



General Assembly

Fifty-ninth session

17th plenary meeting

Thursday, 30 September 2004, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Ping (Gabon)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 9 (continued)

General debate

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jeremie Bonnelame, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Seychelles.

Mr. Bonnelame (Seychelles) (*spoke in French*): My delegation, Sir, is delighted at seeing you presiding over this session of the General Assembly. We also wish to state the high esteem in which we hold the past President, Mr. Julian Hunte, of Saint Lucia, and for Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

The Seychelles, a small island country, is defined by the fact that it belongs to two regions — the Indian Ocean and the African continent — and by the fact that it belongs to several linguistic and cultural areas. Today we wish to be an example of cohabitation of man and nature and an example of unity and cohesion with our people. These two objectives are at the heart of our development plans.

In April of this year, Mr. James Michel succeeded Mr. Albert Rene in the presidency of the Republic through a calm and proper political transition. The new President defends the same development philosophy, taking into account, of course, changes on the world scene, and the economic needs that are inherent in starting a new phase of our development. Thus, the

President has assessed our difficulties and the options available to us in different areas of our economy, such as the balance of payments, the debt burden, access under reasonable terms to capital — and in this context we are a middle-income country — access to markets, and so forth.

Together with the Bretton Woods institutions and our other customary partners, we have committed ourselves to a progressive programme of adjustment and of giving new dynamics to our economy. Of course, we are progressing at our own pace, because we remain a vulnerable economy, since we are a small island country, isolated from markets.

I would like to say a few words about the Seychelles' commitment to the international community. First of all, on the question of security, the fight against terrorism, money laundering and drug trafficking are, in the Seychelles, subjects of prevention and deterrence. We are taking action to tackle the causes, the methods and the effects of these criminal actions. The Seychelles has ratified all international conventions on drug trafficking, and we support all United Nations resolutions on the prevention and suppression of the financing of terrorist acts.

We support the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering (FATF) and the requirements of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

04-52757 (E)

* 0452757 *

We have enacted a law this year on the prevention of terrorism, and at the present time we are revising existing legislation on financial institutions and on money laundering. I might add that our offshore sector is also being monitored in the framework of the implementation of a law on the provision of services which was promulgated last year.

We are fully committed to the fight for security and stability. However, it is being done in difficult conditions, because the very questionable criterion of gross domestic product per capita blocks our access to most development assistance programmes.

A small and vulnerable State always attaches more importance to recognition of its own identity and the defence of its stability. We, therefore, unreservedly support the principles and objectives of global peace, security and development that are embodied by the United Nations. We want the Organization to remain extremely active in its initiatives to restore peace, particularly in the Middle East and in Africa, to all areas where conflicts today have become chronic and are steadily worsening.

We hope that the reorganization of the United Nations, which is now under way, will make it possible for it to be repositioned, on the basis of concrete actions and follow-up and monitoring mechanisms. We believe that the Security Council must be open to more permanent and non-permanent members, so that the developed and developing countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America can contribute to the Council's dynamics.

More than ever, a genuine North-South dialogue is essential to resolve conflicts and to seek shared solutions to shared problems posed by AIDS, poverty, debt and terrorism — all threats that require a joint response and shared responsibilities. This dialogue requires new ethics and a new approach to development, which revitalizes international relations and corrects injustices. It is particularly important to deal with the roots of the debt problem and to adopt energetic measures in order to assist those States whose development is stymied by this burden.

We welcome the exchanges between the Group of Eight and the developing countries. This is a negotiating platform that should have brought about concrete action and implementation of the recommendations of the Millennium Summit, and those of Monterrey, Johannesburg and Doha. It is

particularly important that the allocation by the developed countries of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product to international development should be seen and accepted as a realistic and fair objective.

We expect the meeting to be held in Mauritius at the beginning of 2005, ten years after the adoption of the Barbados Programme of Action, to produce an uncompromising assessment of the Programme's implementation and to adopt operational measures and mechanisms. We are counting on the active commitment of our partners for that assessment and its follow-up.

Support and commitment should be expressed in the area of international trade through equitable treatment towards developing countries that have structural weaknesses, such as small island developing States. Such arrangements must take into account the delicate issues of access to markets and trade relations. The goal is to prevent our countries from becoming further marginalized in a system that claims to be in the interest of all. That is why we invite the World Trade Organization to adopt an approach to development that is consistent with the developments of recent years. I am referring to the launch of the Doha round, devoted explicitly to development, and to the assertion of an African voice on sensitive issues such as commodities and raw materials. The new trade relations must also enable developing countries to continue to acquire the means to be more competitive.

Another urgent matter for us, the countries most vulnerable to the consequences of global warming, is the ratification by all developed countries of the Kyoto Protocol. It is the only instrument capable of acting effectively with respect to a danger of concern to all.

We believe that a special fund should be established in the United Nations to help fragile economies confront losses, including loss of income, caused by climate change.

I reaffirm the importance we attach to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) because it is one of the best tools for enabling African countries to manage their own development. We appreciate the commitment of the Group of Eight in this regard through its African Action Plan, and it is our heartfelt hope that NEPAD's development agenda will comprehensively address the specific needs of the eight African island States.

All these questions are of capital importance today. We hope that the British presidency of the Group of Eight in 2005 and the United Nations summit to review the Millennium Development Goals, also scheduled for 2005, will work a very clear rebalancing in favour of our countries.

Seychelles reaffirms its support for the General Assembly, and we thank you, Mr. President, for your personal action. We also thank Secretary-General Kofi Annan. My country is an advocate of the cause of development, which is a fundamental right. That right entails the obligation of political solidarity in the most active sense of the term.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Fathulla Jameel, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Maldives.

Mr. Jameel (Maldives): First, let me extend to you, Mr. President, my delegation's warmest congratulations on your election to preside over the Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. My delegation has every confidence in your sagacity to guide this session and its deliberations to a fruitful conclusion.

It is also my pleasure to pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Julian Robert Hunte, for the commendable manner in which he discharged his responsibilities as the President at the fifty-eighth session.

As well, I wish to take this opportunity to compliment the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on his diligence in promoting peace and pursuing the noble principles of this Organization. My delegation sincerely wishes him every success in his daunting task.

The unfolding international events bring to the fore the question of multilateralism and the vital role the United Nations has to play in addressing global crises and problems and in promoting a world order based on the rule of law and the collective responsibility of all nations and communities.

The global challenges that we face today are numerous. While goals are set and programmes launched for eradicating poverty, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality, reducing child mortality, fighting HIV/AIDS and protecting the environment, hundreds of innocent lives are lost every day as a result of conflict and civil war.

Terrorism has not been defeated. On the contrary, it is re-emerging in uglier manifestations in the most unexpected places, killing innocent people, including children. The disappointing impasse on global disarmament and the dreadful odds of further proliferation of weapons of mass destruction make us ill at ease and cause us to lose hope for a peaceful world.

We in small States feel more vulnerable to these challenges and threats, as our security is entirely dependent on the prevalence of global security and the observance of the rule of law by all States. Clearly, the concerns of small States cannot be confined only to the issues of the environment, climate change, sea-level rise and sustainable development. The ominous threats that are emerging on the political and security fronts of the contemporary world have far-reaching implications for us as well.

Not too infrequently, we witness small States being victimized by non-State actors such as terrorists, mercenaries, insurrectionary gangs and organized crime networks, whose calculated assaults disrupt socio-economic and political development of small States, endangering peace and security. It would be imprudent to ignore the wider implications of the presence and activities of such perilous actors on international peace and security. Solutions to those threats can only be sought through international cooperation, vigilance and timely action.

It is imperative that the international community takes on the crucial responsibility of protecting the security of small States, as stipulated by General Assembly resolutions 44/51, of 8 December 1989, 46/43, of 9 December 1991, and 49/31, of 9 December 1994. With its global spread and ability to work in collaboration with regional institutions, we see the Organization as the most appropriate body to address such issues.

Terrorism poses grave threats to regional as well as international peace and security. The train bombings in Madrid; car bombings and terrorist attacks in Iraq, Indonesia and Saudi Arabia; and, most recently, the hostage-taking tragedy in a Russian school, are all grim reminders of the particularly insidious nature of terrorism. I am sure that I echo the unanimity of the international community in reiterating that the war against terrorism should continue to remain a principal priority on the international agenda. My Government

believes that early adoption of the proposed international convention on terrorism would be a crucial step in effectively combating that dreadful menace.

Expanding globalization and increasing trade liberalization, contrary to the hopes for a healthier global market, have had a distressing price tag for small economies, especially for small island economies such as the Maldives. Limited natural resources and the narrow economic base of small island economies severely restrict their scope for diversification and their ability to attract foreign investment. Those disadvantages call for special considerations, including a level of preferential treatment, on an exceptional basis, to ensure the sustainable development of small island developing States.

While the Maldives is beset by the entire range of economic problems inherent to small island developing States, the recommendation by the Committee for Development Policy (CDP) to graduate us from the list of least developed countries has compounded the challenges to our development. We do take pride in our achievements in the social and economic sectors during the last two decades. However, we fear that graduation may cause enormous and irreparable damage to our economy, in the absence of a suitable mechanism to ensure sustained socio-economic development. In that context, we welcome the recommendation of the CDP and the decision of the Economic and Social Council earlier this year indicating the need to formulate smooth transition strategies for least developed countries prior to their graduation.

We support in particular the recommendation to decide post-graduation transition arrangements on a case-by-case basis and to establish ad hoc country advisory groups to help formulate those arrangements. We strongly feel that it is important for the Economic and Social Council to formally endorse the arrangements proposed by the ad hoc country advisory groups while mandating the CDP with the task of monitoring the progress of newly graduated countries for any disruptions in their development.

Allow me, at this juncture, to register our sincere gratitude and appreciation to our development partners and the members of the Group of 77, the Group of Least Developed Countries and the Bureau and members of the Economic and Social Council for the

understanding and the care with which they are proceeding on this crucial and important issue.

The state of the global environment is as depressing as ever. Statistical information and projections are alarming and disturbing, not only to small island developing States but also to the entire international community. Those figures and predictions reveal the severity of environmental problems and the potential threats to human existence unless swift remedial measures are implemented.

The frequency with which we have been witnessing natural disasters such as hurricanes and cyclones around the world demonstrates the urgent need to tackle environmental issues on a global scale. Many small island developing States suffer disproportionately from such hazards, underscoring the vulnerability of small island developing States in that regard. As we recently witnessed in Grenada, a single hurricane can lay waste to decades-long developmental progress in a matter of a few hours.

We will soon be meeting in Mauritius to review the progress made over the past decade in the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island States. If we are to make the forthcoming meeting in Mauritius a success, we need to muster the necessary political will to channel resources and to ensure the comprehensive realization of the objectives of the Barbados Programme of Action.

The complexity and magnitude of ever-developing global challenges demand that a reformed United Nations be assigned the central role in dealing with them. While those reforms should cover the entire United Nations system and its bodies, the focus is once again justly being drawn to the urgency of the need to restructure the Security Council, making the Council more reflective of the realities of the present-day world and more representative of the capacity and commitment of Member States to contribute to international peace and security. It is disappointing, though, that no common view has emerged on that issue. We feel that we should go ahead with the enlargement of the Security Council, both in the permanent and non-permanent categories and including in that enlargement countries such as Japan and other Member States that have the capacity and the commitment to serve as permanent members and that

would represent the wider membership of the present-day United Nations.

The international treaty regime has to be expanded and strengthened so that emerging problems can be dealt with more effectively. We feel that that task should be a priority in enforcing the principles for which the United Nations stands and the values of peace, security, justice, equality, human rights, democracy and rules-based international order that it has advocated. In that context, we applaud the remarks made by the Secretary-General at the opening meeting of the General Assembly, and wish to express our support for his efforts to reform the United Nations system.

The rapid socio-economic development attained by the Maldives in the past two and a half decades is in no small part grounded in the political stability that we have enjoyed during that period. To emphasize further the need to promote and sustain the values of democracy and respect for human rights, President Gayoom proposed a sweeping agenda for political reform in early June of this year. The Government remains firmly committed to carry out the reform agenda, which has been welcomed and supported by both the people of the country and its friends in the international community. A special people's assembly was convened, as required by the Constitution, and was charged with the task of debating reforms to the current Constitution proposed by the Government and civil society.

We seek the support and assistance of our friends in the international community in our pursuit of that unprecedented reform agenda. The solidarity of the international community at this crucial hour of need would reinforce our resolve and help us move ahead with the reform agenda with increased veracity and diligence.

My Government is also committed to respecting and observing human rights through adherence to relevant international conventions. In that regard, I am pleased to announce that the Maldives will this week sign a framework agreement with the International Committee of the Red Cross. We will also keep under consideration the signing of other important instruments, such as the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Before concluding, I should like to reaffirm our commitment to the principles enshrined in the Charter.

My country believes this Organization to be the best suited to working for the betterment of humanity and the maintenance of international peace and security.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Frederick Mitchell, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Public Service of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

Mr. Mitchell (Bahamas): It is my honour to congratulate you, Sir, on behalf of the Prime Minister, the Government and the people of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate your predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte, of our sister Caribbean State of Saint Lucia, for his outstanding leadership during the fifty-eighth session. His legacy is one of which we in the Caribbean can be proud, and we wish him well in his future endeavours.

I would also like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for his stalwart defence of multilateralism and the rule of law.

Hurricanes Charley, Frances, Ivan, and Jeanne have ravaged the Caribbean islands and parts of the United States. Lives were lost in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Jamaica, Cuba, the United States and the Bahamas. The damage to homes and infrastructure and the interruption to normal life and commerce compel us to stress the need for immediate and dramatic measures to ensure reconstruction and rehabilitation. What has been on offer to the region so far is woefully inadequate.

Our country's northern islands — Grand Bahama and Abaco — received double hits. First, Hurricane Frances struck on 13 September, leaving hundreds without food, water, homes and power. Then came Jeanne, two weeks later, over the same islands that were hit by Frances, further exacerbating the problems. The Bahamas has many islands and, fortunately for us, tourism facilities remain open in the capital, Nassau, and facilities on other islands in the chain will be operational shortly. That, unfortunately, will not be the case in Grenada.

Regional heads have called for an international donor conference to meet the needs of all countries adversely affected by the hurricanes. The Bahamas supports such a conference. We hope that, as a result of that conference, if not before, there will be a

moratorium on Grenada's debt repayment. We also recommend that a regional disaster relief fund be established to support the reconstruction effort.

The word "hurricane" comes from a word first used by the indigenous people of the Caribbean region, the Arawaks. That pre-Columbian civilization must have seen the phenomenon so often that it invented the word for it. That means it has been around for some time, and it is likely to be with us for some time to come. It behooves us, therefore, to understand the phenomenon that we are facing, including its connection — if any — to climate change, which low-lying States have been warning about for years. These facts also demand that our own societies should better plan for the eventualities that have been, and that we know are going to continue to be, a part of our lives. We cannot let lack of planning be a possible cause of the undermining of our sovereignty in this way.

The world is soon wary and weary; the phenomenon of donor fatigue sets in. And we lose our dignity if we cannot be seen to help ourselves. But if, as the scientific evidence suggests, the hurricanes that we now experience are related to climate change, it is clear that we cannot defend ourselves alone. A major shift on the part of the most active polluting countries is required. They must shift gears if the people in small island developing States are going to survive. It is a moral imperative for them to shift gears.

In this regard, the Bahamas welcomes the preliminary moves by the Government of Britain, as well as the Governments of Japan and of Russia, towards putting climate change closer to the top of the agenda. We urge them to continue to use their influence on their friends to cause a major shift in attitude. The implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, adopted at the Global Conference in Barbados in 1994, becomes even more urgent. The follow-up meeting on this issue in Mauritius in January 2005 now takes on even greater significance.

In this context, I would also like to highlight the region's efforts to designate the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development. We also reiterate our grave concern about the serious threat posed to the security and economic development of Caribbean countries by the trans-shipment of nuclear waste through the Caribbean Sea. We continue

to call on States involved in trans-shipment to desist from that practice.

The scenes of death and destruction as a result of the hurricane that affected Haiti in recent days reminded us of the political turmoil that that country has endured during the past year. The Bahamas extends its deepest condolences to the Haitian nation for the tremendous and sad loss of life. The year, which began with so much hope with the celebration of the deeds of Toussaint L'Ouverture and the two hundredth anniversary of independence on 1 January, fell quickly into the abyss of despair on the fateful evenings of 28 and 29 February. No one will ever know what truly happened on that night as an elected President left his country with armed rebels nipping at his heels, but it filled the entire Caribbean with sadness. It raised the spectre of mistrust of friends. That feeling has still not died, but we must soldier on if we are to help the people of Haiti achieve democracy, economic uplift and a just and fair society.

The Bahamas stands ready to do what it can to assist the people of Haiti in these developments. Haiti sits 90 miles from our southern shores, and each year thousands of migrants looking for a better way of life seek to enter the Bahamas illegally from Haiti. We have practical reasons, therefore, to ensure that justice and democracy prevail in Haiti. We echo the call of all countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) for the return to democratic order in Haiti, and we pledge to help.

We regret the failure of the Security Council to act in a timely fashion when Haiti's friends begged for the authority to intervene or to authorize an intervention. Perhaps that failure heralds the need for the Council's reform. The Bahamas supports such reform efforts and awaits the report of the High-Level Panel appointed by the Secretary-General. But the United Nations must never stop trying to address the issues that face Haiti, because there is a moral imperative to eliminate hunger, poverty, disease and discrimination. In this regard, we welcome the work of President Lula da Silva of Brazil and President Chirac of France, Pope John Paul and other world leaders in seeking to ensure that the moral imperatives to which we have referred are placed at the forefront of the world's agenda. We must never forget what Haiti has done for our region and for the world.

While the fight against those who would subvert our democratic values by attacks on civilian and military targets remains high on our agenda, we must not allow the drums of war to drown out the calls of the world's poor and disenfranchised. In 2000, we gave ourselves a set of goals with respect to development with a human face, and we must do all that we can to achieve them. The Bahamas has committed itself to the fight. We offer our heartfelt condolences to the survivors of all who have lost their lives in such senseless attacks, particularly in the United States, Kenya, Spain, Tanzania and Indonesia. But we also admonish all States that terrorism cannot be an excuse to limit freedom and to dispense with the very liberties that we are trying to defend and that form the foundations of free and democratic societies.

All States ought to act with caution in putting in place rules and regulations for travel, lest the denial of those rights cannot be defended by logic or objectivity. That is especially so where we note that developed countries argue in favour of free trade and globalization but deny the benefits of that trade to legitimate travellers by administrative discrimination and bureaucratic procedures and delay. The appeal therefore is to bring some sense of balance, before we lose the very thing we seek to save.

As part of this overall process of reflection, my delegation welcomes the high-level reviews planned for 2005 of our commitments with respect to social development and the advancement of women. We must ensure that we undertake an unflinching examination of the progress made in achieving the priority goals of the Copenhagen Programme of Action and the Beijing Platform for Action to determine how far we have come and what remains to be done. It is critical that the outcomes of the respective appraisals will acknowledge the gaps in implementation and allow States and the international community as a whole to move forward and achieve the timely and effective implementation of the commitments undertaken at Copenhagen, Beijing and beyond. We must also make certain that the results of our deliberations feed constructively and synergistically into the high-level event in September 2005, so as to ensure that no ground is left uncovered.

HIV/AIDS continues to threaten to undermine decades and centuries of progress in health care and in developing healthy populations that facilitate economic growth throughout the world. The Bahamas is a leader in the fight against HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean region.

We urge the continued and unrelenting fight against the disease, to rescue the world's developing nations from the clutches of that scourge. It must take all of the political will and financial power of the world's nations to ensure that the scourge is brought under control and then eliminated.

In that context, the Bahamas welcomes the recent grant to the Pan-Caribbean Partnership from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. That grant will provide a much-needed infusion of resources for prevention, care and treatment programmes. The Bahamas also welcomes the convening of the June 2005 high-level meeting to review the progress achieved in realizing the commitments set out in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS. The Bahamas acknowledges the pledge made by the United States to set aside \$15 billion to fight HIV/AIDS throughout the world, including in Haiti and Guyana in the Caribbean region.

It is an inescapable fact that there can be no meaningful social or economic development without security. For many of us in the Caribbean in particular, that security is being undermined by the activities of those trafficking in illicit drugs, illegal weapons and undocumented aliens. By virtue of its geographical location, the Bahamas is an unwitting transit point for such illegal activities. In the case of illicit drugs, the Bahamas is neither a producer nor the final destination for them. However, as a trans-shipment point, the Bahamas, as do other transit countries, experiences the illegal activities associated with that trade. Those activities tend to undermine the economic and social fabric of our nations.

We therefore welcomed the convening in June 2004 of the first session of the Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace in a Timely Manner Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, some of the tools undermining our safety and security and our economic and social fabric. That meeting was a small, but important, first step in reaching agreement on an instrument on tracing, to enable States affected by that illicit trade to more effectively identify lines of supply, put measures in place to interdict existing lines and prevent new ones, and to cooperate with other States at the bilateral, regional and international levels. At the same time, we continue to call on developed countries to take the same extraordinary measures they use in seeking to stop drug trafficking into their countries to

stop illegal small arms from reaching our shores from their countries.

The Bahamas joins with other countries of the Caribbean Community in voicing our concern about the persistent attempts on the part of some of the developed world's un-elected multilateral bodies to exclude developing countries from decision-making and norm-setting processes, thereby undermining our economies. Chief among those is the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The decisions of those bodies are not friendly acts. We repeat the call we made last year about the need for a global forum to deal with those unfair practices.

We welcome the work that has been done in the Economic and Social Council to redress the imbalance in favour of a level playing field. The arrangements for dealing with international tax matters in particular are a source of concern. We pledge to continue to work with the United Nations towards establishing a world body that will deal with those matters in a fair and balanced way.

Yesterday I was in our capital city, Nassau, in the Bahamas, where we marked 275 years of continuous representative, parliamentary democracy. This, then, is a propitious time to reaffirm the commitment of the Bahamas to the principles enshrined in the Charter of this great Organization, which will stand as a guiding beacon as we continue to chart a rocky, yet crucial, course towards peace, security and sustainable development for all the world's inhabitants. While progress may seem meagre, we must not be swayed from our course and we must remain confident that the benefits of our activities and efforts will redound to future generations. I say again that, now more than ever, the world needs the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Talbak Nazarov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan.

Mr. Nazarov (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Russian*): We all pinned great hopes on the advent of the twenty-first century with regard to a more stable and secure world and sustainable development for humanity. We were all eager to expand the positive achievements of the twentieth century, which witnessed rapid technological and social progress, the beginning of the space age, the advancement of democracy and the globalization of the planet. We all wanted to leave behind the destructive impact on human history of two world wars, continued

blood conflicts, millions of refugees, poverty and the destitution common in most countries of the world.

It had seemed that, at this junction of centuries and millennia, humanity would rediscover and appreciate more deeply the value of a world without wars or violence and the significance of solidarity and mutual understanding, of true human rights and respect of the views of others. Now, however, it has become clear that it is impossible to comprehend the dynamics of global development or to find adequate answers to modern challenges without the United Nations as a leader.

The impression had been that, in the new century, our civilization would embark on the path towards a global society where harmony would prevail over hatred and stability put an end to suspicion — a society where the agreed rules of conduct set out in international law, binding for all, would stand in the way of isolationism and separatism; where all internationally relevant issues, including the most urgent ones, would be resolved at the negotiating table; and where the use of force would not be the rule but, rather, the exception, and only when sanctioned by collective decisions of a capable and representative Security Council.

Unfortunately, the twenty-first century has brought more new and menacing challenges than solutions to the numerous problems faced by humankind. The number of wars and military conflicts has not diminished but increased. The peaceful resolution of the inter-Tajik conflict achieved under United Nations auspices is more the exception than the rule in the context of the efforts to achieve peace undertaken by the United Nations.

The world's peoples increasingly feel that the world is in a state of permanent war rather than working towards development. Every day we hear about the dangers of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the struggle against international terrorism. These are urgent problems, and we cannot but be concerned about them since weapons of mass destruction are capable of destroying hundreds of thousands of human lives, while acts of terror can destabilize entire countries.

For those reasons, we are firmly resolved to transform Central Asia into a region free of nuclear weapons. The recent tragic events in the town of Beslan, in the Russian Federation, are clear evidence

that the forces of international terrorism are, day by day, becoming more daring and continue to challenge the whole of humankind.

Tajikistan resolutely condemns the acts of violence perpetrated against defenceless women and children in North Ossetia and appeals to the international community to undertake urgent collective measures to combat this scourge of the twenty-first century.

It is comforting that the international solidarity demonstrated in the struggle against such a bloodthirsty and treacherous enemy as terrorism is gaining in strength. Tajikistan has been actively waging, at the regional and international levels, a multifaceted struggle against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism.

At the same time, in order to definitively put an end to terrorism, it is very important to reach a universal understanding of its nature and manifestations in order to eliminate any obstacles that stand in the way of the development and adoption of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism.

While we can rightly be proud of having created, within a short period of time, a united anti-terrorist coalition of States, unfortunately we cannot say that we have achieved the same degree of solidarity in the fight against poverty and destitution.

For decades, States with low levels of income have not been able to free themselves from their destructive debt burden so as to be able to enjoy the advantages of civilization. For instance, Tajikistan, which lived through a civil conflict, continues to face urgent economic and social problems, despite having made some economic progress. Eighty per cent of the population of Tajikistan still lives below the poverty line. Because of the lack of access to the sea, many regions of our country are cut off from the outside world, which results in our paying higher prices for imported goods and increased transit fees. Forty per cent of all budget revenues go to servicing external debt, which limits the Government's capacity to meet the urgent needs of the population.

Writing off a portion of the accumulated debt would make it possible for those countries to invest in education, health care and environmental protection, and, in the case of Tajikistan, could be helpful in rehabilitating the social sphere, which has suffered as a

result of the civil conflict and natural disasters. However, the idea of exchanging debt for sustainable development has not yet garnered solid support among creditors. In that area, we still encounter inertia and a lack of political will.

It is clear to us that the resolution of political issues, including those related to international security, depends, to a great extent, on social and economic development and on the achievement by all countries of the Millennium Goals.

In a globalized world, achieving the Millennium Goals will require the utmost solidarity as well as interaction among the international community as a whole, with the United Nations as a leading coordinator, in its capacity as the most universal and representative international Organization.

The key to success lies in developing a common and comprehensive approach to addressing poverty-related issues, enhancing the means available as well as seeking innovative ways of securing financing for development, eliminating ecological threats, addressing demographic problems, ensuring an equitable international finance and trade system, and dealing with the aftermath of natural disasters. Failing that, the situation will remain the same: a quarter of the world's population will continue to prosper, using more than half of the world's resources, while the majority of the world's population, finding themselves marginalized, will remain mere observers of global economic development.

The ever-increasing severity of these problems makes them global threats to international peace and security. For that reason, we support the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, in his efforts to restore the balance of priorities on the agenda of the international community.

The international community should also strive to ensure maximum coordination of the actions taken at the global level in terms of monetary, financial and international trade policies. In that connection, it is important to strengthen the role of the United Nations as the key force for political mobilization in those areas. That requires, on the basis of the Monterrey consensus, a further reinforcement of the interaction among the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization, which Tajikistan hopes to join in the near future.

The issues of economic rehabilitation, poverty eradication, improved living standards for the population and long-term sustainable development are among the top priorities for Tajikistan, as an economy in transition.

At the same time, for a number of reasons, Tajikistan still needs the assistance of the international community in supporting national efforts to ensure long-term sustainable development in the country. We appreciate the continued efforts of the donor countries and United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Food Programme and others to assist vulnerable segments of the population, as well as their support in the ongoing transition to a socially oriented market economy.

Given our own experience, we support the priority attention given by the United Nations to increasing the effectiveness of the assistance rendered to countries in post-conflict situations and to receiving feedback in that area. There is no doubt that the United Nations is the key player in providing timely and coordinated responses to post-conflict situations.

The success of the United Nations in this area depends to a great extent on a qualitative interaction with host Governments in the area of reinforcing national potential, the introduction of effective instruments and mechanisms for the coordination and mobilization of resources, and increased interaction with the Bretton-Woods institutions in the context of a joint assessment of their needs and specific project activities.

In this regard, it is noteworthy that one of the lessons learned from the peaceful settlement of the inter-Tajik conflict is the need for donor countries to be active not only during the crisis but also in the post-conflict period. I am convinced that strengthening the foundation of peace and stability in countries living through conflict requires not only humanitarian assistance but also actual help in addressing economic problems and support for countries' efforts to create a dynamic and stable economy. As a rule, these kinds of investments, within the framework of a peaceful process, turn out to be instrumental in strengthening young democracies born out of conflict. There is no doubt that the parliamentary elections to be held in Tajikistan in early 2005 will prove once again the vitality and irreversible nature of the peace process in

Tajikistan and the robustness of the country's democratic institutions.

Achieving ecologically sustainable development on the global, regional and national levels remains an issue of top priority. Tajikistan intends to continue to contribute to the implementation of the relevant decisions of Johannesburg and other international forums. The 2005-2015 International Decade for Action, "Water for Life", to be launched on 22 March 2005, was initiated by our country and is expected to combine efforts undertaken by Governments, the United Nations, international organizations, civil society and the private sector. These efforts are aimed at identifying effective ways of achieving the internationally agreed goals in the area of fresh water resources, developing strategies, programmes and laws to protect water environments and increasing investment and voluntary donor contributions, two activities associated with ensuring access to fresh water to all persons in need. We ask the Governments of all countries, as well as United Nations agencies, to undertake practical activities within this decade. This is the key to success, and it will require a great deal of work.

In some regions of the world, the international community is faced not only with the problem of conflicts and wars that interfere with long-term development, but also with illicit drug trafficking, which poses a threat to civil society. We cannot help being concerned with the fact that global demand for prohibited drugs is not decreasing. For instance, the volume of criminal transit of narcotics via Tajikistan constitutes a serious threat to our social, political and economic stability as well as to the security of the region as a whole. Afghanistan remains a major supplier of narcotics. Their production this year has set a record.

The President of Tajikistan, Mr. Emomali Rakhmonov, regards the struggle against illicit drugs as one of the top priorities for our country. Thanks to the cooperation with the United Nations and interaction within Shanghai Cooperation Organization of the last five years, Tajikistan has become one of the leading countries in the world in terms of narcotics interdiction. Over this period, the law enforcement bodies of Tajikistan and the Russian border guards have confiscated about 40 tons of narcotics, with heroin constituting more than half of this total. As a result, millions of dollars have been removed from

circulation and hundreds of thousands of people the world over have been saved from narcotics dependency.

According to Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Tajikistan sets a good example for other countries as to how one can successfully struggle against drugs. The achievements of Tajikistan in this area are considered as a good basis for strengthening the struggle against the narcotics threat, but we are combating the results rather than the roots of the problem.

In autumn 2005, heads of State and Government will meet in this General Assembly Hall to discuss progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. We attach great importance to this event, which coincides with the sixtieth anniversary of the foundation of the United Nations. We expect this forthcoming event to give the necessary political impetus to the international community in its progress towards the achievement through combined efforts of the Millennium Development Goals in the interest of a more stable, just and prosperous world.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Maria Levens, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Suriname.

Mrs. Levens (Suriname): On behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Suriname, I extend to you my sincere congratulations on your unanimous election to guide the work of this fifty-ninth session of the United Nations General Assembly. We are convinced that the wealth of diplomatic experience and expertise you bring to this body will assist you in a meaningful way during your presidency. I can assure you that the Government of the Republic of Suriname and its Permanent Mission stand ready to cooperate with you in the coming months. It also gives me great pleasure to salute your predecessor, the President of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, Mr. Julian Robert Hunte, a fellow Caribbean national. Mr. Hunte's sterling and dedicated leadership has made all of us, especially those from the Caribbean region, proud. To Secretary-General Kofi Annan we offer our continued support. We acknowledge the importance of his remarks at the start of the General Assembly and share his views regarding the application of the rule of law, both domestically and internationally, as the guiding principle in strengthening and preserving

democracy, defending and promoting human rights and establishing peace.

We are keenly aware of the importance of the United Nations, as the supreme multilateral institution, in advancing multilateral diplomacy for the benefit of humanity in a world in which we continue to struggle to achieve peace, security and prosperity. The international community expressed some time ago the need for a more effective and efficient Organization that would be better able to address the many challenges our world faces today.

Under the inspiring leadership of your predecessor, Mr. President, the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly achieved the reordering of the agenda of the General Assembly aimed at its further rationalization and at facilitating the uniform and coherent discussion of development issues in the plenary and the main committees of the General Assembly. We must keep that powerful momentum for change alive and take it a step further. We must ensure that we do not regress from the results achieved and ensure that there is continued progress in these areas.

The reform of the United Nations Security Council remains one of the vital objectives of the restructuring efforts of the Organization. In our view, a restructured Council must be a reflection of the membership of the Organization, improving its level of transparency and making it more democratic. The Council must be more inclusive and comprehensive in its functioning, as security matters, because of their multidimensional nature, affect the life and livelihood of each and every one of us. The membership of a restructured Council and, equally, its current composition must ensure that the Council upholds the fundamental principles of the Charter while retaining its main focus: the maintenance of international peace and security.

It is very disturbing to observe that, despite intensive diplomatic and political undertakings, peace and tranquillity in several regions of the world are still a major concern and challenge that threaten the democratic underpinnings of society. The time may be opportune for the United Nations to spearhead the process of involving relevant interest groups and civil society at large in the different countries of a particular region to assist in the establishment of sustained peace in that region.

We express our concern about the ongoing political difficulties in the Middle East and in Africa, resulting in violence and the displacement of many persons.

The political crises in our own hemisphere — especially in Venezuela and Haiti — have attracted much attention and have been the subject of many efforts by the United Nations and the Organization of American States. We look forward to continuing and sustainable political stability in Venezuela which, we hope, will promote an environment of normalcy and progress.

The political situation in our sister nation, the Republic of Haiti, remains of great concern. Since its inception as the first black independent republic, Haiti has become the symbol of struggle and hardship, but also of courage, survival and solidarity. That long-battered country and its population need more profound, constructive and long-term assistance to improve the living conditions of the people of Haiti.

Earlier, I referred briefly to the multidimensional nature of security and the need to give due attention to social, economic and environmental threats. In recent weeks, the Caribbean region, which is home to economies that are already vulnerable, has felt the force of nature in the most extreme manner. While several countries have been battered — such as Jamaica, the Bahamas, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago and several other islands — one country in particular has been severely damaged: Grenada. I join all the other nations that have already done so in calling for immediate as well as long-term financial and technical assistance for the Government and people of Grenada. The Government of Suriname offers its condolences to the families of the victims in Caribbean countries, as well as in affected states of the United States of America, where various hurricanes in recent weeks have caused considerable damage and loss of life.

Another global threat that has an impact on every country emanates from the activities of terrorists, terrorist groups and State-sponsored terrorism. The world will never forget the images of horrifying terrorist acts such as the one that took place in Beslan this year, where hundreds of persons, mostly children, lost their lives. The Government of Suriname remains committed to the fight against terrorism. We also continue to believe that an effective and successful

battle can be waged through a comprehensive approach.

The High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, which was established by the Secretary-General with a view to receiving a global report on international security, is a result of the renewed interest in international security concerns. We hope that that review will be one that will produce result-oriented objectives and measures.

Suriname believes that development issues such as the eradication of poverty and hunger and the protection of the environment are among the extremely important aspects to be addressed if one wishes to obtain lasting and comprehensive security, which encompasses, *inter alia*, military, political, environmental, economic and social developmental aspects.

Up to the present day, globalization has not delivered on the promise of vast development opportunities on a global scale. While we have to acknowledge that globalization has created opportunities, those opportunities have been restricted to just a few societies. The opportunities that arise from development in the world today are, unfortunately, not within the reach of all humankind. The current world order is still characterized by economic disparities, unequal trade regimes, income inequalities between and within countries, social injustice and declining opportunities for hundreds of millions. Globalization can only become a real option for economic development if it becomes all-inclusive and if we give it a human face by paying particular attention to the negative impact it has on social progress.

Suriname continues to believe that the United Nations must regain its importance in the areas of global development, if we want to be successful in our efforts to eradicate poverty, achieve social and economic development and stem the spread of communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

The meeting on the subject of poverty organized by the Government of Brazil under the auspices of the United Nations points to a common awareness of the fact that the global development agenda must be advanced and that, therefore, the international community must move from political will to action and from commitments to implementation, granting humanity as a whole an opportunity to develop.

The upcoming 10-year review of the Barbados Programme of Action will provide small island developing States with a momentous opportunity to promote their priority interests and concerns for the next phase of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. While we anticipate that that comprehensive review will result in concrete proposals to advance the implementation process, we also expect that the review exercise will take place in a spirit of partnership. The upcoming meeting in Mauritius should therefore generate greatly needed support, genuine commitment and, moreover, the political will of all partners in the process of furthering the cause of achieving true benefits and progress for the many people living in small island developing States.

In conclusion, I want to stress the need for the United Nations to become more effective in dealing with the current challenges in terms of terrorism and security. At the same time, we must remain vigilant in defending and strengthening democracy and democratic values and institutions, so as to create a stable political and social environment for progress and sustainable development. We also need to continue, and intensify, our battle against HIV/AIDS, illegal drug trafficking and crime. Although globalization has opened up opportunities, it is also our collective responsibility to ensure that international trade liberalization does not result in social and economic marginalization, especially of smaller and vulnerable economies.

To achieve those objectives, the United Nations has to continue its restructuring process and become not only the principal global platform in theory, but also demonstrate its capabilities to act in practice. It is in that context that my Government considers the United Nations the most appropriate global multilateral institution for the advancement of the living standards of humankind as a whole and for achieving sustainable global peace and security.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Carlos Morales Troncoso, Secretary of State for Foreign Relations of the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Morales Troncoso (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a great honour for me today to address the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, on behalf of the Government of Leonel Fernández and of the people of the Dominican Republic, in this forum

devoted to the maintenance of peace and the promotion of development and harmony among peoples. Once again, we are speaking out on the most delicate and important issues on the international agenda so that we can join forces in the search for viable solutions to the problems that affect us all.

I extend my sincerest congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. We are confident that you will steer our work along the path of peace and security for the good of mankind. We also underscore the important work accomplished by the outgoing President, Mr. Julian Hunte of Saint Lucia.

The Dominican Republic has been struck by a force of nature that has left death and destruction in its wake in various parts of the country. The rain and the wind of Hurricane Jeanne had severe consequences for the eastern part of our country, destroying homes, means of communication, bridges, crops and tourist infrastructure, at a time when the Dominican Republic had been making increasing efforts to jumpstart its economy. We take this opportunity to express our thanks for the international community's solidarity in these difficult times for the Dominican Republic. I would also like to express my deepest thanks to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who has expressed solidarity with our country and with Haiti in the context of this natural disaster.

The fact of globalization steadily deepens relations among our countries, challenging our capacity to take advantage of the opportunities that globalization offers, as well as our capacity to limit its negative impact. Together with the contradictory and complex processes of integration and disintegration, our countries still hope that the benefits of globalization will create conditions making it possible to overcome poverty and attain a good life.

A tragic event that occurred in this city of New York on 11 September 2001 changed the destiny of humankind in a matter of minutes, and made the world increasingly dangerous and insecure. The promise of lasting peace presaged by the end of the cold war was destroyed by terrorist actions — actions which were condemned by all humankind and which have unleashed a steady escalation of violence that has turned the world into a place of uncertainty.

We must spare no effort to rid humankind of the threat of terrorism. We condemn terrorist acts in all

their forms and manifestations, whatever their source and whomever may be affected, and want to underscore the importance of international cooperation in the fight against that scourge, which should always be prosecuted in strict compliance with international law, and, in particular, with human rights and international humanitarian law.

The Dominican Republic is founded on an unconditional commitment to the norms and principles of international law, and particularly those that relate to the peaceful settlement of disputes, the condemnation of the use of force, compliance in good faith with international treaties and the implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations and its deliberative bodies, including the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Commission on Human Rights.

We reaffirm the view to which countries committed themselves in May 2004 at the third Summit Conference of Heads of State and Government of Latin America and the Caribbean and of the European Union, as set out in paragraph 8 of the Declaration of Guadalajara:

“[A]n effective multilateral system, based on international law, supported by strong international institutions and with the United Nations at its centre, is essential for achieving peace and international security, sustainable development and social progress.”

However, in order to achieve those objectives we must streamline, modernize and reform the entire multilateral international system, a process that States must support through respect for and compliance with the resolutions adopted, without neglecting genuine and effective equitable regional participation.

Multilateralism is one of the main pillars of the foreign policy of the Dominican Republic, as can be seen by our participation and cooperation in all international forums. For that reason, we join those nations that call for a thorough reform of the United Nations system, with a view to enhancing its democratization and making it a more effective instrument for States Members. That reform must be geared, first of all, towards strengthening the General Assembly, the most important body of the Organization, and the Security Council, in which there is unequal geographical representation. We reiterate yet again the suggestion that has been made for several years now: the Security Council should be expanded so

that Asia, Africa and Latin America can have two permanent members, and the number of non-permanent seats should be increased in order to democratize the decision-making mechanism of that forum for peace. Those reforms are necessary to make the multilateral system more agile and effective, so that it may more successfully confront global threats and challenges.

I would like to echo the commitment undertaken by the heads of State or Government who met in Santo Domingo in August and adopted the Declaration of Santo Domingo 2004, in which we agreed that:

“[t]he fight against poverty is essential to the consolidation of democracy. In that regard, it is necessary to formulate and implement public policies aimed at strengthening economic growth and an equitable distribution of national income and wealth.”

As we are all aware, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has reported that the richest 20 per cent of Latin America’s population receives 54 per cent of national income, whereas the poorest 20 per cent of population receives only four per cent. This fact is an attack on governability.

We want to underscore the importance of a meeting that was held at the United Nations last week — the gathering of world leaders in an alliance against hunger and poverty, which resulted in a serious commitment on the part of each and every one of our representatives here to fight unwaveringly and effectively to achieve the agreed objectives.

For the Government of the Dominican Republic, the fight against corruption is a priority. We have shown this by implementing mechanisms to prevent and punish acts of corruption. That scourge has a grave impact on the economies of our countries. We all know that the main victims of corruption are the poor. We need, above all, to strengthen existing mechanisms, and to produce others if necessary, in order to wage a pitched battle against corruption and those who benefit from it, regardless of their origin or social class. We have taken this decision because we see that the rise in corruption in our region has jeopardized the governability of all of our countries. Governmental transparency and a greater participation of civil society are necessary to combat this evil.

We wish to emphasize this morning the importance and effectiveness of the follow-up

mechanism for the implementation of the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption, and its Plan of Action adopted in Managua. Likewise, we ask that our countries not be used as safe havens for persons convicted of acts of corruption. We also advocate the return of those ill-gotten gains to the countries that have fallen victim to this evil, which, together with drug trafficking, has a negative impact on the stability of democracy and the enforcement of the rule of law.

In recent years, Dominican Republic has made real progress in its struggle against trafficking in persons, where the most vulnerable populations are women and children, whether at the regional or international level. Through the establishment of national and international networks against trafficking in Dominican children and adolescents, and with the cooperation of the diplomatic foreign and consular services, we have made great strides in that area. We take this opportunity to emphasize the participation of the International Organization for Migration and its important support in this struggle.

As for the struggle of countries against the manufacture and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, our country is committed to assisting in the areas of investigation and the adoption of measures for strengthening global and regional cooperation in order to fight against this scourge. States must continue to make every effort to implement the Programme of Action adopted by the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

We also want to express our deep concern at the high level of kidnappings and crime in our countries — a level that increases year after year, thus worsening the sense of insecurity felt by persons of all social classes and races. The rise in crime is a threat to the security and safety of our citizens and to the democratic governability of all of our countries. Well-designed deterrence mechanisms based on zero tolerance, an efficient police force, and a strengthened judiciary will all be necessary to reduce this scourge, which has a significant impact on the lives of our citizens.

On a different topic, the Caribbean now has the second highest incidence of HIV/AIDS in the world. We invite the Member States of the United Nations to rededicate themselves to the terms of the Declaration

of Commitment on HIV/AIDS adopted at the special session of the General Assembly on 27 June 2001.

Dominican legislation includes law 55-93 on HIV/AIDS, which is now in the process of being reformed and which represents one of the few existing pieces of legislation in our region regarding that disease. We reiterate the request for cooperation to the international community so that, through financing, the countries most seriously affected can have more resources to deal with the consequences of that illness in order to provide the comprehensive care that is very necessary, as well as the antiretroviral medications to combat the illness. This is based on the right of all citizens to life and health.

In recent years and in most international forums, our country has referred to the grave crisis confronting the sister republic of Haiti. We have drawn attention to the fact that the Dominican Republic could not and cannot bear the weight of this crisis and its consequences on its shoulders alone. On more than one occasion we have called on the international community for solidarity. We do so with the intent of beginning a far-reaching process that can help in finding a solution to this problem. Today, we see that overcoming this crisis represents a major challenge to the United Nations, and therefore we support the process that began through the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. We consider it very important that the Haitian people see this peaceful mission as the participation of the international community in the stabilization of their nation, and that they at no time view it as an occupation force.

Hurricane Jeanne has caused thousands of deaths and much destruction in the area of Gonaïves, Haiti, thus deepening the economic and humanitarian crisis in that country. Now, more than ever, we call on the international community and international financial bodies to provide the necessary financial resources that can place that nation on the path toward stability and progress.

Many regions of the world have not yet achieved the peace to which they aspire. Despite all the efforts undertaken in that regard, innocent people continue to lose their lives in a conflict that for decades has characterized the instability of the Middle East.

The Dominican Republic avails itself of this forum to reaffirm its unrestricted support for the peace process begun between Israel and Palestine during the

1991 Madrid Conference, for the Oslo Agreements, for the recommendations made by United States Senator George Mitchell in his final report and for the road map presented by President George Bush and supported by Russia and the European Union.

Finally, the Dominican Republic reiterates its position, expressed in various forums, on the need for a constructive dialogue between the nations located on both sides of the Straits of Taiwan in order to ensure peace and security in that region.

I conclude by expressing the hope that this occasion has enabled the Governments represented at this meeting to reflect seriously on our destiny — the destiny of all men and women who live on Earth — and also that the United Nations will be able, with the cooperation of States, to establish the balance necessary for the benefit of international peace and security.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Lamuel Stanislaus, Chairman of the delegation of Grenada.

Mr. Stanislaus (Grenada): My delegation joins in the many laudatory and congratulatory expressions addressed to you, Mr. Ping, as you assume the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. Additionally, we pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte, whose presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session was virile, dynamic and constructive, imbued, as he was, with the wisdom of Solomon, the patience of Job and the vision of Daniel.

Grenada's statement is made from the profound depths of the human heart. The Prime Minister of Grenada, The Right Honourable Keith Mitchell, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, The Honourable Elvin Nimrod, whose unavoidable absence can be understood, have asked me to speak on their behalf.

The Assembly will, I hope, understand why Grenada's statement in this general debate will focus in large measure on the natural disaster that has befallen the State of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. First, Grenada expresses grateful appreciation for the outpouring of sympathy and assistance from the many countries that have already taken the rostrum — especially from the Caribbean leaders who have seen and described to the Assembly, in chilling and heart-

rending detail, the devastation of the tri-island State of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique caused by jurrricane Ivan "the Terrible".

Therefore, there is no need for me to multiply my words except to say that the fickle finger of fate seemed to have conspired with nature — exceedingly benevolent at times, but sometimes equally destructive. This time, it released its full fury on a vulnerable small island developing State, reducing it to rubble. After hurricane Ivan's rage had subsided, there was complete destruction of the infrastructure, and it seemed as if a Stygian darkness had descended on the land. However, the resilience of our people and the emerging solidarity give us hope that, with the assistance of the international community, Grenada — like the mythological phoenix — will rise from the ashes brought about by the hurricane.

Who can help us pick up the pieces of a shattered country with a dislocated economy, whose precipitous decline has brought it to rock bottom? An assessment of the destruction reveals that it would take \$2 billion to rebuild the State of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. That is a Herculean task far beyond our means. The call, therefore, is made to the international community: "Come down to Macedonia and help us". We plead with the United Nations, its agencies the United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF, UNESCO, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Health Organization, individual countries, individual permanent representatives, non-governmental organizations and friends to help Grenada help itself.

In that connection, my delegation recalls the words of the seventeenth-century English clergyman and poet John Donne: "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main." Thus, what happens to each of us affects all of us. Today, that is eminently borne out by the interconnectivity and interdependence of societies, aided by the information and communication technology revolution. Consequently, we speak today about a world shared by all instead of a world divided. Giving, caring and sharing should therefore be a reality, not just a concept.

Forgiving Grenada's debt and cancelling its obligations to international organizations and institutions will give Grenada a breathing spell. Help in

that regard will be formally requested through official channels and will free Grenada of its many obligations.

The dire problems of my country notwithstanding, we cannot fail to touch upon the world situation, in which the geopolitical centre of gravity continues to swing from the Israeli-Palestinian struggle to Iraq and Afghanistan. The situation in those centres of conflict is fanned further by the heinous and atrocious crime of terrorism, which is fast becoming a way of life. In that regard, my delegation recalls an ancient law: hatreds never cease by hatreds; it is by love alone that they cease.

It will be recalled that, from this rostrum, I told my colleagues that I would demit office at the end of this month, having attained the ripe old age of 84 years and having served my country in this honourable body for almost 13 years. Today, I want to recant with regard to that diplomatic note on my premature departure and to tell the Assembly that my Government has asked me to continue. Therefore, refreshed in body and mind, confident in faith and joyful in hope, I will continue to expect the generous assistance of my colleagues.

With respect to my age, I should like to quote Sir Francis Bacon, who wrote several centuries ago that age appears to be best in four things: old wood best to burn, old wine to drink, old friends to trust and old authors to read. Colleagues, I treasure your friendship and ask for your support on behalf of my country.

Let me conclude with this patriotic verse:

To all the world I give my hand,
My heart I give my native land;
I seek her good, her glory.
I honour every nation's name,
Respect their fortune and their fame;
But I love the land that bore me!
Love the land that bore me!

Please allow me an addendum to my statement. I wish to announce that tomorrow, Friday, at 10.30 a.m. in the Economic and Social Council Chamber, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme will make a flash appeal for assistance to Grenada and Haiti.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Stuart Leslie, head of the delegation from Belize.

Mr. Leslie (Belize): My delegation congratulates you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency. We have every confidence that the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly will enjoy success under your leadership. We would also like to acknowledge the good work of your predecessor, Minister Julian Hunte of Saint Lucia, whose efforts led to a new level of enthusiasm within the General Assembly. In addition, we recognize the tireless efforts of our Secretary-General.

Events of the past months impel us to ponder the importance of our Organization in the never-ending struggle to secure a peaceful and dignified future for the world. The United Nations was born to promote those values that would unite humanity — values of freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for peoples and for nature — and thus transcend the differences of the world's cultures. And so it is these United Nations large and small come to find, in the words of our Secretary-General, common solutions to common problems. And so it is that we the Member States must ensure that the United Nations is effective for our ends.

In Belize we understand that and remain a legitimate partner in promoting principles such as peace, the right to self-determination, social justice, respect for human dignity, the rule of law, the right to development and the protection of our environment.

We stand for those principles not just because of the international instruments we signed, but because they represent the best way to end poverty, illiteracy, hate and ignorance, to stop the spread of terrorism and to bring an end to inequality, oppression, and injustice.

For the overwhelming majority in the United Nations, the solution to many of the world's problems can be found in the right of every nation to achieve meaningful sustainable development. Accomplishing such goals is not easy, but neither is it impossible.

Challenges to development abound — challenges that make us inherently vulnerable — and we as small States call on the international community to take into account our vulnerability so as to ensure that policies and measures relating to development correspond to our social needs.

As a member of the Alliance of Small Island States, my country underscores the importance of addressing the special needs of such States through the

implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. An international meeting, which will conduct a full and comprehensive 10-year review of the Barbados Programme of Action, will be held in Mauritius in January 2005, providing an opportunity for the international community, especially the bilateral and multilateral donors, to renew their commitments to the Barbados Programme of Action.

Of special importance to us all is the issue of climate change, and we must not flinch from taking effective measures to address that problem; those who seek to block effective solutions are creating conditions for insecurity that would dwarf the threats currently posed by terrorism.

In that context, we remind Member States of the proposals first submitted to the General Assembly in 1999 to designate the Caribbean Sea as a “special area” within the context of sustainable development. The recent spate of hurricanes that have devastated our region — especially Grenada and Haiti — and which call for major efforts from the international community to mitigate our losses, reinforce our contention that our Caribbean Sea is as fragile as it is vulnerable and as fragile as it is valuable to our social and economic well-being, indeed to our very survival.

We call upon the Assembly to support us in our just efforts to achieve the designation of the Caribbean Sea as a “special area” during this session of the General Assembly.

In addition to addressing the special needs of developing countries, development policies must, above all, be people centred. Coherent policies, sustainable partnerships, sustained support and ownership are critical factors for development. That has never been as clear as in the case of Haiti. In the words of our Secretary-General,

“the international community failed to develop ... sustainable partnerships with the Haitian society at all levels. The Haitian people were insufficiently involved in the development of policies that could move the country forward. ... Financial aid did not bear fruit to the extent expected because it was at times ill-targeted ...”
(S/2004/300, para. 6).

With the lesson thus learned, we have an opportunity to influence a positive wave of development for the people of Haiti.

In Haiti, we also have a clear example of the inextricable linkage between development and security. There, threats and challenges to peace and security necessitate an integrated approach. My country hopes that the Secretary-General’s High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change will embrace that approach in its findings and recommendations.

While we condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and have joined international efforts in the fight against terrorism, we are mindful that our actions for the preservation of peace and security must be consistent with international law and must be respectful of the human rights and freedoms of all peoples without discrimination, foremost among which must be the right to self-determination.

For that reason, we shall remain strong proponents of the right of the Palestinian people to a secure and viable State. It is also for the same reason that we support the Taiwanese people’s right for representation before the United Nations.

But what United Nations? Last year our Minister of Foreign Affairs confined his remarks to an urgent call for the United Nations to recall and enforce the principles on which it was founded, basic among which is the principle of multilateralism — the most fundamental conviction that led to its creation: that States, on the basis of sovereign equality, conjointly take decisions that secure a peaceful and prosperous world for all.

Tragically, events since then have only exacerbated the problem whereby powerful States take the law into their own hands and act in total disregard of the principles of the United Nations Charter and indeed of international law. If we do not act together to reverse that evil trend, we are walking — nay, running — on the road to perdition.

Yes, we support the call of India, Japan, Brazil and Germany for a permanent seat on the Security Council, if there must be permanent seats. And to this we would add the equally legitimate right of African and Arab nations to be so represented. But the reforms must go deeper. Why should any one country have a veto power? Why should millions of the wretched of the earth be left without an effective voice and be

powerless to change the world to a more just one? And why do we, who so effectively acted to end apartheid in South Africa, tolerate the equally opprobrious apartheid practised by the State of Israel against Palestinians in their own land, murdering and oppressing them without mercy and with impunity?

The year 2004 has been declared the International Year to Commemorate the Struggle against Slavery and its Abolition. Slavery was based on an exacerbated racism; so let us honour that struggle by implementing the Final Declaration of the World Conference against Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in South Africa in 2001.

Likewise we continue to support United Nations efforts to bring greater visibility to the problems of the world's indigenous people during the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People. As the International Decade draws to a close later this year we call for a second decade to continue the work achieved during the first decade and so to carry out and complete the work that has not yet been completed.

In our own community of small States, we face the most serious threat to our peoples' security, caused by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons that claim the lives of so many of our people. These arms come from countries that must be called upon to live up to their responsibility to cooperate with us to stem the flow of these lethal weapons and to enter into legally binding agreements for the effective registration and monitoring of transfers of these weapons of widespread destruction. An international convention to achieve this must be put on our agenda urgently.

Another major issue for our region is the continued attempt to isolate the sister Caribbean Republic of Cuba and to strengthen an economic embargo that has been condemned repeatedly by the overwhelming majority of this Assembly. The entire Caribbean Community is at one in its resolve to engage Cuba in a constructive and mutually beneficial partnership that brings concrete benefits to all our peoples. The Cuban Government has, by its actions, manifested its determination to fight against terrorism in all its forms and from every quarter. For us in the Caribbean, any call for "regime change" imposed from outside violates every principle upon which the United Nations Organization stands.

Belize has its own cause to promote. The United Nations is well aware of the age-old and unfounded territorial claim of Guatemala, and it has clearly and unanimously called for respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Belize. We have endeavoured to negotiate a just solution to this claim for decades, and in the last four years we have been engaged in a process under the auspices of the Organization of American States (OAS), aimed at bringing this anachronistic claim to an end. Agreements have been made and broken, in the context of a Guatemala that has proclaimed its desire to find a peaceful solution to the dispute. Still no solution is in sight. The worst scenario is for the claim to linger unresolved, thus affecting the security and development of our people.

We welcome the remarks of President Berger of Guatemala before this Assembly on 22 September, when he advocated a final settlement of the dispute, along with cooperation between our two countries to improve the socio-economic conditions of both our peoples. We certainly support this approach and will do our part, as we have always done, to achieve those noble goals. But cooperation does not substitute for resolution of this age-old threat to the security and prosperity of our people. We will, therefore, continue to work within the OAS to develop an agreed process that will bring finality to this matter, which will undoubtedly redound to the benefit of the peoples of both Belize and Guatemala and contribute to the peace and security of the region. In the search for bringing this longstanding dispute to an end, we place high hopes on the role of the Group of Friends that has been agreed by both parties to reach this objective, and we look forward to its greater input and support to the process.

The challenges we face in the world today are not all unique to our generation. Some are the result of our refusal to learn from the mistakes of the past; others are entirely of our making. Yet, if we are to look at those values that unite us and we are determined in our desire for good, we will find that working together brings us ever closer to amore just and peaceful world.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. John Dauth, chairman of the delegation of Australia.

Mr. Dauth (Australia): Sir, let me begin by congratulating you on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, and let me

say how honoured I am to be one of your Vice-Presidents.

I want to say also how delighted Australia is to welcome Iraq back to the General Assembly.

We, the nations of the world, gathered here at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, face challenges to international security and prosperity that are very different from those which existed at the birth of the United Nations. However, the aims of the United Nations as set out in the Preamble to the Charter remain as relevant and vital today as they did then:

“to save successive generations from the scourge of war ... to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights ... to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained ... and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom”.

Today, the menace of terrorism and the dangers of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) cast their shadow across the globe, threatening not only our security, but also the development gains and future prosperity of all nations.

It is this new international environment, this new reality, to which we must all adjust. The United Nations is no exception. The United Nations is a vital institution that does great humanitarian work, but it must strengthen its capacity to deal effectively with the problems we now face or risk sliding into irrelevance.

The Secretary-General himself recognized this last year when he said that we have come to a fork in the road, a moment no less decisive than in 1945 when the United Nations was founded. And, again this year, he stated that if the leaders of the world could not agree on the way forward, history would take the decisions. The issue he raises for us all is whether we, the United Nations membership, can rise to the challenge and take the steps necessary for the Organization to fulfil its aims in today's world.

Australia strongly supported last year the establishment by the Secretary-General of a High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, and we stand ready to contribute to ambitious outcomes. I want to return to the work of the Panel later in this address.

There would be few nations in the room untouched by terrorism. As the cowardly attacks in Beslan and at the Australian Embassy in Jakarta illustrate, terrorism will not simply fade away. In response, we, the international community, cannot allow security threats to fester. What is required is new thinking, practical action, and cooperation between Governments. Obviously, the United Nations has a primary role to play. But Governments and regional organizations must also ensure that their resources and infrastructure can respond to the current environment.

This is a responsibility Australia has taken very seriously. On terrorism, we have fully supported the work of the United Nations, ensuring Jema'ah Islamiyah was listed as a terrorist organization under the Security Council resolution 1267 (1999) sanctions regime and promoting compliance with the United Nations terrorist asset freezing regime.

We have committed energy and resources to building counter-terrorism cooperation in our own region, both bilaterally and through organizations such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation and the Regional Forum of the Association of South-East Asian Nations. We are also committed to building understanding as part of a comprehensive approach. This is evident in the messages we convey to our regional partners and to Australians — namely, that our efforts to stop a minority of extremist Muslim terrorists is not a war on Islam; that Muslims are as much the victims of terrorist attacks and must defend themselves; and that we must all work to defeat terrorism together.

Our cooperation with regional partners has delivered results, but as the recent bombing in Jakarta illustrates, terrorism in our own region is not yet defeated. While Australia's embassy in Jakarta may have been the target of the latest attack, it was as much an assault on Indonesia as on Australia, and we are particularly saddened by the loss of innocent Indonesian lives. Indonesia and Australia are determined to catch the perpetrators and see justice done, for the bonds between us cannot be split by terrorists, but only strengthened.

Australia's commitment to a stable and secure region is particularly reflected in our efforts in the Pacific. Since 11 September 2001, we have come to appreciate more acutely the dangers weak and failing States can pose to security. Of course, not all such

States are home to terrorists, but where instability and vulnerabilities exist, so, too, do opportunities for crime and the potential for human suffering.

When our Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, addressed this forum last year, he noted Australia was developing regional approaches to confront the dangers of State failure and that with our Pacific Islands Forum partners we were restoring hope to the people of Solomon Islands. In just one year, the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands has made excellent progress in restoring stability and law and consolidating Government finances, and is now moving into long-term governance reform.

Australia is also working with other States in our region, notably Papua New Guinea and Nauru, to address economic management and governance issues. Regional cooperation is being strengthened through the Pacific Plan, an initiative of the recent Pacific Islands Forum meeting in Apia, which seeks to enhance collaboration in areas of governance. I am delighted to see among us today the Secretary-General of the Pacific Islands Forum and welcome him to this Hall.

We would encourage the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change to outline ambitious proposals for effective collective action to address failed and failing States, including more explicit provision for action by regional and other plurilateral arrangements, as set out in Chapter VIII of the Charter.

Iraq is at a critical moment in its political evolution. A small minority is bent on destruction and murder and wants to deny the Iraqi people their opportunity to express their political will through elections. This minority also attacks those who are working to rebuild Iraq's economy and improve Iraqi lives. Increasingly, Iraqis themselves will be responsible for doing that work, but success will depend on the resolute support of the international community.

We cannot allow terrorists to disrupt the democratic process in Iraq. Prime Minister Alawi has emphasized his Government's determination to hold elections in January 2005 and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Iraq has told the Security Council that maintaining the election schedule is his greatest priority. While the difficult security conditions in Iraq cannot be denied, it is imperative that the United Nations fulfil its role under Security Council resolution 1546 (2004) and work with

Iraqis to complete arrangements for the elections on time.

The size of the United Nations presence in Iraq must be commensurate with the importance and urgency of its task. For its part, Australia remains committed to assisting Iraq transform itself. To this end, we have committed more than \$125 million, much of it directed through United Nations agencies.

The situation in Darfur is a humanitarian disaster. Australia is committed to supporting urgent international efforts to end this horrific crisis. We have already committed \$20 million in emergency assistance for the people of Darfur. We welcome the adoption of Security Council resolution 1564 (2004) and applaud the African Union for agreeing to lead a mission to Darfur. Let me make this very clear: we stand ready to offer assistance to this mission. The situation in Darfur highlights the need for the international community to develop a better framework for responding to humanitarian crises, and we hope the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change will come up with clear and workable recommendations on humanitarian intervention.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) is another urgent concern. Unless we act firmly and with unity, terrorist groups could one day acquire WMDs with disastrous consequences. As a threat to international security, the issue of WMD proliferation falls squarely within the Security Council's mandate. We welcome the adoption of resolution 1540 (2004) as a demonstration of the Council's willingness to tackle WMD proliferation, including the risk of WMD terrorism. We hope that with the adoption of this resolution, the Council will take a firmer and more active stance on WMD issues.

As part of our commitment to combating the risk of nuclear terrorism, Australia will host an Asia-Pacific ministerial conference in November on nuclear safeguards and security. In addition, in the First Committee this year, we, along with Turkey and Argentina, will introduce a draft resolution on the prevention of the illicit transfer and unauthorized access to, and use of, man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS). We hope for a consensus adoption of this draft resolution, which encourages States to take concrete steps to prevent MANPADS from falling into the hands of non-State end-users.

Allow me to return to the subject of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. During this address, I have referred several times to it. Australia welcomes the direction of panel discussions — as far as we understand them — with respect to both doctrinal and institutional reform. We have contributed actively to the Panel's work and we encourage the Panel, in its remaining deliberations, to work towards ambitious recommendations on its entire programme of work, including Security Council reform, addressing threats from WMDs and terrorism, humanitarian intervention and effective collective action.

On the issue of structural reform, we note here that Australia has advocated expanding the permanent membership of the Security Council to make it more compatible with geographical realities, through the addition of Japan, India, Brazil, an African country and Indonesia. Whatever the final shape of the Panel's report, one thing is clear: high-level political commitment will be crucial to bringing bold reform recommendations to fruition. We would encourage all Member States to give the Secretary-General their full support in considering the Panel's recommendations.

One opportunity to do this will be the 2005 United Nations summit of heads of State or Government. The summit provides an excellent forum, not only to review implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, but also to endorse a reformed United Nations that is better equipped to deal with the challenges it faces.

Australia has long advocated the need for United Nations reform. Back in 2000 in this forum, the Prime Minister warned that,

“In the absence of change and adaptation, the Organization will wither as the nations of the world bypass it in favour of ... mechanisms that are more relevant to their needs” (A/55/PV.20, p. 25).

Of course, this warning was before 11 September 2001, before coalition action in Afghanistan and Iraq and before the terrorist bombings in Bali, Jakarta, Madrid, Istanbul and many other locations. If the need for reform was pressing then, it is critical now. The High-level Panel provides the best prospect for repositioning the United Nations system to meet contemporary challenges. This is an opportunity we cannot waste if the United Nations — our Organization — is to retain a

substantial role in maintaining international peace and security in the twenty-first century.

The President (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker in the general debate of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

Over the past two weeks, the leaders of our respective nations have expressed their views on the major issues of concern to our world. As I now draw our preliminary conclusions, many of these speakers have already gone home to their countries. However, their statements and their policies still continue to resonate here. I was particularly struck by the forcefulness of the ideas expressed, and have no doubt that they will continue to inspire and guide our deliberations. I appreciated in particular the show of solidarity for collectively tackling the threats and challenges facing mankind.

I had an opportunity, on the sidelines of our debate, to speak with a large number of high-level representatives and leaders of Member States. Those talks reaffirmed the will of our leaders to strengthen the role and authority of the General Assembly and their dedication to multilateralism, which forms the basis for the goals and objectives pursued by the United Nations.

It is clear that we will need to do even more to root our action in the spirit of the Charter to provide it with strength and legitimacy. Here, the Secretary-General's call to advance the rule of law and strengthen the role of the United Nations — which, in the words of the Millennium Declaration, remains “the indispensable common house of the entire human family” (A/59/PV.3, p. 2) — should be a further source of inspiration throughout the present session.

Of the 191 States Member of the United Nations, 190 of them, plus two observers, took the floor during the general debate. Among the Member States, 81 were represented by their respective heads of State or Government.

Of the 190 statements made by Member States, 121 took up the question of the reform of the United Nations, emphasizing both the progress made and the road that lies ahead. A considerable number of those statements in fact contained specific proposals urging us to continue improving the functioning and the effectiveness of our Organization.

A great majority of the world's leaders specifically underscored reform of the United Nations system, particularly reform of the Security Council, revitalization of the General Assembly and progress towards the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. Our leaders all indicated their interest in the report we are awaiting from the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, appointed by the Secretary-General to consider threats to international peace and security and collective measures that can contribute to overcoming them.

Of all these issues, reform of the Security Council prompted the greatest number of comments and statements. Indeed, 140 Member States spoke of that issue. A majority indicated a preference for enlargement of both categories of members — permanent and non-permanent. Others wished to see solely an enlargement of the non-permanent membership. Still others would be prepared to accept a reform of the Security Council whatever option was decided on. Because of the importance that our leaders attach to Security Council reform, I shall devote particular attention to the efforts we still need to make to achieve consensus on that issue.

The revitalization of the work of the General Assembly was also a subject of great concern for most Member States, which welcomed the progress achieved during the fifty-eighth session. They emphasized the need, however, to implement the recommendations already adopted and to pursue the process. In that context, I shall be working in close cooperation with the other members of the Bureau.

I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to announce that this very afternoon, the Presidents of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council and I will be meeting to strengthen cooperation, coordination and the complementarity of the programmes of work of those three principal organs, in accordance with the responsibilities allocated them by the Charter and under our previous resolutions on the revitalization of our work. In the same spirit, it is my intention to hold similar meetings during the next few months, and I am counting on the cooperation and the continued readiness of my counterparts from the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

Concerning the Goals defined in the Millennium Declaration, Member States deplored the slow progress

in implementing the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 and evinced considerable interest in the 2005 summit. I call for cooperation from the Assembly to ensure proper preparation for that summit. Allow me to take this opportunity once again to urgently appeal to all Member States, individually and collectively, to redouble our efforts in order to fill the gaps in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. The worst mistake would be a failure to act.

So too, the debate revealed the need to deal with the situation of the least developed countries, of landlocked countries and of small island developing States, regarding their economic, social and climatic vulnerability. Many representatives advocated the formulation of more equitable policies to promote the economic growth of the developing countries and to better integrate them into the global economy. Particular stress was placed on the situation of Africa and on the need to support the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

Concerned by the deterioration of the environment, the Assembly drew attention to the need to take appropriate corrective measures and underscored the importance of ratifying the Kyoto Protocol.

Our leaders also stressed the need to strengthen international peace and security, in particular by fighting the phenomenon of terrorism, strengthening means for preventing and combating the resurgence of crises and armed conflicts, and controlling the spread of weapons of mass destruction and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Virtually all speakers expressed their concern about the situation in Iraq and asked the United Nations to assist, to the best of its ability, the people of Iraq in rebuilding their country.

Member States continue to believe that the road map sets out the only route to follow to stabilize the situation in the Middle East. The meeting of the Quartet held on 22 September alongside the general debate will, I hope, provide new impetus to the peace process.

The situation in Africa, particularly the conflicts in Darfur and in the Great Lakes region, was of particular concern.

The guidelines that have been laid down by our leaders sketch out the framework in which the work of

the present session will be taking place. As I have already indicated, the present session will be key in that it will have the great responsibility of preparing for the major events that will mark the sixtieth anniversary of the Organization next year. I know that I can count on the cooperation and support of members so that together we will be able to conclude the work of the present session successfully.

Two representatives have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. I remind representatives that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Awad Mohamed Hassan (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to respond to the inappropriate and negative accusations directed against the Sudan by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Eritrea in his statement to the Assembly (see A/59/PV.16).

I regret to say that the authoritarian, rogue Eritrean regime has practised the most brutal forms of dictatorship against its people, in violation of their most fundamental rights. We have no wish to respond to the allegations made against Sudan by the Eritrean delegation, but we would like to ask whether Eritrea is qualified to speak about the political status and stability of other countries. Eritrea is a State that lacks good governance and even the most rudimentary institutional and governmental elements. It is a State administered by one authoritarian and psychotic absolute dictator, who has wrested the most basic human rights from his people and has jailed all his former comrades-in-arms, who brought him to power in an independent Eritrea. He has continued to carry out a policy of assassinations and physical liquidation.

We would like to ask the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Eritrea: where are his comrades-in-arms and former Ministers for Foreign Affairs? They are in prison, suffering under very difficult health conditions. He himself does not know where they are imprisoned. Where are his former comrades-in-arms and former Ministers of Defence? Some are in jail, and others have chosen to take refuge outside the country, fearing the brutality of their authoritarian dictator. Where are Eritrea's ambassadors abroad, including the most recent ambassador to the United Nations, a man known

to everybody? He has taken political asylum — as have other ambassadors, in Sweden, in Britain and in other countries.

The authoritarian Eritrean regime has the worst human rights record of all, as reflected in a recent Amnesty International report, which bears witness to the situation in Eritrea over the past 10 years. The Eritrean dictatorship has continued to practice all forms of animosity and hostility against its neighbours. Its attack on islands belonging to Yemen, its unjustified war against Ethiopia and its repeated attacks on the eastern borders of the Sudan are good examples of that hostility.

That internationally isolated regime continues to violate international covenants and international law. It maintains camps for training and arming members of groups that oppose my country. It continues to conspire to destroy, demolish and destabilize the region. The open presence of members of the Sudanese opposition in Eritrea is the best example of that fact.

The rogue Eritrean regime should be the last to speak of stability in the Sudan and in the region. It is the one that is fuelling all the strife, conflict and violence in my country and in other countries in the region.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call on the representatives of Eritrea.

Mr. Tekle (Eritrea): The Eritrean delegation is taking the floor in exercise of its right of reply against the slanderous statement made by the delegation of the Sudan in exercise of the right of reply to the statement made yesterday by the Eritrean Foreign Minister.

The history of the Sudan is a history of conflict that started almost at its independence nearly five decades ago, so much earlier than Eritrea's independence in 1991. Therefore, the Sudan cannot blame a new nation for its multiple — and multiplying — problems. In truth, the Sudan has nine neighbours and, during the past half century, has had 10 enemies, including itself: the Sudan is its own worst enemy.

The genocide in Darfur may be attracting more international attention now, but the fact is that the Sudan has been ravaged by civil strife throughout its independent existence and that it has antagonized its immediate neighbours and countries beyond. It has been a primary exporter of terrorism, particularly during the past decade and a half. Who can forget that

it hosted and gave safe haven to both Carlos the Jackal and Osama bin Laden? Who can forget the assassination attempts against President Mubarak of Egypt in Addis Ababa, where he had gone to attend a meeting of the Organization for African Unity? Who can forget the attempt to assassinate my own President by a Sudanese security officer in the same year? And what about the terrorist group organized by Hassan al-Turabi and Osama bin Laden against our new country only two years after our independence in 1993, and against several of its neighbours? Can anyone forget the Belgian tourists whose throats were cut by terrorist groups financed and trained by the Sudan, or the British mining officer who a year and a half ago was savagely mutilated only a day after he had e-mailed his wife about the good time he was having in Eritrea?

The latest terrorist attacks against Eritrea occurred on 23 May, during Independence Day

celebrations in the towns of Barentu and Tesseney. We lost about a dozen people, while almost a score were wounded. Among them were women, children and elderly people.

The Sudanese delegation speaks about members of the Sudanese opposition in Eritrea. The National Democratic Alliance has an office in Asmara, as it has in other African countries and in Europe. It is not a clandestine movement unknown to the Sudan and the world. Indeed, members of the Sudanese Government, including the President of the Sudan himself, officially visited Asmara on several occasions to hold peace negotiations with the leadership of the National Democratic Alliance. Eritrea is proud to have made the arrangements for those meetings and to have acted as facilitator. Needless to say, the Eritrean delegation rejects the silly accusations levelled by the Sudanese delegation. They are intended to distract attention from Darfur and the Sudan's other problems.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.