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Official Records

President: Mr. Lajčák (Slovakia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Perera (Sri Lanka), Vice-President, took the Chair.

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

Agenda item 15 (continued)

Culture of peace

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/72/488 and A/72/621)

Draft resolutions (A/72/L.21 and A/72/L.26)

The Acting President: Members will recall that the General Assembly, at its sixty-first plenary meeting, held on 1 December 2017, adopted resolution 72/17, entitled “Effects of terrorist acts directed against religious sites on the culture of peace”, under this agenda item.

I now give the floor to the representative of Algeria to introduce draft resolution A/72/L.26.

Mr. Boukadoum (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of all the sponsors of draft resolution A/72/L.26, entitled “International Day of Living Together in Peace”, it is my pleasure to present the draft resolution in this plenary meeting of the General Assembly. I would like to thank all of the countries that contributed to the draft resolution, as well as its sponsors, especially Arab and African countries and other friendly delegations.

The draft resolution proposed by Algeria is the fruit of informal consultations among countries carried out in a transparent and constructive way. We therefore

have a consensual text that takes into consideration the concerns and aspirations of all.

(*spoke in English*)

Algeria is the homeland of Saint Augustine, Al-Kahina, Lalla Fadhma N’Soumer, Emir Abdelkader and Roger Hanin. It was the adopted country of Frantz Fanon and Miriam Makeba. It is also the second homeland of Nelson Mandela, as he used to say himself. Algeria is located at the crossroads of many cultures, traditions, religions and civilizations that have shaped its past, the bulk of its present and will continue to shape its future. We will remain an open society.

(*spoke in French*)

The draft resolution before us today contains 13 preambular and seven operative paragraphs, the first of which designates 16 May as the International Day of Living Together in Peace. The goal of the draft resolution is to further promote living together in peace, tolerance, peaceful coexistence and harmonious cohabitation, as well as in mutual understanding and respect, without distinction of race, nationality, sex, civilization, language or religion.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

The draft resolution also calls on all Member States to further promote reconciliation to help ensure sustainable peace and development, including by working with communities, religious leaders and other relevant actors. It also invites United Nations entities and other international and regional organizations, as well as civil society — including non-governmental

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organizations and individuals — to celebrate the International Day of Living Together in Peace.

(spoke in French)

I also stress that the draft resolution is a model of cooperation and harmony between civil society and States. With us here today is Sheikh Khaled Bentounès, Honorary President of the Association internationale soufie Alawiyya and spiritual guide of the Tariqa Alawiyya, which has consultative status in UNESCO. I want to highlight an excerpt of the statement he would have liked to deliver here.

“[T]he immanent humanity within us expresses itself more when each of us decides to create a rich life for him- or herself with and for others”.

That is the very spirit of our joint efforts, which have resulted in this draft resolution.

(spoke in Arabic)

Finally, it is the wish of the sponsors that draft resolution A/72/L.26 be adopted by consensus.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia to introduce draft resolution A/72/L.21.

Mr. Yaakob (Malaysia): I have the honour of introducing draft resolution A/72/L.21, entitled “Moderation”.

Moderation is acceptance and respect. It involves mutual understanding and the celebration of the rich dimensions of diversity. Diversity enriches and strengthens the fabric of life. More than tolerance, the acceptance of diversity is the key to peaceful coexistence.

Time and again, history has shown that the rejection of moderation — that is, choosing to be extreme in any way or form — can ignite conflict and discontentment, leading ultimately to war and untold suffering. Moderation, on the other hand, can mitigate or prevent such effects. It is therefore imperative that moderation be seen as the bedrock of international relations in a world where in some parts of the globe peace remains elusive to this day.

As we deliberate on our agenda today, we are happy to note that other world leaders, as well as our Prime Minister, are promoting the approach of moderation. The concept can be seen in various outcome documents of a number of international associations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the

Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Commonwealth of Nations and the Asia-Europe Meeting.

Only two days ago, President Trump made a reference to moderation in a speech he gave in Washington, D.C., saying,

“So today we call for calm, for moderation and for the voices of tolerance to prevail over the purveyors of hate. Our children should inherit our love, not our conflicts”.

While Malaysia is extremely concerned about President Trump’s decision regarding Jerusalem, we can identify with the spirit of the importance of making the voices of moderation and tolerance prevail.

Recognizing that moderation as an approach can contribute to peaceful coexistence, today Malaysia is introducing draft resolution A/72/L.21. Among other things, the draft resolution calls on the international community to support a global movement of moderates as a common platform to amplify the voices of moderation over extremism. We are also seeking to proclaim 2019 the International Year of Moderation, when we would encourage and support initiatives that promote mutual respect and peaceful coexistence and reject the extremists who divide us all.

To that end, my delegation has convened five informal consultations and numerous bilateral meetings over the past two months. We were encouraged by the engagement of delegations during the discussions of the draft and believe that the results are reflected in a fair and balanced text as we move forward. I would like to take this opportunity to express my most sincere appreciation to all the delegations that have engaged with us during these informal consultations. I would also like to invite those delegations to sponsor and support the draft resolution.

I would now like to deliver a statement in my national capacity under the agenda item “Culture of peace”.

Malaysia would like to align itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Brunei Darussalam on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations on agenda item 15, “Culture of peace.”

At the outset, I want to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the promotion of a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding

and cooperation for peace (A/72/488), and to express our appreciation to him for his report entitled “A world against violence and violent extremism” (A/72/621). They chronicle important efforts by the United Nations system to promote a global culture of peace and non-violence, both within and beyond national borders.

Malaysia commends the work of UNESCO, UNICEF and the Alliance of Civilizations, as well as other United Nations entities and initiatives, in pursuit of the true understanding and tolerance that bridges divides and overcomes prejudices through intercultural and interreligious dialogue. We also commend the efforts that have been undertaken to instil values related to a culture of peace through education and a focus on involving young people. It is in full support of these undertakings that Malaysia has in the past become a sponsor of the annual resolution on the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace and will do so again at this session.

We are also encouraged that the strong impetus gained from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — which makes numerous references to peace, particularly in Sustainable Development Goal 16 — has helped the United Nations system to work towards promoting a culture of peace. We believe firmly that we can look forward to seeing these efforts deliver quantifiable and significant outcomes on the realization of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development.

In addition to action within the United Nations system, we would also like to highlight the contribution that the concept of moderation can add to efforts promoting a culture of peace. In 2010, the Prime Minister of Malaysia called on the silent majority of moderates to come together in a global movement to reclaim centre stage from the loud voices of hatred and extremism (see A/65/PV.19). Since then, neither the relevance nor the urgency of this call has subsided. The international community remains mired in violent conflicts across the world that are perpetrated by extremists who choose to influence by sowing discord, instilling fear and committing acts of terrorism. Now more than ever we need the collective voices of moderates to be heard in order to quell the extremist rhetoric that is the polar opposite of the culture of peace that is so vital to lasting stability, security and development.

While the call for a global movement of moderates is fairly recent, moderation itself is an age-old, living principle that is embodied in all the great religions. By advocating a middle path between extremes, moderation is an approach that emphasizes the universal values of mutual respect, understanding, tolerance and compassion. These are key ingredients to cultivating a culture of peace.

There are many leaders who personify moderation in their approach, and we need not look far for vivid examples of moderation in action in three of the most popular recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s struggle against racial inequality led to great advancements in civil rights for the people. The world is also still mourning the loss of President Nelson Mandela, who exemplified the virtues of forgiveness and reconciliation, among others. Moderation is also reflected in the conduct of Malala Yousafzai, the young Pakistani who defends the right of all children, including girls, to education.

The Global Movement of Moderates is a sincere attempt to channel en masse the courage and spirit shown by Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela and Malala Yousafzai. Since its inception, the Movement has had far-reaching support from many quarters across the world. In particular, ASEAN has endorsed and adopted the Global Movement of Moderates as part of its recognition of moderation as a central value of the ASEAN way. It underpins the interactions of our multiracial, multicultural and multireligious communities in which we give priority to the peaceful resolution of disputes.

The general absence of wars and armed conflict among neighbours in our region is a testament to ASEAN’s commitment to upholding moderate values, which promote mutual trust and confidence and uphold dialogue and negotiation as key means for resolving disputes. The idea of the Global Movement of Moderates is also supported by many others, as can be seen in the various outcome documents of a number of international associations and conferences, including the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Commonwealth and the Asia-Europe Meeting.

Malaysia believes that moderation in all its forms can complement the mission and work of the United Nations system at various levels in promoting a culture of peace. That is why we are introducing draft resolution

A/72/L.21 on moderation, an initiative that we feel is very timely.

In conclusion, the obstacles that prevent a culture of peace from taking root are many, but they are not insurmountable. We believe that moderation can provide a valuable contribution to the overall endeavour of building a culture of peace that is vital to the sustained development and prosperity that we all desire.

Ms. Md Jaini (Brunei Darussalam): I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) — Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam and my own country, Brunei Darussalam.

We would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report entitled "Promotion of a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace" (A/72/488). We are particularly pleased to note the increasing significance and scope of the promotion of a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue and cooperation undertaken by the Organization.

With more than 600 million people, South-East Asia enjoys a multitude of ethnicities, religions, languages and cultures. Our rich diversity and peaceful coexistence have been a source of strength and harmony for ASEAN since its inception 50 years ago. Promoting a culture of peace is an intrinsic value of our organization, as enshrined in the Bangkok Declaration of 1967 and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia and further reaffirmed in ASEAN's Community Vision 2025 and our shared aspiration for a truly inclusive and people-oriented, people-centred ASEAN community. Moreover, we remain resolute in maintaining and promoting enduring peace, security and stability in the region, as well as the peaceful resolution of disputes, without resorting to the threat or use of force, in accordance with universally recognized principles of international law. In this regard, ASEAN will continue to play a central role in developing a rules-based regional architecture.

ASEAN is firmly committed to doing its part to instil and uphold the values and norms of peace, harmony, intercultural understanding, the rule of law, good governance, respect, trust, tolerance, inclusiveness, moderation, social responsibility and diversity. During the thirty-first ASEAN summit, held

in Manila last month, our leaders adopted the ASEAN Declaration on a Culture of Prevention for a Peaceful, Inclusive, Resilient, Healthy and Harmonious Society, which aims to strengthen coordination in promoting a culture of prevention across the three pillars of ASEAN, whose main thrusts include the promoting peace and intercultural understanding, respect for all and support for the values of moderation, as called for by the Global Movement of Moderates.

ASEAN continues to place great emphasis on promoting dialogue and education to foster interreligious and intercultural understanding with broad participation at all levels. In particular, we recognize the role of young people as agents of change and peace and the need to inculcate a culture of peace from a young age. The ASEAN Youth Interfaith Camp 2017 was held last October in Indonesia under the theme of "Tolerance in Diversity for a World Harmony", with a view to promoting dialogue and mutual understanding among young people of different faiths and cultural backgrounds.

The rising threat of terrorism and violent extremism across the globe is a grim reminder of the need for sustained efforts to combat this scourge and promote peace and tolerance. We would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our strong condemnation of violent extremism and terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We must not allow the seeds of intolerance, hatred and extremism to take root. However, this global threat requires a collective effort. In that regard, ASEAN highly appreciates the work of various regional and international organizations, notably the United Nations, in promoting a culture of peace through dialogue and negotiations, enhanced tolerance, trust and mutual understanding and addressing all forms of political and religious disputes and radicalism.

For our part, we look forward to enhancing the comprehensive partnership between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the United Nations and leveraging the complementarities between ASEAN's Community Vision 2025 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We believe that there is great scope for closer cooperation in promoting the culture of prevention and in averting violent extremism.

ASEAN also stands firmly behind the initiative just introduced by Malaysia through its draft resolution on moderation (A/72/L.21), submitted during the current session. The draft resolution puts in context

the importance of providing the voices of moderation with a platform against the backdrop of the widespread propagation of violent extremism promoted by an irresponsible few. It seeks to proclaim 2019 as the International Year of Moderation and encourages and supports initiatives that promote mutual respect and peaceful coexistence so as to drown out the voices of extremism. In anticipation of its consideration by the Assembly immediately after this debate, on behalf of ASEAN, I want to take this opportunity to seek the support of all delegations for the draft resolution on moderation.

ASEAN also lauds the efforts of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations in facilitating the global conversation on living together in diversity, preventing intercultural crises and mobilizing broad public support for cultural diversity, tolerance and inclusion. We also commend UNESCO for its positive role as the lead organ for intercultural dialogue. ASEAN member States are committed to the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures and to further strengthening its activities in order to promote the value of learning to live together in peace. We believe that all of these multilateral initiatives are mutually reinforcing and foster a culture of peace. We fully support the continued participation of all relevant stakeholders, including religious leaders, women, young people and members of civil society, the media and academia.

In conclusion, ASEAN is firmly committed to promoting the culture of peace. As a multiracial, multicultural and multireligious community, we are all part of the same family, with a shared future and a common desire to live in a world of peace, stability and prosperity founded on respect and a deep appreciation for humankind's diversity. We stand ready to work with our partners and the international community to complement the work of the United Nations in promoting a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

Mr. Said (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): "We the peoples" is how the Charter of the United Nations begins. We come from different places and different environments. We have our own cultures, civilizations and beliefs, which we share with the world. Together, we build human civilization.

The concept of peace is also reflected in the Constitution of UNESCO, which says that

"since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed".

We welcome the role of UNESCO in our efforts to realize peace and a culture of peace through all of its cyclical programmes and activities. The ultimate goal in seeking peace is to establish agreement between parties and harmony among peoples and to end any feelings of animosity. The Charter shows that in order to achieve peace we need security and stability across the world, in societies and in families, a goal that will enhance prosperity and development for all. We must work to make peace and help the parties to conflicts arrive at negotiated agreements. We must work to maintain peace by preventing conflicts between parties. We must work to build peace by creating the social conditions that societies need to be able to live in peace. If we are to achieve those goals, we must also strengthen human rights, economic development and assistance and social solidarity.

In the final decade of the twentieth century, we saw many calls for strengthening peace. On 20 November 1997, the General Assembly adopted resolution 52/15, proclaiming 2000 the International Year for the Culture of Peace. On 10 November 1998, the General Assembly adopted resolution 53/25, proclaiming the first decade of the new century as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. On 6 November 1999, the General Assembly adopted the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace (resolution 53/243), which offered guidelines to Governments, international organizations and the international community as a whole for strengthening a culture of peace.

The terms "culture" and "peace" are now closely related in the area of peacebuilding. The concept of a culture of peace was formulated at a UNESCO meeting in Côte d'Ivoire in 1989, and by 1999 it was reflected in programmes of action in the truest sense, becoming part of UNESCO's strategy for rejecting violence and promoting peaceful coexistence and respect for the rights of others, their freedoms, heritage and ways of life. The Declaration in resolution 53/243 outlined the fostering of a culture of peace through education as the first of eight action areas.

We all know that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is aimed at building peaceful and inclusive societies so that sustainable development

can be achieved in peace and prosperity. We must all work together to accelerate the achievement of the 16 Sustainable Development Goals, which guarantee global participatory activities at all levels with a view to achieving sustainable development. We affirm that Governments, civil society and local communities must all work together to implement sustainable solutions and confront violence, achieve justice and ensure that everyone is involved.

The Alliance of Civilizations is not about the merging of religions, beliefs or cultures. Civilization is an umbrella for all religions and cultures. The purpose of dialogue among civilizations is to study the origins of differences so that we can resolve disputes, with the understanding that they must be resolved ethically and peacefully. To enrich the culture of peace we must genuinely believe in such principles as respect for human rights, freedom of opinion and expression, justice and equality, and the fight against poverty and unemployment. I would like to thank all Member States that have introduced draft resolutions intended to strengthen the concept of a culture of peace and encourage dialogue, understanding and cooperation among religions and civilizations, all in order to enhance tolerance, diversity and cultural diversity as ways of preventing conflict.

My country condemns the terrorist attack that took place north of Sinai in the Arab Republic of Egypt on 24 November, targeting believers at prayer and taking at least 305 lives, including 27 children. This terrorist act, condemned by all peoples of the world, shows that terrorism has no religion and no allies. Terrorists simply exploit anything that will further their economic and political interests, which no one but the leaders of terrorist organizations understands. We should address this extremist ideological thought, whose sources must be extirpated by fighting its ideologies.

We welcomed Saudi Arabia's establishment of the Centre for Moderation this year. We are counting on the Centre to cut off all the intellectual sources used by terrorists and to counter their attempts to realize their political goals and agendas, which they alone are privy to.

My delegation commends our Organization's efforts to encourage dialogue, understanding and cooperation among religions and cultures with a view to achieving peace. We also commend UNESCO's leading role in enhancing and consolidating a culture

of peace, and that of the High Representative of the Secretary-General, who is working diligently to realize and promote a culture of dialogue and understanding at the organizational level.

Mr. Al-Abdali (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening today's meeting, and the Secretary-General for his two reports on a culture of peace (A/72/488 and A/72/621).

The dissemination of a culture of peace, dialogue, tolerance and acceptance of the other has been helping to create a philosophy of tolerance among the peoples of the world for differences between languages and religions. It urges people to believe in love and fraternity, regardless of their views, beliefs, language or ethnic origins. These principles have produced generations who reject violence in all its forms and believe in peace and coexistence, which lead to stability, progress and development for all.

The conflicts in the Middle East have led to the emergence of many extremist groups whose beliefs run counter to a culture of peace, tolerance and dialogue. We have to put a stop to their influence by working to address and abolish these scourges through appropriate measures consistent with our various resolutions, treaties and conventions.

We in Oman firmly believe that peace and dialogue are absolutely crucial, and that it is our responsibility to achieve them, something we have repeatedly affirmed in national, regional and international forums. We have translated that faith into reality by making it a way of life, with practices that organize relations among our citizens and with the world. Our foreign policy and international relations are based on promoting peace, coexistence, tolerance, dialogue and close cooperation with all peoples.

In the context of the implementation of resolution 65/5, whereby every first week of February is designated World Interfaith Harmony Week, the Sultan Qaboos Cultural and Scientific Centre organized an event entitled "Annual Oman Week for Rapprochement and Understanding among Peoples", designed to promote communication among cultures, build greater understanding, bring together scientists, intellectuals and academics from all over the world to strengthen dialogue, and establish peaceful relations and mutual respect among different cultures.

The Sultanate of Oman has wide experience in promoting a culture of tolerance through “Message of Islam from Oman”, an exposition organized by our Ministry of Religious Affairs to disseminate genuine and honest religious tolerance among many countries and peoples of the world. It is also intended to build trust among Muslims and others of different religions, and to strengthen coexistence, in addition to disseminating a culture of peace, understanding, peaceful coexistence and moderation. It sends a message to everybody that there is a common humanitarian ground that we can build on that is greater than the differences among humans.

In conclusion, we call on the international community to disseminate a culture of peace, dialogue and understanding, to shoulder its responsibilities, work for peace and resolve disputes through dialogue. In this respect, we reiterate that our country stands ready to cooperate with the United Nations to build a new world where security and stability prevail. We would like to thank the delegations that have sponsored the draft resolutions under this agenda item.

Mr. Alrowaiei (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General and his team for preparing the reports on the promotion of a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace (A/72/488 and A/72/621).

By virtue of its geographic location, history and human heritage, my country is located at a crossroads of coexistence among different religions and cultures. Bahrain is an integral part of the Arab world, the Islamic world and indeed of the world as a whole. Accordingly, we want this reality to be reflected in the relations among its sects, denominations and all its various cultures. These sects and denominations are a source of richness and diversity for us in the light of our long history of coexistence and tolerance.

The Kingdom of Bahrain, led by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa; His Royal Highness Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa, the Prime Minister; and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, the Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy of the Prime Minister, upholds the diversity that characterizes our country. In an article in the *Washington Times* on 10 October, His Majesty underscored that the Kingdom of Bahrain is stronger because of its diversity, and that our world will

be safer and more prosperous once we see the beauty of this diversity. It can teach us many lessons, particularly about religious tolerance.

The Kingdom of Bahrain believes in the link between culture and development and pays special attention to developing a culture of peace, diversity and coexistence. We have established the King Hamad Global Centre for Inter-Faith Dialogue and Peaceful Coexistence in Los Angeles, and adopted the Kingdom of Bahrain declaration on promoting religious freedom for all. We have created the King Hamad Chair in Inter-Faith Dialogue and Peaceful Coexistence at the Sapienza University of Rome. That is what Bahrain is all about. I note that His Royal Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa, the Prime Minister, was honoured with the Shield of Tolerance by the World Federation for Peace and Love, which is a testament to his efforts to establish peace, tolerance and harmony and to the Kingdom’s achievements in this area.

Finally, the Kingdom of Bahrain underscores that manifestations of intolerance and extremism can be rolled back only by building and developing a culture of peace at the national and international levels, strengthening the principles of dialogue, peaceful coexistence, sustainable development and respect for human rights. The Kingdom of Bahrain continues to work to achieve reform and genuine development. It promotes the rule of law, multilateralism and effective political participation. His Majesty has made it clear that the Kingdom of Bahrain and its people represent the principles of friendliness, tolerance, mutual respect and openness to the world. We are proud of our diversity and our firm belief that every individual has the right to a safe and dignified life.

Ms. Algharabally (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General and his team for preparing the reports before us today on the activities undertaken by the main entities of the United Nations to strengthen dialogue, understanding and cooperation among religions and cultures in order to achieve peace (A/72/488 and A/72/621). My country also welcomes UNESCO’s efforts and good offices aimed at strengthening and consolidating a culture of peace. We contribute to creating an environment conducive to such a culture through the implementation of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, and the Action Plan for the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013–2022).

The relevant General Assembly resolutions are closely related to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and seek to establish societies in which peace and justice prevail. This applies particularly to Sustainable Development Goal 16, which seeks to promote peaceful and inclusive societies. We also thank those Member States that have submitted draft resolutions designed to strengthen the idea of the culture of peace and to promote dialogue, understanding and cooperation among religions and cultures in order to strengthen the principles of tolerance and respect for cultural diversity as a means of conflict prevention.

We live in a world where the culture of peace is threatened by conflicts and disputes among States, societies and individuals, as well as by intolerance, extremism, violence and religious hatred. Intellectual disputes have worsened the situation. We live in a world where people reject the views of others and where a lack of peaceful coexistence is evident. We should seek to understand the reasons for people's intolerance and rejection of each other's views, as well as why they resort to extremism and violence as a means of expression. We must work together at the local, regional and international levels to transform the world's culture from one of hatred, tolerance and war into one that believes in existential and intellectual coexistence.

Our world is facing a serious threat of extremism and terrorism. There is no country or society safe from the scourge of extremism and terrorism, which represent a major challenge to a culture of peace and dialogue. We need to work together to address that threat and to promote peace, peaceful coexistence, dialogue, understanding and cooperation among religions and cultures.

The first phrase in the Charter of our Organization is "We the peoples of the United Nations". We come from different environments, cultures, civilizations and beliefs, but we have only one world in which we all come together to form human civilization. The State of Kuwait attaches great importance to strengthening a culture of peace, especially today, when extremism, intolerance and terrorism have increased in many countries and are trying to bring chaos and intimidation to our societies.

Peace leads to justice. It will enable us to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Promoting peace will help put an end to injustice and enable the oppressed

to achieve self-determination. Building lasting peace must be based on mutual understanding, which means that peace is above all a culture founded on education. In that regard, we thank all States that contributed to the success of the High-level Forum on the Culture of Peace, held pursuant to resolution 71/252 in September 2016.

The State of Kuwait is keen to strengthen the culture of tolerance and coexistence, values and concepts that are enshrined in the Kuwaiti Constitution, which provides that every citizen has rights and responsibilities, regardless of gender, origin, language or religion. Our Constitution also states that justice, freedom and equality are the pillars of society and that cooperation leads to establishing strong bond among the citizens. Based on Kuwait's concern to promote moderation, our Government has set up a high-level committee to strengthen moderation in society, address extremism and intolerance in all their forms, and promote the principle of national unity.

Peace is a concept that was rooted in Kuwaiti society before the creation of the modern State. It paved the way for tolerance, acceptance of the other and dialogue with different cultures and religions. There are many examples in the history of Kuwait of rapprochement and openness towards different civilizations and peoples. These are reflected in our Constitution, which guarantees freedom of speech and allows the free and safe observance of religious rites. The State of Kuwait is a small country but it is a place where people of different nationalities and cultures live together peacefully and enjoy security and stability with mutual respect and well-being.

Finally, my delegation would like to underscore the fact that enriching a culture of peace requires us to work hard to strengthen the principles of that culture, such as respect for human rights and freedom of speech, the implementation of policies of justice and equality, the eradication of poverty and unemployment, and the raising of people's awareness of their responsibilities for peace. A country that deprives its people of their right to a dignified life will not be able to develop a culture of peace and non-violence. That is why we call for respect for these rights so that we may attain a world in which rights are guaranteed and one where friendliness, peace and tolerance prevail.

Mr. Locsin (Philippines): The Philippines commends the President of the General Assembly for

convening today's meeting on the culture of peace. We also welcome the unflagging efforts of the Secretary-General to sustain the peace agenda by declaring 2017 as a year for peace and calling for a surge in diplomacy for peace, an ironic echo of the famed but failed surge in Afghanistan for the same peaceful purpose.

As States Members of the United Nations, we share the aspirations and responsibility for achieving a peaceful world through mutual respect, tolerance, acceptance, reconciliation and respect for the rule of law, a world in which conflict is avoided and injustice corrected by means that are conducive to peace rather than provocative of war. For the Filipino people, this is a natural goal. We have been victims of atrocities in two wars, one of independence and the other of liberation, but we have never committed atrocities ourselves. We are a nation that has never committed massive human rights violations that provoke conflict. We have always been committed to avoiding conflict and promoting peace at home and abroad. The Philippines has never adopted war as a means of teaching a lesson or exacting revenge; rather, we have engaged in war as a last resort, because peace without freedom and justice is also unacceptable to Filipinos.

Since 2004, together with Pakistan, we have sponsored the annual resolution on the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace, whose objectives are twofold — first, to promote interreligious and intercultural dialogue to achieve peace and stability and as the most promising course for realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and secondly, to strengthen mechanisms and take appropriate action to promote sincere and constructive dialogue across cultural and religious divides. The first objective reduces the material causes of conflict that arise from the frustration of basic human needs, and the second reduces the intellectual obstacles to mutual understanding, thereby fostering mutual respect and tolerance despite continuing disagreement.

In building a high-trust Philippine society, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte is unequivocally committed to a peace agenda that accompanies a long-term development agenda for areas threatened by armed conflict. In places where people have nothing to lose, they are prepared to lose everything in a conflict in the hope of taking something away from others.

For the Bangsamoro peace process, we are now following a new peace and development road map that is characterized by the inclusion of all — not just select Muslim groups — a continuous dialogue rather than a hectoring monologue, confidence-building initiatives involving all stakeholders — not just the politically connected — the consolidation and convergence of prior peace agreements and a readiness, so rare in other conflicts, to acknowledge the self-identity of Bangsamoros as our Muslim Filipino brothers and sisters.

We Filipinos are so confident in our singular national identity that we are not afraid to call the differences that make the Philippines a diverse and interesting nation by their proper names. In the spirit of inclusiveness, in the desire for the widest participation and in the hope of the closest convergence, we want our fellow citizens, the Bangsamoro, along with the larger national community, to take ownership of peacebuilding.

To that end, the Government has expanded the peace table to include informal peace tables. A peace caravan is crossing the country so that officials can engage in peace conversations to gather insights on how to create more avenues for dialogue and better bridges for peace. We are speeding up the delivery of programmes to rebuild devastated areas and restore the equanimity of war-torn communities, which will give them a stake in keeping the peace and avoiding quarrels that lead to conflict.

The Philippines attaches great importance to religious and faith-based organizations playing a greater role in preventing the outbreak and escalation of violence and expanding the constituency for peace. In a conflict that is misidentified as religious, it is important for religious persons and institutions of all faiths to clarify what is religion and what is just bloody ambition, and what is prayer and what is rape disguised as piety. The sexual use and trade of women and children can never qualify as a religious rite; it is pure evil that deserves to be relentlessly punished as such.

The Philippines recognizes the crucial role of women in promoting the peace agenda. Those who make homes and keep families provided for and united have the greatest stake in the requirements of peace and the deepest understanding of them. The Philippines was the first country in Asia to adopt a national action plan on women and peace and security. It incorporates much

knowledge gained from the role of women in conflict situations, not least the imperative of gender equality between the women who bind the wounds of war and the men who inflict them. The rehabilitation of Marawi City demonstrates the Philippine Government's commitment to attaining peace with security, prosperity, justice, law and order.

The Philippines stands in solidarity with nations committed to securing a just and enduring peace, a shared prosperity and partnerships productive of those aims. If history is to judge the United Nations on its role in the unfolding narratives of war and peace, it should be a compelling story of hope and healing, reconciliation and renewal and a peace that passes all expectations, given the tragic history of humankind.

Ms. Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the President for convening this important meeting to discuss one of the most important items on our agenda, the culture of peace.

Since we are discussing it as we are witnessing developments in the Middle East, we want to reaffirm the importance of avoiding any measures that run counter to the noble goal of sustainable peace, which the world needs more than ever today. When it comes to the Middle East, we believe that if we do not resolve the Palestinian question, peace in the region will continue to be unattainable.

The State of Qatar seeks to achieve peace by rejecting all measures that call for recognizing Al-Quds Al-Sharif as the capital of Israel. Al-Quds Al-Sharif holds a special place in the hearts of Arab and Muslim peoples. We must respect the city's legal and historic status and warn the world of the dangerous repercussions for security and stability in the Middle East of any such measures that run counter to international law, resolutions of international legitimacy and efforts to achieve peace on the basis of a two-State solution.

The international efforts to promote a culture of peace and intercultural and interreligious dialogue and understanding reflect the determination of the international community to confront all the difficulties and hurdles preventing us from achieving international peace and security, especially in the light of increasing international conflicts and crises. We must therefore provide conditions conducive to peace and as an international community, focus on them by respecting and upholding the legitimate rights of our peoples and providing conditions for sustainable development that

are based on our policies and guided by our societal, religious and cultural traditions. We have adopted an approach of moderation, tolerance and acceptance of differences among cultures, civilizations and religions, and we play an active and responsible role in the international community to contributing to the promotion of international peace and security.

The State of Qatar believes in the importance of achieving Sustainable Development Goal 16 and supporting the efforts of the United Nations. My country has played a leading role in that regard. In cooperation with Member States and the United Nations, we have established a global coalition for reporting on the progress made in achieving Goal 16, that of peaceful and inclusive societies for all.

In the light of the role played by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations in enhancing a culture of peace, dialogue and understanding among cultures and religions, we have been at the forefront of countries supporting the Alliance and continue to do so in every possible way. The State of Qatar is committed to achieving its 2030 National Vision in order to enhance cultural exchange among countries. We have established institutions for spreading a culture of peace and dialogue among cultures, promoting the acceptance of others, fighting extremism and rejecting violence. That includes the Arab Cultural Institute, which opened in Berlin this year and is aimed at deepening cooperation between Germany and the Arab world.

The State of Qatar looks at peace in a comprehensive way. Peace is not just the absence of violence; sustainable peace is based on justice and resolving conflict. We have therefore paid a great deal of attention to, and participated in, international efforts to support the role of mediation and preventive diplomacy — a major pillar of the Secretary-General's action plan in that regard. On 18 and 19 January 2018, we will host regional consultations on maintaining peace for Middle East and Islamic countries, in preparation for the high-level meeting to be held in the General Assembly in April on sustaining peace. The State of Qatar believes in the importance of preventing conflicts and resolving them through peaceful means. Our efforts have borne fruit, and we have contributed to enhancing international peace and security, which the international community has welcomed.

In conclusion, the State of Qatar reiterates its commitment to continue implementing the Declaration

and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace and to provide support to all efforts at the national, regional and international levels to promote the culture of peace and non-violence and support preventive diplomacy in order to benefit humankind as a whole.

Mrs. Rodríguez Camejo (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Agenda item 15 serves to remind us that peace is not only a goal to be fulfilled but also an overarching aim to be safeguarded. There can be no peace without full respect for the sovereignty of States, and there can be no peace without respect for the self-determination of peoples and the territorial integrity of States. Violence must be brought to an end, life respected and dialogue and cooperation seriously considered. Emphasis must be placed on education and the transmission of values for peace.

Cuba notes with concern that the deep fault line between the rich and the poor that divides human society, and the ever-increasing gap between the developed and developing worlds, poses a major threat to global prosperity, peace and security and stability. We fully believe that in order to maintain and promote peace, States' policies must focus on removing the threat of war, particularly nuclear war, committing to the peaceful settlement of international disputes and respecting and promoting the right to development.

In promoting and developing a culture of peace, it is essential to condemn all acts, methods and practices of terrorism, including State terrorism, and to take concrete steps to fight that scourge.

We note with concern the persistence of issues such as intolerance and discrimination on ethnic, religious or racial grounds; the threat and use of force in international relations; covert regime-change agendas promoted by great Powers in developing countries that do not bend to their designs; and the development of new and more sophisticated weaponry and the persistence of large nuclear arsenals. All that compromises real possibilities for advancing towards the culture of peace.

Putting an end to the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America against Cuba would be a step conducive to peace and the peaceful settlement of differences.

Peace can be fostered only if it responds to and meets a set of values, attitudes, traditions, behaviours and lifestyles — in other words, a genuine culture of peace. Cuba believes that education is the path to

promoting a culture of peace through the inclusion of the study of various cultures and civilizations in educational programmes, including their languages, history and sociopolitical philosophy, as well as an exchange of knowledge and information on those subjects. We also want to highlight the role of the mass media in disseminating human values and the importance of ethical conduct in contributing to mutual respect among civilizations. We reaffirm that peace is a fundamental requirement for the promotion and protection of all human rights of all people.

Finally, we reiterate the full validity of the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, adopted at the highest level by the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States in January 2014, as well as the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace.

Mr. Habib (Indonesia): Indonesia aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Brunei Darussalam on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

I thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive reports (A/72/488 and A/72/621), and UNESCO for its valuable contribution to advancing the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace.

Eighteen years after the adoption of the Declaration and Programme of Action on the Culture of Peace, Indonesia notes that tremendous work has been done at all levels to ensure tolerance, dialogue, respect and mutual understanding, as well as the efforts made to shift mindsets and behaviour from conflict and violence to dialogue and peacebuilding.

Nevertheless, intolerance is still rampant in many parts of the world. In some areas it has grown into radicalism, violent extremism and xenophobic movements. Widespread economic and social injustice, human rights violations and violence are used by extremist groups, including religious and faith-based extremists, to recruit children and youth and groom them as the next generation of extremists. Diversity is increasingly being portrayed as a threat that undermines our societies rather than an asset that can benefit us all. Indonesia has some observations on that issue.

First, military measures alone will not be enough to combat and eliminate violent extremism. We need more comprehensive measures to address the root causes of ongoing conflicts in the world. By doing so, we will be

able to break the cycle of violence and extremism on the ground.

Secondly, not only should our efforts to promote a culture of peace equate to an absence of violence, they should also to foster synergies between sustaining peace and development. We must cultivate peace and stability to work for us by implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as by promoting and protecting the human rights of all people, without distinction.

Thirdly, based on Indonesia's experience, the most constructive policy is one that mixes hard and soft approaches. A hard approach uses law enforcement and implementation of the relevant legal framework, while a soft approach works through education, interfaith dialogues and a variety of socioeconomic empowerment measures aimed at building harmony, respect and tolerance among cultures and people.

Indonesia has always upheld the value of unity in diversity, as well as a culture of peace. We are advancing that culture through its eight action areas, including education, sustainable economic and social development, respect for human rights, equality between women and men, inclusivity, democratic participation and tolerance.

Through education, children and young people should be equipped with the universal values of peace, human rights, gender equality and respect for others at the earliest stage of their lives. The family serves as the starting point, followed by society and school, where children learn and exercise values to enable them to resolve disputes peacefully and in a spirit of respect for human dignity, tolerance and non-discrimination.

Along with promoting education, Indonesia is trying to cut the deadly links between violent extremism and extreme poverty by creating jobs, reducing inequalities and building just and inclusive societies. We are promoting economic growth through various measures, particularly poverty eradication, redistribution of economic sources and access to employment and a productive economy.

It would be difficult to sustain such efforts without a vigorous and active political system. Indonesia recognizes that democracy and democratization are compatible with the culture of peace. That includes strengthening good governance, weeding out corruption

and ensuring the full participation of all components of society in decision-making.

Consistent with our commitment to promoting democracy, Indonesia hosted the tenth Bali Democracy Forum on 7 and 8 December. The Bali Democracy Forum was established with the basic idea of creating democratic synergies among countries with different religions, culture and political systems in order to enable their mutual assistance of each other in the practice of democracy. During the Forum, participating countries shared their best practices, based on the principles of equality, mutual respect and understanding.

In conclusion, I would once again like to remind us all that we must work together and spare no effort to build a more peaceful, inclusive, democratic and harmonious society through the promotion of dialogue, tolerance and respect for one another.

Mr. Suan (Myanmar): Building peace is a cherished effort of the people of Myanmar today. We are holding the Twenty-First-Century Panglong Union Peace Conference with the aim of forging lasting peace. We believe in a culture of dialogue for reconciling differences, building trust and confidence and pursuing lasting peace. After almost seven decades of fraternal strife, our country's ethnic armed groups, armed forces, political parties and Government have all agreed to come together around the negotiating table to pave the way for peace, national reconciliation and a democratic federal union.

We know from our own national experience that the road to peace has never been an easy path to tread, but it is the only one that can lead the people of Myanmar to their long-held aspiration to a peaceful and prosperous nation. The quest for peace through dialogue requires vision, political will, mutual respect and trust among the dialogue partners. Courage, a spirit of cooperation and accommodation are required. We have launched that ambitious national peace process in the spirit of Panglong, which is based on the principles of unity, equality, justice and peace for all ethnic nationals of the union.

Religious harmony and tolerance of cultural diversity are crucial to sustaining peace and development in an increasingly globalized and heavily interdependent world. Myanmar is a land of more than 100 different ethnic peoples with their own cultural identities and languages. It is also a multireligious country, where the faithful of all four major religious

tribes live in peace and harmony. Freedom of religion and the right to one's own cultural identity and heritage are guaranteed by the Constitution.

His Holiness Pope Francis paid an official visit to Myanmar last month, the first papal visit ever in 500 years of Catholic missions in Myanmar. The historic event took place a few months after the establishment of diplomatic relations between Myanmar and the Holy See, and was yet another testimony to religious tolerance and freedom of faith in a country where an overwhelming majority of the population professes Buddhism.

Myanmar is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world. It is home to 135 officially recognized ethnic groups, each with its own distinct culture and faith. In a total population of 51 million, 89.89 per cent are Buddhist, 6.31 per cent Christian, 2.2 per cent Muslim and 0.4 per cent Hindu. In order to promote religious harmony and peace among different communities, we have established interfaith friendship groups at the national level representing all religions, with 137 interfaith friendship subgroups across the country. As of October, 112 interfaith dialogues, awareness talks and combined prayer services had been held all over the country for peace and national reconciliation in 2017 alone.

Intolerance and religious extremism are extremely harmful to sustaining peace and harmony in a diverse society, and Myanmar strongly condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. The terrorist attacks on 25 August against Myanmar security forces in northern Rakhine, carried out by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), triggered a tragic humanitarian problem. The atrocities claimed many innocent civilian lives, killing men, women and children. People of several different communities, including Buddhists, Muslims and Hindus, were murdered by ARSA.

Today we are witnessing surging intolerance, hatred and terrorist activities in many parts of the world. Myanmar condemns any act of terrorism, violent extremism, incitement to religious hatred and hostility anywhere and in any society. Peace is not a given gift; many lives have been sacrificed in the name of peace throughout human history. However, it is a reward, and it comes after sincere efforts by all those concerned. We must all work together to build a global culture of peace through compassion, tolerance and an inclusive society, and we must leave no one behind.

Mr. Yao Shaojun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks you, Sir, for presiding over today's meeting. Today's world faces multiple challenges. Regional hotspot issues pop up everywhere. Threats of violent extremism are on the rise. The problem of unbalanced and inadequate development is everywhere. The international community should vigorously promote a culture of peace and insist on peace and development, which are common themes of our era, and work to maintain world peace and promote dialogue across civilizations. China would like to highlight three issues.

First, we should work to maintain lasting peace. Countries should uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, implement the Declaration and Programme of Action on the Culture of Peace, respect each other, consult on a basis of equality and engage in dialogue rather than confrontation. Partnership, not alignment, is the new strategy for fostering international cooperation. Conflicts should be resolved through dialogue, and disagreement through consultation. Concerted efforts should be made to tackle traditional and non-traditional security threats and combat all forms of terrorism and violent extremism.

Secondly, we should work to achieve shared prosperity. According to the relevant United Nations studies, poverty, a lack of education and employment opportunities and other factors have become the main drivers spreading violent extremism. Countries should embrace the kind of open, inclusive, tolerant and balanced economic globalization that produces win-win results. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development should be comprehensively implemented in order to enable countries to enjoy the benefits of development and everyone to enjoy quality lives, peace and health.

Thirdly, we should work to promote exchanges across civilizations, since enhancing civilization and human progress goes hand in hand with an approach that seeks common ground while putting aside differences, remaining open and tolerant and providing opportunities for exchanges and mutual learning across civilizations. We must understand that the world is rich and colourful and that civilizations are diversified to ensure they can coexist harmoniously, enhance each other's splendour, remove cultural gaps and eliminate spiritual disillusionment.

The recently concluded nineteenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China called for

a new type of international relations based on mutual respect, justice, cooperation and win-win opportunities for building a shared future for humankind. The diversity of civilizations should be respected. We should conduct exchanges that overcome hostility, promote mutual learning and resolve conflict. We must encourage harmonious coexistence in order to erase cultural superiority. Traditional Chinese culture emphasizes the concept of peace and cooperation and the idea that the world is one. It also underscores coexistence, which leads to harmony throughout the world. Those are all key elements behind the concept of building a shared future for humankind. China is willing to work with the entire world to maintain global peace and development.

Mr. Mahfouz (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Egypt has always sought to promote dialogue among nations and the rapprochement of cultures. We continue to engage in serious efforts to end wars and armed conflict sparked by racial, faith-based or religious reasons.

The Government of Egypt is working to enhance diplomacy in support of a culture of coexistence and dialogue among nations. We are doing so by holding major events to bring together nations, spreading the concept of peace through the rejection of violence, promoting coexistence and the sharing of expertise and highlighting women's role in society and the importance of empowering them. The World Youth Forum, held recently in Sharm El-Sheikh from 4 to 10 November, was a major event serving as an effective platform for fostering direct dialogue among young people from different parts of the world, enabling them to discuss their hopes for a better future in the modern world and convey to the world a message of peace, love and development. The World Youth Forum will be an annual event held in Egypt at the end of every year.

But peace is not just about the absence of conflict; it also requires an interactive and participatory process to enhance dialogue and resolve conflicts in the spirit of understanding and cooperation. Humankind must completely eradicate all forms of discrimination and extremism. Regrettably, international conflicts still exist in the Middle East and Africa, and we must not forget that a culture of peace is a set of values, customs and behaviour, based on the principles of respecting life, rejecting violence, combating extremism and promoting peaceful practices by advancing education, dialogue and cooperation, full respect for national sovereignty, the political independence of countries,

non-interference in their internal affairs and the resolution of conflicts through peaceful and diplomatic means and respect for human rights.

We must also make every possible effort to meet the development and environmental needs of current and future generations. We must commit to the concepts of freedom, justice, democracy, tolerance, solidarity, pluralism, cultural diversity and peaceful coexistence among nations. The international community must not ignore the inherent right of all nations, including those living under the yoke of colonialism or other forms of foreign control or foreign occupation, to self-determination — and therefore their right to live in peace, stability and security. We want to highlight the plight of the Palestinian people, who have lived under the yoke of military occupation for decades, and stress that one of the international community's priorities is maintaining the Arab identity of Al-Quds Al-Sharif as the birthplace of revered religions and home to holy sites.

In conclusion, we must recognize that an increasing number of movements are calling for an end to conflict among civilizations and require the United Nations to take on an increasing responsibility for fostering dialogue. We must also recognize that the cause of a culture of peace represents a valuable opportunity for peoples all over the world to overcome terrorism and extremist ideologies and the violence and destruction they bring. My Government would therefore like to express its sincere appreciation following the Assembly's adoption by consensus last week of resolution 72/17, entitled "Effects of terrorist acts directed against religious sites on the culture of peace".

All United Nations documents and reports must include clear references to a culture of peace. We therefore support all the draft resolutions under this item — both the traditional ones submitted by friendly nations such as Bangladesh, the Philippines and Pakistan, and the new draft resolutions submitted by Algeria and Malaysia.

Mr. Kadiri (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): My delegation is pleased to be able to participate in today's discussion. We have studied the reports (A/72/488 and A/72/621) of the Secretary-General outlining the main activities conducted by the United Nations during the past year on this issue.

Today's debate is an opportunity for us to reaffirm the international community's commitment to a culture

of peace and similar values. Now more than ever, we reiterate the importance and urgency of ensuring that the values of peace, tolerance, dialogue and coexistence prevail over ignorance and propaganda. Today the General Assembly is emphasizing its commitment to implementing the objectives of a culture of peace and non-violence, almost 20 years after the adoption of resolution 53/243, on the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace.

My delegation takes this opportunity to congratulate Ms. Audrey Azoulay on her election as the new Director General of UNESCO, and welcomes the work done by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations to promote a culture of peace through education and dialogue, among other means.

It is sad to see today the rising incidence of acts of intolerance, discrimination, xenophobia, Islamophobia and inter-State, inter-ethnic and interreligious tensions. It is sad to see that peace remains elusive in certain regions. The culture of peace and sustainable development are two intrinsically linked notions. It goes without saying that peace is based on achieving sustainable development, just as the full implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development depends on peace. In the quest for peace, the role played by women and young people in the peaceful resolution of disputes is critical and must be supported and encouraged.

My delegation underscores that Morocco has implemented a national programme to integrate the theme of a culture of peace into the school curriculum and to organize regular meetings on the dialogue among cultures and civilizations. Morocco was the first Arab country to work with UNESCO on developing a national strategy for the prevention of violent extremism through education. We should also encourage the positive contributions of the media and civil society, which have a real role to play in encouraging collective awareness, promoting social dialogue as a vehicle for peace, diffusing values of tolerance and openness, and fighting against hate speech and incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence.

Religious leaders have a key role to play in preventing and combating incitements to hatred. We must encourage cooperation among religious leaders of all religions and back it with the principles of tolerance and mutual respect. In the fight against religious extremism and terrorism, Morocco has adopted a multidimensional approach. In that regard,

my country understood at an early stage the need to adopt a preventive strategy based on religious training and human development, and we have taken concrete measures to regulate religious teaching through the training of imams.

Encouraged by that success, we have exported our programmes and now train imams nationally and internationally, at home and in sub-Saharan Africa, Europe and Asia. Since the inauguration of the Mohammed VI Institute for the Training of Imams, Morchidines and Morchidates in Rabat in March 2015, nearly 2,000 imams have benefited from the special training we provide at the national and international levels. That policy is accompanied by a widespread rehabilitation project for traditional Koranic schools, which are a vital part of Morocco's religious and cultural heritage.

The Mohammed VI Foundation for African Oulema is holding a meeting of its regular session in Fez today, with the participation of approximately 300 Islamic scholars from 32 African countries, including more than 80 women and 20 Moroccan scholars who are members of the Foundation, four of whom are women. In that framework, and based on its traditional values and political will, Morocco continues to work to maintain spaces of peace and prosperity and to establish good-neighbourly relations and trust within cultural spaces.

Since the announcement by the United States of its intention to recognize Al-Quds as the capital of Israel and transfer its Embassy to the holy city, His Majesty King Mohammed VI, President of the Al-Quds Committee of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, has sent a message to the American President and the United Nations Secretary-General, expressing his profound personal concern and the deep anxiety of Arab and Muslim States and countries over the United States decision, and calling for the preservation of the holy city's legal, political and historical status while avoiding any action that could undermine its current political status.

The Kingdom of Morocco insists on the importance of preserving the historical, legal and political status of Al-Quds and calls on the United Nations, particularly the permanent members of the Security Council, to fully assume their responsibility so as to prevent any action that might undermine that status or international efforts to resolve the Palestine-Israel conflict. Morocco reaffirms its unconditional support for and ongoing

solidarity with the brotherly Palestinian people as they strive to recover their legitimate rights, first and foremost the right to form an independent State with eastern Al-Quds as its capital.

In conclusion, in line with the guidance of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, President of the Al-Quds Committee, Morocco will work, in coordination with the Palestinians and other Arab, Muslim and international parties to come together with a view to addressing this dangerous development.

Mr. Qassem Agha (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish a good morning to Al-Quds Al-Sharif, the capital of occupied Arab Palestine, the core of peace, the birthplace of Jesus Christ, a flower of cities and a place of tolerance and moderation. The future of Al-Quds Al-Sharif is not threatened by any country or any country's President. It is threatened by its history, and it depends on the will and determination of the loyal and honourable people who support a proper solution to the Palestinian question.

Today's vote in favour of all the draft resolutions that call for the prevention of violence and violent extremism, and for which the General Assembly has called on Member States to unite against violent extremism in all its forms and manifestations, is in line with Syria's unwavering position in favour of promoting a culture of peace, dialogue among cultures and a rejection of violence. It also confirms our rejection of any State initiative based on extremism and terrorist Wahhabi ideology, whereby certain terrorist groups are created to promote obscurantist thinking and their own personal political interests. My delegation reiterates its rejection of any initiative that undermines the fight against extremism or the dissemination of tolerance. It is dangerous to assign that noble mission to the institutions of countries with which we are all familiar.

We must speak the truth concerning developments in the Arab and Muslim world. Israel, the occupying Power, was established on the basis of Zionist ideology, which includes policies promoting Israel as an occupying Power. Israel was established on the basis of Zionism, and we all know that Zionism is a form of racism. It is the equivalent of the terrorist Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS). It does not believe in a culture of peace, and it strives to promote violence and religious extremism, as we see daily at the political level.

Zionism says that it wants to steal all of Palestine to build a Jewish State for Jews only — in other words,

to remove all other components, Christians or Muslims. ISIS says the same. It wants to establish a country for all those who believe in ISIS, for Muslims only, and only for those who believe in a culture of killing, bloodshed and the destruction of cultures and civilizations.

That simple approach shows that the reason for the suffering in the region is that Israel has introduced religious intolerance, racial extremism and religious extremism into it. It has introduced the concept of the occupation of another's territory into our region. During the 70 years that have passed since the establishment of this international Organization, hundreds of resolutions have been adopted condemning Israel and its illegal expansionist policies. I would like to remind members that Israel is dealing with terrorists from Jabhat Al-Nusra and ISIS in the occupied Syrian Golan. It is providing them with protection and assistance against the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force all along the line of separation in the Golan.

Israel recently launched missiles into the heart of Damascus, and we responded accordingly. We can therefore not be blamed when we respond and reply adequately to Israeli audacity with like for like, when appropriate. We hope for victory for Palestine and the Arab cause.

Mr. Khoshroo (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to begin by thanking the Permanent Missions of Malaysia and Algeria to the United Nations for introducing the draft resolutions under consideration today — draft resolution A/72/L.21, entitled "Moderation", and draft resolution A/72/L.26, entitled "International Day of Living Together in Peace". We hope that they will be adopted by consensus.

The documents under consideration by the Assembly today also include document A/72/621, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 70/109, entitled "A world against violence and violent extremism". As my country was the resolution's main sponsor, I would like to thank the Secretary-General and his colleagues in the Secretariat for their efforts in preparing the relevant report. I would also like to commend the entire United Nations system for all the initiatives and undertakings aimed at implementing the resolution, with a view to preventing and countering violent extremism, a list and review of which are provided in the report.

The United Nations was founded in the high hope of saving future generations from the scourge of war.

As such, peace lies at the heart of the work of the Organization, and a culture of peace is the essence of the Charter of the United Nations.

As the world today faces a baffling number of increasing risks and challenges, the responsibility of the United Nations to foster and promote peace is also growing, especially with the increase in the number of State and non-State actors spreading hateful ideologies. The world situation demands that all States be more vigilant with regard to the implications and consequences of their messages, actions and decisions on the fragile situation of peace.

Those who try to legitimize occupation in our region by rejecting the historical realities are gravely undermining peace. The occupation of Palestinian land is at the root of every crisis in our region. Any action aimed at denying the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including with regard to the holy city of Al-Quds, and particularly the Al-Aqsa Mosque, will result only in more bloodshed and rage.

We strongly condemn the recognition of the city of Al-Quds by the United States of America as the capital of the Israeli regime, as well as the plan to transfer the United States Embassy to the holy city. That unilateral act constitutes a grave violation of international law, since any territorial acquisition resulting from the use of force is illegal, and all States have an obligation to refrain from any action that runs counter to that principle. The United States action is not only illegal but also indicates how hypocritical its policy is with regard to peace and stability in the Middle East.

The international community will hold the United States and the Israeli regime responsible for all the dangerous consequences of that reckless and illegal act. Throughout history, occupation and peace have never gone hand in hand. The present case is no exception, and there can be no peace or justice as long as the occupation of Palestinian land continues.

The failed experiences of the past should not be repeated. Those who prefer sanctions and coercion to diplomacy and negotiation strengthen extremism and weaken the culture of peace and tolerance by their deeds and rhetoric. Unilateralism and coercive measures create instability and insecurity in international relations and are to blame for spreading terrorism and extremism.

What is happening today in many parts of the world, from the occupied Palestinian territory to Yemen,

represents failures in our joint endeavour to enhance peace in the world. But we cannot and should not give up. In fact, despite all the difficulties and challenges facing our region, there are grounds for optimism. The recent series of defeats of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) in our region, most notably in Syria and Iraq, represent a turning point and a historical victory for peace and peace-loving nations.

We want to sincerely congratulate the Governments and the courageous peoples of Syria and Iraq on their decisive victories against terrorist groups, which have been made possible only by their bravery and steadfastness. However, despite these military defeats, the ideology and networking that created ISIS are still alive. No final victory against ISIS, or terrorism in general, can be imagined without ridding the world of the dark takfiri ideology that inspires it and similar terrorist groups.

War and conflict have always imposed themselves on societies. However, the cost of war today has made it a non-option, and it is therefore imperative to make lasting peace a reality. To that end, the Islamic Republic of Iran, as the initiator of the concept of a world against violence and extremism, once again invites all peace-loving nations to close ranks in the cause of peace.

Mr. Mohamed (Maldives): Peace is the natural condition for the existence of humankind, and war and aggression are artificially created hurdles hampering the basic human instinct for cooperation and coexistence. Promoting a culture of peace requires that we enable those values to grow unhindered.

The General Assembly's Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace prioritizes education as a key strategy in cultivating and nurturing such a culture. That means structuring our education systems and preparing educational materials with a view to helping individuals to cultivate the values of peace. If properly designed and delivered, education has an extraordinary capacity to enable individuals to unlearn the evil art of oppression and learn the beautiful art of compromise. Education helps us to step into the realm of possibilities — to look further, to try harder and to return to the natural condition of human existence.

The United Nations system is doing a commendable job in bringing about such a change in the mindsets of millions of people around the world through education. UNESCO in particular is doing an admirable job in

working with the Governments of Member States to tailor their education materials in a way that will create sufficient space for a culture of peace to flourish.

In the Maldives, the Government of President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom is implementing policies to enable Maldivian women and men, girls and boys, to dream bigger, achieve higher, cultivate and live in a culture of peace, respect and tolerance and learn to cherish the value of compromise. The Maldives approach in creating a culture of peace is by promoting sustainable and inclusive economic and social development, respect for human rights, equality between women and men, democratic participation and tolerance. We recognize the relationship between building a culture of peace and building a stronger, more prosperous and a more resilient nation. The Government is investing more in women and young people, who play crucial roles in creating, consolidating and sustaining a culture of peace and respect for basic human rights.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development forms a central part of that strategy. The Maldives has achieved quality universal primary and secondary education, while ensuring that children learn the values of respect and tolerance from an early age. That is supplemented by targeted education that promotes peaceful coexistence and harmony and prevents the spread of ideologies that lead to violent extremism.

Education must also be the key strategy in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism. Learning the virtues of tolerance should form the bedrock of our shared approach to education and social development. We can do that by closing the existing gaps in our societies that lead people to incite hate. We can do that by overcoming all types of prejudice against Muslims or any other groups of people. The Government and the people of the Maldives condemn the efforts by some to associate Islam with terrorism. We unequivocally condemn all acts, methods and practices of terrorism as criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation, in all their forms and manifestations, wherever and by whomsoever committed. The Maldives condemns in the strongest terms the recent terrorist attack that took place in Egypt targeting worshippers during prayers.

Fostering a culture of peace also requires the media, including the companies that own social media platforms, to ensure that the free media is not used as

an instrument to incite hate and to plan and carry out acts of terrorism.

The power of peace can overcome the tyranny of ignorance, for peace is more powerful than the total accumulation of any social power.

The Maldives believes that the Security Council has an extraordinary opportunity to create conditions for peace. The Maldives hopes to be elected to the Council for the term 2019 to 2020, and to contribute to strengthening the Council's ability in shaping a shared vision of peace — a vision for humankind to return to the default mode of coexistence, where freedom and equality are achieved through understanding, respect and tolerance, and where our shared belief in the culture of peace will guide us to our common and shared destiny.

Mr. Islam (Bangladesh): As the original proponent of a culture of peace at the United Nations, Bangladesh is pleased to see the growing interest in the issue, as manifest in the number of draft resolutions introduced under this agenda item this year.

Since the Assembly's adoption in 1999 of resolution 53/243 A and B, on a culture of peace, Bangladesh has been facilitating subsequent draft resolutions at the General Assembly every year. The annual consensus adoption of the resolution reaffirms the international community's commitment to the enduring value of a culture of peace. It is to be expected that there should be renewed interest in the subject against the backdrop of the Secretary-General's call for a surge in peace diplomacy. We remain grateful to the Presidents of the General Assembly for organizing high-level events on a culture of peace, as mandated by the resolution, and we urge all the relevant United Nations entities to mainstream the promotion of a culture of peace as an underlying objective in their respective areas of work.

We thank the Secretary-General for preparing a detailed report (A/72/488) on the activities that have taken place since last year under this agenda item. We recognize that the promotion of a culture of peace and interreligious and intercultural dialogue have gained further impetus from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The need for greater tolerance and understanding cannot be overemphasized in our increasingly multicultural, multireligious and interdependent societies. We need active and conscious efforts to

promote cultural diversity as an important element for social inclusion. Education must be prioritized across all societies as the most effective vehicle for nurturing the values of inclusivity, pluralism, tolerance, moderation and peaceful coexistence. The observance of the International Day of Living Together in Peace should further reinforce that message.

Our children and youth remain our best hope for peace. The seeds of a culture of peace must be sown in the minds of the young. On 7 September, the President's High-level Forum on the Culture of Peace focused on the relevance and importance of early childhood development in promoting a culture of peace. We encourage the United Nations entities concerned, such as UNESCO and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, to forge ahead with their far-reaching work on peace and global citizenship education. We urge Member States to support initiatives to create avenues for promoting children's and youth engagement in peace. In that context, we commend to the attention of all concerned the research study on youth, peace and security mandated by Security Council resolution 2250 (2015).

Last year, resolution 71/252, entitled "Follow up to the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace", recognized the potential contribution of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture to the promotion of a culture of peace. Building on that, this year Member States have rightly recognized that efforts for peacebuilding and sustaining peace should take into account the promotion of a culture of peace. We would suggest that the Secretary-General's forthcoming report on sustaining peace appropriately reflect that recognition.

We recall that in resolution 70/291, the General Assembly acknowledged the relevance of the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace in the context of the comprehensive implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. There is indeed further scope for exploring how the promotion of a culture of peace can effectively and sustainably contribute to combating terrorism and preventing violent extremism conducive to terrorism. We consider the notion of moderation to add a further useful dimension to this discourse, including in the context of mitigating the potential damaging consequences of extremism, while upholding respect for fundamental rights and freedoms.

Bangladesh condemns the cowardly terrorist attacks on holy sites in Egypt last month, as well as all such attacks, as an affront to our shared commitment to a culture of peace.

Building the mindset of a culture of peace is perhaps the most basic and constructive approach to preventing conflict. We must strive to put dialogue for reconciliation and peace at the forefront of our efforts to combat the hatred, intolerance, exclusion and sectarianism that foment conflict and war.

In that spirit, we recall in particular the desperate situation of the Rohingya in Myanmar's Rakhine state and continue to urge the international community to work to ensure their fundamental human rights and freedoms, including their right to return to their homes, and to self-identification, citizenship and the other basic rights they need to lead a dignified life.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 15.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolutions A/72/L.21 and A/72/L.26.

The Assembly will first take a decision on draft resolution A/72/L.21, entitled "Moderation".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Nakano (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to those delegations listed in document A/72/L.21, the following countries have also become sponsors of the draft resolution: Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Guinea, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Kiribati, Lebanon, the Maldives, Morocco, Myanmar, Oman, the Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Thailand, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

The Acting President: A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina,

Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kiribati, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, United States of America

Draft resolution A/72/L.21 was adopted by 135 votes to 2 (resolution 72/129).

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/72/L.26, entitled "International Day of Living Together in Peace".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Nakano (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, Algeria has become a sponsor on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of African States.

In addition to the delegation listed in document A/72/L.26, the following countries have also become

sponsors of the draft resolution: Armenia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Bulgaria, China, Cuba, Estonia, France, Indonesia, Kiribati, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Nicaragua, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Spain, the Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Turkmenistan, the United Arab Emirates, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Viet Nam and Yemen.

The Acting President: May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft resolution A/72/L.26?

Draft resolution A/72/L.26 was adopted (resolution 72/130).

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to delegations that wish to speak in explanation of vote or position, I would like to remind delegations that explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Galarneau (Canada): I have the honour of delivering this explanation of vote on behalf of Canada on resolution 72/129, entitled "Moderation".

First, Canada would like to thank Malaysia for introducing a resolution on this fundamental issue, and the facilitator and our colleagues for their sustained efforts to achieve a consensus text. We would also like to express our appreciation to Malaysia for its efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism through domestic and international initiatives. Canada is deeply committed to countering violent extremism, as we have demonstrated in our consistent support and engagement on this issue. We are also committed to promoting pluralism, inclusion, respect for diversity and all human rights. For these reasons, Canada decided to support the resolution.

We would like to emphasize that we understand that interventions aimed at preventing and countering violent extremism, including those that fall under the term "moderation", are locally relevant and contact-specific. We believe that when they occur, there must be guarantees of respect for human rights, diversity and inclusion, with a view to helping individuals and communities become more resilient to attempts to radicalize them into violence. It is a difficult balance, but one that we are committed to continuing to work with all our partners to preserve. Our position is that a rules-based, open and pluralistic society, characterized by a wide diversity of thought and belief, is a precondition for a culture of peace.

Mr. Brown (United States of America): The United States of America strongly believes in working together to build a more secure and peaceful world through the promotion of justice, democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as by rejecting violence and by addressing the root causes of conflict. However, we have serious concerns about resolution 72/129, on moderation. For example, the United States cannot accept the language in paragraph 3, which calls on the international community to support the Global Movement of Moderates initiative, owing to our concerns about the current ability of the Global Movement of Moderates Foundation of the Government of Malaysia to conduct the proposed activities.

The United States also reaffirms its well-known position that the exercise of the right to freedom of expression should be afforded the maximum possible protection. We also reaffirm our support for freedom of expression and religion, including respect for the right to freedom of thought, conscience or belief. In that regard, we are unable to support the language in paragraph 1 that does not distinguish between the terms “extremism” — which may be subjectively applied to certain groups and can be used to suppress the exercise of the freedoms of expression and religion, as well as other human rights and fundamental freedoms — and “violent extremism”, which we universally oppose.

Furthermore, the word “moderation” remains undefined in international law and, in our discussions, we are concerned about the possibility that the implementation of moderation-focused programmes and policies will be subject to abuse. We are concerned that individuals in States could construe moderation as justifying undue restrictions on freedom of expression or religion, both of which would contradict internationally recognized rights.

The United States believes in working together to protect human rights and to help ensure that the actions of Member States to counter violent extremism are not counterproductive.

Mr. De Souza Monteiro (Brazil): Brazil would like to explain its vote on resolution 72/129.

Brazil welcomes the adoption of the resolution on moderation. It is reassuring to have such a high level of engagement within an agenda item devoted to the

culture of peace. While we also welcome the adoption of yet another resolution, I would like to highlight the fact that article 1 of the Declaration on a Culture of Peace (resolution 53/243A), adopted in 1999, lists nine fundamental elements for the promotion of a culture of peace, including the right to development, sustainable development and freedom of expression and the promotion of gender equality. This year we have seen a significant increase in the number of resolutions under this agenda item. Although some elements of a culture of peace have received much attention, others have not. We therefore hope that in future discussions, the areas of sustainable development and human rights will be better reflected in the efforts of the General Assembly to promote a culture of peace.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

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

Ms. Shilo (Israel): Syria once again took advantage of this platform to attack my country, Israel, with false accusations and pure lies. I will not waste the Assembly’s time by reacting to that heinous statement by the representative of Syria, a country that kills its own people, including by using chemical weapons.

(spoke in Arabic)

In a fire, the modest bather perishes, while the shameless survive.

Mr. Qassem Agha (Syrian Arab Republic) *(spoke in Arabic)*: As the representative of Israel finished her statement, she used a proverb that says that those who are modest end up dying. We would like to reply by saying that the shape of the bottle tells us what is inside. The continued occupation of the Syrian Golan and extremism are two sides of the same coin — that is, of Da’esh and extremist thinking throughout the world.

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 15.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.