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General debate

Note by the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to circulate, pursuant to decision 74/562 of 22 July 2020, the present compilation document of the statements delivered by Heads of State or other dignitaries by means of pre-recorded statements during the general debate and submitted to the President no later than the day on which the pre-recorded statement is played in the Assembly Hall.

The statements contained in the present document were delivered on the morning of Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 12th meeting of the General Assembly (see A/75/PV.12). Document A/75/592 and its addenda 1 through 11 contain the statements delivered in the 4th through the 15th meetings of the General Assembly (A/75/PV.4-A/75/PV.15).

In accordance with decision 74/562, and without setting a precedent for mandated high-level meetings planned for future high-level weeks, the official records of the General Assembly will be supplemented by annexes containing pre-recorded statements submitted by Heads of State or other dignitaries, submitted to the President no later than the day on which such statements are delivered in the Assembly Hall. Submissions in this regard should be made to estatements@un.org.

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India (see also A/75/PV.12, annex I)

Address by Mr. Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of the Republic of India

Delivered on Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 12th meeting of the General Assembly

[Original: Hindi; English translation provided by the delegation]

Respected President of the General Assembly,

On behalf of more than 1.3 billion people of India, I would like to congratulate every member state on the 75th anniversary of the United Nations.

India is proud of the fact that it is one of the Founding Members of the United Nations.

On this historic occasion, I have come to this global platform to share the sentiments of 1.3 billion people of India.

Your Excellency,

The world of 1945 was significantly different from today's world.

The global situation, sources-resources, problems-solutions; all were quite different.

And as a result, the form and the composition of the United Nations, established with the aim of global welfare, were in accordance with the prevailing situation of those times.

Today we are in a completely different era.

In the 21st Century, the requirements and challenges of our present as well as our future are vastly different from those of the past.

Therefore, the international community today is faced with a very important question: Whether the character of the institution, constituted in the prevailing circumstances of 1945, is relevant even today?

With the changing times, if we don't change, then the drive needed to bring change will also get weakened.

If we were to make an objective assessment of the performance of the United Nations over the last 75 years, we see several stellar achievements.

But at the same time, there are also several instances that point to the need for a serious introspection of the work of the United Nations.

One could say that we have successfully avoided a third World War. But we cannot deny that there have been several wars, and many more civil wars.

Several terrorist attacks shook the world and rivers of blood have continued to flow by.

In these wars and in these attacks, the people who died, they are people just like you and me.

Hundreds and thousands of children, who would have otherwise enriched this world with their presence, have left us prematurely.

So many people have lost their entire life savings and have become homeless refugees.

During those times and even today, can we suggest that efforts of the United Nations to tackle these issues were sufficient.

Over the last 8 to 9 months, the whole world has been battling the pandemic of the Coronavirus.

Where is the United Nations in this joint fight against the pandemic? Where is its effective response?

Your Excellency,

Reform in the responses, in the processes, and in the very character of the United Nations is the need of the hour.

It is a fact that the faith and respect that the United Nations enjoys among the 1.3 billion people in India is unparalleled.

But it is also true that the people of India have been waiting for a long time for the process for the reforms of the United Nations to get completed.

Today, people of India are concerned whether this reform-process will ever reach its logical conclusion.

For how long will India be kept out of the decision-making structures of the United Nations?

This is a country, which is the largest democracy of the world; This is a country with more than 18 per cent of the world population;

This is a country, which has hundreds of languages, hundreds of dialects, many sects, and many ideologies;

This is a country, which was a leading global economy for centuries and also one which has endured hundreds of years of foreign rule.

Excellency,

When we were strong, we were never a threat to the world, when we were weak, we never become a burden on the world.

Your Excellency,

How long would a country have to wait particularly when the transformational changes happening in that country affect a large part of the world?

Your Excellency,

The ideals on which the United Nations was founded and India's own fundamental philosophy has a lot of commonality. They are not different from each other.

Within the halls of the United Nations, one has often heard the words "the world is one family".

We treat the whole world as one family.

It is part of our culture, character and thinking.

In the United Nations too, India has always given priority to the welfare of the whole world.

India is the country, which sent its brave soldiers to about 50 peacekeeping missions the world over to keep peace.

India is that country, which in the course of maintaining peace, has lost the maximum number of its brave soldiers

Today every Indian, while seeing the contribution of India in the United Nations, aspires for India's expanded role in the United Nations.

Excellency,

On 2 October, India initiated the 'International Day of Non-Violence' and on 21 June India initiated 'International Day of Yoga'.

The initiatives for the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure and the International Solar Alliance are realities today due to efforts of India.

India has always thought about the interests of the whole humankind and not about its own vested interests.

This philosophy has always been the driving force of India's policies.

From India's Neighbourhood First Policy to our Act East Policy, as well as the idea of Security and Growth for All in the Region, or our views towards the Indo Pacific region, we have always worked for the interests of humankind and not driven by our own self-interests.

India's partnerships are always guided by this very principle.

Any gesture of friendship by India towards one country is not directed against any third country.

When India strengthens its development partnership, it is not with any malafide intent of making the partner country dependent or hapless.

We have never hesitated from sharing experiences of our development. Your Excellency,

Even during these very difficult times of the raging pandemic, the pharmaceutical industry of India has sent essential medicines to more than 150 countries.

As the largest vaccine producing country of the world, I want to give one more assurance to the global community today.

India's vaccine production and delivery capacity will be used to help all humanity in fighting this crisis.

In India and in our neighbourhood, we are moving ahead with phase 3 clinical trials in India.

India will also help all the countries in enhancing their cold chain and storage capacities for the delivery of the Vaccines.

Your Excellency,

Starting from January next year, India will also fulfil its responsibility as a non-permanent member of the Security Council.

I express my gratitude to all fellow members states who have bestowed this trust upon India.

As the world's largest democracy we will bring our years of rich developmental experience for the benefit of the whole world.

Our way forward is to proceed from human welfare to the welfare of the World.

India will always speak in support of peace, security and prosperity.

India will not hesitate in raising its voice against the enemies of humanity, human race and human values — these include terrorism, smuggling of illegal weapons, drugs and money-laundering.

India's cultural heritage, tradition, thousands of years of experience will always stand in good stead for the developing countries.

India's experiences, and India's developmental journey marked with its ups and downs will only add to strgthening the path to global welfare.

Your Excellency,

Following the mantra of Reform-Perform-Transform, India has made great efforts to bring about transformation in the lives of millions of its citizens.

These experiences are as useful for many countries of the world as they have been for us.

In just about 4-5 years, India has brought over 400 million people into the formal financial sector. This was not an easy task.

But India has proved that it can be done.

In just about 4-5 years, 600 million people have been freed from open defecation. This was not an easy task.^[P.7] But India has achieved it.

Within just about 2-3 years, more than 500 million people have been provided access to free health care services. This again was not an easy task.

But India was able to do this.

Today, India is one of the leaders in Digital Transactions.

Today, India is providing Digital Access to its millions of citizens, and in the process ensuring empowerment and transparency.

Today, we have also launched an ambitious campaign for a Tuberculosis free India by 2025.

Today, India is implementing a programme for providing piped drinking water to 150 million rural households.

Just a few days ago India has initiated a huge project for connecting its 600,000 villages with broadband optical fibre.

Your Excellency,

In the changed circumstances of the post-pandemic era, we are moving forward with the vision of a "Self-reliant India".

A Self-reliant India will also be a Force Multiplier for the Global Economy.

Today, it is also being ensured that there is no discrimination in extending the benefits of all the schemes and initiatives to every citizen of the country.

Large scale efforts are being made in India to promote Women Entrepreneurship and Leadership.

Indian women, today, are the biggest beneficiaries of the largest Micro Financing Scheme of the world.

India is one of those countries where women are provided Paid Maternity Leave of 26 weeks.

In India, the rights of transgenders are also being secured through necessary legal reforms.

Your Excellency,

In its journey towards progress, India wants to learn from the world as well as share its own experiences with the world.

I am confident that on the occasion of its 75th anniversary, the United Nations and its member countries will endeavour with a strong commitment to maintain the relevance of this great institution.

Stability in the United Nations and empowerment of the United Nations are essential for the welfare of the world.

On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, let us once again pledge to dedicate ourselves for the welfare of the world.

Thank you.

Mauritius (see also A/75/PV.12, annex II)

Address by Mr. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister, Minister for Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, and Minister for Finance and Economic Development of the Republic of Mauritius

Delivered on Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 12th meeting of the General Assembly

Mr President of the General Assembly,
Mr Secretary General of the United Nations,
Heads of State and Heads of Government,
Distinguished Delegates.
Mr President,

Let me warmly congratulate you on your election as President of the 75th session of the General Assembly and convey our deep appreciation to Professor Tijjani Mohammad-Bande for his able leadership during the last session of the General Assembly.

This session of the General Assembly is taking place in very special and unique circumstances. Never before had we had to forgo the opportunity to meet, network, and strengthen our bonds among our countries and discuss matters of global concern. I commend the Secretary General and his team for putting in place the business continuity plan which has allowed the UN to pursue its work.

Mr President,

The choice of this year's theme is indeed very appropriate — "The future we want, the United Nations we need: reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism — confronting COVID-19 through effective multilateral action". This is exactly what we need.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the fore our collective vulnerabilities, as viruses know no borders. Few are those countries which have not been affected, and many have been affected very badly. We are deeply saddened by the hundreds of thousands of lives lost and the millions of people still afflicted across the world.

The social, economic, financial and health impacts will take several months, if not years, to be nullified.

In Mauritius we had to take urgent and drastic measures to stop the spread of the pandemic. A sanitary confinement was imposed immediately after the first outbreak as from 20 March, accompanied by the timely and effective implementation of a comprehensive package of public health response and containment measures which enabled us to significantly contain the spread of the pandemic and make our country COVID safe. We now only have a few imported cases which are being carefully monitored.

I must express my Government's sincere thanks and gratitude to the World Health Organization for the timely advice it has been giving and which continues to guide our decision-making process for reopening our borders.

This pandemic which comes on top of the ongoing global crises of inequality and climate change, has exposed and exacerbated the vulnerabilities and inequalities faced by countries of the South in general and in small island states such as Mauritius in particular.

Decades of hard-won development gains have been eroded, and lives and livelihoods of many of our people have been disrupted.

The services industry, and the travel, tourism, and hospitality sectors have all been severely affected.

In the short term, like many other countries, we are focusing on preserving employment which is our pressing concern, and in the long term we will chart a path that leads to a more inclusive and sustainable development. Our topmost priority is to avoid the risk of a possible resurgence through a second wave of COVID-19 because that would be catastrophic for our economy.

Mr President,

The pandemic has shown that more than 4.4 billion people are without any form of social safety net or health care. The pursuit of Universal Health Coverage should be at the center of human development. This is the surest way to move closer to a world where everyone benefits from the human right to health.

Despite all efforts to contain the pandemic, it is clear to us that the only way to overcome it would be through the development of an effective and safe vaccine. And we all know this is not something that all of us can engage in. In developing and producing such vaccines, multinationals and governments must ensure that there is a fair distribution at a price that is affordable to all. Our collective needs have to be taken into account and it is only through our commitment to multilateralism that we will be able to succeed.

Human health and planetary health are intrinsically linked; this is not a time for playing politics or making excessive profits from the vaccine.

This pandemic cannot be defeated as a divided world.

The lives of millions, the economic welfare of billions and the social stability of the world are at stake. Global solidarity and reinforced multilateralism are, therefore, paramount.

Mr President,

Hardly had we had control on the pandemic, that Mauritius became the scene of an environmental disaster following the wreck of a bunker which collapsed on our reef within our internal waters.

The ship *MV Wakashio* ran aground on the pristine reefs at Pointe D'Esny in the South Eastern region of Mauritius on 25 July, following which around 800 tons of fuel oil leaked from its breached tanks which quickly propagated inside our lagoons and the surrounding areas. Bad weather further complicated the spread and restricted our ability to contain it.

On 16th August the ship split into two.

This oil spill is the worst environmental disaster that Mauritius has ever faced. We are still assessing the damage to the mangroves and the coastal areas. We wish to thank all the countries and the UN system which rushed to assist Mauritius during

these difficult times. I have a special word of thanks and gratitude for the people of Mauritius whose display of solidarity and spontaneous support helped protect our Ramsar sites and other environmentally sensitive areas.

A major campaign of cleanup and general assessment was undertaken but we know for a fact that mangroves and other areas will take time to return to their original state. This disaster, apart from the damage that it has caused to nature, has also adversely affected the livelihood of the fishermen and other people involved in coastal and marine activities.

A second naval incident in the Indian Ocean off the coast of Sri Lanka only a few weeks later has brought to the fore the need to put in place a robust regional disaster prevention and management system that can be promptly deployed to limit the damage from oil spills. At the same time, there is a need for a review of governance rule concerning bunkers and tankers. Mauritius happens to be on an important and busy sea lane between the west and the Far East and is, therefore, directly concerned.

We call on the International Maritime Organisation to address these matters as a matter of urgency. Weaknesses in the current liability and regulatory regime for oil spills and for environmental catastrophes need to be addressed promptly.

Mr President,

Once the Pandemic will have been eradicated, and we hope that this happens soon, we will wake up to a new reality — a reality for which there is no reset button. For many countries, the economy will likely suffer by a 14 to 20 per cent contraction with severe job losses and acute poverty. The road to the achievement of the SDGs will become longer and, in some cases, unattainable within the time frame. Added to these woes, we are witnessing severe weather conditions and other calamities such as wild fires with their lots of devastation. The Pandemic has also resulted in the concentration on national needs at the expense of, and in direct competition with, the outer world. Borders have had to be closed and as a result, we are also witnessing unrest in many parts of the world where citizens are on the streets voicing their frustrations. We, as leaders, need to be attentive to these developments. As much as our efforts at national level are crucial, there is an imperative need for us at global level to take all necessary actions to ensure that the world economy does not sink into depression, that we get back on track on the SDGs, that we recommit to our obligations under the Paris Agreement and more importantly, avoid any action likely to create more tension that could lead to further economic despair. This is the time when multilateralism cannot be jeopardized or put in doubt. The pandemic has taught us that no one is immune to it. The only way to fight it is to do it together, whether it is in the area of prevention, cure or reconstruction.

We salute the Secretary-General's initiative aimed at setting out a vision for delivering the SDGs over the course of the Decade for Action and recovering better from COVID-19. We also commend the initiative of Canada and Jamaica on financing for development. Likewise, we are thankful to all the other countries and organizations that made significant amounts of funds available to face the pandemic. What we need now is long term planning accompanied by adequate funds to ensure that affected countries can pursue their development path, for economies to grow and for the populations to survive. Access to funds should be made less complex, and the discrimination linked to categorization of income status should be suspended at least until such time that these countries are able to stabilize their economies.

Mr President,

We appreciate the important work undertaken in respect of reaching a legally binding instrument on biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction. As we move to the drafting stage, it will be important to provide better clarity on marine organisms in the extended continental shelf of coastal states. In our view, the coastal state should enjoy full rights on those organisms whether they are found on the seabed or above.

In the 75 years of its existence, the world has undergone profound changes. By the sheer fact that the membership of the UN has quadrupled and the poles of economic power have been shifting, it is essential that the composition of the Security Council should reflect a fair, equitable and geographically representative body. Our United Nations will be strengthened when we all feel well represented and have a say in the decision-making process. That is why we believe the African continent must have its legitimate seats both in the permanent and non-permanent categories of the Security Council. A reformed and enlarged Security Council with all regions and SIDS represented will restore confidence and enhance legitimacy of its work and our organization itself.

A rules-based international order with the UN and multilateralism at its core, is the guarantor for peace and shared prosperity.

It is important for all of us to reaffirm our conviction to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations which is the cornerstone of International law. This remains timeless, universal and an indispensable foundation for a more peaceful, prosperous, and just world. It is also important that the institutions that we have collectively created operate independently and their rulings respected by all countries irrespective of their size and power.

Mr President,

As the General Assembly is aware, the decolonization of Mauritius remains incomplete despite the clear and unambiguous Advisory Opinion given at its request by the International Court of Justice on 25 February 2019 which determined that the Chagos Archipelago is an integral part of Mauritius, and UN General Assembly Resolution 73/295 which required the United Kingdom to end its administration of the Archipelago by 22 November of last year.

The UK continues to ignore the International Court of Justice as well as its obligations under international law by maintaining its unlawful occupation of the Chagos Archipelago. The General Assembly, given its crucial role in the process of decolonization, must take all necessary actions to ensure that all remnants of colonialism are dismantled as soon as possible, especially as we celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations.

The General Assembly has also been tasked with assisting Mauritius in the resettlement of the forcibly displaced inhabitants of the Chagos Archipelago. I need not recall the horrendous conditions in which these innocent persons were made to leave their homes. That by itself was a major crime, but what makes it even worse is the systematic manner in which they continue to be prevented from returning.

Mr President,

COVID-19 has completely disrupted our activities for the past 6 months. We have been unable to have regular in-person meetings, hence our inability to pursue efficiently the implementation of Resolution 73/295. We will, therefore, have to attend to this forcefully and effectively as soon as the situation permits.

We are nonetheless thankful to the Secretary-General for his report and the UN Secretariat for amending the UN world map to reflect the correct appurtenance of the Chagos Archipelago as part of the territory of Mauritius.

I would also like to express our gratitude to all the Member States and organizations for their continued support to the completion of the decolonization process of Mauritius.

As regards Tromelin which also forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius, we look forward to the early resolution of the dispute over the island, in the spirit of friendship that characterizes the relations between Mauritius and France.

Thank you.

Andorra (see also A/75/PV.12, annex III)

Address by Mr. Xavier Espot Zamora, Head of Government of the Principality of Andorra

Delivered on Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 12th meeting of the General Assembly

[Original: Catalan; English translation provided by the delegation]

Mr. President,

Mr. Secretary General,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to start my intervention by congratulating His Excellency Mr. Volkan Bozkir on his election as President of the General Assembly, and I would also like to congratulate the Secretary General, António Guterres, and the Secretariat of the United Nations. The celebration of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations and of this great Assembly of all the peoples of the world, which was created with the primary objective of constructing multilateralism as way of implementing a system of values and a code of conduct based on cooperation, will undoubtedly be remembered as the year that the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus pandemic shook the very pillars of our societies.

The magnitude of this public health emergency has required an unprecedented mobilization of resources. Governments and institutions, civil and social organizations have all invested great energy in the fight against COVID-19. However, the first response and the most heroic efforts have come from all our health professionals. Therefore, I would like to take advantage of this general debate at the United Nations to vindicate their work. Not only have they demonstrated their professional value, but they have also shown their immense human quality, because, unfortunately, this virus has often deprived us of contact and the accompaniment of persons near to us, who are so necessary in moments of difficulty. However, in spite of all, the men and women of the health services have provided constant support to the people and families that have had to live through such adversity.

All of our countries are suffering the consequences of this pandemic; the virus knows no borders. I want to pass on my affection and extend my sympathy to all those families that have unfortunately lost loved ones.

In 1945, the United Nations emerged from the ruins of the most devastating war in history. The organization has led the way in tackling universal challenges and created an institutional framework that has made significant progress in areas of such importance as human rights, poverty eradication, the consolidation of democratic institutions, the fight against climate change and the promotion of sustainable development, and it has also provided protection for the most vulnerable in armed conflicts. Thanks to multilateralism, the United Nations has often been able to reach areas where traditional diplomacy has not. Even at times such as the present one, in which the pandemic has exposed the weaknesses of States, the United Nations has continued to see cooperation as an antidote to confrontation. From this perspective, I would like to highlight the work that the organization has carried out, especially

under its Secretary General, within a context as fragile as the present situation which, unfortunately, shares many common points with the scenario that led to the founding of the United Nations.

On 23 March, the Secretary General called for a ceasefire to put an end to all hostilities throughout the world, and he asked us to join forces against this pandemic and to facilitate the work of humanitarians. “The fury of the virus illustrates the folly of war... Silence the guns... Let us take inspiration from the coalitions and dialogue slowly taking shape among rival parties to enable joint approaches to COVID-19”, Mr. António Guterres urged. This was an appeal to our good sense which we hope will be permanent, and Andorra aligns itself fully with his call.

In a similar way, the United Nations has spared no effort in planning and offering a response to help pave the way for the recovery of those countries where the pandemic has wreaked most havoc, those countries where the massive destruction of broad sectors of the economy will be long-lasting. This response must underpin a more sustainable and inclusive type of development that leaves nobody behind.

The United Nations has continued to broaden its sphere of action in recent years: ranging from improvements to people’s living conditions to development-related matters that have become key elements of the multilateral agenda. Development has been viewed as a formula to eradicate poverty, to fight against inequality and injustice, and to initiate climate action. It is clear that the pandemic has worsened the situation, but it must also serve as an incentive to push for a paradigm change, and the Government of Andorra is convinced that now is the right moment to build a better and greener world, both at a national level, by approaching sustainability in a transversal manner and as a main line of political action, and at an international level within the area of cooperation; because the world must be sustainable or it will cease to be.

This requires the involvement of everybody, public authorities, civil society and private initiative, science and knowledge, all inspired by the Sustainable Development Goals and the principles of Human Rights that should lie at the core of all our actions.

In specific terms, the world cannot be sustainable, nor can there be sustained growth without the active participation of women at every level. It is now twenty-five years since the Beijing Platform was adopted, and many elements still need to be built on that base. We can no longer tolerate the vulnerabilities endured by women, which have been exacerbated by the pandemic, ranging from the violence they suffer to discrimination in basic rights such as access to health and education. We must use all the means that are necessary to prevent the global disorder caused by COVID-19 from being used to roll back rights. We need to move forward with agendas that are not regressive for women. Now is the time; this is our opportunity to give full meaning to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the most ambitious plan for the promotion of women’s rights established thus far. And, accordingly, we must take advantage of this moment to rebuild and approach this crisis from a gender perspective whereby all women and girls can exercise their freedoms, realize their rights and participate in decision-making.

On the other hand, when rebuilding after COVID-19, children must be protected in all governmental actions, and especially within the area of education, understood as the fundamental, universal and indivisible right that it is. Surely, there is no better weapon to help overcome discrimination and prejudice than to make sure that all our

children have access to education. This education should take the form of training inspired by the principles of human rights, diversity and integration, and respect for and alignment with nature. We need to understand that the function of education is a responsibility of society as a whole, a responsibility of all adults who live and interact with our children and young people.

There are many situations that need to be considered and observed in a transversal manner; gender equality, attention to children and young people, the participation and protection of the elderly, non-discrimination of people with disabilities. The realities of the present, the uncertainties of the future and the experience of the past have shown us the need to teach values and invest our efforts to ensure that schools are able to apply themselves to meeting increasingly greater demands. The success of our societies is based on this growth in human capital through education and training.

Once again, I would like to reaffirm my country's commitment to the international community as we all seek to build up the momentum that is necessary to promote quality education as a mechanism for guaranteeing equal opportunities.

Mr. President,

The fight against climate change continues to be one of the priorities of Andorra, a country with a special awareness of the natural environment. This year was to be a significant year for climate action through the plan for a new scenario of understanding, marked by the ratification of new objectives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, within the framework of the Climate Change Conference COP26 that was to be held in the United Kingdom. Andorra approved the Paris Agreement of 2015 without any doubt or hesitation, and we passed a law on Energy Transition and the Fight against Climate Change that reflects our contribution to the Paris Agreement. Indeed, we were one of the first countries to establish a plan to reduce emissions because we have experience in working towards becoming a sustainable country since we are aware that we must preserve our resources and our natural environment for future generations. For this reason, we will spare no effort in the fight against climate change.

Another action that removes any doubt there may be about our conviction and our commitment to the fight against climate change in all its areas is the role we have been playing heading the Pro Tempore Secretariat of the Ibero-American Summit for a period of two years under the motto "Innovation for Sustainable Development—Objective 2030". The joint declaration adopted by the Environment Ministers at the Environment Conference on 16 September last, is one of the high points of our presidency and it will allow us to build an environmental agenda among the 22 Member States of the Ibero-American Conference.

The crisis triggered by COVID-19 is having a profound impact on the daily lives of many families, and our country is no exception. The sense of responsibility and duty that we feel towards our fellow citizens has led the Government of Andorra to review the road map envisaged by this legislature, and we have developed an action plan based on our conviction that the decisions we make must increase the potential of our country as it moves towards the development and preservation of sustainability in the medium and long term.

This realistic plan builds on the strengths of our country, such as our health and social protection system, the educational model and the country's high level

of public safety, its historical uniqueness, cultural diversity and privileged natural environment. However, the plan also identifies, as one would expect, some aspects that need to be improved and this is based on our belief that sustainability — understood in the transversal sense — has to be the main guiding line of any political action. For this reason, we have developed a roadmap because we are aware that the impact of any actions taken at this moment will have an effect that will endure way beyond the present time. All these actions are in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, because as government institutions we must be the main catalysts of the change that is being promoted from the United Nations.

These initiatives are supported by three pillars: welfare and cohesion, economics and innovation, and alliances for change, and we want to achieve these with transparency, participation, proximity, efficiency and equality.

Your Excellencies,

The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has forced us into unimaginable situations. The world was brought to a sudden halt only a few weeks after the first victim of COVID-19 was announced: schools, factories, offices, roads, stadia etc. all felt silent in order to fight an invisible enemy and this also allowed us see that the world would never be the same again.

We have seen digitalization take giant steps in a matter of weeks, and we have also seen how teleworking has become the norm and education non-presential, obliging millions of people to become technologically literate. But we have also seen cracks appear in this process; we have had to reconsider some of the values of our system of caring for the elderly, who have been the main victims of this virus; we must remember that teleworking does not bring a better work-life balance when home spaces are not appropriate or adequate; we have seen how distance learning has highlighted deep inequalities among families that cannot access services, and we have suffered an overexposure to information which, apart from reducing human contact, has sometimes created manipulable and unsafe environments.

But there is also hope, because, more than ever, we have seen a flourishing of values such as solidarity and empathy, sincere recognition of all our health and healthcare professionals, a sense of civility and the responsibility of the population in favor of the common interest, as well as an increased ecological awareness.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, in the year that we are commemorating the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, Andorra wants to add its voice to those that support an organization that represents the very essence of multilateralism, and which in recent years has managed to preserve its initial spirit while evolving at the same time. Now, more than ever, we must appeal to and recognize the spirit and vision of the UN's founders, who were able to overcome the obstacles of a terrible war as well as difference of opinions in order to preserve mankind.

Far from being an ideal world, we know we must face up to challenges such as the persistence of conflicts that have still not been resolved, bloody scenarios, an imbalanced world from which poverty has not disappeared, where famine is on the increase, where access to health is not universal and where climate change is the clearest sign of structural deficiencies; in short, a world where the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has several readings and applications. But we must pull

together to revert this situation, and work from an open, integrated, participative and inclusive position such as that created by multilateral organizations.

We need to make progress in many areas. We already know where we want to go, but getting there is always the most complicated part. This is why we want to recognize the work carried out by the Secretary General in reforming the development system, and the contributions that States have made to the resolutions and proposals for improvement. However, it is undeniable that we have no time to lose, and we must build up our knowledge about procedures and work with experts in efficiency if we want to respond to our commitment to the Charter and obtain the results of peace and security, rights and development.

Andorra would like to use this Assembly to firmly reiterate its commitment to the United Nations, its agencies and multilateralism, to cooperation, inclusion and the solutions that this unique organization offers us. Its values all come together in the form of solidarity as a way to help us overcome a phase of humanity that is still full of uncertainties.

Now more than ever, our country, true to its record of commitment to peace, stands beside the United Nations as it seeks to reshape a multilateral order that can help us meet the remaining challenges and deal with any possible changes, and we see this health crisis as an opportunity to put an end to a model of development and unsustainable globalization that has run its course.

Now is the moment to make sure that solidarity can prevail in all its aspects. Seventy-five years on, we need to be more aware than ever of the spirit that led to the birth of the United Nations.

Thank you very much.

United Kingdom (see also A/75/PV.12, annex IV)

Address by Mr. Boris Johnson, Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury and Minister for the Civil Service of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Delivered on Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 12th meeting of the General Assembly

Never in the history of our species — not since the almighty felled the tower of babel — has the human race been so obsessed with one single topic of conversation. We have been following the same debates, researching the potential of the same drugs, and time and again we have been typing the same word into our search engines. COVID-19, coronavirus, has united humanity as never before.

And yet the crisis has also been an extraordinary force for division. We have all been up against the same enemy. The same tiny opponent threatening everyone in much the same way, but members of the UN have still waged 193 separate campaigns, as if every country somehow contains a different species of human being. Across the world there has been an infinite variety of curfews and restrictions and closures, and we have fought in a spirit of *saue qui peut*.

And the pace has been so urgent and the pressures so intense that each national government — democracy or otherwise — has decided entirely understandably to put the interests of its domestic population first. We have seen borders spring up between friends and allies, sometimes without consultation. We have seen the disruption of global supply chains with cheque book wars on airport tarmacs as nation has vied with nation for a supply of PPE.

And after nine months of fighting COVID-19, the very notion of the international community looks, frankly, pretty tattered. And we know that we simply can't continue in this way.

Unless we get our act together. Unless we unite and turn our fire against our common foe, we know that everyone will lose. The inevitable outcome would be to prolong this calamity and increase the risk of another.

Now is the time — therefore, here at what I devoutly hope will be the first and last ever Zoom UNGA — for humanity to reach across borders and repair these ugly rifts.

Let's heal the world — literally and metaphorically. And let's begin with the truth, because as someone once said, the truth shall set you free.

And with nearly a million people dead, with colossal economic suffering already inflicted and more to come, there is a moral imperative for humanity to be honest and to reach a joint understanding of how the pandemic began, and how it was able to spread — Not because I want to blame any country or government, or to score points. I simply believe — as a former COVID patient — that we all have a right to know, so that we can collectively do our best to prevent a recurrence.

And so the UK supports the efforts of the World Health Organisation and of my friend, Tedros, to explore the aetiology of the disease, because however great the need for reform, the WHO, the World Health Organization, is still the one body that marshals humanity against the legions of disease. That is why we in the UK — global

Britain — are one of the biggest global funders of that organisation, contributing £340 million over the next four years, that's an increase of 30 percent.

And as we now send our medical detectives to interview the witnesses and the suspects — bats, the pangolins, whoever — we should have enough humility to acknowledge that alarm bells were ringing before this calamity struck.

In the last 20 years, there have been eight outbreaks of a lethal virus, any of which could have escalated into a pandemic. Bill Gates sounded the alert in 2015, five years ago he gave that amazing prediction — almost every word of which has come true — and we responded as if to a persistent Microsoft error message by clicking “ok” and carrying on.

Humanity was caught napping. We have been scrabbling to catch up, and with agonising slowness we are making progress

Epidemiologists at Oxford University identified the first treatment for COVID-19. They did trials with our national health service and found that a cheap medicine called dexamethasone reduces the risk of death by over a third for patients on ventilators. The UK immediately shared this discovery with the world, so that as many as 1.4 million lives could be saved in the next six months by this one, single advance.

And as I speak there are 100 potential vaccines that are trying to clear the hurdles of safety and efficacy, as if in a giant global steeplechase. We don't know which may be successful. We do not know if any of them will be successful.

The Oxford vaccine is now in stage 3 of clinical trials, and in case of success AstraZeneca has already begun to manufacture millions of doses, in readiness for rapid distribution, and they have reached agreement with the Serum Institute of India to supply one billion doses to low and middle-income countries.

But it would be futile to treat the quest for a vaccine as a contest for narrow national advantage and immoral to seek a head start through obtaining research by underhand means. The health of every country depends on the whole world having access to a safe and effective vaccine, wherever a breakthrough might occur; and, the UK, we will do everything in our power to bring this about.

We are already the biggest single donor to the efforts of the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness to find a vaccine. And it is precisely because we know that no-one is safe until everyone is safe, that I can announce that the UK will contribute up to £571 million to COVAX, a new initiative designed to distribute a COVID-19 vaccine across the world. Of this sum, £500 million will be for developing countries to protect themselves.

The UK is already the biggest donor to Gavi, the global vaccine alliance. In June we helped to raise almost \$9 billion to immunise another 300 million children against killer diseases, and Gavi also stands ready to help distribute a COVID-19 vaccine.

But even as we strive for a vaccine, we must never cut corners, slim down the trials or sacrifice safety to speed. Because it would be an absolute tragedy if in our eagerness, we were to boost the nutjobs — the anti vaxxers, dangerous obsessives who campaign against the whole concept of vaccination and who would risk further millions of lives.

And now is the time above all to look ahead and think now about how to stop a pandemic from happening again. How can we stop another virus from coming along and again smashing that precious Ming vase of international cooperation? How can we avoid the mutual quarantines and the brutal Balkanisation of the world economy?

I don't think there is any reason for fatalism: of course, the dangers can never be wholly eliminated, but human ingenuity and expertise can reduce the risk. Imagine how much suffering might have been avoided if we had already identified the pathogen that became COVID-19 while it was still confined to animals?

Suppose we had been able to reach immediately into a global medicine chest and take out a treatment? What if countries had been ready to join together from the outset to develop and trial a vaccine? And think how much strife would have been prevented if the necessary protocols — covering quarantine and data-sharing and PPE and so much else — had, so far as possible, been ready on the shelf for humanity to use?

So we in the UK we're going to work with our friends, we're going to use our G7 presidency next year to create a new global approach to health security based on a five point plan to protect humanity against another pandemic.

Our first aim should be to stop a new disease before it starts. About 60 percent of the pathogens circulating in the human population originated in animals and leapt from one species to the other in a "zoonotic" transmission. The world could seek to minimise the danger by forging a global network of zoonotic research hubs, charged with spotting dangerous animal pathogens that may cross the species barrier and infect human beings.

The UK is ready to harness its scientific expertise and cooperate to the fullest extent with our global partners to this end. Of the billions of pathogens, the great mass are thankfully incapable of vaulting the species barrier. Once we discover the dangerous ones, our scientists could get to work on identifying their weaknesses and refining anti-viral treatments before they strike.

We could open the research to every country and as we learn more, our scientists might begin to assemble an armoury of therapies — a global pharmacopoeia — ready to make the treatment for the next COVID-19.

Our second step should be to develop the manufacturing capacity for treatments and vaccines So that the whole of humanity can hold them like missiles in silos ready to zap the alien organisms before they can attack. But if that fails and a new disease jumps from animals to human beings and overcomes our armoury of therapies and begins to spread, then we need to know what's going on as fast as possible.

So the third objective should be to design a global pandemic early warning system, based on a vast expansion of our ability to collect and analyse samples and distribute the findings, using health data-sharing agreements covering every country. As far as possible, we should aim to predict a pandemic almost as we forecast the weather to see the thunderstorm in the cloud no bigger than a man's hand.

And if all our defences are breached, and we face another crisis, we should at least be able to rely on our fourth step, and have all the protocols ready for an emergency response, covering every relevant issue, along with the ability to devise new ones swiftly.

Never again must we wage 193 different campaigns against the same enemy. As with all crises, it is crucial not to learn the wrong lessons. After the harrowing struggle to equip ourselves with enough ventilators — with countries scrabbling to improvise like the marooned astronauts of Apollo 13 — there is a global movement to onshore manufacturing. That is understandable.

Here in the UK we found ourselves unable to make gloves, aprons, enzymes which an extraordinary position for a country that was once the workshop of the world. We need to rediscover that latent gift and instinct, but it would be insane to ignore the insights of Adam Smith and David Ricardo.

We need secure supply chains — but we should still rely on the laws of comparative advantage and the invisible hand of the market. Many countries imposed export controls at the outset of the pandemic, about two thirds of which remain in force. Governments still target their trade barriers on exactly what we most need to combat the virus, with tariffs on disinfectant often exceeding 10 per cent, and for soap tariffs for 30 per cent.

So I would urge every country to take a fifth step and lift the export controls wherever possible — and agree not to revive them — and cancel any tariffs on the vital tools of our struggle: gloves, protective equipment, thermometers and other COVID-critical products. The UK will do this as soon as our new independent tariff regime comes into effect on 1st January and I hope others will do the same.

Though the world is still in the throes of this pandemic, all these steps are possible if we have the will. They are the right way forward for the world, and Britain is the right country to give that lead. And we will do so in 2021, as we celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of this great United Nations in London in January, and through our G7 Presidency, and as we host the world's climate change summit, COP26, in Glasgow next November.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been an immense psychic shock to the human race. Global fears have been intensified by the immediacy of round the clock news and social media. We sometimes forget, we face a virus — a small package of nucleic acid that simply replicates. It is not even technically alive.

Tragic as its consequences have been, it has been nothing like as destructive as other plagues — let alone the influenza of a century ago. It is absurd, in many ways, outrageous that this microscopic enemy should have routed the unity of the human race.

COVID-19 has caused us to cease other vital work, and I'm afraid it made individual nations seem selfish and divided from each other. Every day people were openly encouraged to study a grisly reverse Olympic league table, and to take morbid and totally mistaken comfort in the greater sufferings of others.

We cannot go on like that, we cannot make these mistakes again. And here in the UK, the birthplace of Edward Jenner who pioneered the world's first vaccine We are determined to do everything in our power to work with our friends across the UN, to heal those divisions and to heal the world.

Bangladesh (see also A/75/PV.12, annex V)

Address by Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Delivered on Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 12th meeting of the General Assembly

[Original: Bangla; English translation provided by the delegation]

Hon'ble Prime Minister

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

In the name of Allah, the most gracious, the most merciful

Mr. President,

Assamu Alaikum.

I congratulate you on your election as the President of the 75th Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

We are passing through an unprecedented crisis in the history of humankind due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is also the first time in the UN's history that the General Assembly is taking place on digital platform without the presence in person of the Heads of States and the Heads of Governments at the UN Headquarters in New York.

This General Assembly Hall evokes deep emotions in me. From this very hall in 1974, my father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman delivered a speech for the first time in Bangla as the Head of Government of a newly independent country. I also had the privilege of attending the General Assembly Sessions in-person for 16 times. I emphasized world peace and solidarity in all my speeches. As a Head of Government, this year I am delivering my 17th speech in the Assembly.

I take this opportunity to pay my tribute to all frontline fighters including health workers and public servants who are working tirelessly to ensure safety of the affected countries and population. I also commend the United Nations Secretary-General for his bold leadership and multilateral efforts during this crisis. Bangladesh was among the first rank of countries to endorse the Secretary-General's various initiatives, including his global ceasefire appeal.

Just as the Second World War created opportunities for countries to come together in their efforts to cooperate, through the establishment of the United Nations, similarly this pandemic has emphasized the need for collective action under the guidance of right leadership.

With profound gratitude, I remember the undisputed leader Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the greatest Bangalee of all time. He taught the Bangalee nation to stand firm in the world by ending exploitation, deprivation, and oppression. Following his footsteps, we have been able to secure a respectable position for Bangladesh in the comity of nation. From this august Assembly he declared, "The noble ideals enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations are the very ideals for which millions of our people have made the supreme sacrifice".

The Bangalee nation fully commits itself to the building of a world order, in which the aspiration of all men for peace and justice will be realized." His statement

was indeed a bold expression for multilateralism. The reflection that Bangabandhu made in 1974 continues to remain equally relevant even today, as we grapple with the current crisis.

This year is particularly significant for the Bangalee nation, as we are celebrating the birth centenary of the Father of our Nation. Our reflection on his life, struggle, and sacrifice and celebration of his achievements, is a source of our encouragement for brighter future and give us the hope to cope with the challenge of COVID-19. On the birth centenary, we, on behalf of all deprived people and nations pay rich tribute to Bangabandhu.

I remember, with deep pain, the brutal assassination of my father, Father of the Bangalee Nation and the then President Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on 15 August 1975 along with 18 members of my family including my mother, three brothers, two sisters-in law. The lives of myself and my younger sister were fortunately spared as we were out of the country at that time. We had to stay abroad as refugees for six long years. I mention this to this Assembly so that the world does not see the repetition of such heinous, brutal and unjust killings ever.

Mr. President,

The pandemic is a stark reminder that our fates are interconnected and that no one is secured until everyone is secured. This pandemic to a large extent kept us restricted to our homes. Consequently, our economic activities were greatly hampered along with our health systems. Bangladesh achieved a GDP growth rate of 8.2 per cent in the fiscal year 2018-2019. But the COVID 19 pandemic has impeded our economic progress.

However, in Bangladesh from the beginning we took initiatives putting equal emphasize on the lives and livelihoods of our people. We have announced stimulus packages aiming to minimize the impact of the pandemic on our business and productivity. We have greatly expanded social safety nets coverage.

Every year, we allocate around 39 billion taka for our freedom fighters. Our allowances for the elderly, widows, destitute women, disabled and other backward sections of the society are benefitting approx 9.1 million families.

We have readily arranged food and other assistance for people who are rendered jobless due to COVID-19. This arrangement has benefitted nearly 10 million families. We have provided scholarships to 4 million students. We have also given cash incentives to five million people including farmers, workers and laborers affected by the pandemic. To ensure healthcare of the common people, we are providing 30 types of medicines free of cost through 18,000 community clinics and union health centres.

Alongwith government assistance, I myself have collected funds and distributed more than an amount of 2.5 billion taka among the orphans, poor students, Madrasas, Mosques, Temples, school teachers, artists, journalists who are otherwise not included in government's assistance programmes. As a result, the impact of the pandemic among our people has been minimal.

We announced 31-point directives soon after the detection of COVID-19 cases in the country. We launched vigorous awareness raising campaigns as well as distributed personal protective kits aiming to contain the spread of the Corona virus. These resulted in containment of seasonal diseases which are otherwise common in our country.

We quickly identified the impending challenges of our financial sector and announced 21 stimulus packages. These packages include sectors such as export-intensive industries, safety and security of the workers, working capital for Small and Medium Enterprises, loan facilities for export growth, assistance to farmers and agriculture, loan for employment generation, interest relief for the affected business enterprises, refinancing schemes and insurance for the health workers. So far, we have announced stimulus package worth \$13.25 billion, which is equivalent to 4.03 per cent of our total GDP.

During the pandemic, highest emphasis has been placed on food production. At the same time, we have taken all measures to ensure adequate supply of nutrition for our people. Special arrangements have been made for keeping the industries running and for proper marketing of agricultural products and industrial outputs in full compliance with health guidelines. Consequently, our health sector and economy are still comparatively at a better shape. Despite the COVID-19-induced stagnation in global industrial outputs, our GDP has registered a growth rate of 5.24 per cent, which is expected to be 7 per cent in the next fiscal year.

Mr. President,

We hope that the COVID-19 vaccine will soon be available in the world. It is imperative to treat the vaccine as a 'global public good.' We need to ensure the timely availability of this vaccine to all countries at the same time. If we are provided with the technical know-how and patents, the pharmaceutical industry of Bangladesh has the capacity to go for vaccine production in mass-scale.

Efforts to contain the pandemic and achieve Agenda 2030 have to go hand-in-hand. Bangladesh's second voluntary national review (VNR) presented this year shows that we are well on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

We are working hard to transform Bangladesh into a middle-income country by 2021, attain the SDGs by 2030, a developed country by 2041 and a prosperous Delta by 2100.

We cannot but emphasize more on the importance of leveraging science, technology, and innovation for closing the digital divide and mobilizing resources and technology transfer. It is also crucial that graduating LDCs and recently graduated ones are accorded scaled-up international support and incentive packages in the transition and post-transition phases to minimize the pandemic-triggered impediments.

The migrant workers are the frontline contributors to the economies of their host and home countries alike. Many of them have lost their jobs during the pandemic while many have been sent back home. We have allocated \$361 million for the returnee migrant workers. It is critical to help them regain employment in the post-COVID-19 job market. I urge the international community and migrant receiving countries to treat migrant workers fairly and with empathy.

Mr. President,

The pandemic is worsening the pre-existing vulnerabilities of climate-vulnerable countries. In Bangladesh, we are dealing with the dual impact of recent floods and the cyclone Amphan even during the pandemic. As the current President of the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) and the V-20 Group of Ministers of Finance, Bangladesh would lead the Forum to map out a sustainable and climate-resilient

pathway out of the crisis. We also stand ready to contribute to securing a constructive and productive outcome in the Glasgow COP.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action has helped the international community come a long way to ensure gender equality. As we are celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Declaration, we need to strengthen our resolve and mutual cooperation to address all the critical areas of concern. In Bangladesh, we have closed 72.6 per cent of our overall gender gap. Women's contribution remains at the core of our national development. They are also at the forefront of pandemic response and recovery efforts.

In Bangladesh we are implementing special programmes for the development of children. As the current President of the UNICEF Executive Board, we are leading efforts to address the existing disparity. At the same time, we remain vigilant to ensure that this health crisis does not turn into a children's crisis.

Mr. President,

"Friendship to all and malice to none" is the fundamental principle of our Foreign policy. Inspired by this foreign policy dictum, Bangladesh has been consistently contributing to international peace and security and the establishment of a Culture of Peace.

During the pandemic, we see the rise of hate speech, xenophobia, and intolerance. Embracing the spirit of a Culture of Peace can help address these worrying trends. Currently, we are the largest troops and police contributing country in the world to the peacekeeping missions. Our peacekeepers are putting their lives on the line to secure and sustain peace in conflict-ravaged countries. International community must ensure their safety and security.

This year we are celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. As one of its original proponents, we call for due recognition of women's role in peace and security. We have already formulated a national action plan in this regard.

Our unflinching commitment to peace has resulted in the adoption of a zero-tolerance policy towards terrorism and violent extremism. National efforts have to be complemented by international cooperation to curb this menace.

We consistently and strongly support the global quest for a nuclear weapons free world. To that end we support the aspirations of developing countries to benefit from the peaceful use of nuclear technology.

Mr. President,

Our painful experience and the worst form of genocide and crimes against humanity that our nation had to endure during our struggle for independence motivated us to support the legitimate cause of the Palestinian people.

Bangladesh provided temporary shelter to over 1.1 million forcibly displaced Myanmar Nationals. More than three years have elapsed. Regrettably, not a single Rohingya could be repatriated. The problem was created by Myanmar and its solution must be found in Myanmar. I request the international community to play a more effective role for a solution to the crisis.

Mr. President,

The pandemic has indeed aggravated existing global challenges. It has also reinforced the indispensability of multilateralism. On this 75th Anniversary of the United Nations, our commitment to multilateralism as embodied in the UN Charter remains unflinching. At the national level, despite numerous challenges, we are committed to upholding the values of multilateralism and working towards building a “Shonar Bangla” free of poverty and exploitation based on democratic principles with full enjoyment of human rights, as envisioned by the Father of our Nation. On the birth centenary of our Father of the Nation, this is our pledge to our nation and to the world.

I thank you all again.

Khoda Hafez.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu

May Bangladesh live forever.

Fiji (see also A/75/PV.12, annex VI)

Address by Mr. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei Affairs, Sugar Industry, and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Fiji

Delivered on Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 12th meeting of the General Assembly

President of the 75th Session;

Secretary-General;

Excellencies;

Bula Vinaka from Fiji, Your Excellency, the President of the 75th General Assembly, Mr Bozkir, and congratulations on your election.

Fiji joined the United Nations in 1970, just three days after our Independence. But even as we mark Fiji's 50th Birthday alongside the United Nation's 75th Anniversary, any celebration feels hollow against the enormity of COVID-19's global spread and the worsening impacts of the climate emergency.

If there was ever a perfect storm of these dual crises, Fiji has seen it. This past April, in the midst of our campaign to contain an outbreak of the coronavirus, category 4 Cyclone Harold — already the third storm we had seen that season — made landfall at our shores.

Our disaster authorities and health officials sprang into action, taking every step in-line with everything the experts could tell us about how to stop the spread of this highly contagious virus.

And we saved lives from Harold's devastation, even evacuating entire communities, all without allowing a single new case in relation to the storm.

This was a turning point for Fiji — we knew that if we could overcome the virus in the harshest of conditions, it could be defeated. So we doubled down on our containment efforts, maintaining fast and early testing through our local WHO-certified laboratory. We either isolated or quarantined every close contact of every known case. We maintained a nationwide curfew and a complete lockdown of our two most populous cities. We have diligently managed travel through our border ever since, and the Fijian public has now been free of the coronavirus for over 150 days.

Our doctors, our nurses, our contact tracers, our lab technicians and the members of our disciplined forces have fought tooth-and-nail for every day of that unbroken streak. And as I speak, they work in our quarantine centres, isolation wards, and at our border to allow our people to continue living without the virus in their midst.

But while Fiji has contained the coronavirus, we have not been spared its economic devastation. Our vital tourism sector, which constitutes upwards of 40 percent of our overall economy, along with other key sectors like our Garment Industry, came to a halt overnight, thrusting our economy into the most severe economic crisis in history.

Yet despite a catastrophic blow to Government revenues, we are committed to rebuilding from Cyclone Harold and building resilience to future storms and

the rising seas. We must continue charting our path towards net-zero emissions and the aims of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. These are not choices, Mr President, they are matters of survival. But the development resources available to us are unaffordable and far too little in relation to the scale of our immense and pressing needs.

Climate change and the coronavirus may be very different beasts, but the inequities they have exposed are all-too-familiar for small developing states. Once again, the worst impacts have fallen on us; those least equipped to bear them. Once again, our fate rests in the collective hands of the world — yet we still have zero guarantee of equitable access to a viable vaccine.

Indeed, the divide between the highly-developed and developing worlds has never felt so stark. But once again, the UN Charter supplies us hope, as has the ferocious advocacy and leadership from my friend, the Secretary-General. 75 years ago, the UN's founding leaders recognised that no nation could know peace, no matter how responsibly and resolutely they act, unless all nations, large and small, did their part. The truth of that founding purpose is timeless — but it is clear that the multilateral system which emerged served the different needs of a different age. Mr President, this is not 1945. Our community of nations is larger, and so are the challenges we face. If climate change was not making that clear, this pandemic has made it painfully evident.

While we trust that science will defeat COVID-19, just as it has defeated smallpox, polio, and other communicable diseases, our changing climate will define the “next normal” post-COVID-19, becoming far deadlier before it ever abates.

We are already seeing a version of environmental Armageddon — from the massive, unprecedented fires in the American West, in Australia, and even in Scandinavia above the Arctic Circle which have devastated communities and infrastructure, turned iconic skylines orange, and scorched millions of acres of land. Just last week, Greenland lost a piece of its ice shelf that is larger than a number of small island nations.

If global climate action mirrors our incoherent global response to this pandemic, our children will see far greater horrors — we will not cap global temperature rise at either the 1.5-degree or 2-degree target, we will not stop our ocean ecosystems from becoming inhospitable, and we will not prevent a sixth mass extinction event.

Billions or even trillions of dollars thrown at scientist's feet decades on from now will not produce a silver bullet that saves us from unmitigated climate impacts. That strategy may suffice for COVID-19, but solving a challenge as complex as climate change demands daily and enduring commitment that is already overdue. Our recovery from this pandemic must mark a transition to a decarbonized, climate-resilient economic system.

That is why Mr. President, Fiji has worked closely with the UN and our partners in Canada, Jamaica, the UK, the EU, and Rwanda through high-level engagement on financing for development to explore how we all recover faster. Recover better. Recover bluer. Recover greener. And recover together.

In the face of crushing financial pressure, Fiji has kept its sights set on the SDGs in every way we can afford. When our borders first shut, we immediately re prioritized finances through a COVID-19 Response Budget. Since then, we have

launched another national budget which puts all resources we can muster behind as balanced, sustainable and inclusive a recovery as possible:

- We have allocated tens of millions of dollars in direct assistance to those left unemployed or who are working on reduced hours as a result of this pandemic;
- Education has remained free for every primary and secondary student in Fiji;
- Healthcare in Government facilities has remained free for every Fijian;
- We have maintained our social protection for over 100,000 of our most vulnerable citizens, including the elderly, persons living with disabilities, rural pregnant mothers, and children from single-parent or destitute homes in need of care and protection;
- No Fijian has been cut-off from water because they cannot afford their bills. In fact, we are still expanding the life-changing benefits of renewable power to more of our people; adding to the over 800 Fijian communities already powered by solar home systems.
- Alongside our development partners we are putting forward innovative solutions, including a new agro-solar project on our island of Ovalau, allowing the same land to be used for growing food and generating power;
- We're making higher education more accessible; with women composing a greater share of graduates from our tertiary institutions than their male peers;
- In under two years we have planted 2.3 million trees and mangroves as part of our commitment to grow 30 million trees in 15 years.

And we soon plan to monetize the carbon captured by Fiji's forests in partnership with the World Bank.

- We have relocated five entire communities vulnerable to the rising seas, with over 40 more identified for relocation;
- We are expanding our marine protected areas and protecting new coral reef systems, while maintaining our moratorium on sea-bed mining for the decade;
- We are committed to net-zero emissions in shipping throughout the Pacific by 2050;
- We are building adaptive capacity by expanding access to information and technology to all our people, including in our most remote islands. Today, 95% of Fijians can access mobile broadband services.

We are creating jobs through the construction of cyclone-resilient infrastructure, extending roads and essential services to the most remote pockets of our islands. And where climate impacts have left trails of devastation, we are building back stronger.

There is so much more we can do — that we must do — to break the costly cycle of rebuilding from climate driven devastation and maintain the pace of our march towards a modern economy. To fund our full recovery, developing countries have asked for a mere ten per cent of the historic stimulus packages the richest nations have deployed for themselves.

If we do not bridge this gap; the economic wounds of this pandemic will fester and cracks of inequity will deepen, undermining hard-earned development gains and

bringing economic catastrophe crashing down on the most vulnerable nations. All countries will be forced to reckon with the historic cost of that collapse.

Mr President, 2020 was meant to be the year we took back our planet; a super-year for nature, for the oceans, for the climate, for biodiversity, for food security, for the survival of all life on Earth.

But caught on our heels by this pandemic, every nation has fallen well short of their global commitments. Our recovery from COVID-19 is our last and best opportunity to set ourselves towards the future our children deserve.

We know that neither this global pandemic nor the climate emergency can be solved in the communities suffering the most from their devastation. The campaign for collective action must press ahead in parliaments, in board rooms, in stock exchanges and in the hearts and minds of ordinary citizens everywhere in the world; that work begins here, it begins with the United Nations.

While they may stand emptier-than-usual today, the halls of the UNGA are where our global responses to COVID-19, climate change, and other defining causes of our time must take form — they are where our collective future will be forged. This great institution must remain the beating heart of global dignity, global security and global order.

While there are changes we know must be made; Fijians still look to the UN as a beacon for hope, a force for peace and an anchor of stability. Fiji stands ready to serve our community of nations in every way we can, by way of peacekeeping, by way of our climate and oceans diplomacy, and by example, through the nation we build for ourselves.

Thank you.

Malaysia (see also A/75/PV.12, annex VII)

Address by Mr. Muhyiddin Mohd Yassin, Prime Minister of Malaysia

Delivered on Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 12th meeting of the General Assembly

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh,

Mr. President,

Mr. Secretary-General,

Distinguished Representatives,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

INTRODUCTION

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. President on your election as the President of the 75th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. I would also like to thank His Excellency Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande for his commitment, dedication and leadership and to congratulate him on successfully completing the work of the 74th Session of the General Assembly, in spite of the extraordinary circumstances the world is facing due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Malaysia welcomes the theme of this year's General Assembly — “The future we want, the United Nations we need: reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism — confronting COVID-19 through effective multilateral action”. I believe the theme resonates well with each one of us, appropriately framing what the world needs during a time of much uncertainty. You can be assured of Malaysia's support and cooperation in achieving the goals of this session of the General Assembly.

Before the onset of man's newest lethal enemy in the form of the Novel Coronavirus, the world had already been reeling from numerous challenges. As war continued to ravage many parts of the world, the global economic ecosystem faced unsustainable pressure as a result of trade wars and populist political posturing. Amidst all this, the state of the planet continued to suffer neglect while nations continued to bicker over who should take more responsibility to reverse the effects of climate change. All this took place against the backdrop of impoverished immigrants fleeing their homes, risking their lives by taking an arduous journey to a distant land in pursuit of a better life.

COVID-19 RESPONSE AND EQUITABLE ACCESS TO VACCINE

Little did we know then that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused great disruption to the world. Worse still, this pandemic has affected the most vulnerable populations – women and children; people with disabilities; as well as the marginalised and the displaced. We must remember that COVID-19 does not discriminate and because of that, our response should not too.

No country has been spared. The pandemic has levelled the playing field for all nations and the race is on to obtain a vaccine. Until or unless we obtain the anti-viral medication required to treat and a vaccine to prevent this novel coronavirus, we can never fully declare victory against it. This is why the manufacturing of a vaccine must promote international collaboration rather than nationalistic competition. Saving lives should be our priority.

THREAT OF TERRORISM DUE TO COVID-19

On top of the socio-economic impact COVID-19 has had on all of us, we need to also be mindful of the possibility of terrorism rearing its ugly head in this time of uncertainty. We must never discount the fact that terrorist groups could be ramping up their efforts to take advantage of the present uncertain times to further enhance their agenda.

Transparent communication, good networking, and greater intelligence cooperation at the national and international levels are imperative to counter terrorism and radicalisation during this pandemic. This is a psychological war waged on the vulnerable and we must win over “hearts and minds” to succeed. Effective communication strategies at all available channels must be prioritised to ensure that misinformation and disinformation is countered, without infringing respective domestic laws.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

REFORM OF THE INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL ARCHITECTURE IN TIMES OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

As a measure to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, governments are implementing lockdowns and rolling out initiatives to ensure that people do not lose their jobs and businesses do not shut down.

The economic and financial impact of the pandemic has brought big and small corporations to their knees. We have witnessed how decades of hard work and dedication have been reduced to bankruptcy or even the downsizing of companies on an unimaginable scale. This has resulted in thousands of jobs lost. This is precisely the reason why the economic devastation of this magnitude needs the collective action of the international community. There is a need to soften the impact to the livelihoods of all those affected.

For Malaysia, the Government has put in place mitigating strategies to address the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 has had on our country. We hope Malaysia not only recovers but emerges stronger from the pandemic. The balancing act that Malaysia strives to achieve – between kickstarting our economy and implementing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to prevent further waves of infection has been nothing short of challenging.

Malaysia has put in place structural economic reforms in facing the new global landscape post COVID-19. We have begun the implementation of economic recovery strategies, followed by an all-inclusive economic revitalization programme. Even though it will take some time before we see the results, we will continue to try our level best to return to some semblance of normalcy. And we know we can only do better with the help of the international community.

REFORM OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Unfortunately, the United Nations has been rather slow in aiding the response of Member States to COVID-19. For instance, in the first few months of the pandemic, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) failed to discuss the issue even though the pandemic clearly poses a grave threat to the security of the world. Only on 1st July 2020 did the United Nations Security Council adopt a resolution to demand an

immediate cessation of hostilities, which would allow nations to refocus resources on combatting the pandemic. This is a positive step. However, we can only imagine the benefits of such action if it had been undertaken much sooner.

Differences in the Security Council left the body, as it has so many times, indecisive and ineffective. We must be brutally honest with ourselves and admit that after more than seven decades, surely the fate of the world's peace and security should not continue to be left in the hands of a few. It is about time that the composition of the Security Council better reflects the United Nations' current membership. The five permanent seats in the Security Council, reserved for the veto-wielding five victors of a World War, has proven that the organization needs to be reformed. There would not be an alliance to pursue a common goal if one party thinks it has more right to decide than the others.

Since 1946, the veto has been wielded more than 200 times. There is nothing democratic in the way the veto is used. The veto is open to abuse, be it sanctimoniously, hypocritically or to uphold wrongdoings. This is why we need to move the reform process forward. Only with an improved Security Council and United Nations can the world hope to see problems being addressed effectively.

THE FUTURE OF PALESTINE AND THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

One of the most glaring failures of the United Nations is the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Despite the countless calls by the international community since the founding of the United Nations, the will of the majority continues to be negated by the few. They hide their true intentions under the guise of national security and the notion of justice. Wars took place and millions lost their lives have portrayed that the very same actors caught in some of the worst tragedies, have chosen to remain oblivious.

For there to be lasting peace in the Middle East, the prescribed international consensus, in conjunction with international law; United Nations resolutions; and the UN Charter, Israel must do several things. First, it must cease all of its illegal settlement activities. Second, it must withdraw its troops from the Occupied Palestinian Territory and surrounding Arab states. Third, it must allow Palestinian refugees their right to return to their land and property. Fourth, it must restore the original status of Jerusalem. And last but certainly not least, it must restore its credibility and revert to the negotiating table with Palestine.

These are not new preconditions. These are merely a reflection of years of diplomatic work and the consensus reached over decades of negotiations. Israel can no longer be in denial. Israel continues to threaten Palestinian statehood with further annexation of Palestinian land, further denying Palestine any semblance of human security or peace. Malaysia's position on this matter remains clear and consistent. Annexation is unlawful. It violates the Charter of the United Nations, Geneva Conventions and relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council. The acquisition of any territory by war or force is inadmissible and illegal. As such, there will never be nor can there ever be any legitimacy in Israel's actions against Palestine.

Together with the rest of the international community, Malaysia will continue to reaffirm its support to the realization of the State of Palestine based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The only viable way forward is a negotiated two-state solution. In this context, Malaysia supports the call of the international

community including by the UN Secretary General, for the Middle East Quartet to find a mutually agreeable path for the parties to re-engage towards a negotiated, peaceful settlement. We continue to call upon the international community to uphold Palestine's legitimate right to self determination, which constitutes one of the very core principles of the United Nations when it was created 75 years ago.

SITUATION SURROUNDING THE ROHINGYA

Another glaring example is the plight of the Rohingya. When atrocities were committed en-masse against the Rohingya in the State of Rakhine, thousands fled their homes fearing for their lives. Many died while crossing oceans and land in search of safety, whilst many others fell victim to opportunistic human trafficking rings promising the Rohingya a life they could only dream of. Yet they still choose to make that life threatening decision to leave home out of sheer desperation.

The spill-over effects of the crisis in the Rakhine State, which includes the mass migration of people from Myanmar have significantly impacted not only Malaysia, but also other neighbouring countries. Malaysia currently hosts the largest number of Rohingya refugees in Southeast Asia. As a developing nation coping with the cost of managing and providing protection to nearly 180,000 registered refugees and asylum seekers in the country, with 86% of them from Myanmar, our resources are stretched thin. Yet, Malaysia is expected to do more to accommodate these incoming refugees. Is that fair?

Although Malaysia is not party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, Malaysia has taken up the social and financial responsibility in providing humanitarian assistance and protection to Rohingya refugees on humanitarian grounds. The time has come for State Parties to the Convention to shoulder a proportionate burden and responsibility in addressing the problem by opening their doors for more refugees for resettlement and relocation.

Addressing the influx of these refugees into our borders is one side of the story. The bigger question is how can the international community play a more meaningful role to end the atrocities in the Rakhine State?

These are just two glaring examples why a stronger and better United Nations is necessary. The credibility of the United Nations can and must be restored, in order to build "the future we want, the United Nations we need". This can only be done if we find the moral courage and political will to do what is right.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS/CLIMATE CRISIS

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Malaysia has and will continue to support the accelerated action and transformative pathways of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Our development plans have always been geared towards sustainability both for the environment and for the living, and have been embedded into the five-yearly national development plans. It has also been included into Malaysia's Shared Prosperity Vision 2030, which aims to develop a fair and equitable distribution of economic development at all levels by 2030, as envisaged by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Since Malaysia implemented the Movement Control Order (MCO) in March, we found that air quality readings in Malaysia has improved two folds, from 28% to 57%. The fear is that this could only be a temporary reprieve as global carbon

emissions may rise again if we continue to be complacent and do a 'business as usual' approach in our post economic recovery plan. The pandemic must therefore be treated as a turning point. It is important for the entire international community to respect the planet's limits and value our natural resources.

Just like everybody else, Malaysia is also concerned about the environment. At the same time, Malaysia is one of the biggest producers of palm oil. Many farmers and smallholders are dependent on this crucial commodity to sustain their livelihoods. However, critics have linked palm oil to the destruction of the world's precious rainforests and the extinction of wildlife. They also claim that it is dangerous to health. These claims are way far from the truth. Malaysia has over 60 national laws and regulations covering the protection of wildlife and the environment; health; the safety and welfare of workers; and control of pollutants. We are pleased and honoured to inform that we have managed to retain 55% of our rainforests, exceeding 5% of our earlier commitment.

MULTILATERALISM AND UN75

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the United Nations. For the past 75 years, the United Nations has been the centre of international relations. In the eyes of some, it can be considered as a failure, while others see it as a success. Call it what you want, but it is difficult to deny that the United Nations has managed to allow human society to progress in so many aspects — from education to the environment, to the health and social security of millions.

Unfortunately, in recent times multilateral commitments are becoming less persuasive because states are less willing to uphold shared values and solve challenges together. Governments are turning inwards, pushing a national perspective that wins more immediate public support. The United Nations should not be a platform to do this. It should be a capable institution that can hear and collectively address the concerns of its members and the problems that beset the world.

In preserving stability, tranquillity and peace, Malaysia has long held the belief that our world demands for collaborative engagement by all. It is, therefore, in our interest that the international community works together to uphold a system based on our shared universal values through dialogues and cooperation.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Turning 75 is indeed a significant achievement. As such, let us not see the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the United Nations go by without a resolve to fulfil our collective responsibilities. We need to build back better for our peoples not just for now but also for generations to come. Rest assured that the United Nations has Malaysia's fullest commitment to multilateralism, based on the purposes and principles as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Thank you.

Cambodia (see also A/75/PV.12, annex VIII)

**Address by Mr. Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen,
Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia**

Delivered on Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 12th meeting of the General Assembly

[Original: Khmer; English translation provided by the delegation]

- Excellency Volkan Bozkir, President of the General Assembly,
- Excellency António Guterres, UN Secretary-General,
- Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen!

This year's General Assembly is an exceptional event in the history of the United Nations, not only it is held for the first time virtually via videos, but it takes place during a time when the world is overshadowed by a number of crisis and uncertainties.

Certainly, the world is facing great turmoil unprecedented in the last 30 years, as a result of the tectonic convergence of a potential New Cold War, which could lead to a profound transformation of the entire geopolitical landscape, the continuous outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, climate and environmental change, non-state terrorism, not to mention the millions of human beings still suffering from hunger, misery and exploitation etc.

On top of that, the world is now facing irreversible metamorphose into a Polycentric Structure marked by intense rivalry-turn-adversary between superpowers, parallelly accompanied by the pre-eminence of middle powers moving rapidly to the foreground of regional politics.

However, this year, we are commemorating the 75th anniversary, marking the end of the Second World War, which is an unforgettable event for everyone. In this connection, we have to salute the Founding Fathers of the United Nations, who have laid the groundwork for the modern system of international relations and multilateral engagement, driven by their idealistic desire “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind”.

In this context, I would like to share my personal views on some topics for discussion in today's event as follows:

New Geopolitical Tensions and Their Impact on the World

Excellency President!

The longest period of stability and prosperity in modern times, a fruit born out of the international order built in 1945, is being deeply shaken because the fundamental values underlying it as well as the core principles of international law are being flouted and no longer respected. Moreover, the trend of unilateralism and the exertion of force against weak countries is on the rise, undermining international order and multilateralism.

Truly, nowadays we note the degradation of the international arms control system and a significant increase in nuclear risks. Also, there has been an alarming shift in doctrinal military and political policies towards the idea of waging war as a

mean to maintain one's own supremacy, which is an unacceptable act. For instance, global commitments made are unilaterally reneged; violent blows are levelled against international institutions; and the voices of reason are stifled by the arbitrary practice of unilateral sanctions and other coercive political, economic and financial measures, all because of the strongest country uphold their interests above everything else.

Furthermore, there is an abusive use of the right of interference, which has taken on such a proportion that it undermines one of the fundamental principles of our UN Charter: the right of peoples to self-determination and the national sovereignty. The damages on the current international order are causes for great concern. In addition, the possibility of a so-called New Cold War has also become a significant concern because this small country, once caught in the midst of the Cold War conflict, ideological rift and nationalist fanaticism, paid a very high price. Thus, we must outright reject any attempt to allow tragic history to repeat itself.

Covid-19 Pandemic, Economic and Social Recovery

Excellency President!

Never, in our history, has a health crisis had effects and consequences of this magnitude. Although we have yet to grasp the full impact of the pandemic on the world economies, we can anticipate the gloomy prospect of business bankruptcies and massive layoffs, which have been affecting the lives of millions of people.

Paradoxically, the pandemic has reminded us of the indispensable solidarity that unites the people of the world. For the world economy to recover faster, we must work more closely to address this crisis through international institutions based on the principles of transparency and efficiency. Now more than ever, we must renounce the inward looking "Me First" attitude, which is the very negation of the universality of the human values. Cambodia has shown its humanitarian gesture early this year, when the MS Westerdam cruise ship, floating at sea with no port to anchor, was allowed to dock in our port, thus allowing the stranded passengers and the crew safe passage to their respective country.

Global Issues and Challenges

Excellency President!

Now, I would like to raise key global issues and challenges, starting with the effects of the pandemic on Sustainable Development Goals.

Looking at the global economies which have severely been hit by the COVID 19, my worries are particularly related to the compounding effects on the resources to deliver on the key priorities necessary to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda on time, and this may require us to re-evaluate the feasibility of achieving the goals set in the past.

Climate change is another matter of great concern. Global CO2 emissions have increased by 1.5% per year over the past ten years. 75 per cent of the Earth's environment shows significant signs of degradation by plastics, pesticides, nitrates, and heavy metals. As scary as these statistics show, it is mind-boggling to note that not many countries have done enough to meet their respective COP21 commitments.

Cambodia is a small country with limited resources, but we strive to address the challenges related to climate change, under both national and international frameworks. For instance, we have taken efforts to meet the obligations born of the COP21: climate change action is a key component of our national development policy.

In fact, we will update our Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) for the implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) ahead of the COP26 meeting in Glasgow.

Non-State Terrorism and Peacekeeping Operations

Excellency President!

Next, let me now shift to two other important issues related to peace and security, namely non-state terrorism and peacekeeping operations.

In my view, it would be a very serious mistake to brush aside the threat of non state terrorism, in the mere hope that it would go away by itself. We have to admit that the root causes of this religious radicalism, or for that matter for all forms of radicalism, have yet to be addressed. In fact, all forms of radicalism or violent extremism stem from a deep sense of social injustice, based on discrimination on gender, language, skin color, beliefs or origins. Moreover, there remain other critical threats to the peace and security all around the world.

In this context, Cambodia is proud of our peacekeeping contributions throughout the years under the UN umbrella. As of now, there are nearly 800 Cambodian blue helmets, of which 10 per cent are women, serving in Sudan, South Sudan, Lebanon, Mali and Central African Republic.

On this 75th anniversary of the UN, we must honor all those brave persons, including the Cambodians, who have given their lives for the noble cause of contributing to a better and more peaceful world. Cambodia remains committed, today as ever, to continue our peacekeeping efforts with a view to promoting peace and development for all. Cambodia counts nevertheless on the UN to provide adequate resources, regular trainings in pre- and post-deployments, and continuous supports to the Peacekeeping Operations to enable them to deliver on their mandate fully, efficiently and safely.

Denouncing the injustice

Excellency President!

As a peace-loving small country committed to democratic principles, Cambodia can play its part in the international community only if it is assured that the rules governing the international system are fairly applied. Unfortunately, all too often, depending on the political ambition and hidden opportunistic agenda of some countries, Cambodia had to deal with hypocritical double standards, biased and politically motivated decisions; in short, injustice.

This story of injustice reminds me of a historical “déjà vu”. A little more than 40 years ago, Cambodia was liberated from the Khmer Rouges’ genocidal regime, where more than 2 million Cambodians have perished in the hand of the barbaric regime. For many years, the traumatized and exhausted survivors, totally stripped of everything, had to rebuild the nation from scratch. Quite ironically, it was to these very same survivors who were being punished by a majority of UN member states while allowing the Khmer Rouge executioners to occupy the Cambodian seat in the UN. These same governments that preached incessantly about democracy and human rights were the ones that have deprived the entire surviving population access to food, health, education, housing, development and even peace for 12 long years.

I believe history repeats itself in the case of the EU's withdrawal of the EBA at a time when Cambodia struggles to survive amid the COVID-19 pandemic. That struggle notwithstanding, Cambodia is strongly determined, as it did 40 years ago, to defend what it believes is the rightful path, that is to defend our sovereignty and to protect our so hard-won peace, which is fully cherished by Cambodians who have gone through the most tragic devastation and are now rising as a nation be on an equal footing, status and rights with other nations in the region and the world.

Excellency President!

In conclusion, let me state outright that our world is in trouble. People are suffering and the planet is suffering. Major challenges are ahead of us and yet some countries have been shirking themselves from their own responsibilities. Ultimately, it is up to the most powerful country to stop threatening world peace and the survival of the planet as much as it is up to the super and middle powers to work together to ensure a new world order based on the respect of the sovereignty of others and their peaceful coexistence.

Thank You!

Norway (see also A/75/PV.12, annex IX)

Address by Ms. Erna Solberg, Prime Minister of Norway

Delivered on Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 12th meeting of the General Assembly

President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The United Nations was founded on hope — the hope for a better tomorrow in the aftermath of war. As we meet today, 75 years later, COVID-19 is putting us all to the test: Will we tackle the largest global challenge since the UN was established?

Building on the lessons from other crises and infectious diseases, Norway continues our unwavering commitment to the UN and multilateral solutions. In response to the pandemic, we took the initiative to establish a UN COVID-19 response and recovery fund, and we are co-chairing the global effort on access to COVID-19 tests, treatments and vaccines — the ACT Accelerator.

We stand firm in our conviction that global problems need global solutions.

President,

The goal of the UN is a world of peace and security. A world ruled by justice and respect for human rights. A world that acts decisively to reduce inequality, poverty and hunger. Acts to stem climate change. And acts to build resilience against pandemics and other global threats.

We celebrate 75 years of the United Nations. In the next seventy-five years, how many new conflicts will emerge? How many new refugees will flee from destruction and persecution? How many girls will attend school? How many children will be vaccinated?

Whatever old challenges remain and new challenges arise in the next 75 years, the UN must be at the centre of our coordinated efforts.

This is why we continue to invest both financially and politically in this organization.

I would like to pay tribute to the many deeply committed women and men who represent the United Nations across the globe. Civilian as well as uniformed. You deserve our gratitude and respect.

President,

In June, Norway was elected as one of five incoming members of the UN Security Council. We are grateful for the strong vote of confidence from the Member States. We are preparing for this assignment fully aware that it is one of the most important and demanding tasks in international politics.

Throughout our campaign, we strengthened bilateral bonds with all UN Member States. We pledged to listen and engage. To be open for dialogue with all countries. We will honour that commitment.

In addressing country situations on the Security Council's agenda, Norway will focus on four thematic areas in particular.

First, we will use our experience from peace diplomacy to help fulfil the UN's untapped potential to prevent and resolve conflicts and sustain peace.

Second, we will build on the women, peace and security agenda and promote women's participation in peace processes. Only an inclusive process can lead to sustainable peace for all.

Third, Norway will focus on the protection of civilians, including children, based on international humanitarian and human rights law. We will give special priority to preventing and combating sexual violence in conflict.

Fourth, Norway will bring climate-related security threats into the discussion. We must acknowledge that people living in conflict zones are among the most vulnerable to climate change, and that climate change in turn increases the risk of conflict.

The Security Council has a primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. The Council should investigate any dispute or situation that might lead to international friction. And the Council should apply appropriate measures to stop aggression or prevent escalation of conflict.

This is at the heart of the Security Council, and at the heart of the UN. Because there can be no development without peace.

President,

Human rights, the rule of law and democratic principles are the building blocks of just, peaceful and prosperous societies. Societies where citizens are protected and leaders are held accountable.

Today, we are witnessing a different trend towards more authoritarianism and populism. Civil society, human rights defenders and media workers are increasingly coming under attack. The basic human rights of women are being undermined. Minorities are being targeted and vilified.

The pandemic is amplifying this negative trend. We have seen examples of the pandemic being used as a pretext to weaken democratic principles and human rights.

The pandemic is an exam in practical governance for all states. The report card will be open for the world to see.

We must ensure that human rights, democracy, the rule of law, and gender equality are at the core of our response and recovery efforts.

Only then can we hope not only to soften the fall, but to build back better.

President,

I am shocked and saddened by the increase in violence against women and girls as a result of ongoing lockdowns across the world.

Women are bearing the brunt of the pandemic in many societies. Women are on the front line as health care workers. At the same time, women's own access to health care is heavily affected. Denying women access to sexual and reproductive health services can lead to more maternal deaths, more teenage pregnancies and more child marriages. We must ensure that women and girls are protected. That they have access to health care. And that women have access to financial incentives for response and recovery.

Norway has a long tradition of promoting women's rights and gender equality. We know from our own experience that it is not just the right thing to do — it is the smart thing to do. Gender equality is well worth the investments. If we are to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals, gender equality must be integrated in all our efforts. We must invest in girls and women. In their education, in their health, and in their participation in the labour market. Increasing their opportunities and levelling the playing field pays great economic dividends.

President,

Eradicating poverty is the greatest global challenge.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is our plan of action for people, for the planet and for prosperity.

There is a danger that this pandemic may reverse years of progress on the SDGs. It has laid bare the weaknesses in our common systems. Extreme poverty is increasing, jobs are being lost at an unprecedented scale, and children are being deprived of their education. We have no alternative but to take decisive action now, and redouble our efforts to reach the sustainable development goals.

In our continued quest to achieve these goals, national ownership and resource mobilization is crucial.

Progress requires financing. We acknowledged this in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development. Funding sustainable development is more critical now than ever. The pandemic has exposed and compounded structural inequalities in all countries. Our response must focus on helping those furthest behind. The Addis Agenda highlights the importance of domestic resource mobilization in order to provide basic public goods and services.

Yet public goods and services, such as health care and education, remain underfunded. We need to stop the drain on public resources. We must prevent corruption, tax evasion and other financial crime.

To this end, Norway in its capacity as ECOSOC President launched a High-Level Panel on Financial Accountability, Transparency and Integrity — the FACTI panel — together with the President of the 74th General Assembly. The Panel will review current challenges and offer recommendations related to illicit financial flows.

It is a common responsibility of all Member States to make sure there are no safe havens for the proceeds of crime, corruption or tax evasion.

President,

We need a healthy planet to fulfil the SDGs.

Many Member States are facing climate related disasters — more frequent and more dangerous than ever before. The most vulnerable among us are hardest hit. The threat to small island states is existential. The people in the Sahel are among the most vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. Yet they are among the world's lowest emitters of CO₂. It is our common obligation to invest in resilience, especially in the parts of the world most adversely affected by climate change.

2020 remains the crucial year for countries to update and strengthen their national climate targets under the Paris Agreement. In February, Norway submitted an enhanced climate target for 2030. I encourage other countries to enhance their ambitions, especially the large economies. We must also give priority to further development of rules and cooperation under the Paris Agreement.

Norway is actively speeding up the green shift in our economy, making it cheaper to be green, and more expensive to pollute.

President,

The oceans are a vital factor if we are to reach the Sustainable Development Goals. The COVID-19 crisis has underlined the importance of the ocean economy. We need to build back not only better and greener, but also bluer.

A sustainable ocean economy holds benefits for health and society, as well as for the global economy and environment. Every dollar invested in key ocean actions yields 5 dollars in return, often more. Actions include increasing sustainable seafood production, decarbonising international shipping, scaling up offshore wind power and conserving and restoring mangroves.

Responsible resource management increases the potential for economic growth.

Two years ago, I convened the High-level Panel on Building a Sustainable Ocean Economy, together with the president of Palau.

The panel is comprised of fourteen distinguished members. On December 3rd we will present ways forward to better protect our ocean and release the enormous economic potential it holds.

Our recommendations are based on the best advice from more than 150 international scientists and a wide network of business and NGOs. We will invite the international community to join this call for ocean action leading up to the UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon next year.

President,

I would like to draw attention to the challenges seafarers are facing in this crisis. Around 500,000 seafarers currently await to disembark or embark ships and vessels globally.

Almost 80 per cent of the world's trade is transported by ship, including food, medical equipment and energy products. If the crisis persists, it can lead to major disruption of global trade, supply chains and the world economy. I encourage all Member States to designate seafarers as key workers and to implement the International Maritime Organisation's protocols for crew changes.

President,

COVID-19 is putting us all to the test. Information, research, treatment and vaccines must be shared in a way that leaves no-one behind. If not, we all stand to lose.

I started by saying that the United Nations was born out of hope. While we can always do better, I find hope in the way we have come together in this race against time. We are united against a common enemy. We have been reminded of a simple fact: We are in this together. There is no stronger argument for our continued support for the United Nations.

Thank you, and stay safe.

Solomon Islands (see also A/75/PV.12, annex X)**Address by Mr. Manasseh Sogavare, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands**

Delivered on Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 12th meeting of the General Assembly

Mr. President,

On behalf of my Government and people, may I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election as President of the 75th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. Your wealth of experience will serve this organization well, as you lead us through our agenda, particularly during these unprecedented and challenging times, as the world navigates its way through the global pandemic caused by COVID-19. Let me assure you of Solomon Islands support and cooperation during your tenure in office.

Let me also use this occasion to commend your predecessor, His Excellency Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, for his excellent leadership of the General Assembly over the past session. I highly commend his efforts in ensuring the work of the assembly progressed in spite of the restrictions faced by the United Nations Secretariat and member states missions. I wish him every success in his future endeavors.

Mr. President

At the outset, allow me, on behalf of the government and people of the Solomon Islands, offer sincerest condolences to all who have lost loved ones to the coronavirus. We stand in solidarity with you all, during these sad times.

Never before has there been a time when the collective action of all UN member states is so greatly needed then right now, a time when the world faces the global, deadly pandemic of COVID-19.

The theme you have chosen for the 75th session renders us this timely opportunity to once again, turn our eyes towards the strengths of multilateralism to address the multiple and complex challenges that our world faces today.

Mr. President,

In the space of a few months, COVID-19 has resulted in more than 30 million confirmed cases of COVID-19, including over 900,000 deaths, according to the latest official World Health Organization statistics. In the health sector the virus remains a novelty to many of our scientific and medical professionals worldwide and as such, its long-term health repercussions to those who have recovered from it are either unknown or poorly understood.

I am pleased to inform the Assembly that Solomon Islands remains one of the 12 COVID-19 free countries without a reported case. Nine other Pacific Small Islands Developing States share the COVID-19 free status.

However, we have not remained complacent. My government has responded to the pandemic by undertaking the following steps. Firstly, a COVID-19 Oversight Committee comprising of all relevant government agencies was quickly established to coordinate the Government's response to the pandemic. Furthermore, resources were swiftly mobilized to address gaps within our healthcare system and secure

entry points on our borders. On the economic front my Government has created a stimulus package to cushion the negative impacts that the virus has and will continue to impose on our fragile economy.

The public have been kept informed about the virus through talk back shows with the COVID-19 Oversight Committee. I also informed our public through my weekly address to the nation which is broadcasted live on air and televised. This is to ensure that our people are kept informed on the steps the Government is undertaking to protect the country. My Government continues to focus on building the necessary health infrastructure within our hospitals in preparation to accommodate any persons that may contract the virus.

In addition, we also have in-country testing capacity. This was only possible through the assistance of People's Republic of China and Australia, which if I may add is a manifestation of our theme. That said, we have put in place standard operating procedures for different sectors to guide us in dealing with this global pandemic. Our objective is two-fold. Our number one priority is to protect our country by keeping the virus from breaching our borders. The second objective is to keep our economy afloat. We are confident that should the virus breach our borders we can contain and manage it at our quarantine stations.

So far 11 repatriation flights have been undertaken. More than 1000 people have entered our borders, 80 per cent of whom are repatriated nationals and 20 per cent foreign nationals. We have scheduled more flights to repatriate more of our nationals abroad.

COVID-19 has brought Solomon Islands closer with its partners. We have made new friends, the latest being "Philippines Red Cross", who are doing a fantastic work in testing and looking after our students in Manila. We are grateful to the excellent work the Red Cross continue to do for our nationals.

I take this time to thank all host countries and transit countries for their goodwill and understanding in accommodating our citizens as they wait to be repatriated. I also wish to express heartfelt thanks to our development partners including, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, the Peoples Republic of China, the United Arab Emirates, Asian Development Bank, World Bank, United Nations agencies and in particular, the World Health Organization, and our regional institutions for your kind assistance and generosity, through financial support and timely donations of medical equipment for our health sector. Your unwavering support is deeply appreciated and will continue to be needed as we continue in our efforts to combat the spread of the virus.

COVID-19 has closed borders and negatively impacted on the global economy. Solomon Islands is no exception, we are going through a difficult period, however, we have launched an Economic Stimulus Package to reset and boost our economy. Let me thank all our partners who have supported our economic initiative.

We have also launched the Development Bank of Solomon Islands which aims to provide sustainable financial services targeting development in the rural areas, especially to small and medium enterprises that primarily engages in commerce and industries.

Mr. President,

Whilst dealing with a pandemic of global proportions, Solomon Islands continues to battle with the incremental effects of climate change and the negative impacts that it has on the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of Solomon Islanders. Climate Change has resulted in changing weather patterns that have caused anomaly weather events of epic proportions. Additionally, climate change has resulted in warming global temperatures which are melting the ice caps and causing sea levels to rise. Both sea level rise and abnormal weather events have wreaked havoc on our infrastructure and homes not to mention threatening our food security and lives. Just earlier this year, we experienced the traumatic effects of Tropical Cyclone Harold. Allow me to thank our development partners who stepped in to assist us during this disaster.

Solomon Islands for its part, remains committed to reducing our carbon footprint and doubling on our nationally determined contributions through our ongoing work on the Tina Hydropower project. This 15-megawatt hydropower project will reduce our reliance on fossil fuels by 70 per cent. Despite the challenges brought about by COVID-19, our efforts to have the project commissioned by 2024 remains on track and we continue to call on development partners to remain with us on this steady trajectory.

I wish to remind us all, that in our collective efforts to combat the coronavirus, we must not lose sight of the need to address ongoing challenges brought about by climate change. I once again reiterate my Government's call for more action by those with a greater means of implementation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, I call on all states to set ambitious nationally determined contributions. Let us adhere to what the science is telling us and strive to maintain the global temperature increase below 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Mr. President,

As a large ocean state with an area of 1.5 million square kilometres, the conservation and preservation of the Ocean and its resources remains a priority for Solomon Islands. The lives of our people and the economy of our country remains deeply connected to the ocean. The Solomon Islands tuna industry generates around \$60 million in revenue on an annual basis for the economy and provides employment for 2,000 Solomon Islanders. Sadly, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing within our maritime jurisdiction remains a threat to our tuna resources. Almost \$150 million worth of direct economic value to small island developing states including Solomon Islands is lost as a result of IUU in the Pacific. I call on distant water fishing nations to reduce the incidences of IUU in our waters.

On matters pertaining to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, my Government remain committed to negotiating a legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. My Government looks forward to an Agreement that is fair, comprehensive and provides the capacity building for small island developing states such as Solomon Islands to fully implement it. We note the challenges that COVID-19 has posed on the ability of states to conclude the negotiations in 2020, however, we must not lose this momentum. We must continue to strive to complete negotiations by the earliest possible date.

Ensuring sovereignty over our maritime zones remains important to my government. We are actively working towards the completion of the delimitation of all

our maritime zones and have only one remaining maritime boundary left to conclude. In this regard, my Government welcomes the work that is being undertaken by the International Law Commission on the questions of sea level rise and sovereignty. It is my government's position that once national maritime zones are deposited with the United Nations, they should not be subject to change despite sea level rise. Solomon Islands is an Ocean State, the Country's sovereign territory should not change due to the effects of climate change and sea level rise.

Mr. President,

At a time when the world is facing unprecedented challenges exacerbated by COVID 19, it is more important than ever, that the world remains united in its efforts to bring peace and unity among all peoples regardless of race, gender and religion. As a post conflict country our people keep striving to maintain unity within our diversity. It is for this very reason that my Government is proud to have contributed 12 police officers to the United Nations African Mission in Darfur, Sudan. We stand ready to deploy more officers for UN peacekeeping duties in other UN peacekeeping missions especially during these critical times.

Mr. President,

Graduation from the category of Least Developing Countries is an important milestone in the development trajectory of a developing country. Solomon Islands is in its transition phase of the graduation and is scheduled to graduate by 2024. However, both times that Solomon Islands underwent the triennial review, it did not pass the vulnerability criterion. Our vulnerability has become glaringly obvious now that COVID-19 has exacerbated the preexisting challenges faced by Solomon Islands and made the pathway towards sustainable graduation and smooth transition extremely difficult.

I welcome the Committee on Development Policy's intention to factor, the impacts of COVID-19 on all sectors during the next triennial review in 2021. I further encourage them to work closely with us to ensure that their next report paints the true picture of Solomon Islands development path as we continue to navigate our transition roadmap in these uncertain and challenging times.

Mr. President,

Solomon Islands presented its first ever Voluntary National Review Report on the implementation of Agenda 2030 in July this year. Despite the technological challenges, we were able to highlight some of the achievements we have made to date. Solomon Islands continues to see an increase in number of children enrolled in the formal education system. Secondly, we are proud to have established a National Financing Framework for Development which underpins the financing of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The report also highlighted the challenges we face in terms of our health sector and particularly on our rates of non-communicable disease cases. Seven out of ten deaths in Solomon Islands are caused by non-communicable diseases. It remains the largest single cause of death in the country.

We are seeing increasing numbers of undernourished children and over nourished adults. In addition to this, the report also highlighted the vulnerability of our economy to external shocks and natural disasters. These coupled with the impacts of COVID 19 will continue to affect Solomon Islands for the foreseeable future.

Solomon Islands believes in the importance of Agenda 2030, the Istanbul Program of Action and the SAMOA Pathway in charting the course for sustainable development. We have factored these into our national development strategy as the path forward for a sustainable future for our people. I urge all development partners to remain committed to working with us to achieve our aim of sustainable development.

Mr. President,

Solomon Islands recognizes the contributions that our frontline health workers make in the fight against COVID-19. In this regard, allow me to offer my deep thanks to Cuba for the training of our medical students. More than eighty Solomon Islands medical doctors having graduated from Cuban medical schools and a further eight more have graduated this year. We note with concern the 59-year-old economic embargo imposed on Cuba remains in place and we reiterate the call for the lifting of the embargo within the spirit and purposes of the United Nations Charter.

Finally, Mr. President,

Allow me to conclude by commending you on the theme for this year's General Assembly session. It could not have come at a more critical time, when we find ourselves facing the deadliest pandemic to affect our modern world in the most horrendous of ways. So many lives have been tragically lost and many continue to be affected by its ongoing onslaught. May we take the time to pause and reflect, on how this virus has changed our lives and look at ways we can collaborate together to alleviate its impacts.

As we continue to confront the problems that our world faces; from climate change, to the deteriorating health of our planet to the coronavirus; we must remember that they can only be addressed through collective action by each and every one of us. As the old African proverb says 'if you wish to go fast, go alone. If you wish to go far, go together'. Now is the time for us to act collectively to address the needs of everyone including the most vulnerable among us! Together we can and together we will go far.

I thank you Mr. President.

Jamaica (see also A/75/PV.12, annex XI)

Address by Mr. Andrew Holness, Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Economic Growth and Job Creation of Jamaica

Delivered on Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 12th meeting of the General Assembly

Your Excellency, Mr. Volkan Bozkir, I extend congratulations on your election to the Presidency of this 75th Session of the General Assembly.

I also commend your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, for maintaining the focus on social justice and climate action as critical elements of the Decade of Recovery.

Your Excellency, during your term of office, you can be confident of Jamaica's continued commitment to the global recovery effort through a multilateral approach to finding viable solutions to the pandemic.

Mr. President,

Jamaica welcomes the significance and timeliness of this special theme to commemorate the 75th UN General Assembly. Indeed, the future to which we aspire is contingent on an effective and renewed multilateral system, in which the United Nations must play a pivotal role.

Prior to the advent of the pandemic, Jamaica had been recording significant progress in our pursuit of economic independence, through macro-economic stability, reduction in our high levels of public debt, poverty alleviation, human capital formation and increased employment opportunities, while protecting the vulnerable in our society.

This placed us in a position to implement an initial social and economic stimulus programme, in addition to our early response to control the spread of the coronavirus and to treat those infected.

However, our economy now faces the triple challenges of reduced revenues, increased health and social expenditures, and an ongoing climate crisis, which threatens to undo years of hard-won development gains.

Mr. President,

The pandemic has highlighted pre-existing vulnerabilities and multiple structural weaknesses within our economies – large and small, rich and poor - and clearly demonstrated the systemic nature of risk worldwide.

The great differences lie however, in our respective abilities to mitigate the development reversals arising from the multi-faceted impact of the pandemic, and to recover stronger.

Developing countries must therefore devise strategies to respond effectively. We must rebalance our economies and rethink the nature of global cooperation so that we not only recover stronger but position ourselves to become more resilient to future systemic shocks.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the interconnectedness and interdependence of our world. It has underscored the need for strengthened and

renewed multilateralism. As we strive to respond and recover stronger, we must re-imagine the way nations cooperate. Persistent global problems require consistent cooperation to achieve strategic global solutions.

Small Caribbean States, which are designated as middle-income countries, but whose small economies are largely dependent on one or just a few industries, are most deeply affected by this crisis. They urgently need increased access to concessional and non-concessional financing, given their limited fiscal space, reduced availability of public resources for investment and the struggle to attract private investment.

We see access to international development finance and the establishment of special funds to complement our response, as an imperative and we endorse the Secretary-General's call for solidarity. I therefore, convey Jamaica's sincere appreciation to the United Nations for establishing its COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund and encourage donor countries to contribute.

This Fund represents an excellent example of the effectiveness of multilateralism at work. Its inclusion of vulnerable middle income countries recognizes the reality that if one member of the global community fails, the potential exists for all others to be impacted. The entire international community will therefore reap benefits from the support provided.

An area which requires particular support from such a fund or similar cooperation mechanism is the "digital divide". The pandemic has forced schools and workplaces to close and people to practice social distancing. The internet has become our public square to meet and access critical information. However, approximately half of the world's population is still not connected to the internet. With school, work, healthcare, commerce and religious worship going online, persons without access to a reliable internet connection may be marginalised and disconnected entirely. Now more than ever before it is imperative that the "digital divide" not only be closed, but that countries are enabled to provide universal access to connectivity as well as the tools to allow their societies and economies to capture the power of digital technologies.

Universal, secure and affordable connectivity is essential for greater participation in the global digital economy and for the attainment of inclusive and sustainable development. The pandemic has greatly accelerated the adoption of digital technologies and has provided developing countries in particular with an opportunity to leapfrog to a more digital economy. We call on the global community to respond with increased bi-lateral and multi-lateral cooperation in this area which promises exponential increase in human capacity and economic dividends.

We are heartened by the understanding, cohesion and clarity for action displayed by the G20 Digital Economy Ministers in their July 2020 Declaration, the UNSG's High Level Panel on Digital Cooperation and last month's Report of the Task Force on Digital Financing of the SDGs. All hands and ideas must be on deck for our national and collective digital resilience.

Mr. President,

Myself as co-convenor of the High Level Event on Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond, along with Secretary-General Guterres and Prime Minister Trudeau, remain committed to facilitate the process of developing concrete global solutions and actions to enable countries to respond and recover

better from what the Secretary-General refers to as the world's first "development emergency". On September 29, when we convene the Second High Level Event, leaders will have an opportunity to highlight the collective measures they deem most effective for resolving the crisis and to also put forward recommendations for United Nations support. We look forward to hearing the actions proposed, including, those related to the closure of the "digital divide" with a view to enabling robust and resilient recovery.

Mr. President,

We note with grave concern, UN reports that women and girls continue to face discrimination globally, and that there are persistent gaps in their participation in economic activity, decision making and political leadership. We have seen that the pandemic has deepened socio-economic inequalities and disproportionately impacted women and girls, leading to increased exposure to domestic violence and loss of livelihoods.

We are taking measures to ensure that our national recovery efforts include a gender perspective and harness the full potential of all members of society as leaders, innovators and agents of economic, social and environmental change.

We are committed to furthering our engagement with the UN and our international partners to implement the Spotlight Initiative and to increase our advocacy through mechanisms such as the Groups of Friends on: Women's Economic Empowerment, Gender Parity, and Women, Peace and Security.

Mr. President,

There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has propelled the United Nations to a critical crossroads. It has exposed and exacerbated the gross inequalities that still exist. It has further reinforced the need for the international community to scale-up cooperation to respond to the growing and deepening health crisis.

The rapid spread of the novel coronavirus is exerting immense pressure on health-care systems globally, many of which were already under stress. It has compounded existing disparities in health, and increased the risks for the vulnerable, particularly the elderly and persons requiring medical care for non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Given our limited fiscal space we have adopted a whole of government approach to the pandemic, while mobilizing the support of all our citizens.

The pandemic has brought to the fore the importance of investing in NCDs prevention and care. Bridging the investment gap for prevention and treatment of NCDs must therefore be an essential pillar for our response to the pandemic and health security. We thank our bilateral and international partners including PAHO/WHO, for their invaluable support and advice in our efforts to address this health crisis and its socio-economic impact.

As the international community works in earnest to develop a COVID-19 vaccine, Jamaica welcomes efforts aimed at accelerating the equitable access to vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics. We believe that the ambition to expedite development of these tools must be matched with a determination to ensure that they are safe, effective and accessible to all.

Mr. President,

In keeping with our commitment to the full realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Jamaica is deeply invested in finding solutions at the national, regional and multilateral levels to respond effectively and decisively to this pandemic. The immense challenges demand that, as a global community, we combine our efforts in a sustained and coordinated manner to identify opportunities for effective remedial action.

As we seek to create the future we want, we must summon our energies, talent and resources, to combat this global crisis with fortitude. We must, Mr. President, act collectively, decisively, and immediately. Our decisions now will determine the kind of future we create. Let us, together, do the right thing!

I thank you.

Samoa (see also A/75/PV.12, annex XII)

Address by Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa

Delivered on Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 12th meeting of the General Assembly

Mr. President,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Our General Assembly session this year is historically unique. We are commemorating the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations, and our General Assembly is meeting virtually for the first time ever. But unprecedented times call for innovative solutions so that as Leaders we remain connected and united in our fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and our desire for a secure and peaceful world.

Mr. President,

Celebrating this UN milestone allows Samoa to reflect on its journey with the United Nations. The United Nations almost 60 years ago, ably facilitated our peoples' aspirations to be a sovereign state founded on democratic principles, Christian beliefs and our cultural values. Upon attaining independence in January 1962, we joined the UN almost 15 years later when we felt confident and prepared to assume our role as a global citizen and a dependable member of the United Nations.

Our membership was firmly rooted in our belief in the sovereign equality of all member states, and grounded in the promise of hope and justice the United Nations offers, irrespective of economic, political or military strength.

We are committed to multilateralism with the United Nations representing the last bastion against the challenges and uncertainties that beset our world: from pandemics to economic crises, climate change to systemic discrimination, endemic poverty to dangerous threats to peace and security. We need a balance of power among UN members as well as responsibilities and representation for all people. This would set the scene for partnerships bearing promise for the future.

The theme for this year's general debate is apt and timely. We need to reaffirm our commitment to multilateralism as we face challenges such as the COVID 19 pandemic, so we can shape "the future we want, the United Nations we need".

As a Pacific SIDS, Samoa has continued to participate and contribute actively to the global effort to address challenges affecting the development, security and human rights pillars of the United Nations.

Mr. President,

We are living in trying unparalleled times. Never before as Leaders were we required to make hard decisions to close our borders and to provide near absolute guarantee to our people against the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic or to limit community transmission of the virus. The uncertainties we are facing have tested the mettle of our nations and governments like never before. Samoa extends its

sincere condolences to our UN family for the lives lost due to the pandemic and pays tribute to the selfless service of all the frontline workers risking their lives to bring COVID-19 under control.

While Samoa remain COVID-free, we have not been spared the serious and life changing impacts on our nation, and people, who are still recovering from the devastation of the December 2019 measles outbreak that claimed more than 80 young lives. While the experience tested our resolve as a nation, it also strengthened our unity and resilience. Importantly, it reaffirmed our trust in investing in genuine partnerships.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a timely reminder yet again of our interconnectedness. When our world is teetering over the brink of uncertainties, we need to be 'Nations United as One'. Global solidarity and a unified response is our best armour against the pandemic and the socio-economic impacts our people are facing. We acknowledge the ongoing support of the UN and all our development partners who continue to assist our efforts to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic. We are hopeful for the successful development of a vaccine and its equal and even distribution. Let us all spread kindness faster than the virus, and not hate, fear and misinformation.

Mr. President,

What is a future we want, and the UN we need?

As Pacific SIDS, our future is already uncertain and compromised if the world continues with the current trajectory of emissions causing more than 3 degrees of global warming. This would pose an existential threat for most of our islands. While the pandemic introduced temporary lockdowns; severe cyclones continue to rampage, coastlines whittle away, sea level rises higher, and our oceans yield to the gnawing acidification. While border closures were observed, climate change knows no restrictions and respects no boundaries.

Tsunamis, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, flooding, deadly bush fires, heat waves and droughts continue to take and devastate countless lives. The heightened occurrence of catastrophic climatic-related disasters all over the world attest to why we must act with absolute urgency even in the wake of the pandemic. Climate procrastination must end now before the window closes on any chance for us to stabilise the Earth's climate.

Critical meetings such as UNFCCC COP26, CBD COP15 and the 2020 UN Ocean Conference have been postponed. This however should not equate to a deferment of ambitious actions. We need to uphold the Paris Agreement commitments and maintain the needed momentum on ambitious climate action.

The United Nations remains the best hope to provide the political will and the necessary commitment to avoid what is an existential threat for many small states of this UN family.

We must mobilise all leaders from governments, NGOs, private sector and empower our youth and rural communities to fight the ongoing threat of climate change and unite against environmental degradation. The 75th Anniversary of the UN should be a point of hope for generations to come rather than an end due to a legacy of selfishness, denial and ignorance. While it is small island states like Samoa that are facing the brunt of the impacts of climate change, no country is immune to the reaches of climate change.

Mr. President,

We want a future with peaceful societies, free from conflict and nuclear weapons.

The UN has made notable achievements in its peace and security agenda, but much work still needs to be done. COVID-19 is contributing to increased volatility and instability in some situations. Growing inequality, poverty, armed conflicts, terrorism and insecurity still exist. People fleeing their homes in search of refuge and safety are becoming the new normal. And the threat of use of nuclear weapons is still present.

We condemn international terrorism unreservedly. Through our membership to disarmament and non-proliferation conventions, we continue to urge for a world without weapons of mass destruction, including the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Our contribution to peaceful societies worldwide is through our police officers serving in UN Peacekeeping missions in countries that require such assistance.

We welcome the recent UAE- Israeli 'Abraham Accord' and new developments to secure a peaceful settlement in the Middle East that is durable and fair. We also commend the "Secretary-General's Appeal for Global Ceasefire" during the pandemic to end the plague of wars and instead fight the disease that is ravaging our world.

Mr President

Samoa presented its Second Voluntary National review on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals to the High-Level Political Forum this year. I also represented Samoa at the SDG Moment Event last week. We applaud this initiative which takes forward our decisions from the 2019 SDG Summit and puts us World Leaders in the driver's seat as we begin the Decade of Action, to deliver the SDGs by 2030.

Samoa's long-term vision for an improved quality of life for all mirrors that of the UN 2030 Agenda, which is a critical roadmap to uphold the three pillars of the UN. Achieving the SDGs will take us closer to the world envisaged by the founders of this organisation 75 years ago, and the future we wanted when we joined.

Mr. President,

The socio-economic wellbeing of our people remains at the core of Samoa's development initiatives. The promotion, respect of, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, is indispensable to ensuring that no one is left behind. We commit to a human rights approach to sustainable development. We continue to invest in robust systems and processes that will improve the effective and inclusive implementation of our human rights obligations. This ensures linkages to our core sustainable development and national security priorities.

This year, Samoa hosted the 84th Session of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, a historic first. This milestone event is consistent with Samoa's ongoing efforts to improve and strengthen the engagement between treaty parties and the treaty bodies. It also ensured the effective and active participation and engagement of the Pacific people, especially the children, on the Convention and the work of the Committee. Samoa encourages other treaty bodies to imitate CRC's example. We also follow closely the work to reform the UN Human Rights Treaty body system.

The rule of law and the vital protection it offers to all states, especially to the weak and small, needs to be respected and we commit to always upholding it. We

are also committed to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, as stipulated in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Samoa will continue to look at initiatives such as the partnership with the EU and UN on the “Spotlight initiative” to support efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.

Mr President,

Let me conclude with a reflection on the UN we need.

We have witnessed some positive outcomes in the reforms undertaken so far, reassuring us that the UN can respond effectively to the needs of its diverse membership. We look forward to the positive impact of the UN Development System reform that promises improved UN presence in the Pacific region with the establishment of a Multi-country Office for the Northern Pacific states. We hope for an enhanced and effective UN engagement through the reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system; and expect a more integrated and focused delivery on the ground, informed by the priority needs of the member states. Samoa acknowledges the valuable contribution of the UN Multi-country office in Samoa and its dedicated staff who continue to collaborate with us and the Pacific, to better the lives and improve livelihoods options of our people and nations.

We are concerned however with the lack of progress in the reform of the Security Council. Samoa remains convinced that an expanded Security Council that mirrors present day realities is essential for multilateralism and for the Council’s integrity and credibility. Increases in both the permanent and non-permanent categories should be part and parcel of the reform package, and it is time to move to text based negotiations.

As a large ocean state and a SIDS, Samoa needs a United Nations that will produce a legally binding Instrument on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ). A UN that will continue to recognise the unique vulnerabilities of SIDS to the impacts of climate change by ensuring the effective implementation of the SAMOA Pathway.

Mr President

While we commit to advance unity for the common good and common prosperity, our ability to do so lies in our uniqueness. The United Nations has become the foremost forum to address issues that transcend national boundaries. The United Nations is placed to understand our unique cultures, respect our different beliefs and embrace our differences as we unite to build the future we want in genuine and durable partnership. God Bless our UN family. *Soifua*

Lesotho (see also A/75/PV.12, annex XIII)

Address by Mr. Moeketsi Majoro, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho

Delivered on Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 12th meeting of the General Assembly

Your Excellency, President of the 75th Session of the General Assembly, ▪ Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government,

Your Excellency Mr. António Guterres, the Secretary General of the United Nations,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Mr. President,

It affords me great pleasure to congratulate you on your election to direct the work of this historic 75th session of the General Assembly. Such an honour bears testimony to your undoubted dynamism and diplomatic skills, which will in no small measure positively affect the outcome of the work of this Assembly. I assure you of my delegation's full support and co-operation in all your endeavours during your tenure of office.

Permit me also to pay tribute to your predecessor, Professor Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, for his outstanding leadership of the 74th session. We congratulate him also on the many initiatives that he took in the furtherance of the work of our Organization during arguably the most challenging session in this century.

To Secretary General António Guterres, I extend my country's gratitude and support for the sterling work he continues to do against great odds. We particularly commend him for his efforts and commitment in transforming the United Nations development system. We also recognize his tireless efforts in the daunting task of strengthening and streamlining the peace and security architecture to better integrate prevention, peace-making and peacebuilding. The energy towards a global ceasefire during the pandemic is worthy of special mention.

Mr. President

I wish to acknowledge this session's theme: "The future we want, the United Nations we need; reaffirming our commitment to multilateralism" that is not only apt but also greatly inspired.

Three quarters of a century ago, our forebears came together in San Francisco and signed the Charter of the United Nations.

This Session therefore marks the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the creation of the United Nations. We do so at a critical time and juncture in human history, which calls for true reflection on the role of the United Nations in the 21st century — the organization upon which humanity continues to place so much faith and hope for a better life for all.

Since that time, the United Nations has been, and will always be, the symbol of humankind's fervent desire to conduct its affairs for eternal survival. The UN has

achieved and made significant strides in addressing many of the serious challenges facing the International Community. When the dark clouds of war threatened to engulf the world with a catastrophe of unimaginable proportions, humankind found the strength within itself to negate the Armageddon. We also recall that the UN played a significant role in easing the pangs of decolonization.

The purpose and principles of the UN Charter continue to be relevant today as they were seventy-five years ago. The United Nations has had to grapple with crisis situations in many parts of the world in pursuance of its mandate to maintain international peace and security. As today's problems grow ever more global, multilateralism and solidarity are more important than ever. We should remain steadfast against the re-emerging threats on multilateralism and global cooperation. We believe that a coherent and feasible strategy for the future, committed resources, streamlining priorities combined with responsible and inspired leadership are the prerequisites to achieving a relevant and vital UN for the future. This will go a long way towards fulfilling the ideals for which the UN was formed.

Mr. President

Lesotho reaffirms its commitment to advance a collective vision of an effective United Nations to ensure a prosperous and lasting future for all our peoples.

The world is indeed witnessing a revolution in information systems and their integration into the lives of men, women and children. There can be no doubt that for some, information technology and globalization are beginning to turn theoretical possibilities into fact, as the use of computers and computer-dependent systems have resulted in improvements in basic health conditions and increases in life expectancy, efficiency and productivity. Unfortunately, the majority, who have been left out of that prosperity continue to live in conditions of extreme poverty. The challenge for the UN of the 21st century is to eliminate those disparities by bringing poor countries into the digital age.

Mr. President

This historic session of the UNGA comes at a sensitive time when the world is faced with the deadly COVID-19 pandemic which has caused economic stagnation, loss of jobs and many fatalities across the globe. This has posed serious challenges to our Organization and exposed weaknesses and vulnerabilities in societies and economies around the world.

The virus attacks all regardless of ethnicity, faith, affluence or nationality. In conflict ridden areas the situation is dire due to health systems that have collapsed. On this note we commend the Secretary General for calling for a global ceasefire in all corners of the world. We support his determination and commitment in the fight against this pandemic. Lesotho believes the international community should collectively adopt measures that are focused on a holistic approach and close coordination within the UN to contain the spread of the virus. Measures against future pandemics, should include ease of access to vaccines, medication and essential equipment. Pandemics respect neither internal nor external borders. Cooperation and collaboration across and among nations, including the essential pillars of multilateralism becomes more essential than ever.

Mr. President

The coronavirus plague has escalated the vulnerability of people in need and has created fear and despair amongst people living under oppressed circumstances. We condemn all acts that result in displacement of women and children.

Lesotho recognizes the leadership of the Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-Women, for her exceptional work in leading global efforts for Improving the living standards and the rights of women and in particular, the inception of the Gender in Humanitarian Action Programme for COVID-19. We commend all efforts to mobilize the UN system, along with all relevant United Nations Agencies that are helping in humanitarian and security interventions.

Mr. President

Lesotho welcomes and appreciates the 2019/2020 Secretary General's trenchant progress report towards the sustainable development goals and aligns herself with the principle of leaving no one behind. The report reveals that there has been some considerable progress in the implementation of SDGs, however, it is trite that the international community is not on track to deliver by 2030.

It is also shocking to learn that the number of people suffering from hunger and malnutrition increased especially in countries in special situations like Lesotho during the reporting period, while at the same time climate change is reported to be occurring much faster than anticipated.

We are meeting here, though virtually, at an opportune time during the commemoration of the UN's 75th anniversary, which coincides with the decade of action that is intended to increase the momentum and implementation efforts on SDGs. Indeed, our commitment to strengthen partnerships and international cooperation has never been so critical to provide solutions to our collective global challenges.

By virtue of being a least developed and landlocked country, characterized by a weak macroeconomy and fragile fiscal policy space, Lesotho will bear a major socio economic brunt of the pandemic and thus remain at high risk of being further left behind.

Mr. President

Devastated by coronavirus and weakened health systems Lesotho may not achieve the SDG on Health. In this vein, we call on development partners, the United Nations and International Financial Institutions to support the LLDCs, LDCs, SIDs and similar vulnerable states, such as Lesotho, with the necessary resources to respond to this crisis, in commitment to leaving no one behind.

While Lesotho recognizes that equitable and quality education is part of human development, I regret to inform this august virtual gathering that the current pandemic is creating an education emergency that is having devastating impacts on children in my country. The abrupt closure of schools for over four months is undoubtedly expected to lead to a decline in education outcomes. In fact, UNESCO warns that schools' closure has the potential for increased drop-out rates which will disproportionately affect adolescent girls, further entrench gender gaps in education and lead to increased risk of sexual exploitation, early pregnancy and early forced marriages. This scenario has negative outcomes on achieving SDGs related to education, poverty, health and gender.

Mr. President

Climate change continues to be a key challenge to our efforts towards achieving sustainable development. Member States of the UN possess different levels of capacities and resources to address the causes and effects of climate change. In light of all these, Lesotho calls for urgent action at the global level and within the UN Development System to mobilize for crisis response and to set the world on the collective path for resilient, substantive and sustainable recovery.

Mr. President

The unfortunate but inescapable scale-back of the work of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW64) due to the pandemic has hindered progress and showcasing of best practices by member states. Nonetheless, we are pleased that in March this year, the General Assembly adopted a Political Declaration which coincided with the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA) which remains the comprehensive and transformative agenda for the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. Since its adoption in 1995, we have undeniably made significant advances on women and girl's rights.

In Lesotho, we are making progress in the representation of women in leadership roles. There is a significant representation at the decision-making levels including in the private sector.

Mr. President

Lesotho remains convinced that the United Nations is the only universal institution that can safeguard world peace and ensure the survival of all. As we stop to ponder and reflect on the past, a new pattern of ethnic intra-state conflagrations are emerging and new dimensions have become increasingly important in international security. These include; proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, illicit arms trade and trafficking, drug trafficking, strains on the conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts, threats of social and economic injustice and the plight of migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons. At the same time, racism is rearing its ugly head in some parts of the world, threatening immeasurable gains of civilization.

The record of the United Nations in the recent past in peacekeeping has been mixed. We have had unqualified success in some places, but then in others success has eluded us. Our resolve, therefore, would be, to ensure that our machinery for peace making and peacekeeping is fine-tuned to maximum precision.

First, the financing of peacekeeping operations must be put on a more secure footing. Persistent arrears, such as those we have experienced recently, cannot but have an adverse effect on the peacekeeping efforts of our Organization.

Secondly, greater attention should be paid to peace-making and preventive diplomacy, thereby reducing the prospects of conflicts, with their attendant costs. The strategy of pre-empting the eruption of conflict is, of course, closely linked to the United Nations efforts in the fields of social and economic development, because it is in the soil of poverty that the seeds of national upheavals take root and sprout. Last, but not least, the changed nature of the challenges facing the Security Council call for the restructuring of that organ to reflect the changed realities of present-day international relations. Most of the international peace-and-security matters with which the Council is currently seized pertain to developing countries or countries

in transition. Thus, it is reasonable to suggest that the composition of the Security Council should include an appropriate proportion of developing countries in both the permanent and non permanent categories in line with the Ezulwini Consensus.

The Intergovernmental Negotiations on the reform of the Council has continued to address the Question of Equitable Representation on an increase in the Membership of the Security Council. It is encouraging to note that discussions have shown a general support for the need to increase the membership of the Security Council, especially of developing countries, and a subsequent need to review the Council's composition. The general view is that the size and composition of an expanded Council should reflect more accurately the universal character of the United Nations and present-day realities. It has further been recognized that the principle of the sovereign equality of all Members of the United Nations and the concepts of equitable representation and distribution, legitimacy, effectiveness and efficiency should serve as guiding principles for the reform of the Security Council.

Mr. President

Several political questions continue to preoccupy us. The people of Israel and the Palestinians have overcome formidable obstacles. Yet the most difficult and divisive issues still remain unresolved. The peace process in that area of the Middle East is of utmost importance and must therefore be negotiated against a backdrop of continuing and satisfactory progress. We urge the international community to respond quickly, appropriately, generously, practically and flexibly to the needs of the Palestinian people with the centrality of their inalienable right to sovereignty in focus. Achievements must match expectations.

Over the past 29 years, the U.N. General Assembly has passed, to no avail, an annual vote condemning the economic, commercial and financial blockade of Cuba. As a result, the people of Cuba have been subjected to undue hardship, which has been relentless even during the global pandemic that required international humanitarian cooperation.

We renew our call for the lifting of this embargo that has had a negative impact on that country's economy and brought hardship to the Cuban people.

In Africa, many significant developments have taken place in respect of peacekeeping that have to be understood in the context of changes in the international environment. Western countries have launched several initiatives aimed at identifying ways in which the international community can assist Africa to cope with the challenges of conflict prevention and management. While Africa, in keeping with its determination to combat conflicts on the continent, is appreciative of these gestures from its outside partners, we wish to remind the international community of the United Nations' primary role as the guardian of world peace and stability everywhere, including in Africa.

The determination of Africa to address, through the AU, the problem of conflicts on the continent should not be misconstrued as absolving the United Nations from its responsibility for peace and security where Africa is concerned.

The situation in Western Sahara also merits our attention. The General Assembly has consistently reaffirmed the inalienable right of the people of Western Sahara to self determination. We express our disappointment at the lack of progress in this regard. Twenty-nine years have passed since the Security Council approved

the Settlement Plan and subsequently established the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), with the mandate to implement the plan. It is therefore unfortunate that the self-determination referendum has not been held and the Security Council appears reluctant to use all diplomatic tools at its disposal to ensure compliance with the peace plan. Lesotho will continue to stand with the people of Western Sahara in their quest for independence.

In conclusion, my delegation looks forward to close collaboration with you and all other Member States over the next year to advance a collective vision of a truly representative and effective United Nations to ensure a prosperous and lasting future for all our peoples.

I THANK YOU

Sweden (see also A/75/PV.12, annex XIV)

Address by Mr. Stefan Löfven, Prime Minister of Sweden

Delivered on Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 12th meeting of the General Assembly

Excellencies,

We are celebrating the 75th anniversary of the United Nations in the midst of a global pandemic — a pandemic that has placed enormous pressure on our societies, our communities and our families. I would like to express my deepest condolences for the lives lost.

Times like these test the resilience of our societies and our international cooperation. More than ever, we need to work together in solidarity.

In this spirit, Sweden and Qatar co-chaired the negotiations on the “Declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations”, which was adopted on 21 September. Member States sent a strong message of support for a rules-based international order and for multilateralism. We all re-committed to strengthening international cooperation, with a modern, innovative and inclusive UN at the core.

We now have the rare opportunity to build better societies — societies that are more resilient. We have the opportunity to jointly address shared challenges:

- the pandemic,
- the climate crisis,
- widening inequalities,
- violations of international law
- and threats to international peace.

To create, as Secretary-General Guterres called for in his recent Mandela Lecture, a new social contract and a new global deal.

Excellencies,

Sweden fully supports the UN’s leadership of the global COVID-19 response and recognises the crucial role of the World Health Organization.

So far, Sweden has contributed more than \$170 million to the global response. Together with a number of world leaders, I have expressed my commitment to securing equitable and global access to future COVID-19 vaccines. No one is safe until everyone is safe. Securing access to vaccines is a global challenge that requires international cooperation and solidarity.

Excellencies,

Climate change is one of our most pressing issues. Throughout the world, young and old people alike have marched together on the streets to demand that decision-makers like us act in line with scientific recommendations. We must reshape our societies and lower emissions. Sweden is striving to be the first fossil-free welfare nation but welcome all competition to beat us to the post.

We will continue to work with the industrial sector to achieve net-zero emissions, not least within the “Leadership Group for Industry Transition” that we launched with India at last year’s Climate Summit. We call for more ambitious nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement. We will work for an ambitious outcome at COP26 in Glasgow.

Excellencies,

As we celebrate the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, we need to strengthen our resolve to ensure that no one is left behind. Ensuring the equal participation of every individual, irrespective of their gender and sexual orientation, is essential to realising the 2030 Agenda.

The current pandemic is exacerbating existing discrimination and inequality and the risk of sexual and gender-based violence. It is having a disproportionate impact on women’s and girls’ access to essential health services. Robust funding of sexual and reproductive health and rights must be a priority.

The 25th anniversary of the landmark “Beijing Declaration” and Platform for Action” offers an opportunity to intensify our efforts for gender equality. Sweden is ready to take on a leading role in UN Women’s “Global Action Coalition on Economic Justice and Rights”. I am delighted to see that others have joined Sweden in pursuing a feminist foreign policy.

Excellencies,

The pandemic is placing enormous pressure on the ability of democratic institutions to function and is having serious consequences for human rights. Far too many leaders and governments are using it as a pretext in their attempts to silence opposition, civil society and human rights defenders.

Sweden will continue to promote our Drive for Democracy, which aims to strengthen respect for democratic principles and institutions, civil society and international law. We support the Secretary-General’s “Call to Action for Human Rights”.

Excellencies,

Millions of people around the world have lost their jobs and livelihoods because of the pandemic. Social dialogue in the workplace can help mitigate the impact of the pandemic and shape solutions. We need a sustainable transition in the global labour market, an issue I worked very closely on with President of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa, when we co-edited the ILO report on the Future of Work. Sweden invites more countries to join the Global Deal partnership for Decent Work and Inclusive Growth.

We have also seen trade barriers introduced during the pandemic. Free, fair and sustainable trade is key in order to create new jobs and increase prosperity. The World Trade Organization has an essential role in upholding a rules-based international trading system.

Around the world, record numbers of people need humanitarian aid to survive. The protracted conflict in Yemen has resulted in the world’s largest humanitarian crisis. I urge donors to step up their support of the humanitarian response. We support UN peace efforts and urge the parties to immediately agree on a ceasefire,

inclusive political talks and continued implementation of the Stockholm and Riyadh agreements.

We extend our solidarity and support to the Lebanese people following the devastating explosion in Beirut.

Excellencies,

The pandemic is a threat to international peace and security. Sweden and the EU strongly support the implementation of the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire. The UN Security Council has an enormous responsibility. To succeed in its mandated task of up-holding international peace and security, it must be reformed to effectively address current and future challenges.

The fight against impunity for international crimes remains essential. Sweden is steadfast in its support of the International Criminal Court.

Women's influence — in peace processes, political transitions and crisis recovery — is crucial. This year marks the 20th anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000); it must be a year of concrete action.

Sweden remains an active partner to the United Nations through:

- financial core support,
- diplomacy,
- mediation

- and as a contributor of military and police personnel to UN peace operations, including MINUSMA. We are following developments in Mali with great concern. A peaceful, swift transition to civilian leadership, with democratic elections, is vital.

Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol and aggression in eastern Ukraine constitute serious breaches of international law, challenge global security and cause human suffering. The European Union is clear on the need for the implementation of the Minsk agreements. Sweden and the European Union condemn in the strongest possible terms the poisoning of the Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny. The Russian government must investigate the assassination attempt thoroughly and transparently. Those responsible must be brought to justice.

We support, as the only viable means of solving the conflict between Israel and Palestine, a negotiated solution with two states living in peace and security. It must be based on internationally agreed parameters and an end to the occupation. The EU position is clear: annexation of occupied territory is illegal.

In Syria, sustainable peace can only be achieved through a political solution in line with resolution 2254 (2015). Sweden recently pledged 96 million dollars to the crisis response at the Brussels 4 Conference.

While there are plenty of challenges across the globe, there is also hope. The Sudan now has a once-in-a-generation opportunity. Women and young people took to the streets in 2019, demanding political change, and courageous political decisions followed. The Sudan deserves our support on its difficult path to democracy.

Excellencies,

Next year, Sweden will assume the role of Chair of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Our main priority will be working for conflict resolution that builds on the OSCE comprehensive concept of security, with democracy and human rights at the core. The European security order must be upheld, not renegotiated.

Sweden is alarmed at the situation in Belarus following the elections on 9 August, which were neither free nor fair. The increased repression of peaceful demonstrators, journalists and opposition leaders is unacceptable. We stand in solidarity with the Belarusian people in their desire to exercise their fundamental democratic rights. We continue to call on the Belarusian leadership to stop the repression and engage in genuine dialogue with the opposition. We stand ready to facilitate such dialogue.

Excellencies,

This year also marks the 75th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It serves as a tragic reminder of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. The nuclear threat is as present as ever. Milestone treaties have been abandoned or are at risk, and new nuclear capabilities are being developed. We call on the United States and Russia to agree on an extension of the “New START Treaty”, and on China to join discussions on follow-on arrangements.

As part of our multilateral disarmament diplomacy, Sweden — together with 15 non-nuclear-weapon states — continues to pursue the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament, which aims to contribute to a successful NPT Review Conference.

Together with the EU, we strongly support the full implementation of the “Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action”.

We call on the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to adhere to its international obligations and take steps towards denuclearisation.

We remain committed to a peaceful resolution of the situation on the Korean Peninsula.

Excellencies,

Future generations will grow up in a different world. We now have the opportunity to shape its direction.

Together with other countries, Sweden will mobilise support for the Secretary-General in advancing our common agenda laid out in the seventy fifth anniversary Declaration.

- Together, we can build better societies.
- Together, we can build stronger societies.
- And, together, we can address the challenges that lie ahead. Thank you.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (see also A/75/PV.12, annex XV)**Address by Mr. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, the Public Service, National Security, Legal Affairs and Grenadines Affairs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines**

Delivered on Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 12th meeting of the General Assembly

Mr. President, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates and Friends,

Seventy-Five years ago, our predecessors founded this noble institution as the primary international platform to promote dignity, security, and freedom for all. Crafted in the midst of seething political tensions and the immense human suffering wrought by preceding global wars, our United Nations has served as humanity's most credible attempt at securing a peaceful and prosperous future for all nations and peoples. Yet, as we convene today against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic — the likes of which we have not experienced in over a century — the future we want and we all rightfully deserve, appears in grave jeopardy.

Amidst the rising tides of Climate Change; the scourge of desertification and land degradation, including in the Sahel; the challenges to biodiversity; the social, political and economic inequities of the global economy; and the unevenness and contradictions of a lopsided multilateral system in which the norms and rules are conveniently applied and upheld in favour of the powerful, the bellowing calls for global reform and a renewed multilateralism reverberate ever more loudly. We are indeed at an important crossroad. A well-functioning United Nations, fit for the purpose of safeguarding the bedrock principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, and political independence of all states, while addressing the critical issues of our times, is urgently needed.

Mr. President,

COVID-19 has laid bare the indisputable fact that coordinated multilateral action to achieve the sustainable development goals is the surest pathway to global peace and security. In our increasingly interconnected and hyper-globalised world, we protect ourselves when we safeguard our neighbours. Indeed, peace and security are the ideals of a collective identity, moulded through stable relationships. The urgent challenges of our times cannot be solved by building walls, nor can they be effectively addressed by retreating to a corner of nationalistic isolationism. We must build bridges. And we must stand shoulder to shoulder with our brothers and sisters throughout the world as we lift each other up from COVID-19. In this regard, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines pays tribute to all frontline workers and first responders — our “Capeless Heroes” — whose selfless contributions and sacrifices have kept many of us safe throughout this pandemic. We also extend our sympathies to the many families who have endured suffering throughout this ordeal. We stand with you as you honour the memories of your loved ones. We must “Keep the Faith”, and more.

Mr. President,

The simple truth is that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about a profoundly altered condition of life, living, and production. None of the awesome challenges arising from this altered condition can be solved by incrementalism or a

minimalist pragmatism which merely tinkers with the pre-existing political economy. To be sure, human ingenuity and science will produce a vaccine within the next few months or a year and the COVID rate of infection, hospitalisation and deaths will come down globally.

But haunting questions remain: Would the vaccine be available cheaply and universally to all peoples the world over? Or would its distribution be so skewed within, and across countries, that there is likely to arise a deafening roar that: “Only Rich Lives Matter?” The good intentions of our United Nations and its specialised agencies such as the World Health Organisation may nibble away at the inequity of a skewed outcome but their impacts are likely to be only marginal unless there is an enforceable, international rules-based compact between all countries and major pharmaceutical companies to deliver universally and affordably the fruits of science and human ingenuity. It cannot be the usual result of corporate profits ahead of people’s lives, livelihoods, social solidarity, and security.

Even if, in this instance of COVID-19, the international community rises to the challenge and confirms that faith and good intentions without practical works is an illusion, would this be only an episodic response which leaves the pre-existing global order in place until the next, and inevitable, pandemic arises? This irrational dangerous cycle has to be reconfigured with a global consensus not merely to “build back better” but to build back optimally and enduringly for all of humanity’s sake.

Fundamentally, Mr. President, the old order is passing away before our very eyes as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, but a new one is yet to come into being; indeed, there is not in place even a transition to a better, optimal, and enduring condition. We are still quarelling about inconsequential matters, insisting on too many sideshows, and casting our gaze askance away from the main events, metaphorically.

It is a truism, repeatedly ignored by powerful nations globally and ruling classes in dominant countries, that our central global challenges cannot be solved in isolation of each other or only on the terms of the powerful. Yet the old reflexes kick in, harming inevitably the strong and the weak, though not in equal measure. So, we end up, metaphorically, with a proud man who is ignorant of that which he is most assured.

Right reason and mature reflection teach that over the past 50 years of the dominant human civilization, and its appending off-shoots, there has been an explosion of individualism and freedom engendered by a huge enlargement of personal, financial, technological, and social spaces. Atomised individualism has been elevated as the apotheosis of progress; and social solidarity has become frayed, tattered, and diminished as a public good. So, along comes a pandemic and the atomised individual has to rely on the prudent and collective good behaviour of his neighbors to stay healthy. This circle cannot be easily squared in an individualistic, dog-eat-dog social order; and, metaphorically, all hell has broken loose.

Thus, internally in our societies, we ought in the current altered condition, to build a social individual, not an atomised one; this social individual necessarily, has to be grounded in the requisite of social solidarity. Across nations, too, we must initiate and build a fresh compact of enduring solidarity, as we in our Caribbean Community (CARICOM), have done with much success, despite a limitation of resources. Our United Nations, and its specialised agencies, are the locales for the construction of an ambitious, renewed global compact, not of world government, but of a genuine

community of nations through a bona fide multilateralism, grounded in international law. This is not merely a technical exercise but a profoundly political one of the first order in which this revitalised compact is efficaciously fashioned on the fertilised soil of genuine commitment among all nations. Let us thus lift Lift Humanity Higher!

In this regard, powerful states must roll back their unilateralist, unwholesome and prejudicial, constraints on weaker nations. The list is long and includes: unilateralist sanctions; weaponising of the trade, banking and financial system; the misuse and abuse of so-called “blacklists” by developed countries against developing ones; the unilateralist termination of correspondent banking relations on purely spurious, and hypocritical, grounds; the breaking of international law, willy-nilly, to serve narrowly nationalist interests on this or that issue, including the existential matter of climate change; and the relegation of Small Island Developing States to the expendable margins of the global political economy.

Mr. President,

As a small island developing state faced with an exceptional and unique admixture of existential circumstances, ranging from our inherent vulnerabilities as a small open economy with porous borders, to the legacies of underdevelopment left in the wake of European settler colonialism, native genocide, the enslavement of Africans, and the indentureship of Madeirans and Indians, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has made tremendous strides to advance meaningfully a progressive and people-centred development agenda. Yet, despite our best efforts, the disastrous economic implications of a global COVID-19 recession threatens to stymie our advances.

These detrimental impacts, already disproportionately felt across the Global South, stem from sharp declines in remittances; significant disruptions of trade, travel and other economic activity; and the negative effects on social welfare, as limited resources are diverted to save lives. For small island developing states, without predictable and reliable financing through concessional loans, without scaled up development assistance, and flexible and innovative forms of debt-relief, we risk falling further behind — unable to safeguard our human development agenda or provide necessary social protections to many of our people. To avert these grim prospects, ambitious reform of the international financial architecture that takes into account our Small Island States’ Exceptionalism is urgently needed.

Mr. President,

The continued use of the illegal and inhumane economic embargo on the Republic of Cuba, and the unilateral economic sanctions imposed for the purpose of stoking social unrest as part of an externally-driven “regime change” agenda in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela are but two egregious examples of how the norms and principles of international law are desecrated for sake of power and self-interest. Despite their own serious challenges, the governments and peoples of Cuba and Venezuela continue to stand as models for camaraderie and solidarity, dispatching medical brigades and essential supplies in response to COVID-19.

Such is the absurd contradiction that those who employ the human rights mantra as a guise for unilateral action would wilfully deprive millions of people, living in countries near and far, of their right to dignity and development by deploying the most debilitating foreign policy tools. The immense suffering of the people of Syria, as a result of a conflict that they did not choose, and geopolitical forces over which

they exert no influence, stands as a prime example of the paradox of humanitarian intervention. In similar fashion, the convergence of a parallelogram of contradictory forces in Yemen has precipitated a humanitarian crisis of monumental proportions. Syria and Yemen are arguably two of the biggest catastrophes in the world which require constructive forms of multilateral engagement that yield people-centred solutions with full respect for international law. I feel sure that interested regional powers yearn for peace and stability in Yemen and Syria.

Mr. President,

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reaffirms its solidarity with the Palestinian people whose daily existence remain marred by the persistent threat of illegal annexation. Honouring the Palestinian peoples' long held quest for self-determination and statehood by revisiting the question of full membership at the United Nations is a matter that is long overdue, and an essential component of a lasting Two-State Solution in the quest for a sustainable peace in the Middle East. In a similar vein, the constructive and pragmatic intergovernmental engagement of Taiwan, as a responsible advocate for sustainable development and an exemplar of the magnificent Chinese Civilization, validates the case for Taiwan's meaningful participation in the specialised agencies and bodies of the United Nations.

Mr. President,

The complex challenges of the 21st Century will not be solved by military means or by a quest for hegemony. While those who sell weapons have been traditionally positioned to broker peace, we cannot expect to use outdated tools to address effectively contemporary exigencies. Accordingly, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reiterates the importance of addressing earnestly the question of Security Council reform — by, among other things, expanding the permanent membership to include our brothers and sisters from the African continent, by incorporating the nuanced perspectives of small island states as a continuously rotating fixture, and by upgrading the working methods of this august, but historically-shackled, body to reflect the realities of the modern world. This issue continues to occupy the attention of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines at the Security Council where my country has forged a strong partnership with the three non-permanent members from Africa, in what has become known as the A3+1.

Mr. President,

Amidst the thundering calls for racial and social justice, globally, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines affirms, yet again, that Black Lives Matter. During this International Decade for People of African Descent, the case for reparatory justice remains unanswerably strong. The legacies of underdevelopment arising from the genocide of our native Kalinago and Garifuna people, and the enslavement of African bodies prompt our just and legitimate demand for appropriate recompense, grounded in historical fact, contemporary reality, and international law, from European Nations and their successor Nation States in North America. The international campaign for reparatory justice, widely promoted by governments across our Caribbean Community and by social activists within the industrialized metropolises, must form part of any serious efforts to achieve the sustainable development agenda.

Mr. President,

As I conclude, I reiterate that, the complex, consequential and overlapping challenges facing our world today can only be resolved through inclusive multilateral solutions and comprehensive development strategies. Admittedly, in any collective struggle for peace or prosperity there are no easy victories. Yet, it is in our darkest moments, when these struggles seem insurmountable, that we must work together in unity and in solidarity, not in spite of, but precisely because, our distinct perspectives and interests necessitate that “we the peoples” work together. As we embark on a new decade of our collective journey, let us craft a more just and equitable world in which all nations and peoples participate meaningfully a measured apportionment of both burden and benefit.

I Thank You.

Lao People's Democratic Republic (see also A/75/PV.12, annex XVI)**Address by Mr. Thongloun Sisoulith, Prime Minister of the Lao People's Democratic Republic**

Delivered on Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 12th meeting of the General Assembly

[Original: Lao; English translation provided by the delegation]

Mr. President,

At the outset, on behalf of the Delegation of the Lao PDR, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Volkan Bozkir, on your election as President of the 75th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. I am confident that with your extensive and rich diplomatic experience, you will be able to lead the deliberation of this UNGA Session under the theme “The future we want, the United Nations we need: reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism”, which is most relevant to the current situation of the international environment, to a great success. Our delegation is ready to extend full support and cooperation to you in the discharge of your noble duties. Let me also commend your predecessor, H.E. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, for his successful presidency of the 74th Session of the UNGA, amid the advert impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the ongoing work of the UN.

Mr. President,

75 years ago, the United Nations has been created from the ashes of the Second World War aimed at saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war that brought untold sufferings to our mankind one after another. Ever since its advent, the United Nations has evolved into a main mechanism for preserving international peace and security, which constitutes a significant prerequisite for the promotion of international cooperation and socio-economic development to be thrived. UN Charter has become a significant tool that identified mechanisms and principles for our joint collective efforts to achieve our noble common objectives. To date, 75 years have passed and we can say that under the UN auspices, the international community has made a number of significant achievements. Conflict resolution mechanism through peaceful means has turned into principle and prevailing trend. International laws and treaties have been gradually enhanced and served as a tool to prevent and resolve various issues in areas such as disarmament, racial discrimination, religion and cultural differences, promotion and protection of human rights, and gender equality, to name a few.

More importantly, multilateral cooperation under the flag of the United Nations has synergized collective efforts in responding to and addressing major common challenges that no single country can do alone, such as an issue of climate change, pandemic, terrorism and others. In addition, we have seen joint efforts in tackling challenges under the framework of MDGs, SDGs, Action Plans to help vulnerable countries, in particular least developed countries (LDCs), land-locked developing countries (LLDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS). Those collective efforts have helped a number of millions of people to get out of poverty and hunger and to have access to education, health service and improve gender equality.

Those are some significant achievements of the United Nations. But of course, the regional and international environment in the past 70 years is definitely different

from the current setting. Therefore, the United Nations has to be adapted and strengthened if it is to effectively deliver its mandates on maintaining international peace and security as well as promoting development cooperation. Against this backdrop, the United Nations should be reformed to fit the current environment in our joint efforts in addressing the unfolded significant obstacles to peace and development, such as lasting resolution to the Middle East problem, in particular the Palestinian issue and the call for lifting of economic embargo on Cuba and so on. Cooperation for development should be further enhanced and prioritized. Without development, people will remain poor and hungry, as a result peace cannot be sustained, and social problems, such as crimes, drugs, human trafficking and refugees will remain unresolved. This requires the international community to actively address the pressing challenges together.

Mr. President,

As we all know, the world is currently facing serious outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, which is an immediate and long-term challenge for us to respond and recover from its impact on economic development. Over the past decades, the world has never seen the pandemic on this scale, more than 30 million people infected and nearly 1 million people have died. Besides, it has posed huge impact on socio-economic development in many countries leading the world economy to recession, many companies went bankrupt and unemployment skyrocketed. Achievements and efforts to eradicate poverty and progress in the implementation of SDGs has been severely impacted. Therefore, the most immediate task for us is to jointly contain the COVID-19 pandemic as well as to implement strict preventive measures. For the Lao PDR, we have adopted very strict preventive measures and achieved quite a good result, with only 23 confirmed infected cases and no fatality. This achievement is partly due to the cooperation and assistance provided by our friendly countries and international organizations. On this note, I would like to take this opportunity to express our high appreciation to our friendly countries and international organizations for such valuable assistance accorded to us.

I am confident that, with the committed joint efforts and with the progress being made on the research and development of vaccine of which some are in the final stage, we will find the vaccine that is effective and safe to prevent COVID-19 soon. However, universal access to the vaccine is another important matter that needs to be considered. Otherwise, we will not be able to respond to the pandemic effectively. In this regard, I would like to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt congratulation to the efforts made by international organizations, in particular the World Health Organization and all countries for the assistance extended to other member states who are facing difficulties, which enables us to control the outbreak of the COVID-19 at a certain level, including the initiative to establish a project to promote and ensure global access to vaccine without discrimination. If we can do so, we then will be able to meet the slogan “leaving no one behind”.

Another important task is the post COVID-19 economic recovery. How are we going to revitalize our world economy and stimulate economic growth. I believe that the international community has to collectively address the issues that are obstacle to the international trade, funding and technology access and build mutual trust for a win-win cooperation, only this then that it will bring benefit and prosperity to the international community. Thus, the international community must enhance a policy of open trade and cooperation, integration and connectivity, as well as addressing the debt issue in order for the world economy to be able to thrive.

Mr. President,

Today, climate change has induced more frequent and severe natural disasters that brought huge impact on development, particularly food security and infrastructure development. Therefore, building society with climate resilience and adaptation is very important. In this connection, it requires that international community provides financial support and technological know-how to the least developed countries in order for them to be able to respond to the natural disaster. On the same note, it also calls for concerted efforts from all countries around the world to consume natural resources in a sustainable manner, employ more alternative energy and follow the commitment under the Paris Agreement on reducing the greenhouse gas emission that contributed to the rising of world temperature.

What is more important now is the fact that we have only 10 years left for the fulfilment of SDGs by 2030 with the slogan “leaving no one behind”. In the past years, although many countries have actively implemented SDGs and many achievements have been made, in particular on poverty reduction, but with the impact of COVID-19, achieving SDGs will be a challenging task. I am of the view that in order to meet our lofty goals, the developed countries including development partners must honor their obligation on ODA to vulnerable countries, such as least developed countries (LDCs), land-locked developing countries (LLDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS). Otherwise, it will be very difficult for those countries to achieve SDGs on their own.

For Lao PDR, we have integrated SDGs and its targets into our 8th 5-year National Socio-economic Development Plan (NSEDP) for 2016-2020 and will continue to further streamline SDGs into our next 9th 5-year Plan. In addition, we have carried out outreach public awareness campaign on SDGs at central and local levels so that all sectors of the society are well aware of its importance and take part in its implementation. Lao PDR plans to present our second Voluntary National Review at the High-Level Political Forum in July 2021 to report and evaluate progress made on the implementation of SDGs. In general, through the implementation of our National Socio-economic Development Plan, as well as the SDGs, Lao PDR has made many significant achievements. The country continues to enjoy political stability, social order and continued economic growth, which has significantly contributed to the poverty reduction and improving living standard of all multi-ethnic people. We have been able to reduce poverty rate from 46 per cent in 1992 to around 18 per cent to date. Nonetheless, due to the impact of natural disasters and COVID-19 pandemic, the economic growth is expected to go down in 2020, but may not be negative. In our upcoming 9th Five-year National Socio-economic Development Plan for 2021-2025, Lao PDR will continue to develop our economy in line with sustainable and green growth strategy, integrate SDGs into our NSEDP, as well as to build a strong foundation and necessary condition for the country to graduate from the LDC status in the future.

In the regional cooperation context, the Lao PDR continues to support commitment and efforts of ASEAN in the promotion of peace, stability and security of the region. We also embrace our efforts for regional and sub-regional economic integration through ASEAN cooperation framework, ASEAN dialogue partnership and cooperation with other countries, including the ASEAN-UN cooperation framework aimed at achieving ASEAN Vision 2025 and other priorities. We also support ASEAN in the collaboration with WHO and countries in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and seeking solution to economic recovery from the pandemic.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, I have a strong confidence that multilateral cooperation, conflict resolution by peaceful means and cooperation for development under the UN Charter remain a relevant mechanism in our efforts to synergizing and unifying us for maintaining international peace and security and our concerted efforts in addressing our common challenges lying ahead. Lessons from history remind us that unilateralism and the use of force to solve the problems always led to war and ushered in unwanted disaster to our mankind. In this respect, we have to try to avoid any emerging elements causing disunity so we can prevent disaster from ever occurring again to our humanity.

Lao PDR has put great efforts in its national development, as well as efforts to eradicating poverty and lifting the country out of LDC status and we found that cooperation under the UN auspices is very important in assisting developing countries in this regard. We stand ready to fulfil our obligations and actively contribute in such cooperation mechanism.

In this spirit, Lao PDR decided to present our candidature for membership of the ECOSOC for the term 2023-2025. It is my hope that as the Lao PDR seeks a membership in this important UN body for the first time, we would highly appreciate the valuable support from all member states. I promise that, if elected, Lao PDR will actively contribute to the work of the Council.

Thank you.

Belgium (see also A/75/PV.12, annex XVII)

**Statement by Ms. Sophie Wilmès, Prime Minister in charge of
Beliris and Federal Cultural Institutions of the Kingdom of Belgium**

Delivered on Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 12th meeting of the General Assembly

[Original: French]

President of the General Assembly
Secretary-General,
Heads of State and Government,
Heads of Delegation
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Trust - Responsibility - Commitment

These are the three pillars that influence mutual aid and cooperation among our various countries: effective multilateralism.

These are the three values that are needed to safeguard this multilateralism and about which I would like to speak to you today.

THE PANDEMIC MUST SERVE AS AN EYE OPENER

Indeed, 2020 will be recalled as a painful year. The COVID-19 pandemic took us by surprise. Each of our States faced an unprecedented crisis.

The virus claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. It shattered many families around the world. Its economic impact is also considerable.

But, in our minds, it has also led to uncertainty and questions about the future.

Yet, we should not be blinded by COVID-19. On the contrary, it should open our eyes to the shortcomings that have been exposed in our models of society, for example.

We must acknowledge the negative and disproportionate effects of the pandemic on those who suffer disproportionately from inequalities: women and girls, children, older persons and people with disabilities. No one should be left by the wayside.

NOT TO MENTION OTHER CHALLENGES

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

While we continue to combat the pandemic and its consequences with vigour and determination, we cannot turn our backs on the other major challenges of the twenty-first century.

Geopolitical tensions are palpable and conflicts are under way or loom in various corners of the globe. The health crisis only exacerbates these tensions.

They threaten the fragile balance of our world.

These conflicts are never inevitable.

Furthermore, they always have a devastating impact on populations...

The situation in the Gulf, for example, remains a source of serious concern and calls for the utmost prudence.

The JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) remains crucial to ensuring that Iran's nuclear programme is used exclusively for peaceful purposes. We must actively preserve this agreement and the non-proliferation regime.

The issue of the upcoming lifting of the conventional weapons embargo must not jeopardize the nuclear agreement and its achievements. This is a top priority for the region and its stability, international security and the global non-proliferation architecture.

In the Middle East, prospects for just and lasting peace remain the goal. There can be no peace in the Middle East without a permanent and just solution to the Palestinian question.

Nor can there be peace in the Middle East without Israel's legitimate right to live in peace and security within internationally recognized borders.

There can be no peace in the Middle East without the eradication of terrorism.

Yes, the suspension of plans to formalize the annexation of parts of the occupied Palestinian territories is a step in the right direction.

But no, it is not enough. These plans must be abandoned once and for all. Annexation would seriously undermine the viability of a lasting solution and close the door to future negotiations.

We welcome recent announcements about the normalization of Israel's relations with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. We must view this as a sign of hope that it can be a cornerstone of peace and stability in the entire region.

That said, international and multilateral efforts aimed at a meaningful resumption of talks must be actively supported to enable a negotiated and viable two-State solution based on international law and United Nations resolutions.

The security situation in much of the Sahel remains a matter of serious concern, despite numerous efforts and increased international mobilization.

Following a coup de force led by mutinous members of the Malian armed forces, Mali's legal and constitutional order was challenged.

The legitimate demands, aspirations and frustrations of Malian citizens, who await solutions to the many challenges facing their country, should not be met in this way. We support all regional and inter-Malian efforts to establish as soon as possible a civil transition process in Bamako that will allow a return to constitutional order.

Many of Mali's challenges are common to the entire region.

Terrorism, conflicts between pastoralists and farmers and inter-community tensions pose severe security threats.

A holistic approach is needed to combat violent extremism, while underscoring good governance, the fight against impunity, the strengthening of democratic institutions, a response to the grievances of marginalized groups and sustainable and inclusive development.

At the same time, an ever-increasing number of regions of the world experience the health, security and humanitarian implications of climate change and the degradation of biodiversity.

Drought and erratic weather conditions drive people from their homes, whether in Somalia, Yemen or Afghanistan. Melting polar ice is leading to the militarization of the Arctic.

The impact of climate change underscores the social, political, economic and environmental causes of conflict.

The climate emergency is a challenge to peace. There is no more time to waste.

This cause must be a concern for us all.

The Sustainable Development Goals and, more generally, the 2030 Agenda are essential tools for responding to the global challenges we face — be they poverty, inequality and climate and environmental degradation.

EFFECTIVE MULTILATERALISM AS A RESPONSE

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the light of these global challenges, we must act.

And admit that we cannot do it alone.

None of the common challenges I have mentioned can be addressed in isolation. None of these complex problems have simple solutions.

We have no choice but to join forces, even if it means reimagining the obvious or even changing our paradigms. But always in accordance with the principles of the Charter.

Multilateralism does not work on the basis of its essence; it works because there is a common will to make it work.

If this makes the task of those who take action difficult and the task of those who reflect easier, so be it. But let us not engage in the wrong fight.

It is when its relevance is questioned that multilateralism reveals its indispensable nature.

Today, more than ever, we need effective multilateralism.

Never as an objective in itself.

But always as a means to address the problems of which we are all part, in one way or another.

As a means to prevent crises head-on.

Through trust, responsibility and commitment.

TRUST

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

When I say trust, I mean trust in ourselves — trust in our individual and collective capacities, as demonstrated in our health-care services, to fight the pandemic.

Trust in our courage, resilience, knowledge and responsible behaviour, in combination with our scientific progress, to mitigate climate change.

Trust in our commitment to achieving sustainable development for all.

The international community has already overcome major challenges and we will do so again. Resignation is not an option.

When I speak of trust, I also mean mutual trust. Such trust forces us all to keep our word. It makes us maintain constant dialogue and put ourselves in each other's shoes.

When we do not, or no longer do so, mistrust sets in and, sooner or later, makes the necessary cooperation too difficult or even impossible.

When I say trust, I mean good governance at the national, regional and international levels in order to gain the trust of citizens.

Good governance built on the foundation of the rule of law, democracy, accountability and full respect for human rights.

When I say trust, I mean trust in justice — justice that must be built on the unshakeable conviction that all individuals are equal and that no form of discrimination can alter that fact.

RESPONSIBILITY

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Trust, responsibility, commitment.

As the United Nations, we have a responsibility to make global governance work. We contribute in various ways and at various levels, but every Member can benefit. We are the United Nations.

As such, we share the responsibility for making multilateralism work and to show its added value.

That is why we fully support Secretary-General António Guterres' continued efforts to reform the UN.

Reform for greater efficiency, greater transparency and greater responsiveness and adaptability.

We also reaffirm our full support for peacekeeping action. This is our recognition of the need to safeguard one of the most important instruments of the international community to support political processes, protect hundreds of thousands of civilians and help enforce ceasefires.

Making global governance and multilateralism work also means not hindering the functioning of its existing bodies.

Therefore, Belgium reaffirms its firm support for the ICC, an essential body in the fight against impunity for the most serious crimes that affect the entire

international community. As an independent and impartial institution, the Court plays an indispensable role in this area. Accountability also means taking ownership of challenges so that we move from identifying them to taking action to address them. That is our responsibility to our contemporaries, but also, and above all, to our children and the next generations. That brings me to my next point — commitment.

COMMITMENT / WHAT BELGIUM IS DOING

The commitment to multilateralism is part of my country's DNA.

Perhaps it is because it is not foreign to our history; our tradition of compromise.

International rules protect us.

Cooperation and our close relations have strengthened us.

Effective multilateralism allows us to punch above our weight. In this process, we, large and small, all have a voice and added value around the table.

Commitment is what helped Belgium obtain its sixth mandate in the UN Security Council.

As an elected Council member for 2019 and 2020, we continue to discharge our duty to advance peace and security daily.

In doing so, we recognize that the Security Council is not immune to geopolitical tensions. We see an imperfect body. We see 15 States that are not always able to resolve all conflicts.

However, we also see that the majority of decisions are unanimous.

The increased cooperation among the elected members is inspiring.

The steps taken to discuss new security threats, such as climate change, are encouraging.

Transitional justice is another area in which the United Nations can demonstrate ambition — for a comprehensive human rights-based approach, the centrality of justice and accountability.

These are all aspirations, which require coordination among the various national and international actors. Belgium contributes to achieving them and will continue to engage.

Commitment is also the driving force behind my country's contribution to development cooperation and humanitarian aid.

This is what prompted Belgium to provide multi-year support to UNRWA — making our country one of its largest donors — to improve the lives of Palestinian refugees.

Belgium's commitment is also reflected in its position as one of the main European donors to Yemen.

We also support UNICEF's efforts to enable it to monitor children's rights in conflicts.

Belgium's commitment is reflected in its predictable direct multi-year funding to United Nations organizations active in the area of development. This allows for long-term action and an adequate response to the many crises.

Through its constant commitment to the work and strategic objectives of UN-Women, whose tenth anniversary we mark this year, my country is working towards the systematic integration of the gender dimension in its efforts. This is a cardinal principle of our foreign policy. That is why we believe in and endorse the work of Dr. Denis Mukwege in support of women who are victims of sexual violence in eastern Congo.

Furthermore, our armed forces are also committed. They are committed to the fight against the threat of terrorism and to the Global Coalition Against Da'esh.

They are committed to participating in multilateral peace missions in Mali and Afghanistan, under the auspices of the UN, the European Union and NATO.

Lastly, a strong and solid Organization must be able to rely on the resources that its sovereign Member States decide to allocate to it.

Belgium is committed to continuing its efforts to ensure that the UN has the necessary resources for conducting its work in time — an indispensable component of effective multilateralism.

CONCLUSION

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the UN, under very special circumstances, we must not allow ourselves to be pessimistic.

Let us stand up. Let us face the challenges ahead and build on past achievements.

In the coming weeks, we will celebrate 20 years of progress in the women and peace and security agenda and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Platform.

These are multilateral achievements in the global policy framework for women's rights. These are two concrete examples of what we can do together to improve the lives of half of the world's population. It matters. This is a project on which there is still much progress to be made.

These are but a few examples, but they matter.

Because they remind us that multilateralism can work. They remind us of the many benefits of effective multilateralism.

Let us therefore support it.

Without hesitation.

With trust, responsibility and commitment.

Thank you.

Ireland (see also A/75/PV.12, annex XVIII)

Statement by Mr. Micheál Martin, Taoiseach of Ireland

Delivered on Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 12th meeting of the General Assembly

President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The United Nations General Assembly meets this year in a virtual format, in the shadow of COVID-19. The pandemic has taken an immense toll on our countries, our citizens, our economies, indeed on our entire way of life.

It has imposed a particular burden on those least able to bear it: countries with weak healthcare systems, and civilian populations suffering from insecurity, displacement, conflict and poverty.

The pandemic has also revealed the best of humanity — the heroic efforts of our front-line workers to provide care and essential services to those directly affected; the remarkable social cohesion, solidarity and civic responsibility of people throughout the world through many months of restrictions and disruptions to lives and livelihoods.

Mr. President,

The pandemic reminds us that multilateral responses to global challenges remain essential. The reality is that we are interconnected and interdependent. Even the strongest of us cannot succeed alone.

This is the guiding spirit of the United Nations since its foundation. The same unwavering commitment to working together underpinned Ireland's candidature for a seat on the United Nations Security Council.

We are humbled and honoured that you, the members of the General Assembly, have placed your trust in us.

You elected Ireland because you believed that we could make a real contribution on the core mandate of the Security Council; the maintenance of international peace and security.

I promise that we will do everything we can to fulfil that trust.

It is sobering to consider that, since Ireland last served on the Security Council in 2001 and 2002, the number of issues on the Council's agenda has tripled.

Violent conflict and insecurity continue to grow.

We face enduring global challenges: hunger and food insecurity; the existential threat of climate change; violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, and impunity for perpetrators.

The Security Council can, and must, play a central role in addressing them.

We are under no illusions. Deep divisions exist on the Council. But we do not accept that these divisions mean that the Council can step back from its

responsibilities. It must fulfil the role entrusted to it by the UN Charter and by the member states.

Mr President,

Ireland joins the Council with firm principles and clear priorities.

Three principles will underpin our approach: Building Peace, Strengthening Prevention, and Ensuring Accountability. These are at the heart of the Council's mandate.

Building peace means ensuring that we promote sustainable, durable solutions to conflict. A key aspect of this is peacekeeping. Ireland has a long-standing and proud record of continuous service on UN peacekeeping operations.

As a member of the Council, we will take a keen interest in shaping the mandates under which UN peacekeepers serve. We want to change aspects of peacekeeping for the better, for both peacekeepers and host communities.

In line with the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative, peacekeeping operations must be adequately resourced, have access to appropriate training and be sensitive to local needs.

A commitment to upholding human rights and gender equality must be at the heart of all missions.

We also need to become much better at linking peacekeeping to peacebuilding, ensuring continued and sustained support for countries emerging from conflict.

Peacekeeping is a vital task; it saves lives and prevents conflict. But, as Secretary-General Guterres has frequently said, we need durable solutions to the causes of conflict.

In Ireland, we have had our own experience of conflict. We know that conflict resolution is a long and complex task. It is rarely smooth or linear. It takes commitment and belief.

The voices of women, young people and civil society must be central. Peace processes cannot succeed unless women are fully involved.

Mr President,

Regional organisations such as the European Union and the African Union are making an increasingly important contribution to how the UN responds to international crises.

Ireland is proud to play an active role in UN-mandated, EU led military crisis management missions and in EU civilian missions. Irish troops, police officers, judges, coastguards, experts in rule of law and security sector reform serve in UN, EU and OSCE missions around the world, from Mali to Lebanon to Ukraine.

We actively support African-led operations, both peacekeeping and preventative diplomacy missions, including through the African Union and IGAD, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development.

Strengthening prevention is also vital. The UN needs to deploy all its resources — country teams, special representatives, political missions, mediators and more — to intervene early; to highlight and stop human rights abuses; to

prevent conflict and to support the efforts of local stakeholders in peacemaking and peacebuilding.

Crucially, we must address the factors underlying conflict, including insecurity, hunger, poor governance, climate change, violations of human rights, and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

We have heard the argument that issues like climate, hunger and human rights do not belong in the Security Council. That there are other fora to discuss these issues. That they do not belong in discussions of international peace and security.

Let me be very clear. We reject that argument.

It is not a case of either/or.

We know that climate change not only impedes sustainable development but also contributes to conflict.

We know that human rights abuses and the denial of justice can fuel radicalisation and extremism.

We know that poverty, hunger and resource deprivation fuel insecurity and violence.

We know that rising oceans pose an existential threat to some Small Island Developing States.

We know that without a firm commitment to supporting the poorest and most vulnerable countries on their development pathways, we will never adequately address insecurity and conflict. This drives Ireland's commitment to reach our official development assistance target of 0.7 per cent of GNI by 2030.

We have ample evidence of these trends.

What we do not yet have is a Security Council ready and able to take on its responsibilities to address these issues. Ireland will do everything possible over the next two years to make all the progress we can.

Accountability will also be a watchword of our term on the Council.

Ireland stands firmly in support of the International Criminal Court. The Court has a unique and vital mission to ensure that those responsible for the most serious crimes of international concern cannot act with impunity. We are deeply concerned by any measures taken against the Court, and against its officials and staff.

Ireland remains firmly committed to upholding universal human rights, the dignity of all, and providing support to those who promote and defend human rights in the most difficult situations.

Humanitarian workers must be able to work safely while helping the most vulnerable.

The Security Council also has its own responsibility to prevent mass atrocity crimes. We strongly support the ACT Code of Conduct, which pledges Council members to act to prevent such crimes, as well as the French-Mexican initiative on restricting the use of the veto.

We have seen the veto repeatedly abused over recent years, to prevent the Council from taking necessary actions, including on access to vital humanitarian relief and in response to the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

This speaks to the wider need to reform the Council.

The longer the Council goes unreformed, and the longer African countries in particular are denied their rightful level of representation, the greater the threat to the legitimacy of the Council itself.

Accountability also extends to failures to respect the Resolutions of the Security Council. States cannot unilaterally decide which aspects of international law to adhere to, and which to set aside when politically inconvenient.

Mr President,

The Council has a large number of country situations on its agenda.

From Syria, to Libya, to Yemen, our approach will be driven by a profound concern for protecting citizens and improving humanitarian conditions.

We will support efforts for peace in Afghanistan, in which the rights of women must be included and respected.

We will also work tirelessly to promote tangible progress towards a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine.

Security Council resolutions set out recognised international parameters for an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These are reflected in the General Assembly resolution Ireland introduced in 2018, and balance the legitimate rights and responsibilities of both sides. As an international community, we need to create the space for direct negotiations.

Ireland has long championed disarmament and non proliferation.

We played an important role in negotiating the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and are proud to have become the 41st country to ratify it, this year. Nuclear proliferation must remain at the heart of the Council's work.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea must abandon all nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programmes in a complete, verifiable, and irreversible manner.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran's nuclear programme must be implemented in full — it is the most effective mechanism for preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

Iran must also end destabilizing activities in the region, to create a context for an alternative future of economic cooperation and development.

Peace and security in Africa, a key focus of the Council, has been an important priority for Ireland since the deployment of Irish UN peacekeepers to the Congo 60 years ago.

On the Council, we will actively support peace and democratic progress in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, the Central African Republic, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan.

We will also carefully consider plans for the drawdown of some peacekeeping missions, ensuring there are no 'cliff edge' departures; rather, we need comprehensive and inclusive transition plans that safeguard progress towards security and development.

The Peacebuilding Commission has an essential role to play in this regard.

Mr President,

The Security Council is often criticised for its failure to prevent and resolve conflict.

Sometimes, that criticism is justified.

But we must also remember the successes. We have seen, for instance, the significant contribution that the Security Council and the wider UN system made to the peace process in Colombia, including the verification of the laying down of arms, clearance of ordnance, and the reintegration of former combatants.

Peacekeeping missions such as UNIFIL and UNDOF — both of which have strong Irish participation — provide vital stability in volatile regions.

Numerous peace agreements around the world have been brokered by the UN, with the active support of the Security Council.

But we need to see more concrete outcomes, more often.

That is what the Security Council was created to do. We must build the trust and political will necessary to achieve progress in even the most intractable conflicts.

My primary focus today has been on Ireland's forthcoming membership of the Security Council.

But we are at all times cognizant that the United Nations is a far broader and deeper entity. The UN's work on human rights, international development, disarmament, trade and economic cooperation, terrorism and crime, the use of technology and safety of cyberspace, remains critical.

We need to see full achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063.

We must continue to support an effective, coherent multilateral response to Covid-19. The guidance and global coordination efforts by the World Health Organisation have been crucial. And Ireland is proud to be part of the European Union's unprecedented global response, including support to the COVAX Facility, which will ensure developing countries have access to vaccines.

Mr President,

The United Nations is not one monolithic body. The United Nations is all of its 193-member states; it is us.

Small states such as Ireland depend on the rules-based international order to survive and to thrive.

As a member of the Council, we will tirelessly uphold the primacy of the United Nations and the multilateral system as a whole.

We will be guided by the principles of the UN Charter. We will listen. We will work across regional and ideological boundaries. We do not have historical baggage, or special interests. We intend, Mr. President, to make every day count. Thank you.

Morocco (see also A/75/PV.12, annex XIX)

Address by Mr. Saad-Eddine El Othmani, Head of Government of the Kingdom of Morocco

Delivered on Saturday, 26 September 2020, at the 12th meeting of the General Assembly

[Original: Arabic]

In the name of God, the most gracious, the most merciful,

Your Majesties and Excellencies,

Mr. President of the General Assembly,

Mr. Secretary-General of the United Nations,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me pleasure to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Volkan Bozkir on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session. I wish him every success as he seeks to revitalize our common endeavour.

I also wish to express the Kingdom of Morocco's deep appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande for his efforts to ensure that the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session has been able to continue its work despite the difficult circumstances imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

I take this opportunity also to express my full appreciation for the role played by Secretary-General António Guterres under these circumstances. We fully support his outstanding leadership over the COVID-19 response, and especially his call for an immediate global ceasefire and his COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan.

The convening of the current session of the General Assembly is of the utmost importance, as it takes place in the context of a deadly and highly contagious pandemic, the interrelated global impact of which has undermined the resilience of societies and institutions and forced the world to face unexpected challenges.

The pandemic has revealed three major and interrelated crises facing our societies since the turn of the current century, namely, uncontrolled environmental degradation; widening socioeconomic inequalities and increasing poverty levels; and institutional dysfunction in addressing the pandemic, with international cooperation weakened by a lack of effectiveness and coherence in its response to COVID-19.

The dangerous manifestations of these crises and the need to find urgent solutions to them are not the result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, they have dominated our societies since the beginning of the third millennium.

At the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, while calling for renewed global solidarity, His Majesty King Mohammed VI wondered whether the various disruptions and violent crises across the world were not enough to constitute a strong argument to convince sceptics that achieving sustainable development was both a collective interest and a collective responsibility.

Today, we have nine years left to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and the decisions we make now will determine the success or failure of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Our commitment is all the more important against the backdrop of the pandemic, as it primarily affects those who are most vulnerable, especially in Africa.

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare inequalities that have been deepening over decades. If we had made enough progress in implementing the SDGs, the effects of today's pandemic would have been less severe.

Morocco, along with a number of countries, believes that the weaknesses that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic constitute a real incentive to redouble our efforts and reconsider our development plans in order to ensure that the gains already made are not in vain. This has prompted the Kingdom of Morocco, under the leadership of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, to integrate this vision into a new, integrated development approach.

Seventy-five years ago, the founders of our Organization laid the foundations of a new global order based on cooperation and solidarity to end wars, prevent their miseries and create the conditions conducive to development and prosperity.

It is our firm belief in those noble values that led the Kingdom of Morocco to join the United Nations in 1956 — one of its first sovereign decisions after gaining independence.

Today, that vision remains as pertinent as ever. While the United Nations has secured great gains for humankind in the past, we must continue to uphold our responsibility to embody those founding values in the face of critical global threats.

It is high time that we undertook reforms that would make the United Nations system more adaptive to the rapidly evolving international changes and more capable of responding swiftly to crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mere statements and speeches are no longer adequate. Now is the time for knowledge-based and results-oriented action.

Nevertheless, the flame of multilateralism continues to burn, as evidenced by the concrete initiatives taken to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. Building a multilateral system is not a luxury, but a necessity in order to ensure continued international cooperation, which must provide the framework for confronting the multiple threats, current and future, in a post-COVID-19 world.

In that context, establishing a global health security system has become imperative, as expressed by the Secretary-General, who emphasized that the COVID-19 has exposed the cracks in the weak social structures that we built with our own hands.

The pandemic has revealed the extent of the damage that new diseases can inflict on national health systems and has demonstrated the importance of adequate emergency preparedness based on a comprehensive approach that unites all stakeholders and communities.

Morocco's response to the pandemic has been guided by the strong vision of His Majesty King Mohammed VI. Our proactive and preventive measures have prioritized the health of our citizens and mobilized all institutions and strata of society to address the health emergency.

Morocco's support for the Secretary-General's initiatives to confront COVID-19, as well as the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, reflects our belief in the ability of the United Nations to coordinate and promote all forms of international cooperation to respond to this all-encompassing crisis.

That is why the Kingdom of Morocco, in its capacity as the Chair of the Economic and Social Council humanitarian affairs segment, launched a call for action in support of the humanitarian response to combat COVID-19, which enjoyed the support of 171 countries from all regional groups, as well as the African Union and the European Union. The call was inspired by Moroccan diplomatic and humanitarian principles and the noble vision of His Majesty King Mohammed VI.

In our view, there is an urgent need to provide vaccines and treatments against COVID-19 in a fair and equitable manner. This would be the most realistic example of a unified global health system and a true test of international cooperation.

We must also lay new and flexible foundations for resilience, reform international health regulations and adopt sustainable financing mechanisms.

In that connection, together with Rwanda, the World Health Organization and the World Bank, Morocco will organize the first high-level meeting on diplomacy for health security and emergency preparedness in Marrakesh next year.

Morocco has also joined the initiative led by Chile to adopt a new, flexible legal instrument that would enable effective preparedness for global health emergencies.

The pandemic has revealed various vulnerabilities and inequalities within and between societies, countries and continents. It has also proven many of our preconceptions to be incorrect, including the presumed link between underdevelopment and inevitable weakness in certain regions.

Many of the dire expectations and pessimistic outlooks that some attached to Africa at the beginning of the pandemic did not materialize. Africa has faced the challenge alone, relying on the resilience of its people, the creativity of its youth and the able leadership of its Governments.

In the spirit of solidarity that characterizes South-South cooperation vis-a-vis the African countries, His Majesty King Mohammed VI has launched a practical initiative to lay the foundations for a realistic framework to assist African countries throughout the stages of pandemic response.

As part of that initiative, Morocco has established air bridges with approximately 20 African countries to transport Moroccan medical aid and pharmaceuticals.

However, in the urgency imposed by the pandemic and its socioeconomic implications, we must not forget the multidimensional and complex challenges that Africa continues to face.

One such challenge is the debt crisis. Morocco calls on international financial institutions and partners to adopt and implement concrete guidelines to reduce the debt of the countries concerned in order to curb the effects of the pandemic on their development.

Global economic recovery must be a top priority for the international community. The repercussions of the pandemic also require innovative solutions for the financing of development.

While the pandemic has cast its shadow over vital issues on the Organization's agenda, this should not be a reason to overlook the other challenges we face, notably climate change, counter-terrorism, migration and peacekeeping.

In that regard, we must express our appreciation for the efforts of the United Nations and countries contributing to peacekeeping operations to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic and to enable the 100,000 peacekeepers currently deployed in 13 peacekeeping operations to continue their missions in various conflict areas.

Morocco believes in the importance of peacekeeping reform in light of the complexities of contemporary conflicts and remains committed to achieving the goals of the Action for Peacekeeping initiative.

In that context, Morocco and France, in cooperation with the United Nations, will organize the second Francophone ministerial conference on peacekeeping.

The Kingdom of Morocco remains committed to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, namely, the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes and respect for the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of States.

In that connection, Morocco remains committed to finding a definitive solution to the regional dispute over the Moroccan Sahara, in line with its territorial integrity and national sovereignty.

Morocco's position is unambiguous. The search for a definitive political solution can succeed only if it meets four basic criteria: first, the full sovereignty of Morocco over its desert and the self-autonomy initiative as the only solution to this contrived dispute; secondly, the full participation of all parties in the search for a definitive solution to this contrived dispute; thirdly, full respect for the principles and criteria set forth by the Security Council in all its resolutions since 2007, namely, that a solution must be political, realistic, practical, sustainable and consensus-based; and fourthly, the rejection of any other proposal aimed at steering the political process away from the terms of reference determined by the Security Council. Both the Secretary-General and the Council rejected such a proposal more than 20 years ago.

The political process, under the sole sponsorship of the United Nations, has seen new momentum. Two round table meetings were held in Geneva, in December 2018 and March 2019 respectively, where all of the parties concerned convened for the first time. It is particularly encouraging to note that the Security Council considers this process to be the only path towards a realistic, practical, enduring and consensus-based political solution to this regional dispute.

The Kingdom of Morocco once again expresses its deep concern about the dire humanitarian situation faced by the inhabitants of the Tindouf camps. The host country has authorized an armed separatist group to take charge of the camps, in flagrant violation of its international obligations under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and other international conventions relating to human rights and international humanitarian law.

In the context of COVID-19, concerns are mounting over the fate of those populations stranded in camps run by an armed group with no legal status under international law.

It is time for the international community to take decisive action to compel the host country to allow the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to conduct a census and registration of the population in those camps, in accordance with international humanitarian law for refugees and the urgent calls made by the Security Council in all of its related resolutions since 2011. This is essential in order

to put an end to the 40-year-long diversion of humanitarian assistance intended for those stranded inside the Tindouf camps.

The security of the Kingdom of Morocco is intrinsically linked to the security of Libya, the sister State with which we share a common history and destiny. Nine years after the outbreak of the crisis in Libya, its security and humanitarian situation continue to deteriorate due to foreign interference, including military intervention.

The only solution to that crisis is a political one decided upon by the Libyans themselves, with the support of the international community but free from foreign interference and agendas, as affirmed by the meeting in Skhirat.

Morocco remains committed to providing a neutral forum for dialogue between the Libyan parties. In the second week of September, we hosted meetings in Bouznika between the High Council of State and the Tobruk Parliament, which culminated in a comprehensive agreement on transparent and objective criteria and mechanisms in order to fill key leadership positions with the aim of unifying them.

The failure to settle the Palestinian question and resume the Middle East peace process is a source of grave concern for the Kingdom of Morocco. There cannot be a just or lasting peace for the Palestinian people unless they are able to exercise their legitimate right to establish an independent and viable Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Morocco therefore categorically rejects all unilateral measures taken by the Israeli authorities in the occupied Palestinian territories, whether in the West Bank or in Al-Quds Al-Sharif. Such measures will only fuel tension and instability in the region.

His Majesty King Mohammed VI, in his capacity as Chair of the Al-Quds Committee of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, stresses the importance of preserving the Holy City of Jerusalem, as it is a common heritage of humankind and a symbol of peaceful coexistence among the followers of the three monotheistic religions. It is also a centre for mutual respect and dialogue. This was reaffirmed in the Jerusalem appeal that His Majesty signed with His Holiness Pope Francis in Rabat on 30 March 2019.

I must express the Kingdom's heartfelt condolences and solidarity with brotherly Lebanon in the aftermath of the explosion at the port in Beirut, with its painful material and human losses. At the request of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, the Kingdom provided medical and humanitarian assistance to the Lebanese people in the hope of alleviating the suffering of those affected by that tragic incident.

We must turn the COVID-19 pandemic into an opportunity to rebuild a more effective and efficient multilateral system. To do so, we must conduct a comprehensive assessment of the failures of the multilateral system and its institutions in facing the crisis, as well as its achievements towards building a sound basis for good practices in the future. We must also refocus multilateral action on the principles of solidarity, cooperation and responsibility, while taking the appropriate measures to put an end to all conflicts through concrete and practical multilateral initiatives.

Morocco, in its firm adherence to the multilateral framework, remains committed to working with likeminded States to create a more just, united and transparent global system.

That was the commitment made by His Majesty King Mohammed VI at the Millennium Summit, where he reaffirmed that, as we embarked upon a new millennium, it was our solemn duty to set new goals for humankind, while acting with justice and solidarity.

May the peace, mercy and blessings of God be upon you.
