



General Assembly

Seventieth session

18th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 29 September 2015, 6 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Lykketoft (Denmark)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Alyemany (Yemen), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 6.15 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (continued)

General debate

Address by Ms. Aja Isatou Njie-Saidy, Vice-President of the Republic of the Gambia

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

Ms. Aja Isatou Njie-Saidy, Vice-President of the Republic of the Gambia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Ms. Aja Isatou Njie-Saidy, Vice-President of the Republic of the Gambia, and inviting her to address the General Assembly.

Ms. Njie-Saidy (Gambia): First and foremost, I bring greetings and best wishes from His Excellency Sheikh Professor Alhaji Dr. Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh Babil Mansa, President of the Republic of the Gambia, who has also directed me to read out his statement on his behalf, as follows.

“I wish to first and foremost praise the Almighty Allah for granting me this opportunity to once again be part of this 2015 General Assembly with

leaders from around the globe. I also pray to the Almighty Allah to guide us throughout this session and provide us with the necessary wisdom, courage and blessing for the fulfilment of our objectives.

“But before speaking any further, please allow me to first extend my warmest congratulations to Mr. Mogens Lykketoft in his new position as the elected President of the General Assembly at its seventieth session and to further wish him all the best in his official endeavours throughout his tenure. The entire Gambian delegation and I are pleased to support his presidency during the course of these deliberations. By being entrusted with such a special responsibility, it is fair to say that the world has, in a position of consensus, identified his exemplary qualities and abilities as the perfect person to oversee the current global agenda for the building of a more caring world free of war ravages and underdevelopment.

Mr. Tommo Monthe (Cameroon), Vice-President, took the Chair.

“I also wish, on behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf, to convey my special thanks to his predecessor, Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa, for his remarkable performance during his tenure in office. We are very proud of him and will continue to wish him the best and give him all our support in his future undertakings.

“Last but not least, I wish to register our special commendation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and members of his entire supporting team who,

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despite difficult challenges, continue to perform their duties with notable success.

“There has never been a moment better than this for our Organization collectively to reflect and resolve to respond with a special sense of urgency to the increasing complexities of global challenges that threaten to derail hundreds of years of peace, progress and prosperity for humankind. It is therefore imperative that, as an agent of change, the United Nations not fail to account for and cement the implementation of critical resolutions designed to assist our Member nations and, indeed, the entire universe for the improvement and sustainment of a better quality of life for all.

“In order to effectively achieve the goals set forth by this world body for the stability and maintenance of world peace, all Member States, be they big or small, must be promptly and strongly reprimanded or censured for violations that are in direct conflict with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1).

“I remain firm in my constant recommendation for the whole world to stand together against the continued barbarism and brutality of indiscriminate terrorism perpetrated against innocent men, women and children, causing undue suffering and losses that often render the victims helpless, homeless and hopeless. As genuine Muslims worshipping the Almighty Allah, whose message in the Holy Koran repeatedly draws our attention to the need to live together in peace for our common humanity, we the majority must not remain indifferent or silent with respect to those particularly sadistic sons of Satan who are committed to desecrating Islam itself with only one objective and inclination — to wreak havoc on their fellow human beings.

“Let me say again as I have said in this forum and many others elsewhere that the propaganda and propagation of these Satanic ideologies are not only a fraudulent misrepresentation of Islam — a noble religion indeed — and a mockery of democratic ideals, but an insult to the Almighty Allah himself, making it ever more necessary to nullify their existence by all means possible. Their baseless claims and increasing attacks on peaceful regions require the United Nations in particular to come together to exterminate these barbaric monsters, as

they have no regard for the sanctity of human life in the first place.

“Countries that are caught at the crossroads and are embroiled in conflicts with terrorism deserve our unfettered and unmitigated support. I therefore call upon Member nations to fully commit to the Organization’s basic tenets regarding the solidification of enduring solutions that protect and sustain all human life. As true Muslims and Allah-worshipping people, we must understand that these are unconscionable acts that should be subjected to the toughest penalties.

“In recognition of the need for world peace, my Government respects the recent landmark agreement on the Iran nuclear issue, outlined in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, in which Iran has agreed — along with the United States of America, Russia, China and Germany — to limit its nuclear programme as specified. My Government believes that it is an important achievement with the right measures, particularly if they are put in place, for monitoring and accountability purposes.

“While we welcome the Iranian agreement to curb the proliferation of nuclear weapons, the need remains to address perennial conflicts with a high human cost to our youth, women and children, and to defuse persistently tense situations with high potential for escalation into a nuclear conflagration. I therefore call upon this global institution and regional organizations charged with the responsibility of conflict resolution, peacekeeping and peacebuilding to firm up our commitment to international peace and security. That is imperative in order to end the dangerously escalating acts of violence, terrorism and banditry in simmering trouble spots the world over.

“The continuation of these conflicts calls into question the efficacy of the United Nations in executing the principal function for which it was first created. Paradoxically, however, their persistence constitutes highly valued gains for some unscrupulous enemies of peace, as the belligerents and opposing factions are supported by States, entities and individuals for geopolitical, economic and military strategic interests based on greed and hatred for the rest of humankind.

“I would also urge that the United Nations address the post-Ebola 2014 virus epidemic, which

claimed and maimed thousands of lives, mostly in the hardest-hit West African subregion. While the sizeable monetary, medical personnel and supply contributions had a huge impact on its containment and treatment, there are invariably vast rippling effects for almost the entire continent. The slow reaction times for response efforts, human fear and media reports have had a wide-scale negative economic impact on a large number of countries. As a result of continued reductions in trade and foreign investment, border closures and flight cancellations, the United Nations Development Group has projected that West Africa stands to lose more than \$3.6 billion annually over the next three years. As the virus still poses a threat to the world, there are a number of solutions that the United Nations could support to contain and prevent the disease from re-emerging and spreading.

“Critical among such approaches is the need to invest in awareness campaigns, education and vaccinations to ensure the safety and security of the whole world community. Obviously, we cannot but continue to express our sincere appreciation for the timely and effective intervention of the Cuban Government, the Russian Federation and the United States Government, whose rapid deployment of the necessary logistics, including medical teams, to the worst-affected areas helped immensely in stopping the spread of the disease.

“Despite persisting challenges, Africa and the Gambia continue to make effective gains in achieving many aspects of the 2015 Millennium Development Goals. To begin with, protecting our environment must emphatically remain a major priority for this global body because registered climate changes over the course of history have significantly impacted negatively on our planet Earth and demand our immediate and permanent attention. The planet is, after all, our only home, which we must passionately protect for the benefit of present and future generations.

“That, in essence, demands from all of us the steadfastness to soundly manage our natural resources for both economic and social development. We can no longer continue to pretend not to know or live in denial of the challenges faced by humankind from the adverse impact of the depletion of our natural resources, as manifest today in the form of desertification, drought, land degradation and

ocean acidification though activities of State-owned and multinational companies, mostly from the West and the developed world.

“This body must act with greater commitment and resolve to establish sustainable conservation programmes, with production patterns aimed at effectively combating climate change, restoring our ecosystems, promoting forest management and reversing desertification and land degradation. It is also the obligation of the United Nations to be resilient in ensuring the reduction of the risks of man-made disasters that often cause massive pollution to our seas, oceans and fresh water sources.

“Therefore, my Government continues to reiterate the significance of how Security Council reform bears on the global interests of all Member States and the enduring interests of the Organization as well. As clearly articulated in decision 62/557 adopted by a consensus of Member States, we, the stakeholders, all support the laudable idea that the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform should be driven by Member States themselves and that the positions of Member States should form the foundation of the negotiations in the first instance.

“We are, however, yet to realize a reflection of such principles and consensus in the Council’s general approach and framework document. In order for the Security Council’s multifaceted reform to realize its desired objective of increased efficiency and effective representation in an atmosphere governed by democratic working methods, top priority should be given to increasing the representation of African countries in particular, which will provide us with better opportunities to participate in the Council’s decision-making process.

“We must bear in mind that African nations represent more than 1 billion people in this body and constitute 54 sovereign States here, making it ever more important and more qualified for the allocation of the two permanent and two non-permanent seats that Africa rightly deserves. But our calls have never heeded despite persistent appeals, as articulated in the Ezulwini Consensus and Sirte Declaration, among others.

“It has been 15 years since 2000 and the initial development of the Millennium Development Goals, and, though progress in various degrees has been accomplished among Member States, with broader, more reliable and sustainable goals we must continue to build on proposed motions so as to ensure the real achievement of the goals that we set for ourselves.

“Despite the marked evolution in human diversity, there are some tenets with respect to people’s religious beliefs and values that are sacred and no country, big or small, should be allowed to insult another country or bully it for honouring the traditions that govern its people. To do so is both disrespectful and dangerous. Whereas materialism, terrorism, crime, obsession with weapons of mass destruction, and deviant lifestyles seem to be the order of the day, we must make no mistake that there are still right and wrong deeds, and positive and negative consequences. As much as some behaviours are clearly in violation of laws and societal norms, there are others that are a direct insult to our respective religions. I maintain that all of the aforementioned behaviours are displeasing to the Almighty Allah and against the principles that govern peaceful and loving Muslims and Christians alike.

Mr. Tommo Monthe (Cameroon), Vice-President, took the Chair.

“For 70 years since the founding of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has continued to maintain the same language as the mainstay of literally every United Nations resolution and conference that has to do with the family, namely, that the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society. So that spirit has excluded and still should exclude any international acknowledgement of relationships between persons of the same sex to signify a family, as in the case of homosexual civil unions and so-called same-sex marriages. Therefore given the natural structure of human nature and society, we must not allow ourselves to depart from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights norm by entertaining deviant beliefs that reduce the family to Government approval of adult sexual and emotional desires, instead of recognizing them as central agents to achieve the common good of spouses, children and society at large.

“I wish to shift attention to the great continent of Africa, whose human and vast natural resources have always been the target of trespassers who have trampled our economic, social, political, and human rights. Although there has been a steep learning curve with regard to becoming self-sufficient, there has always been and will always persist a desire for Africa to remain forever independent of colonial rule and subjugation.

“In fact, my Government and other States have made an iron-clad promise to our citizens that this is our time and our era. It is time for Africa to reap the benefit of its divine inheritance. It is time for Africa to dispel the myths and falsehoods about its history and people. It is time for Africa to stop people from taking advantage of our glorious and rich natural resources, and to stand up for what it believes in, what it is interested in and what is better for its people. No longer will we as a continent be robbed of our very means to progress and prosperity.

“It is heartbreaking to live with the sad reality that the United Nations cannot gain much traction in arresting the state of incessant violence in the occupied Palestinian territories, which is evident as a result of the continuing policy of settlement expansion and the climate of impunity relating to the activities of the settlers. Although there is an overwhelming increase in the number of areas of conflict in the Middle East, which in many ways has impacted the priorities of the United Nations there, our attention must never be distracted from the suffering of the Palestinian people. Their right to a State with secure borders and East Jerusalem as its capital will not be compromised. This long overdue exigency, which is backed by myriad United Nations resolutions — not least, the recent resolution 66/225, of 29 March 2012 — continues to be my Government’s position on this particular issue.

“The fight against drug and human trafficking should be seen as linked to international security because it is a serious threat to all societies. We know that the use and sale of drugs are deeply rooted in violence and organized crime. We also know that drug trafficking is linked to terrorist activities and other crimes, including money-laundering and the sale and trade of arms. Wide-scale corruption exists within organized groups with pervasive

criminal mindsets. Therefore, the inherent threats of drug trafficking and its related problems require urgent action on the part of this international body.

“At the current rate, drug trafficking is likely to become an epidemic that no country can escape because it is steadily rising to become a borderless threat. I therefore strongly urge that we approach this threat much more aggressively, with a comprehensive plan that involves accountability, full international commitment and support. Moreover, not just tougher laws and penalties are necessary; critical efforts are also vital to containing the spread of the use of drugs, as is the need for adequate rehabilitation measures for enduring solutions.

“I must underscore my Government’s gratitude to the Russian Federation for sponsoring the Moscow-Africa Anti-Drug Dialogue, held in the Gambia on 23 July with the objective of mapping out the best means of approaching the hazard in the African continent and the world over. The meeting was a resounding success, and once again I stand to sincerely extol the special part played by the leaders and Government of Russia for a job well done.

“In conclusion, at the forefront of our agenda we should aggressively discuss how we can cope with the evolution of enduring issues that coexist in our societies, such as trespassers and pillagers on free soil, willing to take what does not rightly belong to them. For centuries, the African continent remained the target of intrusion, theft and enslavement by foreign Powers. Nevertheless, increased terrorism threats, hunger, poverty, crime and disease continue to expand faster than our intelligence, resources and might. Global peace, it would therefore seem, depends on our efforts to take corrective measures against rampant injustice.

“It is with this serious concern in mind that I suggest that, on the basis of the brutality and inhumanity of the slave trade, the lingering influences and effects of colonialism, the pervasive destruction of human capital, and the theft of native African resources that are often rare and existing only on that extraordinarily diverse continent, this Organization should now consider remitting an invoice of reparations to the entire world and made payable to the sovereign Governments of Africa.

“But Members should know that such action alone is not enough to compensate for the untold loss of life, limb, talent and resources that are vital for Africa to become a more developed and sustainable nation. It would, rather, amount to a fairly acceptable gesture of restoration and justice for what Africa cannot reclaim.”

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

Ms. Aja Isatou Njie-Saidy, Vice-President of the Republic of the Gambia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand.

Mr. Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Chan-o-cha (Thailand) (*spoke in Thai; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): On behalf of the Royal Thai Government, I should like to join other leaders in expressing my warm congratulations to the United Nations on the occasion of its seventieth anniversary.

I wish to sincerely thank all countries for their expressions of condolence and solidarity in the aftermath of the bombing in Bangkok on 17 August. Thailand strongly condemns this barbaric act, which took the lives of many innocent civilians. We will never condone such violence. Let me therefore pledge our firm and unwavering determination to work with all countries to uphold peace and stability everywhere.

During the past 70 years, the United Nations has made significant contributions to alleviating the plight and problems of peoples in all four corners of the globe, playing a pivotal role in maintaining peace and security, protecting and promoting human rights and advancing the welfare and well-being of all humankind.

In the area of peacekeeping, the United Nations has been recognized for its success in preventing armed conflicts from escalating into war. Nevertheless, the United Nations remains duty-bound to shoulder a heavy humanitarian burden and build sustainable peace, which means continuing to carry out development work and assisting people on the ground. Thailand is determined to provide support to United Nations peacekeeping operations, especially in the area of development.

In the area of human rights Thailand has always accorded priority to protecting and promoting the human rights of all groups of people. We proudly served as a member of the Human Rights Council from 2010 to 2013 and as its Chair from 2010 to 2011. During our tenure we advocated ourselves as a bridge-builder among nations and groups of nations with diverging views and ideologies. We uphold the principle of non-discrimination and constructive partnerships, as well as capacity-building of individual nations in their human rights promotion and protection efforts.

In the area of development, the United Nations deserves credit for bringing progress and prosperity to all Member States. Thailand is proud to be a part of this transformative world agenda, which places people at the centre of development in order to eradicate poverty, reduce inequalities, ensure universal health and well-being, promote good governance and the rule of law, and reduce disaster risks. Climate change will pose a major challenge to the achievement of various Sustainable Development Goals. It is therefore our shared responsibility to ensure that the outcome of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change will be both ambitious and viable.

We live in a borderless world marked by a complex interlinkage of problems, and solving them will require a comprehensive approach because we cannot rely on a one-size-fits-all solution. And since each country's circumstances are different, there ought to be different approaches to addressing common global challenges. Today, close international cooperation and enhanced partnerships are indispensable to tackling the problem of irregular migration, especially persons displaced by conflict, which has created protracted humanitarian crises in many parts of the world. Thailand is also facing this challenge, and we reaffirm our commitment to work closely with all to address this pressing issue.

The United Nations at 70 has a commendable track record in the maintenance of peace and security and

the prevention of human rights abuses. Nevertheless, numerous challenges remain and require a holistic approach, focusing especially on the development dimension. The imperative now is to focus on crafting a truly sustainable solution to peace and security, taking into account the nexus of development and human rights.

Thailand's socioeconomic success of the past three decades, its ascent to the rank of middle-income country, and its status as a partner for development, owes a great deal to the sufficiency economy philosophy of His Majesty the King of Thailand. Thailand's approach to development takes inspiration from His Majesty the King's sufficiency economy philosophy, which espouses moderation, prudence and resilience. It teaches people to be moral, wise and self-reliant and to live modestly and in harmony with society and nature. This people-centred development is indeed consonant with the United Nations new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1). His Majesty the King's sufficiency economy philosophy has been recognized internationally. In 2006, His Majesty the King was awarded the United Nations Development Programme Human Development Lifetime Achievement Award.

The strategy underpinning my Government's approach to national development inspired by His Majesty the King's philosophy is to make the country stable, prosperous and sustainable. The goals include reducing disparity and inequality, promoting the rule of law and good governance, fostering national unity, enhancing economic connectivity with our neighbours and pursuing development that would not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Security and stability, allowing people to live free from fear and free from want, are top priorities for my country, and it is my conviction that Thailand will be stable only when we have developed ourselves into a nation of virtuous, competent and enlightened citizens who live their lives responsibly and for the greater good. The Government has a role to play in the promotion of such a society, in which individuals actively take part in building a stronger and better future for themselves and for the community so that they can be resilient enough to cope with future challenges.

Climate change is a major challenge, and all countries must cooperate to manage the challenge it poses. Thailand reaffirms its commitment to reducing greenhouse-gas emissions by between 20 and 25 per

cent by the year 2030, in line with our commitment under the intended nationally determined contributions. Furthermore, sustainability can be achieved only when we put in place a framework of fair rules for all and promote good governance that in turn leads to greater transparency and accountability. We will stress joint ownership and the collective efforts of all across all sectors because people are the main agents of change, and that change must begin from within.

Thailand is therefore undertaking comprehensive reforms on several fronts to make our country stronger and better in the hope that we will achieve security, prosperity and sustainability, and pave the way towards resilient democracy. Some of these major reforms include amending laws and strengthening the justice system, and improving public-sector efficiency. What we do today will become history tomorrow. Therefore, we must make the best of today so that 10 or 20 years from now we will be remembered for our actions. We want Thailand to be stronger and better and to become more actively involved in the work of the United Nations to shape a brighter future for us all.

We often expect the strongest to help the weakest and the most vulnerable, but given the widening gap between the strongest and the weakest we must not overlook what those in the middle can do. This middle group of countries actually constitutes the majority. They may be strong enough to stand on their own feet while still remaining in touch with the instructive experiences of their growth and development. Therefore they can serve as a crucial link between the strongest and the weakest.

As a middle-income country, Thailand firmly believes that development cannot be truly sustainable when some countries forge ahead and leave others behind. That is why we have pursued the “Thailand-Plus-One” policy for all-inclusive, region-wide economic and industrial development, so that our neighbours can advance alongside us. This includes projects of transport connectivity and the creation of special economic zones along our borders with our neighbours in support of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

At present, the majority of people in developing countries are in the agricultural sector. They currently face a host of challenges, such as trade barriers, competition on the world market, climate change, debt, poverty and a diminishing workforce. All these challenges put the world’s food security at risk.

Therefore, we must join hands to help developing countries, particularly through North-South and South-South cooperation and by strengthening the agricultural sector.

Aside from looking after our farmers, we must also empower other vulnerable groups, such as women, children and the disabled, and those at risk of having their human rights violated and becoming victims of human trafficking, such as workers in the fisheries sector. The Thai Government accords priority to solving the problem of human trafficking because it is a serious violation of human rights and necessitates humanitarian assistance. The comprehensive efforts that we are now undertaking in the areas of prevention, suppression and rehabilitation will contribute to regional and global efforts to tackle this problem.

As regards other major transnational challenges, such as pandemics and drug trafficking, these are issues that require enhanced international cooperation. Thailand stands ready to share our experiences and best practices in areas where we have expertise, namely universal health coverage, infectious disease surveillance and sustainable alternative development. In a few months, we will be organizing the second High-Level International Conference on Alternative Development.

Thailand attaches importance to building a culture of peace. We have also actively participated in the international efforts to address global challenges. It is for these reasons that Thailand has decided to run for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the term 2017-2018. We believe that we can constructively serve as a bridge-builder among Security Council members and non-members. We believe that we can play a constructive role in bridging different cultures and beliefs. In undertaking this important responsibility, we hope to be able to promote good understanding and enhance international cooperation in our collective endeavour to achieve the common goals of the United Nations.

As we enter a new era of development, the concept of sustainability should be integrated into all three pillars of the United Nations work. We have been emphasizing for decades how these three pillars are mutually reinforcing, but in reality we have been taking somewhat of a silo approach to peace and security, to development and to human rights. It is time to change all that. Now is the time to converge all three paths so that the road ahead for humanity in the next 70 years will be

one of promises fulfilled, of visions transformed. Let us make it happen together now and let us turn our road into one that makes a difference.

It is our firm conviction that together we, the States Members of the United Nations, hold the power to change the world for the better. I hereby reaffirm Thailand's readiness to partner with all Member States in our continuing efforts to address both traditional and non-traditional challenges. We are indeed united in our aspiration to make the United Nations a true beacon of hope for humankind.

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

Mr. Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, National Security, Grenadines and Legal Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, National Security, Grenadines and Legal Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, National Security, Grenadines and Legal Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, National Security, Grenadines and Legal Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Gonsalves (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): In the Christian Bible, the Book of Proverbs suggests that mortal men live for threescore and ten years, a number that fairly accurately reflects the current modal life expectancy of the global population. Today we have assembled for the seventieth time in the life of the United Nations with the legitimate question of whether this imperfect assembly of mortals has seen its best days, or if, by reason of the strength of our principles

and actions, we may endure to overcome tomorrow's challenges.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines looks forward to the wise and experienced stewardship of President Mogens Lykketoft during this seventieth session of the General Assembly. President Lykketoft, who will celebrate his seventieth birthday during his tenure, can confidently stand on the exceptional works performed by His Excellency Mr. Sam Kutesa during last year's session.

This year, possibly more than at any point in our modern history, our Assembly is beset by global threats and risks that force us to consider the ways in which our core principles of sovereignty and non-interference can overcome today's challenges. Borderless menaces such as terrorism, economic crises, contagious diseases and climate change heed neither geopolitical boundaries nor governmental jurisdiction. Furthermore, the calamitous fallout of military adventurism, economic recklessness or environmental negligence is not confined to discrete national boundaries. Rather, the chickens often return to roost in far-flung, unexpected and often blameless locales. As such, more than ever our international relations must be defined by cooperation, collaboration and decisive action.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is a small, mountainous archipelago of 32 islands scattered across a shimmering Caribbean sea. But the idyll implicit in our verdant peaks and crystal waters is now belied by the grave and gathering threat of climate change. Rising and raging seas attack our coastline and infrastructure from beyond our shores, while rains and climate volatility make landslides and deadly flooding a real and increasingly frequent internal threat to lives and livelihoods.

The intensifying vulnerability of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and its neighbouring islands to climate change is clear in the alternating bouts of drought and flooding that have caused hundreds of millions of dollars in loss and damage in my country in successive years. Less than two years ago, devastating floods washed away 17 per cent of our fragile gross domestic product and claimed 12 lives. Our quest to recover and to make our people whole again is a continuing struggle and one that takes place against a backdrop of hope that we are not soon beset by a similar tragedy.

One month ago, tropical storm Erika struck our sister island of Dominica, a mere 150 miles north of our

country. The death and destruction wrought by the storm are heartrending and serve as yet another unwanted reminder of the ominous threat of global warming and the precarious nature of our developmental aspirations in the face of an increasingly inhospitable climate. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and other Caribbean countries have joined friendly nations in assisting the Commonwealth of Dominica in its hour of need. I beseech other countries that have not yet supported this noble effort of relief, recovery and reconstruction to do so with the utmost urgency and generosity.

Our existential struggles in the face of climate change inform our posture in the frustratingly meandering negotiations to arrive at a legally binding agreement within the parameters of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. We are two months away from a deadline for reaching such an agreement at the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention (COP21) in Paris, but the precariousness of our global plight is not matched by the ambition of our partners. Indeed, the posturing and recalcitrance of some major emitters suggest that COP21 may be yet another empty diplomatic dance that prioritizes process over progress.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is embracing a green future. We are actively engaged in transitioning from fossil fuels to a renewable mix of solar, hydro and geothermal energy. Within the next three years, more than 80 per cent of our electricity needs will be provided by renewable energy. If we could control our climate destiny and insulate ourselves from the recklessness of other emitters, we would approach the future with greater confidence.

The aftershocks and repercussions of the global economic and financial crisis continue to convulse developing nations. The crisis casts a shadow on our collective efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and shrouds our newly adopted Sustainable Development Goals in uncertainty. The measure of our recovery is not the health of corporations or the rate of jobless economic growth, but the ways in which we have reformed our financial architecture and the reordering of priorities that places people and the alleviation of poverty at the centre of our developmental discourse.

The late United States President John F. Kennedy once said that if a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich. The fortress of wealth is not impregnable to the growing

unrest and instability born of crushing poverty. Our failure to address and assault global poverty in this era of excess and innovation stands as the most stinging rebuke to our existing system of crass commercialism and unfettered corporate profiteering.

In an Assembly shaped by the desire to end global wars, we must remember Gandhi's admonition that poverty is the worst form of violence. We cannot simply pay lip service to people's right to development. Instead, that right must emerge as the driving force in this Assembly's senior years. The roots of modern poverty and underdevelopment are deep and diverse. But even the most casual student of history will acknowledge the debilitating and continuing impacts of native genocide and the institution of slavery on Caribbean States. They constitute in the aggregate an awesome legacy of underdevelopment, a historic bundle of wrongs to be righted.

I reiterate the united call of the Caribbean Community for reparatory justice from the major participants in and beneficiaries of the transatlantic slave trade. Our quest for justice is supported by the 33 members of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and numerous progressive nations globally. The fate of our indigenous peoples and the legacies of slavery and colonial exploitation are neither partisan political talking points nor historical afterthoughts. They are an ever-present modern reality whose redress remains a noise in our blood and an echo in our bones. These issues must form part of the post-2015 development conversation, and also a part of our combined efforts to uplift the International Decade for People of African Descent.

It pains me that I must yet again speak, and demand appropriate redress, on the subject of the retroactive stripping of citizenship of persons of Haitian descent born in the Dominican Republic and their forcible deportation to Haiti, a country to which many of these victims have only a vague ancestral connection. We in the Caribbean Community are pledged to work with our Caribbean family in the Dominican Republic to assist in ending this tragedy at the heart of our Caribbean civilization, but the authorities of the Dominican Republic must demonstrate a good faith not merely in words but in deeds. We in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines cannot remain silent or indifferent in the face of this gross violation of human rights. This not a migration issue of the type that is currently engulfing the European Union. At its core, this is an international

human rights issue of the gravest kind upon which the United Nations must pronounce unambiguously.

Seventy years ago, the United Nations was founded with a central goal of saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war — the very first principle enunciated in our Charter. Today, wars and rumours of wars continue to bring untold sorrow to mankind. Too often these wars are the product of great Power arrogance and decisions based not on fact but on wishful ideological impulses. The results of these actions and inactions almost invariably exacerbate underlying conflicts and produce unwanted global repercussions.

International terrorism threatens us all and requires concerted international cooperation. Anti-terrorist intervention must not be shaped by which side of a border the terrorist armies happen to encamp or one's ideological affinity for the Governments most threatened by these barbaric hordes. We have already learned that modern terrorism, wherever it takes root, can threaten peace and prosperity in any corner of the globe. Stamping it out must be a shared and pressing priority.

Diplomacy ought to be most active in averting conflict and defusing disagreements. Within the zone of peace that encompasses Latin America and the Caribbean, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is concerned at the sharpening of rhetoric between our long-time friends and allies in Guyana and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Their border dispute, which dates back to the nineteenth century, has long been constrained by the ties of brotherhood, solidarity and international cooperation. Accordingly, we call for renewed and reinvigorated diplomatic engagement in the management and ultimate resolution of this vexing issue.

The maintenance and restoration of international peace and security have been the responsibility of the Security Council for the last 70 years. The Security Council, more than any other body delineated in our Charter, is unmistakably in a period of doddering dotage, unable to act with the nimbleness or decisiveness necessary to meet modern challenges. The necessity of reform and rebirth, which is acute in any institution entering its eighth decade, is particularly pressing in the case of the Security Council. For too long, reform efforts have fallen victim to the geopolitical ambitions of entrenched Council members and the regional rivalries of legitimate aspirants. This must end. We must ensure that.

Similarly, the important and indispensable work of United Nations peacekeepers throughout the world must be above reproach. The United Nations must claim responsibility not only for its successes but also for its occasional grave failures. Our collective sanctimony rings hollow when the United Nations shirks its undeniable responsibility for spreading cholera in Haiti, to the tune of 9,400 deaths and more than 400,000 hospitalized. Legal loopholes cannot mask moral responsibility in this case. Nor can we condemn sexual violence as a war crime while shrugging off the unacceptable actions of some United Nations peacekeepers in the Central African Republic. Our Assembly has a responsibility to be open and transparent to meet these sporadic failings head on and to offer redress to all victims of peacekeeper negligence or aggression.

On Wednesday, tomorrow, I will stand a few metres away from where I am speaking today to witness the raising of the flag of the State of Palestine alongside other States' flags in the United Nations compound. The decision to fly the Palestinian flag here at the United Nations, adopted by an overwhelming majority of Member States, is an unmistakable endorsement of a true two-State solution with a viable and safe Palestine living alongside its neighbours in a secure Israel. But the symbolic nature of next week's ceremony is no substitute for continued action to make that two-State solution a reality. With each passing day, realities on the ground make such a solution increasingly difficult. Though the conflict between the States of Israel and Palestine are undeniably complex, they are not beyond the capacity of the parties and the international community to resolve, and we must do so. And we must help in doing so.

The Assembly's unambiguous position on Palestine is reminiscent of our long-standing and overwhelming opposition to the United States commercial and economic embargo against the people of the Republic of Cuba. The embargo has persisted for 55 of the 70 years that the United Nations has been in existence, and its toll is measured in billions of dollars, hundreds of lives and countless developmental opportunities lost.

This year, Presidents Obama and Castro have demonstrated laudable courage in working together to move past years of enmity and mutual mistrust. But the welcome détente between the two countries has not yet led to a lifting of the embargo. There is much more to be done to unshackle the Cuban people from

the chains of an unjust, illegal and plainly outmoded blockade. Our collective pressure, so critical to the belated rapprochement, cannot waver. Instead, we must intensify our calls for the complete lifting of this anachronism, and to make whole this rupture in our hemispheric family.

This seventieth year of the United Nations must therefore be a year of not only action but also inclusion, outreach and redress of calcified injustices. As such, we must move beyond our inexplicable exclusion of Taiwan from the work of the specialized agencies of the United Nations. The perspective, experience and example of Taiwan as an active and responsible global citizen are self-evident arguments in support of their greater inclusion and participation. Taiwan's continued exclusion can be neither explained nor justified by any rational and forward-looking global gathering.

In this, our seventieth year, let us pledge ourselves to liberate our nations and our global family from the continuing bondage of poverty, deprivation and warfare; to emancipate ourselves from the mental slavery of discrimination and learned helplessness; to unshackle our policies from the narrow nationalism and imperialist ambition that constrains the limitless possibilities of the human spirit. As nations and peoples we have choices. In the 70 years of this Assembly's life we have sometimes chosen unilateralism. Many have chosen militarism. Many have chosen, too, to defer and dissemble.

Today, as we look towards a complex and uncertain future, let us instead choose love — love of our fellow human beings, love of our planet, and an abiding love not of problems but of their practical solutions. For with love, faith, works and hope all things are possible, including a further 70 years for the better of this remarkably important global gathering. We are all labouring in this vineyard. We must have the labour of love, of love, of love.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, National Security, Grenadines and Legal Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, National Security, Grenadines and Legal Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Habib Essid, Head of Government of the Republic of Tunisia

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

Mr. Habib Essid, Head of Government of the Republic of Tunisia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Habib Essid, Head of Government of the Republic of Tunisia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Essid (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my honour, as I begin my statement, to convey to Mr. Mogens Lykkesøft, and through him to his country, Denmark, our sincere congratulations on his appointment to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventieth session. I should also like to express our thanks to Mr. Sam Kutesa for his able leadership of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session.

At this time, I should also like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and assure him of the constant support of Tunisia in carrying out his noble duty.

In the past few years, Tunisia has seen very important events occurring in the framework of its democratic transitional process. There is now greater political and national awareness among politicians and components of civil society, which has allowed us to adopt dialogue as the only means to seek solutions to our crises and differences of opinion, and to avoid violence, individualism and exclusion. Thanks to this consensus-based approach, Tunisia has been able to adopt a new Constitution that manifests the fundamental values of democracy, human rights and the peaceful handover of power. Similarly, and in the framework of the transition process, we succeeded in organizing legislative and presidential elections. Observers, both inside and outside the country, bore witness to the integrity, transparency and independence of the elections, which allowed us to establish robust, permanent democratic institutions.

As the success of any political process is contingent upon efforts made on the economic and social fronts, the Tunisian Government, guided by its awareness of the need to tackle current challenges — in particular countering unemployment, strengthening national development investment and ensuring social justice — decided to draw up a strategic vision for

the country for 2016-2020 that will determine the guidelines and courses set nationally regarding sustainable development. In this regard, Tunisia reaffirms its responsibility for improving growth and development and acting in line with the aspirations of its people. We therefore urge our partners and friends in the international community to support national efforts in particular in the area of youth employment, strengthening investment and support for local and national development.

Regional changes have been swift and ongoing. We have seen them lead over the past few years to an exacerbation of the terrorist threat that now jeopardizes the stability and security of many States of the region, including mine. While our country has made significant progress in the area of security and counter-terrorism — particularly through the defeat of many terrorist plans and other criminal activities and the arrest of many suspects who were then prosecuted — over the course of this past year, we have nonetheless been the victims of two heinous terrorist attacks targeting the Bardo Museum and a tourist site in the city of Sousse in a cowardly attempt to undermine our social approach of centrism, moderation and tolerance, and to frustrate the economy by targeting its vital tourist sector. While we express our great sadness regarding the country's losses from these two crimes, we affirm that the perpetrators of these crimes will not enjoy impunity. No one can resort to terrorism to further his own objectives or to destroy Tunisian society.

Our plan for counter-terrorism is based on a comprehensive and integrated approach that goes beyond the necessity for military and security responses and seeks to understand the political, social, cultural and economic reasons behind terrorism. Nationally speaking, the prevalence of terrorism and extremism across the globe is now a significant incentive for finding a new way to combat terrorism, in accordance with bilateral and multilateral cooperation frameworks. While we welcome all initiatives to coordinate international efforts to combat terrorism, we reiterate our offer, made from this rostrum, to convene an international high-level counter-terrorism conference in Tunisia aimed at coordinating international efforts.

The alarming increase in conflicts and tensions throughout the world, whatever the reason, is of great concern to us. It requires the international community to scale up its efforts to find ways to halt these conflicts peacefully, particularly by prioritizing dialogue and

mediation efforts and strengthening activities for peacebuilding.

For Tunisia, the Palestinian cause remains at the core of important issues and conflicts in the region. We therefore reiterate our full support to the brotherly Palestinian people as it seeks to recuperate its legitimate rights to self-determination and the establishment of its independent State. Tunisia supports efforts for the continuance of peace negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis on the basis of a timeline for ending the occupation, and for the adoption of a United Nations resolution that would put an end to the Israeli occupation and restore to the Palestinian people their legitimate rights. We also condemn the ongoing Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip and its settlement policy, which is in violation of international law and international legitimacy. They represent an attempt to impose a new status quo and to undermine the two-State solution as well as efforts to continue talks on the basis of a solution that would guarantee security and stability for all countries of the region.

Near Tunisia, the brotherly Libyan people are seeing the fallout from a crisis that threatens its stability and security and goes beyond the borders of the Libyan State to jeopardize the stability of the entire region, and Tunisia in particular. We firmly believe that dialogue remains the sole solution to overcoming Libya's internal differences and to ensuring national reconciliation and respect for the will of the Libyan people for a political solution and a rejection of violence.

I reaffirm Tunisia's appeal to the brotherly country of Libya and our support for efforts to find a political solution under United Nations auspices and establish a Government of national reconciliation and accord. The international community's support is very important in that respect. The threats and dangers posed to neighbouring countries by the spread of the terrorist organization Daesh from Libya are growing. That requires strengthened coordination and cooperation among neighbouring States. We also need support from the international community in our efforts to suppress the threats to neighbouring countries.

In addition to the crises in our region, four and a half years have passed as the Syrian crisis continues to deteriorate. That is a reflection of the gravity of the political and humanitarian crisis in which our Syrian brothers have suffered death, displacement and other travails. The situation calls for credible action on the part of the international community to coordinate and

mobilize efforts to take immediate measures to halt the violence, disorder and chaos and to protect life. Tunisia urges all influential stakeholders in the Syrian conflict to step up their efforts to find a consensus-based political solution to the crisis based on dialogue and peace. We welcome the international efforts to breathe new life and hope into the situation and to find a consensus-based political solution that will spare Syria the threat of fragmentation and division.

In the face of the suffering of the brotherly country of Yemen and the humanitarian disaster that threatens to tear apart Yemeni society, national cohesion and Government, we express our full support for all efforts to put an end to the bloodshed and war and to assist the country to move beyond this crisis and alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people. We call on all factions in Yemen to return to the negotiating table and to prioritize dialogue and reason in the established framework for the country's political transition.

Not far from that brotherly Arab country, we are seeing an exacerbation of the situation in Iraq, where terrorism is increasingly prevalent and entrenched, and ethnic and sectarian genocide is being perpetrated. This requires a firmer resolve than ever on the part of all regional and international stakeholders to re-establish security, stability and accountability for the gruesome crimes that have undermined the material, human and humanitarian assets in that country.

The sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly saw the evolution of many political, development and security milestones. We saw a galvanization of international efforts to ensure that all means were made available for success based on the growing awareness regarding the need to enhance justice in international relations and to put an end to disparities in development, while guaranteeing sustainable development for all in all social, economic and environmental dimensions. Among these milestones we note the holding of the United Nations Summit on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) and the adoption of important resolutions to reduce poverty, promote social development and actively reduce the gaps between the countries of the North and the South by improving the levels of development in all its dimensions, in particular in developing and least developed countries.

Along these lines, the third Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa in July saw the adoption

of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, reflecting the concerns of developing and least developed countries regarding technology transfer, capacity-building, development assistance and others, and complementing international efforts in this arena. Tunisia actively contributed to the success of these events by actively participating in the preparatory process in our capacity as a member of the intergovernmental Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, and in the geographical group relevant to this issue.

In the framework of similar efforts to support the work of the international community in sustainable development, we assisted in the preparation of the twenty-first session of the Conference of States Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which is to take place in Paris in December. We have finished preparing our nationally determined contribution, which reflects the country's efforts in the areas of adaptability and future programmes. We welcome the relative successes of the United Nations in these areas. Nonetheless, we continue to believe that there is a need to continue to work together to better guarantee the efficiency of the Organization's efforts to address important contemporary issues for humankind, in particular by broadening the decision-making circle and encouraging balance in international relations by enshrining the principle of partnership.

The choice of the topic "The United Nations at 70: the road ahead for peace, security and human rights" as the theme for this session of the General Assembly is relevant to us all at a time for taking stock of the progress that has been made in various areas. Each and every one of us here today is responsible for correcting imbalances and changing the future or destiny of peoples to ensure more justice, equality and fair sustainable development. We are all accountable for redressing these imbalances and ensuring that greater justice, equality and equitably distributed sustainable development prevail in future. That also holds true for any confrontations and for establishing channels of communication in the framework of mutual respect. We shall spare no effort to achieve these noble goals.

In conclusion, allow me also to convey my hope that the United Nations will be capable of tackling the major challenges before us today so that, thanks to the shared desire of Member States, we can achieve peace, development and security. I am convinced that the common ground that brings us together is much more significant than the differences that divide us.

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

Mr. Habib Essid, Head of Government of the Republic of Tunisia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Samiuela ‘Akilisi Pohiva, Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Minister for Education and Training of the Kingdom of Tonga

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Minister for Education and Training of the Kingdom of Tonga.

Mr. Samiuela ‘Akilisi Pohiva, Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Minister for Education and Training of the Kingdom of Tonga, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Samiuela ‘Akilisi Pohiva, Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade and Minister for Education and Training of the Kingdom of Tonga, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Pohiva (Tonga): I congratulate Mr. Mogens Lykkesøft on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventieth session and assure him of our full support. I should also thank his predecessor, Mr. Sam Kutesa, for his excellent work, and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his leadership.

I stand before the Assembly humbled by the words of His Holiness Pope Francis as he addressed this body mere days ago (see A/70/PV.3). I am humbled because in his address His Holiness the Pope spoke directly to those political issues that occupy us all — those issues that we might easily resolve if only we had more political commitment and more political will. But His Holiness the Pope spoke in a language higher than that of politics — one of morality and of moral imperative. These are principles and ideals that have guided me throughout my life.

In this Hall, we are often guilty of an abstraction we call “political will”, the political will to address climate change, to be careful stewards of our environment, and to address devastating global inequalities in development. This abstraction distracts us. It distracts

us from our need for moral commitment and for moral courage. It is this language of morality that speaks to the privileged with the imperative “you must leave no one behind”. It is in this spirit of moral commitment that I speak to the work my Government has undertaken to serve the underserved and to meet our aspirations as they are presently embodied in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1).

As the first democratically elected representative of the people to the rank of Prime Minister in my country, I am particularly pleased with the inclusion of Sustainable Development Goal 16 related to building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. That Goal relates to the notion of good governance — the guiding principle of my Government under our democracy, fit for purpose, and a principle that I have always demanded of any Government of the day in Tonga throughout my almost 30-year career in politics.

Indeed, it is my Government’s mantra that good governance, transparency, accountability and law and order will drive all other development goals of a country. As such, my Government is committing time and resources to strengthening governing institutions through measures such as the establishment of an anti-corruption commission, and considering approaches to removing other challenges and constraints on the sustainable development of the country, such as cultural perceptions and religious dogmas.

The objectives of good governance, effective accountable and inclusive institutions are impossible to meet without full support for the human rights of all peoples living in areas of conflict throughout the world, including in the Pacific islands. Tonga reiterates its call for the root causes of such conflicts to be resolved by peaceful means, and in full recognition of the principle of the sovereignty of States.

With the Agenda adopted, the central challenge for us at this seventieth session of the General Assembly is to translate these aspirations into concrete actions. Our final Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) report 2015 revealed that the achievement in the areas of health and education has helped to maintain Tonga’s position in the *Human Development Index*. Our people now enjoy an acceptable standard of quality health service, and children and young people are able to go to school and advance to higher education. We are pleased to note that the 14 new priorities for Tonga for the next 15 years, as set out in our final MDGs report,

are all included in the 17 Goals of the 2030 Agenda for 2030: Goal 1, no poverty; Goal 3, good health and well-being; Goal 4, quality education; Goal 5, gender equality; Goal 8, decent work and economic growth; Goal 9, industry, innovation and infrastructure; Goal 10, reduce inequalities; Goal 15, life on land; and Goal 17, partnership for the Goals.

Therefore, I confirm here again my Government's full support for the Agenda and, with the assistance of development partners, we will do our utmost to achieve them by 2030. We in Tonga had followed the best practice of the MDGs journey. It was an incredible learning experience for my country and we will adopt these best practices towards our implementation of the new Development Goals and the Agenda as a whole.

Tonga, as a Pacific small island developing State (SIDS), must meet the goals on oceans and seas and climate change, to ensure access to affordable and sustainable energy for all, and the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. Tonga is also aided by the priorities and commitments set out in the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, which represents an international commitment to genuine and durable partnerships. That was advanced by this year's SIDS partnership dialogue, the creation of a SIDS Partnership Framework, and in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit assessment of United Nations system support for SIDS. The relationship between the Samoa Pathway and the 2030 Agenda is now well established, and we must maintain the links between these documents as we review our progress.

The Samoa Pathway is also significant for its central recognition that the challenges that islands such as Tonga face are different and therefore qualify our country as a special sustainable development case in need of targeted and tailored support. This message was reaffirmed in the discussion on the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda, it having been advanced, as can be clearly seen, in the outcome document of the third International Conference on Financing for Development, which makes mention of SIDS in 25 paragraphs.

A key piece of the development agenda remains outstanding as we look forward to the successful conclusion of negotiations on a climate agreement in Paris at the end of this year. That agreement must reaffirm the ultimate objective of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to stabilize

greenhouse-gas emissions in the atmosphere. Tonga remains highly vulnerable to natural disasters, which continue to increase in frequency and destructiveness. Climate change continues to pose an irreversible threat to our people, our society, our livelihoods and our natural environment.

In this regard, we welcome the dialogue that has taken place in the Security Council and that to be held at a side event to be hosted by the Foreign Ministers of France and Germany tomorrow afternoon, touching upon the security implications of climate change, and support recognition of the links between our climate and international peace and security. We reaffirm our support for the call on the Secretary-General to appoint a special representative on climate and security to thoroughly research and report on those links.

Tonga's vulnerability to natural disasters re-emphasizes the SIDS special case for sustainable development, and such vulnerabilities should therefore be factored into development finance calculations designed to assist SIDS. Currently, the use of gross domestic product per capita as the basis for determining the access of SIDS to development finance should be replaced by a comprehensive approach that recognizes our vulnerability to natural disaster. That move will save Tonga from increasing its indebtedness in obtaining funds from multilateral institutions for reconstruction in the wake of a cyclone. Currently, Tonga accesses these funds under the condition of a 50 per cent grant and a 50 per cent credit. We therefore support the proposal for adopting a new index reflective of our specific and unique national development characteristics.

We remain thoroughly committed to the management and conservation of our ocean and seas. This year, Tonga commenced its term on the Council of the International Seabed Authority. At home, we have enacted legislation related to seabed mining activities within our national jurisdiction under the relevant provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

We remain committed to the conservation and sustainable use of resources in areas beyond the national jurisdiction and fully support ongoing efforts towards an instrument regarding the same. We therefore welcomed the first meeting of the Pacific Ocean Alliance in May, under the auspices of the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner of the Pacific Islands Forum in Fiji, to discuss the positions of Governments, the private sector and civil society on the new UNCLOS implementing

agreement on marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. Within our exclusive economic zone, we continue to combat the problem of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. In welcoming the adoption of Sustainable Development Goal 14 on the oceans and seas, we support the proposed triennial United Nations ocean and seas conference to drive progress on the goal.

As we work to translate our new Agenda into action, we recognize that the development system of the United Nations must adapt to suit our new priorities. We are supportive of efforts to ensure that the United Nations is fit for purpose to implement the 2030 Agenda. We look forward to continued dialogue on longer-term positioning of the United Nations development system. In the same vein, Tonga is supportive of continued efforts to reform the Security Council through an intergovernmental process in the pursuit of a more representative and inclusive body, reflective of and in line with today's realities.

Finally, most of us have come a long way looking with hope for solutions. Our political priorities must not distract us from the call so well embodied in the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind. I re-emphasize that this call speaks to us as leaders to work together against injustice and cruel violations of human rights and dignity, as in the case of West Papuan Melanesia in the Pacific; this is within our power. It is a choice that those with power and privilege can make. The United Nations has a duty to closely follow up this West Papua case and take the necessary action to stop these brutal and inhuman activities.

We leaders must rise to a higher moral order beyond interests and be guided by what is fair and justiciable to all. I am concerned that the message delivered by His Holiness Pope Francis and other world leaders we have heard in the past few days may not have been well and truly heard. We have an obligation, a duty, and I echo the challenge. We must meet this moral obligation internationally, regionally and nationally, or else we will be left behind.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade and Minister for Education and Training of the Kingdom of Tonga for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Samuela 'Akilisi Pohiva, Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Minister

for Education and Training of the Kingdom of Tonga, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Julie Bishop, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Commonwealth of Australia.

Ms. Bishop (Australia): We meet this day at an important time for the United Nations, 70 years after its foundation. Australia's representative to the San Francisco Conference in 1945 described the General Assembly as the place where the conscience of the peoples of the world should have its most potent expression. It is appropriate then, here in the General Assembly Hall, to reflect on what the United Nations has achieved and what it needs to achieve for the future.

The United Nations provides critical services each and every day in many parts of the world. Often this important work goes unnoticed or unappreciated by those not in direct receipt of that support. Australia recognizes the dedicated, often courageous work of the thousands of United Nations personnel in the field who protect vulnerable citizens, deliver vital humanitarian assistance, rebuild damaged societies and support development. The United Nations carries out its work in an increasingly hostile environment.

Today the world faces an unprecedented number of long-running and seemingly intractable conflicts, generating displacement on a massive scale and making humanitarian need more dire than at any time since the Second World War. Terrorism today is a global threat. The magnitude of the development challenge is immense. However, we must acknowledge the remarkable achievement that is the United Nations Charter. The values and aspirations articulated seven decades ago still guide us today.

Australia is proud that, as an active participant at the San Francisco Conference, we crafted a central element of the Charter, Article 56, known as the Australia Pledge. Under that Article, United Nations Members pledge to take action individually and jointly to promote higher standards of living; solutions to international economic, social, health and related problems; and universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms. Australia took that pledge on signing the Charter in 1945. Today I reiterate that pledge.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), adopted unanimously last Friday by the General Assembly, is a manifestation of the

Australia Pledge and a testament to the fundamental role of the Organization. Only the United Nations could have produced this remarkable result. The Sustainable Development Goals are necessarily ambitious. Let us consider just the first five: to end extreme poverty everywhere; to end hunger; to ensure quality education; to ensure healthy lives; and to achieve gender equality. Should we realize all 17 Goals, we will transform our world for the betterment of humankind.

We must ensure that the remarkable spirit of cooperation displayed during the negotiation process is maintained as we work to turn these ambitious goals into reality. The 2030 Agenda recognizes that economic growth, including through private-sector investment and trade, is central to sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda also recognizes that while official development assistance remains important, it is only one source of financing for development. The 2030 Agenda affirms that it is the quality of assistance that matters, and that true partnerships for development are essential, based on respect and cooperation. That is what Australia seeks to achieve with our friends and neighbours in the Pacific.

Climate change is a challenge for all nations and decisive action is required. We will succeed in reducing global emissions only if there is engagement by the entire United Nations membership. Australia has announced a strong, responsible and achievable post-2020 contribution to international climate action. We are committed to ensuring the United Nations Climate Conference in Paris at the end of the year is the platform needed to secure a collective approach to the below 2° goal.

There is an inescapable truth. We cannot transform our world unless the place of women within it is transformed. The 2030 Agenda requires us to achieve nothing less than full gender equality. This is not just the right thing to do; it is the smart thing to do. It is essential to achieve sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth. Australia has established a \$50 million gender equality fund to accelerate support for gender equality in our development programme delivered in our region, the Indian Ocean/Asia-Pacific.

We must step up the fight against the global scourge of violence against women and girls.

Last week the Australian Government announced a new domestic policy, a \$100 million women's safety package, improving front-line support services

and providing educational resources to help change community attitudes to violence and abuse. Similarly, our overseas aid programme helps countries in our region in efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls. The United Nations women, peace and security agenda has changed our collective thinking on the role of women in conflict. We now need to put it into practice. That is why Australia has worked with the United States to produce the first military commanders' guide for implementing women, peace and security in the field.

A key element of the 2030 Agenda is that peaceful and inclusive societies are essential to achieving sustainable development. Human rights, good governance and open and inclusive institutions are crucial foundations for development. Human rights have been at the very centre of the United Nations over the past 70 years, from the United Nations Charter in 1945 to the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015.

With the rise of terrorist groups like Daesh, the continuing depredations of the North Korean regime, and the persistence of forced labour and other contemporary forms of slavery, the need for the United Nations to prosecute a strong human rights agenda has never been more pressing or urgent. Australia is standing for a seat on the United Nations Human Rights Council for the 2018-2020 term. This is the first time that my country has sought election to that body. I believe that Australia would bring to the Human Rights Council the same principled and practical approach that distinguished our 2013-2014 Security Council term. Should we be elected, our focus would be on empowering women and girls, strengthening governance and democratic institutions, promoting freedom of expression and advancing human rights for all.

Australia would be at the forefront of efforts to hold to account those responsible for human rights abuses and to build more effective preventative and accountability measures. We would be unrelenting in our efforts to secure abolition of the death penalty. Our term on the Human Rights Council would reflect Australia's inclusive, diverse society and build on the Australian Government's strong domestic human rights agenda.

There are nations for which the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda, indeed the promises of the United Nations Charter, appear remote or unachievable. The scourge of war continues to tear apart families, communities, countries and entire regions. As a non-permanent

member of the Security Council, we experienced firsthand the difficulties the Council faces in responding to the crises and conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, South Sudan, the Central African Republic and Mali. Nowhere is the devastation greater than in Iraq and Syria. Daesh is wreaking unspeakable havoc and harm on individuals, families and communities and destroying the world's cultural heritage in gross violation of international law and against the fundamental concepts of morality. It cannot be allowed to prevail.

Australia is participating in coalition military action to combat Daesh in Iraq and Syria. We are doing so within the framework of the Charter and in a manner consistent with international law. Defeating Daesh requires both military and political action. Reconciliation and inclusive governance in Iraq are the key to reducing Daesh's appeal and support. We continue to advocate a political solution that can bring an end to the conflict in Syria and we support United Nations Envoy Staffan de Mistura's efforts towards that end.

We do not believe any transition option should be rejected. All permutations of a political solution should be assessed with clear-eyed realism. Australia is committed to defeating terrorism in all its forms. We are responding to the challenges of violent extremism and foreign terrorist fighters, taking on those who would exploit our openness and modern communications to commit violence and promote terror. The humanitarian consequences of the conflicts in Syria and Iraq are devastating. I commend neighbouring countries Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, which continue to bear the brunt of the population of displaced persons. Australia has provided \$230 million in humanitarian assistance since the start of the conflict.

The massive flows of displaced people across the Middle East and into Europe have stretched response capacities to a breaking point. In this environment, people smugglers will strive to prosper from their dangerous and criminal trade. Australia's firm response to people smuggling, and continued cooperation with its regional partners, have saved the lives of thousands who would otherwise have succumbed to the false promises of people smugglers. It has also enabled us to give refuge to those most in need. Consistent with our record over decades of resettling permanently thousands of refugees, Australia was pleased to announce recently that we would resettle permanently an additional 12,000 refugees from Syria and Iraq — registered by

the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees — particularly those who are unlikely to have a home to which they might return. We also announced \$44 million in funding to support 240,000 displaced persons on the borders.

The global humanitarian system is struggling to cope with the escalating demands. The World Humanitarian Summit in May next year must deliver a nimble humanitarian system which responds to different types of humanitarian crises in the most effective fashion. The only long-term solution to these man-made crises is a political one — to bring these conflicts to an end.

Australia's recent experience as a Security Council member confirmed that the Council's role is more essential than ever. The Security Council can perform its role only if it has the tools it needs. The role of peacekeeping is fundamental. Yesterday, I joined others in pledging renewed operational support for the United Nations peacekeeping system. Australian airlift was vital to the United Nations early response to the South Sudan crisis. We have now pledged to provide our C-17 Globemasters and C-130 Hercules aircraft to help United Nations peacekeepers respond to crises where and whenever we can in the future.

We recognize that the United Nations needs more tools for peacebuilding to help vulnerable States emerge from crises and prevent them from falling back into violence and disorder. Australia is looking forward to co-chairing with Angola the consultations on the peacebuilding architecture review later this year. We need to strengthen this crucial element of conflict prevention.

Another central lesson from Australia's term on the Council was that accountability is crucial in preventing cycles of violence. The International Criminal Court has a critical role to play and requires our support. Australia remains determined to hold to account those responsible for the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH-17 in July 2014. We owe nothing less to the families of those aboard that fateful flight. We will not let a Russian veto impede the efforts of countries grieving the loss of their citizens and demanding justice for the perpetrators of this atrocity.

All States must uphold their responsibility to protect civilians from the most serious international crimes. Security Council members have a particular responsibility to do so. In that context, we welcome

proposals to restrain use of the veto where mass atrocity crimes are being committed. Australia's term on the Security Council in 2013-2014 demonstrated that elected members can play an active and constructive role. I am therefore pleased to announce that Australia is nominating itself to serve again on the Council for the 2029-2030 term.

We do not underestimate the challenges facing all of us. Equally we should not downplay the opportunities. We remain confident that working together we can realize the enduring promise of the Charter — for Australians, for our region, and for the international community. And now 70 years on, the General Assembly is indeed the place where the conscience of the peoples of the world has its most potent expression.

The Acting President: I now call on Mr. Philip Hammond, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hammond (United Kingdom): Nearly 70 years ago, the first meetings of the General Assembly and the Security Council took place in London. They marked the point when the world came together to turn its back on war and to seek to institutionalize the conditions for peace. By that process, from the ashes of the Second World War, our predecessors embarked upon a shared quest for peace, development and human dignity.

And they succeeded where the League of Nations had failed. From 51 Members at its inception to 193 now, the United Nations has become a powerful and universally recognized expression of our collective will to find solutions to the most difficult challenges we face. It is the cornerstone of the rules-based international system and an affirmation of the value we attach to human dignity and hope.

Britain is proud to have played its role in the birth of the Organization. And proud too, 70 years later, of the active role we play in international affairs as the only Security Council member, indeed the only major economy in the world, that both meets the NATO 2 per cent target for defence spending and the United Nations 0.7 per cent target for development spending.

But seven decades on, the daily reality for millions of people is a very far cry from the ideals set out in the Charter of the United Nations. Despite the historic work delivered under the Millennium Development Goals, more than a billion people still live on less than \$1.25 a day. Insecurity, extremism and conflict in the

Middle East have driven millions of people to abandon their homes, creating a humanitarian emergency on an unprecedented scale. And many millions more still live under regimes in which they have no say about how they are governed, and in which human rights and fundamental freedoms are denied.

At the same time, the rules-based international system that keeps the peace between nations is being undermined by States willing to violate the territorial integrity of others or to breach the most fundamental prohibitions on weapons of mass destruction. And alongside these challenges, we face the longer term threats of climate change, global pandemics and anti-microbial resistance — threats that we must tackle effectively now, if we are not to put the lives of future generations at risk.

But it is in Syria and Iraq, in the crucible of human civilization, that our collective values and our will to act are being most immediately challenged. The twin evils of Al-Assad's murderous regime and the brutality of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) or Daesh, have inflicted suffering on the Syrian people on an almost unimaginable scale. The humanitarian crisis, the tide of refugees seeking sanctuary in neighbouring countries and in Europe, underscore the urgent need to end the conflict and represent huge tests of our resolve.

I want to pay tribute to the extraordinary generosity of Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, which have given a temporary home to many millions of refugees and which have accepted this role stoically for years. It is incumbent upon all of us to support them as they bear that burden, and to ensure that the United Nations appeals for Syria are fully funded. And I am proud that the United Kingdom is making the second-largest contribution of any country to the humanitarian mission in the region.

We judge it important that we seek to support those who have been displaced as close as possible to their homes. Because there will be a new Syria to build, post-Al-Assad, and that country will need to draw on the talent of all the Syrian people. But a humanitarian response alone is not adequate. We share a responsibility to act to end the bloody civil war and create an inclusive political process, and to work together to crush ISIL and banish its twisted ideology from the face of the Earth. The United Kingdom will continue to be a leading member of the international coalition against ISIL, including in carrying out more air strikes in Iraq than any other country except the United States, for as

long as it takes to prevail in what will ultimately be a generational struggle against the Islamist extremist ideology that drives it.

But the defeat of ISIL on its own will not bring peace to Syria. An inclusive political settlement is the only sustainable way to end the suffering of the Syrian people. We must redouble our efforts to build a political process under Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura, and to hold to account those who have committed crimes during the conflict. Positive movement on this agenda is a crucial test for the United Nations. Progress at the Security Council has been blocked for too long. All parties must now put narrow interests aside and cooperate for the good of the Syrian people and to reassert the values of this Organization.

Urgent though the crisis in Syria is — and to that we could add the crises in Yemen, Somalia and Libya — we cannot neglect the need to act now to prevent future threats to global security from arising. But that collective action will truly work only if we have a shared analysis of the real causes of poverty, injustice, and the conflict that feeds upon it. We need a common recognition that strong, **transparent** and effective institutions, open economies and **open societies**, the rule of law, and **freedom from corruption** are the conditions that will allow development to flourish over the long term and so reduce the drivers that fuel conflict. They provide what Prime Minister David Cameron has called “the golden thread of development” and they are **vital** to the success of the Sustainable Development Goals. Each country must, of course, follow its own path to prosperity. But as we help the poorest countries overcome conflict, poverty and instability and to move up the development curve, it is in all our interests that that development be sustainable over the long term.

And the foundation for all sustainable development is security. As a permanent member of the Security Council, the United Kingdom places security as the prerequisite to good governance, strong institutions and economic development at the core of its approach. So, as the Prime Minister pledged yesterday, the United Kingdom will resume a significant role in enabling peacekeeping operations, particularly in Africa, where the United Kingdom will support efforts by the United Nations and the African Union to end some of the world’s most destabilizing conflicts, conflicts that are prompting mass migration from South Sudan and sustaining terrorist groups in Somalia.

But there is another important truth to understand — security within countries can deliver the benefits of economic growth only if it is matched by security among countries. Britain has always believed that the stability we seek in relations between nations is best realized through the framework of laws, norms and institutions that together constitute the rules-based international system that was developed after the Second World War, with the Charter of the United Nations at its heart.

Fundamental to that system is the fact that States should respect one another’s territorial integrity and political independence. When States challenge those rules, all of us have a duty to come swiftly and unambiguously to the defence of the victims. That is why we stand shoulder to shoulder with the Ukrainian people. Illegal actions and State aggression must have consequences, or the international order will be fatally undermined. We, the United Nations, insist that differences and disputes be resolved within the framework of international law, not outside it.

The collective will to tackle threats to our security must be extended to the threat we face from climate change. It represents not just a threat to the environment and to our prosperity, but to our security too. The impact of rising sea levels and rising global temperatures will be felt by all of us, but it will hit hardest many of the poorest countries and those who are least able to adapt. So the United Kingdom will not only cut its emissions at home but, as our Prime Minister announced on Monday, also increase its support to climate finance for vulnerable countries to \$9 billion over the next five years. We must work for a strong and effective deal at the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Paris in December, built upon clear commitments from all nations to lower emissions targets still further, and a collective commitment to maintain the goal of limiting global warming to two degrees.

Seventy years after the first session of the General Assembly, the United Nations stands battered by the waves of international crises but unbowed, proudly at the heart of the international order. Over seven decades, it has played a critical role in addressing almost every challenge we have faced. And crucial to its future success will be further evolution, embracing change, and maintaining relevance in this twenty-first century. The United Nations must strive to represent the new realities of our age with a reformed Security

Council. It must have the best possible leadership, with a transparent system for selecting the next Secretary-General. And he — or dare I suggest perhaps she? — will have to head a more efficient Organization ensuring that every cent it receives from its Member States is used to maximum effect.

As a founding Member of the United Nations, and as a permanent member of the Security Council, the United Kingdom will champion that reform agenda, and we will continue to promote the ideals that the United Nations represents. Seventy years ago, a generation resolved to shape their world on a vision for peace, security and universal values. Today, realizing that vision in its totality still eludes us, but we have demonstrated that when we work together collectively we can take great strides towards it. Now we must resolve to demonstrate that collective will; to recognize that it is not only our moral duty, but also in the enlightened national interests of all of us to act; to respond to the grave humanitarian crises we face; to tackle the causes of conflict, poverty and instability; and to uphold the rules-based international system.

The world is a better place because of the foundation of the United Nations by our predecessors 70 years ago. By holding firm to our ideals as United Nations Members in the face of all challenges and all temptations, we will preserve their legacy and continue to build the foundations for a better age, an age of peace, hope and dignity for all.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Hamadi Ould Meimou, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Mauritania.

Mr. Meimou (Mauritania) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is an honour for me to deliver the statement of the President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, and to speak on his behalf.

“It gives me pleasure, on behalf of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, to extend to Mr. Mogens Lykketoft our warm congratulations and best wishes on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventieth session. I am fully confident that his statesmanship, skills and long-standing experience is our best guarantee of success at this session.

“I should also like to express profound thanks to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his great and tireless efforts in the service of international peace

and security and for his promotion of dialogue as an optimum means for addressing current global issues.

“Today, we meet 70 years after the establishment of our great Organization, and those seven decades have been spent in unabated pursuit of the noble goals for which it was founded. We should congratulate ourselves on the achievements of this eventful history, without overlooking the tremendous challenges facing the world in the areas of peace, security and sustainable development. It is our hope that the post-2015 development agenda will effectively address all those challenges. Moreover, we should all work within the framework of the United Nations system to alleviate the burden of foreign debt under which many countries suffer, which impedes their economic growth and jeopardizes their stability and social peace.

“We in the Islamic Republic of Mauritania work tirelessly for the welfare for our people through a range of development projects undertaken by the State, in cooperation with the private sector and our development partners. Over the past few years, our country has obtained remarkable results that have had a positive impact on Mauritians’ standard of living. Unemployment has been curtailed, and we have widened the base for accessing and improving basic services so as to achieve concrete economic growth. In the area of promoting the rule of law, the Government of Mauritania has worked to strengthen the judiciary system and promote its independence so as to ensure that transparency prevails throughout public affairs.

“In recognition of the organic nexus between security and development, my country has made security and development top national priorities and is working to build a modern republican army equipped with every means to ensure the country’s territorial integrity. We have implemented a multitude of projects in the most impoverished regions and provided welfare for vulnerable groups. This policy has had a positive impact on the security of our homeland and its citizens and bolstered the pillars of social peace.

“Our security development approach does not stop there; we have also worked to promote the culture of dialogue and peaceful debate with all those who go astray by misinterpreting and misunderstanding the purposes of our Islamic religion and have fallen

into extremism and fundamentalism. They have therefore been engaged by our clergy, under the supervision of the Government — an approach that has yielded concrete results. In order to raise awareness of the benefits of that dialogue, we hosted an international seminar under the theme “Culture of peace and moderation” in order to tackle extremism. The Mauritanian experiment is a good example to follow.

“Our region, the African Sahel, has been exposed over the past few years to a proliferation of networks of organized crime. Drugs, weapons and human beings are trafficked and smuggled through waves of illicit migration and hostage-taking; extremist organizations have also adopted terrorism as a profession and thereby endanger security throughout the region.

“In order to address and face these challenges, Mauritania has worked with its brotherly States of Chad, the Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso to establish the group of five Sahel States with a view to designing a development and security framework as a platform for coordinating the resources of member countries in order to promote security and stability and to work to achieve sustainable development, as envisioned in the post-2015 agenda. In this regard, we appreciate the appointment of a Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, entrusted with dealing with regional issues. That augurs well for good cooperation among the group of five Sahel States and the international community in countering terrorism and organized crime and drafting rules for sound and effective sustainable development.

“Recognizing the importance of maintaining international peace and security, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania has taken the initiative to coordinate with the United Nations by participating in its peacekeeping operations. We contributed a unit of national guards that is deployed in the city of Bouaké in the sister State of Côte d’Ivoire. We are also preparing to dispatch an infantry battalion of 450 troops and a national gendarmes unit of 140 officers in order to contribute to establishing peace in the Central African Republic. That is our response to the call of duty towards our brotherly African countries in support of peace and security in our continent.

“The Islamic Republic of Mauritania is following with grave concern the serious developments in sisterly Yemen. In this regard, we support Operation Restoring Hope and the tremendous efforts undertaken by the Arab coalition led by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to restore the legitimate system of Government to sisterly Yemen, represented by brother President Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour and his Government, and to implement all relevant Security Council resolutions. We hope that the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen to solidify peace and security in this sisterly country will be crowned with success.

“On the other hand, the ongoing war and massive destruction, killing and displacement of millions in Syria require us all to support every effort to bring the Syrian parties together at the negotiating table in order to find a political solution to that war, which has been raging far too long. This solution, we hope, will save Syria from further destruction and maintain its territorial integrity.

“In the same vein, we call on our brothers in Libya to agree to a political solution culminating in the formation of a national Government that would organize fair and transparent elections to put an end to the internecine hostilities that have torn Libya asunder and made it a sanctuary for extremist organizations. We trust that the patriotic spirit of the Libyan people and its leaders will move them in that direction so that a State can be established under the rule of law and the Libyan people can enjoy peace and security.

“The Arab-Israeli conflict remains a source of animosity and a threat to international peace and security in a region that is very sensitive and vital to the entire world. Despite the multitude of United Nations resolutions and negotiations that have dragged on for decades, the two parties have failed to reach a formula for a final resolution that would guarantee the rights of the Palestinian people in an independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We condemn settlement activity and unilateral actions that impede the peace process. We also condemn the unjust siege imposed on the Gaza strip, with all its dire consequences for the brotherly Palestinian people.

“Our continent of Africa faces a multitude of challenges in the economic and security spheres. The many development programmes that have been implemented with our development partners have not achieved the envisaged goals, though some measure of success has been registered. Problems relating to poverty, disease and malnutrition persist and deplete many resources of African countries.

“The outbreak and spread of the Ebola virus disease in some West African countries highlighted the severe shortcomings in the area of fighting epidemics and disease. Despite the fortitude demonstrated by those countries and the generous assistance of African countries and the international community, which stopped the spread of the disease, there is a pressing need to establish a well-developed and integrated health-care system that would protect citizens from diseases and lethal epidemics. There are also many flashpoints of conflict that impede the development of the continent and strain its resources. Despite all these challenges, many African countries succeeded in achieving many of the Millennium Development Goals and are now resolved to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1).

“Africa, with its enormous economic resources and its demographic weight, deserves to enjoy a permanent seat on the Security Council. From this rostrum, we demand that this reform be undertaken as expeditiously as possible.

“Perhaps the most viable path to achieving peace and security is to promote the culture of peace and the values of tolerance among nations, peoples and civilizations and to uphold justice for all. Leaving issues unresolved for a long time without any prospect of a solution, as well as the widening gap between the poor and the rich and the imbalance in global economic structures, have contributed to increased tension and the spread of the phenomenon of extremism and terrorism.

“We in the Islamic Republic of Mauritania reject all forms of terrorism, while firmly abiding by tolerant Islamic values that renounce violence, extremism and excess. Islamic values call for tolerance and brotherhood, and it is our belief that it is the duty of the international community to find an effective means to halt the tide of terrorism at its roots and dry up its sources.

“The pledges undertaken by the international community at the birth of the Organization will not be fully met unless and until a minimum level of justice in the production and distribution of wealth is achieved. Furthermore, we will not come full circle in delivering on the noble aspirations for which the United Nations was founded without creating conditions in which human beings can live in dignity, freedom and equality. By those means, we could achieve the noble goals for which the United Nations was established.”

The meeting rose at 8.45 p.m.