



General Assembly

Sixty-second session

5th plenary meeting

Tuesday, 25 September 2007, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Kerim (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Address by Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rajapaksa (*spoke in Sinhala; English text provided by the delegation*) I am pleased to be able to address the global community on the first day of the current session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Please accept my congratulations, Sir, on your assumption of the high office of the President of the sixty-second session. To Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, I wish to convey Sri Lanka's gratitude for her astute leadership of the sixty-first session.

Sri Lanka can boast of a very old and advanced civilization, similar to Greek, Roman and Nile Valley civilizations. One of the important characteristics of our civilization is the use of living languages such as Sinhala and Tamil, two languages used by many even

today. I therefore consider it my obligation to use Sinhala, a living language, to address the General Assembly.

Let me begin by quoting the immortal words of Sir Isaac Newton: "We build too many walls and not enough bridges". We all became Members of an Organization that was created to let all our voices be heard and to avoid an approach aimed at resolving problems through violence, revenge and blame. Yet we see a trend to find fault, to place countries in the dock and penalize those who do not fall into line. Instead of seeking solutions through cooperation, we have often created suspicion and built walls between ourselves through double standards.

I am proud to inform the Assembly that, despite the significant challenge posed by the ongoing conflict with a ruthless terrorist group in the north of our country, we have freed the Eastern Province from terrorism and restored law and order there. My Government has already launched a massive programme of rehabilitation and reconstruction in the east. We propose to make the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka a model for development and rehabilitation, essentially through our own effort but also with the assistance of all donors. We are taking steps to return the usurped rights of the people by conducting provincial and local Government elections in the east early next year. There is a clear opportunity for the international community to play a vital role in breaking the cycle of conflict by focusing on development.

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We launched military operations only to exert pressure on terrorists in order to convince them that it would not be possible for them to obtain a military victory. Our goal remains a negotiated and honourable end to this unfortunate conflict. I must say that the All Party Representative Committee is working successfully towards it.

Sri Lanka was one of the first developing countries to promote universal health and education, gender equality and social mobilization. We have been able to achieve exceptional socio-economic indicators — way ahead of those normally expected of a country in the lower-middle income range — and are on the way to achieving or surpassing many of the Millennium Development Goals. It is a beautiful sight on our rural roads to see thousands of children in clean white uniforms heading for school. It is a fine example of our success in achieving education for all.

Despite 25 years of brutal terrorism, we have been able to continue with this social development. My Government maintains a policy of openness and cooperation with all international human rights mechanisms, and a number of high-level officials have visited Sri Lanka recently. Sri Lanka's ancient civilization was rooted in the Buddhist principles of metta and ahimsa — metta being loving kindness to all living beings and ahimsa being a deep respect for life. Human rights have been an essential part of our great cultural tradition for millennia. It is therefore nothing new for us to protect human rights. Women in pre-colonial Sri Lanka enjoyed rights that are prescribed under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women — including rights of property ownership and inheritance rights. It was certainly no accident that Sri Lanka produced the first democratically elected woman Prime Minister in the world in 1960.

Guided by the principles of Buddhism, we have long respected the rights of our fellow human beings. It has therefore not been necessary for us to experience global wars or the deaths of millions to learn to recognize their value. My country has no record of inflicting misery on fellow human beings for the purpose of empire-building, for commercial advantage or for religious righteousness. Sri Lanka, as one of the founding members of the Human Rights Council, believes that human rights are too important to be used as a tool to victimize States for political advantage. It is essential that international action to facilitate

compliance with human rights standards be fair and even-handed. Human rights have to be protected and advanced for their own sake, not for political gain.

Even as we are gathered here, State sovereignty, civil society and the rule of law are increasingly being threatened by terrorism and other illegal and illicit activities in many countries. We need to be vigilant about these activities. Although the United Nations system has set up mechanisms to deal with many of these problems, the capacity of the United Nations to address these challenges effectively has been brought into question. There are many Member States represented in the Assembly today that have first-hand experience of the havoc caused by brutish terrorism, which has stretched out its claws to many corners of the world to mar innocent lives. All terrorist attacks — whether in New York, Mumbai, Cairo, London or Colombo — are acts that threaten the democratic way of life, and must be condemned unreservedly.

Terrorism anywhere is terrorism. There is nothing good in terrorism. Sri Lanka has taken an up-front position in the global community's efforts to deal with terrorism. We have become party to 11 of the 13 United Nations conventions for the suppression of various acts of terrorism. We think that the comprehensive convention on international terrorism — which, in our view, remains a priority — is a hostage to endless discussion. I emphasize that we must conclude those negotiations soon.

In whatever continent there are conflicts, those will affect the world economy. Peace in the Middle East would have a great impact on our economy. Solutions sought for conflicts in various countries must be indigenous. Otherwise, even if the international community is appeased, people in the countries saddled with conflicts will not be satisfied. That would be a blow to democracy. At this point, we must focus our attention on the Palestinians who are striving for an independent State. The world community must help them to manage their country without any undue influence.

We strongly support the strengthening of United Nations mechanisms for countering fund-raising for illegal and illicit activities. We encourage the Secretary-General to allocate more resources to this area, especially to enhance technical skills in countries that do not have such skills. Many developing countries would benefit from such assistance. We need

to have a better mechanism to provide solutions to the problems confronting us. Support from all Member States should be obtained for this purpose.

The United Nations has a mixed record of achievements. As resources received by the United Nations are limited, it has been only possible to deliver limited results. We need to focus on these as they often have been characterized by countless, poorly coordinated, ineffectively designed, ineptly staffed and overlapping programmes, with unnecessary inter-agency competition. The United Nations must always remember that its primary function is to render assistance for the well-being of its Member States.

We have rounded the Development Decade declared by the General Assembly. My country has declared the “Mahinda Chintana” 10-year vision to usher in a new Sri Lanka in line with those goals. Through that we are committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. We have accorded priority to the areas liberated from terrorism, those that have been devastated by natural disasters and rural areas lagging behind in development. However, it is a huge challenge for us to fill the gap created by the loss of human lives arising out of disasters.

We are implementing a rural development initiative based on “Maga Neguma”, the road development programme, and “Gama Neguma”, the rural reawakening programme and a national infrastructure development initiative. The “Mahinda Chintana” 10-year development vision includes continuous qualitative upgrading of education and health programmes in all areas, livelihood initiatives for low-income groups, and broad social welfare programmes covering poor and disadvantaged members of society, aimed specially at children and women. We also implement programmes to protect our people from narcotic drugs and diseases transmitted through social contact.

The working population, as well as low-income and poor groups in developing countries such as ours, face tough challenges due to escalating world oil prices and increases in the prices of essential food items. Similarly, we are severely affected by natural disasters and uncertainties in the world financial markets. For those reasons, it has become a challenge to achieve the Millennium Development Goals declared by the Assembly.

The World Bank, established for economic development, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which was set up for financial stability, and other regional banks established at the same time as this world organization, all need to implement new programmes to assist the countries affected by these challenges. Priority must be given to providing resources for this purpose.

I believe that our obligation as global leaders at these sessions of the General Assembly, is to commit ourselves to programmes that will eradicate terrorism, establish human-welfare-oriented development, establish democracy and ensure there is hope for low-income groups for economic development. Accordingly, I appeal to the global community to make the sixty-second session the beginning of a new chapter, rather than just another session.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Duarte Frutos, President of the Republic of Paraguay

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

Mr. Duarte Frutos, President of the Republic of Paraguay, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Nicanor Duarte Frutos, President of the Republic of Paraguay, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Duarte Frutos (spoke in Spanish): The Government of Paraguay comes to the Assembly to reaffirm its importance in examining the world situation. We have also come in order to further strengthen the United Nations as a body fit to represent the interests of all countries and ensure the effectiveness of international law.

For that reason, Sir, I express my support for your successful presidency of the General Assembly at its

sixty-second session. It is urgent for us to contribute not only to meeting the objectives of the United Nations, but also to ensuring that the principles governing its functioning truly find expression. The world needs a better, more just and brotherly world order now.

From this lofty universal rostrum, we customarily speak with eloquent urgency, but the practice of States, in particular of the most powerful, has not always been one of cooperating in order to overcome the uncertainties that overshadow our future.

In recent sessions of the Assembly, we have focused on the challenges of the new millennium, but while we have been looking far ahead, in the first decade of this new century alone, relations among civilizations have clearly been marred by an absence of peace and harmony.

It has not mattered that more than half of the world's population continues to live in poverty. Of greater importance has been the senseless squandering of money on weapons and the terrible effect this has had on the world economy. Note how the price of oil has rapidly increased and how countries, such as ours, which do not produce oil, have had to make great sacrifices. How much money could have been used to alleviate poverty! As long as capital is concentrated in one area and poverty continues to rise, world peace will be precarious.

In Paraguay, in South America, we are calling for the globalization of democracy combined with social development. We are calling for the universalization of security based on respect for human rights and on the dignity of human life.

In this way we hope to build a regional community and a global union, which will work together to eradicate hunger and extreme poverty, and which will effectively cooperate to promote the participation of all in prosperity by providing quality education and a system of social protection without exclusion.

In Paraguay, we are struggling for economic stability, for political stability and for social peace. With these ideals, I have been working very hard at the head of the Government to make significant changes and score important advances. We have sought radical change beyond what is needed by the Paraguayan society. The achievements we have attained require

that we continue the progressive policy to which we committed ourselves when we assumed office.

Since we took office in 2003, following a turbulent transition that was constantly undermined by violence and conspiracy, Paraguay has institutionalized political stability — not an easy task in an environment of political division and with a parliament that did not always meet its responsibilities in governing jointly. Nevertheless, political stability has been, and continues to be, one of the defining characteristics of our Government. Through great perseverance, we have succeeded in permanently institutionalizing political stability. We did so because I understood that stability had to be the framework for achieving economic development, which is so crucial to achieving our plans for incremental growth. Having achieved economic stability, we began a process of growth of historic proportions. After 20 years, Paraguay was able to overcome stagnation. Despite the terrible drought in the country, which continues to this day, Paraguay experienced an average annual rate of economic growth of 4 per cent for the period 2003-2007.

Moreover, my country has also recorded a budgetary surplus. We have also markedly improved our tax receipts and are waging a difficult battle to control inflation. Through that policy, not only have we considerably increased our financial reserves, which have tripled, but for the first time in its history Paraguay is today able to pay its foreign debt in full and still continue to hold international reserves. Our exports are at a historical high, having doubled during my term of office. Another relevant factor has been the sustained growth in per capita production, which will rise from \$915 to \$1,800 by the end of my mandate, in 2008.

More generally, the Government has been pursuing plans aimed at strengthening various areas of the economy, including the industrial, commercial and service sectors. We have encouraged the transformation of the country's economy while coordinating and integrating the various sectors of production and facilitating the distribution, circulation and consumption of domestically produced goods. We have thereby been able to lower the rate of poverty we inherited from previous Governments — which is now approaching 38 per cent, down from the 46 per cent at which it stood in 2003.

However, the poverty and marginalization of millions of our fellow citizens continues to be the most obvious threat to democracy and political stability in Paraguay as well as the region. Our belief that we will continue to overcome poverty is due to the Government's significant investment in society. Never before have so many houses been built nor more resources devoted to the most vulnerable members of our society. Next year, we will earmark 50 per cent of the country's budget for the fight to reduce poverty.

As a multi-ethnic country, we have not ignored the education of our indigenous citizens. We have built schools and established special programmes. As a bilingual country, we have both ensured Guaraní-language education at all levels and worked towards having it recognized as a third official language of the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR). Prior to the establishment of present-day borders, Guaraní was also spoken in Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Bolivia.

The Government over which I preside has ensured unfettered political freedom, as well as freedom of the press, association and expression. Unfortunately, the media have not always taken advantage of the freedom of the press in order to become channels for truthful information, serious and responsible opinion and constructive and reasoned criticism — much less to overcome its vestigial Manichaeism and instead to become a source of culture and daily provider of knowledge and ethical values.

Political parties are independent and represented in the parliament. Those not in parliament exercise their rights freely as new political parties are formed.

There is in fact pluralism in Paraguay, although the absence of an adequate civic culture on the part of most political actors has kept it from genuinely contributing to the essential consensus needed to defend the country's overall interests and promoting equitable development within it. Unfortunately, remnants of fascism and conservatism continue to hamper coexistence in an environment of diversity and difference, while also conspiring against the country's progress.

Nevertheless, our struggle for a participatory and inclusive democracy that promotes social justice has transformed the governing party. Today's governing party is promoting an advanced philosophy of social change. It is also the political organization generating renewal and social mobilization to overcome the old

party-based oligarchy that was so damaging to Paraguay. The party has therefore assumed responsibility for transforming the system whereby the State and its policies were subjugated to individual interests. Through its political independence, the party is in a position to be able to eliminate illegitimate privileges and the illicit groups that control the economy, finances and large land holdings.

We are continuing to modernize Paraguay by linking the entire country with roads, exponentially expanding its economy and ensuring that all citizens become part of the nation's social capital and possess the qualities and competitiveness required by today's societies. Most of the people of Paraguay understand that the historic steps we have taken in that direction must continue and become irreversible. Today, anarchy, demagoguery and theological feudalism pose a regressive threat to peace, the secular State, the rule of law and the institutional order we are building.

Paraguay is the most open and dynamic country with regard to the regional integration agenda. Our support for MERCOSUR is a clear reflection of our national policy. We believe in MERCOSUR. We believe in regional integration. We believe in the possibility of Latin America having a louder voice in the world in order to manage and humanize the process of globalization.

My Government also endorses and supports the proposed union of South American nations, which will above all make us stronger in claiming and defending our rights in an environment of asymmetrical globalization and better able to contribute to world peace and more equitable distribution of international trade and financing for development.

The international mobilization of financial and technological resources is today threatening the stability and overall progress of countries. Speculative investments flow to countries and regions where the work force is subjected to exploitation. Then comes the invasion; and, through unfair competition, our industries are damaged and shut down. At the same time, our raw materials are undervalued. What capital should do is to promote industrialization, or at least ensure that the terms of trade become fairer instead of being imposed unilaterally.

Mr. Ehouzou (Benin), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We have to change this trend. The international economic order should promote a more equitable world economy. Through solidarity, cooperation and fair treatment, all countries of the world should be admitted into the club of development. In Latin America, and in Paraguay, we don't need charity; we need markets, transparency, technology, and the lifting of protective trade barriers.

The United Nations should reflect this philosophy. For this reason, its reform cannot be delayed any longer. Its priority concerns should not be war, armed conflict or even terrorism, whether real or strategic. On the contrary, its priorities should be programmes to end poverty, ignorance and unemployment. We must educate and distribute in order to build a culture of democratic participation in the wealth of humanity.

Paraguay, like the other 30 landlocked developing countries, continues to suffer marginalization and a lack of proper access to international markets. The absence of preferential treatment for us from the more developed economies has denied us a more competitive participation in trade, as well as, access to quotas and to higher tariffs.

Paraguay is not only aware of the serious consequences of climate change; it also suffers from them. Proof of this is the catastrophe our country is suffering through prolonged drought and the dreadful fires that have destroyed a major part of our territory. I take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude on behalf of my people and my Government to the countries that have come to our aid in this national emergency. In particular, I would like to thank, from this rostrum, my friend Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of Brazil, Nestor Kirchner, President of Argentina, my friend President Chavez of Venezuela, and the other heads of Government and multilateral organizations that have worked with us.

Paraguay recognizes the importance of including gender issues in the agenda of the United Nations and the need for effective coordination among all agencies and organs in the United Nations system in addressing the situation of women in the world, particularly in developing countries. Increasingly and emphatically, we reject existing inequalities between men and women whether they be political, economic, social or cultural. Irrespective of the domestic actions we take to combat discrimination, we believe that the United

Nations is the most appropriate forum for designing programmes in support of national policies to bring about true equality.

The Government of Paraguay would also like to take this opportunity to express once again for its support for the request for admission into the United Nations of the Republic of China, Taiwan, a nation that has continued to struggle for its freedom and wishes to be a member of the United Nations in accordance with Rules 59 and 60 of the Provisional Rules of the Security Council and Article 4 of the United Nations Charter.

In conclusion, inequalities among our peoples are not part of the human condition. On the contrary, they are the result of iniquitous relations that separate us and draw us apart. That being the case, we need only to show determination in building a universal community marked by greater equanimity and balance. This determination should be given expression by governments and citizens and should draw on the concerted efforts of States and civil society.

What we are seeing, however, is that the countries that have most want more. Their humanism is disguised in hand-outs and philanthropy when what the world needs is greater solidarity and justice. We need to share science and technology; we need to share markets. The pretence of cooperation to help countries achieve balanced development is not only denounced in fruitless rhetoric; it is also exposed in protectionism and in investment choices.

As long as this bipolar situation continues to prevail in the world, an organization such as the United Nations serves little purpose. Only when the powerful countries stop taking advantage of the less powerful countries will the United Nations be able to have a true impact on the lives of people.

This alternative is the process that we are involved in today. Many Governments representing countries in the Third World have begun to seek our own freedom. We are drawing a new map on the international scene.

I am compelled to mention this historic challenge in my final statement to the General Assembly of the United Nations because on 15 August 2008, I will hand over power to the new Government in my country. But I will continue to fight with greater fervour to help change the world. I am committed as ever to the

difficult struggle to build a new world order, to ensure equality, social justice and solidarity for all countries, for all women and for all men. I will fight for their emancipation and their progress.

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

Mr. Nicanor Duarte Frutos, President of the Republic of Paraguay, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal

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

Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

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

President Wade (*spoke in French*): Senegal welcomes Mr. Kerim's election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. We congratulate him and will support him as he carries out his important responsibilities. His predecessor, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain, a country which is a friend to Senegal, deserves our tribute and appreciation for her outstanding contribution, throughout her term of office, to the revitalization of the General Assembly.

I also would like to take a moment to acknowledge my brothers and sisters in the diaspora, who this year commemorated the 200th anniversary of the abolition of slavery. That shameful and repugnant trade constituted the worst of attacks on the dignity of the human person, as did its continuation, colonization. That is why I would now solemnly warn against horrendous revisionist arguments that attempt in vain to falsify history. Colonialism in its design and exclusive logic of domination, exploitation and enslavement cannot boast of any civilizing mission or any positive fallout, because by its very nature it is a negation of the human condition. We must remain

vigilant and mobilized. In Senegal we say yes, we will forgive, but we will not forget or agree to manipulation.

The high-level discussion we held on 24 September on the serious issue of climate change confirms once again the terrible threat that is hanging over our planet. I therefore welcome the initiative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, to put this crucial issue at the very heart of our agenda. We have all seen the damage done. Mankind has not been wise. We have, with greater or lesser awareness, destroyed this Earth which God has lent to us. We must beseech his forgiveness.

Combating climate change demands innovative solutions, which must take into account the special situation of countries that are not significant polluters but which nevertheless suffer from the serious consequences of this phenomenon of the modern age.

Senegal is aware of its responsibility to join the struggle against pollution. Therefore, in exploiting our mineral resources, we take particular care to restore the ecosystem and to use non-polluting practices and technologies. We have also prohibited the importation of used cars more than five years old and of household appliances that pollute. As we have already mentioned, we do not want Africa to be a dumping ground for outdated technology from Europe or elsewhere.

We are also gradually establishing a policy of combating coastal erosion. On the Atlantic coast, at the high-tide line, we are building a reinforced concrete wall on the granite or clayey base of the continental shelf, 2.5 to 3 metres deep by 40 centimetres thick, to slow the advance of the sea. Experts say that the wall will stop the sea's advance for 50 to 100 years. We have done this on an experimental basis, since it is very expensive. The wall costs \$2,000 per metre. We have constructed 2 kilometres as an example, to show that it is possible, because we consider it the ultimate weapon.

We are also launching a project for ports leading into free zones, alternating with tourist complexes, along the Atlantic coast; that is also a way of stopping the advance of the sea. Coastal erosion, from Morocco to Mauritania to Senegal, is a threat which the international community must take very seriously.

In the Sahel region, we Africans are also planting what we call the great green wall, 7,000 kilometres

long by 150 kilometres wide from Dakar to Djibouti. We have not waited; each of us in our own country has begun to create the “wall”. The European Union and France, as Mr. Sarkozy has said, are ready to provide us with loans to help with the wall in order to stop the encroaching Sahel and the process of desertification.

We have also tried to take advantage of the billions of tons of water that, each year during the rainy season, fall on the Sahel and are absorbed by the earth or flow into the sea. In Senegal we have therefore built holding basins in the most low-lying areas, where runoff water accumulates. We have built 250 of these basins; we are walking the walk. The African countries meeting in Bamako have decided to implement this programme, from Dakar to Djibouti, to create such a “wall” to stop the encroaching desert.

At Senegal’s initiative, non-oil-producing countries have now established an association that we call the Green OPEC, with the aim of protecting our interests. We call on the international community to take on the excess costs with which we have been burdened owing to increases in the price of oil. We also want to turn Africa towards producing biofuels. For this reason, I welcome the launch, here in New York on 2 March 2007, of the International Biofuels Forum. As President of the African Non-Petroleum Producers Association, I solemnly request that all of the Forum’s initiatives and participants pursue our common goal of promoting alternative energy sources.

As we pursue economic and social development in the South, African countries in particular continue to face insurmountable obstacles, such as agricultural subsidies in developed countries. We have already talked about that subject enough. Paradoxically, at the same time that our countries are being forced to open their markets in the name of free trade, developed countries are subsidizing their own products, so we are no longer able to export our products to the developed world.

As I said at the Group of Eight summit in Heiligendamm, Germany, Africa is not poor. It has been impoverished by unjust trade practices and by the exploitation of its resources, which are not bought at their true price. I wish to add that trade measures are not in themselves enough to wipe out the injustice that has been done. We also need genuine economic measures.

If we want to fend off the advance of poverty, we must be creative. But first, what is poverty? It is certainly not an income of less than a dollar a day, the definition advocated by the United Nations. Poverty, in my view, is a set of unmet needs. Poverty is a leaky roof, or not having a roof over one’s head at all. It is poor-quality food, no drinking water, no clothing, no health care, no education or training. Lastly, being poor is not having a clean environment. That is what I call the cluster of needs, which is an entire set of needs and, as we can see, not just a monetary assessment.

What are we in Senegal doing? We have launched a programme to build housing, called the Jaxxay plan, under the slogan of “one family, one roof”. We build nice, affordable homes. For less than \$70 a month, people can become homeowners in Senegal. The development in which we are building those houses provides health, education and other services. That is how we are trying to combat poverty.

Allow me to turn to the digital revolution. We believe that Africa has a great opportunity, because the digital revolution is happening now. The Internet contains all the knowledge in the world. Africans must therefore have access to the Internet for their training, information and educational needs and in their universities and schools. For that reason, as Africa’s representative to the World Summit on the Information Society, organized by the International Telecommunication Union in Geneva in 2003, I proposed a Global Digital Solidarity Fund to bridge the digital gap that separates us from the developed world. After many ups and downs, the Fund is now supported by all of the Members of the United Nations. Unfortunately, the majority have not yet formalized their acceptance of this Fund or have begun paying into it. However, all countries in principle are members of this Fund, which seeks to provide computers to Africa and to be involved in various programmes, like healthcare telematics.

In Geneva we launched what is called the Geneva Principle, which asks countries and producers of information and communication technology to voluntarily donate one per cent of the amount of each transaction to the Digital Solidarity Fund.

Let us now discuss the Security Council and the need for Africa to have a seat therein, irrespective of any question of reform. It is the only continent which is not represented in the Security Council, even though

it has been said that 70 per cent of the Council's business involves Africa.

Today, Senegal is at peace — I shall not dwell on this — and we are trying to provide the materials and the personnel needed for Darfur. Senegal is increasing its contingent from 150 to 1,600 and is also providing all the police for the operation conducted by the African Union and the United Nations.

The Middle East situation still gives serious concern and I wish to reconfirm Senegal's unwavering support for the just cause of the Palestinian people in their legitimate quest for a viable State. We support all efforts to that end.

Remembering the last two wars, we must really try to achieve peace. Peace is not just the absence of war as somebody said this morning. We must combat war in the minds of men, particularly young people.

In March 2008, Senegal will have the honour of hosting the eleventh Islamic Summit Conference. It is, therefore, my deepest hope that we will make progress towards achieving peace in accordance with our religion and the Qur'an. I have already proposed an Islamic-Christian dialogue, which would be a first step towards dialogue among peoples. We believe that if the leaders of the world meet together and make a real appeal for tolerance as a legacy from this generation to future generations, then we will have taken a step forwards towards understanding among the various religions. This is absolutely essential to the establishment of peace.

We know that Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) oligopoly increases the price of oil as it wishes by manipulating supply — I know this because I am an economist. I realize that it is the law of the market, but the rest of us suffer from it. I propose that whenever OPEC increases the price of oil, it voluntarily add 2 per cent, but not as a tax: 1 per cent to combat poverty and 1 per cent to combat environmental degradation. Out of the \$200 million of profits from Africa, this would be at least \$40 million and you won't feel it more than you do just now, because a barrel which cost \$29 in December 2003 now costs over \$81.

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

Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa

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

Mr. Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mbeki: Let me begin by adding my voice to the many salutations directed to Mr. Ban Ki-moon on being elected as the Secretary-General of the United Nations. I wish him a fruitful tenure of office, trusting that through his work the poor of the world will have good reason to increase their confidence in this Organization of the nations of the world.

Again, I reiterate the many thanks to Her Excellency Ms. Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, for the good work she did as the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. Equally, my congratulations go to Mr. Srgjan Kerim on his election as the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session.

We meet here today, under the theme of responding to climate change, at this session, which marks the half-way point in the freely agreed period during which the nations of the world committed themselves to work, individually and collectively, to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Billions of the people of the world know as a matter of fact that the consequences of climate change — be it droughts, floods or unpredictable and extreme weather patterns — undermine our common efforts to achieve the MDGs. Today, we all understand that the costs of doing nothing about climate change far outweigh those of taking concrete measures to address this challenge. It is clear that delaying action on this matter of climate change will hit poor countries and communities hardest. Yet the pace of climate change

negotiations is out of step with the urgency indicated by science.

I would therefore urge that we collectively aim for a significant advance in the multilateral negotiations when our negotiators meet in Bali in December this year. Together, we must ensure that we build a fair, effective, flexible and inclusive climate regime under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol, and we must agree to this as a matter of urgency. Though we have different responsibilities, and developed countries clearly have an obligation to take the lead, we all have a common duty to do more and act within our respective capabilities and in accordance with our national circumstances.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development correctly reaffirmed sustainable development as a central element of the global action against poverty and the protection of the environment and identified important linkages between poverty, the environment and the use of natural resources. These linkages are real to billions of the poor; the combination of their empty stomachs, their degraded environment and their exploited natural resources, for which they benefit nothing, defines hopelessness and a heart-wrenching existence.

Many of these wretched of the Earth know from their bitter experience how their resource-rich areas were transformed into arid, uninhabitable and desolate areas forcing migration to better-endowed regions, thus exacerbating conflicts and the struggle for scarce resources.

Gathered here as representatives of the peoples of the world, we know very well that climate change, poverty and underdevelopment are not acts of God but human-made.

Clearly, the starting point for a future climate regime must be equity. A core balance between sustainable development and climate imperatives will have to be the basis of any agreement on a strengthened climate regime. Any deal on fair use of the ecological space will have to be balanced by a deal giving all countries a fair chance in the development space.

Under the aegis of the United Nations, but also within our regional bodies, we have adopted many programmes and declarations, with clear

implementation targets aimed at addressing the challenges of climate change, poverty and underdevelopment. As this conclave knows very well, the many lofty agreements include, among others, those adopted at the Rio Earth Summit, the Copenhagen Social Summit, the Millennium Summit, the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Monterrey International Conference on Financing for Development. At all these summits and others, we have adopted declarations using moving and solemn words that express our profound understanding of the gravity of the challenges facing the modern world and have unequivocally committed ourselves to defeating any and all of the miserable and dehumanizing conditions facing large parts of humanity.

Indeed, this collective asserted, in paragraph 11 of the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2):

“We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty. ... We are committed to making the right to development a reality for everyone and to freeing the entire human race from want.”

Yet the poor, whose hopes have been raised many times as we have made declaration after declaration against poverty and underdevelopment — and as we are doing now on climate change — can be forgiven for thinking that this important global leadership often sounds like an empty vessel.

That this collective is able to express, always eloquently, the dire circumstances characterizing poverty is without doubt. However, this Organization, which should pride itself on visible actions and results in the fight against climate change and poverty, finds it difficult to demonstrate decisive progress in that regard. The reasons for that are not hard to find. Although the concepts of freedom, justice and equality are universal and fully embraced by the United Nations, this global Organization has not itself transformed and designed necessary institutions of governance that are consistent with the noble ideals that drive modern democratic societies.

Because the nations of the world are defined by the dominant and the dominated, the dominant have always become the decision-makers in the important global forums, including at this seat of global governance. Accordingly, the skewed distribution of world power — political, economic, military,

technological and social — replicates itself in multilateral institutions, much to the disadvantage of the majority of the poor people of the world.

Indeed, even as we agree on the important programmes that should bring a better life to the billions of poor, the rich and the powerful have consistently sought to ensure that, whatever happens, the existing power relations are not altered and therefore that the status quo remains. The results of that situation are that the United Nations can and does correctly identify problems and appropriate solutions necessary for making the world a better place for all of humanity. Naturally, the dominant and the powerful very often respond positively to agreed programmes if these would advance their own narrow interests.

At the same time, the poor will continue to strive for improvement of their wretched conditions. They therefore see the United Nations as a natural instrument for helping to accelerate the process of change for the better. Hence, they correctly see implementation of all United Nations programmes as being central to the efforts relating to climate change and the struggle against poverty and underdevelopment.

Yet the cold reality is that it will be difficult for the United Nations, in its present form, to fully implement its own decisions and therefore to help the poor to swiftly achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Indeed, until the ideals of freedom, justice and equality characterize this premier world body itself, the dominant will forever dictate to the dominated, and the interests of the dominated — which are those of the majority of humanity — will be deferred in perpetuity. Thus, noble statements will continue to be uttered on all matters facing the majority of the people of the world, such as the need to successfully conclude the Doha Development Round, while little is done to implement the many critical agreements necessary to pull the poor out of the morass of poverty and underdevelopment.

We in my own country are of the firm belief that we will achieve the MDGs. Having emerged from more than three centuries of colonialism and apartheid, we inherited two interlinked economies, which we characterize as the first and second economies. The two economies — one developed and globally connected and the other localized and informal — display many features of a global system of apartheid.

As South Africans, we have sought to strengthen the first economy and to use it as a base for the transfer of resources to strengthen and modernize the second economy, and thus embark on the process of changing the lives of those who subsist in the second economy.

Indeed, without the requisite resource transfers, it will not be possible to achieve the MDGs, because our second economy cannot on its own generate the resources needed to bring a better life to millions of poor South Africans. I mention this because, as we all accept, central to the global attainment of the MDGs is the critical matter of resource transfers from the rich countries of the North to the poor countries of the South.

Many developing countries — especially those of my own continent, Africa — do not have the material base from which to address and attain the MDGs on their own. Accordingly, there is an urgent need for massive resource transfers through development assistance, investment, trade, technology transfers and human resource development to these poor countries if we are to achieve the MDGs and successfully adapt to the devastating impacts of climate change.

If we do not succeed in building a climate change regime that balances adaptation and mitigation, underpinned by the transfer of technology and financial resources, we will place an unmanageable burden on future generations. In that regard, given Africa's specific and dire challenges, we believe it is important to enter into a partnership with Africa using the African Union's programme the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which the Assembly has adopted, so that the measures that the continent has undertaken, with limited resources, for the regeneration of all the African countries can be strengthened by support from the international community, guided by the programmes of the United Nations.

As history teaches us, it was because of the massive resource transfers in the aftermath of the Second World War that Western Europe recovered and was set on its development path. A similar intervention helped to put a number of Asian countries on their own development trajectory. The question we should ask is, why is there an absence of the same resolve to assist poor nations today? The global village to which we constantly refer should encourage us to expand human solidarity. Thus, we would build a durable bridge over the river dividing our common global village and

regrettably ensuring that one human being lives a fulfilling life while another experiences a miserable existence.

Representing the citizens of the world, we have set for ourselves programmes requiring that all of us work together to create better living conditions for humanity and ensure that we achieve that which is necessary for our mutual prosperity.

Together, rich and poor, developed and developing, North and South, we can and must truly hold hands and address the challenges of climate change and sustainable development, work together to defeat poverty and underdevelopment and ensure that every human being is saved from the indecencies and humiliations that are inseparable from poverty. But to do that, we need first and foremost to implement the decisions that we have adopted freely in this eminent house of the representatives of the global community. And so, let our actions speak louder than our words.

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

Mr. Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Néstor Carlos Kirchner, President of the Argentine Republic

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

Mr. Néstor Carlos Kirchner, President of the Argentine Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

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

President Kirchner (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to express my sincerest congratulations to Mr. Srgjan Kerim on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. Argentina welcomes the new Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and expresses its

support for his efforts at the head of the United Nations.

As in previous years, we have come to the General Assembly with the aim of revitalizing this world body and with the firm belief that this will ensure the effectiveness of international law in settling disputes, thus successfully dealing with any threats to peace.

The world is facing problems. The only hope we have of resolving them lies in respect for multilateralism, support for local customs, observance of international norms and conventions by all countries, and, of course, the full realization of human rights.

For each individual country, and for the world as a whole, peace will be possible only if we promote equality and work to combat poverty and marginalization. The world cannot and must not be a place where violations of human rights are everywhere. Peaceful coexistence is strengthened and maintained through true solidarity between nations based upon a concept of humanity that goes beyond the purely military or the predominantly unilateral.

Our international policy is based on the values of representative democracy, sovereignty of the people, respect for fundamental human rights, and the active upholding of international peace and security. Those principles are shared by the vast majority of the Argentine people. They help to focus the Government's activities and are reflected in the decisions taken by the Argentine Republic at the international level.

We firmly support the construction of more just and equitable societies that distribute more equitably the benefits of economic growth. We know that each country must have the right to seek out its own development model, without external pressure.

The past few years have been very testing for us. Considerable efforts have been made to rescue a nation that barely five years ago was in the throes of an unprecedented social and economic crisis. At the time, many people thought that recovery might be impossible. But day by day, with a great deal of effort and humility, we revived production in a country burdened by a foreign debt that threatened our future with its conditions and constraints.

Argentina — a developing country which once demonstrated that it is truly possible to climb the social

ladder; a country of immigrants where workers once succeeded in sending their children to university; a country once without illiteracy and having almost banished child mortality — had been reduced to a country of workers demoralized by unemployment, children begging in the streets instead of going to school, and the elderly living off miniscule pensions and becoming dependent on their children and grandchildren.

Our country's coffers had been emptied owing to the rigid application of the rules of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). As a corollary, there was violence in the streets, and Argentina experienced an institutional crisis, with presidents lasting only days. For the first time, Argentina sent off its own children into an unprecedented economic exile.

Today the Argentine State has won its autonomy and itself administers the variables of its macroeconomy as best it can in the current international environment. It pursues a sound, disciplined and predictable economic policy within a stable and democratic framework.

Our capacity for revitalization has allowed us, even without receiving funding, to begin cancelling our net debt with international organizations. We have even paid off in advance all of our debt with the IMF — an IMF that supported and promoted Governments that were self-supporting, adjusting and patching up their budgets, but at the cost of increasing the poverty of their people, promoting deindustrialization and irresponsibly plunging the country into debt.

Faced with the incredulous criticism of the promoters of orthodox prescriptions, Argentina, thanks to cautious monetary policies, disciplined public expenditures and a healthy budget surplus that enabled it to face or mitigate potential foreign crises, has reduced the debt and registered an annual growth rate of 9 per cent during the past five years. This was the strongest uninterrupted economic expansion of any in the past 100 years.

Today we represent the empirical proof that there is life after the Fund and also the certitude that other paths can lead to development and integration. We serve as a reminder of the unreliability of models that claim to be universally valid and the revindication of the right of countries to choose their own path, benefiting from international experience while prioritizing their national interests and circumstances

above any other interest. Our case provides proof that the international economic architecture must be reformed, in particular that of IMF. The Fund is an exponent of an old world order that is no longer valid. Our case demonstrates the need for change in the multilateral financial institutions so that they can cooperate in the development of the less-well-endowed nations and help to fight poverty and generate true options for progress.

We are thinking, not of economic growth as defined by economic experts or historians, but of growth that has a strong social component and an emphasis on equity, where citizens are the focus of the results. Whereas one fourth of the labour force experienced the humiliation of being unemployed, unemployment has been reduced to 7.8 per cent since we have taken office. We are speaking, not about just any sort of work, but about appropriate and decent work of the kind we advocated at the most recent summit meeting of the Americas, which was held in our country.

Thanks to a productive policy that generates added value and, in addition, appeals to private enterprises to show social responsibility, we are reindustrializing Argentina. The economic indicators posted by our country today would have been impossible were it not for the complementarity of action between the State and the private sector.

Our sales to all destinations have doubled over the past four years, with a 16 per cent annual growth rate. Investments have improved substantially: gross domestic fixed investment has increased for the past 17 consecutive quarters; the ratio of investment to GDP is between 20 and 23 per cent — in stark contrast to the level of 2002 when it was hardly more than 11 per cent.

When faced with that crisis almost five years ago, we felt compelled to maintain essential assistance policies for the most vulnerable segments of our population. We do not regret those policies, and today we can state that the true solution to the serious social problems affecting our country, and many others around the world, lies in providing jobs, health care and education.

In the area of health, Argentina has launched a national policy that includes prescriptions for generic drugs and the provision of essential medications free of charge. It also strengthens maternity and child

programmes and everything that relates to primary health care, in line with the goals of equity and protection. This has enabled us to compensate in part for the disastrous state of the public health sector a short time ago.

Of course, education is an essential element for renewing the social and moral fabric of the nation, even though the time horizon for its effects to be felt is longer than those of other public policies. In order to remedy the tragic situation that signalled the breakdown of society and the failure on the part of the State to protect those who were most vulnerable, a new law on national education was passed. It will again focus on ensuring equality of opportunity through guaranteed access to a quality education throughout the territory that is linked to the labour market and includes excellent training for teachers. Under the new law, a deadline of 2010 has been set, by which time 6 per cent of the gross national product will be used to finance education.

In this context of steady recovery, Argentina's foreign policy is being strengthened and expanded, with a clear and decisive commitment to the national interest. Regional integration is a priority. Over the past two decades, through the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR), Argentina has strengthened its commercial ties with the countries of the region. But its trade relations go far beyond the region. In that sense, multilateral negotiations within the World Trade Organization are of particular importance because the liberalization of our agricultural sector — in which our country has clear competitive advantages — depends on them, as does the adequate flexibility we need to carry out our industrial policies.

More equitable and fairer rules in international trade are of great importance to Argentina. We therefore participate actively in multilateral economic negotiations with the firm goal of achieving equity in the norms that govern world trade and of reversing the discrimination erected against our main products through tariff barriers and other trade-distorting instruments imposed by the developed countries.

Argentina will be present in all multilateral forums, where we will participate to ensure more equitable and democratic rules. Multilateralism is the most effective instrument for winning the battle against hunger, poverty, exclusion and environmental degradation.

Everything I have said here is both cause and consequence of institutional stability and respect for the rule of law. The three pillars of the Argentine State are making decisions to combat impunity and preserve memory, truth, and justice. We have begun bringing to justice those guilty of serious human rights violators. Those who imagined themselves having escaped with impunity are fiercely resisting justice and, in an attempt to intimidate witnesses, have caused the disappearance of one witness, Julio Lopez. They have thereby sent a dark message to a society that is seeking the truth about the crimes against humanity which they committed, and that condemns such acts.

Unconditional respect for human rights is our new national paradigm. In the past, we were known throughout the world for violations of those rights; today, as we strive to find the truth and to punish the guilty, we also seek to defend those rights worldwide.

Argentina, the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo in the monumental dignity of their struggle, and the Argentine people have personally suffered under the inefficiency of a broken multilateral human rights system. Their sole comfort were the very precious humanitarian gestures of individuals, organizations and countries. While people were being kidnapped, tortured and killed in my country, the mechanisms established precisely to condemn and prevent such horrors remained silent. It is in their memory, so that this will never happen again, that we support the new Human Rights Council and hope that it will live up to the expectations of the international community.

My Government has endorsed instruments of great importance, including the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, adopted by this Assembly on 20 December 2006, which we signed in Paris on 6 February. That instrument, along with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, gives continuity and concrete form to a policy that ascribes a central role to the promotion of human rights.

In our public policy, we now focus on environmental protection, but we know that there will be no viable solution without cooperation among all the countries of the world, the industrialized countries

in particular, because the nature of the problem is of a global scale.

The issue of climate change should be of concern to all Governments, because no corner of the planet is unaffected by changes that have been identified as due to human activity. The Secretary-General's convening of yesterday's High-level Meeting was a timely manifestation of the urgent need to strengthen international cooperation as an effective and adequate response to protect the environment and prevent the unacceptable exportation of pollutants to the developing countries.

One after the other, various diplomatic efforts to halt the violence in the Middle East once and for all have failed, but we cannot merely throw up our hands. No military solution will lead to peace and the tranquillity that all the peoples of the region so desperately call for. The invasion of Iraq, which we rejected at the time it occurred, is the tragic and painful proof of the truth of our position. The Security Council and the nations of the Quartet have the heavy responsibility of accompanying and, if possible, guiding a peace process that can succeed with courage and great perseverance.

The Argentine Republic continues, year after year, tirelessly to condemn the serious threat of terrorism throughout the world. We believe that all acts of terror are criminal and unjustifiable and that no argument can justify them. Just as no nation of the world is beyond their reach, the response must be a joint effort of all nations, and especially this Organization, to stop and eliminate this scourge. We cannot tolerate the actions of those responsible for terrorism or of those who defend, finance or protect terrorists, be they individuals or countries.

Argentina has twice suffered terrorist attacks. The Israeli embassy was attacked in 1992 and the AMIA headquarters in 1994. Some 102 members of our community, some of whose relatives are here with us today, lost their lives. Those victims, united by terror to those of this city, those of Madrid, those of London, those of Bali, those of Istanbul and those of many other places, impose upon us the moral mandate to respect their memories and to commit all our energies to hunting down, finding and prosecuting those responsible.

Despite the difficulties that have arisen through the passage of time, given that those attacks took place

13 and 15 years ago, respectively, and the subsequent cover-ups, our interest and the justice system continue to seek the truth, and we keep our memory of the horror alive so that it will not recur.

In November last year, the Argentine justice system called for international cooperation in the apprehension of nine people suspected of having initiated and planned the 18 July 1994 attack on AMIA, and the Executive Committee of INTERPOL unanimously recommended the apprehension of six Iranian citizens and one Lebanese involved in the affair. We call here for that recommendation to be ratified during the November session of the INTERPOL General Assembly.

In that context, we hope that the Islamic Republic of Iran, in the context of applicable international law, will accept and respect Argentina's legal jurisdiction and cooperate effectively with Argentine judges to bring to justice those involved in these events. In that respect, I wish to say here, at United Nations Headquarters and before all the countries of the world, that, unfortunately, the Islamic Republic of Iran has to date failed to offer the required cooperation with the Argentine justice system to resolve those issues.

We call on the Secretary-General and on all the nations of the world to persuade the Islamic Republic of Iran to allow the judicial process to move forward. We do so with the sole aim of clarifying the facts and bringing those responsible to justice. Respect for the memory of our 102 victims requires justice to be carried out. We request the Islamic Republic of Iran to cooperate in the implementation of the norms of international law to allow us to come to nothing more, but nothing less than the truth.

Nations big and small, rich and poor, all throughout the world will be highly vulnerable if we fail to grasp that action against terrorism requires urgent multilateral, intelligent and sustained action firmly anchored in legitimacy, respect for individual rights, proportional response and respect for international public opinion.

Efforts to counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction can count on the firm support and full participation of the Argentine Republic.

My country is known for the active role it plays in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Argentina develops, consumes and exports nuclear energy for

peaceful purposes in the framework of the strictest respect for the norms enshrined in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the non-proliferation regime in its broadest sense.

Efforts to prevent proliferation are ethically and legally correlated to progress on disarmament. Indeed, the legal instruments on which the prohibition of weapons of mass destruction is based specifically on the firm commitment not to develop new weapons of terror and destruction in the understanding that those who possess such weapons will proceed to their gradual and effective elimination.

In recent years, we have seen disarmament commitments permanently eroded. Nuclear arsenals remain disproportionately large and nuclear disarmament agreements are in stasis. It should come as no surprise, then, that, given the situation, there are those who question the legitimacy of pursuing unilateral advocacy for non-proliferation while solemn commitments in the area of disarmament are ignored.

Conventional weapons are responsible for the deaths of millions of people around the world. Our country has given a high priority to initiatives associated with the conclusion of an arms trade treaty. Domestically, we have initiated programmes for the voluntary handover of firearms, the initial results of which have been encouraging.

The reform of the Security Council is still pending. We are hoping for a reform that will make this central body more responsible, democratically representative and dynamic. It will not, however, achieve this objective by creating new privileged categories. We trust that the ongoing process of consultations will be successful so that the Council can be adapted to today's world.

Before concluding I wish to raise a matter of continuing importance to the Argentine Republic: the question of the Malvinas Islands, which include South Georgia, South Sandwich and the maritime areas surrounding those islands. This year, 174 years will have passed since the British began to occupy this part of Argentine national territory. Ever since that act of force in 1833, my country has protested against this illegal occupation and has demanded that the full exercise of its sovereignty be restored.

We would also mention that 2007 marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the 1982 conflict in the

South Atlantic, a conflict unleashed by the military dictatorship without the backing of the Argentine people, who had always endeavoured to find a peaceful solution to its legitimate sovereignty claim.

The General Assembly has dealt with this matter on many occasions, both prior to and since 1982. Starting in 1965, when the Assembly adopted resolution 2065 (XX), the Organization has recognized, year after year, the existence of a sovereignty dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom relating to the question of the Malvinas Islands. It urged the two Governments to negotiate, as soon as possible, a peaceful, just and lasting solution to the dispute, taking into account the relevant resolutions of United Nations bodies and the interests of the people of the islands. The ongoing and unrenounceable objective of regaining the full exercise of Argentine sovereignty over this part of our territory and the permanent readiness of my country to resume negotiations aimed at finding a solution to the dispute have been reflected in our national Constitution.

It is incomprehensible to us that the United Kingdom should be unwilling to negotiate this matter, thereby violating the provisions of General Assembly resolution 2065 (XX) and numerous similar resolutions.

The time has come for the United Kingdom to shoulder its responsibility and put an end to an anachronism: the illegal occupation for clearly colonial purposes of territory belonging to another State.

My Government vigorously rejects the British claim on the establishment of maritime areas surrounding the archipelagos. In particular, it rejects the recently divulged intention of the United Kingdom to make a submission to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf — established by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea — relative to the outer limits of the continental shelf of these Argentine territories.

In this, my last message to the General Assembly as the President of the people of Argentina, I wish to reaffirm our profound conviction that it is only through democracy, accompanied by freedom, social justice and peace, that man can realize his full potential. This Assembly of the peoples has a bounden duty to help ensure that that will come to pass.

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

Mr. Néstor Carlos Kirchner, President of the Argentine Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran

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

Mr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

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

President Ahmadinejad (*spoke in Farsi; English text provided by the delegation*): I am pleased and grateful to the Almighty to have the opportunity once again to attend this important universal forum.

In the present tumultuous world, loud outcries, threats and tensions predominate. The big Powers are unable to solve present problems, and mistrust in regional and international arenas is on the rise. The psychological security of societies is targeted by an onslaught of political and propaganda designs; disappointment prevails with regard to the efficacy of the policies and actions of the international organizations in the establishment of durable peace and security, and the protection of human rights is being weakened. I plan to touch upon and explain the roots of and solutions to these predicaments and some of the principal challenges facing our world. I will also speak to you about the need to remedy the present situation, about prospects for a brighter and a more hopeful future and about the appearance of the sublime, about beauty, compassion and generosity, about justice and the blossoming of all God-given human talents and about the prominence of faith in God and the realization of the promise of God. I will then submit for your judgement the question of Iran's nuclear

programme as a yardstick for the measurement of honesty, efficacy, steadfastness and accomplishment. In the closing part of my statement, I will offer my proposals.

As you are all aware, mankind is currently facing important, numerous and diverse challenges. I will refer to some of them.

First, organized attempts to destroy the institution of family and to weaken the status of women. Family is the most sacred and valuable human institution. It is the centre of the purest mutual love and affection between mothers, fathers and children, provides a safe environment for the nurturing of human generations and serves as a fertile ground for the blossoming of talent and compassion. This institution has been respected in all times by all peoples, religions and cultures. Today we are witnessing an organized attack by the enemies and plunderers of humanity, who are trying to destroy this noble institution by promoting lewdness and violence and by crossing the boundaries of chastity and decency.

Womanhood, as the manifestation of divine beauty and supreme kindness, affection and purity, has been heavily exploited in recent decades by the holders of power and the owners of media and wealth. In some societies, womanhood has been reduced to a mere instrument of publicity, and all the boundaries and protective shields of chastity, purity and beauty have been trampled. That is a colossal betrayal of human society and of future generations, and it is an irreparable blow to the pillar of social coherence, the family.

I now turn to the issues of widespread violations of human rights, terrorism and occupation. Unfortunately, human rights are being extensively violated by certain Powers — especially those who pretend to be their exclusive advocates. Setting up secret prisons, abducting persons, carrying out trials and secret punishments without any regard for due process, conducting extensive tapping of telephone conversations, intercepting private mail and issuing frequent summonses to appear at police and security centres have become commonplace and prevalent. These Powers prosecute scientists and historians for stating their opinions on important global issues.

They use various pretexts to occupy sovereign States and cause insecurity and division, and then use the prevailing situation as an excuse to continue their

occupation. For more than 60 years, Palestine, as compensation for the loss that it incurred during the war in Europe, has been under the occupation of the illegal Zionist regime. The Palestinian people have been displaced, are under heavy military pressure or economic siege or are incarcerated under abhorrent conditions. The occupiers are protected and praised, while the innocent Palestinians are subjected to political, military and propaganda onslaughts. The people of Palestine are deprived of water, electricity and medicine for the sin of asking for freedom, and the Government that was freely elected by the people is targeted. Terrorists are being organized to attack the lives and property of people with the blessings of the politicians and military officials of the great Powers.

The brutal Zionists carry out targeted assassinations of Palestinians in their homes and cities, and terrorists are decorated with medals of peace and receive support from the great Powers. On the other hand, they attract a number of Jews from various parts of the world by using false propaganda and by promising to provide them with welfare, jobs and food, and then settle them in the occupied territories, exposing them to the harshest restrictions, psychological pressures and constant threats. They prevent these people from returning to their homelands and, by coercion and propaganda, incite them to malevolence towards the indigenous Palestinian people.

Iraq was occupied under the pretext of overthrowing a dictator and the existence of weapons of mass destruction. The Iraqi dictator, who had been supported by the same occupiers, was disposed of, and no weapons of mass destruction were discovered, but the occupation continues under different pretexts. No day passes by without people being killed, wounded or displaced, and the occupiers not only refuse to be accountable for and ashamed of their military adventure, but speak in a report of a new market for their armaments as a result of it. They even oppose the Constitution, the National Assembly and the Government established by the vote of the people, while not even having the courage to declare their defeat and to leave Iraq.

Unfortunately, we are witnessing the bitter truth that some Powers do not value any nation or human being and that the only things that matter to them are themselves and their political parties and groups. In their view, human rights amount to profits for their

companies and their friends. The rights and the dignity of American people are also being sacrificed for the selfish desires of those holding power.

I shall now discuss aggressions against indigenous cultures and national values. Culture is the manifestation of identity, the key to the survival of nations and the foundation for their interaction with others. In an organized movement, indigenous cultures that are messengers of monotheism, love and fraternity are being subjected to broad and destructive aggressions. National customs and values are being humiliated, and the self-esteem and character of nations are being ridiculed and defamed. The purpose is to promote blind emulation, consumerism, scepticism towards God and human values and the plundering of the peoples' wealth by great Powers.

With regard to poverty, illiteracy, health-care issues and the gap between the rich and the poor, I should like to say that, while a major part of the natural environment in Asia, Africa and Latin America is being plundered by the political and economic domination of certain Powers, the situation of poverty and deprivation is alarming.

Let me draw the attention of the Assembly to some data issued by the United Nations. Every day, nearly 800 million people go to bed hungry and about 980 million suffer from absolute poverty, having less than a dollar a day in purchasing power. People in 31 countries — equivalent to 9 per cent of the world's population — have an average life expectancy of 46 years, which is 32 years fewer than the average in developed countries. The gap between the rich and the poor in some parts of the world has increased by 40 times. In many countries, the majority of the people are deprived of access to education and schooling. In developing countries, the rate of maternal mortality during pregnancy is 450 per 100,000; that figure is 7 in the richer nations. The infant mortality rate is 59 per 1,000 live births for the developing countries and 6 for the richer nations. One third of the deaths throughout the world — or 50,000 deaths daily — result from poverty. I believe that those data clearly demonstrate the tragic situation dominating economic interactions in the world.

Next, I shall take up the forsaking of noble values and the promotion of deception and lies. Some Powers sacrifice all human values, including honesty, purity and trust, for the advancement of their goals. They

propagate scepticism and deception in the relations between States and peoples. They lie openly, level baseless charges against others, act in contradiction to legal norms and damage the atmosphere of trust and friendship. In their relations with others, they openly abandon morality and noble values, forsaking justice, respect for others, love, affection and honesty for selfishness, supremacy, enmity and imposition. They sacrifice all the good things of life, including the sublime, for their own greed.

I now turn to violations of rules of international law and disrespect for commitments. Some, who themselves have drafted international law, openly and easily violate it and apply discriminatory policies and double standards to others. Having drafted disarmament regulations, they daily test and stockpile new generations of lethal weapons. Having helped to frame the Charter of the United Nations, they show disrespect for the right of sovereign nations to self-determination and independence. They conveniently abrogate their formal treaties and do not yield to laws concerning protection of the environment. Most of the violations of international obligations are committed by a few global Powers.

I will now talk about an escalation of threats and the arms race. Some Powers, whenever their logic fails, simply use the language of threats. The huge arms race casts its menacing shadow over the entire globe. The nations of Europe were the victims of two world wars and a number of other devastating conflicts and were subjected to the consequences of the cold war for many decades. Today, Europeans are living under threat and their interests, security and lands are endangered because of the arms race carried on by certain big Powers.

A bullying Power arrogates to itself the right to set up a missile system, poisons the life of the peoples of a continent and lays the ground for an arms race. Some rulers who superficially appear to be powerful actually believe that the tools they have at hand can be used at any time and for any purpose and, consequently, threaten others and cast the shadow of insecurity over nations and regions.

International organizations and mechanisms clearly lack the capacity to overcome problems and challenges, to put in place fair and just relations and peace, fraternity and security. There is hardly a Government or nation that really trusts these

mechanisms to secure its rights or defend its independence, territorial integrity and national interests.

There are many more challenges besides the ones I have enumerated. I know that I could have introduced more had I wanted to touch upon them, but I chose to confine myself to the ones I have stated. Now, the important and decisive question concerns the roots and causes of these challenges. A scientific and careful analysis shows that two fundamental factors account for the present situation. Without a doubt, the first factor is the relations arising from the consequences of the Second World War. The victors of the war drew the road map for global domination and formulated their policies on the basis not of justice but of safeguarding the interests of the victors over the vanquished nations. Therefore, for 60 years now, mechanisms arising from this approach and related policies have been incapable of finding just solutions for global problems. Some big Powers still behave like the victors of the World War and regard other States and nations, even those that had nothing to do with the war, as the vanquished. They humiliate other nations and make extortionate demands. Their condescending ways are reminiscent of medieval times and the old lord-serf relationship. They believe that they should have more rights than others and that they are not accountable to any international organization.

Unfortunately, among all the ineffective bodies, the United Nations Security Council ranks first; owing to circumstances in which some Powers with an exclusive and special right to the veto in the Security Council act as prosecutor, judge and executioner. It is natural that countries that have been subjected to those Powers' infringements of their rights have no hope of getting what they deserve from the Council.

Regrettably, humanity has witnessed that in all long wars — like the Korean and Viet Nam wars, the war of the Zionists against the Palestinians and against Lebanon, the war of Saddam against the people of Iran and the ethnic wars of Europe and Africa — one Security Council member was one of the belligerents or supported one party, usually the aggressor, against the other, or the conflict itself.

Let us take a look at Iraq. They first occupied the country and then received authorization from the Security Council — the same Council in which the same occupiers have the right of veto. Whom should

the people of Iraq complain about, and where should they take their complaints, in the hope of securing their rights?

We saw in Lebanon that some Powers, for 33 long days, prevented the Security Council from taking any action against the Zionist regime with the hope of giving it time to achieve victory. Then, when they became disappointed at seeing their hopes unfulfilled, they decided to put an end to the hostilities by adopting a resolution. But the duty of the Security Council is to prevent the expansion of conflicts, to put ceasefires in place and to promote peace and security. To whom and to what organization should the people of Lebanon complain?

The presence of some monopolistic Powers has prevented the Security Council from performing its main duty, which is the maintenance of international peace and security based on justice. The credibility of the Council has been tarnished, and its efficacy in defending the rights of United Nations Member States has been undermined. Many nations have lost their confidence in the Council. Some other mechanisms, such as monetary and banking ones, are in the same undesirable situation and have been turned into tools that enable some Powers to impose their will on other nations. It is evident that these mechanisms are not capable of responding to current needs, solving challenges or establishing fair and sustainable relations.

Again, there is no doubt that the second and more important factor is that some big Powers disregard morals, divine values, the teachings of the prophets and the will of the Almighty. They allow the rule of the incompetent. How can the incompetent, who cannot even manage themselves and conduct their own affairs, govern humanity and arrange its affairs? Unfortunately, these people have put themselves in the position of God. They are in servitude to their own whims, and they desire to have everything for themselves. For them, human dignity and the lives, property and territories of others are no longer respected. For centuries, humanity has had a deep wound inflicted on its tired body by impious Powers. Today, the problems that people around the world face are mainly rooted in disregard for human values and ethics, as well as in the rule of the selfish and the incompetent.

The only sustainable approach to the betterment of humankind is a return to the teachings of the divine

prophets, monotheism, respect for the dignity of humans and the flow of love and affection in all relationships, ties and regulations, and the reform of present structures on this basis. To fulfil this objective, I invite everybody to form a front of fraternity, amity and sustainable peace, based on monotheism and justice, under the name of the Coalition for Peace, to prevent incursions and arrogance and to promote the culture of affection and justice. I hereby announce that, with the help of all independent, justice-seeking and peace-loving nations, the Islamic Republic of Iran will be heading down this path.

Monotheism, justice and compassion for humans should predominate in all the pillars of the United Nations, and this Organization should be a forum for justice, where every member should enjoy equal spiritual and legal support. The General Assembly, representing the international community, should be considered the most important pillar of the United Nations and should, free from any pressure or threats by big Powers, take the required measures for the reform of the other United Nations structures including especially the reform of the Security Council. It should define new structures based on justice and democracy, with a view to becoming responsive to present requirements and settling existing challenges, thereby bringing about enduring stability and security.

The nuclear issue of Iran is a clear example of how such mechanisms perform and of the prevailing thoughts behind them. Members are all aware that Iran is a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and has always observed its rules and regulations. It has had the most extensive cooperation with that Agency in all areas. All our nuclear activities have been completely peaceful and transparent.

According to the Statute of the IAEA, every member has a number of rights and obligations. In fact, all members have to stay on a peaceful path and, under the supervision of the Agency, assist other members, and they are entitled to be supported by the Agency and have access to the fuel cycle with the help of the Agency and its members.

Thus far, Iran has fulfilled all of its obligations but has been deprived of other members' technical assistance and, even at times, of the Agency's support. For about five years, some of the aforementioned Powers have, by exerting heavy pressure on the IAEA, attempted to prevent the Iranian nation from exercising

its rights. They have derailed Iran's nuclear issue from its legal tracks, and have politicized the atmosphere to impose their wishes through taking advantage of all their potential.

The Government of Iran spared no effort to build confidence, but they were not satisfied with anything short of the complete halt of all activities, even those related to research and university fields. They only sought to deprive the Iranian people of all their inalienable rights, even to the extent that centres not involved in the fuel cycle or not in need of supervision by the Agency were closed.

After three years of negotiations and attempts to build confidence, the Iranian nation came to the firm belief that the main concern of these Powers is not the possible deviation of Iran's nuclear activities, but is to prevent its scientific progress under that pretext. If this trend continues, there will be no possibility for Iran to enjoy its rights, not even in the next 20 years. Therefore, Iran decided to pursue the issue through its appropriate legal path, one that runs through the IAEA, and to disregard unlawful and political impositions by the arrogant Powers.

In the past two years, abusing the Security Council, the arrogant Powers have repeatedly accused Iran and have even made military threats and imposed illegal sanctions against it. However, by the grace of faith in God and national unity, Iran has moved forward step by step, and now our country is recognized as one with the capacity for industrial-scale fuel cycle production for peaceful uses. Unfortunately, the Security Council, in dealing with this obvious legal issue, was influenced by some bullying Powers and failed to uphold justice and protect the rights of the Iranian people.

Fortunately, the IAEA has recently tried to regain its legal role as supporter of the rights of its members while supervising nuclear activities. We see this as a correct approach adopted by the Agency. Previously, they illegally insisted on politicizing the Iranian nation's nuclear case, but today, because of the resistance of the Iranian nation, the issue is back with the Agency, and I officially announce that, in our opinion, the nuclear issue of Iran is now closed and has turned into an ordinary Agency matter. Today, many important questions have been raised about the nuclear activities of certain Powers within the IAEA, which should be dealt with properly. Of course, Iran has

always been, and will be, prepared to have constructive talks with all parties.

I would like to thank all the nations and countries that, during this difficult period, defended the legal rights of my nation and motherland. I also want to express our appreciation to the members of the Non-Aligned Movement, our friends in the Security Council and in the IAEA Board of Governors, the committed and law-abiding experts of the Agency and its Director General for standing by the law. I would also like to announce that, unlike the monopolistic Powers, the Iranian nation is ready to offer to other members its experiences in the form of educational programmes, based on its obligations under the Agency's Statute and under Agency supervision.

Now I would like to address those who have shown hostility towards the Iranian nation for some five years and who have offended and accused my people, who have contributed to the history and civilization of the world. I advise them to learn from history and their recent actions. They badly mistreated the great Iranian nation, but they should be careful not to inflict the same on other members of international organizations, and not to sacrifice the dignity of international organizations for the sake of their unlawful wishes. Today the nations of the world are wide awake and resistant. If those Powers reform themselves, the whole world will be reformed. Nations are inherently good and can coexist peacefully.

Those Powers should endeavour to serve their own peoples; others do not need them. Is it not high time for these Powers to return from the path of arrogance and obedience to Satan to the path of faith in God? Would they not like to be cleansed of their impurities, submit to the will of God and believe in him? Faith in God means believing in honesty, purity, justice and compassion for others. They can be certain that they will benefit from purity, honesty, justice and loving and respecting human dignity. They can also be certain that such values are, more and more, considered appropriate, valuable and beautiful by the nations of the world.

This is the invitation of all the divine prophets from Adam to Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus Christ and Mohammed, peace be upon him. If they accept this invitation, they will be saved, and if they do not, the same calamities that befell the people of the distant past will befall them as well. According to the holy

Quran: "One who does not answer the divine call should not think that he has weakened God on Earth; he has no companion but God and he is clearly engulfed by darkness". They have nothing of their own and cannot escape from the dominion of the rule of God and his will.

At this important gathering, I have to remind them of the following words of the Almighty, which are mentioned in the Holy Quran:

"Do they not look at the powers and Governments which came before them? If the people of the past had actually possessed something, they would have kept it and would not have let you possess it now. God destroyed them because of their sins, and nobody could protect them against the will of God".

These Powers have to know that thoughts and methods based on oppression and injustice are doomed to failure. Do they not see the signs of vigilance and resistance based on monotheism, philanthropy and the justice-seeking spirit of the nations of the world? Do they not notice that we are nearing the sunset of the time of empires? I hope that this invitation will have a practical answer.

Peoples and Governments are not obliged to obey the injustice of certain Powers. Those Powers, for the reasons already mentioned, have lost the competence to lead the world. I officially declare that the age of relations arising from the Second World War and of materialistic thought based on arrogance and domination is well over now. Humanity has passed a perilous precipice and the age of monotheism, purity, affinity, respect for others, justice and true peace-loving has commenced.

It is the divine promise that the truth will be victorious and the Earth will be inherited by the righteous. Those who are free, believers and the people of the world should put their trust in God. Those who crave lofty values, wherever they are, should try to prepare the grounds for the fulfilment of that great divine promise by serving the people and seeking justice.

The era of darkness will end, prisoners will return home, the occupied lands will be freed, Palestine and Iraq will be liberated from the domination of the occupiers, and the peoples of America and Europe will be free of the pressures exerted by the Zionists.

Tenderhearted and humanity-loving Governments will replace the aggressive and domineering. Human dignity will be regained. The pleasing aroma of justice will permeate the world and people will live together in a brotherly and affectionate manner.

Striving in that way to surrender rule to the righteous and perfect human, the promised one, is indeed the final cure for the wounds of humanity, the solution of all problems, and the establishment of love, beauty, justice and a dignified life throughout the world. That belief and endeavour is the key to unity and constructive interaction among nations, countries, the people of the world and all true justice-seekers. Without a doubt, the promised one who is the ultimate saviour, along with Jesus Christ and other holy prophets, will come. In the company of all believers, justice-seekers and benefactors, he will establish a bright future and fill the world with justice and beauty. That is the promise of God; therefore it will be fulfilled. Let us play a part in the fulfilment of all that glory and beauty.

I wish for a bright future for all human beings, the dawn of the liberation of and freedom for all humans, the rule of love and affection all around the world, as well as the elimination of oppression, hatred and violence — a wish that I expect to be fulfilled in the near future.

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

Mr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President of the Republic of Indonesia

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

Mr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President of the Republic of Indonesia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President of the

Republic of Indonesia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Yudhoyono: Let me begin by stating how much I welcome and support the theme of this year's sixty-second session of the General Assembly, which is "Responding to climate change".

I stand here representing the good people of Indonesia, who are very eager to welcome representatives to the Bali conference in December this year. When they come to our country, they will see a great nation whose multi-ethnic and multi-religious people live in harmony with one another and in harmony with mother Earth, the way they have for thousands of years.

Indonesia is a country that has felt and suffered the effects of climate change. In recent years, we have been hit by a series of natural disasters in the form of floods, drought, forest fires, El Niño, tsunamis and earthquakes. The issue of climate change has made us see interdependence in a completely new light. When it comes to global warming, we are much more interdependent than we thought in terms of the causes, symptoms and solutions.

We must uphold the principle of common and differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, but there is always room for every country, every community and every individual to be more flexible, more innovative and more inclusive.

A persistent theme in our discussions on climate change yesterday was the need for urgency, which means the need for action and the need to think outside the box. I count myself as an optimist who sees today a larger window of opportunity to strike a global consensus to tackle global warming.

We will have that chance in Bali. The Bali conference must yield a new road map on climate change, and that new road map must spell out what must be done by both the developed and the developing worlds to save humankind and its planet from the looming tragedy of climate change. It must link the solution to the problem of climate change with sustainable development — the conquest of poverty. It must produce an outcome and timeline that will be more comprehensive and more ambitious in achieving its practical objective of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

We developing countries must protect our natural resources while using them wisely for development. Among the most valuable of our natural resources are our forests. From them, we extract economic wealth; through them, we store an immense volume of carbon that would otherwise pollute the atmosphere.

On that basis, yesterday Indonesia took the initiative of launching a special leaders' meeting of tropical rainforest countries. At that meeting, we leaders of the countries having custody of a great portion of the world's rainforests decided to intensify our cooperation in forest conservation and reforestation.

We also believe that countries that seek to enhance their carbon sinks — through forestation, afforestation and avoided deforestation — should be given incentives and rewarded fairly for doing so.

Throughout our deliberations on climate change, let us always keep an eye on the requirements of development. That means we must not lose sight of the imperative to conquer poverty as a basic problem of the human condition.

In Indonesia we have a national dream, which is reflected in our 1945 Constitution. We dream that we and our future generations can enjoy the blessings of peace, freedom, justice and prosperity. And we dream of seeing to it that the same blessings are enjoyed by the rest of humankind. Poverty can kill that dream.

That is why the new Indonesia of today is fully dedicated to the fight against poverty. For that purpose, our national economic policy is focused on the development of rural areas, where the vast majority of our people live and where they wage a daily struggle against the ravages of poverty. That is why we are so intent on making the national business climate friendly and attractive to foreign direct investment, so that jobs will be created for our millions of unemployed people. That is why we are so intent on eradicating the taint of corruption from our society. And that is why our foreign policy addresses the need for a truly functioning global partnership for development, because only such a partnership can ultimately conquer the basic problem of poverty.

Peace in the Middle East is crucial to long-term global stability. But there can be no peace in the Middle East unless there is justice, especially justice for the Palestinian people. A divided Palestinian nation

cannot secure justice. Hamas and Fatah must therefore engage in dialogue and reconcile their agendas. The Arab initiative must catalyse political change in the region.

Indonesia has a long history of participating in United Nations peacekeeping operations that dates back to the Suez conflict, in 1956. We are taking part in the operation in Lebanon today. We are determined to maintain that proud tradition of involvement in global concerns. That, I believe, is what humankind needs most today, namely, the involvement of everyone. There must be a global partnership at work. Developed and developing countries must work together with a greater sense of partnership and of urgency.

Therefore, to solve the problem of climate change the Bali Conference must set the stage for a genuine partnership between developed and developing countries and all other stakeholders. Developed countries must extend support while developing countries strive to protect and enhance their environment and its biodiversity. They must lighten the burden of developing countries in carrying out that immense task — through incentives and the transfer of environmentally sound technology.

While developing countries are in hot pursuit of their Millennium Development Goals, the developed world can greatly help ensure the success of the Doha Development Round. Developed countries must ensure sufficient flows of financing for development through foreign direct investment and official development assistance. They must facilitate the transfer of technology for development.

We in the developing world, on the other hand, must prudently manage our natural and human resources. We must practise good governance. We must fight corruption at all levels so that our resources will not be wasted. We must see to it that the human rights of our citizens are promoted and protected.

No partnership works without teamwork, and no teamwork is possible without constant effective communication. That means dialogue. After all, dialogue is the best way to exercise soft power. Dialogue and soft power can greatly advance the cause of disarmament and non-proliferation. Dialogue and soft power have helped resolve various intra-State conflicts — including in Aceh, where two years ago we reached a peaceful political settlement that

permanently ended the conflict. Dialogue and soft power can also be a major instrument in addressing the root causes of terrorism.

That is why I am a firm advocate of dialogue among faiths, cultures and civilizations. I urge that the dialogue in the Alliance of Civilizations be fully integrated into the work of the United Nations. Sincere dialogue can lead to the formation of an effective global partnership on climate change, which is also a partnership for sustainable development. I look forward to such a dialogue taking place at the Bali Conference this coming December. That will be a vitally important dialogue, for it can set off a chain of events that will lead to the fulfilment of the dream of billions for a safer, better life. It will certainly add sheen to the national dream of Indonesia — our common dream — for a better world of peace, social justice and equitably shared prosperity.

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

Mr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President of the Republic of Indonesia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Martín Torrijos, President of the Republic of Panama

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

Mr. Martín Torrijos, President of the Republic of Panama, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

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

President Torrijos (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of my country, and on my own behalf, I would like to congratulate Mr. Kerim on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at the sixty-second session. I should also like to commend Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his encouraging message this morning (see A/62/PV.4).

The Charter of the United Nations has been the subject of revisions almost from the moment it entered into force. Some of those changes were successful and timely. However, today we are acting too slowly in adapting United Nations structures to the realities of the twenty-first century, despite the fact that the Millennium Development Goals have given it new vigour and almost a new *raison d'être*. Although there seems to be broad agreement to strengthen the General Assembly and to make the Security Council more representative and transparent, we are spending too much time trying to decide how to do it.

Panama has been very clear in its support for the aspirations of Brazil, Japan and Germany to become permanent members of the Security Council. But we have also deemed it appropriate to offer Member States alternatives that would enable us to make progress in this debate. We urge an open mind so that we can complete this debate and come up with the relevant changes quickly.

Panama became a Security Council member with a great feeling of regional solidarity and fiduciary responsibility vis-à-vis the international community on all matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security. We are grateful for the confidence that the General Assembly placed in my country, and we are always ready to seek agreement between parties to a conflict and to help remove obstacles that stand in the way of peace and agreements. To that end, we have encouraged and supported efforts to advance democratic institutions and the rule of law, the promotion and protection of human rights and humanitarian assistance to refugees and displaced persons.

No conflict in the world has been given greater attention by the international community than that in the Middle East region. Although agreements have been arrived at that have eased tensions, the path towards peace has always been elusive, and new obstacles arise all the time. The conflict between Israel and Palestine is at the very core of the problems in the region. Panama therefore encourages and promotes negotiations between the parties, geared towards creating a Palestinian State that can live in peace with the State of Israel, with secure borders for both. This will require a cessation of attacks on Israel from Gaza, withdrawal from all the occupied territories in the West Bank and the achievement of an agreement about the status of Jerusalem that would satisfy the parties

directly involved and the entire international community.

On the situation in Lebanon, it is important for the international community to realize that a lasting peace in the region requires the establishment of a government of unity which can end the current political deadlock. If it is not resolved, this could lead to a return to civil war, which is something that we all thought was now over and done with.

From this rostrum, we join in the call for an immediate reduction in tension and peaceful solutions in all parts of the world where international peace and security are threatened. It is much less costly to invest our efforts in avoiding confrontation than to stop it once it has begun. Accordingly, we appeal to this Organization to reconsider its actions vis-à-vis the conflict in the Middle East which, far from being resolved, seems to be intensifying.

Turning to the dispute between Serbia and the Kosovar Albanians, today we can be cautiously optimistic that, after several months of Security Council debate, which included a visit to the region, the parties have agreed to resume dialogue. Only an agreement between them can ensure peace and economic development in the region.

Panama strongly supports the renewal and extension of the mandate of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. We recognize the progress made by the Haitian Government with support from that mission. However, there are many matters that still require more efforts, and it is essential that the mandate not end before that country's institutions have been strengthened.

We welcome the progress made, but we must condemn the violation of human rights in Myanmar and the continued detention of Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi. Although every conflict has its own particular causes, we can say that violations of the human rights of certain groups, a culture of impunity or the absence of strong institutions able to guarantee the human rights of all are the common denominator of most conflicts.

In Africa, there are examples of how institutional weakness and abuses of human rights become the main causes of conflict. On the initiative of the President of France, the Security Council is meeting this very afternoon to analyse all the problems that afflict that

continent (see S/PV.5749). It is only by strengthening institutional capacity and building a culture of justice that it will be possible to restore to those peoples the rights that this Organization enshrined for all inhabitants of the Earth.

Responsibility for solving disputes and preventing conflict lies primarily with the States parties to a dispute. However, achieving peace depends to a large extent on our commitment to the collective security architecture that we have built here in the United Nations. Since the end of the cold war, the United Nations has responded to the major challenges to international peace and security by increasing the number and the quality of peacekeeping operations in cases where diplomacy has failed. To avoid a return to conflict situations, peacekeeping operations cannot be confined to simply separating rival forces. It is essential to strengthen the concept of integrated missions to include new responsibilities that cover a broader range of activities. Achieving a lasting peace means more than simply laying down one's weapons. One must set off on the path towards development; legal and political institutions must be rebuilt and human rights must be respected.

We cannot talk about lasting peace while we live under the threat of terrorism, whose definitive defeat is an ongoing challenge for the international community. Panama supports United Nations efforts to combat this scourge in an integrated manner, such as the adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (see resolution 60/288). And, because we attach high priority to the adoption of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism, we have shouldered the responsibility of chairing the Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee.

The adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (see resolution 61/106) was a major milestone on the path towards a world without exclusionism and reaffirmed the universality of human rights. Specific measures have been defined to guarantee full participation. Above all, we have categorically said that discrimination against any person on the basis of disability is a violation of the inherent dignity and worth of the human person. I would like to say that Panama has made significant progress in this area; inclusive education is a State priority. We have signed the Convention, and we are committed to implementing it.

Of particular importance to Panama is the recent adoption of a declaration on indigenous peoples for the Latin American region. It strengthens respect for cultural diversity, with emphasis on preserving cultural assets.

The President returned to the Chair.

A year ago, I told the General Assembly (see A/61/PV.12) that my country would hold a referendum to decide whether to undertake the work of widening the Panama Canal so that larger ships could transit between the two great oceans. As I believe is generally known, the people of Panama approved the project, and barely three weeks ago the work began. It will be completed by the year 2014.

Panama, which has always contributed to the development of international trade and to understanding among nations, is especially pleased to reaffirm that unifying mission today, as well as its commitment to peace, development and full respect for human rights.

I should like to conclude my statement by referring to some words spoken from this same rostrum by a Panamanian more than 50 years ago and that are still just as true today. He said that to attempt to preserve peace without at the same time improving peoples' living conditions is to leave the task unfinished and inconclusive. We should not tire of repeating that the most serious threats to peace and freedom are rooted in human poverty, social injustice, ignorance and economic backwardness; and that the only peace worth keeping and defending, and which can be lasting, is peace with honour, justice and freedom.

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

Mr. Martín Torrijos, President of the Republic of Panama, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Hâmid Karzai, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

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

Mr. Hâmid Karzai, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Hâmid Karzai, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, and to invite him to address the General Assembly.

President Karzai: Over the 62 years of its existence, the General Assembly has witnessed many moments of historical reckoning. It was one such moment, five years ago, when Afghanistan returned to the Assembly as a country emerging out of a long, dark era of war, violence and terror. As I stood before the Assembly in September 2002, the challenges of restoring security to the lives of the Afghan people and of rebuilding Afghanistan into a stable and democratic country seemed all but insuperable. The fate of a nation swayed between the promise of a safer and more prosperous future, on the one hand, and the enormity of the tasks, on the other hand.

Today, efforts in support of stability and reconstruction in Afghanistan are proceeding resolutely apace. The Afghan people continue to make the best of the new opportunities. Our economy is surging ahead. The legitimacy of our newly founded institutions is gradually taking root. Our society is brimming with freedom and activity.

For too long, Afghanistan was in an unenviable position in terms of most human development indicators. That situation is no longer acceptable, and is changing rapidly. Today more Afghans enjoy access to health and education than ever before in our history. We have very fortunately cut our child mortality rate, which was one of the highest in the world just two years ago, by 25 per cent. As a result, over 85,000 more children have a chance to live today.

For the first time in 40 years, Afghanistan is set once again to become self-sufficient in food production. Already, the fruits of relative stability and increased prosperity in Afghanistan are spilling over the borders to the wider region. Having enjoyed unprecedented growth in our regional trade over the past six years, we are now moving to consolidate Afghanistan's role in the economic integration of the region. Earlier this year, we assumed membership of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The significance of that step lies in the

potential for Afghanistan to connect South Asia to Central Asia and the Middle East in commerce and interaction.

Last month, President Rahmon of Tajikistan and I were joined by the United States Secretary of Commerce to inaugurate a transit bridge financed by the United States that connects Afghanistan with Tajikistan and beyond. That bridge, alongside many other infrastructure projects we have completed, is to play a significant role in the further economic integration of the region.

Make no mistake: despite our achievements, a safer and brighter future for Afghanistan still hinges on many serious challenges. Poverty, underdevelopment, climatic hardships and, above all, the menaces of terrorism and narcotics, are challenges of global proportions that continue to be shared by Afghanistan as a member of the global village.

To the extent that terrorism remains a threat, world citizens will never be safe. Six years after Afghanistan's liberation from the grip of international terrorists, we are still grappling with this threat on a daily basis. Terrorists continue to kill innocent people, including those who have come from the outside world to help. The past two years have witnessed a significant increase in terrorist attacks carried out with new and brutal tactics such as beheadings, kidnappings and the burning of schools and clinics.

Terrorism can only be overcome if it is addressed appropriately across its regional and international dimensions. We are monitoring with deep concern the continued presence of a terrorist infrastructure in our region, and condemn, in equally strong terms, the atrocities that terrorists are committing in places beyond our borders.

Recognizing that constructive regional cooperation is vital to a successful counterterrorism strategy, we proposed the holding of a joint *jirga*, or council, between Afghanistan and Pakistan. We are pleased with the support that that initiative has received from our friends in the international community. The first joint peace council between Afghanistan and Pakistan was held in Kabul last month. It was a promising step in harnessing the unequivocal support of civil societies in both countries in our common fight against terrorism and extremism. We expect that the outcome of the council will translate into concrete action.

While we continue our struggle against terrorism, we will also focus on reconciliation with those that are not part of Al Qaida and other terrorist networks.

I also note, with deep concern, the particularly heinous use by terrorists of local populations as human shields, resulting in the loss of civilian lives. While condemning such deliberate targeting of civilians in the strongest possible terms, I would like to emphasize the need for maximum caution on the part of the international forces operating in Afghanistan, as well as for increased coordination with Afghan authorities, in order to avoid civilian casualties.

Narcotics is another global peril that, like terrorism, seriously undermines the stability and well-being of our societies. In Afghanistan, that scourge is the legacy of the decades of misfortunes that befell our country — from the widespread despair induced by war and oppression, to drought and climatic hardships. We are working with our international partners to tackle the menace. We will prioritize the provision of alternative livelihoods to farmers and expedite implementation of other strategies, including poppy eradication and the interdiction of traffickers. However, addressing the world's drug challenge must involve focus on the far greater dimensions of the drug trade that lie outside Afghanistan, such as fighting the international drug mafia, ensuring stricter border control, and reducing demand in foreign markets.

Climate change has rightly been recognized as a serious challenge facing the entire world. No country, developed or developing, is immune to its impact. Yesterday's high-level event on that important topic was an essential step forward in strengthening the resolve of the international community to address that global threat with unity. We fully support the recommendations of the Chairman's summary.

We are also watching the situation in the Middle East with deep concern. In particular, we remain concerned about the situation in Palestine and call for the full realization of the rights of our Palestinian brothers and sisters, including their right to an independent State, living side by side with its neighbours in peace and coexistence.

The adoption of the Iraq Compact, sponsored by the United Nations and the international community, was an achievement marking Iraq's new partnership with the international community to consolidate peace and promote social and economic development. We,

the Afghan people, wish our brothers and sisters in Iraq every success in achieving their aspiration of a peaceful and prosperous Iraq.

Allow me to thank our partners in the international community, the United States, Japan, members of NATO, the European Union, our brothers in the Islamic world, our neighbours, China, India, Australia and all other countries for supporting Afghanistan during these years of challenge to our country. We appreciate the role that the United Nations and the Secretary-General are playing in coordinating the international community's role in the development process in Afghanistan. I am particularly thankful to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his initiative, two days ago, of calling a high-level international meeting on Afghanistan, at which our partners once again reaffirmed their commitment to Afghanistan's rebuilding and reconstruction.

Six years ago, in an unprecedented convergence of interests, the international community united behind Afghanistan, facing up to the inescapable reality that the world's security had come to depend on stability and progress in Afghanistan. Today, many of the nations represented here can rightly take pride in what we have achieved together. I thank them all for their commitment and for the steadfast support they have provided to Afghanistan over the past six years. Without that support, the progress we have made in Afghanistan would be simply unthinkable.

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

Mr. Hâmid Karzai, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ivan Gašparovič, President of the Slovak Republic

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

Mr. Ivan Gašparovič, President of the Slovak Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ivan Gašparovič, President

of the Slovak Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Gašparovič (*spoke in Slovakian; English text provided by the delegation*): Allow me, Sir, to congratulate you on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. I believe that, under your presidency, this Organization will make further progress in its reforms, enabling it to respond promptly to the challenges faced by the international community.

From the outset, I would like to thank your predecessor, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, for her efforts in performing the challenging tasks on the agenda of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly.

The Slovak Republic fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Portugal on behalf of the European Union. In addition, I wish to make a contribution to the general debate on behalf of the Slovak Republic.

In spite of notable progress in some areas, the Slovak Republic is not satisfied with the current pace and scope of the United Nations reform process. We think it necessary to make the work of newly created structures and institutions more dynamic and to prepare the United Nations to ensure the targeted prevention and solution of concrete problems and conflicts.

We appreciate the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission. We hope that it will become a pivotal tool in post-conflict stabilization. It should give the international community a vehicle for solving issues that extends the scope of crisis management.

Slovakia also encourages efforts towards overall reform in the system of human rights protection. We have welcomed the commencement of work by the Human Rights Council and recognize its primary responsibility for promoting universal respect for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Within the ongoing process of institutional changes, we expect the Council to effectively enforce its mandate pursuant to resolution 60/251. The Slovak Republic endorses the concept of protecting and promoting human rights at the national and international levels. In that context, we are prepared to assume our share of responsibility. We will be honoured to receive the support of other United Nations Member States for the

candidacy of the Slovak Republic to the Human Rights Council for 2008-2011 in the election scheduled for spring 2008.

The Slovak Republic appreciates the measures designed to reform the Secretariat. We support the modernization of the Secretariat's management system so that it can flexibly respond to current needs and challenges, and the strengthening of its accountability for the implementation of its tasks. As a country participating in several United Nations-led peacekeeping missions, we have also expressed our support for the restructuring of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

United Nations reform cannot be complete without also reforming the structure and working methods of the Security Council. Slovakia has been actively engaged in this reform effort during the term as a non-permanent member of the Security Council. The membership of that United Nations body should reflect the changed geopolitical reality. The number of both permanent and non-permanent Council members should increase and the Global South countries should acquire more seats. Germany and Japan have our explicit support in their ambition to become new permanent members of the Council. As a small country, we also support those proposals for the non-permanent membership category that would restrict countries from so-called "flip-flopping" between categories.

Nor may the General Assembly evade the reform effort. It is necessary to strengthen its role and authority by focusing the Assembly's attention on real and acute problems of the current world. The Assembly should also create mechanisms that would allow for the monitoring of the implementation of its decisions and at the same time provide for the elimination of outdated measures that overburden its work.

Thought should also be given to the representativeness of the bodies established by the General Assembly. Slovakia, as a member of the Group of Eastern European States, appreciates the election of Mr. Srgjan Kerim as President of the Assembly at its sixty-second session. At the same time, it should be emphasized that the Eastern European Group is the most dynamically growing regional group in the General Assembly, yet its representation in managerial positions in the Secretariat and in United Nations bodies does not reflect that situation. A prime example of the situation is the fact that this year not one of the

Assembly's Vice-Presidents is from the regional group of which the Slovak Republic is a member.

Besides the efforts aimed at reforming the United Nations, the Slovak Republic wishes to pay special attention to the issue of security sector reform during the sixty-second session. We believe that insufficient reform or lack of reform in the security sector is often a source or catalyst of conflicts, or even causes post-conflict countries to lapse back to a conflict state. It should also be borne in mind that a well-governed security sector should, above all, ensure human security, which represents the foundation for the stability, good governance and, ultimately, development of a country.

We are expecting a comprehensive report by the Secretary-General on security sector reform, which should become the basis of a more in-depth discussion on this issue within the United Nations. Therefore, Slovakia has decided to initiate a thematic discussion on security sector reform during the sixty-second session.

The Slovak Republic also expects the sixty-second session to revitalize the discussion on disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Slovakia has had an opportunity to contribute to these efforts through its chairmanship of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004). In this context, in February 2007 Slovakia also initiated an open debate in the Security Council on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The destructive potential of weapons of mass destruction increases along with the growing threat of international terrorism. We therefore also wish to pay special attention to this threat to international peace and security. The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy adopted by the General Assembly last year (resolution 60/288) provided for wide-ranging international cooperation in this field.

The Slovak Republic pays due attention to the economic and social aspects of the United Nations, where we wish to engage even more actively. In 2003, we submitted our candidacy for membership in the Economic and Social Council for the years 2010 to 2012. We will be pleased to receive support from other Member States for our candidacy.

As a new development aid donor, we want to facilitate more effective cooperation with both beneficiary and donor countries, integrate the work of international agencies and make more efficient use of the existing United Nations capacities in this area. We wish to pay special attention to the development of post-conflict regions, which currently receive the largest portion of development aid. We believe that there will be room in the Economic and Social Council for Slovakia to utilize its experience in the field of security sector reform in the joint work with other bodies of the United Nations system.

Over the past two years, Slovakia has worked for the first time as a member of the Security Council. When adopting our decisions on the sensitive problems of the modern world, we took into consideration the peculiarities of individual cases, yet at the same time, we sought to promote the value system of a member of the European and trans-Atlantic community. Slovakia will continue to work within the United Nations in this same spirit, even after the completion of its current term in the Security Council. We also wish to make good use of the experience we have gained in our work in other United Nations bodies.

The Slovak Republic is frustrated that no solution to the Kosovo issue has yet been found. In our opinion, Kosovo must not thwart the unification of European nations nor set a negative precedent in terms of international law.

It is with hope that we view the adoption of Security Council resolution 1769 (2007), granting a mandate for the deployment of a joint African Union-United Nations peacekeeping operation in Darfur. This unprecedented decision has moved the cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations to a new level.

With regard to the Middle East issue, Slovakia endorses a peaceful, fair and permanent solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The talks should result in the establishment of a viable Palestinian State that will coexist with Israel in an atmosphere of perpetual peace and security. In this context, we appreciate the resumption of dialogue between Israel and Palestine and the measures taken in this respect by the Quartet.

It has been seven years since our Millennium session, when we discussed our vision for the future of life on our planet. It has been neither seven rich nor seven poor years. The United Nations has made some

progress. On the other hand, it has failed to cope with many challenges. We must do better together to make the future score fall more in favour of the United Nations.

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

Mr. Ivan Gašparovič, President of the Slovak Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will hear an address by His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco.

His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Prince Albert (*spoke in French*): Allow me, at the outset, to address my warmest congratulations to the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. With that election, which honours your country, the Group of Eastern European States and the members of this Assembly have unanimously recognized, Sir, your eminent competence and your perfect knowledge of the Organization. You and the other members of the Bureau may be assured of the active cooperation of my delegation.

You have chosen the theme of climate change for this sixty-second session. I would like to thank you for that initiative, which has been commended by all.

Today, I would like to share my observations on this issue as well as my personal commitment in service of this cause. Very early on, I learned to appreciate nature and to take the necessary measures to protect it. From my very earliest years, I was taught to share and to give back. Then I wanted to see and learn things for myself, and my responsibility today is to testify and to act.

That is why, in June 2006, I decided to make my own contribution, as well as that of the Principality, by

creating a Foundation. The mission of the Prince Albert II Foundation is to identify priority and symbolic projects and to accelerate their implementation in order to reach concrete results throughout the world aimed at a sustainable and equitable management of natural resources.

The Foundation's activities are based on three strategic principles. The first is to act alongside nations, international institutions and opinion leaders in order to enhance consciousness of and accelerate decisions for sustainable development. I am personally committed to leading consciousness-raising missions on the ground around the world. I will also stand with other heads of States, as I do today, and take part in international negotiation meetings regarding the environment.

The second objective of my Foundation is to promote initiatives, activities and corporate actions that combine innovation with environmental protection. The Foundation is supporting and financing about 30 projects as of this year. Through its activities, the Foundation also wishes to attest to the fact that it is possible to engage in sustainable practices and behaviour that are respectful of the environment and compatible with economic, social and human development.

Lastly, its third objective is to create the broadest possible public understanding of the environmental challenges and responsibilities involved in those issues via outreach activities. I commit myself to devoting the time and energy necessary to the success of those actions.

All the programmes adopted by the Foundation comply with the environmental policy of my country. Monaco has long been active in protecting the marine environment and in developing scientific research in marine biology. The creation a century ago of the Oceanographic Museum and the Museum of Prehistoric Anthropology by my great-great-grandfather Albert I, and the more recent creation of an underwater reserve by my father, Prince Rainier III, bear witness to that policy. The RAMOGE Agreements for the control of marine pollution and the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Black Sea, the Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic Area reinforced that international engagement. That vocation is part of the history of my country.

This year, I agreed to sponsor an ambitious international initiative launched by the United Nations Environment Programme, the objective of which is to provide for the planting of at least 1 billion trees throughout the world in 2007. Seven months after the launch of the operation, that objective was achieved. It is an extraordinary sign of hope, and I must commend the dynamism of the Programme, whose actions within the United Nations are essential for the environment.

The time for action is today. We already know that the future of humanity is at stake. This is a collective responsibility. To tackle this urgent matter, it is necessary to raise awareness, mobilize capacities and revolutionize our lifestyle. That is how we will forge a new relationship to nature. As Yves Coppens, a French scientist, stresses: “for millennia, climate has dictated man’s behaviour; today, it is man who dictates his behaviour on nature”.

It is also necessary to commit ourselves to promoting a new ethic — that of the right to the protection of the environment. What better place is there than this prestigious institution to lead the way forward? That new ethical dimension can be achieved only if built on the sincere commitment of each individual. That is why Bill Clinton, in his recent book, calls for concrete mobilization. As he says so well, “each one of us can give something. There is so much to do; it is never too late to start”. Like President Clinton, I believe that generosity is at the heart of that mobilization.

It is thus imperative to transcend our own selfishness and inertia, and to learn to develop a harmonious relationship between humankind and nature. Safeguarding our planet is the challenge of the twenty-first century. That challenge requires courage, tenacity, commitment and generosity. Above all, let us act. Peter Frumhoff, one of the main contributors to the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, declared, following a large-scale study undertaken by the Union of Concerned Scientists, that “some changes are inevitable, but the worst consequences can be avoided if we act quickly”. That message was reiterated over and over again yesterday during the high-level event on climate change convened by the Secretary-General.

The European Union has shown the way by committing to a 50 per cent reduction of its greenhouse gases by 2050. Let us help developing countries by

finding new financial resources; let us quickly update our modes of production and consumption. To meet that challenge, we must work together to find solutions to existing problems. Individual announcements or actions will never solve the problem. The threat is global. As the climatologist Edouard Bard has pointed out, “global warming concerns our entire ecosystem and the consequences of this phenomenon can be done only at the global level”.

We have long lived in a world fraught with threats, but for the first time we are facing a planetary threat that threatens humankind itself. The evolution of human mindsets and behaviour will inevitably take time, but the planet cannot wait. Thus, without further delay, we must adopt a culture of responsibility. We must meet this historic challenge so that we may preserve planet Earth for our children. Let us make the choice of hope based on humanistic values, and let us not forget the power of courage when it is supported by the will to place humankind at the core of our priorities.

There are also ethical considerations which inspire my country’s constant and resolute commitment in the fight against terrorism. In no circumstances can violence ever be a legitimate means to pursue any combat, whatever the cause may be.

To consolidate its legal framework in compliance with international standards, and according to the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering (FATF), the Principality of Monaco took measures identical to the European Union directives adopted to fight money laundering and terrorism. Without waiting for the new report of the Select Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures, in this area, my Government enacted new laws and regulations on these issues. With those tireless efforts, Monaco has been publicly recognized for leading the way in this field. I will maintain the required vigilance so that our legislative framework and our security policy will continue to guarantee the reputation of the Principality as a safe State. In so doing, I reiterate my unfaltering determination to combat the manifestations of terrorism regardless of their forms.

For my country, sustainable development and the fight against poverty go hand in hand, in that we are called upon to identify a new manner of growth more respectful of the resources of our planet, which, while

abundant, are not inexhaustible. That is the reason why I asked my Government to increase by 30 per cent for the year 2008, under the heading of international cooperation, the total of the Principality's voluntary contributions to the funds and programmes of the United Nations. This significant increase of funding for official development assistance is proof my country's determination to eventually reach the target of devoting 0.7 per cent of gross national income to official development assistance. A great deal remains to be done in the fields of education, access to health care, the fight against pandemics and HIV/AIDS, human crises following natural disasters or conflicts and, lastly, the fight against poverty.

I pay particular attention to the Principality's actions through multilateral and bilateral assistance programmes, supplemented by the generous initiatives of the charitable organizations in Monaco, which are also part of my country's tradition.

Children's welfare has, for a long time, been a priority commitment for the Principality. My sister, Her Royal Highness the Princess of Hanover, is actively involved with this issue through the World Association of Children's Friends (AMADE Mondiale). In December, the General Assembly will hold a debate to evaluate progress in the implementation of the Declaration and Plan of Action entitled "A world fit for children" (resolution S-27/2), adopted in 2002. Considerable progress has been achieved in five years, although there still are too many needs to be met.

Monaco has also joined the campaign entitled "Unite for children. Unite against AIDS," sponsored by UNICEF, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the World Health Organization. My sister, Princess Stephanie, Special Representative of UNAIDS, has committed herself wholeheartedly to harnessing the energies of the Principality and beyond to advance in the fight against this scourge.

Reform of the Security Council remains a current issue. I reaffirm my country's support for a process of increasing the membership of this Council. In fact, the chances of maintaining international peace and security will be that much greater if the representation of the international community in the Security Council were the most equitable possible.

I also express the wish that the newly established Department of Field Support, working alongside the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, will facilitate the actions of United Nations personnel on the ground working valiantly to safeguard peace. I congratulate the Secretary-General on the efforts he has undertaken to these ends.

My country became a Member of the United Nations 14 years ago. Ever since, the Principality has increased its participation on the international scene. The Principality has taken pleasure in hosting many international meetings and high-level conferences in recent years.

Accordingly, I am delighted that in February 2008, the tenth special session of the Governing Council of United Nations Environment Programme and the Global Ministerial Environment Forum will be held in Monaco. On that occasion, I will proudly receive ministers of the environment of Member States to discuss topics similar to those we are tackling within the General Assembly framework and thus to continue the debate launched here. In so doing, my country will, I hope, contribute once again its part to the fundamental debates of our time and will reaffirm its will to be at the heart of the genuine struggle.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco for the statement he has just made.

His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia

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

Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ilves: I shall speak today on four fundamental topics: climate change, cybersecurity,

conflict resolution and cooperation among international organizations.

In accordance with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as well as the Kyoto Protocol, industrialized countries are obligated to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases. Estonia has already achieved the basic target of the Kyoto Protocol: our emissions of greenhouse gases have been cut back by over 50 per cent. Fully subscribing to the European Union statement on the post-2012 vision for international climate, released by the Portuguese presidency, we hope that the negotiations concerning a new global climate deal will reach a new comprehensive and global political agreement by as early as December 2009.

Yes, we recognize that developing countries have special needs in the areas of sustainable economic growth and eradication of poverty. But we also need to decouple economic growth from energy consumption and carbon dioxide emissions. Investing in energy efficiency will have a huge impact on our future. Diversification of the energy supply and greater use of renewable energies are the way forward.

The resources and the technology for decarbonisation come primarily from industrial nations. Therefore, we need to continue the dialogue between industrialized and developing nations concerning the adoption of a "green" economy, reducing carbon-fuel dependency and counterbalancing climate change caused by human activities. We need to promote technology transfer, which is necessary for developing environment-friendly energy production. Estonia believes that the best way forward is to tie development assistance to investment in clean technologies.

If in the past people were connected by sea lanes and trade routes, today we are ever more connected by the Internet, along with the threats that loom in cyberspace. Cyberattacks are a clear example of contemporary asymmetrical threats to security. They make it possible, with limited means and from a distance, to paralyse a society.

In the future, cyberattacks may, in the hands of criminals or terrorists or terrorist States, become a considerably more widespread and dangerous weapon than they are at present. Cyberattacks are a threat not only to sophisticated information technology systems, but also to communities as a whole. For example, they

could be used to paralyse a city's emergency medical services. The threats posed by cyberwarfare have often been underestimated, since, fortunately, they have not as yet resulted in the loss of any lives. Also, for security reasons, the details of cyberattacks are often not publicized.

In addition to taking concrete technical and legal measures to counter cyberattacks, Governments must morally define cyberviolence and cybercrime, which deserve to be generally condemned in the same way as terrorism and the trafficking in human beings are condemned. Fighting against cyberwarfare is in the interests of us all. It requires both appropriate domestic measures and international efforts.

In April and May of this year, my country, Estonia, coped successfully with an extensive cyberattack, and we are prepared to share with other countries the know-how that we have acquired. We call upon the international community to cooperate in legal matters in questions concerning cybersecurity. But, since this whole subject is in a relatively new field, it is essential to establish an appropriate legal space. As a first step, we call upon all countries to accede to the Convention on Cybercrime of the Council of Europe. The Convention is also open for accession by non-members of the Council.

We should move ahead and create a truly international framework for combating these vicious acts. The Global Cybersecurity Agenda of the International Telecommunications Union, launched by the Secretary-General in May, is an important initiative for building international cooperation in this field. Estonia also agrees with the assessment of the specialists of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research that a globally negotiated and comprehensive cyberspace law is essential and that the United Nations can provide the neutral and legitimate forum necessary for that task.

The United Nations is determined to resolve conflicts. Understandably, conflict prevention and resolution, particularly in Africa, is a top priority. We welcome the creation of a United Nations-African Union peacekeeping force to quell the violence and instability plaguing the Darfur region of the Sudan.

It is important to settle conflicts in other places as well, such as Afghanistan. We need to increase the presence and visibility of the United Nations there, which would be an encouraging sign for the local

population and would also send a signal to other international aid organizations and non-governmental organizations that they should increase their activities. The United Nations should also assume a greater role in coordinating the reconstruction effort in Afghanistan.

I would like to highlight one conflict in Europe in which the United Nations has a significant role to play: the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia. Along with the other “frozen” conflicts in the neighbouring region, it remains among the last unresolved conflicts in Europe. It is my hope that the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General will have the determination to find solutions that honour Georgia’s territorial integrity. We cannot be satisfied with the current situation. It is important to build confidence between the parties and to resume the meetings between the representatives of Georgia’s Government and those of Abkhazia. There is no place for military provocations, internal or external.

A major task for the United Nations remains the facilitation of the return of refugees to Abkhazia, which, unfortunately, has been greatly hampered. Progress regarding the conflict is possible if all interested parties act in a constructive way. We must generate the political will necessary to resolve the conflict. In that context, I welcome the increased contribution of the European Union (EU).

The international community should also secure the best and most rational use of available resources, including in emergency and crisis response situations. For example, both the United Nations and the EU were involved in managing the response to the Asian tsunami in 2004 and the Lebanese crisis in 2006. That once again brought to the fore the necessity of developing common needs assessments — to further discuss the roles and mandates of the relevant actors, such as the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and the Community Mechanism for Civil Protection of the EU.

Poverty, armed conflicts and natural disasters such as floods, tsunamis and forest fires are all causes of another global problem — forced migration, which should also be tackled in a more concerted manner by the whole international community. Being forced to leave one’s home is always a tragedy. I know: my family was forced to leave my country, fleeing brutal Soviet occupation forces. Trying to integrate into a new

society is always a significant challenge. Only through well-coordinated common efforts can we ensure that people never again have to leave their homes because they have no other option. Thus, a global approach to human migration should remain a vital issue on the United Nations agenda.

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

Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Excellency Mr. José Eduardo dos Santos, President of the Republic of Angola

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

Mr. José Eduardo dos Santos, President of the Republic of Angola, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. José Eduardo dos Santos, President of the Republic of Angola, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Dos Santos (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): At the outset, I would like to salute the international community, legitimately represented here today. I would also like to take this opportunity to personally congratulate Mr. Ban Ki-moon on his election to the post of Secretary-General of our Organization. I am confident, Sir, that your able leadership, steadfastness and commitment will assist us in our search for consensual solutions to the issues that affect humanity in order to make the world an increasingly safer, freer and fairer place.

Today, the world is confronted with global warming, a consequence of the atmospheric pollution resulting from human activity on Earth, which is causing dramatic and dangerous climate change. The world is also confronted with extremists who resort to terrorism and the use of religion for political ends; with growing militarism as a would-be response to terrorism; and with the hoarding of capital, information and know-how, all of which widen the gap between the

rich and the poor and generate social tensions around the world.

On the issue of terrorism, the model of an open, democratic and tolerant civilization, with a State that serves the interests of all, has shown that parties that alternate in political office in the post-cold-war period can coexist and fight for their principles and values through peaceful means. I believe that the same model can be successful if properly adjusted to the concrete realities of other regions.

At the same time, we must continue to deepen our study and analysis of the threat of terrorism and use peaceful means to seek an ever-broader consensus on the collective responses needed to counter it.

Islam can peacefully coexist in societies with other religious beliefs. However, it is necessary to neutralize fanaticism and prevent the Islamization of the State, which is contrary to humanity's modern legal concept of a secular State.

In our opinion, it is necessary to defend cultural diversity and to render more inclusive and fair the process of political, economic and social development; to support and stimulate, in countries that are predominantly Islamic, all the forces and movements that defend modern life and the separation of State from religion; and to support the values and privileges of the universal culture that are enshrined in conventions, charters and international treaties. This movement is immense, it continues to grow and it can be more effective than military action, which in our understanding should only constitute a last resort.

Ecumenism and dialogue among cultures are other avenues for action that can be better and more frequently used to bring together the dominant religions and all the people of the world, based on the ideals of peace, solidarity and fraternity.

The fight against poverty and hunger in the world, with a global plan monitored by the United Nations as an international convention, higher and fairer remuneration for commodities or natural resources extracted from developing countries and technical support to poor States would contribute greatly to eliminating social inequalities and the social seedbed and support of those who prefer violence.

In this regard, the globalization of the economy must be regulated in order to mitigate the asymmetries between the centre and the periphery of the economic

system and to ensure that each person has the necessary means for survival with dignity.

Such regulation should further address environmental matters. There are countries that have experienced rapid industrial development without paying due attention to the protection of the environment. Other countries are now involved in an identical endeavour, thus increasing the production of carbon dioxide and worsening the greenhouse effect. It is plain that a new meeting of all world leaders is urgently required in order to approve and begin the execution of a global plan of environmental protection.

We therefore support the initiative of the Secretary-General to that end, convinced that the countries that most pollute the atmosphere, such as the richest countries, should contribute more resources to its protection.

Today, the Republic of Angola is in a position to engage more actively in this collective effort of solidarity for humanity, because the country has been at peace for a little more than five years and is moving towards complete normalization of its political, economic and social life. Proof of that lies in the fact that Angola has already signed all the international protocols in favour of environmental protection, such as the Kyoto and the Montreal Protocols, while contributing to conflict resolution and peace in its region and in the African continent as a whole.

As a country that has recently chaired the Peacebuilding Commission, we are pleased to learn of the important progress achieved in consolidating the peace processes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

However, the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea and the conflict in Darfur, Sudan, still prevail, while the issue of Western Sahara's self-determination remains unresolved. I am convinced that the Organization will remain engaged in the search for a solution to these problems in the shortest time possible and that United Nations forces will be urgently deployed in Darfur.

The Commission of the Gulf of Guinea is currently headquartered in Luanda, where the representatives of the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic met recently at the initiative of Angola. Both institutions promote peace, security,

stability and multiform cooperation among their members, in consonance with the principles of the United Nations Charter.

I must highlight the decisive role that regional and subregional organizations can play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. At the same time, they can alert everyone to the need to strengthen the mandates and the financing of United Nations peacekeeping operations, without prejudice to post-conflict activities, such as disarmament and the resettlement of populations, among other actions.

In the particular case of Africa, it is in our interest to see the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) fully achieved, so that the growth rate of the entire continent can be aligned with that of the world economy. The reduction of extreme poverty by 50 per cent by 2015, as foreseen by the United Nations, must be accompanied by a decisive fight against hunger and disease, including HIV/AIDS and other endemic scourges. The effectiveness of these actions depends, however, on complementary achievements, such as fairer trade with developed countries, greater fluidity in the transfer of capital, official development assistance and forgiveness of foreign debt.

In recent years, significant progress has been made in the reform of the United Nations system. It is nevertheless important to continue to move forward in that process, especially in regard to the Security Council, with the objective of strengthening the authority and the effectiveness of the Organization and making it more representative, more democratic and more participatory in the areas of international security, development and human rights.

In spite of criticism and some known failures, the United Nations remains the only institution at the international level with the prestige and credibility to resolve inter-State conflicts and crises that, due to their dimensions, escape the control of the authorities of a State or endanger its population.

The United Nations-led fight against conventional, nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and landmines, in addition to the peacekeeping and humanitarian operations of the Blue Helmets in many regions, have contributed to greater world security. In that regard, it is important to strengthen the monitoring of the implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), so as to move towards a global disarmament

process and discourage a new arms race. It is also urgent to relaunch the Middle East peace process in a committed and comprehensive manner, for the Middle East remains unstable and the source of a constant threat to world peace.

A recurring theme in the Assembly's agenda is the embargo against Cuba. It is imperative to put an end once and for all to the economic, trade and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America, as it violates the principles of international law and Chapters I and II of the United Nations Charter. Angola hopes that the United Nations will state its view on this matter and remain faithful to the core of its Charter, according to which all actions must be the result of a debate and a collective decision, thus excluding unilateralism.

The challenges that lie ahead of us entail a constructive dialogue among all the countries involved, especially among heads of State and Government, who will have to overcome possible differences and impediments and will have to find middle ground between the possible and the desirable, between boldness and realism.

We believe that through joint action, the promotion of dialogue among civilizations and the revitalization of the spirit of international solidarity, it will be possible to build a better world for all. A world of peace, based on justice and the rule of law, without weapons of war and without dangerous pollution is a safer world. Its construction depends entirely on the political will of all States Members of the United Nations, especially the permanent members of the Security Council. Let us all unite our forces for a better world for all.

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

Mr. José Eduardo Santo, President of the Republic of Angola, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (continued)**General debate****Address by Mr. Romano Prodi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Italy**

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Italy.

Mr. Romano Prodi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Italy, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Romano Prodi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Italy, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Prodi (Italy) (*spoke in Italian; English text provided by the delegation*): I wish to offer you my heartfelt congratulations, Sir, on your election to preside over this sixty-second session of the General Assembly. Your experience in international affairs and your first-hand knowledge of the Organization make you particularly suitable for this important post. At the same time I sincerely thank your predecessor, Ms. Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, for her wise and dedicated leadership of the Assembly.

I want to begin my statement where I left off last year, with Italy's decision to defend human rights in the world and to oppose the death penalty. In recent months, Italy has worked very hard to enable the Assembly to adopt a resolution on a universal moratorium on the death penalty, with a view to its complete abolition. It has been a source of great satisfaction to see support for our initiative growing day by day in Europe and in every other region of the world. We have now reached a decisive moment.

I trust that we shall all be united in this battle, which is supported by Nobel laureates, statesmen and stateswomen, and free men and women throughout the world, and that the "growing trend in international law and national practice toward a phasing out of the death penalty" — to quote Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (*Press release SG/SM/10839*) — will be officially sanctioned by this General Assembly's adoption of the draft resolution we are about to submit together with many countries from every regional group and from the European Union. If genuine politics means showing foresight, we shall perform a great political act through the adoption of that draft resolution. It will demonstrate that humankind is capable of making

progress not only in science, but also in the field of ethics.

A United Nations resolution against the death penalty will prove that human beings are better today than they were yesterday, even in moral terms. An outcome with enormous consequences, heralding a more just future, and a society that has at last freed itself from the spiral of revenge, demonstrating that it has heeded the ancient admonition: if you want peace, you must work for justice.

Last year we welcomed the ceasefire in Lebanon and the launch of the new United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which has been under Italian command for several months now. Today, thanks in part to our common commitment, Lebanon is in a better situation, although it has not yet solved its problems, as the brutal attacks of recent days have unfortunately demonstrated.

We must continue to support the Lebanese reconciliation process and help the country to regain its unity through the election of a new President. We must do this without ignoring the root causes of the conflicts afflicting the Middle East, first and foremost the Palestinian question. In short, we must continue to mobilize support for reconciliation among peoples and within a single people.

Restoring peace to the Middle East is the top priority of the international community, because if one day this region should find greater peace, freedom and prosperity, we shall all live in greater peace, freedom and prosperity. I am therefore delighted that the United States has promoted a new international meeting. We are ready to provide our input and we are already preparing it, knowing that the more countries in the region that are behind this meeting, the greater the possibility of success.

Italy will continue to play its part in the rest of the region too, beginning with dialogue. For it is through dialogue that the most difficult issues can be resolved. I have never seen a lasting solution to a problem when the solution was imposed from above or from outside.

Today's challenges, such as bringing peace to the Middle East, are complex. If we wish to overcome them we must rise to their dimensions. In other words, we have to set aside all partisan interests in a world that is increasingly shaped by global processes.

This applies also to climate change, to which this session is most appropriately dedicated. As I said yesterday at the panel convened by the Secretary-General, Italy considers climate change a priority issue. We are among the European supporters of a unilateral 20 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. We have made similar commitments on energy efficiency, renewable energy sources and biofuels. In Europe we have already made various strategic decisions, but it is obvious that any post-Kyoto agreement can only be achieved within the United Nations, because when speaking about global warming we are speaking about the pre-eminent global problem of our day.

National approaches to solving the world's problems no longer exist. The era of making and unmaking national borders is long over. It is only through multilateralism, by marshalling everyone's energies, that we can hope to do good.

Our task today is to adapt the multilateral structures at our disposal to a changing world and to think of new forms of global governance, for there is no other way to manage global processes.

The challenge facing Europe today is not to become resigned to the world as it is, but to seek to improve it based on the values in which Europe believes: freedom, democracy, respect for others, and respect for the rules of peaceful coexistence. That is why we are adapting our founding treaties. That is why we are building a common foreign and defence policy. That is why we have invented a new citizenship, European citizenship, to which we are entitled by choosing to share certain values, not by virtue of kinship or nationality.

The European dream is thus the child of the universal dream of the United Nations. In the past year the United Nations has continued to play a central role in resolving international disputes. The cases of Lebanon and Darfur demonstrate that if Member States are willing to give the United Nations a strong central role, the Organization is today up to the task. We have to ask ourselves what the United Nations needs in order to fulfil its worldwide mission and to be equally effective in different crisis areas.

First and foremost, we need an Organization capable of renewal and adaptation. In the past two years the revival of the reform process produced its first positive results. One essential aspect of reform

relates to the General Assembly, which remains the main decision-making organ of the Organization. I never tire of repeating that we have to restore the General Assembly's central position, and exploit its political guidance potential and, above all, its universality.

The principles of democracy and the representation of every Member State underpin the United Nations system. That is why we are opposed to any concept of Security Council reform that would establish new permanent members. The growing contribution of a growing number of countries to the Organization should not be wasted by introducing elitist and selective reforms.

It is clear that reforming the Security Council means addressing one of the fundamental pillars of the global security architecture. The Council's central role and its nature as the paramount source of international legitimacy impel us to seek shared political solutions.

Last year, in this very Hall, I advocated that negotiations be started to break the deadlock and help strengthen the Organization. I spoke of the need to start negotiations based not on imposing predefined models and positions, but rather on the search for solutions based on the widest possible consensus.

I am therefore delighted that, one year later, the General Assembly has decided to make every effort, through intergovernmental negotiations among others, to reach a general agreement on Security Council reform that we all hope will open a new chapter with a view to an agreed solution, a solution that I hope can include strengthening the presence of the leading regional stakeholders in the Security Council. My country is ready and will not fail to demonstrate commitment and to contribute ideas in this new phase of the Security Council reform process.

Reform is also intended to make the Organization more effective in the areas and on the issues where, by history and vocation, it can provide greater added value: Africa and development issues.

The United Nations is deeply engaged in Africa. Over two thirds of the Blue Helmets are deployed in Africa on peacekeeping missions. Italy will pursue this goal through the establishment of the African Peace Facility fund, which will complement its European counterpart fund. Darfur and Somalia remain two of our central concerns.

But it would be a mistake to look only at the negative side and forget the many encouraging signs of development and unity coming from Africa. I am referring to the growth of the economy and to the hope that has arisen in many parts of the continent.

In Europe we are now preparing for the second Africa-Europe Summit. I hope that it will be held successfully before the end of the year. Italy is working above all to ensure that the Summit will spark a European policy for Africa that is worthy of the name.

That brings me to development. It is the responsibility of the United Nations to keep development at the top of the international agenda. It will take more than lip service to the Millennium Development Goals to achieve them. We all have to work for their attainment. I have already expressed my willingness to sit at a table next year for a progress report on the implementation of the commitments we made seven years ago.

We can no longer ignore the reality around us: one half of world trade and investment benefits 14 per cent of the world's population; the 49 poorest countries in the world receive 0.5 per cent of the global product; and 90 per cent of the planet's wealth lies in the hands of only 1 per cent of its inhabitants. Efforts are needed from everyone, particularly those who have more to give. The G-8 can play an important role in this area. Here and now I pledge to make this issue the centrepiece of the Italian presidency in 2009.

The principles of solidarity and cooperation underlying this Organization are as sound today as they were 62 years ago. The spread of democratic values and greater attention to the protection of human rights should not make us forget that these principles and values are still threatened and violated in far too many parts of the world. What is more, insecurity leads more and more people and countries to close themselves off.

The danger is that this sense of insecurity can cause societies to regress. Even the most free and democratic nations, if they feel they are under threat, may adopt measures that will undermine peace and with it, the civil and political rights of their citizens.

In the face of such risks, the principles and values of the United Nations are our beacons and our stars. They make it possible for us to navigate even by night and in rough waters. Staying on course is not just a

political imperative. It is above all a moral imperative for all of us.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Italy for the statement just made.

Mr. Romano Prodi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Italy, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mrs. Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mrs. Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Mrs. Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, and inviting her to address the General Assembly.

Mrs. Merkel (Germany) (spoke in German; English text provided by the delegation): Please accept my congratulations, Mr. President, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. I wish you every success.

We are currently experiencing a period of dramatic changes. Great opportunities are accompanied by considerable risks. Global structures are changing. States, economies and societies are becoming networked as never before. That is what we call globalization.

The good thing about that development is that prosperity is increasing, and more and more people are escaping from poverty. The challenge that that development poses is that not everyone has their fair share of this prosperity. There are considerable imbalances. We thus need a global awareness, beyond national boundaries, of our joint responsibility in order to master the major challenges facing our world.

Climate change is undoubtedly one of the central challenges facing humanity today. I therefore very much welcome your decision, Mr. President, to make climate change the focus of this year's session of the General Assembly. Never before have the facts been so clear, the consensus among scientists so great or the need for action so indisputable. Each and every country

is affected by the impact of climate change. No one country can tackle it alone. Not to take action would incur immense costs and cause new global conflicts.

What does that mean for the way ahead? In quite concrete terms, it means that any contribution from individual States or groups of States is welcome. However, I would like to add most emphatically that such contributions can only complement a post-Kyoto agreement under the auspices of the United Nations. They can never replace it.

This session of the General Assembly therefore has to set the course for the next vital step: the climate conference in Bali. Environment ministers will have to agree in Bali on a clear road map so that negotiations can be successfully concluded by 2009. There are three key elements: a common understanding on the scale of emissions reduction, a common understanding on fair national contributions and a common understanding on the instruments we should use both to protect the climate and to foster economic growth.

The scope of the need for action is becoming increasingly clear. We must at least halve global emissions by the middle of the century. For this we have a clear guiding principle: the principle of common but differentiated responsibility. Industrialized countries must embrace ambitious absolute reduction targets. During the German presidency the European Union adopted bold targets for 2020. All industrialized countries will have to drastically reduce their per capita emissions.

Emerging economies will first of all have to decouple their economic growth from emissions. In the long term, per capita emissions in both industrialized countries and emerging economies will have to converge at a level compatible with our global climate protection target.

Such a process of long-term convergence offers all countries scope to develop. It does not demand too much of anyone. There is no doubt in my mind that only a United Nations agreement can provide the dependability this will require.

Climate protection will therefore be a litmus test of the international community's ability to act effectively in the twenty-first century. For, on our own continent, we Europeans know from our daily experience that — although any individual country is

too small to make a real difference — together we can achieve much.

In the light of our experience, I believe three principles are of crucial importance to our common future. First, economic strength and social responsibility belong together. This principle applies both to how States treat their citizens and to how States treat each other. It emphasizes the right and freedom of each individual to achieve their full potential. At the same time, it upholds cohesion and solidarity, while categorically rejecting isolationism and protectionism.

That is why we are seeking a balanced and comprehensive agreement on multilateral trade. In concrete terms, this means that we have to bring the Doha Round to an early and successful conclusion. Too much time has been wasted. We have to seize the last chance for negotiations this autumn. Our aim must be transparent financial markets and effective protection of intellectual property, as well as minimum legal and social standards. For I am convinced that there can be no fair competition without common ground rules.

We can only achieve cohesion and solidarity in a global development partnership. With the Millennium Development Goals, the international community has laid down binding quantifiable targets and deadlines for the first time. Together with its EU partners, Germany has undertaken to reach the United Nations 0.7 per cent target no later than 2015. We stand by these pledges.

There can be no doubt that genuine partnership places all sides under an obligation — an obligation to step up the fight against corruption, to aim for better governance and to better protect human rights. We want to support Africa in particular. There have been encouraging developments on the continent but unfortunately, also, serious setbacks, for example in Zimbabwe.

“Growth and responsibility in the world economy” is, therefore, also the motto guiding this year's German presidency of the Group of Eight (G-8).

The second principle is that we have to strengthen the effectiveness of the United Nations. In my view, there is absolutely no doubt — the United Nations is the place where binding joint responses can be found to global challenges. But the United Nations is in need of reform. This is true, above all, of the Security Council. In many crisis situations it needs to

be able to come up quickly with universally binding proposals. To do this, it must have international legitimacy. However, the present composition of the Security Council no longer reflects the world today. There is, therefore, no alternative to adapting it to political realities.

My country has over the past years been actively involved in this debate. Germany is prepared to assume more responsibility, and to take on a permanent seat on the Security Council. What we need now are tangible results. We are by no means only at the start of our endeavours. The United Nations reform process has already produced some results, such as the report of the High-level Panel on United Nations system-wide coherence and the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission.

But time is short. There are numerous crises we have to deal with right now. And notwithstanding the many differing factors that have led to these crises, they all have one thing in common: they can only be solved multilaterally. The key to ending them is unity of purpose. This is particularly true with respect to Iran. Iran has continuously worked on its nuclear programme in clear contradiction of the demands of the International Atomic Energy Agency and the United Nations. Nobody should be in the slightest doubt as to the dangerous nature of this programme. Iran is ignoring Security Council resolutions. Iran is blatantly threatening Israel.

Let us not fool ourselves. If Iran were to acquire the nuclear bomb, the consequences would be disastrous, first and foremost for the existence of Israel; secondly, for the entire region; and ultimately for all of us in Europe and the world who attach any importance to the values of liberty, democracy and human dignity. That is why we have to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear arms.

The international community must not allow itself to be divided or have its decisive response to Iran's provocations undermined in any way. The world does not have to prove to Iran that Iran is building a nuclear bomb. Iran has to convince the world that it is not striving towards such a bomb.

Each and every German Chancellor before me has shouldered Germany's special responsibility for the existence of Israel. I, too, pledge to live up to this responsibility that our history has bequeathed us. It is one of the fundamental principles that guides my

country. In other words, Israel's security is non-negotiable for me as German Chancellor. And that being the case, we have to do more than pay lip-service to it. Together with its partners, Germany will continue to seek a diplomatic solution. With this aim in mind, Germany will — if Iran does not come around — firmly advocate additional and harsher sanctions.

Unity of purpose is also the key in the fight against international terrorism, and especially in our efforts aimed at security and stability in Afghanistan. Unity of purpose is also vital for ensuring a peaceful future in Kosovo, where NATO and the European Union play a particularly active role. We want a solution under United Nations auspices. All parties are now called upon to show a willingness to compromise.

We also strongly support the efforts of the Middle East Quartet for peace in that region. Germany is a staunch advocate of the vision of two States, within secure borders and in peace, for the Jewish people in Israel and for the Palestinians in Palestine. We welcome the fact that both parties are continuing their talks with great vigour, above all with a view to the Middle East conference scheduled for November.

The third principle is that we have to strengthen our shared immutable values. In my opinion, one of the great dangers of the twenty-first century is that crises and conflicts could give rise to a clash of civilizations. This must not happen. For this reason, I plead for tolerance — tolerance as properly understood, not "anything goes" masquerading as tolerance. Everybody must be able to follow his or her own path, but it must be a path within the international community, not outside it.

This path is clearly departed from wherever massive human rights violations are committed, as in Darfur. A human tragedy is being played out there. Too much time has already been squandered. Now is the time to act. The crimes perpetrated there must not go unpunished. This path has been departed from in Myanmar, where human rights have likewise been disregarded for years. I urge the Government not to use force against the peaceful demonstrators and finally to make way for a democratic future for the country. This path is also departed from when political assassinations are carried out, as in the case of Rafik Hariri or the recent cowardly attack just a few days ago in Lebanon. The Hariri tribunal must commence its work with all

possible speed. I call on Syria to grant Lebanon diplomatic recognition at long last.

It is my fundamental conviction that we must, time and again, muster the strength to assert our shared values of freedom and democracy. In order to do that, we need an unshakeable foundation.

We have such a foundation: the Charter of the United Nations. It was written when Europe and wide swathes of the rest of the world lay in ruins. At the most basic level, it is a statement that, notwithstanding all the dark chapters and tortuous turns of our history, universal human rights do exist. In other words, what it all comes down to is respecting and protecting the dignity of each individual person. That is the

underlying reason why we assemble here each year and work together for the future of our peoples.

Germany will do its utmost to advance that work. We look forward to fruitful cooperation with all partners in the United Nations.

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

Mrs. Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 8.55 p.m.