no small measure, constrains their ability to project news of events in their society promptly and effectively, avoiding the tendentious reporting of the media in the developed countries. Nigeria's desire to be friends with all nations, our commitment to the maintenance of international peace and security and our abiding faith in the principles enshrined in the charters of the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and our subregional organization, ECOWAS, are demonstrable and beyond question. It was therefore a matter of surprise to the Nigerian Government that this Assembly, in December 1995, adopted resolution 50/199 of 22 December 1995 on the human-rights situation in our country. We believe that this action was based largely on media reporting and

without any investigation of the facts of the matter. In spite of the fact that the Nigerian Government was not happy with that action, we subsequently took the initiative to invite the Secretary-General to send a fact-finding mission to Nigeria to ascertain the realities on the ground. That mission visited the country from 28 March to 13 April 1996, and conducted its work unfettered. While the mission's report identified areas of progress in our domestic situation, it also made constructive recommendations. I would like to take this opportunity to express the appreciation of the Government and the people of Nigeria to those Governments which took a principled position of not supporting the resolution against us. We note with satisfaction that since the United Nations visit, a growing number of countries have reconsidered their position on the matter in favour of Nigeria. We therefore urge the Assembly to take cognizance of these positive developments.

The present Administration in my country has continued to make steady progress in the implementation of its programme of transition to democratic rule. The fundamental difficulties which faced our nation in its previous efforts at building a viable democracy are being progressively addressed, taking into account the objective realities of our national situation, so as to ensure an orderly transition and the establishment of durable democratic structures of governance at all levels in our country. We are encouraged by the successful outcome of the elections which were conducted at the local government level in March this year. The impressive turnout of voters nationwide and the general atmosphere of tranquillity prevailing in our country have elicited goodwill and support from within and outside the country. Political parties have now been registered and full political activities have resumed nation-wide. Our transition to civil rule is now fully on an irreversible course.

In our resolve to ensure that the evolving democratic institutions take root in a fertile economic environment, the Nigerian Government has undertaken economic reforms aimed at promoting rapid growth and sustainable development. The overall macroeconomic performance of the economy has improved with the implementation of deflationary fiscal and monetary measures. Efforts are ongoing to establish a conducive environment for the promotion of investment, both domestic and foreign. Additionally, in recognition of the vital role of finance in the attainment of greater economic efficiency, a wholesale overhaul of the banking and financial services sector has been undertaken to sanitize this important sector of the

national economy. It is also worthy of mention that necessary instruments have been put in place in order to intensify economic deregulation and create a conducive environment for domestic and foreign investment.

In the year 2010, Nigeria will be 50 years old as an independent and sovereign nation. It is envisaged that by that date, Nigeria will have achieved economic prosperity, political stability and social harmony. In order to realize this objective, our Government announced, a few weeks ago, a new socio-economic campaign, "Vision 2010", to provide insights into and articulate the goals and objectives of our national economy in a macroeconomic format. It is also intended to focus on the contribution of the private sector as the engine of growth of our economy. We urge the international community to give this programme the necessary support and encouragement.

In order for the United Nations to respond fully to the purpose for which it was established, there is need to strengthen the Organization and to reform its principal organs. Such reform must be system-wide and must be undertaken not for its own sake but to achieve efficiency and effectiveness. It should aim to enhance rather than weaken the capacity of the United Nations to respond effectively to the legitimate aspirations of all its Members.

A vibrant and responsible United Nations requires an assured financial base. The failure or unwillingness of Member States to pay their assessed contributions as and when due is a dereliction of Charter obligations and a threat to the survival of the United Nations. For our part, Nigeria has continued to pay in full and without conditions our assessed contributions to the regular budget including, in particular, for the year 1996. We therefore call on all Member States that have yet to do so to pay their assessed contributions promptly, in full and without conditions.

For several decades, the Middle East question has engaged the attention of the international community. Nigeria has been concerned with the various wars and acts of terrorism which have brought incalculable loss of life and property to that region. There can be no question but that we will continue to support the just struggle of the Palestinian people for their inalienable right to a homeland. There is an increasing awareness, even among the countries of the region, that the right of Israel to live within safe and secure borders can no longer be denied. We call on all parties to intensify their efforts to ensure that the peace process in the Middle East remains on course.

For some time now, the world has been faced with a new upsurge in terrorist incidents. Nigeria condemns unreservedly all acts of terrorism in all its manifestations, as terrorism cannot be a substitute for dialogue and peaceful negotiations in resolving conflicts and misunderstandings between nations. We call on the General Assembly to take additional steps to eradicate the scourge of this menace, which also constitutes a threat to international peace and security.

As the principal organ of the United Nations, the Security Council is in dire need of reform. Its composition must reflect the principle of equity, balance and equitable geographical distribution. It must seek to correct the current anomaly of the non-representation of Africa in the permanent membership category.

We should, however, be mindful that reform of the United Nations, particularly in a period of transition, is an onerous undertaking. My delegation recognizes the vital role of the office of the Secretary-General in overseeing this reform process. In spite of the difficulties the United Nations is passing through and the fluidity of the international situation, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali has shown uncommon and unrelenting commitment to meeting the challenges of his office. He deserves our gratitude and continued support. We therefore wish to see him complete the laudable changes he has initiated, some of which are already yielding useful results. In this connection we reiterate and support fully the collective African position that Africa should be given the opportunity to serve two terms in the office of Secretary-General. For that purpose, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali is the only candidate recommended by the Organization of African Unity. Like his predecessors, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali should be given a second term to serve our Organization. It is the only credible thing to do. This is a matter of principle in our country.

My delegation recognizes the enormous tasks facing the Organization as it seeks to concretely address the challenges of the twenty-first century, and we wish to reaffirm Nigeria's commitment to continue to contribute effectively to the realization of the Organization's twin objectives of global peace and prosperity.

The Acting President: I now call on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Zaire, His Excellency Mr. Jean-Marie Kititwa.

Mr. Kititwa (Zaire) (*interpretation from French*): During the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the

United Nations, States renewed our faith in the ideals of the Charter of this Organization. This means that past experience has given us a new vision of the world, a keen awareness of the interdependence of nations, all of which seek to live in a work committed to peace, freedom and justice.

It is with this conviction that my delegation extends to Mr. Razali Ismail the warmest congratulations of the Government of Zaire on his election as President of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. We would also like to congratulate his fellow Assembly officers. And we also congratulate Mr. Razali's predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral. The competence and intelligence he showed as he guided the work of the fiftieth session earned him the Assembly's appreciation.

We would also like to pay a well-deserved tribute to the Secretary-General Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and to the members of the Secretariat, for their untiring efforts to ensure the proper functioning of our Organization and for their clear-sightedness and courage. Zaire also takes this opportunity to express its support for Mr. Boutros-Ghali as he stands for a second term as Secretary-General. This must be our position. His predecessors from other continents had this opportunity; Africa cannot accept otherwise.

During this half century, our free nations have won the greatest victories in the fields of national liberation and political independence. However, as we come to the end of the twentieth century, we still face major challenges in the economic, cultural and social fields, as well as in the area of international peace and security.

Peace, freedom and stability together constitute an indispensable prerequisite for development. No part of our Earth, no country in the world, can be really secure while there are still outstanding hotbeds of tension. And, today, such hotbeds are on the increase, in Africa, in Asia and in Central and Eastern Europe.

The situations in Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia, Liberia, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and the Middle East are all causes for the concern weighing on international peace and security. The United Nations, which is already seized of these issues, should continue its efforts with the encouragement of every one of us.

In Angola, a neighbouring country to Zaire, my delegation can see positive developments in the domestic situation. The integration of União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA) forces into the

Angolan National Army should be promoted and encouraged for the good of the entire population of Angola.

For more than two years, Zaire has lived with the tragedies of Burundi and Rwanda, which have led to a massive influx of refugees from these two countries onto its territory. This grave situation, for which my country is not responsible, has caused and continues to cause us considerable human, material, environmental and other forms of damage. In this respect, the international community has been inexplicably reticent in its actions, as if Zaire should shoulder this burden alone and indefinitely. Zaire is indeed constantly being denigrated even to the extent that it is often falsely accused of supporting armed activity within Rwanda and Burundi. A memorandum from the Government of the Republic of Zaire on the lack of security in northern and southern Kivu has already been submitted to the Secretary-General. A few days ago, the Zairian towns of Bukavu, Uvira and surrounding districts were shelled by armed elements from Rwanda. The Assembly has heard Rwanda's pernicious and false representation of the facts. Inter-ethnic massacres occurred in Rwanda in 1959, 1962 and 1972, not to mention 1994. This genocide in Rwanda was designed, developed and executed in detail and with delight by Rwandans against Rwandans, and by that I mean by past and present leaders in power in Kigali. Members can now understand why Rwanda, nursing its planned aggression against my country, has refused to sign the non-aggression pact patiently negotiated by all the States of Central Africa, including Rwanda.

From this rostrum, my delegation solemnly declares the following: First, Zaire does not accept and will never again accept to act as anyone's scapegoat. Secondly, Zaire will do all it can to defend the security of its population and its borders, and will call on its people and its friends in its defence. Thirdly, Zaire is always prepared to cooperate with the neighbouring Governments and peoples of Rwanda and Burundi to ensure the voluntary and dignified return of refugees to their respective countries. Failing this, following the example of certain European Governments with respect to refugees and people without documentation, Zaire will have no choice but to begin the enforced and unconditional return of such people to their countries of origin.

Fourthly, as President Mobutu stated last year in this forum, Zaire will never accept the de facto transformation of a part of its territory into a "Hutuland", whether through a challenge to its territorial integrity or through

the establishment of refugee settlements on its territory. Anyone considering that can forget it.

Fifthly, given the sacrifices endured by its people, Zaire calls on the international community to implement fully the agreements that have been signed, and General Assembly resolution 49/24 of 2 December 1994 on special assistance to countries hosting refugees. Finally, Zaire reaffirms the position it stated at the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development regarding the holding of a world conference on refugees and displaced persons to find a comprehensive and lasting solution to the refugee question, which has disastrous consequences for development, human relations and human rights.

The political, economic and social situation in Zaire has deteriorated over six long years of transition. Despite this difficult situation, Zaire has made it a point of honour to pursue its democratic process, committing itself to reestablishing the authority of the State, rebuilding the basic infrastructure, improving the country's economic, financial and monetary situation, ensuring the security of persons and property and observing human rights and fundamental freedoms.

To date, Zaire's main task has been to organize free, democratic and transparent elections. This is why it has set up a National Electoral Commission which is now ready to get down to work, as observed by the delegation recently sent to Zaire by the Secretary-General. Furthermore, the draft electoral law and the bill on the organization of a constitutional referendum are also currently under discussion by the Parliament of Transition. Zaire wishes to reaffirm before the entire world that the democratization of its political system is irreversible, regardless of the difficulties facing our country. For these reasons, the Government of Zaire calls on the international community to give it effective support in the establishment of these new democratic institutions by June 1997 at the latest.

Democracy can only develop and last in a country that enjoys economic development that allows for the protection and promotion of human rights. Some human rights were being promoted in Zaire long before the democratization process. Thus, for example, despite the many social and cultural constraints, Zairian men and women enjoy political and vocational equality, including in terms of remuneration.

The noble mission of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights certainly merits our encouragement. Zaire has nothing to hide, and has thus accepted and accredited the Secretary-General's human rights representative, whose

office is in our capital, Kinshasa. Nonetheless, Zaire deplores and vigorously condemns the malicious use of the human rights issue for political ends, as can be seen in the unfounded and unwarranted accusations levelled against it at each annual evaluation session of the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva.

Preventive diplomacy should be the very basis of peace-keeping operations. However, preventive diplomacy would be meaningless if the international community were not to grant it a standing, mobile military sector that could be deployed wherever international peace and security were to come under threat. Thus, in the framework of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, the countries of this subregion, with the exception of Rwanda, signed the non-aggression pact at the latest Organization of African Unity (OAU) summit in Yaoundé.

In this first year of the second half-century of the United Nations, safeguarding peace and cohesion among peoples are issues of vital importance to all of us. Zaire considers the adoption of the resolution recommending signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty at the fiftieth session of the General Assembly to be an important step towards comprehensive nuclear disarmament. We do, of course, recognize that this is not a perfect Treaty. It lacks the firm commitment of nuclear-weapon States to renounce the use and threat of use of such weapons in their relations with other States. It also lacks a precise timetable for complete destruction of existing weapons. It does not mention the banning of nuclear tests in laboratories, which is the most sophisticated modern way of developing such weapons. Despite these imperfections, Zaire joined those delegations that sponsored the resolution, and it voted in favour of the text proposed. I wish to announce officially that Zaire will sign this text tomorrow, 4 October.

From this rostrum we appeal to the nuclear-weapon States to put aside their selfish interests and to commit themselves firmly to the new path set out by the Treaty, so that the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons can become a living reality and so that nuclear weapons will no longer threaten future generations, as they have done since the end of the Second World War.

We cannot be at peace with ourselves if we fail to take firm action for conventional disarmament as well.

I come from a region where the merchants of death have dumped tons and tons of conventional weapons that

kill people daily. We urge countries that manufacture and sell these instruments of death to stop taking satisfaction in the positive balance sheets of their international trade, which includes arms sales. This is a shame for all mankind. To those who would give lessons of morality and ethics, we would insist that they look at the way they live and stop sowing death and suffering. Life and happiness are the most fundamental of human rights.

In addition to disarmament, worldwide elimination of poverty is fundamental to the strengthening of peace and the realization of comprehensive, sustainable development. At the dawn of the third millennium, it is deplorable to note that more than a billion people today live under conditions of unacceptable poverty and are outside the mainstream of economic and social progress because of imbalances in the international economy.

My delegation hopes that, to remedy this situation, the North-South dialogue will be guided more by the imperatives and interests of mutual advantage and benefit, as well as by genuine interdependence. Solidarity demands fairer prices for commodities, access to the markets of developed countries, easing the debt burden and increased official development assistance so as to ensure sustained growth and sustainable development.

Last year we commemorated our Organization's fiftieth anniversary. That occasion was an opportunity for us to focus on the possibilities for an appropriate reform of this Organization, which is unique in its mission and its impact. I would like to offer my country's reflections on this subject.

We are now living in a period of extraordinary contrasts. Despite the historic successes of our Organization — including independence for many countries, the peace process under way in the Middle East, the end of the South African saga and the perceptible tendency of the United Nations towards universality — we must observe with some bitterness that areas of tension have flared up worldwide, sparking anarchy, despair, poverty and death.

For this reason, Zaire believes that the Security Council, which is the United Nations body that has foremost responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, and which by its present membership is no longer representative, should be expanded and its functioning improved. In this exercise, the main concern should be to correct the clear imbalance in that body. Expansion of the Council should take into account the will of many countries to become members and the importance

of safeguarding its effectiveness. It should avoid making it a body dependent on the General Assembly. For that reason, we think that equitable geographic representation would appropriately remedy the glaring imbalance in the current representation of the Security Council. We encourage the international community to give deep thought to this question and not to forget that one continent — Africa — is at the greatest disadvantage with the current composition of the Council.

We refuse to be dragged into the dispute over the veto power of permanent members. We are against the emergence of a category of permanent second-class members in the Security Council.

There is a need to look for ways to improve the functioning of the Security Council. It is inconceivable that a State that is concerned in a question being discussed in the Council can participate only in a formal meeting — if there is one — to hear the decision made. If the State were officially involved in the informal consultations on that issue, its direct contribution to the members of the Council could enable them to adopt decisions that would be well thought out and realistic rather than being imposed.

We must have the courage to put an end to the anti-democratic character of this important United Nations body. All the parties involved should be given the opportunity to defend themselves before the members of the Council. This is a basic rule of the administration of justice.

We take note of the report of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council, and we encourage it to pursue its consideration of this matter.

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

Mr. Kamilov (Uzbekistan) (*interpretation from Russian*): Let me express my appreciation for the honour of addressing the Assembly. On behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Uzbekistan, I offer my sincerest congratulations to Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia on his election as President of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. I am sure that his presidency will enable us successfully to solve many of the urgent issues on the international agenda. I also take

this opportunity to extend our appreciation and gratitude to Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, President of the historic fiftieth session of the General Assembly, for his valuable guidance and personal involvement in the resolution of issues the world was facing during that period.

We consider the safeguarding of peace and stability in Central Asia and the sustainable development of the region as the most important goal of our cooperation with the United Nations and its specialized agencies. In this context, I would like to outline a number of problems and to make several proposals.

First, regarding regional security, we are of the view that we need to move through regionalism towards the global: global peace can be achieved through stability in the various regions of the world. Regional conflicts are increasingly the direct source of such dangerous challenges and threats as terrorism and violence, the illicit arms trade and drugs trafficking. That is why the main focus of Uzbekistan's initiatives aimed at ensuring security in the Central Asian region is finding ways to settle the conflict in Afghanistan and to stabilize the situation in Tajikistan.

One of the most important elements of these initiatives is an embargo on arms deliveries to Afghanistan. We welcome the start of a discussion of this problem in the Security Council and support proposals for a comprehensive approach and for the convening of an international conference — where, in our view, the main role should be played by the United Nations. Halting arms deliveries to Afghanistan is an indispensable condition for any peace process. An embargo does not mean just any sanctions against Afghanistan; it has to be directed towards those who continue to supply weapons to the area of conflict. The inability of Afghanistan's forces to control its borders requires efforts on the part of the international community to ensure that arms deliveries are ended.

I would like to underline particularly that the Republic of Uzbekistan, more than any other nation in the world, seeks to return to age-old traditional relations of friendship, cooperation and mutual trust with neighbouring Afghanistan. This is the only aim guiding us in our initiatives to promote peace in the Islamic State of Afghanistan. We want Afghanistan to be a stable, indivisible State, open to the outside world for the sake of progress and prosperity. I take this opportunity to appeal once again to the Secretary-General, and to the Presidents of the Security Council and the General Assembly to do their utmost to resolve the Afghan conflict, which poses a

serious threat not only to regional security but also to for global security.

We continue to believe that Central Asia has its own characteristics; the positive or negative development of events there can be a catalyst for positive changes or a destructive factor affecting the situation far beyond the region.

Secondly, we must enter the twenty-first century with a new vision of questions of peace and security in a rapidly changing world. The promotion of world peace is accompanied today by intensive debates and disputes on the expansion of the membership of various international bodies and on models for comprehensive world security in the twenty-first century.

While welcoming these aspirations, we must note that each sovereign country in this multi-polar world has the right to decide for itself, in accordance with its national interests, and with its regional identity taken into consideration, whether or not to enter a given union, irrespective of the position of more powerful countries. There is no place for domination or monopoly on the part of other, more powerful, countries in resolving this problem.

Thirdly, as regards our position in relation to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), we consider that the CIS countries can successfully cooperate within the framework of the Commonwealth on a multilateral and bilateral basis. At the same time, we believe that the CIS cannot be treated as a unit under international law. It is unacceptable to let the CIS be transformed into a political or indeed a military-political bloc. Otherwise, the world community will inevitably slide back down into global antagonisms and confrontation. For Uzbekistan, this is fundamentally unacceptable.

Fourthly, Uzbekistan continues to support the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and views as historic the decision to conclude the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, adopted under the auspices of the United Nations, and the beginning of the signature process of the Treaty. We consider this event to be a most important stage in liberating humanity from the threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

For our part, the relevant work is being carried out to establish a nuclear-free zone in Central Asia within the international non-proliferation system. We believe that the

initiative of the President of Uzbekistan will soon find more detailed interest in the Security Council.

Fifthly, I would like once again to draw the attention of Member States to ecological problems, whose dimensions go beyond State borders. I would especially like to say a word about the problem of the Aral Sea. There have already been a great number of scientific studies and international conferences, including several on the sustainable development of the Aral Sea countries. However, to our great disappointment, we do not see any movement from statements to practical deeds. I would like to note that Uzbekistan supports and considers as timely Great Britain's proposal on the adoption of a special declaration condemning terrorism in all its forms.

For a more effective functioning of United Nations machinery in all areas of activity, we consider it necessary to reform a number of United Nations organs, including the Security Council. This is in line with today's realities. The geo-strategic balance of power raises the question of the expansion of the number of permanent members of the Security Council. We are convinced that such States as Germany and Japan today are fully equipped to be permanent members of the Security Council.

Uzbekistan stands for the constructive reform of the United Nations. In this context, together with other States, including Italy, whose proposals deserve serious attention, we express our sincere desire to ensure that the United Nations is a reliable instrument for maintaining universal peace and stability.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Guinea, His Excellency Mr. Lamine Kamara.

Mr. Kamara (Guinea) (*interpretation from French*): It is with real pleasure and great interest that I stand before the Assembly to convey the warm greetings of the people of Guinea and of its President, General Lansana Conte. I join with the many preceding speakers in warmly congratulating Ambassador Razali on his election to the presidency of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. His election is testimony to the international community's high regard for Malaysia, his country, with which the Republic of Guinea is honoured to have special ties of friendship and cooperation. I am convinced that under his skilful guidance our work will enjoy every success. I assure him of the support and cooperation of the delegation of Guinea in this task.

My congratulations also go to his predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal who, with skill and clear-sightedness, enabled the Assembly to address the concerns of the international community during the fiftieth session.

My country, the Republic of Guinea, takes this opportunity to greet and stress our tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, whose courage, intelligence and tireless efforts have contributed significantly to the attainment of the Organization's noble purposes of peace, justice and progress. This is why my delegation reiterates its support for his candidacy for a second term of office, in accordance with the decision of the most recent Summit Meeting of the Organization of African Unity, held at Yaounde from 8 to 10 July 1996.

A host of challenges are now threatening to upset the balance of the United Nations as we approach the end of the millennium. Despite encouraging results in terms of maintaining international peace and security, many conflicts incompatible with people's aspirations of economic and social progress persist.

In addition to the tensions and conflicts which are tearing peoples apart, of equal concern are the poverty, unemployment, malnutrition and environmental degradation that continue to threaten the existence and future of many populations of the world. Today more than ever there is an urgent need radically to restructure our common institution, the United Nations, so that it can adapt better to current changes, respond appropriately to the expectations of our populations on the major questions which challenge humankind and make the outlook for the future one filled with hope.

The need to prevent and settle conflicts, to support the efforts of States to ensure sustainable development, to provide easier access to suitable housing and to guarantee sufficient food for all are now becoming elements of the promotion of human rights. The same holds true for how we deal with the implications of the globalization of the international economy through reliable mechanisms.

The Republic of Guinea welcomes and strongly encourages the initiative of Japan, our great friend, to design and implement, with our countries, a new development strategy. In this respect, it supports the organization in 1997 in Tokyo of the second International Conference on African Development in which it undertakes to play an active role from the preparatory phase to the end of its work. We are convinced that there

is an urgent need and obligation to support firmly a new form of world partnership involving all nations, large and small.

The Republic of Guinea, aware of the fresh challenges facing developing countries on the eve of the third millennium, has decided that its diplomacy should be based on development. This role of diplomatic linchpin in the area of economic advancement will not only strengthen our commitment to subregional and regional integration, but will also increase significantly our participation in international trade.

Questions of international peace and security must remain at the forefront of our concerns. In this respect, my delegation considers that the main role of the United Nations is to continue and intensify the search for ways and means to increase the effectiveness of its action in the areas of the maintenance of peace and of preventive diplomacy.

My delegation welcomes the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which I have just signed on behalf of the Government of Guinea. We see this as an important step towards total disarmament. If the Treaty is to attain all of its objectives, the main one being to spare humanity from chaos, it must be signed and respected by all States of the world. To do this, we must calmly and jointly seek to give the assurances of the international community to countries that hesitate to take the decisive step towards the salvation of humanity, so that in the near future the accession of all Member States of the United Nations will enshrine the universality of this important Treaty.

Along the same lines, my delegation calls on the international community to implement global measures to prohibit the illegal traffic of fissile materials, the transborder trafficking in conventional small arms and the production, stockpiling and use of anti-personnel landmines. More than 110 million mines are now scattered around the world, ready to explode at any time, indiscriminately striking down innocent civilian populations.

The Republic of Guinea welcomes the adoption of the text of Protocol II to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, on Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Such Devices during the Review Conference on the implementation of that Convention.

Other threats weigh heavily on international peace and security. Our Organization must react vigorously to the threats of terrorism, organized crime and drug trafficking.

Apart from their many disastrous consequences, these threats, because they are transborder threats, must be considered as real dangers to the health, security and stability both of our populations and of our States.

My delegation, while welcoming the decisions of the Group of Seven and Russia on combatting terrorism and transnational threats, believes that a more complete use of the potential of the United Nations as an instrument for developing joint international strategies and cooperation among all States in the area of fighting crime would allow for more effective coordination of the actions of the international community.

We greatly appreciate the United Nations efforts in other areas as dangerous as terrorism: money-laundering, trafficking in children and all related crimes. Fighting these scourges of our time is everyone's business.

In Africa, tangible progress has been made in the area of peace and democracy. The Republic of Guinea, however, remains concerned by the conflicts which continue to rage on the continent. In the West African subregion, the situations in Liberia and Sierra Leone have tangibly improved, despite some obstacles, which we are striving to overcome within the context of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its peace force, the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG).

The conflict in Liberia has lasted for seven long years. It has caused the death of tens of thousands of people and has led to a mass exodus of hundreds of thousands of refugees to neighbouring States, including my country, the Republic of Guinea, on whose territory are hundreds of thousands of refugees, to whom it offers assistance and protection while at the same time espousing total neutrality in relation to other States members of ECOWAS in the search for a political solution to end this conflict.

The joint efforts of that subregional organization with such major forums as the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations led to the signing of the most recent peace agreements at Abuja, Nigeria. The Republic of Guinea, true to its policy of good-neighbourliness and neutrality, firmly supports these

agreements, which provide for free and transparent elections in May 1997, and will ensure their strict implementation. An end to this conflict is of interest to the Republic of Guinea, my country, mainly because of the presence on our territory of more than 650,000 refugees compared with a population of 7 million Guineans: one refugee for every 10 inhabitants. This is a situation with rare precedents. Similarly, our participation in the peace effort places a heavy burden on our economy and compromises many of our development projects.

I would like to make an urgent appeal to all the parties concerned with this conflict to implement the Abuja Agreement in full, and in a timely manner, to the benefit of stability in the subregion. The promises of assistance from friendly countries and by the international community could, if kept within the timetable, effectively lead the final settlement plan to success. The initiatives under way in this regard are very encouraging. We welcome the action of the United States of America to assist ECOWAS peace efforts and thank the United States warmly for its latest contribution to the financing of the activities of ECOMOG.

The deterioration of the socio-political climate in Burundi stirs fears today of a repetition of the threats experienced in neighbouring Rwanda, a country with which it shares many social, historical and cultural similarities. The continuation of this crisis also poses a serious threat to stability in the region and to peace. This is why the United Nations, together with neighbouring countries, must be further involved in the search for a final solution to this crisis. We lend our full support to the recent decision taken by the OAU and by the conference of Heads of State of the Great Lakes region, held at Arusha, against the Government stemming from the *coup d'état*. We urge all the sons of Burundi and all those of good-will worldwide to support OAU efforts towards the peaceful settlement of the crises in Burundi and in Rwanda through dialogue, tolerance and reconciliation among the various communities.

As regards Western Sahara, my Government supports the international community's efforts for a peaceful solution to this question, in accordance with the United Nations settlement plan.

With respect to Angola, my delegation strongly encourages the Angolan Government and União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA) to persevere along the path to peace and national reconciliation on the basis of the implementation of and respect for the Lusaka Protocol.

Regarding the situation in Somalia, we must say that leaving Somalians to their fate would be contrary to the United Nations ideal of solidarity. Despite the difficulties, the United Nations must continue to be involved actively in the process of restoring peace to that country, through a continuous search for mechanisms to promote national reconciliation, peace, security and stability in Somalia.

On the Middle East, my Government remains greatly concerned by the latest developments in Jerusalem, in Gaza and in the West Bank. The seriousness of these events could jeopardize the peace process. We are convinced that rapid approach of Palestinian autonomy in the Gaza Strip, in Jericho and in the West Bank, and the necessary continuation of the peace process are the responsibility of the entire international community. This is why my delegation solemnly calls upon all the parties involved with the Middle East conflict, especially Israel and its Arab neighbours, to continue courageously on the path of peace, through the pursuit of negotiations, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Peace Agreements.

The Republic of Guinea, convinced that dialogue, the creation of a climate of mutual trust and a greater mutual understanding constitute the only path towards a lasting solution on the Korean peninsula, will continue to encourage the two Korean States to persevere in their efforts towards independent and peaceful reunification.

The signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995 has opened up fresh prospects for the restoration and consolidation of peace in the Balkans. With the recent elections in Bosnia, developments in the situation strengthen the aspirations to peace, stability and security of the region's peoples. We must however remain vigilant. In this respect, my delegation welcomes and supports the efforts of the United Nations, of the Implementation Force (IFOR) and of the international criminal tribunal, aimed at consolidating peace and prosecuting those responsible for crimes against humanity. We invite the international community to display firmness in dealing with this question, in order to extinguish any re-emergence of the practices of "ethnic cleansing". The Organization of the Islamic Conference must be involved more closely in the process begun in this country.

The situation in Jammu and Kashmir continues to deteriorate. At its various summits and ministerial conferences, the Organization of the Islamic Conference has appealed to the international community to urge the protagonists to abide by the relevant Security Council

resolutions and thus enable the Kashmiri people to exercise freely its right to self-determination. We repeat this appeal, and invite them to begin a constructive dialogue.

The Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, which is chaired by the Republic of Guinea, requests the United Nations and the Security Council to shoulder all their responsibilities by becoming decisively involved in the search for peace in the Indian sub-continent. Security Council resolutions 47 (1948), 91 (1951) and 122 (1957) on Jammu and Kashmir, which remain unimplemented after five decades, should not remain among the forgotten resolutions of our system. The Republic of Guinea therefore gives its full support to efforts by the Government of Pakistan aimed at finding a peaceful solution to the problem of Jammu and Kashmir through the opening of talks with India.

My country follows the development of the situation in Afghanistan with the greatest attention. It urges all the parties concerned to work fraternally for the restoration of peace and for national reconciliation.

In the context of its actions within the Organization of the Islamic Conference, of which it is a founding member and current Chairman of its Council of Ministers for Foreign Affairs, the Republic of Guinea — a secular country with a strong Muslim majority — is dedicated to promoting understanding and tolerance among civilizations, cultures and religions and to contributing to the rise of the forces of progress, justice and democracy in Muslim regions and in the world beyond.

At a time when the world is experiencing profound changes of unequalled complexity and scope, it is essential to promote and consolidate an international environment that will foster peace, growth and development. It is regrettable that Africa does not play a greater role in major international negotiations. We must not continue to be spectators while the rest of the world carries out negotiations which involve us directly or indirectly. We are convinced that Africa has a role to play in this area.

In the new configuration of today's world, a country such as the Republic of Guinea — through its policy of peace and because its interests do not diverge from those of other regions of the world; through the nature of its sometimes exceptional relations with the parties in latent or overt conflicts in various regions; through its membership in several geo-political groups, several cultural zones and several continental and non-African organizations — could,

where desirable, play a useful role in international negotiations.

The permanence and fairness of development will be illusory so long as modalities that preserve and perpetuate present inequalities continue to govern international relations. Economic and social development, whose correlation with international peace and security is clear, requires of States and of the international institutions that are our development partners a pragmatic and coherent approach which takes into account the specific socio-economic needs and realities of our States.

My delegation is pleased with the efforts that have already been made in the area of debt relief for developing countries and appeals to the solidarity of the international community for a real increase in development assistance, whose current tendency to decrease is a real source of concern for us in the face of our pressing development needs. In this regard, we welcome the decisions of the last summit of the Group of Seven, held at Lyon.

Although the conclusion of the Uruguay Round opens up new prospects for the stimulation of international trade, it is essential to introduce new, energetic measures to save Africa from marginalization and impoverishment. It is a human, social, political and economic imperative for the international community and for all the actors and partners in development, in their own specific actions, to work responsibly for a more just and equitable framework for international trade, favouring a free and democratic economic partnership.

We therefore congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali for his praiseworthy efforts which have made it possible to develop the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa. My country would like to express the hope that this will not suffer from the same lethargy which the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development suffered from. Such a failure would be highly prejudicial and damaging to the credibility of the United Nations. In this regard, my delegation seeks the urgent implementation of this ambitious Initiative, for it is undeniable that it is one of the best ways of giving development a chance and new hope for future generations.

We would also like to express our satisfaction at the convening of the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements and to support the important

resolutions arising from that Conference promoting access to suitable housing for all.

Along these lines, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to welcome the holding of the World Food Summit, which will take place from 13 to 17 November 1996 at the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

My Government believes that the enhancement of our Organization's effectiveness lies above all in the redefinition of some of its objectives, especially in adapting the functioning of its organs to reflect better the new face of international relations. With regard to the Security Council, my Government fully supports the review and expansion of its current composition on the basis of equitable geographical representation so that the southern hemisphere — which since 1945 has been the theatre of many conflicts — can participate in its activities which are fundamental to the maintenance of international peace and security.

My wish, therefore, is for the United Nations to carry out its restructuring. Whether with regard to revitalizing the General Assembly and its organs, to expanding or strengthening the Security Council, to rationalizing activities and procedures, to redefining programmes and mandates or to consolidating the financial and material bases of the Organization, all Member States must work with courage, clarity and a high sense of responsibility for the proper implementation of these reforms in order to give the United Nations reliable and effective institutions worthy of the vision and aspirations of our peoples.

That is why my delegation, while expressing its satisfaction at the evident willingness and efforts of our Organization to adapt to the world's changes, is in favour of strengthening its potential and improving the interaction among the various organizations of the United Nations system and other development partners.

In conclusion, the Republic of Guinea would like to express the hope that courageous and realistic decisions will come out of the work of this session, and it remains convinced that — apart from divergences and differences in approach in the search for ways and means to achieve solutions to the problems facing our States — the United Nations community which we constitute will continue to work successfully for peace, security and the well-being of all, in the spirit of active solidarity, as the founding fathers of this Organization dreamed.

The Acting President: The Observer of Palestine has asked to be allowed to reply to a statement made by one of the speakers in the general debate. I shall call on him on the basis of General Assembly resolutions 3237 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974 and 43/177 of 15 December 1988, and particularly on the basis of the ruling made by the President of the General Assembly at its thirty-first session and of the precedents established in similar circumstances during subsequent sessions of the General Assembly.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The representative of Israel, Mr. David Levy, spoke before the General Assembly this morning. In his statement he confirmed Israel's defiance of the international community and its violation of Security Council resolutions concerning a very important question, namely the legal status of the Holy City of Al Quds. In speaking of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel he repeated the myths of thousands of years.

As a matter of fact, United Nations organs, and especially the Security Council in many resolutions, have confirmed that East Jerusalem is an integral part of the Arab territories occupied since 1967, to which the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 is applicable. The Security Council has declared null and void all legislative and administrative measures adopted by Israel to change the city's legal status or demographic composition. It has called upon Israel to annul these measures and not to repeat them, and for Member States not to establish diplomatic missions in Jerusalem.

All the States of the world have agreed not to recognize illegal Israeli measures which would name Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. This applies not only to occupied East Jerusalem, but also to West Jerusalem, which was under Israeli control before 1967.

We should not forget that General Assembly resolution 181 (II), which Israel considers the legal basis for its existence, decided to consider Jerusalem a separate international entity. In addition to this, we must remember that both the Israeli and Palestinian sides agreed, in the 1993 Declaration of Principles, which is binding on both parties, to negotiate the status of Jerusalem in the second phase of negotiations.

Consequently, any Israeli measures to establish a new *fait accompli* in Jerusalem or to enforce its claims violate agreements between the two parties. First and foremost among those measures was the opening of a

tunnel under the western wall of the Holy Shrine. Prior to that, Israel destroyed the community centre of the Burj Al-Laqlaq Association in the Old City.

This leads us to the other policies pursued by the Government of Israel since it assumed power. I can refer here to the non-implementation of provisions of the Agreement that are now due to be implemented, especially withdrawal from the city of Al-Khalil and from Area B; the continued blockade of Palestinian territory; the prohibition of the movement of persons and goods in violation of the economic part of the Agreement; and the continued settlement policy on occupied Palestinian lands, including Jerusalem, which is a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and of agreements between the parties.

We view as positive the meetings between leaders of the two parties, including the summit meeting which was organized by President Clinton and which ended yesterday. Yet, regrettably, these meetings have not achieved the necessary changes in Israeli policies and positions. The situation created by these policies is extremely dangerous, because they have caused unbearable suffering on the part of the Palestinian people.

We must admit, before the international community, that the Middle East peace process is facing a great danger. It is facing a serious crisis because of Israeli policies and positions. We hope that — with the help of the international community and the United Nations and with the direct contribution of the co-sponsors of the peace process and of the other actors in Europe — the status of the negotiations can return to what it was before the recent crisis. This should include the closing of the tunnel in accordance with Security Council resolution 1073 (1996), and an end to the blockade of Palestinian towns and villages, in which tanks are being used. We also hope to see a serious change in the Israeli position, with a commitment to the effective implementation of the agreements that have been entered into and with Israel refraining from any act that would violate the agreements and render them useless.

Let us work together to rescue the peace process and to agree on the basis of these agreements. We hope to reach a peaceful and just solution to the Palestinian question and to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Programme of work

The President in the Chair.

The President: I should like to inform Members that the General Committee will meet on Tuesday, 8 October 1996, at 9.15 a.m. in Conference Room 3 to consider a request for the inclusion of an additional item, entitled “Observer status for the International Seabed Authority”, which has been circulated in document A/51/231.

Announcement

The President: I would like to remind representatives of the following dates: The 1996 United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities will be held in conjunction with the United Nations/Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations pledging conference for the World Food Programme. The Pledging Conference for Development Activities will be held on the mornings of Monday and Tuesday, 4 and 5 November. The Pledging Conference for the World Food Programme will take place on Monday, 4 November, in the afternoon. Both Conferences will be opened by the Secretary-General on the morning of 4 November.

The announcement of voluntary contributions to the 1997 programme of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees will take place on Wednesday, 13 November, in the morning.

The announcement of voluntary contributions to the 1997 programmes of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East will take place on Thursday, 5 December, in the morning.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.