



# General Assembly

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*President:* Mr. Lykketoft . . . . . (Denmark)

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

slave in a free society, and a woman in a society ruled by men.

## Agenda item 118

### Follow-up to the commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade

#### Reports of the Secretary-General (A/70/136 and A/70/221)

#### Draft resolution (A/70/L.5)

**The President:** Today's debate is an excellent opportunity to reflect on history, lessons learned and progress made since the abolition of slavery and the slave trade. Without any doubt, slavery remains one of the darkest chapters in our past, and in this seventieth anniversary year of the United Nations it is timely that we recommit ourselves to raising public awareness about its legacy of unprecedented horror.

As we meet today we should continue to honour the enslaved Africans and their descendants and recognize their respective contributions to our world and societies. The latest report of the Secretary-General (see A/70/221) highlights the educational outreach and public-awareness efforts undertaken to commemorate and honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. In this regard, I commend the Department of Public Information for selecting the topic "Women and slavery" as the theme for 2015. As one historian tells us, to be a slave and female was a triple-edged sword — a slave woman was black in a white society, a

Despite the hardships, enslaved African women were largely responsible for preserving and passing on the culture and traditions that form such an integral part of the African diaspora of the Americas and the Caribbean that we know today. This year's theme therefore is timely and relevant, and we should pay tribute to those women who contributed immensely to the abolition of slavery and the creation of our societies. I should like to commend the sustained commitment and actions of Member States to ensure that this issue remains a priority of the General Assembly. In particular I wish to recognize the dedication of the States members of the Caribbean Community and the Group of African States for their efforts over the years.

Let me also take the opportunity to congratulate the Permanent Memorial Committee for its tireless efforts, which resulted in the construction and unveiling earlier this year of the permanent memorial to honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. We are thankful also to those Member States, organizations and individuals who contributed to the creation of the memorial and eagerly anticipate the conclusion of the final steps in the project. I look forward also to the collaboration between the Secretariat and States members of the Assembly aimed at promoting the annual observation of the International Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade as reflected in the reports of the Secretary-General.

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While significant progress has been achieved since the abolition of slavery and the slave trade, the struggles of millions of descendants of enslaved Africans did not end with the close of that dark chapter. The challenge facing us all today is to take concerted action to fight all forms of discrimination, including institutional racism and gender discrimination, and to eradicate contemporary forms and manifestations of slavery, including sexual slavery, of which women and girls are the primary victims. Many of these matters are at the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), whose implementation must be a priority for all Governments and for all of us. It is crucial also that we maintain our political commitment to the principles of the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and all other international human rights standards relevant also to this case.

I now give the floor to the representative of Jamaica to introduce draft resolution A/70/L.5.

**Ms. Richards** (Jamaica): I am honoured to introduce draft resolution A/70/L.5 for the consideration of the Assembly. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and African member States collaborated with a wide range of partners to arrive at a text that truly reflects the consensus which similar resolutions have enjoyed over past years. The draft, as is customary, enjoys the full support of the membership, as demonstrated in its sponsorship by the vast majority of Member States.

I thank the Secretary-General for the two reports submitted under this agenda item, the first being on the status of the Trust Fund and the second on the educational outreach activities on slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.

Since the General Assembly's last consideration of this agenda item, we have achieved a lot. Most significantly, the permanent memorial was completed and unveiled on 25 March 2015. The *Ark of Return* now occupies a prominent place here at United Nations Headquarters, in keeping with the decision of successive resolutions. Visitors to the United Nations are not only struck by its captivating presence but also drawn to its symbolism and interactive nature. I use this opportunity to reiterate the gratitude of the members of the Permanent Memorial Committee, which Jamaica has had the honour to chair, for the steadfast support of the membership towards the completion of the project. The financial contributions made are reflected in the Secretary-General's report and every dollar has been

prudently managed by the United Nations Office for Partnerships.

The outpouring of financial support in the final weeks of the fundraising campaign, reinvigorated in earnest at a pledging luncheon last December, ensured that all the funds required were raised. I am proud to say that the memorial has been completed on time and on budget. This has been due in no small measure to the support received and also to the collaboration with the Department of Management, the capital master plan and the architect and designer, Mr. Rodney Leon, whose professionalism and dedication was exemplary.

I encourage everyone to pay a visit to the memorial and to spend what will prove to be a worthwhile few moments of reflection to acknowledge the tragedy and to consider the legacy. The *Ark of Return* is not a memorial just for people of African descent; it is the United Nations memorial; it belongs to us all.

The *Ark of Return* has been erected, yet our work does not cease. As demonstrated in the Secretary-General's report on the educational outreach activities (A/70/221), there remains broad scope for actions to teach present and future generations about what slavery truly was, how it was sustained, how it was opposed, how it was defeated, and, very importantly, what lingering legacies remain for us to address. The work being undertaken by the Department of Public Information, both at Headquarters and globally, is of utmost importance so that the message of the memorial can be disseminated widely. Within each of our countries and regions there is work to be done to address systemic and ingrained legacies that often result in discrimination and other disparate challenges faced by the descendants of African slaves.

We face injustice where we seek justice; we encounter suppression where we seek empowerment; we suffer marginalization where we seek recognition. There are social, economic and psychological scars that need to be healed in order for us to properly move forward. And while some of that healing must of necessity come from within, it is undeniable that much more must come from outside.

It is quite disappointing that so few Member States contributed information on the activities they are undertaking to ensure that the lessons of slavery are taught within their jurisdictions. I encourage Member States to implement programmes and activities, including with the support of the United Nations system,

in particular UNESCO, which has excellent resources, such as its Slave Route project and the General History of Africa project.

Implementing such programmes and activities serves to bolster our collective efforts to build a world of justice and equality, where slavery is eliminated and its tragic effects are reversed. Let us take the message of the memorial as our guide. We should acknowledge the tragedy. Let us teach the facts and the impacts. We should consider the legacy. Let us address systemic imbalances, redress wrongs and defeat modern-day slavery. We should never forget.

**Mr. Kataria** (India): I should like to thank the Secretary-General for his reports under the agenda item. I should also like to pay a rich tribute to Ambassador Courtenay Rattray, Permanent Representative of Jamaica, for his tireless efforts in making the permanent memorial *Ark of Return* a reality.

The evil of slavery was deeply rooted in economic greed, racism and different forms of discrimination during the period of colonization and imperialism. Millions lost their lives, during the unprecedented middle passage. African civilization was torn apart, and it left an indelible mark on society for many generations. In this context, I must recall that Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, speaking at the Asian-African Conference at Bandung in 1955, in referring to transatlantic slavery, declared that there was nothing more terrible, nothing more horrible, than the infinite tragedy of Africa in the past few hundred years.

The historic unveiling of the permanent memorial *Ark of Return* at the United Nations in March this year was a small but significant gesture of remembrance to the victims of slavery who perished in dark oblivion. It symbolizes long-overdue condemnation by the international community, which will remind generations to come of the four-century-long grief and tragedy borne by the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.

India remembers its own tragedy of colonialism and the export of indentured labour, which was initiated to replace freed slaves on sugar plantations in British colonies in the 1830s. We welcome the UNESCO International Indentured Labour Route project as a complement to the Slave Route project. India's contribution of \$260,000 to the memorial Trust Fund reflects its sharing the pain and suffering of the affected countries and their people. We are

happy to co-sponsor draft resolution A/70/L.5, entitled "Permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade", introduced by the Caribbean Community, which we have been co-sponsoring since 2007.

The Slave Route project of UNESCO has contributed immensely to raising awareness of the history and consequences of the transatlantic slave trade and slavery. The recognition of 2015-2024 as the International Decade for People of African Descent provides us the opportunity to showcase and recognize the important contribution made by people of African descent to modern societies.

The international community must utilize the opportunity in the implementation of Agenda 2030 to redouble its efforts and allocate more resources for the promotion and preservation of the dignity and worth of all human beings, especially vulnerable women and girls, and the fight for the complete abolition of slavery in all its contemporary manifestations and forms as envisioned in the Durban Declaration.

**Mr. Amihai Bivas** (Israel): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting. We also thank the delegation of Jamaica for its leadership on this issue, and we recognize the many other Caribbean and African States that have lent momentum to the drive to formally honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic trade.

Earlier this year, on a cold, grey March day, the efforts of many Member States, organizations and individuals came to fruition. With the unveiling of the permanent memorial to the victims of slavery, the *Ark of Return*, visitors and diplomats will now be starkly reminded of the unnamed millions who endured unspeakable suffering, and those who perished. With the completion of the memorial, one chapter of our work has come to a close. And while we have good reason to be satisfied with this accomplishment — long overdue — we must now turn to the work ahead.

As draft resolution A/70/L.5 stresses, the responsibility for educating about the causes, consequences and lessons of slavery falls to us, as Member States and as individuals. In this regard, we support the efforts of the United Nations, including the activities of the Department of Public Information, to teach these lessons across cultures and generations, and we encourage all Member States to do the same. In adopting the draft resolution, Member States will recognize the indomitable spirit of the millions

of slavery's victims, and in their honour, pledge to continue to teach the lessons of the past.

One of the most important holidays on the Jewish calendar is the observance of Passover. The holiday recalls the 400 years of bitter slavery of the Jewish people and celebrates the joy of freedom gained after generations in bondage. A key part of that holiday, also known as the Feast of Freedom, is the relating of this epic story to the next generation. In fact, the act of carefully teaching it is so important that the Passover observance has changed little for hundreds of years.

I mention this because a crucial purpose of teaching and honouring the past is to inform how we act today and how we influence future generations. Our knowledge and understanding of past injustice should compel us to act whenever it echoes in the present. We must therefore recognize that the long arm of slavery continues to touch the modern world. Slavery's legacy lives on in discrimination and inequality, racism and prejudice. The most fitting tribute we can pay to slavery's victims is by addressing these issues and by committing ourselves to fighting modern-day slavery in all its forms. Wherever a child is forced into hard labour, wherever a person is sold into prostitution, we must put into action the responsibility that comes with memory.

In conclusion, Israel is proud to have played its part in honouring the memory of the victims of slavery by contributing to the Permanent Memorial Fund and by co-sponsoring the present draft resolution, as we have done each year. We are grateful for this opportunity.

**Mr. Kaganda** (United Republic of Tanzania): My delegation thanks you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting to consider agenda item 118, entitled "Follow-up to the commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade". We thank and commend the Permanent Mission of Jamaica to the United Nations and members of the Caribbean Community for the facilitation of draft resolution A/70/L.5, to be adopted under this agenda item, which Tanzania and other members of the Group of African States have naturally co-sponsored.

We wish to extend a word of appreciation to our illustrious Secretary-General for overseeing the implementation of the resolutions adopted by this body under this item, as illustrated in his recent reports before us.

Slavery and the slave trade across the Atlantic, on the shores of the Indian Ocean and elsewhere, were a global tragedy whose legacy must be shared with present and future generations with a view to preventing its recurrence in any shape or form. That is why my delegation welcomes the eighth annual observance of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade under the theme "Women and slavery", which coincided with the unveiling of the permanent memorial the *Ark of Return*, in honour of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.

We are delighted that the *Ark* has found a permanent and prominent berth at the United Nations Headquarters. We hope and believe that the memorial will help visitors, the general public, students, delegates, United Nations staff, and other stakeholders to appreciate the tragedy and consider the legacy of slavery in general and the transatlantic slave trade in particular. Whereas the memorial sufficiently presents a sombre portrayal of the tragedy, it would benefit a great deal from the application of audio guide technology providing a recorded spoken commentary to visitors.

The permanent memorial initiative is a great success. As such, we would like to thank and commend the Permanent Memorial Committee for its tireless efforts to ensure its successful completion. We also thank the Department of Public Information, the Office of the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session, and partners such as UNESCO for ensuring the successful observance of the International Day. We acknowledge the significance of the United Nations Trust Fund for Partnerships — Permanent Memorial, and thank all Member States, organizations and individuals that have generously contributed to it.

Modern forms of slavery persist in many parts of the world despite its abolition and classification as a crime against humanity. According to the International Labour Organization, around 21 million men, women and children globally live in some form of slavery, generating a profit of around \$150 billion a year to unscrupulous operators and criminal gangs. Devastatingly, some of the victims of this vice are descendants of persons who experienced the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade, and hence are reliving a fraction of the dark history of the past. In that vein, resolution 61/19 could not be more accurate in recognizing that the slave trade and slavery are at the heart of situations of profound social and economic

inequality, hatred, bigotry, racism and prejudice, which affects people of African descent today. Against this background, we would like to underscore the following.

First, we recognize the importance of educating and informing current and future generations about the tragedy, lessons, history and consequences of slavery and the slave trade, which, as was once described in this Hall, represents one of the low points in the history of humanity.

Secondly, we recognize the importance of upholding human rights, especially pertaining to the equality and dignity of all humankind, without any distinction. We note that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by this body in 1948 declares that no one shall be held in slavery or servitude and that slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms. We must enforce these rights, including through the enactment of appropriate national legislation. We must also put into effect the relevant provisions of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, which is as relevant today as it was almost a decade and a half ago.

Thirdly and finally, we recognize the importance of eradicating poverty in all its forms and manifestations, and of addressing the chronic inequality that persists among and within countries and communities. We know too well that poverty, protracted inequality, socioeconomic and political exclusion, as well as conflicts, expose the vulnerable members of society — especially women, girls and boys — to a myriad of misfortunes, including modern-day slavery, sexual violence and abuse. It is very opportune, therefore, to address these challenges, including in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) and the African Union Agenda 2063, which we have recently adopted. We need to forge greater partnerships to address the root causes of these problems. Failure is not an option.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to pay a glowing tribute to the many enslaved women who endured untold suffering and abuse from their tormentors, who advocated the abolition of slavery and the slave trade, and who succeeded in transmitting the rich and vibrant African culture to their descendants. Their incredible fortitude and steadfastness, which Ms. Sylviane Diouf eloquently described in her keynote address in March (see A/69/PV.83) and which actresses such as Lupita Nyong'o, Aunjanue Ellis and Oprah Winfrey magnificently depicted in their films *Twelve*

*Years a Slave*, *The Book of Negroes* and *Beloved*, will never be forgotten. We all have a duty to prevent the horrors of yesteryear, and work towards building a prosperous future for all humankind, a future free from slavery in all its forms and manifestations. It can be done. We must play our part.

**Mr. Ruiz Blanco** (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action recognize that slavery and the transatlantic slave trade were atrocious tragedies of human history, not only because of their abhorrent barbarism but because of their magnitude, their organized character and, in particular, their denial of the essence of the victims. The Declaration also recognizes that slavery and the slave trade, in particular the transatlantic slave trade, constitute and should always have constituted a crime against humanity.

In the framework of this commemoration, Colombia celebrates the imminent adoption of draft resolution A/70/L.5, on the permanent memorial recalling the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, and is pleased to join the group of sponsors, as we have traditionally done on this subject. We also celebrate the placement of the *Ark of Return* on the grounds of the United Nations as a permanent memorial to the victims and a recognition of their tragedy, the legacy of their lives and, in many cases, their heroic resistance.

The communities of people of African descent now living in all regions of the world have trod a long road to claim their rights and have raised their voices in our societies, generating awareness of human rights and contributing invaluable to our cultures and identities as peoples and nations. In America, Colombia was particularly enriched by the cultural contributions and labour of the black people whom the transatlantic slave trade brought to our lands. Cities such as Cartagena, Popayán and Santafé de Antioquia received this bitter legacy. The millions of men and women brought from Africa are embodied in our most important cultural manifestations — our language, our cuisine, science and art. We also recall the contributions to freedom made by the descendants of Bantus, Anzicos, Minas, Viásfaras and Congos to American countries, in particular Colombia, with the struggles waged by their autonomous communities of runaway slaves, including their own patriot armies.

For these reasons, there is a long cultural and life-affirming bridge between our countries and African countries that makes it unthinkable to discriminate

against them on the basis of their former enslavement. The presence of cultures of African origin enriched our nationality and gave it a multicultural character of rich human content. Colombia is a multi-ethnic country, and our African origin is claimed as one of our greatest assets. In this context, Colombia reiterates the importance of resolution 69/16, which proclaimed the “International Decade for People of African Descent: recognition, justice and development”. We believe that this proclamation constitutes a great opportunity for Governments, civil society and the international community to pool their efforts in the common purpose to adopt effective public policies aimed at making a difference over the next 10 years.

The International Decade for People of African Descent 2015-2024, proclaimed by the General Assembly and welcomed by the countries of Latin America and the world, opens a window for redressing the human catastrophe of the transatlantic slave trade, based on the fact that it is not possible in any part of the world to build a nation from the starting point of the exclusion, invisibility and denial of the other, in particular when that other gave his and her life to the material and symbolic wealth of our countries and societies. The Decade seeks recognition on the part of the international community that people of African descent represent a specific group whose human rights must be promoted and protected. The communities of people of African descent have the right to equality, non-discrimination, education, ethno-education and participation and inclusion in society.

In Colombia, the Decade was launched on 21 May through a national campaign entitled “*La hora contra el racismo*”. A few months later, a national development plan enshrined in law the commitment of the Colombian State to the Decade through measures such as a 10-year plan for the Afro-Colombian population, a special statute for the Raizals — the black communities of San Andrés, one of our island communities in the Caribbean — and compensation for the property tax imposed on the collective territories of the black communities.

Recognition of multicultural and plural ethnicity by my country’s political Constitution launched a fruitful way for Colombia to be recognized as a country of immense cultural wealth based on the differences and autonomy of its various population groups. These principles have allowed the country to deepen its understanding of its own history and that

of its populations. The socialization of that history is one of the most important strategies for the eradication of racial discrimination, insofar as it allows us to highlight the role of each of these communities in the development of the country and the nation.

Today, as we join in the commemoration of the 200th year since the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, we recall the victims and the immense and invaluable contribution they made to each of our nations. Once again, we join voices to ensure that this shameful episode in the history of humankind is never repeated.

**Ms. Butts** (United States of America): I am honoured to represent the United States today on this important occasion to recognize the commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade.

Two hundred and seven years ago, on 1 January 1808 in New York City, a young Peter Williams Junior, a self-described descendant of Africa who would become a leading pastor and noted abolitionist, chose to recognize the effective date of the legislation abolishing the transatlantic slave trade in a speech entitled “An Oration on the Abolition of the Slave Trade”. He exalted in the moment:

“Rejoice, Oh, ye descendants of Africans! No longer shall the United States of America, nor the extensive colonies of Great Britain, admit the degrading commerce of the human species: no longer shall they swell the tide of African misery by the importation of slaves. Rejoice, my brethren, that the channels are obstructed through which slavery, and its direful concomitants, have been entailed on the African race.”

Today we, too, rejoice in the United Nations recognition of the bitter history of the transatlantic slave trade through the permanent memorial the *Ark of Return* unveiled this past March. The United States is pleased to join more than 90 Member States that have made contributions in support of the permanent memorial — designed by an American architect of Haitian descent, Rodney Leon — that now stands on United Nations Headquarters grounds as a public tribute to all of slavery’s victims. The United States contribution supports this crucial project in partnership with so many others who came together to fight injustice with the particular leadership of Member States, the

Mission of Jamaica, the Caribbean Community and the African Union.

As a multicultural society, the United States strongly believes in spreading awareness of the struggle of all who fell victim to slavery. While we take pride in the tremendous progress we have made in our great nation, led by such historic women leaders as Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Fannie Lou Hamer and Ella Baker, we also recognize that the scars of the past still linger. As such, we are dedicated to educating future generations of this tragic past as a means of combating racism and prejudice.

The United States continues to press forward on eliminating discrimination within our country as well as joining the global community in creating a world of freedom and equality for all. In that vein, the United States is proud to be a sponsor of this draft resolution and to support the ongoing efforts of the United Nations to fight racial injustice and intolerance. Also, we are proud of the fact that more than 120 United States mayors have joined the International Coalition of Cities against Racism, an initiative launched by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The United States network has been the fastest-growing part of the global coalition. Every day United Nations representatives and Government officials, along with tour groups, visitors and schoolchildren, will experience the *Ark of Return*.

The memorial stands as a reminder not only of the horrific injustices of the past but also of our shared responsibility to fully realize the aspirations outlined in the United Nations Charter. We must continue to study the history and legacy of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. We must never forget the terrible human tragedy and the moral courage of those who work to end it.

**Mr. Rakhmetullin** (Kazakhstan): Every year, on 25 March, we pay tribute to the victims of slavery. The International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade is also a sober reminder that many modern forms of slavery and long-established stereotypes and biases continue to prevail, all calling for strong, concerted multilateral action.

Slavery did not end with its abolition in the nineteenth century. It continues to prevail in numerous ways, in some form or another, in almost every country in the world. This illegal practice takes the form of women caught in prostitution, children and adults

forced to work in agriculture, domestic work, factories and sweatshops. Unfortunately, the illegal practice of slavery still blights the contemporary world. According to the International Labour Organization, around 21 million men, women and children throughout the world are in a form of slavery. Contemporary slavery takes various forms and affects people of all ages, gender and races, restricting their freedom.

What we learned from past tragic experiences in our part of the world is best summarized in the words of President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan, while inaugurating in 2002 the monument dedicated to the victims of political repression. He said “We remember not to sprinkle ashes on our heads, but to prevent such tragedies in the present and in the future”. We should remember historical tragedies each day of our lives in every thought, word and deed, and not merely at commemorative observances.

My country, in its national legislation, condemns and forbids genocide, racial segregation and all forms of racial discrimination, propaganda and agitation for racial, national and religious superiority. Kazakhstan supports the creation of inclusive multiracial and multi-ethnic organizations and movements. The country, where about 130 ethnic groups and 20 religious denominations live peacefully, has a unique constitutional organ to ensure inter-ethnic harmony — the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan — the public entity that has nine seats in the Parliament. In Astana, we organize regularly the triennial Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions as a platform for dialogue among spiritual leaders to promote mutual respect and understanding worldwide, thus contributing to peace and security.

My country considers the transatlantic slave trade to be one of the most tragic pages of human history — one that still has lasting consequences, severely damaging human rights and international law. The erosion of international law demands from us all a reaffirmation of its cornerstone principles and our commitment to preserve them to overcome the challenges ahead. At the general debate of this session, the President of Kazakhstan proposed convening in 2016 a United Nations international conference at the highest level, designed to reaffirm the basic principles of international law (see A/70/PV.13).

Kazakhstan has co-sponsored draft resolution A/70/L.5, entitled “Permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade” to reconfirm my country’s

robust commitment to combating racial and ethnic discrimination and to upholding human dignity, freedom and justice for all — the primary prerequisites for peace and security.

**Mr. León González** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba attaches special importance to the commemoration of the bicentenary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. Cuba is proud to sponsor draft resolution A/70/L.5, before us today.

We reaffirm the special declaration of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in favour of erecting a permanent memorial in honour of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. We also support the CELAC Latin American and Caribbean People of African Descent Action Plan, adopted in the context of its third Summit in January 2015, held in Costa Rica. Cuba welcomes both the proclamation of the International Decade for People of African Descent and the approval of the programme of activities for the Decade, and reiterates its commitment to continuing to participate actively and support efforts for its effective implementation.

In Cuba, as in other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, we can feel the consequences of the transatlantic slave trade. That cruel trade brought approximately 1,300,000 Africans to our island. These men, women and children from Africa were torn from their villages and families and sold as slaves on the other side of the Atlantic. The identity of the Cuban nation emerged from the mixing of the cultures of various ethnic groups in difficult colonial and, later, neocolonial circumstances.

In 1959, we launched a stage of true integration and recognized the value of all components of Cuban culture. We are essentially a mixture of Hispanics and Africans; we also have influences from Asia and the American indigenous peoples. The Cuban people are very proud of their African origins, which are embodied in our idiosyncrasies and cultural characteristics. Cuban culture and nationality are enriched by the legacy of the Africans. Freed slaves and their descendants were the main actors in the various stages of the war that enabled the Cuban people to exercise its self-determination. Furthermore, Cuba has contributed its own blood to the emancipation of Africa, a continent to which all humankind will forever be in debt.

As stated by the historic leader of the Cuban revolution, Fidel Castro Ruz, in his statement at

the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban in 2001:

“The inhuman exploitation imposed on the peoples of three continents, including Asia, marked forever the destiny and lives of over 4.5 billion people living in the Third World today whose poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and health rates as well as their infant mortality, life expectancy and other calamities — too many, in fact, to enumerate here — are certainly awesome and harrowing. They are the current victims of that atrocity, which lasted centuries, and those who clearly deserve compensation for the horrendous crimes perpetrated against their ancestors and peoples.”

The developed countries and their consumer societies, responsible for the accelerated and almost unstoppable destruction of the environment, have been the main beneficiaries of conquest, colonization, slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, and the terrible exploitation and extermination of hundreds of people of the South. Cuba supports the just request for compensation put forward by the countries of the Caribbean Community. Cuba also advocates the special and differentiated treatment requested by the developing countries, in particular in Africa, in their economic and international relations. Cuba rejects selfishness and the shameful wealth of a few that serve as the blueprint for the ongoing globalization.

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

To conclude, we reaffirm the importance of strengthening the activities of the United Nations and other international organizations, such as UNESCO, with regard to this issue. It is the minimum that the international community can do to repair the crime against humanity committed through slavery and the transatlantic slave trade of Africans.

**Mr. Minah** (Sierra Leone): I am truly honoured to represent Sierra Leone at this moment as we celebrate the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade. We are truly grateful for the leadership provided by Jamaica, and we commend Ambassador Rattray for his leadership of a memorial committee that led to the creation and the establishment of the *Ark of Return* designed by a Haitian American architect, Rodney Leon, and supervised by Sierra Leonean engineer Melbourne Garber.

As we commemorate the lives lost, let us celebrate the resilience of the descendants. As we commemorate the lives lost, let us also educate those who need to know the lessons of the slave trade. Certain names ring true when we talk about the transatlantic slave trade, but all of us might not be familiar with them. Names such as Elmina, Cape Coast, Gorée Island and Bunce Island are all locations where the commercialization of the slave trade occurred on the West African coast.

All delegations support the total abolition of the slave trade, but let us understand that while the tide of slavery has receded, it has not completely gone away. We must remain vigilant. We must remain attentive to make sure that a world without prejudice, without bigotry, without discrimination and without slavery truly comes about. We note the terms, the clauses and the promise of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We also take note of the aspirations of this noble Organization, but the future is not guaranteed and it is for all of us as diplomats, as those who are influence-makers and opinion formers, to make sure we remain vigilant on the question of slavery in all its forms to ensure that the world we wish to live in, and the world we wish to bequeath to generations yet unborn, is truly free, fair and as we wish it to be.

In a village in Cuba I had the privilege of meeting descendants of slavery who still sing the songs of a West African village in Freetown, Sierra Leone. A film crew managed to record these songs in Cuba and also to go to West Africa to try to find the origins of these songs. When he played the songs in Sierra Leone in this particular village, these songs were immediately recognized by the old people who said: "Those are our songs. Those are the songs our grandmothers used to sing to us. We recognize these songs." The result of this discovery was that members of the Cuban village went to Sierra Leone and met those in the Sierra Leonean village and even though they were separated by language, the one phrase that both of them could manage to understand among themselves was simply the phrase "they are we". In other words these are our people, our cousins, our sisters, our descendants.

Slavery has united many in misery, but the promise of the future is for us to realize that the resilience of the descendants can make a future for the world we wish to live in. As we celebrate and commemorate, let us rededicate ourselves to what we need to do. We welcome the leadership of Jamaica, but it is for all of us

to do our part to make sure that the world we wish to live in truly comes about.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 118.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/70/L.5, entitled "Permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

**Mr. Zhang Saijin** (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, in addition to those delegations listed in document A/70/L.5, the following countries have become sponsors of the draft resolution: Andorra, Argentina, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Georgia, Honduras, Iceland, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein, Malaysia, Maldives, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Nepal, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Paraguay, Peru, Samoa, San Marino, Serbia, Sweden, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Turkey, Uruguay, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Viet Nam.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly adopted a similar draft resolution at the previous session without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/70/L.5 without a vote?

*Draft resolution A/70/L.5 was adopted (resolution 70/7).*

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): I shall now give the floor to the speaker who wishes to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted.

I give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

**Mr. Whiteley** (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

Slavery and the slave trade are a crime against humanity and should always have been so, especially the transatlantic slave trade, and are among the major sources and manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Building on that notion, acknowledged at the World Conference against Racism in 2001, in 2007 the General Assembly agreed to establish a permanent memorial on the grounds of the United Nations to honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. Working together in unity, on the one hand to honour the victims of slavery but also to acknowledge and remember such manifestations of racial discrimination, it was with great contentment that in March we witnessed the unveiling of the memorial the *Ark of Return*.

We warmly acknowledge the work of the Committee of interested States, pay tribute to the efforts of Jamaica, the Caribbean Community and African Union States and others, and the generous voluntary contributions from Member States, complemented by funding from foundations and private individuals.

The memorial reminds us, and will continue to remind those after us, of the tragic legacy of the slave trade and the need to continue the fight against racism and prejudice. We believe that the project is just beginning. The memorial helps us to remember the past and what racism and prejudice brings. We must work together in raising awareness of, educating and informing current and future generations about the causes, consequences and lessons of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. No effort should be spared, and the European Union will always be in the forefront of efforts to combat all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 118.

#### **Agenda items 119 and 120 (*continued*)**

#### **Implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations**

#### **Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly**

**Mr. De Antueno** (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, we would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening the Assembly to exchange ideas with regard to the implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations and the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

The General Assembly is the most representative and democratic organ of the Organization. Our delegation is convinced that we must work seriously to recover the leading role that, for different reasons, very

often has been ceded to or taken up by other bodies. Therefore, we recall the fundamental importance of promoting the efficiency, transparency and inclusivity of our work as basic pillars to improve and perfect the working methods of the Assembly and each of its committees.

In that regard, the work done and efforts made are worthy of recognition. The process headed by Ambassador Vladimir Drobnyak and Wilfried Emvula have to be highlighted; they led to the adoption of resolution 69/321, which is innovative in many respects, in particular with regard to the process of the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General. We are grateful to the entire membership for the flexibility and constructive spirit demonstrated during the process, which must continue during this session.

One question that we think is important to reflect on for the future is the need to strengthen the Office of the President of the General Assembly. We must guarantee that the exception is not the rule. Both from a personnel perspective and from the budgetary point of view, the Office of the President has to have the necessary resources to function appropriately and predictably. It is clear that the resources currently allocated from the regular budget are insufficient and have not been substantially increased since 1998, when they were established. On the other hand, the trust fund established in 2010 is not the most efficient or transparent way to finance the Office.

It is essential to establish mechanisms that guarantee total accountability with regard to the resources available for the trust fund, as well as the origin and way in which they are used. We must reflect collectively with regard to the best way to guarantee that the Office of the President adjusts to the highest standards of transparency. In previous years we have discussed these issues in the framework of the debates on the revitalization of the General Assembly. We cannot continue delaying a solution to these problems. The time for action is now.

Another point I wish to make is the need to respect the equilibrium in geographic representation as well as gender equality for the posts of the Organization. That leads us to underscore the appeal to invite women candidates for the highest post, which is to be filled next year. After eight Secretaries-General and seven decades when the administration of the Organization was headed by men, and with everything that the United Nations is doing for the empowerment of women, the

time has come to continue to make history and ensure that a woman heads up that important post.

Another aspect of concern is the timeliness and the updating of the reports we receive. Argentina reiterates the need to implement the provisions of resolution 46/190, which establishes that documents must be submitted by the Secretariat six weeks in advance, and in the six official languages of the United Nations.

Finally, in relation to the implementation resolutions, we ask the membership to make the political commitment to carry them out as a legal obligation. That is one of the most serious problems faced by the General Assembly, and one reason that it has lost in its leadership. But the deep analysis, hours of debate and the commitments and negotiations will all be for naught if States Members ignore the resolutions that are adopted and we do not comply and keep our word in the most inclusive and democratic organ at our disposal. We thus cannot complain that other organs are encroaching on our functions and leaving us out of the discussions.

**Ms. Argüello González** (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the convening of this important meeting. First and foremost, our delegation wishes to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Wilfried Emvula, Permanent Representative of Namibia, and His Excellency Mr. Vladimir Drobnjak, Permanent Representative of Croatia, on their reappointments as co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly. We wish them every success in the performance of their functions.

Our delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Algeria on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (see A/70/PV.45).

Our delegation reiterates its firm commitment to the process of the revitalization and democratization of the General Assembly. We want to continue to work constructively so that this organ can act in all its dimensions as the most representative and legitimate organ of the Organization.

As established on different occasions, Nicaragua believes the democratization of the United Nations to be an overriding concern. To achieve that goal, we must continue to take measures so that the authority of the General Assembly is restored in order for it to act as the most democratic, deliberative and normative organ of the Organization. We therefore

highlight the importance of the full implementation of resolution 69/321, adopted by the General Assembly on 11 September 2015 and entitled "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly". We recall the flexible approach and consensual adoption of the resolution. We also agreed to continue the review of the four clusters, among which is the nomination and appointment of the Secretary-General during this seventieth session of the General Assembly.

The resolution marks a milestone in the following: through a letter from the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council, the resolution invites applications for the post of Secretary-General and requests that the names of the candidates be circulated to the membership in general, that meetings with the Member States be held and that there be women candidates.

The Working Group is at an auspicious crossroads in terms of revitalizing the General Assembly. Nicaragua reaffirms its vision to make the United Nations and the General Assembly the principal global forum for debate. The Assembly must be a genuine bridge of communication with global governance stakeholders. As such, it is necessary for it to be a transparent and inclusive forum, where each country, however small, can feel that its voice is heard.

We already have at our disposal the necessary tools by way of the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the resolutions of the General Assembly. The division of labour is clearly defined among the different organs. We must respect and ensure that the Security Council does not take up subjects that are within the competence of the General Assembly.

The seventieth anniversary of the United Nations is a crucial time, which is vital because of its importance to international law, global security and peace. We hope that this historic time will be taken full advantage of to create awareness of the role and activities of the General Assembly.

In no way can we minimize the achievements and importance of the General Assembly. The decrease in its role and functioning could cause doubts as to its relevance and credibility. The voice and the vote of all States Members of the Organization for the good of all our peoples must be increasingly strengthened. Nicaragua is committed to every initiative that allows us to recreate, reinvent and reshape the United Nations. We are in favour of reshaping the United Nations so

that the interests of everyone prevail and we can speak and hear under equal conditions as Member States.

We conclude with the inspiring words of our President, Commander Ortega Saavedra. May the United Nations lead us to play our role of ensuring dialogue, respect, understanding, security with sovereignty, peace and a future without interference or dependency, but working on a footing of equality, that is, with all, for all, for the good of all. May that be so.

**Mr. Mendoza-García** (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica associates itself with the statement (see A/70/PV.45) made by the representative of Estonia on behalf of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group (ACT), with whom we co-chair the ACT working group on transparency.

My delegation is grateful for the convening of this joint debate on agenda items 119 and 120, as well as for the appointment of the Ambassadors of Croatia and Namibia as co-facilitators for this session of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly. We recognize their excellent work at the previous session, which we are convinced will facilitate significant progress at the present session.

Allow me, in my national capacity, to make the following points with regard to the process of the selection and the appointment of the person who will occupy the post of Secretary-General as of 2017.

First I should like to highlight that it is with a feeling of urgency that we have to follow up resolution 69/321 and all the relevant resolutions on the process of the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General. Although adopted, those resolutions have not been implemented fully or have to be modified because, until just a few months ago, there was no clear, defined process for such appointment.

As with all processes, implementation is decisive. Resolution 69/321 includes clear and forceful language as to how the membership considers that the process should be carried out for the selection of the next person who will become Secretary-General. Costa Rica hopes that the next Secretary-General will be a woman.

In that connection, Costa Rica calls upon the Presidents of the Security Council and of the General Assembly to remit a joint note to the membership as soon as possible officially inviting the submission of nominations, as established clearly in the resolution. That letter should also invite Member States to put

forward women for the post of Secretary-General; thereby an open, transparent and inclusive process will be launched.

Once the process is formally begun, we will have an opportunity to know on a regular basis the names of the candidates and their curricula vitae, as well as the possibility of interacting with them in informal meetings of the General Assembly or in formats that include meetings with regional groups — or even under an Arria-Formula format. We want to, and should, know their visions and platforms for action. This upcoming appointment will be decisive for the Organization.

Furthermore, Costa Rica supports the idea that the Security Council must recommend more than one candidate to the General Assembly. We are happy to know that a permanent member of the Security Council has expressed its support for that option.

Since nobody questions the legitimacy and the mandate of the President in any of our countries that are democratically elected, we should not fear that a process of this nature will in any way affect their mandate. A vote serves to confer greater legitimacy on the selection. Even when we consider the many achievements of past sessions, with the onset of the next session Costa Rica will continue to promote changing the mandate to a single, non-renewable term of seven years, which will thus guarantee the independence of the post.

It is necessary that the next person who becomes Secretary-General perform with moral authority, integrity and courage, so that the United Nations can do its work in a more effective way. We need a strong and impartial leader, one who will not be involved in campaigns or making undue promises to assure his reappointment. On the contrary, the next Secretary-General must focus on current concerns that demand our maximum attention and clear action. All members represented in the General Assembly, not just the 15 members of the Security Council, must be involved in the process of selection. The General Assembly must play a more active and vigorous role, as should be the case in any democratic system.

Not only do we wish to have a voice in the process, we want to participate in it. Costa Rica aspires to an open, transparent election based on merit, with a feeling of predictability, and which is taking place in a structured and timely fashion.

With regard to the strengthening of the Office of the President of the General Assembly, we are convinced

that we must make a very serious analysis of how we can ensure transparency and improve the effectiveness of its management. We think the Office should have a minimum number of resources from the regular budget that corresponds to the mandate we have given to it as the General Assembly and which will allow it to act without any level of financial dependency with regard to a specific country or donor.

The fact that the Office has not received an increase in its budget for 20 years shows the little strategic thinking we have devoted to its functions, competencies and necessary resources to do its work. We must therefore carry out a debate on the scope of its powers and the level of activities that Member States expect from the Office, with a view to finding a way of strengthening the institution. In that respect, the discussion on the biennial budget is an opportunity that we cannot miss, as it will allow us to take concrete action to correct past deficiencies.

We think that the time for major change in the United Nations has come. We must start without delay. We have all the necessary tools at our disposal. Let us use them. The time is now.

**Mrs. Zarrouk Boumiza** (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation would like to thank the Permanent Representatives of Croatia and Namibia for their great efforts as co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly during the seventieth session. We welcome them both and congratulate them on their re-election as co-Chairs.

We align ourselves with the statement (see A/70/PV.45) made by the representative of Algeria on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. I would like to make the following comments in my national capacity.

The Working Group will continue its work throughout this session on the four topics it was already considering. Our great interest and priority continues to be on the selection and appointment of the next Secretary-General, which will take place in 2016.

With regard to strengthening of the role of the General Assembly and its delegations, we believe that to be among the main priorities in the overall reform of the United Nations, given the Assembly's role as a key deliberating body and one that defines overall policies. It is the most representative organ of the United Nations. It also has a key role to play in the establishment of the

norms and codification of international law, as well as in questions related to the budget and the administration. At the same time, we must strengthen the role of this body and its authority and move forward to revitalize its work. In the same context, we must pursue the implementation of the relevant resolutions, including on the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General, as that is essential for progress to be made in this area.

My delegation believes that strengthening the role and authority of the General Assembly requires pursuing and including in its agenda urgent issues that are relevant to the international community. It is necessary for this body to be able to address current challenges, including making progress on implementing our obligations under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) and strengthening our efforts to combat terrorism.

We believe the holding of thematic debates to be an important interactive tool that enables us to exchange points of view on topics of common interest that are of current relevance. We hope that such discussions will continue under the presidency of the seventieth session of the General Assembly.

On another point, we reaffirm the importance of improving the content of the annual Security Council reports submitted to the General Assembly so that they are more thorough and more analytical and reflect the contexts in which resolutions were adopted and the issues that remain unresolved.

We would also like to underscore the importance of holding regular meetings among the heads of the various entities within the United Nations and regularly informing Member States of the results. That is a matter of increasing coordination and cooperation among the essential bodies. We favour expanding such coordination so that it encompasses all the agendas of those bodies, in order to strengthen integration and mainstreaming.

With regard to the work of the General Assembly, my delegation notes that we have already taken many measures to improve the methods of work of the Main Committees of the General Assembly. However, we need to go into the substance of the discussions of certain recommendations that are related to this as follows: to attempt to summarize and be brief in resolutions and reports and other United Nations documents and to focus on the practical aspects and avoid redundancy; to

exchange best practices among the various committees while maintaining the specificity of each committee and the distribution of responsibilities among them; to avoid the dates of meetings of various committees interfering with one another; and that discussions are well planned.

As to the nomination of the Secretary-General that will take place next year, my country takes a favourable view of the consensus reached during the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly to send a joint letter of the General Assembly and the Security Council to invite delegations to present the names of their candidates, to make the whole process clearer and to regularly circulate the names and curricula vitae of the candidates. We hope that there will be close collaboration with the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council to officially begin that process as soon as possible.

We underscore the importance of the full implementation of the Assembly's resolutions, including resolution 69/321, on the role of the General Assembly, which should be transparent, exhaustive and guarantee the participation of all Member States in the various stages. We are certain that there are a number of very qualified candidates to take up the post of Secretary-General. And it is important to include names of women on the list of candidates, especially since no woman has been appointed to the post since the establishment of the Organization, 70 years ago.

With regard to the strengthening the Office of the President of the General Assembly, we believe that it is necessary to provide all the necessary human resources and financial support to the President so that he can carry out his mandate effectively and so that taking up the presidency does not pose an additional burden for countries with limited resources. We also underscore the importance of strengthening the institutional memory of the Office of the President of the General Assembly and to transmit the lessons learned and best practices from one President to another. That could guarantee effectiveness in managing the presidency.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate our support for resolution 69/321, which was adopted in September and which re-establishes the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly. We hope that its agenda will be very precise.

**Mr. Hilale** (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, my delegation would like to congratulate

Mr. Vladimir Drobnyak and Mr. Wilfried Emvula, the Permanent Representatives of Croatia and Namibia, respectively, on their reappointment as co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly during its seventieth session. We commend their enormous, constructive and tireless efforts during the negotiations. We assure them of our full cooperation.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement (see A/70/PV.45) made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The process of revitalization of the work of the General Assembly is part of the major efforts to reform the United Nations and constitutes a driving force, as it has done from the beginning. Facing new types of problems and challenges, the roles of the United Nations have increased and diversified, requiring new ways of working and also new sources of financing.

During the general debate in September, world leaders mainly focused on the reform of the United Nations so that the Organization can be capable of effectively carrying out its mandate while reflecting the geopolitical realities of today's world, strengthening international peace and security, combating the phenomenon of terrorism, strengthening the means of prevention and combating the recurrence of crises and conflicts, and preventing the deterioration of our environment and our biodiversity. The achievement of those goals will certainly enable us to make the main deliberative body a strong, credible and effective body that is capable of addressing the new challenges of the twenty-first century and of contributing to building a better world, one that is peaceful, more prosperous and more just.

Resolution 69/321, adopted by the General Assembly on 11 September, is a major step forward due to the spirit of compromise and flexibility that delegations demonstrated throughout the negotiations. It is certainly possible to make tangible progress in the process of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly — specifically as far as its methods of work are concerned — and that requires of the Chairs and members of the bureaux of the Main Committees to take better account in their consultations with Member States so that they can improve the work of the Committees. We call on the Secretary-General and on Chairs of the Main Committees to better coordinate their work in order to optimize the interactive nature of their relationship. We recall the decision to proceed

to the election of the non-permanent members of the Security Council and the members of the Economic and Social Council six months before they assume their functions, including during the seventieth session.

Beyond working methods, we would also like to recall that the subject that has gained the most interest this year is mainly the process of the selection of the Secretary-General, which introduced major innovations in the selection procedures. My delegation also welcomes and strongly supports the measure of the relevant resolution to send a joint letter of the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council addressed to all Member States inviting candidates for the post of Secretary-General and regularly communicating the names of the candidates, who will interact with the members of the General Assembly. In that regard, my delegation encourages candidates to officially present their candidacies in a timely manner so that exchanges with Member States will not be hurried. My delegation also supports the principle of geographic distribution, which should be more balanced, as well as that of gender equality, which should absolutely be taken into account. Finally, my delegation believes that a democratic, transparent and inclusive process, if it is seen through to fruition, will mark a decisive turning point in the selection of the next Secretary-General. My delegation is prepared to work alongside other delegations in order to participate constructively in the process.

On another point, it is important to note that the role and activities of the President of the General Assembly have evolved throughout the years and that the Assembly is increasingly considering issues related to global challenges. It is therefore essential to give the Office of the President the proper personnel and necessary resources, specifically financial resources, so that he is able effectively and efficiently to carry out the functions of his mandate in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, thereby preserving the institutional memory of this Office.

In conclusion, my delegation reiterates that, in spite of the significant progress that has been achieved, the process of revitalization is still far from complete. It requires the commitment of all Member States and an unfailing political will in order to focus on multilateralism and its noble objectives, which we all support.

**Mr. Mohamed** (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation associates itself with the statement (see

A/70/PV.45) made by the representative of Algeria on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

We, too, thank the President for convening this meeting to discuss the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly and the implementation of United Nations resolutions.

The delegation of the Sudan welcomes the reappointment of the Permanent Representative of Croatia and the Permanent Representative of Namibia to co-chair the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly. We thank them for their efforts in that regard. We would also like to welcome the adoption of resolution 69/321, entitled "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly", especially as it relates to the nomination and appointment of the Secretary-General and the role of the General Assembly in that connection. We also appreciate the President's contribution to that process. We emphasize that it should be based on the principles set out in the Charter of the United Nations and carried out with full transparency and with the participation of all Member States. We also reiterate the need to abide by all of the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, especially those related to the rules and regulations for nominating and appointing the Secretary-General, including resolution 69/321.

Nominating and appointing the next Secretary-General is a source of concern for many Member States. In that regard, my delegation reiterates the need to respect the General Assembly's rules of procedure, including rule 141, which relates to the nomination and appointment of the Secretary-General. We also note that the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly should discuss this issue, so as to guarantee broader participation by all Member States.

As we celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations, many geopolitical, security and humanitarian changes have occurred and we are witnessing new threats to international peace and security. That requires a comprehensive review of the Organization. Therefore, my delegation welcomes the Secretary-General's initiative in appointing Mr. José Ramos-Horta, former President of Timor-Leste, to undertake a comprehensive review of peacekeeping operations, as well as the report (see A/70/95) issued by the Panel in June. My delegation will take part in that process. We call for the implementation of all the recommendations in all the relevant United

Nations bodies, such as the Fourth Committee, the Fifth Committees and the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations.

It is the duty of all Member States, which are members of the General Assembly of course, to safeguard and reinforce the Assembly's mandate and authority, as well as the practical authority that it has developed throughout the seven decades following the establishment of the United Nations, in 1945, especially with regard to its role in peacekeeping operations. We warn against encroaching upon the General Assembly's work and mandate, which could negatively reflect on developing countries.

**Mr. Bodini** (San Marino): I would like to congratulate the Permanent Representatives of Croatia and Namibia on their appointments to co-chair the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly.

San Marino believes in a strong United Nations and in its universal values. The General Assembly is at the centre of the authority and decision-making process of the United Nations system. Over the years, many resolutions on the revitalization of the General Assembly have been adopted and have improved the work of this very important body. I should like to mention briefly a few items on which we could focus our attention.

We could give to the President of the General Assembly more authority in his role and increase the human and financial resources of the Office of the President of the General Assembly to make sure that he can effectively accomplish his tasks. We might also improve coordination of the work of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Second Committee in order to fulfil the mandate of the Sustainable Development Goals and to monitor their implementation.

We should continue to hold high-level thematic debates. However, the General Assembly should organize fewer events than in the past — not only to secure greater participation by our leaders but also to allow a small country like ours to be more involved in such endeavours.

We can improve the working methods of the General Assembly and of the various committees by streamlining their workload with biennial or triennial draft resolutions and coordinating the many events in a manner that will allow the greater participation of

all our Missions. We might try to engage one another during meetings like this with greater interaction and fewer formal speeches. Doing so might create a friendlier environment and a more expeditious path for our deliberations.

While the General Assembly should not be a substitute for the Security Council in the selection of candidates for the post of Secretary-General, we should pursue the implementation of resolution 69/321, in particular by conducting informal meetings with the candidates.

We should continue with the good practice of the Secretary-General in providing informal briefings on his travel activities and his priorities. Under the able leadership of the President, we can advance the reform of the Security Council. Hopefully, that reform will be embraced by the vast majority of the membership or by consensus. With the goal of improving the financial health of the United Nations, we should prepare accurate United Nations budgets and monitor carefully actual expenses.

In conclusion, like many other small countries with limited resources and small missions, San Marino seeks a more efficient, more effective and more user-friendly General Assembly.

**Mr. Drobnjak** (Croatia): I have the honour to deliver a brief joint statement on behalf of the Permanent Representative of Namibia, Ambassador Wilfried Emvula, and myself.

At the outset, allow me to thank the President of the General Assembly for reappointing us as co-Chairs of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly. We feel deeply honoured to continue facilitating such a vital, important and far-reaching process. We thank Member States for all the kind words of praise and support.

Evidently, there is widespread recognition that resolution 69/321 represents a success for us all — for the United Nations and Member States alike — and it serves as the best proof of how much can be achieved through constructive, reform-oriented and consensus-based work. It is a result of the willingness of Member States to engage in a thorough, substantive debate on numerous crucial issues on the subject of General Assembly revitalization and, in particular, those related to the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General. Clearly, during the sixty-ninth session certain issues were successfully addressed and provided with

appropriate, effective solutions. On the other hand, some issues are still to be addressed properly during this session and beyond.

As requested by the President of the General Assembly, during the seventieth session co-Chairs will focus in particular on the issue of transparency, efficiency and accountability in the work of the Office of the President of the General Assembly. At the same time, we should pay due and full attention to all other clusters on the General Assembly revitalization agenda, bearing in mind the latest report of the Ad Hoc Working Group (A/69/1007), which is an important point of departure for some aspects of our future discussion, and remains our point of reference.

We have taken very careful note of yesterday's and today's debate, and we shall take everything that has been said as guidelines for our upcoming work. We remain, as always, at the disposal of Member States for consultation, exchanges of views and the exploration of new ideas in the months to come.

The co-Chairs note an interest by Member States to exchange views on the subject of the Office of the

President of the General Assembly, its transparency and financing aspects, and especially in hearing the views of the President of the General Assembly on that particular matter. Therefore, the co-Chairs are considering organizing some informal discussions in that regard in the course of this year. It is an important matter, and early informal exchanges of views will benefit the co-Chairs immensely in charting the best way forward.

Let me conclude by saying that we look forward to another fruitful year of deliberations in the Ad Hoc Working Group. We express once again our full appreciation for being entrusted with such an important task at this session of the General Assembly. We also look forward to members' positive and active engagement.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in French*): The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda items 119 and 120.

*The meeting rose at noon.*