



# General Assembly

Sixty-eighth session

**12**<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting  
Thursday, 26 September 2013, 10 a.m.  
New York

Official Records

*President:* Mr. Ashe ..... (Antigua and Barbuda)

*The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.*

**Address by Mr. Donald Rabindranauth Ramotar,  
President of the Republic of Guyana**

**The President:** The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guyana.

*Mr. Donald Rabindranauth Ramotar, President of the Republic of Guyana, 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. Donald Rabindranauth Ramotar, President of the Republic of Guyana, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Ramotar:** My delegation and I warmly congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to the high office of President of the General Assembly. I salute you as a distinguished son of our Caribbean community and I pledge Guyana's unwavering support towards the successful execution of your important duties. I would also like to pay tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, for his valuable service to the Organization. And I take this occasion to reiterate our thanks to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his leadership and dedication to the United Nations.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our solidarity with and deepest condolences to the Government and people of Kenya in the wake of the

recent terrorist attacks there, which resulted in the loss of life and great pain to the people of that nation.

Barely 800 days remain until the deadline for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is reached and a post-2015 development agenda launched. It is appropriate, therefore, that the Assembly has been invited to focus its attention on the theme of "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage". A review of our experience to date will reveal that the world as a whole has witnessed substantial progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. However, prospects vary significantly within and across countries and regions, and a large number of countries are likely to come short in achieving the Goals.

Health and education challenges threaten the sustainability of hard-earned socioeconomic gains. Today, still more than 1 billion people live in extreme poverty and one in eight persons on the planet — among them 200 million children — suffer from chronic undernourishment. In addition, we still have 57 million children who are out of school. This needs to be urgently corrected. We must also pay special attention to the quality of education in order to develop a generation of global citizens who are capable of rising to the challenges of the future. To this end, Guyana supports the Secretary-General's Global Education First Initiative as an instrument for the development of meaningful solutions to the challenges regarding access to and quality of education.

If we are to make this world a better place for everyone, we must also address the issue of inequality.

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Income distribution continues to be skewed in favour of the rich nations and rich persons within nations. This gap has grown dangerously wide. Needless to say, inequality leads to great discontent and social unrest. At the heart of many of the conflicts we see today is the widening gap between the haves and have-nots. Sometimes this is not readily visible, as the fight for social and economic justice is often clouded by inter-ethnic, interreligious and other types of conflicts.

To defend the gains that we have made and to expand further, it is necessary for the United Nations to focus on narrowing the gaps in income, access to social services, infrastructure, land distribution and other critical areas. If there is one lesson to be drawn from efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, it is that addressing inequality is crucial to the achievement of sustainable development objectives. The approach adumbrated in the resolution on a new global human order (resolution 65/120) remains relevant in the struggle to eradicate poverty and inequality and indeed the post-2015 development agenda.

In setting the stage for a post-2015 agenda, we must build on and expand the gains made. To this end, we must create an international environment that will facilitate the achievement of the goals that we will set for the future. Central to our efforts must be the focus on world peace. Peace and development are inseparable. Peace will be realized only if international law and the rights of nations and their sovereignty are always respected and upheld.

It is in this regard that I wish to view the situation in the Middle East. At the moment, Syria is at the centre of our collective concern. The war in that sister nation has taken thousands of innocent lives. It is an illusion to believe that military intervention will bring peace to that country. What is badly needed is political dialogue among the Syrian parties. The international community also has an important role to play. We welcome the agreement between Russia and the United States that will facilitate the destruction of chemical weapons held in Syria. We call on all countries that possess such weapons to do the same. We hope too, that terrorist forces operating in Syria will withdraw. After all, they cannot be terrorists when they were fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq, but freedom fighters when fighting the Syrian Government. A terrorist is simply a terrorist.

In the same way, let me say that a blow was struck against democracy when the coup took place in Egypt.

However, the major world Powers, instead of condemning the use of such means to change Governments, chose to remain silent. This gave tacit support to the coup, which has led to violations of human rights and loss of innocent lives, and may lead to more protests and possibly violence and death. Nevertheless, it is our fervent hope that the people of that great brotherly country and their leaders, regardless of their political persuasion, will find a peaceful way out of the present difficulties.

Moreover, peace in the Middle East will not be realized until we have a just solution to the Palestinian tragedy. The Palestinian people have the right to their own country. We support them in their quest for the right to live in peace and in an independent, viable Palestinian State.

Turning to our own region, allow me to underscore that the blockade against our sister Caribbean country Cuba has caused serious damage to that country's economy and continues to be a major obstacle to development. We join the call for a lifting of the blockade and the removal of the burden that it places on the Cuban people.

The adoption in April of the landmark Arms Trade Treaty opens the door to effective regulation of the international trade in conventional arms. For us in the Caribbean, the Treaty bears relevance not only to the safety and security of our citizens and to the fight against transnational crime, but also, in an important way, to our overall pursuit of sustainable development. The funnelling of guns into our societies is a menace that must be curbed in order to preserve our young people and our future. As one of the first countries to ratify the Treaty, Guyana urges all States to work to assure its early entry into force.

While peace is vital to development, let me hasten to add that socioeconomic progress coupled with democracy is crucial to the preservation of peace. Central to these principles are our people. They remain the most important factor for development. That is why my country has been increasingly investing in the development of our people. An examination of our national budget will reveal that some 30 per cent of our expenditure goes to the social sector. As a result, we have managed to achieve several of the Millennium Development Goals well before the time envisaged. We have achieved universal primary education and are close to achieving universal secondary education.

We have also slashed poverty by more than half. Moreover, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, we are one of the few countries in the world that have not only reduced poverty but also improved nutrition. The eradication of poverty and the promotion of sustainable development must become a key principle and objective of global economic governance and a guidepost for the action of international financial and trade institutions.

While I speak of these achievements, I would be remiss if I did not point out the grave challenges confronting us even as we seek to build on the foundations that have already been laid. We in the Caribbean have experienced major setbacks due to the international economic and financial crises that started in North America and Europe. While it appears that those two regions are emerging from the crises, the effects continue to be devastating in the Caribbean. Even as we continue to grapple with the effects of the financial crisis, we are now faced with the graduation and differentiation imposed by some of our international partners.

We are told that as middle-income countries, measured by per capita gross domestic product (GDP), we are no longer entitled to concessionary financing. This is a recipe for reversing the gains made over the years of hard work and sacrifice. We call for a rethink of that position and urge that greater consideration be given to the special vulnerabilities of our region, where a country can see its entire GDP wiped out by a single hurricane or, as in our country in 2005, when 60 per cent of its GDP was wiped out because of floods. Clearly what we need is increased cooperation with the international community and our development partners, and not less.

Another serious challenge to sustainable development is the impact of climate change. This is even more the case for small island developing States, which are represented in the Assembly. Some of them face an imminent passage to oblivion. Climate change is not of our making but, sadly, as small island developing States and low-lying coastal States, we remain the victims of its most adverse impacts. Unfortunately, instead of a reduction in the emissions of greenhouse gases, there has been a rise of nearly 50 per cent. This marked failure to take decisive action poses a threat to all humankind. It is tragic that while we all know that dangers that lurk due to global warming and climate change, we seem incapable of stopping ourselves.

We therefore welcome the initiative of the Secretary-General to convene a summit on climate change, and hope that it will result in a strong political consensus for addressing this paramount challenge of our time.

We welcome the observance of 2014 as the International Year of Small Island Developing States, and call on the international community to seize the chance to take a serious approach to meaningfully assist such States, in particular in relation to building resilience and disaster risk management. To that end, a special fund must be established and made easily accessible.

In setting the stage for the post-2015 development agenda, we believe that we should intensify efforts to eradicate poverty. The United Nations must not allow that objective to be lost among the many other demands that exist. The United Nations also has a role to play in ensuring that the poorer, smaller developing countries are not always put at a disadvantage at the level of international economic discourse and action. It is critical that this body pursue and encourage multilateral approaches to international and global problems. Experience has shown that even though the multilateral approach is often slow, it is the only approach that can lead to lasting peace, democracy and justice in our world.

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

*Mr. Donald Rabindranauth Ramotar, President of the Republic of Guyana, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Address by Mr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia**

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

*Mr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia, 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. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Pohamba:** Last week a heinous terrorist attack was perpetrated against the Republic of Kenya,

resulting in the death and injury of dozens innocent civilians as well as the destruction of property. We condemn this senseless attack and express our fraternal solidarity with the people of Kenya.

The theme for the sixty-eighth session is “The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage”. It echoes the words of the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations: “to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom”. As leaders, we are therefore challenged to ensure that the post-2015 development agenda promotes sustainable development and a secure future for current and future generations.

When the Millennium Summit adopted the Millennium Development Goals in 2000, it emphasized the urgency of making the world a better place for all humanity. That promise gave hope to millions who live in abject poverty and deprivation in many parts of the world. As we approach the 2015 deadline, we should ask ourselves whether we have lived up to the commitments that we made in 2000. We believe that the post-2015 development agenda should be people-centred and inclusive, with a focus on the provision of health care, education, food security and nutrition, energy, potable water, gender equality and the empowerment of women, young people and people with disabilities.

The challenges of climate change and environmental conservation should continue to be a focus of our attention. During the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012, we made commitments to create a new global partnership characterized by a new spirit of solidarity, cooperation and mutual accountability. The outcome document of the Conference, entitled “The future we want” (resolution 66/288, annex), identified poverty eradication as the greatest global challenge facing the world today and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.

As I speak, the eleventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification is about to conclude its deliberations in our capital city, Windhoek. We believe that the outcome of the Conference will further strengthen the Convention’s role in mitigating the effects of desertification and droughts, particularly on the continent of Africa.

While developing countries have made commendable advances in the areas of social and economic development, many challenges remain. Namibia holds the view that the post-2015 development

agenda should take into account the valid concerns and challenges faced by middle-income countries, such as access to grants and concessional funding for developmental purposes. The post-2015 development agenda should also embrace the protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms, the rule of law and the maintenance of international peace and security. I wish to emphasize that sustainable development requires adequate and predictable financing at the local and international levels.

Namibia is concerned about the conflict situations and growing instability in many parts of the world. We welcome the signing of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Region. Namibia urges all signatories to the Framework to work together in good faith towards its full implementation. We commend the efforts of the Intervention Brigade to restore peace in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and call on the international community to give its full support to achieving the success of that important mission. We also appeal to the international community to provide humanitarian assistance to the communities affected by the conflict.

Namibia welcomes the decision of Madagascar’s reformed special electoral court, paving the way for holding presidential and parliamentary elections there next month. We call on the international community to provide the financial, technical and logistical support necessary for those elections to be successful.

Our Government continues to support the efforts of the African Union (AU), through the African Union Mission in Somalia, to stabilize the situation in Somalia.

The Southern African Development Community and AU election observer missions have declared the harmonized elections that recently took place in Zimbabwe to be free, peaceful and credible. In that context, Namibia calls for the unconditional lifting of all sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe.

We welcome the holding of democratic elections in Mali and congratulate President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita on his election. We commend the Economic Community of West African States and other international partners for the leading role they have played in resolving the crisis in that country.

I take this opportunity to reiterate our steadfast solidarity with the people of Cuba, who have endured

harsh conditions due to the illegal economic blockade imposed on their country. We once again call for the unconditional lifting of the embargo on Cuba.

The attainment of self-determination of peoples living under foreign occupation is one of the principles that this Organization was founded on. In that regard, we reaffirm our solidarity with the people of Western Sahara, and call for the implementation of the United Nations settlement plan for that country. Similarly, we call for the implementation of relevant United Nations resolutions on Palestine.

Namibia condemns the use of chemical weapons against the civilian population in Syria, as confirmed by the United Nations inspectors. We welcome the agreement reached between the Russian Federation and the United States of America to place Syrian chemical weapons under the control of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We also support the efforts of the Joint Special Envoy of the Secretary-General and the League of Arab States to help the Syrian parties find a peaceful solution to the conflict in their country.

The process of reforming the United Nations system, especially the Security Council, must be accelerated in order to make it representative and democratic.

This session of the General Assembly presents an historic opportunity for the international community to take concrete steps to eradicate poverty and enhance international peace and security in order to create a world free of want, as envisaged in the Millennium Development Goals. Let us summon the necessary political will to act now.

I congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session and assure you of the full support of my delegation.

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

*Mr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

#### **Address by Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus**

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

*Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus, 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. Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Anastasiades:** It is a great honour to address the General Assembly for the first time in my capacity as President of the Republic of Cyprus.

While it is realistic and pragmatic to acknowledge that in an anarchic international system the political and economic leverage and might of States, or even of international organizations, are asymmetric and unequal, one should never forget the founding principles of the Charter of the Organization, which were formulated as a result of the traumatic historic experiences of two world wars.

Bearing in mind the aim of promoting the fundamental United Nations principles, I would like to share my deep concern regarding what is happening in various parts of the world, threatening the sovereignty of States and regional and global stability through, among other things, acts of State violence, acts of terrorism, the infringement and calling into question of sovereign rights enjoyed by States, the annexation of territories through the illegal use of force, the production and use of weapons of mass destruction, the sponsoring and harbouring of secessionist or terrorist movements, religious fundamentalism manifested through terrorist attacks, the forcible displacement of millions of people, and hunger and distress, which intensify migration flows and create demographic changes.

These are but a few examples that bear out the need to evaluate, through collective debate and self-assessment, whether the United Nations principles, values and methods have indeed contributed to what we have all been hoping for — the maintenance of peace and security and respect for the fundamental freedoms and human rights of all people.

I am not a romantic ideologist; quite the contrary, I am a pragmatic realist who acknowledges that in this imperfect world it is extremely difficult, even impossible, to expect the full and unquestioning implementation of United Nations principles and values. However, what is happening today risks overthrowing the current

world order, calling into question the relevance and effectiveness of this international Organization.

*Mr. Jerandi (Tunisia), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

It is not my intention to cast doubt on or minimize the multidimensional contribution of the United Nations to a plethora of cases over the past seven decades. What is important is to enhance the Organization's role and safeguard the effectiveness of its decisions, as well as its actions. Should decisions or resolutions based on international law condemning violations of human rights not be implemented or enforced, that could be seen as fostering or even rewarding arbitrariness. In that case, regional differences and conflicts could be prolonged indefinitely, serving the petty interests and expedience of their perpetrators at the expense of international law and our universal principles.

I do not intend to enter into detail of what we are witnessing and experiencing every day in different parts of the world. I will limit myself to the example of my own country, a small European country that has for almost 40 years been violently divided, despite numerous Security Council resolutions calling for its reunification and the withdrawal of the occupation forces.

I take this opportunity to assure the General Assembly that, despite the current economic difficulties we are facing, I am committed to working tirelessly and with determination to reach a viable and lasting settlement so that all the communities of Cyprus may live and thrive in a modern European country that fully respects the values and principles of the United Nations and the European Union, safeguards the fundamental freedoms and human rights of all its people, and ensures their peaceful coexistence and prosperous collaboration.

As I have already conveyed to the Secretary-General, it is my firm belief that the current status quo is unacceptable and that its prolongation would have further negative consequences for Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Therefore, a comprehensive settlement is not only desirable, but should not be further delayed. In that respect, I wish, as a leader with a sincere vision of reuniting my country, to once more call on Turkey and our Cypriot compatriots to demonstrate the same determination and commitment and become partners in the effort for the reunification of a peaceful, secure and prosperous homeland.

The reference made by the President of the Republic of Turkey, Mr. Abdullah Gül, in this very Hall (see A/68/PV.5) to the 2004 proposal that, through genuine democratic procedures, was not accepted by the vast majority of Greek Cypriots for a number of substantive reasons, does not absolve Turkey from its obligations and responsibilities concerning the efforts to find a just solution and does not truly reflect the realities on the ground, as borne out by the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Nonetheless, I welcome the decision of Turkey to respond positively to my proposal to hold meetings with the negotiator of the Greek Cypriot community. I hope, and at the same time expect, that this positive response will be followed by practical and substantial steps and the adoption of a constructive attitude, guided by good faith, that will contribute effectively towards reaching a settlement.

In that respect, it is my strong belief that it is of paramount significance that a dynamic impetus be launched, either before or even during the negotiating process, in order to restore the confidence of the people of Cyprus in the prospect of reaching a settlement. Such an impetus can be achieved only through the adoption of bold measures that are seen as game-changers and as creating a win-win situation, not only for both communities but also for all interested stakeholders.

With that in mind, I have submitted a package proposal that, among other things, includes the return of the ghost city of Famagusta to its lawful inhabitants, under the auspices of the United Nations and in line with Security Council resolution 550 (1984). The return of Famagusta, along with the evident advantage of reviving the hope of the people of Cyprus, will also provide a number of benefits. The infrastructural restoration of a city that has been uninhabited for 39 years will undoubtedly lead to the creation of new jobs in a wide variety of professional fields, providing a major boost to the economy of the country. At the same time, by working together, building mutual trust and enjoying the results of joint collaboration, Greek and Turkish Cypriots will come closer to the realization of the benefits of sharing together a prosperous future, just as we have done in the past.

I believe that the Assembly shares my assessment that this proposal, which is complementary to the negotiating process, is to the benefit of both communities and that its acceptance would provide a much-needed stimulus to the prospect of reaching a

settlement. At the same time, in order to avoid entering into a new frustrating negotiating process, the time for the start of the negotiations is not as important as that they be conducted in a comprehensive manner with clear substance, aims and targets.

To that end, I consider it essential that, before the start of the negotiating process, it be clearly established that the basis and solution to be reached will adhere to the relevant United Nations resolutions, the high-level agreements and the evolving transformation of the Republic of Cyprus into a bi-zonal, bi-communal federal State with a single international personality, single sovereignty and single citizenship. Moreover, the settlement must embody our capacity as a European Union (EU) member State and fully enshrine its values and principles by enhancing the role of the EU in the negotiating process. I have to clarify that such a role played by the European Union would merely supplement and complement the United Nations good offices mission in order to guarantee not only our effective and efficient participation in the European Union, through the proper implementation of the *acquis communautaire*, but also the restoration of the fundamental freedoms and human rights of all Cypriots.

Last but not least, an important humanitarian aspect of the Cyprus problem is the issue of missing persons. We salute the progress achieved so far. The issue must be resolved as soon as possible, regardless of the developments in the negotiations.

The positive and stabilizing role that Cyprus can assume in the eastern Mediterranean — especially in the areas of combatting terrorism, fighting the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and providing humanitarian assistance — has in the past few months received extensive recognition. Keeping Cyprus peaceful and stable and maintaining its constructive regional role is a primary objective of my Government. We have proven that we are a reliable and interconnecting bridge between Europe, North Africa and the Near and Middle Easts — in terms of both perception and actions — as well as a credible and stable country that gives true credence to being a safe haven. That has been demonstrated in practice several times during periods of massive humanitarian evacuations. We stand ready once more, if it is deemed necessary — and hopefully it will not be — to contribute in a substantive manner to any international call to provide humanitarian aid and facilities to the nationals of any third country.

A recent and most encouraging development in our area is taking place in the field of energy cooperation. The very promising potential of hydrocarbon exploration in the Levantine basin requires that all countries in the region work closely together, bilaterally and regionally. Pertinent to that and a testament to our constructive role in the region is the fact that Cyprus has assumed a leading role in bringing neighbouring hydrocarbon-producing countries together, seeking opportunities not only for maritime boundary agreements, but also for joint efforts in exploring those hydrocarbon resources. Energy, in my opinion, should be not a source of conflict, but a catalyst for conflict resolution and regional integration.

The Millennium Development Goals framework has galvanized unparalleled development efforts and guided global and national development priorities since 2000. While three of the eight Goals have been achieved prior to the final deadline, much work remains to be done ahead of 2015. With only two years left, enhanced commitment, resources and efforts are needed, as is a coordinated and integrated approach that can contribute to accelerating progress towards the achievement of all the Millennium Goals.

As a small island State facing particular challenges, we understand well why the coherence of all processes leading to a single and universal post-2015 development agenda is crucial. New and emerging asymmetric challenges — such as climate change and natural disasters, terrorism, inequalities and the necessity for the prevalence of the rule of law, democracy and human rights — require renewed and collective commitment and an effective target-oriented post-2015 framework with poverty eradication and sustainable development at its heart.

As the Secretary-General says in his report entitled “A life of dignity for all: accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015”,

“the world’s quest for dignity, peace, prosperity, justice, sustainability and an end to poverty has reached an unprecedented moment of urgency” (*A/68/202, para. 1*) “and the world’s nations must unite behind a common programme to act on those aspirations” (*ibid., para. 120*).

Cyprus strongly subscribes to the joint efforts in fulfilling this task.

A few months ago, my country received unprecedented international attention because of the economic crisis. I am proud to say that, due to the persistence, determination and resilience of the people of Cyprus, we are rising to the challenge and will soon lead our country to the path of recovery and growth. My political vision is for Cyprus to receive international attention yet again, but this time for all the right reasons.

This points to an end in the long-standing anachronistic division of my country, in line with the aspirations of our people, especially the younger generations, to coexist peacefully in a European country that fully respects their fundamental human rights and freedoms. I am certain that all will agree that the reunification is in the interests not only of the people of Cyprus, but also of the entire international community, since a solution to the Cyprus problem will undoubtedly have a very important spillover effect on efforts to achieve a much-needed environment of stability, security and peace in our region.

For our part, we are determined to rise to the challenge of this historic responsibility and do our utmost with the aim of providing a more stable, prosperous and conciliatory future in our immediate region, so that our legacy is remembered by generations to come.

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

*Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

#### **Address by Mr. John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana**

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

*Mr. John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. John Dramani

Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Mahama:** It is with a heavy heart that I address the Assembly today. Just before I left Ghana to attend this general debate, I learned of the terrorist attack that took place in Nairobi. I was shocked and deeply saddened to hear of the many lives that were lost to those senseless and cowardly acts of violence. As the death toll increased, so too did my grief, knowing that each additional number symbolized one more human life. Those numbers symbolized individuals who may have been strangers to those of us here but were of prime significance in the lives of the people who loved them — their parents, children, husbands, wives, friends and colleagues.

Soon enough, I got word that one of the people massacred was a person of significance in my life and in the lives of so many other Ghanaians. Kofi Awoonor was a 78-year-old gentleman who had served his country loyally as a poet and professor, ambassador to Brazil and Cuba, and Chairman of our Council of State, a presidential advisory body. Professor Awoonor had once even been our country's envoy to the United Nations. On this fateful day, however, Professor Awoonor was in Nairobi to perform his poetry at a writers' conference. He had travelled there with his son, and they had decided before the day's scheduled events to do what should have been one of the most ordinary and uneventful of activities — to make a stop at a shopping mall.

Unfortunately, what happened that day at the Westgate Premier Shopping Mall was anything but ordinary. Professor Awoonor's life was taken from him and those who loved him, just as the lives of dozens of others were taken away from them and their communities. Each of them had a unique story and accomplishments or aspirations for which they will be remembered. Professor Awoonor's son, though injured, was among the many who were lucky enough to escape the attack. It is a day they will never forget. They will carry the scars, physical and emotional, with them. We who watched from a distance should never allow ourselves to forget, because we have also been irrevocably marked by this tragedy.

When independence was upon us and our possibilities felt endless, the world saw how brightly Africa could shine. Then, for decades, that light was dimmed. There was a time when killing seemed almost

commonplace in Africa. Indeed, there are plenty of graves that remain unmarked. There was a time when the ruthlessness of dictators seemed to be the order of the day. For decades, the corruption, greed and depravity of a few caused the suffering of an entire continent. We so easily could have succumbed to the wars, the poverty and the diseases, but we did not. We staggered our way through, year after year, and eventually we made it. We have survived.

Last year when I addressed the General Assembly (see A/67/PV.9), I began with the assurance that I had come with good news from Ghana, with stories of success from the African continent. This year, it gives me great pleasure to do the same — even on the heels of the dastardly terrorist attack — because I know that today's Africa will not be divided or deterred by the heinous crimes of those who wish to disrupt our progress. I know that our borders will no longer be used to undermine the brotherhood and sisterhood of our citizens.

The days of massacres must remain in our past. Our rivers will no longer run red. Our children must be students now; we will no longer allow their childhoods to be stolen from them by those who wish to turn them into soldiers. Africa is standing tall, walking confidently towards political stability, walking confidently towards economic prosperity, walking proudly towards ethnic and religious harmony and coexistence. There is no place in today's Africa for hatred and intolerance and the murder of innocent people — not anymore, not ever again. So we will mourn our dead. We will console ourselves and each other through our grief. We cannot allow terror to defeat us. That must strengthen our resolve. Our stride will not be broken.

Last year from this stage, I also declared Ghana's resolve to be a beacon of peace and democracy in the West African subregion. On behalf of the citizens whom I serve, I promised the world that Ghana would not allow its territory to be used in any manner whatsoever to destabilize other nations. Ghana has been steadfast in its cooperation with its regional neighbours to maintain the security of those nations that are enjoying stability and to restore security to those, such as Côte d'Ivoire and Mali, that have recently emerged from turmoil. Currently, Côte d'Ivoire is in a stage of rebuilding. The recent overtures towards reconciliation made by President Ouattara are a major step towards bridging the country's political divide. After its own

bout with terror, Mali made a solid return to democracy by conducting an election that all observers, even the sceptics and the cynics, hailed as being free, fair and peaceful.

West Africa has seen enough war and strife. We want peace and security to persist in our subregion. Ghana will continue to play its role in strengthening the Economic Community of West African States to make sure that it is able to meet that objective.

With all that I have said in my statement today, I am sure it will not come as a surprise to anyone that Ghana enthusiastically threw its support behind the Arms Trade Treaty adopted by the General Assembly at the sixty-seventh session. International trade in conventional arms and ammunition must be regulated. We like to mention how the world has become a global village, especially when speaking of technology, culture and travel. The ease of communication in that global village also exists for warmongers and terrorist groups, who are using it to recruit new members, expand their cells, create intercontinental networks, obtain weapons and conceal their identities and locations. If we are to fight back, we must also work cooperatively. Nations in the developed world must align themselves with nations in the developing world. We must form partnerships and work together. Ghana is prepared to do that. We have signed the Arms Trade Treaty and we intend to do everything possible to see that it is ratified in a timely manner.

Fledgling democracies tend to be fragile. Their limits are still being tested; their characteristics are still being defined. Democracy is not a one-size-fits-all venture, nor is it a one-time event. It is a system that takes decades to build, a process that pushes a country towards a perfection it will never reach, but countries must try nonetheless. This past year, the limits of Ghana's democracy were tested, and I am proud to report that we passed with flying colours.

The results of our recent elections were contested. Since our return to constitutional rule, Ghana has conducted six successful elections. Last year's elections were the first whose results were formally challenged and heard by the Supreme Court. What made that situation noteworthy was the reliance of all parties involved on the rule of law. The proceedings were televised for the sake of transparency. The verdicts were readily accepted, and there was not a single reported incident of violence.

Ghana's victory is not an aberration. Other countries, like Kenya, have had similar experiences. That indicates that democratic institutions in Africa are growing stronger. It indicates that the balance of power in African countries is shifting from the authority of a sole individual to the more equitable process of properly designed systems. Strong institutions are the hallmark of every nation's stability. They are crucial tools in the fight for human rights.

It is our intention to bring an end to youth unemployment. In Ghana today, we are about to launch the Youth Jobs and Enterprise Development Fund, a programme that will provide young people with entrepreneurial skills and access to the funds needed to establish businesses of their own or expand existing ones, thereby creating new employment opportunities for themselves.

Six of the ten fastest growing economies in the world today are on the African continent. However, that growth has not yet been translated into sustainable employment opportunities. Over the course of the past decade, African economies created over 37 million wage-paying jobs, yet 63 per cent of workers remain trapped in low-paying subsistence or self-employment endeavours. With those realities come the very real possibilities of income instability, exclusion from the benefits of economic growth and social security benefits tied to formal sector employment.

Africa has a fast-growing population, more than 50 per cent of which is below the age of 35. That means we must create more jobs for our growing numbers of youth. They must have opportunities available to them. We cannot do that unless we transform the economies of Africa. It all comes down to value. We must value our resources, including our human resource — we must value our people.

We cannot continue to be exporters of raw materials and primary produce. We need to add value to our exports. We cannot continue to export raw cocoa beans in Ghana; what we need to do instead is process more of those beans into value-added products. We cannot continue to export unrefined gold; we need to add value to our gold exports. We cannot continue to export oil and gas; we need to integrate that industry into our economy; we need to process petroleum products and produce power with the gas. We cannot continue to export bauxite and then in return import alumina to feed our local aluminium smelter; we need to work

towards creating an integrated bauxite and aluminium industry in Ghana.

In that way, by keeping the concept of value at the forefront of our economy, we can create new jobs for our young people. We can do that with local and foreign investors who share our vision. Often the rest of the world wrongly assumes that we in Africa do not know our worth. But we do. It is not sympathy we want; it is partnership — and the ability to stand on our own feet. It is not handouts we are in search of; it is opportunities. We have already shown that with time and the right opportunity, Africa can make it.

Ghana achieved the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets for reducing poverty and hunger far ahead of the scheduled date of 2015. We are on track for achieving MDGs 2, 3, and 6 as well. School enrolment, gender parity and the reduction of HIV/AIDS have all seen dramatic progress and statistical shifts as a result of the work to reach our targets. While we are lagging behind in MDGs 4, 5, and 7 — infant mortality, maternal health and environmental sustainability — the figures show that there has been a vast improvement. Since 2000, the number of maternal deaths for every 100,000 births has decreased by more than half, from 740 to 320. We recognize that when we are talking about human lives, even a 50 per cent decrease is too little; it is not enough. That is why in 2010 we launched the MDG Accelerated Framework and Country Action Plan.

Women account for more than 50 per cent of Ghana's population. We believe that empowering them through education and encouraging them to take full control of their reproductive rights will help us not only to attain the MDGs faster, but also to build a better nation. It is not enough to put girls in school and allow them just enough education to be deemed literate; we must keep them in school. Removing teenaged girls from school for any reason, let alone to marry them off, is an unacceptable practice that must end.

African women have always been the backbone of our societies. Let us imagine the change they could effect in our countries if we would only help them to reach their full potential. As a President and a father, I owe it to my children — my sons and my daughter — and all the children of Ghana to create a country where they may walk with their dignity intact and heads held high, standing shoulder to shoulder with the children of Europe, South America, Asia, North America and the rest of the world.

Ghana is encouraged by the new initiative to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian issue. We are still firm in our belief that an independent Palestinian State, existing side by side with a peaceful and secure Israeli State, is a desirable outcome that we must all support and work towards. In working towards that goal, we must realize that the continuous construction of settlements in Palestinian territory increasingly shuts the door on a two-State solution.

Ghana calls once again for the embargo against Cuba to be lifted. It is a relic of the Cold War era and has no place in our current global dispensation.

We have come a long way since the end of the last global war, yet the makeup of the Security Council does not reflect those developments. Ghana therefore supports the reform of the Security Council.

Ghana will continue to pursue the principle of constructive engagement in our relations with the other countries in the world. We are fully committed to promoting honest global partnership that is informed by mutual respect and reciprocity.

In closing, I would like once again to pay my respects to those who have lost their lives in Kenya, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Libya, Pakistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Mali, Somalia, Turkey, India, the United States and all the other places where terrorists have attacked just this year alone. The reason we are all gathered here today is to find the ways and the means to create a better, more peaceful and prosperous world.

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

*Mr. John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

#### **Address by Mr. Elbegdorj Tsakhia, President of Mongolia**

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

*Mr. Elbegdorj Tsakhia, President of Mongolia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

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

to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Elbegdorj Tsakhia, President of Mongolia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Tsakhia:** Allow me to first congratulate Mr. John Ashe of Antigua and Barbuda on assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at this session. Mongolia pledges its full support to him.

We gather here at the United Nations to collectively assess the state of the world, share our thoughts and our vision, and agree on common actions. I shall begin by reviewing where we are today.

Over 70 million people around the world join the middle class each year. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have improved the lives of billions of people. The world has attained poverty-reduction targets — in some places, even ahead of the proscribed deadline. Rather than seeing 2015 as the end, we should view it as the beginning of a new era. In this era, we should build on our successes, attend to gaps and meet emerging challenges.

Sadly, we face many such challenges. Today, over 200 million people are jobless, over 50 million children are not in school, and one in eight of our fellow citizens still goes hungry. Yet over \$900 billion dollars are earmarked for military expenditures every year. Only a fraction of that sum is spent on health care and education. Such a state of affairs should not be tolerated.

When it comes to the climate, a temperature increase of more than two degrees Centigrade would be disastrous, if not catastrophic. Our environment is changing rapidly. On the production side, global consumption far exceeds our fragile planet's capacity. Resources are being exhausted. Humankind is gravely endangered. We are running out of time. The world has too many hungry people, too much violence and too little commitment to human rights. We need to change that.

I want to share with the Assembly Mongolia's views and experience. Mongolia is a great nation with a rich history. It is an old nation with a young heart. We are fortunate to have abundant natural resources, which offer great growth prospects and a unique opportunity for economic development and social progress. With double-digit percentage growth, we are one of the world's fastest developing economies.

Mongolia has achieved many development goals in areas such as universal primary education, reducing

child mortality and improving maternal health. However, our fifth national MDG progress report suggests that more needs to be done. To reach our development goals, the Government is working closely with all national stakeholders, including political parties, the private sector, research institutions, civil society and the media. Likewise, we invite investors to work together for our common interests. Just a few days ago, we hosted the World Economic Forum Strategic Dialogue on the Future of Mongolia. That event gathered representatives of multiple stakeholders to explore future economic pathways for my country's development.

Mongolians care deeply for the environment. We take seriously our shared responsibility to confront the threat from climate change. That is why we are promoting a green development policy. We have also created and preserved national parks to curb desertification. At the same time, these scenic parks form the backbone of new ecotourism. They will generate both conservation income and green jobs.

My country is creating an Asian super-network for green development. It will produce renewable energy and provide it to Asian consumers. Mongolia's first wind farm, which is privately owned, is now in operation. Wind energy has the potential to produce electricity well beyond the country's needs.

We face many environmental challenges, including land degradation, deforestation, natural disasters and pollution. Those issues need to be resolved urgently and collectively. Environmental education and wider public participation are vital to resolving those challenges. This year we hosted the United Nations World Environment Day. Indeed, we are at the centre of the green economy. The Mongolian people, particularly our young people, are committed to building a better environmental future.

Last year I spoke of the importance of Mongolia's battle to root out corruption at all levels. We are combating corruption — the scourge of democracy — with a zero-tolerance policy at every level of Government. As a result, Mongolia moved up 26 places in Transparency International's rankings of States.

Transparency is the key to fighting corruption. Citizens have the right to know how their taxes are spent at every level of Government, from national agencies to the local administration. Our "glass account" system ensures that all funds are accounted for openly and

transparently. Citizens deserve access to information and a say in how their communities are developed. The best Government is the one based on strong civic participation.

Mongolia believes in democratic development. Over 20 years ago, it was unimaginable that Mongolia would one day chair the Community of Democracies. That well-known and highly respected global democratic movement is dedicated to promoting freedom and democracy. Hundreds of human rights activists and democratic leaders from many countries gathered in Ulaanbaatar last April. The Ulaanbaatar Declaration charts a future course for promoting democracy. Our initiative, the Asia Democracy Network, and the ministerial consultative meeting, have laid a solid foundation for democratic development.

I believe that efforts to foster civic engagement are more effective with democracy education. The implementation of resolution 67/18, on education for democracy, will strengthen democratic institutions and improve the human rights situation for more of our fellow citizens, because knowledge is power.

We all must focus on promoting human rights. In the past two decades, Mongolia has been learning and advancing democracy at home. With a view to supporting emerging democracies, we initiated and established an international cooperation fund and have already started implementing several projects. We are actively sharing the lessons of parliamentary democracy and conducting legal reform with Kyrgyzstan. We organized training for diplomats and public servants from Afghanistan. We are also discussing the possibility of cooperation with Myanmar and other emerging democracies.

I call on Member States to support our policy of protecting and promoting democratic governance and human rights. I humbly ask for States' support of Mongolia's candidature for the Human Rights Council in the elections to be held in 2015.

Peace and security remain a fundamental human right.

Today people the world over are distressed by endless cycles of conflict. Military forces and weapons are being used to settle disputes. Thousands of human beings are losing their lives, millions are displaced and many more are suffering. The grave situation in Syria is the latest example. We hope that the United States-Russian initiative will bear fruit and lead to a peaceful resolution of the Syrian conflict.

Mongolia firmly supports non-proliferation and the complete elimination of weapons of mass destruction. We cannot tolerate the use of chemical weapons and strongly condemn any violation of universally accepted international law.

This morning I participated in the High-level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament (see A/68/PV.11). As a country with internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free-status, uniquely situated between two nuclear-weapon States that are permanent members of the Security Council, Mongolia has been working hard on nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

As a result of our efforts, the five nuclear-weapon States, permanent members of the Security Council, have issued a joint declaration recognizing Mongolia's unique status. They pledged to respect that status and not to contribute to any act that would violate it. Their joint commitment ensures that we will not be used as a pawn in any future nuclear plans or strategies. That is Mongolia's contribution to greater confidence and stability in the region.

Strengthening peace and stability in North-East Asia is one of Mongolia's national security priorities. We firmly believe that dialogue and open discussions foster confidence. We have therefore put forth an initiative: the Ulaanbaatar Dialogue on North-East Asia Security. We invite the other States of the region to jointly address various issues of common interest, including security issues in North-East Asia.

Mongolian military officers and troops are honoured to serve along with their fellow United Nations peacekeepers to maintain international peace and security. We are very proud of our peacekeepers for their dedicated service and their invaluable contributions to the cause of peace.

We all know the complexity of contemporary conflicts. Our peacekeepers are serving in areas with high security threats and risks. To support and encourage our peacekeepers, last February I took a trip to South Sudan and visited the United Nations Mission there. During my visit, I met the President of South Sudan and offered my support to him and to his nation, the youngest member of the international community.

Let us make our world safer and more prosperous. Let us be fearless when it comes to fighting for fairness, transparency and the rule of law. Where there is the rule of law, there is less corruption and more human rights.

Where there is transparency, there is less economic disparity and greater accountability.

Where citizens are engaged and informed, good things happen. We must be fearless in our efforts to promote and achieve a fair, open and transparent world community.

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

*Mr. Elbegdorj Tsakhia, President of Mongolia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

#### **Address by Mr. Borut Pahor, President of the Republic of Slovenia**

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

*Mr. Borut Pahor, President of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

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

**President Pahor**: I would like to congratulate Mr. John Ashe on his election and wish him every success. Let me also pay tribute to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and thank him for his tireless efforts and leadership in promoting the ideals and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

The ideal and principle to which we should aspire is creating a world in which everyone can live free from fear, free from want and in dignity. The United Nations has achieved many extraordinary successes in the past, but we also have to acknowledge some disappointing and frustrating setbacks and failures. I believe that now more than ever, the United Nations must play a major role in international relations. We live at a time when the balance of global power is changing in a rapid and dramatic way. Thus far in history, this kind of global change has never ended without a global conflict. We established the United Nations precisely in order to prevent such a conflict in future.

Less than 20 years ago, we witnessed events that shocked our human conscience: genocide in Rwanda,

followed by genocide in Srebrenica and Darfur. We should have learned lasting lessons from those horrific events. We vowed never to let that happen again. We collectively endorsed the responsibility to protect human beings from mass atrocities and gross and systematic violations of human rights, and yet we have failed again.

We are faced with another human tragedy unfolding before our eyes in Syria. After more than two years of brutal violence against civilians, including women and children, we still have not found a political solution within the framework of the United Nations. Not only is the unconscionable use of chemical weapons in Syria considered a war crime, it is an assault against our common humanity.

Sovereignty as responsibility implies that States are responsible for the well-being of their citizens. It does not give them a licence to kill their own citizens. If States manifestly fail to protect their populations, the international community has a duty to react. When faced with mass atrocities, indifference is not, and cannot represent, an option. The report of the United Nations inspectors was clear, credible and impartial. The United States-Russian agreement on the framework for the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons must be implemented without delay. Syria's accession to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction is a positive step. Syria should comply immediately and fully, or face the consequences.

It is important that diplomacy prevailed and referred the issue back to the United Nations and the Security Council. The Security Council should live up to its responsibility and use all appropriate measures to comprehensively address the situation in Syria. Reaching a political settlement remains the only viable and lasting solution to the crisis and to ensuring stability in the region. We support the timely convening of the "Geneva II" conference.

The Security Council has the primary responsibility to maintain international peace and security under the Charter of the United Nations. It exercises that responsibility on behalf of all of us. It has an obligation to deliver and to fulfil the mandate entrusted to it by the international community. In this period of tensions and challenges, the responsibility of the major Member States is especially great. In recent years we have

witnessed too many divisions in the Council, which have impeded its ability to act in a timely manner. Decisive progress in Security Council reform is required to improve the Council's efficiency, transparency and accountability. As part of that effort, the permanent members should consider refraining from the use of the veto in situations of genocide, crimes against humanity and serious violations of international humanitarian law.

We call upon the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court. The International Criminal Court is an essential pillar in the system of international justice and a powerful tool to ensure accountability and to fight against impunity for the most serious crimes. It deserves our full support.

We must focus more closely on addressing the root causes of conflicts and expand our work on prevention. In particular, we must improve our ability to read the warning signs and trigger early action. The consequences of inaction far outweigh any risks that might arise from timely prevention and response, in terms both of money and — more important — human suffering and lives.

That was a lesson learned in our neighbouring region, the Western Balkans. Enhancing mutual trust through open political dialogue is a prerequisite for peaceful coexistence and long-term stability there. Slovenia and Croatia have therefore launched the Brdo process as a forum for high-level dialogue intended to strengthen relations and reconciliation among the countries of the region.

The past century was a very dark chapter in Europe and in human history. In August 2014, we will commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War. It brought about mass destruction of human life and new methods of warfare that were subsequently condemned by the civilized world. It was followed by the Second World War, and the century ended with a decade of intra-State conflicts and genocides that caused untold human suffering.

Let us use our conscience and humanity as the weapon of choice, for everyone deserves to live in dignity and peace, feeling safe, with access to food and drinking water and with a decent job and adequate pay for it. Yet something so obvious seems to be very far from reality. It is our task to bring reality closer to our dreams.

Today's world leaders have a unique opportunity, possibility and responsibility to influence our common future for many decades to come. That is why it is important not to lose focus on the successful implementation of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 and to agree on the post-2015 agenda. Let us transform our vision of saving future generations from the scourge of war into reality. We have no time to spare. We have no right to fail.

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

*Mr. Borut Pahor, President of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Address by His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Moncef Marzouki, President of the Republic of Tunisia**

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

*Mr. Mohamed Moncef Marzouki, President of the Republic of Tunisia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Moncef Marzouki, President of the Republic of Tunisia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Marzouki** (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of my country, Tunisia, and the Tunisian people, I greet the Assembly and all those around the world represented here.

On 17 December 2010, Tunisia, as the Assembly knows, was the first country to experience the Arab Spring, the peaceful revolutions of Arab peoples aimed at ridding themselves of corrupt dictatorships hampering the economic, political and social progress of their countries. Such dictatorships had imposed with brutal force corrupt regimes that had swept away basic human civilization. What has now been seen in some Arab Spring countries may lead some to believe that those efforts at liberation have failed and that the dream has become a nightmare.

What we must remember is that the Arab Spring is not a final stage, something that can be achieved overnight. It is, rather, just the beginning of a liberation

journey and a future project leading towards further horizons. What we must take into consideration is the element of time. Nations require decades to gain control of their revolutions and achieve their success or failure. We must remember that the Arab Spring, like all human projects, may stumble or come to a standstill — indeed, may fail. Our duty — the duty of those here — is to persist in support of that journey and to begin afresh after each obstacle.

We believe that the difficulties involved in building democracy in the Arab Spring countries are only natural and will be overcome. Our peoples will never accept regimes that shackle them. We want to fight extremism cloaked in religion, not replace it with dictatorship cloaked in nationalism or patriotism. Those difficulties do indeed reveal that political, social and ideological forces are pushing countries this way and that; building democracy and civil institutions is replete with difficulties in all Arab Spring countries.

From this rostrum, I would like to speak to the current authorities in Egypt and call on them to release President Mohammed Morsi and all political detainees. Only a bold initiative such as that has the potential to end the political tensions, stop the violence and bring all the parties back to a dialogue as the only means to solve all the difficult problems caused by the current transitional phase.

The restriction of movement of goods and persons is increasing the difficulties faced by the struggling people of Gaza under Israeli occupation and colonization.

Tunisia is dealing with three challenges. That of terrorism, as exemplified by the killing of the two martyrs, Shukri Belaid on 6 February and Mohamed Brahimi on 25 July, is a major political challenge that has impeded the work on the Constitutional Council. The second is the fact of slowing domestic and foreign investment. The third is that we are having to learn democracy at the same time that we are building and defending it. It has not yet taken root in our political and social traditions or our general culture. In Tunisia we have many of the elements necessary for success — a responsible and conscious political class that has continued to pursue dialogue, a legitimate, disciplined and professional army and a people who are peaceful and politically aware and who understand what is in their own interests.

I would like to assure the Assembly that the Arab Spring in Tunisia will continue and succeed. We

will set a date for elections and will agree on a just Government. Those elections will be supervised by the United Nations, the League of Arab States, the African Union and all other relevant international and local organizations and civil society groups. God willing, they will be held next spring. We are aware that the forces of terrorism and chaos will try to destabilize them as much as possible. Tunisia is undertaking this experiment both for itself and for the rest of the world.

We want our revolution to be peaceful. We want justice to play its role in the transitional period. We also want to expand the concept of democracy. It is not merely about the rights of those winning 51 per cent of the vote, and ignoring those who won 49 per cent. We want coalition Governments that take into consideration the fact that society is made up of many parts. We want to learn from one another. Our success or failure will have consequences that will reach far beyond our borders. Hence the importance of solidarity among peoples, so that we can ensure success for this unique experiment.

Today the Arab Spring has encountered the ultimate expression of suffering in Syria. The violence that has faced peaceful demonstrations has shocked us from the beginning. It is escalating day after day, and is now brutal on a scale that history has seldom seen before. In Tunisia we have taken a strong position against the dictatorship in Syria. We supported the the struggle of the Syrian opposition and expelled the regime's ambassador from our country. We have been warning for a long time now about the problems of the militarization of the events, of factionalism, sectarianism and outside intervention, whether by States or so-called jihadi groups, including some from Tunisia, which we know will be a danger to us when they return from that suffering country.

We have always called for a peaceful solution and have gone so far as to say that life is more important than justice, and if it is necessary not to prosecute the Syrian dictators — and if they leave the scene — we should accept that situation, however bitter. Our fears have become reality, however, and we continue to live with this nightmare that is afflicting the valiant Syrian people, as well as our conscience. We have never seen such a pitch of brutality and barbarity. A political solution to end the nightmare is desperately needed. However, what we also need is the support of the General Assembly for prosecuting the case through the International Criminal Court (ICC). That would be a contribution to international law that could contribute

to protecting people against dictatorships, particularly the Syrian dictatorship, which is an extreme example of how immorally a regime can behave.

We are fully confident that had the Court been able to act, the Syrian regime would not have attempted to turn the presidency of the country into rule-by-heredity, limiting ruling to one party only. It would not have dared to convict members of opposition political parties and sentence them to death. Imagine if the Court had been able to act in such cases. What if the Court had been able to pursue a course in favour of human rights? Imagine how we could have avoided the nightmare that the Syrian people has been going through — 100,000 dead and 7 million displaced persons, with a regime killing men, women and children with all the weapons at its disposal, including chemical weapons.

Have we ever seen such a brutal regime by an individual person who came to power through force and falsification and who is fighting a barbarous civil war that has set the stage for ugly scenes beyond any ever seen in the history of the region? The regime ought to be brought to the ICC. Justice delayed still cannot bring millions of dead back to life. There have to be preventive bodies that can take up such situations from their very beginning.

Regimes like that of Syria cannot last long against internal democratic opposition and the lack of international recognition. Tunisia therefore calls on all democratic States that wish to build institutions that counter the rise of dictatorships to support our project. We believe that such a constitutional court would be the expression of a new spirit needed by the international community.

We are meeting in this place with all the nations of the world to review the world's problems, many of which are foreseeable and bring great pain to people. We would have been able to avoid such situations had we adopted the slogan "Think globally and act locally."

As a medical doctor, I would recall that we were able to conquer epidemics that raged against humankind through efforts at prevention. Dictatorships, climate change and poverty must be thwarted internally and among peoples. In facing such epidemics, we must have preventive policies that save humankind. We hope to God that there is enough time for us to quickly take such a direction before it is too late.

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

of the Republic of Tunisia for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Mohamed Moncef Marzouki, President of the Republic of Tunisia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Address by Mrs. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania**

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

*Mrs. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Mrs. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

**President Grybauskaitė:** There are two years left until the deadline for achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. It is therefore time to review what we have succeeded in achieving and set the guidelines for the work that remains.

Development is a global challenge. Every contribution that is made, every experience that we share and every lesson that we have learned is very important for all of us. By sharing we set the stage for learning from each other — and not only from our own mistakes. In today's world, every country has the right to choose a path that best suits its experience, culture and needs, as long as it does not infringe upon the rights of others and guarantees human rights and freedoms. The international community has an obligation to offer support based on the principles of ownership and empowerment so that those choices may be realized.

Development cannot be imposed; it must be promoted. But it is not only about development. It is about free choice, democracy and fundamental rights, each of which is key to the success of the Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda.

Today we live in the twenty-first century, but there are still those who want to enforce a specific course of development on others, using economic pressure, energy levers or cyber tools, by distorted information or threats. It is true that internationally approved

sanctions send a message to those who are producing weapons and not jobs, who violate human rights and use national resources to satisfy individual interests and not those of their society as a whole. But the use of economic, energy or information tools to show power or set up zones of influence is unjustifiable, especially for the future.

The twenty-first century should be the age of solidarity, equality and sustainable development. It cannot be an age of the flaunting of power, zero-sum games or buffer zones. Those times are over. Any attempt to return to those times impedes the development of the modern world. But, regrettably, power games still exist.

I would like to share my country's and region's experience with the Assembly. In the past two decades, the Baltic States have been rapidly transformed. Complex and painful economic, political and social reforms have boosted economic growth, social well-being and political stability. After rebuilding our statehood two decades ago and with the help, advice and experience of the international community, our nations have today become donors and have a lot of experience to share with those who are going through transformations similar to the ones we have experienced.

Inner resolve and consensus are very important. However, a favourable external climate and international support are also needed, especially for small countries that depend on larger players for their trade, transportation or energy links.

*Mr. Corlăţean (Romania), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

In two months' time, in Vilnius, several Eastern European countries intend to confirm their commitment to completing the painful but much-needed reforms for economic growth, political stability and social harmony. For many years, those countries worked hard to reach national agreement on reforms, their scope and direction. They learned from their mistakes and mobilized resources to build their own futures. They chose to build modern States of the twenty-first century — open, transparent and collaborative, not dominating.

It was not easy for those countries to decide which course to take. Their choice would have been made easier if their free will had been respected and their decision supported in good faith, and with encouragement by those who could provide such support. Instead, they are now facing trade restrictions, bans on goods, the

manipulation of energy prices, the use of pressure and open disrespect displayed in information forums.

The countries of the European Union Eastern Partnership are not the only ones experiencing such problems. Even Lithuania, which holds the presidency of the Council of the European Union and has successfully consolidated its course of development, is under similar pressure. Barriers to travel, unreasonable delays in cargo transportation, the milk wars — those are just a few very recent controversial examples. For nations, the decision is really difficult to make when free choice means being threatened with gas-price increases and blocked trade, instead of receiving support and advice. Under such pressure, it is hard to implement reforms that empower members of society and open up opportunities to engage in the state-building process.

The post-2015 development agenda must provide instruments that empower States to seek development, based on free will and their individual needs. There is no place for forced choices, open threats or demonstrations of power. The international community, especially the United Nations, should empower States to realize such self-determination. I urge us all to give the matter our very careful attention.

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

*Mrs. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

#### **Address by Mr. Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of the Republic of Nauru**

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

*Mr. Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of the Republic of Nauru, 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. Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of the Republic of Nauru, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Waqa:** May I first congratulate Mr. John Ashe on his election to the presidency at the current session. I am sure that his wisdom and experience will

guide our deliberations on the many challenges that the world faces today. Also, allow me to commend His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić for his excellent leadership during the sixty-seventh session.

The President knows better than most the unique combination of challenges faced by small island developing States. We are being battered from all sides, both literally and figuratively. Over the past decade, we have faced a flood of crises with a genesis far from our shores that have stretched our capacity to protect and improve the health and prosperity of our people.

The near collapse of the global financial system and spikes in food and energy prices have caused enormous difficulties for our small and vulnerable economy. A severe drought caused additional hardship and foreshadowed the much more difficult future we will face in a warming world. At the same time, the flow of official development assistance and climate financing have begun to stagnate.

Thankfully, we are presented with an unprecedented opportunity over the next few years to transform how the international system supports sustainable development. We will be continuing work on a number of important processes over the next year., They include the crafting of sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda, the work of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and — of particular importance to my country — the proceedings of the third Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. In addition, we must make rapid progress towards a new climate-change agreement in 2015, which will obviously have enormous implications for the sustainable development prospects of small islands. We must work in a coordinated fashion so that those processes are mutually reinforcing and deliver concrete results, rather than produce the usual rhetoric. It will be a challenge, but under the President's skilled leadership, I am confident we can succeed.

However, I fear we will come up short of our ambitions for transformational change if we shy away from making fundamental reforms in the way the global economy works. We began a promising conversation on the matter back in 2008 when the financial crisis was still fresh in our minds, but as stock prices have rebounded, our attention has wandered. Let us not forget that most of the problems that caused the previous crisis have not been fixed. Those same problems also

undermine sustainable development in many countries and communities around the world.

In 2009, the Commission of Experts on Reforms of the International Monetary and Financial System submitted a report (A/63/838) to this body in which it indicated that finance, which should be the servant of the economy, had been promoted to be its master. The rules of economic governance had been increasingly written to serve the interests of a shrinking few as they pursued risky ventures — ventures that often played havoc with people's lives and livelihoods. We are very familiar with some of the results of that system: stock-market bubbles, currency bubbles and property bubbles. When they burst, they leave behind enormous hardship. Even worse, investments in risky activities of that type compete with more productive investments in basic infrastructure, renewable energy, health services and the like — investments that contribute to true sustainable development.

Our reckless inaction is demonstrated by the inflation of the latest bubble: the carbon bubble. At least two thirds of known fossil fuel reserves cannot be burned if we are to limit the rise in global temperatures to below two degrees. The cost of renewable energy has fallen considerably in the past decade. By any measure, fossil fuels are a very bad long-term investment, yet that has not prevented trillions of dollars in private investment and fossil fuel subsidies from pouring into new infrastructure for the exploration, extraction and consumption of fossil fuels.

The size of the recent housing bubble has been estimated at \$4 trillion. The carbon bubble could be more than five times larger. That should be an issue of serious international concern. How do we allow trillions of dollars to flow into destructive activities while the most basic needs of millions go unmet? The reasons are complicated, but make no mistake that this is a choice. It is a choice made by international policymakers to prioritize profits over people.

As the President said earlier this week, “it is time for us to concede that our efforts at reforming and revitalizing our Organization need new impetus” (A/68/PV.5, p. 5). Reclaiming the global economic system and putting it to work for the good of the people will be a long and difficult process, but it may be the only way to reach our sustainable development goals.

The Commission's 2009 report made many good recommendations for our consideration, and the first

step must be to bring more transparency and democratic oversight to economic governance. The most important decisions are not made in universal bodies, such as the General Assembly, but rather far away from the small, the isolated and the vulnerable. Is it any surprise that the system has failed to meet our needs? To address that problem, we should start by relaunching the discussion on global economic governance here in the General Assembly, as well as by reforming the governance of the Bretton Woods institutions, so that they are more inclusive.

The systemic barriers to sustainable development are formidable, but that has not stopped Nauru from seeking practical solutions that can be readily implemented in the short term. An example is the recently completed Nauru case study on climate change financing. The study identified a number of steps my Government and our development partners can take to make official development assistance more effective. For example, project-based financing was found to be markedly less effective than more flexible modalities, such as general budgetary support.

Another key finding concerned the need for domestic institution-building. Accessing many sources of multilateral finance is, quite frankly, beyond the capacity of my Government, and the traditional strategy of conducting regional workshops has simply not worked. We hope to collaborate with development partners to design sustained programmes with a significant in-country component, so that there is a durable transfer of the skills necessary to benefit from international support mechanisms.

Nauru has also made its best efforts to contribute at the international level. We have the tremendous honour of presiding over the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), a group that has been a leading advocate for climate action for more than two decades. The upcoming nineteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP-19), to be held in Warsaw, will be important to laying the foundation for an ambitious agreement in 2015. A key priority for the COP-19 will be jump-starting near-term mitigation action through the launch of a process guided by more technical expertise and focused on energy efficiency and renewable energy. AOSIS has proposed a very practical and collaborative approach to rapidly scale up the implementation of policies and the deployment of technologies that not only reduce greenhouse gas

emissions but also advance domestic sustainable development priorities. In the view of AOSIS, that technical process can prepare the ground for a much more ambitious post-2020 agreement.

The proposal in no way relieves developed countries of their international obligation to take the lead in addressing climate change. They should be held accountable for fully implementing best practices to reduce their own emissions, while also providing the means for implementing adaptation and mitigation actions in developing countries. The AOSIS proposal indicates the way to accomplish those objectives. Establishing an international mechanism to address loss and damage is also a key priority for AOSIS, as is mobilizing climate financing and making sure the Green Climate Fund is ready to accept donor contributions in 2014.

Climate change is the greatest challenge to the sustainable development of small islands. We must come to terms with the fact that, owing to our delay, some grave impacts are now unavoidable. Some will have security implications. Addressing the security implications of climate change remains a key priority for Nauru and the Pacific small island developing States. I would like to reiterate our proposals for moving forward.

First, we are calling for the appointment of a special representative on climate and security to help expand our understanding of the security dimensions of climate change. The special representative would regularly report to the General Assembly and the Security Council on emerging climate-related security threats and would facilitate regional cooperation on cross-border issues. Vulnerable developing countries in particular could benefit from a special representative equipped to help them evaluate their security situations and develop action plans to increase the resilience of their institutions. At some point in the future, the special representative could become an invaluable asset in preventive diplomacy efforts and post-conflict situations.

Secondly, we are requesting the Secretary-General to lead a joint task force of all the relevant organs and specialized agencies to immediately assess the capacity and resources of the United Nations system to respond to the anticipated security implications of climate change. We have heard in countless forums about the potentially destabilizing effects of climate change, yet

we have only the vaguest idea of what an international response to those effects would look like. That needs to change. We must start preparing for the challenges that lie ahead. As the Secretary-General said at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, “We must strengthen the interface between science and policy”.

The world’s attention is now focused on the immense suffering in Syria. On behalf of the people of Nauru, I would like to offer my condolences to the millions of people whose lives have been affected by the Syrian conflict. We are horrified by the scale of human atrocity there. I am compelled to ask: Do we always have to wait for well over 100,000 people to be killed before we can find solutions to restore peace and security? As the President observed, the mandate of this body has limitations, and we cannot issue resolutions that bind countries. The United Nations invests enormous power in the hands of a tiny minority of five, which is not so different from global economic governance being dictated primarily by eight.

Nauru is always striving to improve bilateral relations. I would like to express my gratitude to Australia, which has always been an important partner. We look forward to our continued work with the new Government as we continue to collaborate on joint projects that are delivering important benefits in my country.

Nauru is gratified to note that, with solid international support and cross-Strait rapprochement, the Republic of China on Taiwan has increased its meaningful participation in United Nations specialized agencies and mechanisms. We continue to encourage the positive interaction between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait in the international arena. Furthermore, I would like to recognize the contributions that Taiwan has made to helping my country make progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. We also express our gratitude to the Governments of New Zealand, the Russian Federation, Japan, the Republic of Korea and India; they are all invaluable partners in our joint effort to bring sustainable development to my island.

As the President of the General Assembly aptly described in his opening statement, setting the stage for sustainable development will require introspection, frank discussion and coming to terms with some hard truths about the nature of the challenges we face and the institutions we have at hand to respond. Only by

correctly diagnosing the problems and choosing the appropriate tools to begin our work will we be able to reach satisfactory outcomes that benefit us all.

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

*Mr. Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of the Republic of Nauru, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Address by Mr. Robert G. Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe**

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

*Mr. Robert G. Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, 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. Robert G. Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Mugabe:** Let me begin by extending my warmest congratulations to Mr. John William Ashe on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. His election to that esteemed office is a fitting tribute to the personal and diplomatic qualities that he has exhibited over the years.

Throughout the world, peace and development have remained dominant themes of our times. People all over the world have been raising their voices in favour of peace, development and cooperation, and against war, poverty and confrontation. Here at the United Nations we all acknowledge that peace, security, development and human rights are the pillars of the United Nations system and the cornerstones of our collective well-being.

In that regard, the theme for this session, “The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage”, is quite pertinent and timely, as it gives fresh impetus to our understanding that achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and mapping the way forward beyond 2015 requires our collective efforts. The United Nations, as the centre for international

cooperation, should lead in promoting the envisaged development.

Thirteen years ago, our global efforts were mobilized behind the Millennium Development Goals. We now have less than 1,000 days in which to meet those targets. Our review and stocktaking exercise reveals that, while there have been some significant achievements, there are still gaps and unevenness in the attainment of the Goals.

In the case of Zimbabwe, we have made progress towards achieving universal access to primary education and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. However, some of the Goals are off track owing to lack of capacity — mainly financial capacity — and in some areas progress has stalled, including in those areas relating to the eradication of poverty and hunger, child mortality, universal access to maternal and reproductive health, environmental sustainability and access to potable water and sanitation. As a country, we are committed to undertaking coordinated efforts to accelerate progress to complete the unfinished business of the MDGs in the remaining period leading up to 2015. Any goals that have not been achieved by then should be integrated into the post-2015 development agenda.

Zimbabwe fully shares and supports the emerging consensus that eradicating poverty in all its dimensions should be the overarching goal of our post-2015 agenda. Eradicating poverty by 2030 may be an ambitious goal, but it is attainable if we mobilize our collective efforts. Building on the foundation of the MDGs, the post-2015 agenda should go beyond the social development agenda of the MDGs and achieve structural transformation in our economies that delivers inclusive and sustainable growth. We expect a shift that will bring about industrialization, decent jobs and qualitative change to the lives of our citizens. We are determined to modernize our infrastructure and ensure access to sustainable energy for all, food security and nutrition. However, we recognize that we cannot do that in isolation from other partners.

In the same vein, we also support calls to prioritize gender equality, the health-related MDGs, education and environmental sustainability in the post-2015 development agenda, among other issues. Those are critical matters in our quest to achieve sustainable development for all our people.

The lofty objectives of the Charter of the United Nations in the economic arena will remain unfulfilled

unless all Member States join in efforts, genuinely and seriously, to address challenges that developing countries face in their pursuit of development, including meeting the MDGs. It is therefore imperative that our discussions address what has so far been the weakest link, namely, the means of implementation. It must be understood that, in addition to national efforts, substantial international support and an enabling international economic environment are essential if the MDGs are to be achieved by 2015, especially in Africa. It is therefore important to fulfil the commitments made to support Africa in various international forums. The United Nations should track the fulfilment of those commitments.

Zimbabwe supports the reform of the United Nations to strengthen its central role in promoting multilateralism and to be effective in tackling current and future global challenges. We are convinced that reform would strengthen the Organization's capacity to fully promote and implement the purposes and principles of the Charter and improve its democratic decision-making.

In that regard, the reforms in the economic and social actions of the United Nations remain of fundamental importance to us. Our firm belief in multilateral cooperation means that we place a premium in the ability of the United Nations system to deliver efficient development cooperation. The democratic transformation of the architecture of the international financial system is essential, as is a root-and-branch reform of the international trading system. The terms of trade have hugely burdened developing countries for too long.

Zimbabwe supports the ongoing efforts to revitalize the General Assembly, which is the most representative organ of the United Nations. We believe that the Assembly should take the lead in setting the global agenda and restore its primacy, which has over the years been encroached upon by other organs. We cannot accept situations whereby the Security Council is increasingly encroaching upon issues that traditionally fall within the General Assembly's purview and competence, including in the area of norm-setting. Recent events have revealed that the formal decisions of the Security Council have provided camouflage to neo-imperialist forces of aggression seeking to militarily intervene in smaller countries in order to effect regime change and acquire complete control of their wealth. That was the case in Libya, where, in the name of

protecting civilians, NATO forces were deployed with an undeclared mission to eliminate Al-Qadhafi and his family. A similar campaign was undertaken in Iraq by the Bush and Blair forces under the guise of eradicating weapons of mass destruction, which Saddam Hussein never possessed.

We appreciate the central role that the United Nations should play in furthering multilateralism in preference to unilateralism. In that regard, we applaud the consultations and negotiations on the eventual destruction of the chemical weapons in Syria. My country expresses its gratitude and appreciation to Russia and China for their principled stand on Syria. We hope and trust that the Syrian people will soon sit in dialogue to discuss peace and desirable political reforms. Those Western countries in pursuit of hegemony as they pretend to be advocates of democracy must be resisted.

For Africa, the reform of the Security Council is especially long overdue. The anachronistic and unrepresentative character of the Council must be redressed. For how long should Africa continue to be denied the right to play a pivotal role in the Security Council as it decides measures on conflicts within the borders of that very continent? The Security Council needs to be more representative, democratic, transparent, accountable and accessible to the wider membership for its decisions to have greater legitimacy. Africa's case for the correction of the glaring historical injustice of being unrepresented in the permanent category and underrepresented in the non-permanent category has been made through the clear, fair and well articulated Ezulwini Consensus. Zimbabwe remains steadfast in its support of the Ezulwini Consensus, which is, in fact, a demand.

Zimbabwe strongly condemns the use of unilateral economic sanctions as a foreign policy tool to effect regime change. The illegal economic sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe by the United States and the European Union violate fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations on State sovereignty and the non-interference in the domestic affairs of a sovereign State. Moreover, those illegal sanctions continue to inflict economic deprivation and human suffering on all Zimbabweans. In the eyes of our people, the sanctions constitute a form of hostility and violence against them for the simple crime of undertaking the land reform programme by which land was put in the hands of the then majority landless Zimbabweans. Our small and

peaceful country is threatened daily by covetous and bigoted big Powers whose hunger for domination and control over other nations and their resources knows no bounds.

Shame, shame, shame, we say to the United States of America. Shame, shame, shame, we say to Britain and its allies, who have continued to impose illegal sanctions on our people. Zimbabwe is for Zimbabweans; so are its ample resources. I ask those countries to please remove their illegal and iniquitous sanctions from my peaceful nation. If those sanctions were intended to effect regime change, well, the results of the recent national elections have clearly shown them that they cannot achieve their agenda.

We are preached to daily by the West on the virtues of democracy and freedom, which they do not entirely espouse. Zimbabwe took up arms precisely to achieve freedom and democracy. There was none during colonialism, and it was British colonialism, for that matter. Yet we have been punished by the United States through the odious Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act, which it enacted in 2001 to effect regime change in our country. Now that malicious intent to continue with the relentless persecution of our small, peaceful country has shown itself again, through the rejection by the United States of the recent and absolutely democratic and fair results of our general elections of 31 July, even as they were applauded by the African Union and all our regional organizations.

It appears that when the United States and its allies speak of democracy and freedom they do so in relative terms. Zimbabwe, however, refuses to accept that those Western detractors have the right to define democracy and freedom for it. We made the greatest sacrifice and paid the ultimate price for freedom and independence in Zimbabwe, and we remain determined never to relinquish our sovereignty, as at the same time we remain masters of our destiny. As we have repeatedly and loudly said and asserted, Zimbabwe will never be a colony again.

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

*Mr. Robert G. Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Address by Mr. Otto Fernando Pérez Molina,  
President of the Republic of Guatemala**

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

*Mr. Otto Fernando Pérez Molina, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

**The Acting President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Otto Fernando Pérez Molina, President of the Republic of Guatemala, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Pérez Molina** (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin my remarks by welcoming Mr. John Ashe in his capacity as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. We are pleased that a representative of our region, Latin America and the Caribbean, is once again presiding over the main organ of the United Nations. At the same time, I wish to express my appreciation to Mr. Vuk Jeremić for his outstanding leadership and stewardship of the Assembly at its previous session, during which he honoured us with a visit to Guatemala.

The year 2013 has been challenging for Guatemala. Last year we undertook to reduce our levels of child malnutrition, which affects 4 of every 10 children in my country. In addition, we decided that we could not continue to sit on our hands while hundreds of those children died of hunger. I am here to inform the Assembly, with some optimism, that our efforts are beginning to bear fruit. Since we began the fight against hunger, we have managed to reduce infant mortality from malnutrition by 50 per cent. Similarly, we have created a monitoring system that allows us to measure the nutritional condition of hundreds of thousands of children, both to assess their growth and development and to prevent deaths among children under the age of 5. The challenge is enormous and we know that our goals are very ambitious. That is why we are not yet satisfied with the progress achieved, but we can affirm without hesitation that little by little we are winning the fight against hunger and child malnutrition.

The fight against hunger is closely related to education. We want our boys and girls to study as many years as they can and wish, and with no less than nine years of basic education, which is the goal we have set.

But for that to happen, we have to ensure that they have the nutrition that will enable their brains and bodies grow healthily. We have to nourish our boys and girls so that they can study. And we must provide them with the opportunity of education so that they can be successful in their adult lives, both in the world of work and in the civic responsibilities that our democracy needs.

That is clearly linked to our second goal, that of promoting dignified employment and a competitive economy. I can again report to the Assembly that we have achieved a 27 per cent increase in the number of workers registered with Guatemala's social security system between the first quarters of 2012 and 2013. That means that our economy is creating more formal employment opportunities at the same time as we are making progress in establishing our country as a leader in improving the business climate in order to stimulate investment.

I am delighted to say that we have developed a growing dialogue in various fields with the President of the United Mexican States, Enrique Peña Nieto. We see the future of Guatemala as clearly related to the economy of that fraternal neighbouring State, and that is why we have been seeking to strengthen our relations in areas including energy, transport and logistics, the modernization of customs and the improvement of security at border crossings, as well as our common battle against hunger and in favour of peace in our countries. Shared prosperity is our banner, and justice our emblem.

In the same vein, we have expressed to the Government of the United States of America our clear interest in aligning our policies with those that promote progress and security between the peoples of Mexico and the United States. Guatemala aspires to a tripartite alliance of prosperity with Mexico and the United States that would serve as the foundation for solid links with the countries of the Central American Integration System and at the same time become a platform for progress in the entire Caribbean region.

Again, we know that these are ambitious goals and that reaching them will require a strong and persistent effort, so as to achieve the common future of prosperity that our peoples demand - a demand that we cannot and should not evade. Today millions of Guatemalans and Central Americans live and work in the United States, and more than 50 per cent of our population depends directly on business transactions with and family remittances from Mexico and the United States.

That integration is a fact, and we Governments must strengthening the institutions and policies that make it possible to make best use of the achievements of our children, our citizens and our business community.

The quest for prosperity is also related to our goals of promoting peace and combating impunity. Security has been a challenge inherited by my Government, and we have resolved to address it by preventing violence and by enforcing the law in a clear framework of respect for human rights. We are far from having achieved our goals, but the progress made shows that our State has the capacity to dismantle large criminal networks and to make them accountable to justice for their actions.

In that regard, I should like to inform the Assembly that in urban areas of Guatemala City, where homicide, extortion and insecurity were prevalent, we have managed gradually to reinstate peace and social coexistence. At the same time, our justice institutions report that overall, impunity has been reduced by almost 25 per cent between 2009 and 2013, with a particular decrease in impunity for crimes against life, both homicide and sexual crimes against women and children.

In connection with the strengthening of the rule of law, I would like to thank the General Assembly and the donor community in particular for their support for the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala. Its mandate has been renewed until September 2015, and we hope that this period will be used well to continue strengthening the capacity to prosecute of the Public Prosecutor, the Ministry of Security, the Ministry of the Interior, the national civil police and the courts.

Building a country that is prosperous and free of hunger, a country integrated with its neighbours and where justice and peace prevail - that is the standard that will guide us, and those are the goals that will move us forward. That is why we ask the international community to support us in moving in that direction.

Since my Government took office last year, we have clearly affirmed that the war against drugs has not yielded the desired results and that we cannot continue doing the same thing and expecting different results. That is why I associate myself at this time with other countries that have spoken out in the Assembly, including Mexico, Colombia and Costa Rica, in stating that in the face of the global drug problem, we must review internationally agreed policies in the quest for

more effective results in a framework of respect for human rights and from the perspective of health and harm reduction. The objective must be the well-being of society in all its aspects.

Prevention must be given priority in order to reduce the impact on health and especially to reduce the level of social violence that is associated with the drug problem. In the same vein, international cooperation should be strengthened so as to reduce illegal flows of arms and the funds that finance those criminal networks.

The new global strategy must emerge from an open and inclusive debate leading up to the special session of the General Assembly scheduled for 2016. We welcome the Declaration of Antigua Guatemala of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States as a first step in the right direction towards the 2016 session.

I would like to add to this the specific views of my Government. I should first like to say that Guatemala commends the visionary decision of the citizens of the states of Colorado and Washington, which have led the way to an approach that addresses the issue of drugs from the perspective of public health, the prevention of addiction and violence, and full respect for human rights. Likewise, I wish to commend President Obama for his wise decision to respect the voice of the citizens of Colorado and Washington, allowing those innovative undertakings to prove themselves over time.

We also respect and support the example set by President José Mujica of Uruguay in proposing legislation that regulates the cannabis market instead of following the failed route of prohibition. I must also acknowledge the valiant and visionary leadership of the Secretary-General of the Organization of American States, José Miguel Insulza, who has firmly promoted a climate of dialogue and reflection on drug policies among the Governments of the western hemisphere.

Without digressing from the path of international cooperation against transnational crime, each country must experiment with new models to address the drug problem. My Government has decided to create a national commission that will help us explore more effective means of dealing with the consumption, trafficking and production of drugs.

We hope that the special session of the General Assembly to be held in 2016 will draw on those innovative experiences and take a strong stand in favour of public policy that can be evaluated objectively and is based on a focus on public health, prevention, damage

control and, of course, respect for human rights. We also believe it important that the special session be held here in New York City, because of its significance for the future of global policies on the drug problem.

We had the privilege of being elected to the Security Council for the period 2012-2013. Now that we are only a few months away from the end of our tenure, I would like to say that we have taken the provisions of Article 24 of the Charter of the United Nations very seriously, not only in decisions based on our own values and principles but also taking into account the fact that we are acting on behalf of the General Assembly. We have strived to comply with our mandate with objectivity, a sense of responsibility and professionalism, while emphasizing security and justice and the protection of human rights and humanitarian law.

As a non-permanent member of the Security Council, we have taken a position on the recent crisis in Syria. We condemned the massacre, with chemical weapons, of more than 1,000 people and insisted that a crime of such magnitude could not go unpunished. We also called for a firm response on the part of the international community in order to prevent any repetition of such deplorable acts. Consistent with that position, we have supported the leadership of President Obama, who has clearly affirmed that peace in Syria and the Middle East as a whole must be built within the framework of a political and diplomatic dialogue, but without abandoning our international responsibility to protect the citizens of those countries and of the world from the threat of nuclear and chemical weapons.

*The President returned to the Chair.*

We also believe that the United Nations made a singular contribution to humankind in 2000 when it launched the Millennium Development Goals. That is why we are actively participating in the design of the content and scope of the post-2015 development agenda as a catalyst for development. We particularly hope that the international community will define the reduction of violence against women and children and universal access to justice as global priorities. Only in a world that is free of violence against women and provides justice for all can a path be cleared towards development based on full respect for human rights.

I would like to conclude my statement by congratulating the United Nations system once again on its ongoing efforts to seek peace and justice worldwide. Guatemala endorses the same goals, and it is with

pride that I can affirm that we are and always will be a country guided by the principles of the Charter of the Organization.

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

*Mr. Otto Fernando Pérez Molina, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

#### **Address by Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine**

**The President:** The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the State of Palestine.

*Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, 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. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

**President Abbas** (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his outstandingly successful presidency of the General Assembly at its previous session. I would also like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency at its current session and to wish you every success.

I am pleased, indeed honoured, to address the Assembly today for the first time in the name of the State of Palestine, following the Assembly's historic decision on 29 November of last year to raise Palestine's status to that of a non-Member Observer State. As representatives of their Governments and peoples, Members have championed justice, right and peace, while affirming their rejection of occupation and standing for principles and ethics and on the side of peoples yearning for freedom. For that, I once again offer my deepest thanks and gratitude today on behalf of Palestine and its people. The Palestinian people celebrated resolution 67/19. They rightly felt that they were not alone in the world and that the world stood with them. They celebrated because they realized that the overwhelming result of the Assembly's vote meant that justice was still possible and there was still room for hope.

I assured the Assembly last year that our quest to raise Palestine's status was not aimed at delegitimizing an existing State, the State of Israel, but at consecrating — I repeat, consecrating — the legitimacy of a State that should exist, which is Palestine. I have also affirmed before the Assembly that our quest was not intended to affect the peace process, nor is it a substitute for serious negotiations. On the contrary, our quest is supportive of the choice of peace and has revived a process that was, in truth, moribund. As we have repeatedly affirmed and proved in practice, the State of Palestine, which abides by the Charter of the United Nations and resolutions of international legitimacy, will exercise its role and uphold its responsibilities within the international system in a positive and constructive manner that reinforces peace.

A new round of negotiations was launched a few weeks ago, thanks to the tireless and appreciated efforts of the President of the United States, Mr. Barack Obama, and of the United States Secretary of State, Mr. John Kerry. I affirm before the Assembly today that we have begun those negotiations and shall continue them in good faith and with open minds, strong will and determination and a sharp focus on success. I assure Members that we shall respect all of our commitments and foster the atmosphere most conducive to continuing the negotiations seriously and intensively, while providing guarantees for its success and aiming at a peace agreement within nine months.

As we engage in a new round of negotiations, we must remind everyone that we are not starting from a vacuum or from point zero, nor are we lost in a labyrinth without a map or a compass, at risk of losing sight of the destination. The goal of the peace that we seek is defined and the objective of the negotiations is clear to all, just as the terms of reference and the basis and foundations of the peace process and of the agreement we seek are longstanding and within reach.

As for the goal of peace, it is embodied in redressing the historic, unprecedented injustice that befell the Palestinian people in the Al-Nakba of 1948. It is the realization of a just peace, the fruits of which can be enjoyed by the Palestinian and Israeli peoples, as well as by all the peoples of our region.

The objective of the negotiations is to secure a lasting peace agreement that immediately leads to the establishment of the independence of a fully sovereign State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital,

on all of the Palestinian land occupied in 1967, so that it may live in peace and security alongside the State of Israel. The negotiations must also resolve the plight of Palestine refugees in a just, agreed-upon solution, in accordance with resolution 194 (III) and as called for by the Arab Peace Initiative.

We reaffirm our refusal to be drawn into the whirlpool of a new interim agreement aimed at the perpetuation of an interim State with interim borders, or to enter into transitional arrangements that will become the fixed rule rather than an urgent exception. Our goal is to achieve a permanent and comprehensive agreement and a peace treaty between the States of Palestine and Israel that resolves all outstanding issues, answers all questions and allows us to officially declare an end to the conflict and to all claims.

The terms of reference and parameters of the negotiations, their goals and the basis of the agreement we seek are all found in the Assembly's historic decision to upgrade Palestine's status, as well as in the countless resolutions of this body and of the Security Council and those of the League of Arab States, the European Union, the Non-Aligned Movement, the African Union and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. In fact, over the years, the parameters have become the basis of an international consensus, indeed, near unanimity.

Exactly 20 years ago, precisely on 13 September 1993, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people signed, together with the Government of Israel, the Declaration of Principles Agreement on the White House lawn in Washington, D.C, in the presence of our departed leader, Yasser Arafat, and Yitzhak Rabin, the late Israeli Prime Minister, the King of Jordan and former President Bill Clinton.

Some five years earlier, on 15 November 1988, the Palestinian National Council had adopted our programme for the achievement of peace, thereby taking an extremely difficult decision and making a historic, painful and harmful concession. However, as representatives of the Palestinian people, and having long been aware of our responsibilities to them, we mustered the necessary courage to accept a two-State solution, namely, Palestine and Israel on the borders of 4 June 1967 and the establishment of a Palestinian State on 22 per cent of the land of historic Palestine. Thus we realized our part in achieving a historic settlement, upheld our obligations and fulfilled all of

the requirements from the Palestinian side as set by the international community, in order to attain peace.

At the same time that the PLO affirmed its choice of peace as a strategic option and a solution resulting from negotiations, the PLO firmly repudiated violence and affirmed an ethical, principled rejection of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations — especially State terrorism — while affirming respect of international humanitarian law and United Nations resolutions.

As a genuine historic breakthrough, the signing of the Oslo Accords led to an unprecedented political movement that fostered great hopes and generated high expectations. The PLO worked with dedication to implement the Accords in order to end the occupation and to realize a just peace. However, 20 years on, the picture appears dispiriting and bleak: great dreams have been shattered and goals have become more modest.

As much as we felt in those days that peace was at hand, today we realize how far we are from it, for the goal of the Accords has not been achieved, its provisions have not been implemented and its deadlines have not been respected. All the while, ongoing intense settlement construction, which aims to change the facts on the ground in the occupied Palestinian territory, has violated the spirit of the agreement, struck at the core of the peace process and caused a deep fracture in its cornerstone, that is, the two-State solution.

The start of a new round of negotiations is good news, but it cannot serve as grounds for complacency or an exaggerated sense of tranquility on the part of the international community. The negotiations we are undertaking today with the Israeli Government under the auspices of the United States require that the international community exert every effort to make them succeed, namely, through international and regional organizations and individual States upholding the international consensus on the goal of peace, the objectives of the negotiations, the terms of reference and the basis for a permanent peace agreement.

However, at the same time, the international community is asked to remain vigilant. The international community must condemn and put an end to any actions on the ground that would undermine negotiations. In that regard, I refer above all to the continuation of settlement construction on Palestinian land, particularly in Jerusalem. There is an international consensus among the countries of the world, international and regional organizations and the International Court

of Justice on the illegality and illegitimacy of those settlements. The position of the European Union with regard to settlement projects is a positive model of what can be done to ensure an environment supportive of and conducive to negotiations and the peace process. It is also imperative that the near-daily attacks on the religious sites in occupied Jerusalem, the foremost of which is the Al-Aqsa Mosque, cease, as the continuation of such attacks will have dire consequences.

History is the best teacher. It teaches us that waging war, imposing occupation and building settlements and walls may provide temporary quiet and temporary domination, but they certainly do not ensure real security or guarantee sustainable peace. Such policies may create a specific reality on the ground, but they certainly do not create a right or provide legitimacy. Such policies may impose weak stability, but they cannot prevent the inevitable explosion, because such policies in fact fuel situations that are already inflamed and cause them to explode. Above all, such policies are incapable of extinguishing the aspirations of a people for freedom, and cannot eradicate their living memory or their narrative.

Therefore, what is required now is to heed the lessons of history, to abandon the mentality of force and occupation, to recognize the rights of others and to work on an equal footing and in full parity to achieve peace. What is required is to stop relying on exaggerated security pretexts and obsessions in order to consecrate occupation and to stop contriving demands that push the conflict out of its defined political arena and towards the abyss of religious conflict in a region burdened with such sensitivities. That is something that we categorically reject.

I am confident that the Israeli people want peace and that a majority of them support a two-State solution. We have always expressed our firm positions and have always explained them at the negotiations table with the Israeli Government and in the meetings and contacts that we have intensified in recent years with a wide spectrum of actors from Israeli society.

Our message is rooted in the idea that the two peoples, the Palestinians and Israelis, are partners in the task of peacemaking. That is why we keep reaching out to the Israeli side, saying: let us work to make the culture of peace reign, to tear down walls, to build bridges instead of walls and to open wide roads for connections and communication. Let us sow the seeds

of good-neighbourliness. Let us envision another future, one that the children of Palestine and Israel enjoy in peace and security, where they can dream and realize their dreams, a future that allows Muslims, Christians and Jews to freely reach their places of worship, and a future in which Israel gains the recognition of 57 Arab and Muslim States, the States of Palestine and coexists in peace and each of their peoples can realize their hopes for progress and prosperity.

While we discuss the realization of peace between Palestine and Israel as an imperative to achieve a comprehensive peace between the Arab countries and Israel in accordance with United Nations resolutions, we bear in mind the current volatile reality and unprecedented dynamics besetting our region. Palestine does not interfere in the internal affairs of Arab countries, but we have clearly affirmed our stance in support of the demands of the peoples of our region, their choices and their peaceful popular movements to achieve those demands, along with the programmes and road maps they have adopted to reach their goals.

Furthermore, while we have condemned the crime of the use of chemical weapons in Syria, we have affirmed our rejection of a military solution there and stressed the need to find a peaceful political solution to fulfil the aspirations of the Syrian people.

The overwhelming majority of the Palestinian people were born in Palestine and were sent into exile after the 1948 Al-Nakba. However, 65 years afterwards, they continue to be its direct victims. Since the start of this year, 27 Palestinian citizens have been killed and 951 have been wounded by the bullets of the occupation, and 5,000 fighters for freedom and peace are currently being held captive in occupation prisons. Does anyone deserve an end to this occupation and the realization of a just and immediate peace more than the Palestinian people?

This year and in the past few years, Palestinian refugees, despite their neutrality, have continued to pay the price of conflict and instability in our region. Tens of thousands have been forced to abandon their camps and to flee in another exodus, searching for new places of exile. Do the Palestinian people deserve justice less than the rest of the peoples of the world?

Since the beginning of the year, construction has been under way on thousands of settlement units by the occupation authorities, and construction tenders have

been issued for thousands of others on our occupied land, even as additional vast areas of land are either expropriated or declared off limits; 850 homes and structures have been demolished.

Palestinians are forbidden to plant on their own land and to use the majority of the area of our country, which is only 22 per cent. They are prevented from using their own country's water to irrigate their crops. The wall and checkpoints continue to tear apart the lives of the Palestinian people and to destroy their economy. The siege is growing tighter, along with the attacks and oppressive discriminatory measures against occupied Jerusalem, its holy places and its citizens. In Gaza, for years an unjust blockade has been imposed on our people.

So is there any people more deserving of freedom and independence than the Palestinians? Since the beginning of the year, 708 terrorist attacks have been perpetrated by settlers against our mosques and churches, our olive trees, our agricultural fields and our homes and property. Is there the shadow of a doubt in anyone's mind that the Palestinian people have the most need of security?

Also, is there a nobler mission on the international community's agenda than realizing a just peace in the land of the monotheistic faiths, the birthplace of Jesus Christ, the site of the ascent of the Prophet Muhammad and the resting place of Abraham, the father of the prophets?

As they remain steadfast on their land, the Palestinian people also continue to build their institutions, to strengthen internal unity, to achieve reconciliation by returning to the ballot box, to wage a peaceful and popular resistance to counter the oppression of occupation and of settlements and settler terrorism, and to hold fast to their rights. The Palestinian people do not want to remain "out of place", in the words of Edward Said. Our people are waiting for the day when their cause ceases to be a fixed item on the agenda of the United Nations. Our people want to have freedom, God's gift to humanity, and to enjoy the grace of living an ordinary life. For we, as Mahmoud Darwish wrote, cultivate hope and shall one day be what we want to be: a free, sovereign people on the land of the State of Palestine.

I personally am one of the victims of Al-Nakba, one of the hundreds of thousands of my people who

were uprooted in 1948 from our beautiful world and thrown into exile. Like hundreds of thousands of other Palestine refugees, I knew as a youth the pain of exile and the tragedy of the loss of loved ones in massacres and wars, as well as the difficulties of building a new life from zero. In refugee camps and the diaspora, in exile, we knew the bitter taste of poverty, hunger, illness and humiliation, and the challenge of affirming one's identity.

Our people have walked the path of armed revolution and have risen from the ashes of Al-Nakba. They have collected their shattered souls and identity to put their cause to the world and ensure that the recognition of their rights is enshrined. We have walked a long, difficult path and sacrificed dearly, and yet we have affirmed at all times our active quest for peace.

Twenty years ago, on behalf of the Palestine Liberation Organization, I signed the Declaration of Principles Agreement, and we have since worked faithfully and diligently to implement it, affirming to all our respect for our commitments and the credibility of our positions. The successive setbacks encountered have not shaken our strong faith in the objective of a just peace, and we shall continue to work tirelessly and unwaveringly to see it realized. My own personal hope is to see the day when a just peace reigns so that the generation of Al-Nakba can pass on to its children and grandchildren the flag of an independent State of Palestine.

Time is running out; the window of hope is narrowing and opportunities are diminishing. The current round of negotiations appears to be a last chance to realize a just peace. The mere thought of the catastrophic and frightening consequences of failure must compel the international community to intensify efforts to seize this opportunity.

The hour of freedom for the Palestinian people has rung. The hour of the independence of Palestine has rung. The hour of peace for the two peoples — Israeli and Palestinian — has rung.

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

*Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

**Agenda item 8 (continued)****General debate****Address by Mr. Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta**

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

*Mr. Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The President:** I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

**Mr. Muscat (Malta):** I wish to join other delegations at this gathering in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. I am sure that under your guidance and through your excellent diplomatic skills we will have a rich exchange of ideas and a fruitful outcome. I also wish to extend my congratulations and gratitude to your predecessor, Vuk Jeremić, for his successful stewardship of the previous session of the General Assembly. My deepest appreciation also goes to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, whose passion and commitment have been instrumental in the work of the organization.

I will start by taking the Assembly back a few years. All here will certainly remember how not too long ago the world waited in anticipation and hope for the clock to push past midnight to the year 2000. As with most fresh starts, the new millennium brought with it a sense of promise and, indeed, something extraordinary was taking place.

For the first time in history, Governments had committed themselves to “walk the talk” by adhering to a set of measurable targets aimed at lifting millions out of poverty by the year 2015. The so-called Millennium Development Goals were bold and ambitious. They became national and global priorities, setting Government policies and generating a strong commitment across wide areas towards their attainment. Failure, it was felt, was not an option.

Undoubtedly, there have been remarkable successes. The number of people living in extreme poverty has fallen, as have poverty rates. Access to sources of clean water has improved. The proportion

of urban slum dwellers has declined substantially, and there has been visible improvement in the areas of health and education.

Yet, as significant as those achievements are, we are now at a watershed moment. The international community has already recognized the need to push the Goals further, beyond 2015, and to see that they become sustainable development goals. An important stock-taking exercise has been taking place so as to ensure that no one is left behind, that no human being feels merely like a scrap of life, living at the edge of existence.

It would be easy for us to think of poverty as belonging elsewhere, if we did not see it all around us. We have the luxury of exercising wilful blindness to malnutrition and disease, pretending that they belong to a different culture, to a different nationality, to a fictitious world that is wiped away as easily as flipping a television channel. It would also be easy for us to think that we can be altruistic, since we are lucky enough to live without want.

But we are not here today to be blind. What brings us together at the General Assembly, year after year, to hear speech after speech, is a longing to belong. We want to be part of something bigger, something that goes beyond our self-imposed borders of language, culture and tradition. We want to belong to that global sea of peoples sharing a single purpose. That longing or need to come together tugs at our hearts with hope and empathy for those at the margins of humankind. We want to do something worthwhile. We want to commit our intelligence to being effective agents of change. “Make poverty history,” we once heard, and indeed we have worked towards that aim.

But, as we hold those noble aims high, we also question whether our plan is a priority, whether it will fit within our national budget or our political life cycles. And then we pause to consider our options, to choose what will hurt us the least. The poor do not have the luxury of granting us time to take our decisions. Humankind cannot wait for a better time, when there is no financial crisis. We, the international community, need to forge ahead with determination to reach all our goals.

I am proud to note today Malta’s long-standing history of solidarity with other nations all over the world. Our accession to the European Union took that solidarity a step further, and my country assumed

responsibilities and obligations in the context of providing overseas development assistance to developing countries. That remains a cornerstone of Malta's international relations, and we remain firmly engaged in seeking the eradication of poverty and the sustainable development of societies in need. We are proud to form part of the European Union, which is the world's largest donor of development aid, and we are committed to reaching the goals that we have set and to being a reliable partner for those in need.

I am equally proud to recall that this year marks the twenty-fifth year since Malta proposed to the General Assembly that climate conservation should be part of humankind's shared concerns, a concept that launched the process leading to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Malta is proud to have been at the forefront of that discussion. We are adamant about keeping the issue alive, for we are conscious of the fact that climate change hits hardest the world's most vulnerable.

In defining a common vision for the future, we believe that the eradication of poverty and the promotion of sustainable development must be at the heart of the post-2015 development framework. In the words of the former President of South Africa, Mr. Nelson Mandela,

“[o]vercoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings.”

Malta is committed to continuing to engage with its international partners in developing a post-2015 global development agenda that delivers on the promise of a better and fairer world for all.

Malta also understands the need to act in other very tangible ways. When rickety boats laden with irregular migrants reach our shores, which happens each and every day, we see the suffering, we feel the loss of dignity etched on people's faces. We understand that they are caught in a web of poverty and criminal exploitation. We feel for those fleeing persecution and poverty. They are desperately searching for safety and prosperity. We do everything we can to provide them with the help they need, offering refuge and respite.

Yet Malta cannot do that alone. The international community must do more in the face of an ongoing situation that is nothing but tragic evidence of our global

failures. It would be easy to flip channels once again, to “park it in someone else's back yard”. But it is not someone else's problem. Irregular immigration, human trafficking and modern-day slavery are everyone's problem. We all have to play a part in solving it, not only regionally but also globally.

There needs to be a sustained evolution in our thinking. At the threshold of the year 2015, we urge fellow nations not only to think beyond the current Millennium Development Goals and how to ensure their sustainability, but also to think of other goals that could be included. There can be no unfinished business. There can be no sustainable development goals without peace, without fighting corruption, without respect for human rights and without economic equality, which is the social justice issue of our time.

The news headlines may not shock us anymore, but those living in fear of losing their lives and those of their families do not live in order to make news. They look to survive. Whether scrapping for food or seeking shelter from bullets, whether hiding their daughters to prevent them from falling victim to rape as a tool of war or keeping sons from being forcibly recruited as child soldiers, millions of people all over the world live dreading tomorrow. Each day they die a little bit more.

We bear responsibility for not safeguarding their sense of belonging as equal human beings on this planet. Malta firmly believes that the United Nations can and must do more to safeguard human dignity and stir the conscience of humankind. No undertaking can be as fundamental as addressing the needs of the peoples of the world, and no organization is better situated to see that that can be done than the United Nations.

Malta's geostrategic location makes it look most closely at that which surrounds it. We are proud to be a people of the sea, of a Mediterranean Sea that has given us life and marked our history. We are proud of our contributions towards the health of that sea, the many exchanges that we support and the good relations we maintain with all our neighbours, North and South.

But we are also troubled by the conflicts and suffering that we see around us. Waves of new tomorrows and hopeful struggles for democracy in North Africa have given way to new realities that were unthinkable when the Millennium Development Goals were drawn up. Sectarian strife, religious tensions and power struggles have halted or reversed the progress of development. It is almost correct to say that the

Mediterranean Sea is at a boiling point and that the next conflict — one over scarce resources, contested borders or even cultural offences — is just waiting to happen. But there can be no stalemate or acceptance of the status quo if we truly believe that the peoples of the Mediterranean deserve better. No violations of human rights or shaky institutions can be accepted if we are to look truly holistically at a new positive agenda for humankind. The deepening links between the lives of peoples across countries demand coordinated global action. We must face that challenge.

Malta firmly believes that more can be done by the community of nations gathered here to support the fragile democracies that are struggling to take root where dictators formerly ruled. More can and should be done to ensure that the economies of the region are able to flourish, that intraregional trade is supported and that cultural exchanges are fostered. More needs to be done to stop the violence and bloodshed that risk becoming the norm for those of us who see the evolution of events.

Malta calls upon the international community to look with compassion on the innocents in Syria. That is a humanitarian catastrophe with no end in sight — a horrendous and indiscriminate tragedy. Each child's death and each mother's wail should shame us all. People are morally outraged around the world, and justifiably outraged, for there can never be any justification for the appalling suffering that is taking place.

The Mediterranean Sea basin remains awash with promise but polluted with pain and prejudice. The Middle East remains a hate-filled maelstrom and the most explosive region in the world. How many more need to die, not just in that region but everywhere else because of conflict and terrorism? How many more need to leave all their belongings to join hurried convoys, fearful of losing their lives? How much longer can the rights of others be ignored and trampled upon while others enjoy their perceived rights? We need to stop that wildfire. We need to stop the further descent into brutality and carnage. Those responsible must be brought to international justice.

Malta is convinced that we cannot start talking of a post-2015 agenda if we cannot solve our differences today. We do not have a carte blanche privilege to be immune and indifferent, for the cost of our inaction is greater than the cost of our effort and commitment. Conflict saps the focus from our goals. It drains our

resources and stifles our potential. The United Nations family, committed as it is to the purposes of peace and prosperity among nations, understands that.

Malta firmly believes that true peace in our time needs to be the overriding goal, the one target to which we should all aspire and for which we should all work. We need to ensure stable and peaceful societies if we want to take the Millennium Development Goals further. The opportunities for all to thrive are at hand. The United Nations is and should be the force field to which all nations gravitate in order to solve differences and push boundaries together.

Our global goals and commitments cannot be solely time-bound but must also be outcome-oriented. We need to think inclusively and holistically. Post-2015, we should not be looking towards rebooting, but towards continuity with greater purpose and greater ambition. Fewer people dying every day is a great achievement, but more people truly living is an astounding victory for all.

However, to get there we have to realize that everyone has an equal voice. People need to be involved in decision-making, since it affects their lives and their livelihoods. They should be foremost in our minds as we consider the world's natural resources and tackle global concerns such as climate change. There is never only one way of doing things. We can achieve our targets only if we listen to the people whom we are meant to represent and make them part of the decision-making process.

A few weeks ago, a young girl, Malala, from Pakistan, spoke in this very Hall of her dream for girls to get an education and wield the power of the pen. Yesterday, at a gathering I attended, she said that everyone should send books, not bombs.

Thirteen years ago, our leaders had a dream: to live up to the millennium moment and to better peoples' lives. As we approach the year 2015, we need to remember the hope and determination we felt as we crossed into the new millennium, that determination to make the world a somewhat better place through the goals we reach together. We need to carry that forward and continue to make dreams happen. Every day, millions of people around the world dream of something more than a scrap of a life. Indeed, there are no scraps of life.

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

*Mr. Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta, was escorted from the rostrum.*

**Address by Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan**

**The President:** The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Japan.

*Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, was escorted to the rostrum.*

**The President:** I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

**Mr. Abe** (Japan) (*spoke in Japanese; English text provided by the delegation*): First, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session.

I would now like to make a new pledge about the situation in Syria. The use of chemical weapons has caused profound shock and anger on the part of the people of Japan, including myself. Chemical weapons must never be used again. I hereby declare that Japan will provide thorough support to, and the greatest possible cooperation with, the international community's efforts to dispose of Syria's chemical weapons. We feel righteous indignation about innocent civilians continuing to be victims. Japan regards the cessation of violence, the initiation of political dialogue and the improvement of the appalling humanitarian conditions as issues of the utmost urgency.

At this very moment, the number of refugees is soaring. To them, Japan will provide still greater assistance. We will act in cooperation with the international community to extend a helping hand to internally displaced persons and refugees fleeing across national borders. I take pride in the fact that Japan's non-governmental organizations and volunteer organizations are working around the clock to help them.

Japan will also continue to provide assistance to areas under the control of the opposition groups, where it is difficult for assistance from the international community to reach. We are working to undertake the training of staff working at medical centres. We will also deliver portable X-ray devices and other medical equipment to those areas.

With the escalating despair of refugees now as they head for a harsh winter, I would like to announce that the Government of Japan will provide and make immediately available approximately \$60 million in additional humanitarian assistance to Syria and its surrounding countries. We are determined to conduct such assistance in parallel with the process of political dialogue, notably the "Geneva II" conference, and to move forward in cooperation with the international community.

Our nation, Japan, and its capital, Tokyo, have been granted the honour of hosting the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, seven years from now. To reciprocate that good fortune we have come to enjoy, my obligation first of all is to rebuild the Japanese economy to be vibrant, and then to make Japan a dependable force that works for good in the world. I pledge here that I will make Japan a force for peace and stability in the world, just as it has been until now — or, rather, make it an even greater such force than it has been thus far, given the increasingly tragic state of the globe.

Japan will newly bear the flag of proactive contributor to peace, anchored in the undeniable record of and the solid appreciation for our country, which has endeavoured to bring peace and prosperity to the world while emphasizing cooperation with the international community.

The balance of power in the world has been changing rapidly, and technological innovations are now removing all borders from both new opportunities and new types of threats. It is now impossible for any one country, no matter which one it may be, to safeguard its own peace and security acting entirely by itself. That is why Japan is working to garner trust from the world as a creator of added value and a net contributor to regional and global peace and stability. Under those circumstances, the role of the United Nations will become even more important than it is today.

Japan has continually promoted the concept of human security, and the implications of the concept will surely expand. Through the accumulated discussions over the nine years since the submission of a report by the Commission on Human Security, the resolution on a common understanding on the notion of human security was adopted, here at the General Assembly, in September 2012 (resolution 66/290). Guided by the wisdom of its forerunners, Japan is determined to further spread the concept and build actual practices.

I will enable Japan, as a proactive contributor to peace, to be even more actively engaged in United Nations collective security measures, including peacekeeping operations. I believe that Japan must continually cultivate our human resources so that they are appropriate for use in United Nations activities.

For Japan, whose national interests are firmly connected to the stability of open seas, changes to the maritime order through the use of force or coercion cannot be condoned under any circumstances. Japan has great expectations that public spaces, ranging from outer space and cyberspace to the skies and the seas, will be rigorously preserved as global commons governed by rules and laws.

Japan, as a country that understands the horror and devastation wrought by atomic bombs, will utterly devote itself to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and the total elimination of nuclear weapons. North Korea's nuclear and missile development cannot be condoned. Japan also maintains serious concerns with respect to other weapons of mass destruction that North Korea is likely to possess. Pyongyang should listen to the unified voice of the international community and rectify its own actions by taking a tangible step. We demand that North Korea return every Japanese national whom it has abducted, without exception. While in office, I am determined to resolve that issue completely. The normalization of diplomatic relations with North Korea remains unthinkable without the resolution of that issue.

As for the nuclear issue of Iran, Japan hopes that the country's new Administration will move forward with concrete actions. We are ready to continue to play a role in resolving the issue.

In the Middle East region, a cornerstone for world peace and prosperity, Japan will continue its unique contributions towards the Middle East peace process.

Japan will also continue to extend cooperation to the countries of Africa, which are certain to become a growth engine in the twenty-first century. Firmly rooted in our own experiences, that cooperation takes the fostering of human resources as its main emphasis and seeks to achieve sustainable growth while cultivating ownership by Africa itself. In June, my Government invited African Heads of State and Government and representatives of international organizations to Japan, where it convened the fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD V). On

that occasion, I was deeply struck by the eagerness expressed by representatives of African nations for private sector investment.

Investment flow to Africa now exceeds the flow of assistance. I also heard from the African leaders time and again that assistance should be utilized strategically as a catalyst for attracting investment. That is the evolution that discussions in the 20-year-long TICAD process have witnessed and given rise to. TICAD V became a forum where we celebrated the path that Africa has walked down, and together we reconfirmed that Japan has been an enduring partner weaving dreams side by side with Africa.

I hold the firm conviction that the future course of Japan's diplomacy will begin here, by sparing no pains — and with our regained strength and capacity — to become actively engaged in meeting the historic challenges that today's world faces. I consider "sparing no pains" to be nothing less than the basso continuo notes that set the basic tone for Japan's actions, be they in diplomacy or any other field.

As a country with such intentions, strengths and achievements, Japan considers it extremely regrettable that the structure of the Security Council is still frozen in a state that reflects the realities of some 70 years ago. Security Council reform must proceed without delay. Japan's aspirations to becoming a permanent member of the Council have not changed in the slightest.

Everything begins with Japan refortifying its true abilities and its economy. The growth of Japan will benefit the world. Japan's decline would be a loss for people everywhere. How, then, does Japan aim to realize its growth? Mobilizing the power of women will serve as both a source and outcome of growth, a point almost self-evident at this gathering.

There is a theory called "womenomics", which asserts that the more the advancement of women in society is promoted, the more growth increases. Creating an environment in which women find it comfortable to work and enhancing opportunities for women to work and to be active in society is no longer a matter of choice for Japan. It is instead a matter of the greatest urgency.

Having declared my intention to create a society in which women shine, I have been working to change Japan's domestic structures. However, that is not confined merely to domestic matters. I would now

like to discuss how it is also an issue guiding Japan's diplomacy. To begin with, I would like to state four contributions through which Japan aspires to remain a leading member within the international community.

First, Japan respects the activities of UN-Women and intends to become one of its leading contributors, and therefore an exemplary country in that area. Japan will also work closely with the relevant international organizations.

Secondly, as other like-minded countries have already done, Japan also intends to develop a national action plan with regard to women, peace and security, in cooperation with people working at the grass-roots level.

Thirdly, Japan will cooperate closely with not only UN-Women, but also the International Criminal Court and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura. It is an outrage that there continues to be sexual violence against women during times of armed conflict even now, in the twenty-first century. Japan will do everything possible to prevent such crimes against women and to support — both materially and psychologically — those people who unfortunately become victims of such acts.

Fourthly, Japan will submit once more at the next session of the Commission on the Status of Women a draft resolution that gives careful consideration to women in natural disasters, as they are likely to be vulnerable. Japan, which experienced a major natural disaster two years ago, wishes to garner support for the draft resolution, which embodies our outpouring of support for the matter.

I would now like to make use of the examples of three individuals to clarify Japan's development concept aimed at bringing about a society in which women shine, and also to shed light on some issues that must be tackled. I will first introduce the examples of a Japanese woman and a Bangladeshi woman, and then that of an Afghan woman, as the third example.

Ms. Tokiko Sato was an expert at the Japan International Cooperation Agency, responsible for improving maternal, newborn and child health for over 15 years in a remote village in Jordan. Undaunted by the suspicious looks she initially received from the villagers, Ms. Sato would speak with anyone, anywhere. Devoted to her ideas, including making

use of public entertainment to persuade the villagers, Ms. Sato finally found herself accepted by the village community. Ms. Sato's tenacity gradually transformed the traditional idea that the one who decides the number of children is the husband, not the wife, into a mindset that values the health of women.

As the Assembly is aware, my country played a leading role in the establishment of the the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Japan intends to continue to make an appropriate contribution at the upcoming Fourth Replenishment, which seeks to secure additional financing for the Fund. However, as for the post-2015 development agenda, it would be most appropriate to broaden the focus to encompass those diseases individually.

Japan regards approaches that address individuals holistically as better able to meet their broader health needs. That is why Japan decided to promote universal health coverage — "UHC" — on the occasion of TICAD V. To address health issues in the African region, we have readied \$500 million and are at present concentrating on setting up training for 120,000 health and medical services providers. With regard to medical care for all, there can be no doubt that the people who give the human touch to the three letters in "UHC" are, in concrete terms, people like Ms. Sato, who without hesitation go into local communities.

The second person I would like to introduce is Ms. Nilufa Yeasmin, a young Bangladeshi woman and the mother of two. Her professional title is "Poly-Glu Lady". Poly-Glu is a made-in-Japan water purifier derived from a food that can be found in Japan in great abundance. One simply adds it to turbid water. Poly-Glu acts as an adsorbent, adhering to excess substances in the water, and then falls to the bottom as a precipitate, leaving the water clear. It is necessary to teach people how to use it correctly at the outset, and Ms. Yeasmin and other Poly-Glu ladies serve as both salespersons and instructors.

As members can see, as with what is called a "base of the pyramid" business, that endeavour is characterized by the expectations placed on the power of women. By combining her income with her husband's, Ms. Yeasmin has been able to send her children to an institution of higher education. Poverty caused her to give up on the dream she had cherished as a little girl of becoming a doctor someday. But I understand that now she proudly states she has become a doctor of clean water. Can we

not say that Ms. Yeasmin has acquired self-esteem, the most precious asset of all? My Government wishes to create as many Ms. Nilufa Yeasmins as possible.

By the way, the company that makes Poly-Glu is a very small Japanese company. We will work to enhance the assistance to such companies and organizations to allow their ideas to bear fruit.

Finally, there is one more woman I would like to introduce to everyone in the Hall today, but this Afghan lady is no longer with us. Her name is Ms. Islam Bibi, and on 4 July she was gunned down and assassinated. She was 37 years old and is survived by three children. Ms. Islam Bibi was a proud female police officer with the Afghan police. She came to shoulder heavy responsibilities through her nine years of service. She guarded polling stations to monitor elections and was a trainer to young female officers coming after her. We have much work to be done. However, we must proceed undaunted.

Under the auspices of the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan, Japan has been one of the countries that have always taken great pains to improve the capacity of the Afghan police force and cultivate female police officers, whose number will finally reach 1,800 — still far from enough. I have renewed my determination to continue to provide support in order to prevent another case like that of Islam Bibi.

I wanted to emphasize — through the real-life example of Ms. Nilufa Yeasmin in Bangladesh — the necessity of promoting women's participation in society and their empowerment. My Government has prioritized that as its foremost policy and will continue to undertake highly inventive efforts, including launching start-up businesses in Africa.

Through her actions, Ms. Tokiko Sato, the Japanese aid specialist, has highlighted the importance

of maternal, newborn and child health, an MDG whose attainment has been conspicuously slow. My Administration will, as its second priority policy area, engage greater efforts towards women's health and medical care.

Finally, what I hoped to convey through the tragic example of Islam Bibi is the importance of women's participation and their protection in the context of peace and security. Japan intends to promote measures to ensure women's participation at all stages — including in conflict prevention and resolution and in peacebuilding — and to safeguard their rights and the physical well-being of women who are exposed to danger in times of conflict.

I would like to state here that in establishing those three pillars, the Government of Japan will direct official development assistance in excess of \$3 billion over the next three years, to target the pillars.

In conclusion, if we were to follow the wisdom of the so-called “womenomics” theory, as mentioned earlier, the development concept aimed at cultivating the power of women would generate greater peace and well-being in the world. I wish to bring about a society where women shine, within Japan and in conflict regions and countries suffering from poverty. In that context, I do not consider the outlook to be optimistic. However, I know one thing: in Japan a considerable number of people are working unsparingly towards that end. They are the people who are making every effort to ready themselves to be able to work together, in unity.

**The President:** On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Japan for the statement he has just made.

*Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, was escorted from the rostrum.*

*The meeting rose at 2.50 p.m.*