



General Assembly

Seventy-sixth session

4th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 21 September 2021, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Shahid (Maldives)

The meeting was called to order at 3.35 p.m.

Address by Mr. Zoran Milanović, President of the Republic of Croatia

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

Mr. Zoran Milanović, President of the Republic of Croatia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Zoran Milanović, President of the Republic of Croatia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Milanović: It is a great honour to address this important organ once again. I especially want to congratulate you, Sir, on being elected to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session and I wish you much success. I also want to thank your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Volkan Bozkır of Turkey, for his leadership and guidance in truly difficult times. Furthermore, I congratulate His Excellency Mr. António Guterres on his reappointment as Secretary-General of the United Nations.

It is perhaps more important than ever that we continue to strengthen multilateralism and the international rules-based order, with the United Nations playing a central role. You are right, Sir, to point out how this moment in history calls for, above all, hope.

Violence, poverty and hunger are once again on the rise. Our post-pandemic recovery will be even more hard-pressed in upending the world's uneven economic development. Devastating natural disasters, especially due to severe weather patterns, are increasingly difficult to deal with. As our best scientific minds tell us, we can no longer afford to ignore how climate change is making natural hazards worse. Migration continues to rise, further fuelling discontent in its wake. Meanwhile, populists and disinformation campaigns, by blatantly or maliciously ignoring factual accounts, can unnervingly shake people's confidence in public authorities, in science and in the media.

But we cannot and we must not give in. It is our responsibility, as global leaders, to tackle those false narratives head-on, to win back the people's trust and to give them hope. Multilateralism, global solidarity and international cooperation have few — if any — alternatives. They constitute a sound way forward for rational beings. The United Nations stands only to benefit from its cooperation with regional multilateral actors, such as, in a European context, the European Union (EU), the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and NATO.

I therefore want to re-emphasize Croatia's commitment to our collective efforts to tackle the many challenges before us. That includes taking action on climate change; our commitment to solidarity in times of crises; protecting human rights and upholding humanitarian law; promoting education and the empowerment of women; peaceful conflict resolution;

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

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fighting organized crime and corruption; countering terrorism; and dealing with disruptive technologies.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is a historic test for our generation. How we respond today, both individually and collectively, will greatly shape the world of generations to come. Croatia is pleased to have been able to coordinate, together with Afghanistan, resolution 74/306, on the comprehensive and coordinated response to the coronavirus disease pandemic, which set the stage not only for our recovery, but also for building back better. The resolution also recognizes the value of an integrated One Health approach. By better understanding the health-related interlinkages of humans, animals and our ecosystem, we stand a better chance at tackling antimicrobial resistance, as well as preventing and containing another major zoonotic disease outbreak.

I think we all share an aspiration for comprehensive, multisectoral engagement to strengthen national, regional and global capacities, as well as society's overall resilience to a future pandemic. Let us maintain the momentum and keep working towards a more robust architecture that will reinforce global health security. The World Health Organization plays a pivotal role and its further development is therefore essential. Establishing legal standards and assuring compliance is a fundamental part of an effective multilateral cooperative response.

That is why Croatia actively advocates for a pandemic preparedness and response agreement. As an incoming member of the Economic and Social Council for the term 2022-2024, Croatia wants to foster the deliverance of a stronger multilateral response to the pandemic in a spirit of global solidarity and partnership. Safe and effective vaccines, as well as diagnostics and treatment, need to be made more easily accessible to all, in a timely and sustainable way and without discrimination of any kind. We are firmly committed to supporting the work of the Economic and Social Council as the key platform at the United Nations for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, clearing our path to recovery.

Ahead of the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Glasgow in November, it is vital that we stay on track and promote the continuous implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Even Pope Francis, who dedicated his first

encyclical *Laudato si'* to the common heritage of our planet, is expected to attend.

Making the necessary changes to our lives and our economies will certainly not be easy. However, I am convinced that shifting to green and sustainable technologies can go hand in hand with economic growth. Croatia is actively setting up a legislative and strategic framework, which is a prerequisite for coordinated action on climate change. Our commitment to reaching climate neutrality is visible through several key strategic achievements, namely our national development strategy for 2030; our low-carbon development strategy for 2030 with a view to 2050; and our five-year action plan for the implementation of a low-carbon development strategy.

Allow me to say a few words about our South-Eastern European neighbourhood. Croatia has vested interests in the well-being of the Western Balkans. The stability, functionality and prosperity of the region mean a great deal to us. That is why Croatia is one of the strongest advocates of the region's EU enlargement prospects. The fulfilment of well-established criteria, the implementation of reforms and the delivery of tangible results remain key requirements for EU membership. Even more so, the path to membership serves to secure the higher standards all peoples aspire to. Democratic transformation and the rule of law will remain central markers. We have also continued to call on all regional leaders to lower tensions, overcome differences and seek ways to build lasting partnerships.

In a way, Bosnia and Herzegovina is a cornerstone of peace and security in the wider region. Its territorial integrity, functioning institutions and inter-ethnic cohabitation have always been important concerns for Croatia, yet the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is as challenging and as complex as it gets in the Western Balkans — and it is always challenging in the Western Balkans. We would like to see a stable, peaceful and prosperous Bosnia and Herzegovina, progressing firmly on the path to EU membership; a country where equality among its three constituent peoples and the rights of all its citizens are fully guaranteed.

Unfortunately, narratives in Bosnia and Herzegovina often swing between two tenaciously unachievable and unjust ends, namely centralized governance and separatism. In their own way, both are destructive and contrary to the spirit of its constitutional framework, stemming from the

Dayton-Paris Accords. The Dayton-Paris Accords are not without their faults, which undoubtedly will need to be addressed. However, we should not underestimate Bosnia and Herzegovina's well-established sensitivities and inherited intricacies, nor should it be subject to experimentations that dangerously deviate from the Dayton Peace Agreement's founding principles. That is essential in order to move Bosnia and Herzegovina forward and secure its EU aspirations.

The inequality of its constituent peoples has been left unresolved for too long, unnecessarily creating internal political instabilities and tensions. In order to move forward, Bosnia and Herzegovina requires an appropriate institutional power-sharing framework, based on the principles of federalism, decentralization and legitimate representation. The concept of constituent peoples is often misrepresented as an obstacle to the equal rights of all its citizens. Many political and legal practices can be ensured without having to give up democratic rights and freedoms.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's electoral reforms are long overdue and urgently needed. Electoral reforms should facilitate the ability of the constituent peoples, namely Bosniacs, Serbs and Croats, to respectively choose their representatives at all appropriate political levels. Bosnia and Herzegovina's Croats have not been able to exercise that right, therefore it is no wonder that they feel marginalized and disenfranchised. That should change.

The collapse of Afghanistan's Government is a major setback. After 20 years of our engagement and investment, it is hard not to come away discouraged. We will certainly assess the lessons from our Afghan experience, but the key question today is: how should we deal with the Taliban? Maintaining a pragmatic approach will not be easy, as we rightfully call upon those in power to respect the most fundamental rights of their people. Security will remain fragile, as the risk of a regional spillover cannot be ruled out. We are also concerned that Afghanistan may once again become a breeding ground for terrorism. Croatia has decided to financially support the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in its efforts to provide humanitarian support to the Afghan people.

The Middle East peace process remains crucial, not just regionally but globally. We call on both sides to refrain from unilateral actions that could exacerbate tensions and reopen new cycles of violence. In the

long term, the focus should be on developing a wider political horizon for meaningful negotiations and renewing the peace process. A two-State solution based on internationally agreed parameters remains viable.

Reviving the Iran nuclear deal is a key instrument of regional security and stability that can still serve as a useful platform for broader regional dialogue. We hope that further diplomatic efforts will contribute to resolving issues of common interest.

After over a decade of instability, the Libyan crisis could be winding down. Nevertheless, lasting peace will remain complicated. I sincerely hope that the planned elections will be held in December, as legitimate leadership is an important precondition for a successful transition.

Mr. Manalo (Philippines), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Together, we urgently need to start reforming the United Nations, especially the Security Council, which is our main instrument for securing global peace and security. In that regard, we welcome the Secretary-General's efforts, expressed in his recently published report, entitled "Our Common Agenda". Croatia also upholds the responsibility to protect, as adopted by consensus in the 2005 World Summit outcome document (resolution 60/1). We welcome resolution 75/277, entitled "The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity", which was adopted with overwhelming support. Together with Costa Rica, Denmark and the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, Croatia organized yesterday's special event on protecting women and girls, who are directly affected and often targeted in conflict and post-conflict settings.

Croatia reaffirms its strong commitment to a rules-based international order and to upholding international law — two essential ingredients of peaceful coexistence and cooperation among States. We support the role of the International Criminal Court and call upon those Member States yet to ratify the Rome Statute to do so. Promoting the rights of women and children, confronting hate speech, calling for the abolition of the death penalty, protecting minorities and actively promoting casualty recording and the mandate on truth, justice and reparations are among our human rights priorities at the United Nations.

Croatia is still searching for 1,858 citizens who are still missing or unaccounted for from the 1991-1995 Homeland War. It is a lasting and painful burden for the affected families and takes a toll on our society's desire to move on. The fact that the fate of the missing is unknown some 30 years later is especially excruciating. We urge other neighbouring States to cooperate in good faith and to respect their declared commitments and international agreements. I must confess that I cannot understand the lack of information sharing and access to archival leads on the possible locations of individual and mass graves so many years after the conflict.

It is impossible not to recall the horrific terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, 20 years ago. Terrorism continues to be our era's formidable security threat. On the other hand, it has also ushered in unprecedented cooperation and unwavering resolve to counter terrorism. Cybersecurity is perhaps one of our fastest growing concerns. Trends appear to indicate an increasing diversification of malicious efforts, with State-sponsored ones perhaps being the most worrisome. Particularly upsetting incidents involve cyberattacks targeting our critical health infrastructures, which are already exhausted due to the struggle against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Croatia is proud to have contributed to 19 United Nations peacekeeping operations. We also aspire to join the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission and continue our engagement from previous mandates.

Nuclear weapons and corresponding technologies still loom large in the security calculus of leading global Powers. Nightmare scenarios can largely be avoided by sincere commitments to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), a foundation of global nuclear order. We hope to see progress made at the next NPT Review Conference. But while nuclear weapons cast large shadows, let us not lose sight of the lingering threats posed by illicit small arms and light weapons trafficking. We are familiar with such threats due to the armed conflicts and organized crime in the Western Balkans. We will continue advocating for effective multilateral action on tackling illegal arms transfers and build-ups.

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

Mr. Zoran Milanović, President of the Republic of Croatia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Abdel Fattah Al Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt to introduce an address by the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

Mr. Selim (Egypt) (spoke in Arabic): It is my pleasure to introduce His Excellency Mr. Abdel Fattah Al Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, at the general debate of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly.

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

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex I and see A/76/332/Add.1).

Address by Mr. Pedro Castillo Terrones, President of the Republic of Peru

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

Mr. Pedro Castillo Terrones, President of the Republic of Peru, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Pedro Castillo Terrones, President of the Republic of Peru, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Castillo Terrones (spoke in Spanish): The seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly is taking place in a global context marked by instability and uncertainty, rather than by the certainties that our peoples are demanding about the future of the pandemic, peace, security, economic recovery and the reduction of inequality and poverty. The President of the General Assembly bears the heavy responsibility of leading the Assembly in this changing and fragile world. I am confident that his skill, knowledge and experience will lead us to the best decisions and success in our work.

At the same time, we were celebrating the bicentennial of Peru's independence last 28 July, I

assumed the presidency of the Republic in a democratic exercise, in which the Peruvian people, reflecting their sovereign will, voted in favour of social change through macroeconomic stability and sustainable growth. It is the first time in the history of the Peruvian people that a schoolteacher from a rural part of the country, has assumed the leadership of this country and taken responsibility for its destiny. That responsibility binds me to the poor, marginalized and vulnerable populations, as well as to entrepreneurs and the middle classes, which have suffered so much from the pandemic — in short, to all Peruvians, without exception.

Peru is the cradle of one of the many great civilizations that have contributed to the history of humankind. It is a multicultural and multiethnic country, which, through the Government of Peru, is committed to building a society and a State rooted in the people, nurturing social inclusion that eliminates inequalities, injustices and the unfair distribution of wealth, forging a solid democratic society in which freedom and civil rights are guaranteed by a democratic and representative State, and promoting the participation of the people and the country's subnational, regional and local governments in all decision-making processes that involve their destinies and their lives.

I reaffirm the Peruvian Government's democratic nature and mission, as well as its commitment to social justice. Our task is not only to strengthen the rule of law and the separation of powers, but also to do so in political life in an effective manner, ensuring that the people can fully exercise their rights on a daily basis. Peru's economy has been growing for 25 years, and it is one of the strongest in Latin America. Notwithstanding the ravages the pandemic has brought to the national economy and the world, we are going to press on with the responsible and efficient management of the country's macroeconomic framework in order to continue to expand growth and improve income redistribution.

At the same time, indicators show that there is extreme inequality and exclusion in Peru. This situation compromises the ethical values of democracy and affects the competitiveness of the State and the economy. A social transformation is therefore necessary to allow all Peruvians to enjoy their economic and social rights, as well as their fundamental freedoms and civil and political rights. This transformation must guarantee in every home and to every family their rights to education, health, decent employment and a living wage, social security and housing, as well as

access to an individual, economic and collective life that is respectful of the rights of Mother Earth.

We fully support the historic initiative of Secretary-General António Guterres to set out a “common agenda” that proposes a new social contract for the post-pandemic world. The transformative action of the Peruvian Government is inspired by the same view of the problems at hand, and we have the same will to see a new global social contract adopted. We want to establish a new social pact in Peru, as well — one that ensures democratic governance, peace and social cohesion and manages to drastically reduce poverty, eliminate extreme poverty, lessens inequalities and consigns to the past exclusion and racism as limiting factors to equal access to the State and the market.

For the second year in a row, this general debate is being held against the backdrop of the risks of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which has claimed the lives of more than 4.5 million brothers and sisters worldwide. The number of people infected exceeded 220 million, including more than 200,000 Peruvians.

Vaccines have opened the way towards restoring humankind's faith that this battle will be won by humankind. However, the fight against the pandemic has shown us that the international system has been unable to cooperate or uphold the principles of solidarity and efficiency. We need agreements to ensure equity in access to vaccines and vaccination. Multilateral cooperation is still the great absentee in the fight against COVID-19.

The new global agenda initiative should include vigorous and urgent multilateral actions to combat the pandemic and allow all countries, especially the poorest, to have access to vaccines and complementary health coverage. Peru will be an active and dynamic member in the shared endeavour to ensure that all countries have inclusive, equitable and non-discriminatory access to all diagnostic processes, therapies, medicines and vaccines, as well as to the technologies and health products, including their components and precursors, required to respond to COVID-19 as a global priority, including fair access.

Strengthening international scientific cooperation to combat the pandemic must be a top priority. We must reinforce the initiatives that are being developed for this purpose. In view of the foregoing, on behalf of Peru, I would like to propose the signing of a global agreement

between the Heads of State and Government and the owners of the relevant patents to guarantee universal access to vaccines for all inhabitants of the planet without discrimination or privilege, which would signal our commitment to the health and life of all peoples.

It is necessary to adapt the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to the new realities of the post-pandemic world. Peru has a national, autonomous, democratic, social and decentralized foreign policy, which is oriented towards cooperation in solidarity with all international actors, State and non-State. To that end, public diplomacy is a priority, as it is now for the United Nations. We are therefore giving special attention to the most urgent of the SDGs in order to reach the neediest and the poorest.

The goal of zero hunger must be the central focus of the international community's efforts. It is crucial that we redouble our efforts to meet the immediate food needs of all vulnerable populations, stimulate social protection programmes, maintain and increase world trade in food, keep the wheels of national food supply chains in motion, and support the capacity of small-scale producers to expand food production.

We are equally committed to a social development policy that will allow Peru to meet the SDGs, particularly in relation to access to water and sanitation networks, poverty reduction and the elimination of extreme poverty, reduction of infant mortality, full access to the health-care systems, guaranteed inclusive and quality education, gender equality and, especially, employment-generation and improvement of informal employment. Decent employment is the only lasting antidote to poverty. Health, education and access to water and sanitation cannot be for-profit businesses, as they are fundamental human rights that we must guarantee, ensuring universal, quality access without discrimination of any kind.

As a primary school teacher by profession, I must call international attention to the millions of children and adolescents in the world who are out of school, which is a situation that has worsened with the health emergency. I am convinced that society's ability to overcome the complex challenges that we face depends on the education that our children and our young people receive. Following the severe impact of the pandemic on school education, the Secretary-General's initiative calling for a new global social

contract should be expressed through an initiative to universalize schooling.

Women and girls make up half of the world's population. They are a determinant force in the creativity capacity and labour, economic and spiritual potential of all our societies. The new global social pact must take a leap forward in protecting the effective exercise of women's rights, which are human rights. In addition to their being recognized, they must be effectively realized at the local, regional, national and global levels. We must establish concrete gender equity. We must remove all legal, social and economic obstacles to the empowerment of women and girls. We must fully guarantee their rights and eliminate all social norms and practices that discriminate against women. The Government of Peru is committed to doing so.

Peru therefore aligns its national social development agenda with the priority action and agenda of the United Nations with a view to fulfilling and implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is time to put the social component at the forefront of international relations and commit ourselves to ensuring that all actions, initiatives and resources of the United Nations system are linked to the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda. Public diplomacy is not only a national requirement; it is a global imperative.

Human action without respect for nature has led us to question the viability of the planet. The fight against climate change is challenging our consciences. Limiting the temperature increase to between 1.5° and 2.0°C s, a goal set out in the Paris Climate Agreement, is now compromised in its viability. Desertification continues to devastate forests, especially in the Amazon. The effects of climate change are increasingly devastating. The time has come to reconsider our activities so that we can achieve sustainable development in harmony with the planet, with a view to leaving a habitable world for future generations. Moreover, the countries that pollute the most must imperatively comply with the obligations they have assumed.

Peru has set the goals of becoming a carbon-neutral country by 2050 and of reducing greenhouse-gas emissions by 30 to 40 per cent, in line with projections for 2030. As an expression of the Peruvian Government's commitment to the health of the planet, we will declare a national climate emergency.

This Assembly will once again debate the acute and serious problem of terrorism. Peru has suffered

terrorist violence and has been able to overcome it. We condemn and reject terrorism in all its forms. We support all efforts to combat it. We are committed to the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Terrorism has never been and never will be a means for social transformation. Violence only generates destruction and human rights violations, and its victims are the poorest and most dispossessed. Terrorism violates human dignity and is irreconcilable with the values of a democratic society.

At the regional level, Peru is committed to peace and international security, respect for international law and an inclusive agenda.

As a teacher, I am convinced of the power of education. If we do not make the Governments of the world help children, we will have done little or nothing. The present is fragile for global diplomacy, especially for multilateralism. But I believe that our collective will always be the stronger force. I am confident that, through a new global agenda initiative, together we can build a world of peace, friendship, cooperation and well-being for all. As a teacher and a Head of State, I must tell Assembly members: we invest in education because an educated people can never be deceived.

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

Mr. Pedro Castillo Terrones, President of the Republic of Peru, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, President of Turkmenistan

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

Mrs. Ataeva (Turkmenistan) (*spoke in Russian*): It is my great honour to introduce the video statement by His Excellency Mr. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, President of Turkmenistan.

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

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex II and see A/76/332/Add.1).

Address by Mr. Sauli Niinistö, President of the Republic of Finland

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

Mr. Sauli Niinistö, President of the Republic of Finland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Sauli Niinistö, President of the Republic of Finland, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Niinistö: At the outset, I would like to congratulate Mr. Abdulla Shahid on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session. I would also like to congratulate Mr. António Guterres on his reappointment as Secretary-General for a second term. Both of them can count on Finland's full support for their important work.

Finland warmly welcomes the ambitious approach put forward in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Our Common Agenda" (A/75/982). It is easy to agree with one of the key statements in that document:

"In our biggest shared test since the Second World War, humanity faces a stark and urgent choice: a breakdown or a breakthrough" (*ibid.*, *Summary*).

We are indeed at a critical juncture. If humankind is to make the right choice — a breakthrough, rather than a breakdown — we have to shoulder our human responsibilities and take responsibility for our common future.

The task may seem daunting. The past years have witnessed continued and even growing turbulence in the world. Volatility and uncertainty may easily lead to despair. Common solutions may seem far out of reach.

At the same time, many trends highlight how interconnected our world is. The pandemic has had an impact on every one of us. The same will increasingly be true of both climate change and emerging technologies.

Conflicts no longer remain local or regional. They have consequences, direct or indirect, across the globe. All of these cross-border challenges are crying for a global response. With the right mindset, such a response is within reach.

In 1975, 30 years after the United Nations was founded, 35 Heads of State and Government gathered in the Finnish capital to sign the Helsinki Final Act. The letter of that document, still valid today, focused on security and cooperation in Europe. But if we succeed in reviving and expanding the spirit that arose from that meeting, it can have a more global significance.

The willingness of adversaries and competitors to engage in dialogue, build trust and seek common denominators was the essence of the Helsinki spirit. Its potential today is by no means limited to the area within the purview of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. It is precisely that kind of spirit that the entire world and the United Nations urgently needs.

I am convinced that the more we speak about the Helsinki spirit, the closer we get to rekindling it and to making it come true, which will bring us closer to solving our common challenges together.

Over a year and half since the beginning of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, we still live in its shadow. Fortunately, there is now some light at the end of the tunnel in many countries. Yet we should resist the temptation to think about health security on a national basis alone. The scientific community has shown a better example than Governments.

To end this pandemic, the solution has to be global. For a global response to succeed, we need to ensure equitable access to effective remedies. Working through the COVAX Facility, Finland is strongly committed to vaccine solidarity. Global action is also needed to be better prepared for future pandemics.

It is high time to take concrete steps to improve our common health security beyond the current challenges. To improve our resilience, we need a One Health approach. Enhancing international collaboration on research and development and exchanging information on emerging threats are both vital. We must ensure the effective functioning of multilateral global health institutions, such as the World Health Organization.

We must also pause to reflect upon the long-term ramifications of COVID-19. It has led to an increase in extreme poverty and inequality and resulted in a deterioration of gender equality. It has seriously affected many countries' ability to reach the Sustainable Development Goals. We must intensify our

efforts to ensure that the most vulnerable are not left further behind.

The pandemic has shown that a severe enough concern can push us to take unprecedented steps. In a very short order, we all took more extreme measures to change our behaviour than anyone of us could have imagined before. What would be a sufficient wake-up call for us to do the same for the health of our planet?

With the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Climate Agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity, we already have plenty of documents and road maps to rely on. But talk is not enough. We need to act, and the time for action is now.

The rapidly proceeding loss of biodiversity alone should be a cause for immediate global concern. In addition, we now know that climate change is proceeding even faster than was previously thought. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, we are already likely to reach the 1.5°C temperature rise in the early 2030s.

It is not an exaggeration to say that we are facing a global climate emergency. And yet, that urgency is still not reflected in our deeds. The national determined contributions that we, the signatories of the Paris Agreement, have made so far may still put us on track for a 2.7°C temperature rise by the end of this century. The consequences for the planet and for future generations would be catastrophic.

We have to use the upcoming twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to put ourselves on a sustainable course. It is our common responsibility — that of Governments, institutions, companies and individuals — to step up. Well ahead of the meeting in Glasgow, we need more ambitious emission-reduction plans, and we must speed up the ongoing transition away from fossil fuels.

To succeed, we need adequate climate financing. As a global community, we have to increase the quality, quantity and accessibility of climate finance, especially to the least developed countries and the small island developing countries.

We must also encourage Finance Ministers to take climate change into account in all of their decision-making. The Coalition of Finance Ministers for Climate Action, co-chaired by Finland and Indonesia, already has more than 60 members. It currently focuses

on green recovery, carbon pricing and biodiversity. We invite more countries to join the work of the Coalition.

The dramatic events in Afghanistan in the past weeks have again reminded us of the fragility of peace and security. The humanitarian needs in the country are immense, and it is critical that we act together to ensure that the people have access to humanitarian assistance. The United Nations entities staying on in Afghanistan play a key role in this regard, and the international community must be steadfast on this issue. Women and girls in Afghanistan must not be forgotten or made invisible.

Yet, unfortunately, Afghanistan is just one example. Conflicts, old and new, continue to cause human suffering across the world. The diplomatic toolbox of the Charter of the United Nations needs to be used to its full potential to build peace where needed and to prevent conflicts where possible. For Finland, conflict prevention and mediation are strong priorities. We continue to be ready and willing to offer our good services for constructive dialogue in this regard.

In its foreign policy, Finland has long underscored the importance of the universal and binding nature of human rights. Our own experience is that a society flourishes when everyone has an active, equal and meaningful role in it. Finland is a candidate for a seat on the Human Rights Council for the period from 2022 to 2024. As a member of the Human Rights Council, we would do our best to make our human rights priorities work for the benefit of peace, stability and prosperity across the world.

In our human rights policy, we pay special attention to the rights of those in the most vulnerable situations — the ones most exposed to discrimination. Promoting the rights of persons with disabilities is a cross-cutting priority for Finland. Another key theme for us is the rights of all women and girls. The recently launched Generation Equality campaign in which Finland co-leads the action coalition on technology and innovation, has an important role to play in mobilizing different actors for gender equality.

In an era of intensifying great power, competition and rapid technological progress, we are also faced with the serious risk of a new arms race. If the unraveling of the international arms control system is allowed to continue, it will reduce predictability and increase the likelihood of unintended escalation. That will make all of us less secure. We urgently need to remedy the

situation. The most important task is to uphold and strengthen the existing arms control architecture.

But at the same time, we also need to think ahead with an open mind. We have to develop new solutions to respond to emerging challenges and technologies by strengthening confidence-building, verification and transparency.

In nuclear-arms control, Finland welcomes the extension of the New START Treaty. Yet it is also clear that engagement between all the nuclear Powers would be beneficial for global security.

The need to come together and save the planet for future generations has rarely been greater. For Finland, the United Nations system is at the core of the rules-based order that we want to defend and the multilateralism that we want to strengthen. No other organization has the same legitimacy or the same normative impact. No other organization gives hope to so many people for a better world. No other organization can deliver the future we want and the future we deserve.

But the United Nations can only succeed if we, its States Members, want to come together and do what is needed and expected of us. That requires more dialogue. That requires more trust. That requires more Helsinki spirit from all of us. In this spirit, Finland continues its unwavering support for the United Nations.

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

Mr. Sauli Niinistö, President of the Republic of Finland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Rodrigo Roa Duterte, President of the Republic of the Philippines

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

Mr. Locsin (Philippines): I have the special honour to introduce His Excellency Mr. Rodrigo Roa Duterte, President of the Republic of the Philippines.

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

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex III and see A/76/332/Add.1).

Address by Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Rwanda to introduce an address by the President of the Republic of Rwanda.

Mr. Biruta (Rwanda): It is my distinct honour to introduce a pre-recorded statement by His Excellency Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, on the occasion of the general debate at the seventy-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly.

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

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex IV and see A/76/332/Add.1).

Address by Mr. Alberto Fernández, President of the Argentine Republic

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

Ms. Squeff (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is my honour to introduce to the General Assembly a pre-recorded statement by the President of the Argentine Republic, His Excellency Mr. Alberto Fernández.

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

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex V and see A/76/332/Add.1).

Mr. Carazo (Costa Rica), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Address by Mr. Klaus Werner Iohannis, President of Romania

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Romania.

Mr. Klaus Werner Iohannis, President of Romania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Klaus Werner Iohannis, President of Romania, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Iohannis: This is our second general debate during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which has fundamentally changed our way of life. While the pandemic has affected almost all aspects of our lives, it has also provided us with opportunities to learn, adapt and do things better. Global challenges require common solutions, solidarity and cooperation. Romania strongly believes that democratic values and a rules-based international order, with the United Nations at its core, are fundamental to build a safer and better future. Effective and equitable multilateralism that directly benefits our citizens is essential.

The pandemic has also showed us that we need to find ways to build back better and greener. We must recommit to achieving sustainable economies, as well as resilient, fair and inclusive societies where no one is left behind. Indeed, the special needs of the vulnerable should be granted particular attention. In order to be effective in achieving that aim, solidarity in action is necessary. We also need an integrated and innovative approach to respond simultaneously to a whole range of interrelated challenges, such as health, demographic changes, migration, scarce resources, climate change, biodiversity loss, extreme poverty and hunger.

We are indeed at an inflection point, and Romania welcomes the newly issued report of the Secretary-General entitled *Our Common Agenda*, supports its main conclusions and encourages the Secretary-General to continue efforts towards their implementation. Romania remains committed to contribute to the collective efforts meant to limit and overcome the delays in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals.

The post-COVID-19 recovery needs to place sustainability at its core, and we must work together to protect our planet and ecosystems. The effects of climate change have no national borders, and the responsibility to effectively address them rests on all of us. Working with other States and international organizations to respond to climate change is a priority of my current mandate as President of Romania. The year 2021 should about bring a leap forward in preventing climate change and protecting biodiversity.

Recently, we have also witnessed the potential and the challenges of digital technologies. We must ensure meaningful and safe access to the Internet, strengthen cybersecurity and promote responsible behaviour in cyberspace, while addressing the digital spread of hatred and disinformation. Bucharest will be contributing to that effort by hosting the European Cybersecurity Competence Centre, which will improve cyberresilience and cybersecurity research across the European Union.

The pandemic has also prompted us to act together to consolidate our national health systems and make them more resilient. An urgent priority is to ensure equitable and affordable global access to vaccines and treatments for COVID-19. Romania reaffirms its support for the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility, and we have contributed to the Team Europe approach to help various countries tackle the impact of the pandemic. Romania fully supports the adoption of an international legal instrument for pandemic preparedness and response.

The primary responsibility for the protection and promotion of human rights lies with our States. We must all ensure that restrictions related to COVID-19 do not exacerbate rights violations. Romania remains strongly committed to the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide. My country promotes the imperative of combating discrimination and hate speech, including anti-Semitism. This year, we adopted the first Romanian national strategy for preventing and combating anti-Semitism, xenophobia, radicalization and hate speech. Romania will continue to work towards those objectives, including by pursuing a mandate on the Human Rights Council for the term from 2023 to 2025.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made humanitarian intervention even more difficult. Nevertheless, common international action to guarantee human security is needed, as no one is safe until everyone is safe. Romania has included refugees and persons at risk in its national public health coverage. We have provided them with access to all necessary medical facilities and immunization campaigns, including against COVID-19.

Nowadays, we all look to Afghanistan, and the most pressing issue is the safe passage for Afghans who are willing to leave. We recently welcomed vulnerable groups of Afghan citizens to Romania. Ensuring that human rights — especially the rights of women, children

and minorities — are respected is also essential. We also have to ensure that humanitarian assistance can be delivered.

In holding the presidency of the Community of Democracies, Romania will continue to work towards upholding all democratic principles. We therefore encourage all States to ensure the proper functioning of democratic institutions, uphold respect for the rule of law and guarantee fundamental rights and freedoms.

Armed conflicts, ethnic divisions and inequalities remain harsh realities. It is the right time to turn the COVID-19 crisis and its security impact into an opportunity to revitalize the peace and security agenda, with renewed emphasis on conflict prevention and the consolidation of peace processes. The protracted conflicts in Romania's vicinity continue to threaten Europe's security. Romania supports the lasting peaceful resolution of those conflicts through political negotiations in the framework of their dedicated formats.

We must step up and confront the global threat of terrorism by acting in a coordinated manner. Romania maintains its full commitment to preventing and combating terrorism at the international level, building on the newly reviewed Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. The concept of resilience is an important component of our security, as well as a key factor in protecting democracy. For Romania, ensuring strategic resilience, both at the State and society levels, is a priority, which is highlighted by the Euro-Atlantic Centre for Resilience, which we created in Romania. The Centre, which will be open to all partner countries, is meant to manage various programmes and advance resilience, be it societal or in the field of emerging and disruptive technologies, resilience of communication systems and technological ecosystems, resilience to complex crises and emergencies, ensuring the continuity of Government and essential services, and resilience of the transport infrastructure.

Romania firmly believes in the potential of international law to contribute to international security. We reaffirm our appreciation for the work of the International Court of Justice. Accepting the Court's jurisdiction serves the cause of international peace. It is in that spirit that Romania, together with a group of supporting States, is promoting a declaration on the topic and invites all interested delegations to endorse it and support the initiative.

Last, but not least, let me remind the Assembly that an international organization is as strong as the political willingness of its Member States to make it relevant and fit for the times in which we live. Let us all join efforts to achieve the noble goals of the United Nations.

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

Mr. Klaus Werner Iohannis, President of Romania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Surangel S. Whipps Jr., President of the Republic of Palau

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

Mr. Surangel S. Whipps Jr., President of the Republic of Palau, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Surangel S. Whipps Jr., President of the Republic of Palau, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Whipps: It is a privilege to speak before the General Assembly for the first time. I bring warm greetings from the people of the Republic of Palau.

I extend my sincere congratulations to Mr. Abdulla Shahid on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session, and I commend Mr. Volkan Bozkir on his leadership during the previous session.

Our seventy-sixth session convenes at a unique time in the history of the United Nations. Member States are still confronted with the monumental task of solving the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. On behalf of the people of Palau, we applaud and salute the first responders, doctors, nurses, public health professionals and all those who have worked on, and continue to diligently respond to, the pandemic, including scientists, pharmaceutical companies, civil society, Governments and others that have taken the lead in creating life-saving vaccines and innovative treatments in swift response.

Palau would also like to thank all our international allies and friends that came to our aid during this

difficult time, especially the United States, Taiwan, Japan and Australia. They delivered COVID-19 vaccines, personal protective equipment, testing capacity and vital training to the people of Palau, which allowed us to remain COVID-19-free through most of the pandemic. We are now COVID-19-safe, with more than 80 per cent of our total population fully vaccinated and with zero deaths or hospitalizations. The people of Palau are eternally grateful for the friendship, generosity and cooperation.

Along those lines, we would like to highlight the Republic of China-Taiwan's leadership in the global response against COVID-19. Not only has it demonstrated consistent and effective management of the pandemic within its borders, but its leadership has also extended to Palau. Taiwan's international response facilitated cooperation and the implementation of an effective sterile travel corridor between Taiwan and Palau. That sterile corridor has allowed Taiwan and Palau to resume medical and educational cooperation and recoup economic engagement and other benefits of international travel. We encourage the United Nations system to accept Taiwan as a valuable contributor to our collective efforts and strongly advocate for Taiwan's participation in the United Nations system.

On behalf of the people of Palau, we also extend our deepest condolences to those whose lives have been affected by the pandemic. Our prayers go out to members and their loved ones. We also pray that we will further band together to find more equitable approaches to subdue the pandemic and continue the healing and economic recovery of our people, communities and nations.

If there is to be a silver lining in the pandemic, it is the strength of human resolve. In record time, we mobilized global resources and information to send protective equipment around the world and created numerous vaccines and treatments to counteract the COVID-19 virus. Although more can — and must — be done in our efforts to contain the pandemic, the global community responded to the threat of despair by taking action and working at break-neck speed to contain the coronavirus. Today I ask the global community to take the same level of urgency and bold action in responding to the existential threat of climate change.

In April of this year, Palau, which historically is outside the typhoon belt, was hit by Typhoon Surigae, our third typhoon since 2012. It damaged 20 per cent of

our homes and destroyed major infrastructure, including our aquaculture facilities. It also destroyed millions of dollars' worth of crops and wreaked significant havoc on our reefs and corals, consequently undermining Palau's food security. That is particularly notable because Palau and other small island developing States (SIDS) depend on imported and highly processed food products, due to the lack of economies of scale as a result of our small populations. That results in significant increases in non-communicable diseases among our people. While there is potential for increased local production, our efforts are hampered by the adverse impact of climate change, including sea-level rise, typhoons, droughts and other stress on marine and terrestrial ecosystems.

The gradual destruction caused by climate change has allowed us to be complacent and to respond by kicking the can down the road. However, the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has indicated that we are running out of time. Simply put, we must act now to ensure that our children inherit a healthy and reliable future. We need to act now before further irreparable damage is done to our planet. As a SIDS, we stand here as one of the States most vulnerable to climate change, and we urge fast and comprehensive multilateral action to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Ocean-based climate action can play a significant role in shrinking the world's carbon footprint. The Ocean Panel has commissioned research that found ocean-based climate action can deliver up to a fifth — 21 per cent — of the annual greenhouse-gas emissions cuts needed to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C by 2050.

One of the major issues in addressing the risks of climate change and the climate-ocean nexus is our inability and lack of capacity in accessing climate financing. That further exacerbates our vulnerabilities, and we are not alone in that respect. Of the 20 per cent of climate financing provided on adaptation, only 2 per cent of that support went to SIDS. Furthermore, of that 2 per cent, at least half of those funds were not in the form of grants, but in the form of loans. We urge the United Nations to address that inequality and reduce the artificial barriers to allowing small countries to access climate financing. We also urge the United Nations to create systems that, in line with its Charter, represent "we the peoples" for all people.

As a SIDS, Palau relies heavily on the ocean, not only as its main economic engine via tourism and fisheries but also for its food security. A recent study on the Palau National Marine Sanctuary by Stanford University stated that rising temperatures will produce warmer waters that will hold less oxygen. Those twin pressures will cause tuna and billfish, which have particularly high-oxygen requirements, to migrate in search of areas with cooler waters and higher oxygen concentrations. Those analyses project a 40 per cent decline in skipjack and yellowfin tuna biomass in Palau's waters by the year 2100, if we continue on this high-emissions trajectory.

As Palau prepares to host the seventh Our Ocean Conference in February 2022, we reaffirm our commitment to sustainably manage, use and conserve our oceans. In 2015, we declared most of our exclusive economic zone as the Palau National Marine Sanctuary, but that is not enough. We need global action. It is time that the international community commit to establishing a 30 per cent target that focuses on marine-protected areas within and beyond national jurisdictions.

Many of the challenges that will be presented here this week must be addressed within the framework of the United Nations, as the custodian of the world. To that point, Palau is undergoing a renewal of its Compact of Free Association with the United States. The relationship was the result of the United Nations historic role in assigning trusteeship to the United States to administer our islands as part of a strategic trust territory, with the duty of developing the territory into full self-government and self-reliance.

After seven referendums, the people of Palau agreed to the Compact of Free Association in 1994, allowing the United States to exercise the fundamental elements of our national sovereignty — control over our national security and defence. And that enabled the United States to deny other nations access to our lands and waters, ultimately restricting our association with some members of the international community and limiting our prospective economic development opportunities.

In that regard, previous Compact reconsiderations have been unsuccessful because of inadequate regard for the complex dynamics of the modern world and the compounding vulnerabilities Palau is challenged with. Regardless, I am confident that the new United States Administration will rise to the task and correct the deficiencies in previous deliberations.

As the eldest, or big brother, in my family, the safety, security and well-being of my siblings were ultimately my responsibility. We grew up in our community as a collective unit, whereby “I” was always synonymous with “we”. This reassured us that no one would be left out and reinforced the principle that each of us reflected the stability and character of the family and the extended community. That is a fundamental Palauan principle that, I believe, signifies the Pacific way and reflects the United Nations system.

This family — the United Nations — has the opportunity to reconcile global issues and, through its collective membership, take the actions necessary to develop and implement innovative crucial solutions. This is our mandate, and we must not fail.

In Palau, many different fishes of the ocean are painted on our traditional Chiefs’ meeting houses, which we call *abais*. There are the sharks that symbolize bravery, the stingrays that symbolize steadfastness and the surgeon fish, which we call the *mesekuuk*, that symbolize unity. The surgeon fish represents a unique characteristic. They are fish that graze and roam on the reef alone, eating algae. But, once danger lurks, they all swim quickly from wherever they are along the reef and come together in a large school resembling an intimidating ocean animal to provide safety and security for all.

The nations of the world must act like the surgeon fish and come together, including Taiwan. Taiwan’s 23.5 million people must also be given a voice, as the Charter of the United Nations states, “We the peoples”. All the nations working together can overcome the challenges of our time, from COVID-19 to climate, and act with integrity and resolve to leave a better world for our children.

I am proud to stand among my brothers and sisters at the United Nations and champion a brighter and more sustainable world. God bless us all. *Kom kmal mesulang.*

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

His Excellency Mr. Surangel S. Whipps Jr., President of the Republic of Palau, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

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

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

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

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Carlos Alvarado Quesada, President of the Republic of Costa Rica. As a Costa Rican, I feel very honoured to introduce a young leader who is working tirelessly for his country and for a more peaceful, more unified, more inclusive, more just, greener and bluer world. I invite him to address the Assembly.

President Alvarado Quesada (*spoke in Spanish*): We will only be strong and prosperous when the world’s most vulnerable are too. That concept is not a romanticized vision of multilateralism. It is a reality we see, time and again, as we face shared challenges. We are only as safe as the most vulnerable among us. That is the conceptual cornerstone of human security, but we are struggling to comprehend this reality, and above all, take action to safeguard us all. The precept of leaving no one behind — a moral compass for taking action — exists not only in relation to the most vulnerable, but also the interests of all, as we make up a single interconnected and interdependent macrosystem.

The facts speak for themselves. Millions of people — mainly the poorest — throughout the world are waiting for the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccine. Only two out of 10 people in low- and lower-middle-income countries have received the first dose of the vaccine, whereas in high- and upper-middle-income countries the corresponding statistic is eight out of 10. The level of inequality is abysmal and tragic. The spirit of solidarity embodied by the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility has not met the scale of demand needed, and access to vaccines is absolutely unequal.

Costa Rica advocates access to COVID-19 vaccines as a global public good, for everyone in the world. The COVAX promise must be fulfilled, and the developed countries can make it a reality. The shortfall and the passage of time are spawning increased suffering and

death, as well as new variants. Today, it is imperative that, based on effective multilateralism, we turn COVAX into a concrete solution. In that regard, I ask for the support of the Group of 20 (G-20) to make that happen. As long as the maximum rate of global vaccination is not reached, all of us, including countries that have stockpiled a greater number of vaccines, will be vulnerable to the virus' mutations and the economic ravages of the pandemic.

At the same time, in recent months and weeks we have seen the extent to which extreme natural disasters have swept the world from Germany to Nigeria, from Australia to Haiti, from Kiribati to Central America and from the Philippines to the United States, including floods, hurricanes, melting ice, forest fires, poverty, crop failures and migration.

We take note of the recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. In the worst-case scenario, if action is not taken now and emissions continue to grow at their current rate, by the end of the century the temperature of the planet will increase by 4.4°C and, as a result, so will the force and frequency of extreme weather phenomena. Ironically, the countries that produce the lowest levels of carbon emissions, such as the island States and my own region, Central America, are the areas most affected by the climate emergency. Extreme weather events have led to migration and developing countries to go into debt to deal with adaptation and reconstruction.

The pandemic, the climate crisis, unemployment and limited levels of investment are putting extreme stress on the social and political stability of developing countries, as well as the stability of the entire planet, owing to global interconnectedness. At the same time, global military spending continued to rise in 2020. How will we explain to the next generation that, during the pandemic, as vaccines failed to reach everyone and we faced an unprecedented climate crisis, the world increased its spending on weapons? How can something so absurd be possible? The future is crying out to us for fewer military weapons and more investment in peace.

Ours and the next generation face the unique challenge in human history of preserving life on the planet and its cultures against the threat of destruction. The question is whether we are doing enough and everything possible to that end, and if we are not, what needs to change? The reality that our planet is interconnected compels us to understand that today

the interests of the most disadvantaged people are the interests of all. It means understanding that the best way to be selfish is to be supportive and generous and that hoarding capital, know-how and health assets deprives the entire world of a better future for all humankind.

In order to forge ahead and fight for our own and our youth and children's future, however, humankind must be determined to embark upon the path of action — not words or appeals, but concrete commitments entailing responsibilities and changes that are quantifiable in terms of their impact and qualitative in terms of their ethics.

The pandemic is also an opportunity to build better and foster an economic and social recovery that will create sustainable, green, inclusive and resilient societies that will be tailored to technological and digital transformations. Costa Rica, together with the World Health Organization and dozens of other countries, launched the COVID-19 Technology Access Pool (C-TAP), a repository of technologies and intellectual property, with a view to democratizing innovation and technology, particularly in the area of health care, treatments and medicines, to make them available for all people in all countries — especially for people in vulnerable situations or living in poverty.

In that regard, our will must be actualized. I call on everyone to support with resolve and join that initiative. It is no secret that the pandemic has placed enormous strain on developing economies. Economic decline, unemployment, falling tax revenues and an increase in spending on vaccines, treatments and financial assistance programmes have hit emerging economies. The new allocation of \$650 billion in special drawing rights is a step in the right direction, but it is not enough. More than 40 per cent of that amount is intended for cash-rich countries, and only 1 per cent of those resources have been allocated for the people of developing countries.

Priority should be placed on supporting Governments in need of financing and public financing rather than on shoring up the reserves of central banks. In that context, while holding the presidency pro tempore of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Costa Rica has proposed the establishment of the Fund to Alleviate COVID-19 Economics (FACE)— an emergency support fund of more than \$500 billion, financed by 0.7 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) of the world's largest

and strongest economies — representing 80 per cent of the world's GDP — which will be administered by multilateral development banks as concessional loans to developing countries.

The funds are to be lent on a long-term, 40-year basis at fixed low rates to provide countries facing economic constraints with emergency financing, enable them to respond to the crisis and stay on track to meet the 2030 Development Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. The success of ambitious and supportive initiatives like C-TAP and FACE requires the determination of the developed countries.

I dream of a world-serving agreement between countries like the United States and China that would focus not on competition but on cooperation to move the world forward — a world that, to a large extent, depends on the resolve of its leaders, particularly those of the G-20, on whom I call once again to recognize the interdependence between self-interest and solidarity, which are today indissoluble.

Our ambitions must be constructive for the sake of the future of the planet. The three United Nations Conventions — the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biodiversity and the Convention to Combat Desertification — are but reflective of the singular reality of a planet that must stop global warming, safeguard life and ecosystems and protect and restore agricultural areas. We must be ambitious with regard to the goals to be met at the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26) to be held in 40 days. It will be imperative for the survival of humankind. We cannot let down our guard concerning our climate ambition on the way forward towards COP26, to be held in Glasgow, or our biodiversity ambition on the path towards the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Kunming.

Through its own example, Costa Rica has shown that nature can save us and that sustainability and human development are possible. Accordingly, in 2019 we launched our plan to decarbonize the economy by 2050. Today, however, only 15 per cent of the Earth is protected, and only 7 per cent of the oceans are protected. Scientists agree that more of the planet must be protected and restored to safeguard it from the climate crisis and the accelerated loss of biodiversity.

That is why the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, led by France, Costa Rica and the United Kingdom, as Ocean co-Chair, is a nature-based solution that seeks to protect 30 per cent of the planet's marine and terrestrial ecosystems by 2030, in order to avoid exceeding global temperatures by 1.5°C and to promote the protection of the ocean. More than 70 countries have joined the initiative, and I invite other States to do so as well. We also call for a halt to oil exploitation and exploration. To that end, together with Denmark, we are launching the Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance.

Understanding and living with our interconnectedness and interdependence on the planet can lead us to a new era for humankind. It will mean promoting access for the most vulnerable populations to opportunities leading to their economic well-being, while focusing on indigenous peoples, Afrodescendant populations, migrants, women, children, young people, internally displaced persons and members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community. That is how to put the new global contract into practice.

We welcomed the designation of 31 August as the International Day for People of African Descent and the establishment of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent. The bicentennial anniversary of Costa Rica's independence has reminded us of the reality of interdependence — an interdependence that compels us to turn our attention to Haiti in a show of support at this very difficult time for the first country in the Americas to end slavery. The same regard compels us to speak out for the lifting of unilateral measures that run contrary to international law and are having an impact on the Cuban people, and to demand respect for the exercise of the fundamental rights — such as freedom of expression and freedom of assembly — of every Cuban citizen.

Interdependence compels us to advocate for peace and reiterate the aspiration of a world free of nuclear weapons. We call on countries to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which to date 55 countries have ratified and 86 have signed. Likewise, we advocate for a Korean peninsula free of nuclear weapons, on which we can together build peace, stability and security. We reiterate our deep concern about the human rights situation in Nicaragua, as did the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, a few days ago. We are concerned about the imprisonment of political opponents, journalists and students, and we call for the

unconditional enjoyment of democratic institutions, respect and the promotion of human rights, freedom of expression and freedom of the press in that brotherly country. Peace, respect for institutions and the division of their powers must be sustained in Central America.

We recognize the Malvinas Islands as Argentine territory, and we respectfully call for settling that dispute in a peaceful manner. Costa Rica will not allow itself to waver in its international commitments to the women and girls of Afghanistan. We cannot remain silent when the new regime does not allow girls access to education. Educating girls today is key to empowering the leaders of tomorrow.

It is an honour to serve in this capacity. From this forum, it has allowed me to represent the aspirations and values of the Costa Rican way of life: peace, democracy, environmental sustainability, equality in diversity and the protection of human rights. I say with hope that the new global contract has a name. It sees development as a virtuous cycle and something to share, invest in and finance, not accumulate. The new global contract makes well-being a reciprocal good. The path laid out by humankind to achieve the new global contract is called the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. I hope that history will remember this era and its people and leaders, especially the most powerful and, consequently, most accountable, as those who took this path and gave the Earth a fresh start.

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

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

Address by Mr. Andrzej Duda, President of the Republic of Poland

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

Mr. Andrzej Duda, President of the Republic of Poland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

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

to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Andrzej Duda, President of the Republic of Poland, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Duda (*spoke in Polish; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): I congratulate His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session. I would like to express Poland's full support for his mission and wish him every success in its execution. I also thank His Excellency Mr. Volkan Bozkır for his active presidency over the work of the General Assembly at the previous session. Furthermore, I am grateful to Secretary-General António Guterres for crafting the report, entitled *Our Common Agenda*, which provides a comprehensive response to the most pressing challenges faced by the world today. Like the Secretary-General, I can see the need for international solidarity with regard to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccination process; like him, I can see the need for action on the climate crisis and the protection of biodiversity. As a participant in numerous debates, I can also see an increasing consciousness of mainly young people, who realize that the decisions taken today will have an immense impact on their lives. I am delighted by that trend.

I stand before the Assembly as the leader of a 38-million-strong nation that, like all our States, has been facing the unprecedented pandemic with all its consequences for almost two years. Over a period of 20 months, we have lost 75,000 thousand lives, while almost 3 million out of 38 million people in our country have contracted the virus. Although our robust economy has bravely resisted the crisis and has managed to return to exceptionally dynamic growth today, during the first year of the pandemic it failed for the first time in 30 years to record such growth. I do not need to explain to the leaders of States what it means for millions of families, as they know the situation first-hand.

I stand before the Assembly as one of more than 200 million people who have contracted and have recovered from COVID-19. Like probably many here, I experienced an illness that befalls people irrespective of their function, status, religion, convictions, orientation or world views.

The past 20 months of the fight against the pandemic have reminded us of a word that we, as Poles, learn in our cradles. That word is "solidarity". Many of those present know what I am talking about. The word

refers in our history to a large independent trade union established in 1980 by industrial workers who went on strike against the communist regime and, in the 1980s and 1990s, inspired millions of people across the globe in their fight for their democratic and labour rights. The word has come to symbolize the guiding principle of our policy — its ideal.

In speaking about solidarity, I am also thinking about solidarity in the context of COVID-19, and this reflection is by no means an easy one, especially in reference to us — the leaders of the rich world, or, as some refer to it, the affluent North. Have we shown enough solidarity? Has humankind behaved appropriately throughout its fight against the virus? Have we helped one another as we should, in accordance with our basic moral instinct as humans? One can have serious doubts about it.

Have we, the rich North — as my country, despite all its daily problems, belongs to the limited group of affluent States — demonstrated the necessary solidarity with the countries of the South? Have we had equal access to vaccines and other measures to prevent the spread of the disease? When the threat came, our first instinct was to isolate ourselves from one another. Borders re-emerged in Europe. Those were unquestionably justified actions, as none of us knew then how serious the danger would really be.

The situation was further exacerbated by reports of the tens of thousands of people who were infected by the virus and who died. Every one of us remembers the horror of the first months of 2020 and the great hope we placed in the development of a vaccine that would protect us from the disease. However, today, almost two years later, with more than 4.5 million casualties, we should answer the question of how well we passed the solidarity test.

I salute those who won the vaccine battle in laboratories and those who, while risking their own health and lives, have vaccinated hundreds of millions of the cohabitants of our planet. But has access to vaccines been fair? Have we not forgotten that, during a pandemic, a vaccine is more of a human right than a commodity regulated by market principles? I have wanted Poland to be, right from the start, a country of solidarity — a country not guided by the rule that the weaker has to die. Therefore, we have tried to protect each and every life with the same commitment. Therefore, whenever we could, we have tried to show

solidarity with other nations that needed assistance at any given time.

I cannot say whether we have done everything possible, but we have still tried, for instance, by sending our medical doctors to our friends in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, the United States and Italy, which suffered in Europe. I am convinced that some of the countries of the rich North have behaved in the same way as Poland, which has donated 6 million vaccine doses to, inter alia, our partners from the South. Has that been enough, however, to close the obvious gap with regard to access to vaccines, which have been wasted in some States and inaccessible in others? It seems to me that, as part of this group, we should have many reasons to be dissatisfied with ourselves.

The word “solidarity” does not refer exclusively to the pandemic, as the pandemic has not made other global problems disappear. We are discussing the rights of nations in this forum. Let me ask members then — what is the first right of every nation? It is the right to self-determination and the right to democratic governance, set out in detail in the science of democratization and enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted by the United Nations. I am absolutely sure that most of us agree on the fact that every one of our nations, the United Nations, has the right to protect its borders and their inviolability, choose its system of Government and govern with the consent of the nation, never against it.

Do we really agree with that? I have the impression — and it is not only my impression — that COVID-19 has allowed us to easily forget about the multiple misfortunes plaguing different parts of our globe, often in the vicinity of our homes. During the pandemic, reports of the tragedy in Syria, where an externally supported civil war has inflicted unimaginable suffering on the population and turned millions of people into refugees and fugitives, have vanished from the headlines. The tragedies in Libya, Ethiopia and Yemen are barely noticed by many people from the rich North. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have moved no closer to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which, as all of us know, requires a two-State solution and, above all, peaceful one. Unfortunately, tragic developments are also unfolding close to the Polish border, and I have the impression that humankind seems to have forgotten about them.

Furthermore, the pandemic has not stopped the war in Ukraine, where more than 13,000 people have died since the beginning of the Russian aggression, with one State seizing the territory of another. After the Second World War, in Europe, in the twenty-first century, Ukraine was attacked. What was the response of the rich North to the drama of the Ukrainian nation fighting for its independence and self-determination? The response was the construction of the large-scale Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline, which will carry Russian gas to Western Europe, bringing additional billions in revenue to the aggressor and complete helplessness and even indifference to the fact that Ukraine will find itself in even greater danger. I recently attended the Crimean Platform summit in Kyiv, as one of few leaders representing the rich North. I searched with my own eyes for those who are planning for and have approved the construction of Nord Stream 2. I did not find them.

COVID-19 is also obscuring for many people the events in Belarus, which neighbours Poland, where, since August 2020, hundreds of thousands of people have come out daily for peaceful protests demanding just one thing — respect for the election result. In response, they have encountered police batons, tear gas and, often, bullets used by the regime to defend itself against its own people. As I speak, more than 650 persons are in prisons in Belarus, the majority of them young women and men — patriots — who simply wanted to choose their leader in fair elections.

They are languishing in prison for political reasons. Recently, a kangaroo court sentenced two of them — Maria Kalesnikava and Maxim Znakh — to 10 and 11 years in prison, respectively. In addition to them, the leaders of the Polish minority in Belarus — Andżelika Borys and Andrzej Poczubut — have been either detained or imprisoned for their democratic activities. These are just a few names from among the hundreds of persecuted. We demand the release of all of them and expect greater solidarity from the international community with the nation of Belarus, which simply wants to have a fair democratic State.

What have these people done that was so wrong? They have done nothing. They wanted to claim the same right to elect their Government that the French, the Poles, the Americans, the Koreans, the Australians and the people of Argentina have. They wanted free elections, in which many of us run — the Presidents of the free world — the importance of which the General Assembly

has so emphatically expressed in a series of historic resolutions, emblemized by the phrase, “Enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections”. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, they paved the way for the realization that the right to form one’s own Government is not a Western whim but a universal human right. Belarusians want to ensure that their authorities respect that universal right. They pay the price with their suffering and with imprisonment.

I say that as the leader of a country in which nearly 150,000 Belarusians have found shelter and employment, including thousands of protesters. I recently told our Belarusian brothers that they are welcome in our country and that Poland will be their home for as long as they deem it to be appropriate and necessary. I will honour those words. Nonetheless, solidarity comes at a price because regimes defend themselves not only against their own citizens, but also against democratic States.

The response of the authoritarian regime in Belarus has taken the shape of an unprecedented hybrid attack on the borders of Poland, Latvia and Lithuania — the three countries that make up the eastern flank of NATO and the European Union. For several weeks, Alexandr Lukashenko’s regime has brought tens of thousands of desperate inhabitants of the Middle East into the country, forcing them, with police batons, to cross our borders, in an attempt to create an artificial humanitarian crisis. Those people then set up camp at the borders. The regime ignores our offers to provide them with humanitarian aid. It treats immigrants as pawns in a political game and undermines their dignity and fundamental rights.

We will not yield in that crisis, because we have not agreed to treating migrants as pawns. We have not agreed to abuse their vulnerable plight, pitched against the security of our borders. We protect those borders, as it is our duty to do so. We are also a member of the European Union, which defends the borders of the European community.

I also say that as the leader of a country that knows very well how to tell the difference between a humanitarian crisis and hybrid activities. Together with its allies, our country participated in the refugee rescue operation at Kabul airport, just a few weeks ago. Initially, our intention was to evacuate dozens of military and diplomatic staff who cooperated with us. We ended up evacuating more than 1,300 people. We

helped other countries to evacuate their own people. We also benefited from the solidarity of others, in particular the Republic of Uzbekistan, and we are deeply grateful for that.

I remind members once again that the world did not come to a standstill during the pandemic. The pandemic has not deprived nations of their democratic aspirations; neither has it stifled people's desire to live in freedom. It has not suppressed the craving for dignity and respect across large swathes of the globe. I recently saw for myself the enthusiasm among Moldovan voters, who took power away from the oligarchs plundering the country and voted in favour of reforms, democracy, normalcy and honesty. I assured them of Poland's support for any initiative of the kind in our region, wherever we have influence. These are the times that restore faith in the most fundamental values of humankind and inspire the spirit of profound solidarity in other countries, including my own country.

As trivial as it may sound, we all realize that humankind is not homogeneous and each of us has his or her own values and beliefs that are sacrosanct to us. However, the experience of sharing the same planet and the knowledge that we have no other teach coexistence and prompt us to define its framework. International law is that framework. It is one of the greatest achievements of modern times. We can debate at length about reform of the United Nations system, but each debate comes down to one fundamental element — how to promote the role of the United Nations in securing the primacy of international law, because we want to live in a world based on law, not on force.

Securing respect for international law was one of Poland's priorities as a member of the Security Council in 2018 and 2019. Today we continue in the same vein, in support of international law, by serving on the Human Rights Council. Our priority is to protect vulnerable groups, civilians in armed conflict and religious minorities. The same purpose will be pursued by the Polish chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2022, where we will work to resolve regional and frozen conflicts. We want to tap OSCE potential to improve the conditions of the weakest and most vulnerable people. We will also strive to make human rights the main point of reference for OSCE activities, on the premise that solidarity is the fundamental value underlying human rights — the rights enjoyed by every human being.

The pandemic has nearly removed from the headlines another major topic — the fight against climate change and for a secure future for us all, our children and grandchildren. We leaders must realize what it takes to protect people and the planet from climate change. The problem will not disappear with the pandemic. It is also part of international solidarity.

Let me pose this question once again — do we, the rich North, pass the test of solidarity, or do we merely cater to our own statistics by relocating production to the poorer countries of the South, where the least environmentally friendly technologies are employed? Those countries are then blamed for polluting the planet.

I say this as the leader of a country that overthrew the communist dictatorship in 1989 and inherited a very difficult ecological situation in the aftermath. Over the past 30 years, we have made tremendous progress on that front. Between 1988 and 2016, Poland reduced its carbon dioxide emissions by more than 30 per cent. Our rivers and air are cleaner, and the country is much greener. Moreover, we have more forests. As a country with primeval forests, woods, great lakes and rivers, Poland attracts nature lovers from all over Europe every year.

I could also add that the percentage of hard coal in our energy mix is systematically decreasing, with biofuels and renewable energy sources gaining ground. At this point, let me humbly admit that that is only the beginning of the road. We have a long road ahead of us. Nonetheless, I believe we will manage, as we are very ambitious in that regard and we understand the challenges of the future.

Indeed, during our presidency of the twenty-fourth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, we managed to finalize the negotiations on the Katowice Rulebook — an agreement that streamlines the implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change so as to make it transparent and fair to all parties. It is also fair to say that we supported the transformation of our energy sector, with due respect to the socioeconomic context. However, at the same time, we realize that more effort will be needed. Therefore, in February this year, the Polish Government stamped its seal of approval on the Energy Policy of Poland Until 2040, which maps out the direction of energy transformation. The document is an important step

towards the transition to low- and zero-emissions in the Polish economy.

It is my firm belief that, in the name of solidarity, the strategy will continue to be implemented by the Government of my successor to office. I believe that the fundamental principle — that of a just transition — will be maintained. The transition should take into account social needs, possibilities and the importance of people living in dignity and, being employed and able to raise their children. That also takes into account the interests of the family.

Solidarity has not ceased to exist in the face of a pandemic. It should remain our motto. Our central tenet, in addition to others, should be to ensure that we do not compromise on human rights and the rights of entire nations so as to guarantee the development of the United Nations, always with respect for the primacy of international law. We should always be ready to set and pursue ambitious goals in the fight for our planet.

Over the past 20 months, as the pandemic has weighed heavily on us, we have often asked ourselves, what will the post-pandemic world be like? Will it be a world where solidarity reigns? Or will we return to business as usual and consider those months as nothing more than an interruption in our routine, after which we can continue repeating past mistakes?

Personally, I believe that mankind shares the same aspirations: security and prosperity, democracy and human rights. We share aspirations of a world without wars and border violations; of nations respecting each other's territories, languages and identities; of a world without discrimination or any undermining of the inherent dignity of human beings; a world that consistently endorses, among others, the principles invoked by the authors of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; a world based on solidarity among people and among States.

I believe that Poland will continue striving for that world, no matter who holds the office of its President. Whether man or woman, I believe our next leader will continue striving to build that world.

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

Mr. Andrzej Duda, President of the Republic of Poland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

**Address by Mr. Guillermo Lasso Mendoza,
Constitutional President of the Republic of Ecuador**

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

Mr. Guillermo Lasso Mendoza, Constitutional President of the Republic of Ecuador, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Guillermo Lasso Mendoza, Constitutional President of the Republic of Ecuador, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mendoza (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a distinct honour for me to address the General Assembly for the first time in my capacity as President of Ecuador. I am here, fully aware of the expectations that a new Government creates, not only for the citizens who elected me, but also among the nations of the world whose representatives I now address.

That is for good reason. Ecuador's current experience constitutes much more than just the start of a new Administration. We were elected on a promise of change and to create new opportunities, restore full democracy and join the rest of the world. That vision is markedly different from the one held by those who governed for the past 14 years. During that time, I am sure that members all heard statements by my predecessors, as well as those by other respectable Latin American leaders, in which they complained of asymmetries and so-called empires. They even used this podium to launch personal diatribes against the leaders of other countries.

Although it is true that Ecuador and our region alike have endured historic challenges that we are yet to overcome, I am not here to speak about that. When we stand before the world, it is best to ensure that our actions speak louder than words. I want members to get to know me, not because of incendiary statements, but through concrete results. I want members to have a very clear idea of the citizens' movement now being led by

Ecuador to usher in a new era of understanding with the rest of the planet.

As members all know, the Organization, where we find ourselves today, was born after a protracted period of conflict. Humankind realized that global issues needed global responses. We realized that, each day, we became somewhat more responsible for all that occurred in every corner of the world. The coronavirus disease pandemic has made those ideas even more relevant now. We are now compelled to put them to the test.

For that reason, I am pleased to report to everyone present at today's Assembly that, fewer than four months after inaugurating a new Government, Ecuador has met with success concerning its vaccine record. Believe me, I do not say that to boast about my country; I say it because I genuinely believe that that success was not solely the result of Ecuadorian efforts. To a large extent, that success is also a credit to global diplomacy. In a recent telephone conversation with the President of the People's Republic of China, he surprised me by saying, "President, you have said it before; health has no ideology". Indeed, I had used those words when I delivered my inaugural speech. That confirms for me the power of international cooperation when we simply stop and listen to each other.

That is the spirit in which my Government has led Ecuador since its first day in office. That is why 62 per cent of the total number of vaccines that arrived in Ecuador since I took office come from China. However, not just China; we also received a large donation of 2 million doses from the Government of the United States of America — our main trading partner. Not just the United States; we started talks with Russia, which, if productive, could lead to us building, on Ecuadorian soil, the first Latin American laboratory to produce Sputnik V vaccines. We can also mention our talks with Spain, Canada, Chile and Mexico. Most important in that whole range of actions is not just the number of Governments involved, but the number of lives that have been saved in Ecuador.

Indeed, there are those here who recall the horrifying images out of Ecuador in the first few days of the pandemic — bodies in the streets, hospitals overwhelmed and hastily dug mass graves. Those days demonstrated all that was wrong with our management of the health crisis. Those images were a graphic representation of the fact that we had hit rock bottom

after 14 years of isolationist policies, buttressed by a warped and small-minded concept of sovereignty.

Today, just three months and a few days after taking office, I would like to share the following specific information so that members can draw their own conclusions. First, we met our most pressing commitment — ensuring that 9 million Ecuadorians were fully vaccinated, with two doses, within the first 100 days' of our Government. Allow me to state that in even clearer terms. In 100 days, the percentage of those vaccinated in Ecuador increased from a mere 3 per cent to 52 per cent — in other words, more than half of the population was vaccinated. According to statistics from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 81 per cent of Ecuadorians over the age of 18 have been vaccinated. Among Latin American nations, we rose from the bottom of the rankings to third place with regard to the percentage of vaccinated populations. Only Chile and Uruguay rank higher. In just a few days in July, our daily vaccination rate was equivalent to 2.5 per cent of our overall population. That placed us among global vaccination leaders, based on the number of doses administered for every 100,000 inhabitants.

Without diatribes, complaints or whims, we were able to meet the Organization's goals, namely harmony and cooperation among Governments to provide well-being to our peoples. It is very easy to complain but challenging to take action. It is very easy to divide the world into blocs or clubs but challenging to unite it into a solid edifice of peace and cooperation. Nonetheless, faced with a global threat, such as the pandemic, what other option do we have? What other option is there in our attempt to save humankind itself?

Perhaps some delegations have already heard me say, more than once, "more Ecuador in the world, and more world in Ecuador". That phrase summarizes our ideal of a more competitive and outward-focused country that seeks opportunities. However, those who believe that that phrase refers only to economic benefits are mistaken. On the contrary, that phrase encompasses a deep commitment to all causes that humankind, as a whole, must address, and that are the *raison d'être* of the Organization. Ecuador reaffirms its firm commitment to those basic principles. I would like to again make it clear that our actions speak for us in each and every one of those areas.

In our first few days in office, our Government sent to the National Assembly a draft organic law on

free expression and communication. There was an overarching need for us to have a body of law that would guarantee and protect the enjoyment of that human right. To fight corruption, we signed a memorandum of understanding with United Nations. It is a document that will enable us to establish mechanisms for integrity, transparency and accountability.

With respect to climate change, we are the first Latin American country and the fourth in the world to place our ecological transition under the responsibility of a Ministry. Ecuador is one of the most biodiverse territories on the planet. Our interest in implementing policies to cut carbon emissions, as well as in any mechanism that addresses accelerated environmental degradation, is quite natural. We take this opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We continue to have great expectations of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which will take place in Glasgow in October.

Concerning asylum and international protection, Ecuador will continue to serve as an example to others. In the light of the serious situation that took place in Afghanistan, we endorsed the joint declaration, signed by more than 70 countries, which urges the parties involved to provide safe departure for foreign and Afghan citizens alike, who wish to leave the country. We are one of the first countries in the world to establish a Subsecretariat for Diversity, which seeks to eliminate sexual discrimination of all kinds. No one in Ecuador will fear discrimination, regardless of who they are or whom they love. Our Human Rights Secretariat works tirelessly to eradicate gender violence — a reprehensible phenomenon that, regrettably, continues to exist in our society.

With regard to legal certainty, we rejoined the Convention on the Settlement of Investment Disputes between States and Nationals of Other States to provide guarantees for foreign investment. We are again stimulating private sector activity, but without ever losing sight of the crucial balance with social investment. To that end, we are developing new programmes that will reduce poverty and eliminate child malnutrition, which, regrettably, after years of neglect, remain a problem for our most vulnerable communities.

We restored the balance of power by strengthening democratic dialogue and governance among the various levels of the State. We achieved all of that in just a few

months in office. In short, we were able to re-establish democratic institutions and the freedoms and rights of our citizens, which had been undermined by a Government that placed all powers of the State under its authority.

In that regard, I would like to convey my willingness to ensure similar retribution in Latin American countries where constitutional elements of the rule of law, enshrined in the Inter-American Democratic Charter, have disappeared. All peoples of Latin America are fighting to restore democracy and freedom, and everyone who does so will receive my Government's unwavering solidarity.

Lastly, I wish to say a few words about the tragedy of forced migration. The sad truth today is that the migrants of the world no longer seek only a better life, now they seek to survive. Regrettably, that human tragedy is nothing new for those of us living on the Latin American continent. However, it does not mean that we have remained indifferent to the exodus of Venezuelan nationals from their homeland. Ecuador has provided a brotherly response. We welcomed approximately 433,000 Venezuelan citizens, who have benefited from a solidarity-based process of regularization, which will enable them to receive work and social security benefits.

We in Ecuador, too, have witnessed an increase in our own migrating population — those exposed to unimaginable risks in their attempts to reach other countries, such as the United States. It is precisely for that reason that I am so passionate about and committed to trade integration as a driver of opportunity creation. Migration is a clear sign that the citizens of the world want more integration, not less. When they migrate, citizens demonstrate, in practice, the integration that their authorities have not dared to provide for them. They are prepared to cross continents to join new societies that provide them with more and better opportunities. They want access to global job markets and education and to a whole world that is increasingly connected by technology, but separated by misplaced protectionist policies. For that reason, I call on all countries that wish to deepen their trade relations with Ecuador to embrace a solution to that problem, which is precisely bringing together markets closer to our citizens, instead of forcing citizens to migrate to those markets.

Let us ensure that opportunities seek out our citizens and not have our citizens migrate in search of opportunities. It is better for us to be connected through

free trade than through forced migration, caused by practices that isolate us, lock us in and only limit the number of spaces for shared prosperity. Sooner or later, our citizens will seek their economic freedom. Human beings will seek opportunities. We believe that we must facilitate that natural impulse; not obstruct it. The only result of blocking it is precisely the tragedies we now witness. I believe that what I am saying is just common sense. But let us ask ourselves, why do we not do it? What are we waiting for to advocate global integration policy?

Mr. Rodrigue (Haiti), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In conclusion, I would like end with the words I used at the beginning of my statement. I would like all I have said to be a satisfactory response to the curiosity and expectations created by my new Government. Nonetheless, in addition to all I have said, I must utter two simple words that transcend all cultural barriers. They are words that are never out of place in relations among peoples. In recent years, however, we have not heard them enough from Ecuador. Those words are “thank you”.

We thank the entire community of nations for their cooperation in the first few months of our successful vaccination programme. We were able to restore calm to Ecuador. With this message, we begin a new era of Ecuadorian diplomacy and a new way of relating to all countries of the world, regardless of their location, size or beliefs. Let today be a new beginning. Let the lessons of the pandemic be forever etched in our memory. Let all the difficulties we have overcome lay the firm foundation for a new understanding among peoples. During this period of recovery and renewal of global harmony, members can always count on the faithful friendship and abiding gratitude of the people of Ecuador. I thank all members and may God bless humankind.

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

Mr. Guillermo Lasso Mendoza, Constitutional President of the Republic of Ecuador, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Egils Levits, President of the Republic of Latvia

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

Mr. Egils Levits, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

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

President Levits: Let me begin by congratulating the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Maldives, Mr. Abdulla Shahid, on taking up the honourable position of President of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session. I can assure him of Latvia's full cooperation.

I also warmly welcome the appointment of António Guterres, as Secretary-General, for another term. The Secretary-General has made considerable efforts to strengthen the effectiveness of the United Nations system. The new report by the Secretary-General, *Our Common Agenda*, provides us with a vision and choices for the future.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has not yet been overcome. The current global challenge is to achieve the widest possible vaccination, as soon as possible. Latvia is providing support to increase the availability of vaccines worldwide. Latvia has sent vaccines to its closest neighbours as well as to friends in Africa and Asia. We plan to continue to share vaccines, including through the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility mechanism.

The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the need to continuously strengthen the resilience of countries and societies, as well as the vulnerability of our societies to all kinds of disinformation. Latvia's response to combating disinformation is based on strengthening public resilience by raising awareness on disinformation, strengthening independent and pluralistic media, involving civil society and teaching media literacy. Combating disinformation, which causes serious harm to society, while protecting and strengthening the freedom of expression and data privacy in the digital world is an extremely complex challenge.

The lines between the freedom of speech, accountability and censorship are thin and fragile. The freedom of expression, as a universal human right, can be limited only in extreme cases. Such limitations should not be managed by global Internet platforms. Instead, in democratic societies, that function should be exercised only by democratically mandated institutions.

At the global level, combating disinformation effectively requires even closer understanding and cooperation in international organizations. Latvia was one of the initiators of the General Assembly resolution on the promotion of media and information literacy at the global level adopted during the previous session (resolution 75/267). We will continue to use our expertise in combating disinformation to provide support to partners. Efforts at the United Nations level need to be strengthened.

Latvia was one of the first countries in the world to develop several digital solutions that were important in elaborating a sustainable response to the pandemic. Due to the fact that almost every corner of Latvia has access to high-speed Internet, many people have used those solutions during the pandemic to change their habits and shape their daily lives. They contribute, inter alia, to the convergence of quality-of-life and income levels between urban and rural areas. In many cases, digital solutions have reduced the need to commute, which helps to limit emissions.

At the same time, we must bear in mind that digital transformation and artificial intelligence pose new risks. Also, security threats in cyberspace are increasing. Therefore, in parallel with technological developments, we must work actively to define new legal principles. On the one hand, those principles should help us make the best use of opportunities and, on the other, avoid risks and damage to human rights and freedoms.

In recent years, we have seen innovations that, through global social platforms and increasing use of artificial intelligence, make it possible to influence and manipulate human thoughts and actions more effectively. Human autonomy and the free will of people are thereby endangered. The main challenge for the democratic world in the coming decades will be whether artificial intelligence or humans control decisions.

When individual scientists and environmental activists began to express concerns about climate issues in the 1990s, few listened to them. It takes time

for public opinion and legal consciousness to mature. Today we are grateful to them for raising the alarm early.

Looking ahead, I consider protecting the autonomy of human thought to be the most important task for legal policy in the coming decades. We must also ensure that the digital transformation is inclusive of all countries and all people, while bridging the current digital divide.

Another important aspect for Latvia is the preservation of linguistic diversity and the use of small languages in the digital age. Latvian digital technology companies are developing a high-quality machine translation programme for small languages using artificial intelligence. That will help to safeguard linguistic diversity in the digital age.

Latvia is also proud of its Riga TechGirls project, which offers women a chance to improve their digital skills and more opportunities in the digital sphere. We are happy to share that experience with others through the United Nations system.

Latvia supports the Technology Facilitation Mechanism to identify how science, technology and innovation can best contribute to delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals.

There is an urgent need to reach our common goals on the environment, climate change and renewable energy. The twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Glasgow later this year, will be an important milestone. Latvia is committed to meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and has adopted an ambitious development strategy that aims to minimize carbon production. There is a need to make greater use of innovative technologies for the prudent and sustainable use of natural resources. Latvia continues to expand its experience in sustainable forest management using digital technologies.

In the coming years, we will continue to pay special attention to the issue of clean water in a national, regional and global context. Latvia has a long coastline. We can share our accumulated knowledge about monitoring and combating marine pollution. Latvia is also actively involved in the Group of Friends to Combat Marine Plastic Pollution.

With regard to the Sustainable Development Goals, we are especially committed to promoting peace, justice and good governance. Good governance is crucial in terms of respect for all human rights,

democratic principles and the rule of law. Therefore, in its development cooperation, Latvia is focusing on public administration, the rule of law, gender equality and environmental protection.

Now more than ever, human rights need to be a strategic priority for the United Nations. Over the past year, we have witnessed negative developments with regard to basic human rights and security issues — for example, in Myanmar and Tigray. New tragedies in Afghanistan are now unfolding before our eyes. Taking into account the latest developments, we are especially concerned about the security of Afghan women and girls. The rights of women and girls will be high on our agenda as Latvia serves as Vice-Chair on the Bureau of the Commission on the Status of Women for the next two sessions.

Over the past year, Latvia has also closely followed the dramatic developments in neighbouring Belarus, where public efforts to decide on the future of the country are still being brutally suppressed. Latvia strongly condemns the actions of the Lukashenko regime against Belarussian civil society, independent media and journalists. It has even gone so far as to hijack an international flight. Belarus exploits and puts vulnerable people from different regions of the world at great risk in an effort to create targeted, intensive migratory flows to Lithuania, Latvia and Poland in order to destabilize Europe. We have a duty and a right to protect our national borders. At the same time, Latvia, in cooperation with its non-governmental organizations, provides humanitarian assistance to people who have become hostages of the Lukashenko regime. The crisis in Belarus can be resolved only by new, free and fair presidential elections in the presence of international observers.

Meanwhile, Russia's military intimidation campaign against Ukraine continues. That confirms the need for the international community to support Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. Latvia sees the newly established international Crimea Platform as a valuable format for keeping the issue of Crimean de-occupation on the international agenda. We call for the widest possible engagement of the international community in the Crimea Platform.

Furthermore, the frozen conflicts in the Moldovan territory of Transnistria and the Georgian territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia should be resolved in accordance with international law and with full

respect for the territorial integrity of Moldova and Georgia, respectively.

A few days ago, on 17 September, we marked 30 years since Latvia, together with Lithuania and Estonia, returned as full members of the international community and joined the United Nations. For 30 years, Latvia has clearly demonstrated its commitment to democratic values and respect for international law. Our experience in strengthening statehood, the rule of law and good governance allows us to better understand similar efforts elsewhere.

Latvia has also made a practical contribution to global peace by sending 158 experts to participate in eight international missions and operations around the world. We are determined to continue contributing to peacebuilding processes by actively participating in the Peacebuilding Commission in 2022. Latvia has shown that it can effectively contribute to solving global security challenges. Therefore, Latvia aims to become a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the 2026 to 2027 term.

A new generation has grown up in the past 30 years. In Latvia, like elsewhere, youth are deeply concerned about the climate crisis and disinformation. They want to build inclusive societies where people of all generations, backgrounds and communities can feel included not only formally, but also in practice.

In order to meet the challenges of the modern age, the United Nations and the Security Council must show willingness to change and implement long-overdue reforms. As a member of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group, Latvia advocates for greater openness in the Security Council. Latvia would strongly support the beginning of text-based negotiations on Security Council reform. The reform should ensure more equitable representation from African, Latin American and Eastern European countries.

It is in the interests of every State to defend an international system based on rules and rights in order to maintain global security and sustainable growth. The United Nations is at the heart of multilateralism and the rules-based international order. No State is big enough to solve the complex challenges we face today alone. The need for an effective United Nations is now greater than ever.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the

President of the Republic of Latvia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Egils Levits, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Rumen Radev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Bulgaria to introduce an address by the President of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Ms. Stoeva (Bulgaria): I have the honour to introduce His Excellency Mr. Rumen Radev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria, who will deliver a pre-recorded statement at the general debate of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session.

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

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex VI and see A/76/332/Add.1).

Address by Mr. Hakainde Hichilema, President of the Republic of Zambia

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

His Excellency Mr. Hakainde Hichilema, President of the Republic of Zambia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

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

President Hichilema: I wish to begin by congratulating His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid on his election as President of the United General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session. I am confident that his wealth of knowledge and vast experience on multilateral issues will lead to a successful discharge of the important responsibilities of the General Assembly throughout this session. Zambia stands ready to work with the President as he executes his mandate in presiding over the matters of this session. To the outgoing President, His Excellency Mr. Volkan

Bozkir, I wish to convey Zambia's appreciation for his commendable service to the United Nations family during the seventy-fifth session.

I have the distinct honour to deliver my maiden speech as the seventh President of the Republic of Zambia following the electoral victory of our United Party for National Development in the presidential and general elections held on 12 August. I am pleased to inform the General Assembly that the people of the Republic of Zambia once again rose to the occasion to usher in a new Government through a peaceful election. That has enabled Zambia to further consolidate its democratic credentials. It serves as an inspiration to the African continent, as the outcome of our election was determined by those who vote and not those who count the votes. We are therefore proud to provide leadership in our country, where people aspire to a free and just society and where they aspire to have their voices heard.

We were able to achieve that political transformation even at the time when Zambia was grappling with the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, and in the midst of deep sorrow following the passing on of our founding father and first republican President, Dr. Kenneth David Kaunda. I therefore wish to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Zambian people, to pay tribute to this iconic leader, who was fondly known in our country and elsewhere as "KK". It is without doubt that the last remaining steward of liberation struggles has left an indelible mark on humankind. Dr. Kaunda's principles, values and contributions to the ideals of emancipation and independence did not only spread across the African continent, but across the entire globe. His untold devotion to peace and unity laid the very foundation for Zambia's stature as a beacon of peace, not only in Southern Africa but on the African continent as a whole. The Zambian Government will therefore build upon KK's profound legacy to live in peace and harmony with one another. As we work towards this year's theme, let us remember the important lessons that Dr. Kaunda taught us, especially as we work towards revitalizing the United Nations system.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a far-reaching socioeconomic impact globally, including disturbing trade flows, supply chains and various economic activities on our continent. In addition to the loss of lives, the pandemic increased poverty levels through job losses, stressed health-care systems and, worse still, the delivery of education to learners. The disruption to educational systems, particularly in developing countries, was in part due to inadequate

information, communication and technology facilities within our countries. In response to the pandemic, Zambia has developed a national preparedness and response plan for COVID-19, which has been used to guide the implementation of pandemic mitigation measures. The vaccine programme forms an integral part of the response plan in our country. Despite our placing the vaccine programme high on the list of mitigation measures, Zambia has managed to vaccinate a mere 3 per cent of its population. That is against the country's target of vaccinating 70 per cent of the eligible population by the third quarter of 2022. That clearly highlights the inequitable access to vaccines in developing countries, especially given that more than 2 billion vaccines have been administered worldwide.

It is fair to say that recovery from the pandemic hinges upon mass vaccinations before considering other reforms or facilities that tend to fail when countries lock down their economies. It is therefore gratifying that this session of the General Assembly will consider building on initiatives such as the African Vaccine Acquisition Trust and the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility. The two initiatives have made it possible for low-income countries, such as Zambia, to access life-saving vaccines, which will contribute to building resilience and recovery from the pandemic. I wish therefore to express Zambia's appreciation for the support that has been provided so far through COVAX and the African Vaccine Acquisition Trust facilities, which the United Nations system and various stakeholders have benefited from.

To further guarantee resilience, we call for concerted and enhanced global efforts towards promoting investments, particularly in local manufacturing capacity and technology transfer on vaccines, related infrastructure, human capital, as well as research and development.

The new Administration in Zambia is cognizant that a conducive governance environment is a precursor for the country's political stability, security, economic growth and sustainable development. It also fosters enhanced transparency, accountability and consultative dialogue. With that realization, our Administration will work towards strengthening oversight and governance institutions and ensure the independence and autonomy of the three arms of Government, particularly the legislature and the judiciary. The fight against corruption will be at the centre of our transformation agenda, and that shall be executed with zero tolerance for corruption. We shall also promote free media

and an active civil society, as they are critical in upholding checks and balances, human rights, liberties and freedoms.

My Government's high priority is to restore macroeconomic stability, attain fiscal and debt sustainability, promote economic growth, enhance economic diversification and manage the contraction of debt. I am confident that those measures will restore macroeconomic stability and put the country back on track to economic recovery.

To sustain that growth, Zambia will dedicate efforts to guarantee a stable and predictable environment that will attract and protect local, regional and foreign direct investment, as well as enhance local participation in our economy. That is a prerequisite for a vibrant private sector-led economy, thereby creating jobs and opportunities for all our people.

To complement those efforts, Zambia has embarked upon an ambitious economic and social transformation agenda with a view to creating equitable opportunities and poverty reduction for the Zambian people, especially the youth and women, who delivered the election victory in our country. In order to achieve that goal, our Administration shall design and implement interventions aimed at inducing enhanced productivity in agriculture, mining, energy, financial services, tourism, technology, health and education, as well as support the growth of micro, small and medium enterprises.

Despite those well-thought-out interventions, today's world economy is more complex than ever before. Given the numerous global concerns, including pandemics, climate change and illegal human migration, it is imperative that we adapt to those effects of globalization by fostering key partnerships and deepening integration at all levels. That is critical to ensuring that we realize our aspirations of restoring Zambia on a path to sustainable economic growth and development.

Zambia is aware of the critical role of the United Nations in guiding the world to focus on the sustainable development agenda. In particular, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development set the tone and benchmarks for countries to incorporate sustainability in their development policies. Our New Dawn Government in Zambia is committed to realizing tangible growth and sustainable development while paying particular attention to ensure that those are not achieved at the expense of future generations.

Like many other developing countries, Zambia calls for closer cooperation and support in terms of capacity to adopt better, safer, climate-change sensitive and modern methods of increased production and productivity. Our Administration has established a ministry that is the first of its kind in Zambia — the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment. To address that as well as other important issues concerning environmental sustainability, it became important for us to establish that new Ministry, which will be crucial to build our ability to implement climate-positive actions in our country.

I am drawn to the prophetic inscription on the opposite the United Nations Headquarters, which reads:

“They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (*The Holy Bible, Isaiah, 2:4*).

Those words serve as a reminder to the United Nations to work towards global peace and international cooperation. Although we have made leaps and bounds in the areas of peace and security and stability, there remain pockets of conflict in many regions of the world where the guns have not yet been silenced.

The silencing of the guns therefore goes beyond addressing conventional warfare, as it also depends on addressing the new emerging threats of our century, which include the challenges of extremism and international terrorism, cybercrime, asymmetric warfare, the proliferation of non-conventional weapons and organized crime. As an international community, we need to continue working together to address the root causes of those global threats through various national, regional and global mechanisms.

The former Secretary-General of the United Nations, the late Mr. Kofi Annan, laid out an ambitious agenda before the General Assembly at its sixtieth session, which is still pertinent today. In his report entitled “In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all” (A/59/2005), he made the case that development, security and respect for human rights cannot be enjoyed in the absence of the others. Those are the indispensable realities of a well-functioning nation and international system. However, I wish to go a step further in asserting that the foundations of sustainable economic growth and development are peace and stability. Without peace and harmony, development cannot be attained. Zambia will therefore continue to support national, regional and

international initiatives aimed at promoting peace and security and stability.

In that vein, Zambia reaffirms its commitment to playing an active role in the Southern African Development Community mission in Mozambique, which is aimed at restoring peace to Cabo Delgado province. In addition, Zambia remains committed to the cause of the Lusaka master road map on practical steps to silence the guns in Africa — an initiative being implemented by all African Union member States to promote peace and security, which has since been endorsed for extension for a further 10-year period, from 2021 to 2030. We therefore wish to call for the continued support of the United Nations in silencing the guns in Africa and other continental initiatives.

In the quest for promoting global peace and security, Zambia notes with satisfaction the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which became operative on 22 January 2021. The entry into force of the Treaty is a tangible feat towards advancing the cause of nuclear disarmament on the international stage. Zambia encourages those States that are yet to ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons to come on board so that we can continue making advances towards achieving our aspirations to eradicate nuclear weapons on our continent.

On the reform of the Security Council, Zambia is still concerned by the slow pace of negotiations, which have continued without making much progress. In that regard, Zambia wishes to reiterate the Common African Position — the Ezulwini Consensus — which calls for a more representative and democratic Security Council where Africa, like all other world regions, will be fairly represented.

The call for gender equality is now a century-old struggle for women to participate equally with men in society as a whole. Despite the realization that women’s full and effective participation in all areas of life results in prosperity, women are still less involved in public life and decision-making than men. It is important that we continue to demand the promotion of gender equality while paying particular attention to the rights of women and children, especially girls, and the rights of people living with disabilities.

For us in Zambia, we will remain committed to the advancement and promotion of women’s rights. For the first time in the history of our country, our new Parliament has elected the first female Speaker of the National Assembly to preside over Zambia’s supreme

law-making organ of Government. Furthermore, I believe it is important and I state with pride that Zambia's Vice-President of the Republic, as well as the deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, are both women. We are very proud of that.

Consistent with our commitment, Zambia is implementing various initiatives designed to harmonize the development, programming and implementation of economic empowerment efforts targeting women and young people across the country. In doing so, our aim is to eliminate hunger and rural poverty, as we know those issues affect women and children disproportionately.

In addition, Zambia emphasizes the importance of ensuring that communities include women at every level of decision-making, as doing so will translate into a discourse that will be inclusive, representative and therefore more holistic and insightful. Our Government will focus on increasing support for women through the creation of employment opportunities and entrepreneurship programmes, among other things. We will also focus on increasing access to secondary education for adolescent girls from impoverished households through financial aid and grant schemes.

I wish to stress that the Government of the Republic of Zambia will remain committed to economic diplomacy and multilateralism and to consolidating global efforts through the promotion of open and cordial relations with the international community in order to ensure collective sustainable growth and development in our country.

As I conclude, I wish to emphasize that it is the duty — and indeed the responsibility — of all of us in the global democratic community to make democracy work for all our people. We can do that by delivering democracy dividends by accelerating economic development and a balanced distribution of resources among our people and ensuring access to opportunities for a better life for our people. That is what will make democracy attractive to our people in our individual countries. That is what will make democracy sustainable and keep at bay autocratic and heavy-handed alternatives from leadership in our countries. That is what will foster a peaceful, prosperous and more united world.

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

Mr. Hakainde Hichilema, President of the Republic of Zambia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Faustin Archange Touadera, President of the Central African Republic

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

Mr. Faustin Archange Touadera, President of the Central African Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Faustin Archange Touadera, President of the Central African Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Touadera (*spoke in French*): As I take the floor before the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session on behalf of the Central African Republic, I would like to warmly congratulate His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly and wish him every success in carrying out his noble task. His election to the presidency of this session is well-deserved tribute to his qualities and an honour that speaks to the standing of his country, the Republic of the Maldives. I must also commend President Volkan Bozkır on the excellent work he accomplished under exceptional circumstances during the seventy-fifth session, which just ended.

The seventy-sixth session has a poignantly topical theme: “Building resilience through hope — to recover from COVID-19, rebuild sustainably, respond to the needs of the planet, respect the rights of people and revitalize the United Nations”. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis, which continues to pose a challenge to the community of nations, can be overcome only with more active international solidarity.

In that regard, I must pay a heartfelt tribute to the memory of the direct and indirect victims of the pandemic. With determination, despite limited resources, the Central African Republic has set about containing the epidemic, the disastrous effects of which on all sectors of our national economy have jeopardized our growth predictions for 2020 and 2021, undermining our socioeconomic gains under the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan in the Central African Republic. Estimates show that, if the crisis is brought to an end

in the next six months, the national economy will have lost 5.8 per cent of its projected gross domestic product (GDP). However, if the crisis extends beyond six months, that loss will be 8.9 per cent of GDP.

To limit the effects of the pandemic, my Government is ensuring that we are safeguarding the capacities to finance our development. In that regard, we are pressing ahead with the reform of our public finance management system, the strict implementation of which will enable us to conclude a second programme with the International Monetary Fund covering the period 2021 to 2022.

To tackle the shocks caused by COVID-19, we must strengthen our population's resilience and invest more in the health-monitoring system and tirelessly pursue collective awareness. Furthermore, we must do everything to achieve herd immunity while stepping up our search for safe and effective preventive and therapeutic medicines. Universal access to vaccines for least developed countries must be an international security priority in the name of the fundamental principles of human solidarity.

However, mobilization against COVID-19 should not overshadow the other challenges we face individually as States, but also collectively as the international community. One of the biggest challenges we face as we seek to meet the needs of the planet collectively and individually is the preservation of our environment, which is threatened by various types of harmful emissions and climatic and atmospheric pollutants. It is now clear that human activity is the main cause of climate change. We consume more than what nature can offer us in the course of one year because of our increasingly conflicting interests.

Global warming, due to an excessive production of greenhouse gases, has resulted in changes in the climate, which themselves cause floods during the rainy season, as well as water shortages. The overexploitation of water, forestry and agricultural resources is exacerbating the degradation of ecosystems. We have a historic responsibility to save succeeding generations by changing our behaviours and ensuring that we immediately put into operation a governance framework that will enable us to achieve coordinated and sustainable management of our natural resources.

My country has contributed modestly by coming up with a national sustainable development strategy, along with our Vision 2050, which is part and parcel of our environmental policy statement, based on investment

in education and the establishment of equitable environmental justice.

Over the past 75 years, our common Organization has made creditable progress thanks to the intelligent pooling of our efforts. Faced with new challenges, sweeping reforms of the organs of the United Nations are essential for the Organization to remain the forum par excellence for multilateralism. To do that, one important step remains that of redressing the historic inequality that continues to deprive the African continent of a permanent seat on the Security Council.

It is here, and nowhere else, that solutions to safeguard international peace and security must be found in respect of the principles, values and commitments of the Charter of the United Nations. The Charter, whose essence is respect for human rights, is strongly echoed in my country, which has enshrined it in the Preamble to our Constitution through the principle of *Zo Kwe Zo*, which, in the Sango language, is the affirmation of the sacred nature of the human being.

Through our determined action to fight against impunity, we demonstrate our adherence to international mechanisms for the protection of human dignity. As proof of this, I note that, as soon as we became aware of the report of the Human Rights Division of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) alleging cases of abuses committed by the Central African Armed Forces and their allies during counteroffensives and sweeps on the national territory against the rebels of the so-called Coalition des Patriotes pour le Changement (CPC), we promptly decided to take action. We promptly decided to fully investigate the matter by creating, on 4 May 2021, a special national commission of inquiry tasked with shedding light on those allegations of serious crimes, human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law, which has already made an initial visit to MINUSCA in Bangui.

Furthermore, the operationalization of the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission is a major contribution to ensuring the success of the peace process and national reconciliation, and complements efforts to fight impunity.

My Government is working to preserve the constitutional order, entrench democracy and consolidate peace and stability. It is engaged in security sector reform and the reform of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, and is

taking action to enable the massive return of refugees and internally displaced persons. It is also accelerating the implementation of the post-conflict development plan and is preparing local elections, which last took place in 1988.

Scrupulous respect for the commitments set out in the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic remains my compass. Against the backdrop of the armed groups of the CPC that signed the Agreement yet continue their abuses against civilians, the Central African Republic, through me, calls for unwavering solidarity in the name of the principles of the Charter — equality, the promotion of peace and respect for the sovereignty of States. We must definitively reduce these negative forces if we are to achieve a virtuous dynamic of national reconstruction.

From this rostrum and through me, the Central African Republic renews its call for the total lifting of the embargo that unjustly weighs on our national army, depriving it of its sovereign mission of protecting the civilian population and ensuring the integrity of our territory.

My leitmotif continues to be to bring my compatriots together to make our shared Central African Republic shine and overcome all divisions. I have shown this by calling on the population to hold a republican dialogue in order to share ideas that could help strengthen the peace option set out in the Political Agreement.

I would be remiss if I did not pay tribute to MINUSCA's Blue Helmets and to our Russian and Rwandan allies, who have championed fundamental rights, democracy and peace in the Central African Republic, at times making the ultimate sacrifice.

To all the guarantors and facilitators of the peace agreement, including the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, MINUSCA and the European Union, the Central African Republic expresses its eternal gratitude. To Secretary-General António Guterres, I express my deep gratitude for his ongoing commitment to global peace and development, and in the Central African Republic in particular. I hope that the global community remains mobilized in this surge of international solidarity, alongside the people of my country, in their quest for peace and economic recovery. I wish our work every success. Long live international cooperation and solidarity.

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

Mr. Faustin Archange Touadera, President of the Central African Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo, President of the Federal Republic of Somalia

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Federal Republic of Somalia to introduce an address by the President of the Federal Republic of Somalia.

Mr. Mohamud (Somalia): I take this opportunity to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Maldives, on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session. My delegation assures the President of its utmost support and cooperation during his term. We would also like to commend the exemplary leadership of his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Volkan Bozkır, during the critical time of pandemics and uncertainties.

I have the great honour and privilege to introduce the pre-recorded statement by His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo, President of the Federal Republic of Somalia.

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

A pre-recorded video statement was shown in the General Assembly Hall (annex VII and see A/76/332/Add.1).

The meeting rose at 8.50 p.m.

Annex I**Address by Mr. Abdel Fattah Al Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt**

[Original: Arabic]

Mr. Abdulla Shahid , President of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations,

Mr. President,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you and your country on assuming the presidency of this General Assembly session and to wish you every success in your work. I commend the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the constructive role he has played by relentlessly striving to uphold the principles of the Charter, which has been the constitution and reference point of international relations for more than 75 years. Our hope still rests on consolidating a rules-based international order and working to establish peace.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The global pandemic, now approaching the two-year mark, has once again demonstrated that, just as humanity shares the same bonds of fraternity, it also faces the same challenges , irrespective of development gaps.

The theme of this year's General Assembly session is vital. To confront the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, we need resilience; to recover, we need hope. In order for that to happen, we need to overcome obstacles and ensure, as a top priority, that the countries and peoples of the world have fair and equitable access to vaccines.

Allow me, before this important forum, to explain how Egypt — as a founding member of the United Nations and of a number of regional organizations — understands the international situation, and what it has done to tackle the world's current challenges.

Mr. President,

The Government of Egypt finds it alarming that countries' economic recovery rates diverge depending on their capacity to meet vaccine needs. Developed countries account for the largest share of the world's production of vaccines. In particular, Egypt stresses that the vaccine needs of Africa must be met promptly and effectively. Our continent has been the hardest hit by the repercussions of the pandemic, at a time when our peoples are facing other challenges that are no less of a threat than COVID-19. Egypt has therefore focused on the domestic production of vaccines, both to meet its own needs and to export vaccines throughout Africa.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The current circumstances have merely exacerbated decades of inadequate regional and international cooperation. International support for the developing world must be expanded to include middle-income countries, which are vitally important because they account for the majority of the world's population. Middle-income countries are a major hub for the consumption of goods and services internationally and a key driver of global economic growth.

The International Monetary Fund has moved to allocate approximately \$650 billion in special drawing rights . Egypt considers it critical to explore appropriate ways to utilize those resources to serve the needs of the developing world, including low- and middle-income countries. Developing countries, especially African and middle-income countries, should be granted debt relief. Conditionalities that apply to loans from international and regional institutions should be loosened. For those purposes, concessional financing should be made available, investments should be encouraged, and investment flows into the countries should be sustained. Such measures are vital to supporting national development efforts, in line with the relevant regional and international development agendas.

Mr. President,

Development is a comprehensive framework: it includes a broad range of rights that are necessary in order for individuals to flourish and for societies to enjoy a dignified existence. Egypt has implemented economic reform policies that have paved the way for ambitious social programmes benefiting the most vulnerable groups. Egypt has achieved the Sustainable Development Goals across the governorates and reduced the development gap between rural and urban areas. These actions are rooted in our belief that, by delivering basic services nationwide, the Egyptian State can enhance political and social participation and create a healthy environment in which free thought and creativity can flourish, allowing for continued progress.

Mr. President,

Egypt is well aware that environmental degradation poses a threat to all aspects of life and to the future, indeed the very existence, of generations to come. This is especially true of climate change, whose detrimental effects are now plain for all to see. We have recently seen many severe weather phenomena worldwide, from floods and torrential rains to unprecedented rises in temperature and forest fires. The attendant humanitarian, economic and social repercussions have placed an added burden on countries and Governments as they attempt to achieve prosperity for their peoples.

Guided by our shared moral responsibility to future generations, in line with the objectives of our national vision and our international obligations, Egypt is making every effort to promote coordination on climate issues. It seeks to avoid reaching the point of no return, at which climate change would have run its course and become irreversible. Egypt has played a proactive role in climate change negotiations and looks forward to hosting the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2022.

Mr. President,

Terrorism is one of the greatest challenges facing the human family. It violates civilians' most fundamental rights, foremost among them the right to life. It hinders Governments' efforts to achieve their peoples' economic, social and cultural objectives.

Egypt therefore stresses that terrorism can be eradicated only by confronting the tak-firist and extremist ideology that causes this abhorrent phenomenon . Such an effort should be part of a comprehensive approach including not only security operations to confront terrorist individuals and organizations, but also economic, social, developmental and intellectual dimensions. The aim should be

to tackle the root causes of terrorism and address the circumstances that drive some people to embark on that criminal path. This requires both national efforts and international cooperation.

All States must abide by their obligations under international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions. It is essential to hold accountable those States that sponsor terrorism, harbour terrorists, including foreign terrorist fighters, provide them with safe haven and support or give them free rein across their territory in a way that threatens international peace and security.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Egypt has worked tirelessly to strengthen the human rights of its citizens within a framework that enshrines respect for the principles of citizenship and the rule of law. The country's comprehensive development plan is centred on the Egyptian people; its purpose is to uphold their dignity and protect their rights and freedoms.

The human rights system of Egypt has recently seen significant developments, reflecting the rights and freedoms that are enshrined in the country's Constitution and the amendments thereto. For instance, some of the relevant laws have been overhauled. One of the best examples of my country's comprehensive and constructive approach to human rights issues is the national human rights strategy launched a few days ago, one that is based on society-wide consultation and civil society input.

Mr. President,

Egypt is chairing the fifteenth session of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission. Its election follows from years of consistent contributions to strengthening and operationalizing the United Nations peacebuilding architecture since the latter's establishment in 2005. It is a testament to the international community's confidence in Egypt, which ranks seventh on the list of troop- and police-contributing countries and has deployed men and women to serve in numerous United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Mr. President,

Egypt has repeatedly affirmed that the only way to stabilize the Middle East is to reach a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine — which remains the Arab world's defining issue — through negotiations based on internationally recognized resolutions, with a view to establishing a Palestinian State within the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Egypt therefore underscores the importance of consolidating the ceasefire that was reached on 20 May 2021. The international community should take the necessary measures to improve living conditions and deliver humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people. Donors should support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in preparation for the effort to rebuild Gaza, an effort to which Egypt has pledged \$500 million.

Strategically located, the Middle East is also one of the world's most turbulent regions. In addition to facing the same challenges as the rest of the world, the countries of the region contend with a set of specific issues. The model of a strong and cohesive nation State is being undermined by various sources of turmoil, leading to sectarian, political and ethnic divisions and fragmentation. Such strife creates major problems for the countries of the region, whether they be rich in natural resources,

history and ancient civilization, such as Iraq; religiously and ethnically diverse, like Lebanon and Syria; resource-rich and optimally situated, like Libya; or in a strategic geographic location, like Yemen. We need to rally around the unifying concept of the nation State, which does not make distinctions among citizens of the same country and prevents interference in Arab affairs.

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen,

Egypt is intimately linked to and fiercely proud of its African heritage, a heritage that is not merely geographical but part and parcel of the country's identity. Cooperation between African countries cannot, however, mean that one party determines the needs of another. Cooperation needs to be reciprocal. Egypt, which recognizes its neighbours' right to development, is itself one of the driest countries on Earth, and its people live below the water poverty threshold.

Throughout history, the Nile has been the lifeblood of Egypt, hence the overwhelming concern of ordinary Egyptians about the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. You may be aware of what has transpired during the negotiations, under way for a decade, between Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan. These negotiations have gone on for so long owing to plain intransigence and an unjustifiable refusal to engage constructively throughout the negotiation process. The decision to pursue a unilateral approach and policy of fait accompli imperils regional security and stability.

In order to prevent the matter from escalating into a threat to international peace and security, Egypt has referred it to the Security Council. Egypt has called upon the Council to assume its responsibility to support and promote African mediation efforts by dispatching United Nations and Member State observers. Egypt remains committed to reaching — as soon as possible — a comprehensive, balanced and legally binding agreement on the filling and operation of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam in order to safeguard the livelihood and capabilities of 150 million Egyptian and Sudanese citizens. Egypt appeals not only to fairness and reason, but also to the solid international legal basis underpinning the principle of fair and equitable use of shared water resources in international river basins.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Before concluding, I would like to stress that multilateral action is vital and that its importance only grows with every passing year, as new difficulties and threats emerge. Multilateral action remains a way of surviving intensified confrontations and escalating conflicts.

Faced with successive challenges, we need to stop and determine how to harness the resources needed to confront such problems urgently so as to ensure the survival of humankind. Egypt calls on all humanity to join forces so that we can save ourselves before it is too late. To do so, we must rely on the force of logic, not the logic of force.

Thank you for your kind attention. I wish us all a successful session.

Annex II

Address by Mr. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, President of Turkmenistan

[Original: English and Russian]

Dear Mr. Secretary General!

Dear Mr. President!

First of all, allow me to congratulate Mr. Abdulla Shahid upon his election for the Presidency of the 76th session of the General Assembly and wish him success in this responsible position. I would like to assure you that Turkmenistan will lend you, Mr. Shahid every assistance and support.

We would like to kindly ask Mr. Volkan Bozkir to accept our deepest gratitude for his able and effective work in the position of the President of the 75th session.

Distinguished participants!

The current state of global realities, the nature and trends of political, economic, social processes objectively require closer and coordinated cooperation among countries and major international organizations to achieve a common main goal — to ensure global peace and security, conditions for further sustainable development and progress, preservation of legal and institutional basis laid in the foundation of the modern world order.

The degree of effectiveness in such cooperation will largely depend on whether a common denominator can be found between national interests and global goals and priorities. Will we as the members of the world community have enough responsibility, foresight, the political will to overcome disagreements, tactical divergences, and differences in approaches and assessments, to focus on achieving strategic, long-term development objectives, resolving the most acute global problems such as environmental, energy, food, issues regarding equitable distribution of water resources, alleviating poverty, protection from natural disasters, countering terrorism, drug-related threats, and other challenges.

This fully applies to the problem of combating dangerous novel infection and mitigating socio-economic consequences caused by its spread. To be honest, the world community efforts in this direction are still insufficient. Moreover, the pandemic has exposed serious systemic failures in the international response to this challenge.

We firmly believe that when only all UN member-states and UN institutions unite, they may create conditions for success in combating a common threat.

We underline that the World Health Organization is a major platform for multilateral dialogue to develop consolidated and mutually agreed responses to common challenges in the field of global healthcare.

Turkmenistan will continue to promote its previously echoed initiatives aimed at activating multilateral cooperation in science diplomacy. In particular, we propose to consider issues on instituting the following international and regional instruments during the 76th session. The World Health Organization Special Program for studying the genome of coronavirus; Multilateral mechanism of the World Health Organization to fight against pneumonia; Methodological center of the World Health

Organization to treat and prevent acute infections; the Central Asian regional center for epidemiology, virology and bacteriology.

In the context of mitigating the negative economic implications of a pandemic, Turkmenistan considers that it is necessary to strengthen the UN activity in certain areas. In particular, we should actively work on recovering and strengthening resilience of the international transport system in the face of emergencies. There is a good foundation for that. It is the UN General Assembly resolution “Strengthening the links between all modes of transport to achieve stable and reliable international transport for sustainable development during and after the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic” adopted at the initiative of Turkmenistan on July 29, 2021.

Distinguished participants!

The past period was marked by serious problems in terms of ensuring global peace and security, exacerbating local and regional conflicts.

Under such circumstances, Turkmenistan, as a responsible member of the world community will continue to consistently assist in resolving international issues by only peaceful, political, and diplomatic means based on principles and norms of the UN Charter, fundamental Conventions, and other international documents.

In this respect, we plan to take several practical steps for the realization of the neutrality potential as an effective peacemaking instrument and reaching constructive consensus decisions, implementing the provisions of the UN General Assembly Resolution “The Role and Importance of a Policy of Neutrality in Maintaining and Strengthening International Peace, Security and Sustainable Development” adopted at the initiative of Turkmenistan on December 7, 2020.

As is known, this year is declared as a year of peace and trust by the UN General Assembly. Being an initiator of this decision, Turkmenistan has undertaken enormous international work aimed at strengthening peace culture and respectful dialogue, addressing present trust deficit in international relations. Turkmenistan plans to summon the International conference “The policy of peace and trust is the foundation of international security, stability, and development” in December this year by finalizing events in the year of peace and trust.

We invite the UN Member States and international organizations to take an active part in this event.

We consider that the subject of trust and dialogue culture initiated this year should be the focus of global attention and become permanent element of the UN strategic agenda. In this context, Turkmenistan proposes draft of General Assembly resolution “Strengthening regional and international cooperation aimed at ensuring peace, stability and sustainable development in the Central Asian region” to develop dialogue mechanisms in Central Asia. We think that considering and adopting this document will promote the practical implementation of international initiatives by the Central Asian countries stipulated in the outcome document of the Consultative Meeting of the Heads of States of Central Asia held on 6 August 2021, in Turkmenistan.

Concurrently, Turkmenistan reiterates its proposal to create the zone of peace, trust, and cooperation in the Central Asia-Caspian region, acknowledging interconnectedness and inseparability of issues related to maintaining peace, security and sustainable development in Central Asia and the Caspian Sea basin. We

consider this model as a platform for promoting initiatives to strengthen multilateral cooperation for global peace and development.

Dear Mr. President!

Distinguished participants!

The whole world is following events in Afghanistan today. The situation is not easy there, emerging institutions of power and society are extremely fragile. And therefore, when interpreting and assessing the situation in this country, both words and deeds require extreme consistency, balance, and responsibility.

Afghan realities have changed. The ideological preferences, old grievances, phobias, and stereotypes should be discarded, first and foremost Afghan people dreaming of a peaceful and calm life, tired of wars and turmoil should be considered when approaches to realities are formulated.

Turkmenistan always puts the principles of friendship and good-neighbourliness into basis, as well as the historical, cultural and civilizational commonality of the peoples of the two countries whilst developing relations with Afghanistan.

Our country has been and remains deeply interested in the political stability and security in Afghanistan, the well-being and unity of the fraternal Afghan people. At the same time, we are firm adherents of resolving contradictions by peaceful, political and diplomatic means.

We stand for speedy normalization of the situation in Afghanistan and express hope that emerging state institutions will work effectively for the benefit and interests of all Afghan people.

Turkmenistan, for its part, will provide comprehensive economic and humanitarian aid to Afghanistan as before. We are committed to finalizing ongoing projects and implement new infrastructure projects in the energy, transport, and communications fields with Afghan participation. We view this as an important condition for economic and social recovery in Afghanistan and its equitable and mutually beneficial integration to world economic relations.

The readiness of Turkmenistan as a neighbouring and neutral state to promote the establishment of appropriate contacts and the creation of conditions for the early establishment of peace, harmony, and unity in Afghanistan remains unchanged.

Distinguished participants!

During this session, Turkmenistan looks forward to continuing broad dialogue on achieving Sustainable Development Goals. In our view, effective collaboration and practical compatibility of the global, regional, and national instruments for SDG implementation have become a major priority today.

We stand for the active promotion of adequate financing of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this regard, we think it is necessary to organize another international conference on development financing very soon.

We will continue to pay and draw the world community's unflagging attention to issues on mitigating the consequences of an ecological catastrophe of the Aral Sea. Turkmenistan plans to achieve the goal of establishing the UN special programme for the Aral Sea basin with its partners from the region during the upcoming session.

The humanitarian issue remains among priorities on the cooperation agenda of Turkmenistan with the UN.

As a member of the UN Commission for Social Development for 2021-2025, Turkmenistan intends to promote strengthening its role as a main coordinating body for the development of coordinated approaches and actions in global issues of social protection, youth affairs, strengthening the role of the traditional family and other areas.

Migration policy will remain an invariably important area for cooperation between Turkmenistan and the UN. Being the permanent member of the Executive Committee of the Program of the High Commissioner for Refugees and having extensive experience in dealing with such complex humanitarian situations, Turkmenistan stands ready to contribute to solving these global issues.

Distinguished participants!

We are united by common thoughts and hopes, worries and threats. The more valuable is the experience gained in solving complex problems jointly, whether it is on an international scale or at the regional and national levels.

Turkmenistan is ready to share it, will seek together with partners new approaches and ways to overcome challenges facing the UN.

We express our firm commitment to cooperate with the United Nations, actively participate in and contribute to its political and diplomatic efforts to preserve and strengthen the existing architecture of global security, overcome the consequences of the pandemic, and implement plans and programs in the economic, social, environmental, humanitarian and other fields.

The partnership with the United Nations for Turkmenistan was and remains a strategic priority, ideological and practical foundation for all our activities in the international arena.

Thank you for your attention.

Annex III

Address by Mr. Mr. Rodrigo Roa Duterte, President of the Republic of the Philippines

Mr. President,

I congratulate you on your election and welcome your “Presidency of Hope”. Indeed, that is what we need in these challenging times.

For nearly two years now, the pandemic has upended our lives. The climate crisis has worsened, inequalities have deepened, and the geopolitical balance is in a state of dangerous flux.

Certainly, these are complex problems. But one thing is clear — they all hit the poor the hardest. Injustice is the common thread that ties these issues together.

When I spoke before this august body last year, I said that how we address these issues will define our future.

From what I have seen, that future will likely be one of inequality — where the poor plays catch-up with the rich, with no hope nor chance of ever succeeding in closing the gap.

We cannot, in all conscience, allow this to happen. An unjust order is inherently volatile.

We have to reverse course.

How then do we, as Governments, reconcile our obligations to our own citizens with our responsibility to the rest of humanity?

For the Philippines, we understand that we need to expand our notion of “us” beyond the nation, so we can work together to secure our common future.

We recognize that only inclusive multilateralism can deliver the global public goods we need.

And we believe that fairness, equality and respect should always be the basis of our engagement with one another.

Only with these can we correct the injustices that doom the downtrodden all over the world to a life of indignity. And for thousands during this pandemic — certain death.

Mr. President, the picture is bleak. There is a man-made drought of vaccines ravaging poor countries.

Rich countries hoard life-saving vaccines, while poor nations wait for trickles. They now talk of booster shots, while developing countries consider half-doses just to get by.

This is shocking beyond belief and must be condemned for what it is — a selfish act that can neither be justified rationally nor morally.

The plain fact is — this pandemic will not end unless the virus is defeated everywhere. Vaccines are key to achieving this.

This is why the Philippines committed One Million Dollars to the UN’s COVAX Facility. This is our modest contribution to our collective fight against COVID-19.

We strongly urge our privileged partners to fully support the COVAX Facility and further strengthen other cooperation mechanisms. We need this to save more lives, break the cycle of variants and help ensure global economic recovery.

Just as COVID-19 has had an uneven impact on peoples, climate change has also exposed the varying vulnerabilities of countries around the globe. The risks and burden of a warming climate are simply not the same for everyone.

The greatest injustice here is that those who suffer the most are those the least responsible for this existential crisis.

But here we are now at a critical tipping point, where failure to act leads to cataclysmic consequences for the whole of humankind.

The Philippines accepts its share of responsibility and will do its part to avert this collective disaster. We have submitted our first Nationally Determined Contribution, with a target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 75 per cent by 2030.

I issued a moratorium on the construction of new coal power plants and a directive to explore the nuclear energy option.

But this contribution will be rendered useless if the biggest polluters — past and present — choose to do ‘business as usual’. We therefore appeal for urgent climate action, especially from those that can truly tip the balance.

Developed countries must fulfil their long-standing commitment to climate financing, technology transfer, and capacity-building in the developing world. This a moral obligation that cannot be avoided.

Our world’s transition to a green economy must not be at the expense of developing countries’ economic vitality. It simply cannot be — or it would be another travesty of justice.

Mr. President, the Filipino people aspire for a stable, comfortable and secure life founded on freedom, justice and equality.

We have made significant strides to this end, after more than a century of nation-building. Today, the Philippines is a middle-income economy and a thriving democracy. But difficult challenges remain — this we do not deny.

Millions of Filipinos work abroad under the most difficult and inhumane of circumstances. We call for the abolition of all structures that allow the exploitation and oppression of migrant workers.

The kafala system is one such behemoth that chains the weak, the desperate, and the voiceless to an existence of unimaginable suffering.

Nothing can justify the continued existence of this unjust system.

While reforms have been made, the kafala system must be dismantled — sooner rather than later — in the name of justice and basic decency.

The Philippines seeks stronger partnerships to protect the rights of Filipinos and realize the full potential of our nation. But let me be clear — what we mean is partnership that respects our peoples’ agency.

Let me say this again: My Government has a mandate and an obligation to my people. We will deal with all criminals — including terrorists — with the full force of our laws.

The Filipino people want to live in peace and security in their homes and communities — free from harm and danger from the lawless.

But achieving this goal has not been without challenges.

I say this in no uncertain terms: The law applies to all.

I have instructed the Department of Justice and the Philippine National Police to review the conduct of our campaign against illegal drugs. Those found to have acted beyond bounds during operations shall be made accountable before our laws.

We have recently finalized with the United Nations our Joint Program on Human Rights. This is a model for constructive engagement between a sovereign Member State and the United Nations.

Meaningful change, to be enduring, must come from within. The imposition of one's will over another — no matter how noble the intent — has never worked in the past. And it never will in the future.

How many more countries shall be made to unravel and descend into chaos before the powerful heed this simple lesson?

In dealing with complex problems in nation-building, let us consider pragmatic approaches that square ideals with reality. Sure, they may lead us to imperfect solutions — but solutions, nonetheless, that actually work.

We all pay the price for the misadventures of the few that spiral into humanitarian disasters.

The Philippines, in line with its long-standing humanitarian tradition, has opened its doors to Afghan nationals, especially women and children, fleeing from conflict.

As one global community, we must do our utmost to help the Afghan people and all those who continue to suffer.

For the Rohingyas, I have instructed our Department of Justice to work closely with the UN High Commissioner on Refugees to prepare a cooperation program for a specific number of Rohingyas, consistent with our capacities.

The Philippines has limited resources during these extraordinary times. But what we can do for humanity and to uplift human dignity, we will.

Mr. President, in a period of profound geopolitical change, it is vital that all countries — big and small — commit to the rule of law. FULLY AND FIRMLY.

For a world without law is a world of disaster, where the weak is at the mercy of the strong. There can therefore be no other acceptable basis for global order but the law.

We must resolve disputes peacefully, as we manifested in the Manila Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes.

The Philippines is one with ASEAN and other stakeholders in ensuring that the South China Sea remains a sea of peace, security and prosperity.

The 1982 UNCLOS and the 2016 Arbitral Award on the South China Sea provide a clear path towards a just, fair, and win-win solution for all.

The Award must be seen for what it is — a benefit across the board to all who subscribe to the majesty of the law.

No amount of wilful disregard by any country, however big and powerful, can diminish the Arbitral Award's importance.

Mr. President, we face multiple crises that demand effective global governance. Yet, our institutions, including the United Nations, have proven to be inadequate.

The UN is a product of an era long past. It no longer reflects the political and economic realities of today.

Democracy and transparency are concepts that reverberate in the halls of the UN. But ironically, the Security Council — the pinnacle of the UN structure — violates every tenet of these values. It is neither democratic nor transparent in its representation and processes. Many member states have spoken firmly and we agree: This simply is not right.

If the UN is to lead the world out of the many crises we face, things need to change. The UN must empower itself, by reforming itself. Therein lies the hope for humanity.

Thank you.

Annex IV

Address by Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda

- Excellency, Abdulla Shahid, President of the General Assembly
- Excellency, Secretary-General António Guterres
- Excellencies, Heads of State and Government
- Distinguished Delegates

Fighting the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the international system like never before.

However, alongside unfortunate examples of inequality, we have also seen evidence of the spirit of global solidarity and fairness, exemplifying the best values of our organisation.

The COVAX mechanism, despite its limitations, is one such case. Without this system, Africa's vaccine deficit would be even more severe.

But we can and must do more, to speed up vaccine distribution in Africa. Doing so benefits the entire world.

The positive steps from various partners and companies toward building local vaccine manufacturing capacity is also very welcome.

We must harness this positive momentum to build long-term pandemic resilience, where it is needed most.

The cooperation at the G-7 and G-20 to issue new Special Drawing Rights is another positive example.

A further voluntary reallocation of new SDRs to countries that need them most, will help create the fiscal space required for a faster and more equitable recovery from the pandemic.

Nevertheless, the world is seriously off-track with the Sustainable Development Goals, as highlighted during today's Food Systems Summit.

In fairness, we were behind schedule with the SDGs even before the pandemic hit. But there is now increased attention to figuring out how to refocus our efforts, and catch up.

We need to convert this sense of urgency into a durable political commitment to achieving the SDGs.

That commitment must put climate change mitigation at the centre of our efforts.

The severity of weather-related disasters is increasing year-by-year.

We cannot afford for the result of COP-26 in November to be inconclusive or divisive.

We also need to re-emphasize the importance of citizen-centred governance and accountability.

This not only guarantees well-being and material progress, but also security, stability, and confidence in the future.

The extremist ideologies that drive terrorism and genocide must be named, identified early, and dismantled, without ambiguity or hesitation.

On that, we cannot afford to play politics.

I wish to conclude with a strong endorsement of the Secretary-General's report on Our Common Agenda.

The Secretary-General is right to warn of a possible breakdown in the multilateral system, in the face of the Covid pandemic, worsening conflict, the climate emergency, and chronic poverty.

This would have disastrous consequences for all of us, and the risk should be taken seriously.

The Secretary-General's Action Plan merits our full support, particularly the need for a global vaccination plan, a renewal of trust between governments and citizens, more focus on the needs of youth, and a rejuvenated commitment to fact-based reasoning and science.

Whether we are able to convene physically for the 77th General Assembly in 2022, or for the Secretary-General's proposed Summit of the Future, depends on the actions we all take in the coming months.

With determination and focus, it can be achieved.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Annex V**Address Mr. Alberto Fernández, President of the Argentine Republic**

[Original: Spanish]

I come to this great forum at a unique time for humankind, when we face a triple pandemic with common roots: the pandemic of global inequality, the pandemic of climate change and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

This is not a mere change of direction but a real change in times.

The cry of the injured earth is combined with the cry of entire peoples plunged into vulnerability and backwardness. The pandemic has revealed the globalization of inequality and, at the same time, a vulnerability that transcends borders.

The pandemic has also exposed the risk of greed, waste and slowness in providing supportive responses to global problems.

For that very reason, I would like to emphasize before this Assembly the conviction that the COVID-19 vaccines must be global public goods.

Argentina welcomes the proposals regarding patents under the World Trade Organization in order to help to promote the production, competitiveness and local development of vaccines.

With public policies focused on strong support for research and development, our country managed to join the global production chains for two international vaccines, and we have a production capacity for the entire cycle that allows us to introduce new developments.

Clearly, it is now a matter of addressing not only the pandemic's impact in terms of health care, but also the recovery of the economic and social situation, which goes hand in hand with caring for our common home — the planet.

We are fully committed to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

With the transition towards renewable energy; the adoption of clean technologies to reduce methane emissions; the elimination of illegal deforestation; and the rehabilitation of our ecosystems.

All those commitments are a further step by our country towards a path consistent with the 1.5°C target and carbon neutrality by 2050.

However, I wish to emphasize that none of that will be possible if we do not address the sword of Damocles of global inequality: the restructuring of the global financial architecture.

As the Secretary-General said, it is frankly distressing that, in 10 years, the commitment to providing \$100 billion to developing countries for climate action has failed to be realized.

Climate justice will be a chimera without comprehensive financial and tax equity, which would contribute to real social justice.

All the more so in this post-pandemic context, where the risk of widespread catastrophic external debt in developing countries looms. Latin America and the Caribbean, for example, spend 57 per cent of their exports on external debt servicing.

I mention the issue of external debt with particular regret on the part of Argentina, a country that has been burdened with toxic and irresponsible indebtedness to the International Monetary Fund.

To give the world an idea of the magnitude of that “debticide”, I would like to mention one figure:

The funds for Argentina approved by the International Monetary Fund in relation to that unsustainable debt were \$57 billion — the same as the total amount that the organization disbursed to 85 countries in the world in the year of the pandemic.

I repeat: they gave us in just one year practically the same amount as they gave to 85 countries around the world in the year of the pandemic.

There is no technical rationale, ethical logic or political sensitivity that can justify such an anomaly.

What is even more serious is that a large part of the funds provided to Argentina have been drained out of the country by an irresponsible liberalization of the capital account.

From that case of “debticide”, which cries out to the global financial world, I emphasize that it is key to restore the principles of debt sustainability that were discussed and agreed at the United Nations, in resolution 69/319 of 2015.

For that reason, we also support the idea of promoting an inclusive multilateral agreement that can fully address the issues related to sovereign debt restructuring.

We believe that the extension of the Debt Service Suspension Initiative of the Group of 20 (G-20), while valuable, is an interim and insufficient measure that does not fully address the issue of debt relief and the restructuring of unsustainable debts.

Similarly, the lack of a multilateral framework for debt restructuring for middle-income countries remains a major gap in global financial governance.

We therefore encourage the extension of the new G-20 Common Framework for Debt Relief to vulnerable middle-income countries.

We also propose that the credit risk rating of countries, currently in the hands of a few private agencies, should be part of the reform agenda of the global financial architecture.

Change, while difficult, is not impossible.

We welcome the expansion and distribution of the International Monetary Fund’s special drawing rights, an initiative that has opened the door to hope. What was unthinkable a year ago is now a reality.

This issue must give rise to a major environmental pact of solidarity that includes low- and middle-income countries with high climate and financial vulnerability.

A pact that allows for the extension of debt repayment terms and the application of lower rates under the current circumstances of financial, health and ecological pressure.

We must promote sustainable financing systems that support payment mechanisms for ecosystem services and the concept of environmental debt.

Debt-for-climate swaps are another positive step.

The capitalization of multilateral development banks, by leveraging funds from country contributions, is also an urgent task.

It is also necessary to deepen the debate on the new global minimum tax.

What has been set out by the Group of Seven and the G20 is a first step, but it is insufficient to benefit emerging economies. It is necessary to work towards a cooperative approach, in which the Sustainable Development Goals can become a reality.

Dear colleagues,

The crisis caused by COVID-19 is also a human rights crisis.

The pandemic has exacerbated violence against women, intensified the stigmatization of migrants, people of African descent, ethnic minorities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people, the elderly and people with disabilities and had a serious impact on indigenous peoples.

We face the challenge of building a new beginning towards more just, inclusive and democratic societies.

The prevention and early warning of situations that could lead to massive human rights violations, as well as crimes against humanity or genocide, must be one of the main tasks of the United Nations.

Argentina is firmly committed to moving forward towards the universalization of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, a crucial instrument in the fight against impunity.

Together with France, we are currently working on a third campaign for the universalization of the Convention so that more States ratify it, with the aim of reaching 100 ratifications by 2025.

Argentina also takes responsibility for the historical demands of the women's and diversity movements.

That commitment is reflected at the national level, and its highest expression is the establishment of the Ministry of Women, Genders and Diversity.

With the adoption of the law to legalize abortion, the Argentine State assumed the responsibility of legislating and protecting through public policies the health and life of women and people of other gender identities capable of bearing children.

At the same time, we adopted the Law on Comprehensive Health Care during Pregnancy and Early Childhood, which expands benefits and rights and guarantees health care for women during pregnancy and for children in the early years of life.

The Argentine Government resolved to strengthen care for women victims of violence, while implementing a gender focus in social and labour policy measures and promoting joint responsibility and a fairer distribution of care tasks.

With regard to the rights of diversities, we have made progress on historic measures to expand and recognize rights, such as the adoption of the transvestite-trans labour quota law, which stipulates that the national Government must ensure that a minimum of 1 per cent of its workforce is made up of transvestites, transsexuals and transgender people, and a decree that provides for the issuance of national identity documents that recognize non-binary identities.

Let me now turn to the scourge of terrorism.

Argentina highlights the efforts of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism to support States in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, with full respect for international law, international human rights law, international humanitarian law and international refugee law.

Twenty-seven years after the attack on the headquarters of the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina, we continue the ongoing policy initiated in that area in 2003 of requesting the authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran to cooperate with the Argentine judicial authorities in order to move forward with the investigation of the attack.

We reiterate the request to the international community to comply with the requirements contained in the INTERPOL Red Notices in the event of the possible presence of a suspect on their territories, which Argentina has never ceased to demand.

Colleagues from around the world,

With regard to the Food Systems Summit, an event that I welcome, I would like to say that the topic is, in my opinion, of particular importance not only to Argentina but to all of us given our status as producers and exporters of healthy and nutritious food to the entire world.

We believe that the transition towards sustainability in food production systems must be gradual and in line with the ways and time frames decided by each country based on its productive, economic and social circumstances.

There is no single development model that serves all the nations of the world. An inclusive approach to sustainable food systems is therefore essential, with solutions tailored to the social situation and needs based on solid scientific evidence.

Finally, let me mention an issue of great significance to our nation.

The Argentine Republic reaffirms its legitimate and inalienable rights to sovereignty over the Malvinas, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, which are part of the Argentine national territory. Those territories have been illegally occupied by the United Kingdom for more than 188 years.

Apart from the United Kingdom's intention to maintain the manifestly illegitimate colonial situation, there is no reason that the bilateral dialogue on the question of the Malvinas should not be resumed now. The request of resolution 2065 (XX), of 1965, has remained in force and has been reiterated on many occasions, most recently with the adoption by consensus of a new resolution on the question by the Special Political and Decolonization Committee on 24 June.

The United Kingdom persists in its attitude of disregarding the call to resume negotiations on the territorial dispute and has exacerbated the dispute by calls for the illegal and unilateral exploitation of renewable and non-renewable natural resources in the area — an action that is contrary to resolution 31/49 of this Assembly.

It also insists on an unjustified and excessive military presence on the islands, which only brings tension to a region characterized as an area of peace and international cooperation.

We have asked the Secretary-General to renew his efforts within the good offices mandate entrusted to him by this Organization.

In short and in conclusion.

Just as we reject all forms of colonialism, we also understand that humankind faces the challenge of combining rapid technological change and fatal environmental degradation with a vision of comprehensive human development and global social justice.

That is not a choice. It is either solidarity or extinction.

We will emerge from the triple pandemic that I mentioned at the beginning only through bold leadership, innovative ideas and schemes that make possible what seems to be a chimera.

The hands of the clock are ticking. There is no time to lose. It is now or never. History will judge us not on our words but on our actions.

Annex VI

Address by Mr. Rumen Radev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria

MR. PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY,

MR. SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS,

EXCELLENCIES,

Allow me to start by expressing my gratitude to His Excellency Ambassador Volkan Bozkir, the President of the United Nations General Assembly during its 75th session, and my high appreciation for the way he conducted the work of the Assembly under the unprecedented conditions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

I would also like to congratulate the President of the General Assembly for the current seventy-sixth session, His Excellency Abdulla Shahid, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Maldives, who visited my country recently, and wish him every success in his future endeavour still challenged by the coronavirus.

I would like to begin by quoting the late former UN Secretary-General Kofi Anan:

“More than ever before in human history, we share a common destiny. We can master it only if we face it together. And that, my friends, is why we have the United Nations.”

The raging COVID-19 pandemic in many parts of the world, and several, mostly unprecedented global challenges we are facing at the very same time, raised the need for all countries to support a more effective and coherent rules-based multilateral approach with the United Nations system at its core. Multilateralism is the key to our future and has no alternative. For Bulgaria, this is a high priority, and we support the deepening of EU's strategic partnerships around the world, as well as its more active engagement with third countries and regional organizations.

The most urgent tasks ahead of us are:

- to prevent the spread of the coronavirus;
- to focus on the global economic recovery, decreasing growing economic disparities;
- to accelerate progress in climate change and sustainable development;
- to combat terrorism and transborder crime, as well as enhancing cybersecurity.

MR. PRESIDENT,

It is vital that we all stand in support and solidarity with the most vulnerable countries and people around the globe, under the guidance of the United Nations and the World Health Organization. My country, Bulgaria, has joined the efforts to provide vaccines to those in need by sharing its excess supplies through EU mechanisms and on a bilateral basis.

COVID-19 pandemic and climate change combined resulted in wasting an entire decade of progress in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in many parts of the world. There is no doubt that the sustainability cannot be achieved without dealing with the effects of climate change, environmental degradation, and loss of biodiversity.

To maximize our collective response, we must build resilience. We have to enhance the security of our supply chains, the critical infrastructure, the energy networks, as well as our preparedness for pandemics and natural disasters. Our efforts must be directed against the increasingly frequent and severe malicious cyber-attacks exploiting vulnerabilities of our democratic societies.

MR. PRESIDENT,

Bulgaria is deeply concerned by the persisting threats to security and stability in numerous parts of the world. The situation in Afghanistan, the Middle East, the continuing crisis in Ukraine, are only some of them.

We share the grave concern over the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover, threatening to jeopardize the political, economic, and social achievements by that country over the past 20 years. The risk to the stability and security extends to the whole region and far beyond. Bulgaria condemned the attacks near the International Airport in Kabul on 26 August 2021. The attacks, claimed by Islamic State in Khorasan Province, resulted in the death and injuries of over 300 civilians, including women and children, and military personnel. Terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security. All States must combat terrorism through concerted multilateral efforts, and by all means, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and other obligations under international law.

As an EU Member State Bulgaria supports EU's commitment to work with international partners on durable solutions for Afghan refugees and address the needs of countries hosting large numbers of them. As a sign of solidarity, we took a decision to receive up to 70 Afghan citizens who have worked for Bulgaria, EU or NATO missions, and their families.

Bulgaria shares the view that a continued humanitarian engagement in Afghanistan is essential to respond to the unfolding humanitarian crisis fuelled by the conflict, the severe drought and COVID-19 pandemic.

Let me now turn to the Middle East. We condemn the missile attacks on Israel and the unproportioned use of force in retaliation while we fully recognize Israel's right to self-defence. We are deeply concerned by the violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory since the deadly escalation between Israel and the militants in Gaza earlier this year, and the continued loss of life and serious injuries as reported to the Security Council by the UN Special Coordinator on the Middle East Peace Process.

The solution of the conflict between Israel and Palestine through the revival of the Middle East Peace Process has no alternative. We call on both sides to use maximum restraint, refrain from unilateral acts and provocations, and give a chance to negotiations and dialogue as well as to confidence-building measures.

Bulgaria has high appreciation for the work of the United Nations Agency on Palestinian Refugees on the ground, and will continue to support it both politically and financially.

In accordance with the fundamental principles of international law, Bulgaria continues to call for resolving the crisis in Ukraine on the basis of full and comprehensive implementation of the Minsk Agreements.

In the context of the ongoing pandemic, we need to ensure the respect for human rights, since they are of utmost importance for achieving security, prosperity and peace. Protection of children's rights is a key priority of my country with regard to human rights, with a strong emphasis on the inclusive education for children with disabilities and the process of deinstitutionalization. Further, we insist on the empowerment of women and girls, the promotion of rights of people with disabilities, as well as the fight against antisemitism, islamophobia and hate speech.

To promote these priorities on a global level, Bulgaria supports all relevant UN funds and programs, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and actively engages with the UN system, currently as member of the Human Rights Council.

We need a revitalized United Nations to effectively address the numerous challenges the world is facing today. To this end, Bulgaria will continue to work for efficient United Nations, adequately prepared to respond to the needs of humanity in the 21st century. We support the comprehensive reform in all areas of activity of the Organization.

Bulgaria welcomes the report of the Secretary-General "Our Common Agenda". We especially commend the fact that it is future-oriented with a strong focus on youth, since the decisions taken today will shape life of future generations.

Bulgaria is strongly committed to its financial obligations to the United Nations and is concerned about the persisting liquidity challenges, which undermine the ability of the Organization to implement its mandates and to carry out its work.

MR. PRESIDENT,

In concluding, let me be optimistic. At the very outset of the World Organization, Ralph Bunche, a renowned American political scientist and diplomat, a leading civil rights activist and Nobel Peace Prize laureate for his mediation in Israel in the late 1940s, said: "The United Nations is our one great hope for a peaceful and free world." I would like to add – the United Nations is our one great hope for safely steer the boat of our common destiny through the troubled and uncharted waters of our future, and we all must stand as one in its support.

THANK YOU, MR. PRESIDENT.

Annex VII

Address by Mr. Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo, President of the Federal Republic of Somalia

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The COVID-19 health pandemic has truly challenged the world in ways most never envisaged. Across the world, people have lost their lives, livelihoods and are tasked with the enormous challenge of rebuilding their lives, communities, and countries during a very uncertain period in human history. However, uncertainty and inability are different: I strongly believe that we as a community of nations are capable and must recover together by remaining hopeful. Throughout history, mankind has been challenged but never has our collective spirit and determination to learn, share, progress and prosper through effective partnership been beaten. COVID-19 has proven to us all that when an existential catastrophe surfaces, we as a community of nations can rise to the challenge together. It is only fitting that the 76th Session of the UN General Assembly focuses on “Building resilience through hope.”

Building resilience through hope, hard work and multi-faceted partnerships is a must for an equitable and holistic recovery from COVID-19. The global health pandemic laid bare the frighteningly unequal world that we all live in today. The different pace of response within nations and regional organisations highlighted the vast gap there is in terms of opportunities between the developed and developing world, with countries like mine still struggling to offer the vaccination to most of our citizens. It is fundamental to recognise that responding to COVID-19 requires renewed commitment to vaccinations for all. Human safety is the cornerstone of any sustainable recovery from this disastrous health pandemic.

I am proud to say that the Somali Federal Government responded quickly to the health pandemic in the country. Our policies prioritised the lives of our citizens and most of our national resources and available human capital was dedicated to saving lives through direct medical provisions and information sharing. Despite its devastating impact on individual lives, livelihoods and the economy, COVID-19 galvanized the resilient Somali people, including the private sector and Diaspora, as well as international partners to do everything possible to mitigate the worst of the impact. This strong and timely partnership continues to this day and is saving lives and creating the opportunities our people urgently need to recover quickly and sustainably.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Recovering from the global impact of COVID-19 is indeed our most crucial single collective priority. There is not one single nation, community or individual which has not been detrimentally impacted. However, we must all understand that this recovery must be anchored on innovative and sustainable human centred policies and strategies delivered in partnership across continents.

In Somalia we are determined to ensure that our national recovery strategies are in line with our ninth National Development Plan. The core of this focuses on rebuilding a strong, cohesive, and fair Somali society underpinned by strong institutions and opportunities.

Somalia’s economy has been heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic like everywhere else in the world, but this has not deterred us from successfully

continuing on our national economic reform path. The successes of these reforms have enhanced the trust between the Somali government and public and international partners and helped to deliver basic public services. It is because of these clear reform efforts that many of our valuable international partners, including the International Financial Institutions, provided much needed and appreciated grant financing to mitigate the worst impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Economic reforms are key to the sustainable recovery and development of Somalia. In this regard, we are determined to continue growing our domestic revenue base, strengthening transparency and good governance as well working even more closely with our people and all our development partners to ensure that Somalia's recovery from COVID-19 is swift and sustainable.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The protection of the environment is an urgent global priority that the Somali government is committed to. Somalia has one of the longest coasts in the world, vast arable land for farming and huge blue economy potential. Indeed, Somalia's many natural resources are the jewels in the present and future economic crown of the country and only through the protection of our environment can the resilient Somali people truly benefit from them. However, Somalia directly experiences the painful results of global warming.

Somalia has been cyclically challenged with recurring droughts and, in the same year, floods. This has painful human and economic consequences with many lives and livelihoods lost as a result. Somalia's environmental challenges have led to food insecurity, an increase in the number of internally displaced people living in major cities like Mogadishu and the weakening of the traditional rural communal economic networks that have sustained the Somali people for centuries.

A Somali proverb states that: "The city lives of the provisions of the countryside" but, sadly today, it appears the countryside has been displaced in the major cities. This is not sustainable and certainly not conducive for the long-term development the Somali government and people envisage going forward.

Looking forward, it is the collective duty of all states, communities, and individuals to respond to the needs of the planet. We must all do our absolute best to cooperate to protect the future of our planet and our source of life, wealth, and well-being.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In Somalia we strongly believe in the enduring ability of the international multilateral system to deliver a better world for all. In today's interconnected, interdependent, and globalised world, cooperation, strategic collaboration, and good governance are a must. In this brave new world, it is almost impossible for any nation to strive for progress and prosperity alone. It is in this regard that all member states must work closely together to revitalise the United Nation so that it can effectively play its mandated role of connecting us all in navigating the serious global challenges that threaten our common development.

The UN remains the foremost multilateral institution for the regular high-level dialogue and decisions that guide the world's collective response in today's most pressing challenges including the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

As a member state, Somalia is proud of its contribution to the UN and the strong partnership that exist between the UN agencies and our government in Somalia.

The Federal Government of Somalia firmly believes that the UN can be revitalised through the reform of its own governance structures which must reflect the changing world we live in today. The UN must also have greater impact on people's lives through a strategic focus on peace-building activities which are in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. Furthermore, to revitalise the UN and the impact of its activities across the world, we must seek to strengthen public-private partnerships to overcome the financing challenge the organisation faces at this desperate time of global crisis and need, especially, in the developing world.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Somali Federal government is working tirelessly to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals with, and for, our people. We are doing this by successfully confronting international terrorism, investing in basic public services, tackling corruption, and promoting good governance and inclusive politics. We are currently finalising the process of holding free, fair, and inclusive elections with the largest number of Somali electoral participants since the civil war in Somalia. The elections are centred on respecting the rights and wishes of the Somali people including the rights of women and youth to represent themselves within the very political arena that governs them.

In conclusion, it is important to reiterate the enormous impact COVID-19 has had on the world. We have all suffered and many still are hurting from the personal and economic pains caused by the health pandemic. Sadly, we also know that it is not yet over for many, especially the most vulnerable in the world, including many in Somalia. However, through effective multifaceted partnership, social solidarity, strong institutions, and hard work, I strongly believe that we can recover from COVID-19 more sustainably. Furthermore, to achieve sustainable development for all, we must also recognise and act on responding to the needs of our planet and creating a fairer society for all underpinned by opportunities and good governance. In Somalia, our government is working hard on all these priorities to improve the future for our people.

I thank you.
