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GENERAL ASSEMBLY SEIZED WITH 'WAR ON CLIMATE CHANGE' AS ISLAND NATIONS WARN POLITICAL COWARDICE LEAVES THEM ONE STRONG HURRICANE AWAY FROM COLLAPSE

Caribbean Nation: Some Member States May Simply Vanish; Pacific Island State : 'Rising Tide May Lift All Boats, but It Will Drown Us'

With their countries locked in a life-and-death struggle against climate change — a battle they were currently losing — leaders of some of the world's smallest and most vulnerable nations today warned the General Assembly that apathy about the health of the planet and "political cowardice" on reaching a post-Kyoto Protocol climate deal had left them one category 2 hurricane away from economic and social collapse.

"The islands of our planet are at war against climate change, warming temperatures and rising seas," said Ralph E. Gonsalves, Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, as he opened the fourth day of the Assembly's annual high-level debate with a bracing assessment: "Entire nations that currently occupy this Assembly, whose representatives sit among us as friends and equals, may simply cease to exist as a result of our inaction."

Echoing a sense of urgency that would be heard from many other speakers about the existential challenges posed by climate change, he expressed his Government's anger over the "inexcusable failure" of States to move decisively towards a meaningful and legally binding treaty. "Our survival is at stake and the responsibility for immediate change lies indisputably with those whose reckless pollution over generations has led us to the brink of catastrophe." While pledging to continue defending his island home against encroaching seas, he said that if nations set aside narrow, short-term interests, the battle could yet be won.

Similarly, Denzil L. Douglas, Prime Minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis, was troubled that the main contributors of greenhouse gasses were still not taking responsibility for the coastal degradation, coral reef bleaching and decimation, infrastructure damage and loss of lives that their actions had wrought. "The physical, mental and financial burden that other countries' energy usage has inflicted on countries like mine has been enormous — plunging us deeper into debt and severely frustrating our efforts to meet our Millennium Development Goals."

He strongly urged that "green energy" be made an absolute global priority, and welcomed the Secretary-General's initiatives, including the recently launched "Sustainable Energy for All" strategy in that regard. Noting the framework that had emerged from the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development — known as Rio+20 — he said, "If we are to even approach [that summit's] potential, it will be essential that we first face up to, and then break, the strictures of indifference and narrow self-interest that have plagued us for far too long."

Pacific island nations were also committed to the full implementation of the Rio outcomes, said Lord Tu'i'vakano, Tonga's Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, as he pledged to join others in pressing for the finalization of plans to convene in 2014 a conference to follow-up the Mauritius Strategy for the further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. That summit should be held in the Pacific region, especially as it would provide an opportunity to take stock of efforts to implement the other Rio outcomes, as well as the status of the Millennium Goals.

“There is an urgent need to continue to address the security implications of climate change, including the impact on territorial integrity [...] threats to water and food security, and the forced displacement of people,” he declared. Small island developing States were challenging developed countries to take the bold measures necessary to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to levels that would ensure a viable and meaningful future for their countries, he said, adding that safeguarding the survival of the smallest and most vulnerable was to safeguard a viable future for all States. “A rising tide may lift all boats, but it will drown us,” he said.

Lamenting what he saw as a “huge deficit” in international cooperation for the development of low-income countries and least developed countries, Hailemariam Desalegn, Prime Minister of Ethiopia, said that the global sustainable development agenda related to a host of issues had actually been spelled out in such agreements as the Paris Declaration, the Accra Agenda for Action and the Busan partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. However “the resources have been few and far between”. Therefore, he was hopeful that the Assembly’s intergovernmental process on financing for development would not end up as a “filibuster exercise with no effect on this critical issue for the development of low-income countries”.

Landlocked developing countries, said Thongloun Sisovlith, Deputy Prime Minister of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, were among the most vulnerable in the world, with unique challenges derived from their distance from world markets, high transport costs, and lack of access to water and trade routes. Even as those countries laboured to improve their infrastructure and expand their economies, their challenges were exacerbated by natural disasters or fallout from global events such as the financial crisis. In that light, he joined other speakers today in urging the international community to devote more time and attention to addressing the needs of that particularly vulnerable group of countries.

Highlighting another issue that concerned many small nations, Meltek Sato Kilman Lituvuanu, Prime Minister of Vanuatu, argued that mechanisms and criteria for graduating such countries from “least developed” status must recognize their inherent and permanent vulnerabilities. Indeed, it was unrealistic for the United Nations to make projections without taking such issues into consideration. Here, he noted that on the 2011 *World Risk Report*, Vanuatu had scored highest on the index of countries with the greatest disaster risk, due to its high exposure and weak coping capacities. As such, he invited members of the third triennial review of the least developed country category to visit his nation to establish first-hand information prior to moving forward with the graduation process in 2013.

Also addressing the Assembly today were the Heads of State and Government of Saint Lucia, Bhutan, Samoa, San Marino, Croatia and Sao Tome and Principe.

Other senior ministers and high-level officials from Germany, Nepal, Malta, Netherlands, Chile, United Republic of Tanzania, Burkina Faso, Turkey, Morocco, Ireland, Austria, Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, United Arab Emirates, Monaco, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Fiji and Andorra also spoke.

Speaking in exercise of the right of reply were representatives of Bolivia, Chile, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Iran and the United Arab Emirates.

The General Assembly will reconvene at 9 a.m. Saturday, 29 September, to continue its general debate.

Background

The General Assembly met today to continue the general debate for the sixty-seventh session.

Statements

RALPH E. GONSALVES, Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, said that last year’s debate had not been without hope and optimism, as Member States had anticipated meaningful progress at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development — “Rio+20” — and had predicted a robust and legally binding arms trade treaty. They had embraced popular home-grown calls for political change and scanned the horizon for encouraging signs of recovery and growth. Today, however, “global optimism, though still enduringly present, is in scarcer supply, as the international community has encountered the challenges of a new world and found itself wanting”. Global structures, including the United Nations, were faced with changes of a scope, scale and rapidity that substantially outpaced their ability to react, and demanded a level of courage not sufficiently matched by political will.

In the Caribbean region, the global economic and financial meltdown continued to be felt most acutely by the poor, the youth, the elderly and the vulnerable, who bore no responsibility for the rampant financial speculation and unregulated movement of capital that had spurred the crisis. Today, four years into an externally imposed meltdown, which had produced negative or marginal growth across the Caribbean, the region was forced to contemplate the implications of a potential "lost decade" of development. "Our citizens, who have struggled nobly under the weight of externally sourced contraction, austerity and hardship, are not possessed with limitless patience or endurance," he said. Their hard-won developmental gains were in jeopardy and their political stability in potential peril.

In both global economics and politics, he went on, the "ancien régime" was passing. A transition was at large, but immense challenges arose with it. Among those, he asked, would the transition be manageable, or must it be played out in a chaotic manner? How could it be managed in the most efficacious way, and in whose interest? Was the transition a dead end, and if not, what was its destination? It was a truism that men and women made history not in circumstances of their own choosing, but in those which they inherited. Yet, each people possessed their own history, with its own legitimacy. Unfortunately, the power of some to define things globally distorted those elemental truths. "It is well known that the lion's view of history does not coincide with that of the gazelle or the lamb; the elephant and the ant do not see things eye to eye." But, human beings possess the capacity to go beyond those limitations of the animal kingdom and that was fundamentally why States have gathered together under the United Nations Charter. Its uplifting and magnificent ideals and purposes constitute the best hope for the human race. "Arrogant and unbridled power, from whatever source, is thus to be contained."

In the Latin American and Caribbean region, developmental and political partnerships increasingly reflected a strengthened spirit of regional integration and greater South-South cooperation, he said. After centuries of colonial conquest, settlement and exploitation, the deepening bonds of friendship among States of the region were a fundamental manifestation of their independence and political maturity. The strength and genuine cohesion of those growing regional integration initiatives was built on a solid foundation of shared experiences and common values. The members of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) were bastions of good governance, democracy and the rule of law, and they shared those experiences and aspirations with the country's South and Central American sister States, which had also established unshakable foundations of democracy and good governance after fitful periods of political unrest and foreign interference in the past.

However, his country, its region and the world faced other "existential challenges". Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was angered by the inexcusable failure of States to move decisively towards a meaningful and legally binding climate change treaty. "Entire nations that currently occupy this Assembly, whose representatives sit among us as friends and equals, may simply cease to exist as a result of our inaction and political cowardice," he stressed in that respect. Other nations, including his own, were already victim to increasingly intense and frequent storms, hurricanes and other weather events. "These changes threaten not only our way of life, but risk reversing our recent developmental progress," he said.

The islands of the planet were at war against climate change, warming temperatures and rising seas. That was not a future event, but instead a present-day and ongoing battle. "As all of you in this Assembly are aware, it is a war that we are currently losing." The survival of their islands were at stake, and the responsibility for immediate change lay indisputably with those whose reckless pollution over generations had led the world to the brink of catastrophe. "We shall fight the rising seas and encroaching oceans and defend our islands' right to exist at any cost," he said, calling on all nations to join them in the fight — for it was one which could still be won.

KENNY DAVIS ANTHONY, Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, said that each year as speeches were delivered in the Assembly Hall, it was easy to forget that behind each country's representative were real people seeking cherished moments, despite their troubles and despair. As such, all nations should embrace solidarity and commonality and ensure that "our faiths should never tear us apart", but should form bonds of understanding and tolerance. At the same time, he said, no one expected a naive world, or a world completely without tension and disagreement. "However, I ask that we have the courage to be bold about the world we want; that we act when we know we can," he said, adding that political leaders must always remember minorities, those that were forgotten, marginalized or "easily wiped away".

Touching on a number of peace and security issues, he said he looked forward to a peaceful resolution to the crisis in Syria and an immediate end to the "carnage" there. He said that Saint Lucia was committed to the achievement of peace throughout the Middle East region, and urged all stakeholders to understand that ongoing turbulence there was not only

unacceptable, it impacted oil prices, hampering the interests and development prospects of countries both large and small. He also looked forward to continued evolution in the peaceful rapprochement between China and Taiwan "as they search to unify their civilization". Turning next to Africa, he expressed support for permanent representation on the Security Council for nations from that continent, as "the voices of 1 billion people [...] should no longer go unheard".

Continuing, he welcomed resolution to the longstanding dispute in Sudan and the achievement of self-determination of South Sudan. He said that while bolstering democracy and good governance were crucial for development, it was also important to acknowledge past injustices, including slavery, forced labour and the decimation of cultures and identities. "Many of us today are descendents of the survivors of slavery," he said, recalling his Government's support of the move by Caribbean nations to raise awareness about the impacts of the transatlantic slave trade, and the need for dialogue on the status of peoples of African descent. Also on situations in his region, he denounced the embargo on Cuba, calling those measures an anachronistic "relic from an era of fear" that had been imposed purely for political retribution. Blockades and embargoes were outmoded, and in an era of globalization and economic liberalization, could not be tolerated or justified.

Haiti was another nation suffering from the relics of colonial attitudes, he continued, noting that what had been the first black independent nation in the Western hemisphere was now the region's poorest country. Haiti still needed and deserved the support of the United Nations, especially as it was still recovering from the devastating 2010 earthquake. He went on to urge broader awareness about the impact of illegal narcotics and guns in his region. The Caribbean could never have peace as long as its young people had easy access to guns, he said, and added that the recent Cartagena Summit of the Americas had focused on that issue and had also heard delegations acknowledge that measures to combat cross-border drug trafficking had failed. The region's States were determined to undertake a comprehensive review of the situation, and knew that they must craft new solutions.

He went on to note that many small States were deceptively categorized as "middle-income" merely on the basis of their per capita income. Yet, countries like Saint Lucia, which faced unique vulnerabilities, should not be subjected to such a measuring tool. Indeed, Saint Lucia had experienced one hurricane in 2010 that had caused damage that wiped out 30 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP). That was just one category 2 hurricane in one year, he said, explaining that following such extreme weather events, small islands and States were forced to borrow to replace damaged roads and repair infrastructure. In some countries, that situation was compounded by the impact of unilateral measures put in place by major economies and the prevailing inequitable trade environment. With all that in mind, he said the collapse of the Doha Round of World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations had been a "disappointing portent of difficult times to come". He looked forward to a time when United Nations and other institutions worked towards more targeted and differentiated policies.

LYONCHOEN JIGMI YOEZER THINLEY, Prime Minister of Bhutan, said the world's economic, social, ecological and political problems were interconnected and rooted in the "folly of mankind's pursuit of the wrong ends in wrongful ways". The Secretary-General had sounded the alarm about the international community's direction as a human family, but he had also pointed to moments that projected hope. One such moment had been when it had resolved that it was time to accept human well-being and happiness as a developmental goal binding all of humanity with a common vision and pursuit, and that it should bring about a holistic, sustainable and inclusive approach to development. That resolution had prompted Bhutan to host a high-level United Nations meeting on well-being and happiness, and the General Assembly had later declared 20 March as the annual International Day of Happiness.

The agreement to develop Sustainable Development Goals was a substantive outcome of the Rio+20 Conference, consistent with the Assembly resolution and Bhutan's efforts, he said. Bhutan hoped to actively participate in that work and saw it as evidence of the growing convergence on the understanding that the world must break from the past and agree on a collective vision. He hoped the new Goals would steer the post-2015 international development agenda and set humankind on the right course. He was inspired by the indomitable spirit of the hundreds of side events at the Rio+20 Conference, the Secretary-General's appointment of a high-level panel to advise on global development beyond 2015 and the launch of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

Bhutan had initiated several steps in the same direction in line with the 2 April high-level meeting on well-being and happiness, he said. In July, Bhutan's King had set up an international expert working group comprising more than 50 "thought" leaders to shed light on the proposed development paradigm in the coming two years. Their work would be made available during the Assembly sessions in 2013 and 2014. The King had also appointed a national steering committee to guide and support that process. The working group's findings would contribute to the high-level panel's efforts. Bhutan also

looked forward to the early establishment of the intergovernmental open working group tasked to design the Sustainable Development Goals.

For the first time, Bhutan was seeking non-permanent membership in the Council, for the 2013-2014 period, he said. All States, regardless of size, population and level of development, must be given the opportunity to contribute by bringing diversity of thought, approach and their will to work on the Council. The election of non-permanent Council members next month would give the international community an opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to the fundamental precept of sovereign equality, as enshrined in the Charter, and to the principles of democracy and rotation that gave it meaning.

Lord TU'IVAKANO, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Tonga, said his Government's delegation, along with those of other small island developing States, had returned this past June to Rio+20, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, to chart a new course for sustainable development. For those countries, the return amounted to a reaffirmation of the special and particular vulnerabilities of small island States recognized in 1992. In line with the Rio Outcome, Tonga planned to join other island nations in pressing for the finalization of plans to convene in 2014 a conference to follow-up the Mauritius Strategy for the further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

That summit should be held in the Pacific region, he said, especially as it would provide Pacific nations an opportunity to take stock of their efforts to implement the other Rio outcomes, as well as the status of the Millennium Development Goals in the region. On a related matter, he said that Tonga had joined other Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) nations at an event the previous day that had adopted a declaration on the continuing serious threats posed by climate change to the territorial integrity, viability and very survival of those States. "There is an urgent need to continue to address the security implications of climate change, including the impact on territorial integrity, the frequency and severity of climate related disasters, threats to water and food security, and the forced displacement of people," he declared.

Small island developing States were challenging the wider international community, especially developed countries, to take the bold measures necessary to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to levels that would ensure a viable and meaningful future for their countries, he said, adding that safeguarding the survival of the smallest and most vulnerable was to safeguard a viable future for all States. "A rising tide may lift all boats, but it will drown us," he said, stressing that the upcoming meeting in Doha, Qatar, of the States Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, must advance efforts to bridge differences on key issues, including the future of the Kyoto Protocol, climate-related finance, closing the pre-2020 mitigation gap, and constructively addressing losses and damages associated with the impact of climate change.

He stressed that Tonga's connection with its oceanic environment was one with deep historical dimensions. As custodians of the ocean and its fragile resources, Tongans had long appreciated that the health of the world's waters was critical to maintaining a stable source of sustenance and livelihood for island communities. As such, he welcomed the Rio Outcome's focus on sustainable fisheries and developing national capacities, as well as on the importance of access, small-scale and artisanal fisheries and women, as well as on the need for concerted efforts to address the vulnerability of coral reefs and mangroves. He went on to note that Tonga would build on its commitments made at Rio and Barbados to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and improve its energy security to achieve a 50 per cent renewable energy mix by 2020.

GUIDO WESTERWELLE, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, said the forces of freedom and dignity, self-determination and hope for a better life were the driving forces behind the movement for change in the Arab world. "As Germans, we know from our own bitter experience: freedom is not a gift," he said. Freedom had to be won and constantly defended. As a result of its experiences, Germany would always stand by those who, wherever they were in the world, called for freedom. However, he added, freedom had a "daughter" — called tolerance — and a "son" — known as respect. Freedom, therefore, did not mean freedom from responsibility. Rather, it always meant freedom to shoulder responsibility. He understood the many devout people who felt wounded by the shameful anti-Islam video that had surfaced in recent weeks. However, legitimate criticism and sincere indignation could not be used to justify acts of violence or destruction. While some said that the burning embassy buildings around the world were proof of a clash of civilizations, he continued, "we must not allow ourselves to be deluded by such arguments". The vast majority of people opposed violence, and there was no clash of civilizations. The struggle was, in fact, between open and closed minds, between moderates and radicals, between understanding and hate. It was a clash between those who

sought peace and those prepared to resort to violence. Germany had taken a stand in that struggle, and would not turn its back on the peoples of the Arab world.

In Syria, the United Nations Security Council had failed to live up to its responsibility, he said, strongly criticizing and calling for an end to that “deadlock”. Every day, the violence perpetrated by the al-Assad regime was escalating, and the risk of the conflict engulfing the entire region was growing. He supported the efforts of the Joint Special Representative, Lakhdar Brahimi, to find a political solution to the crisis. Meanwhile, at Germany’s initiative, this week, the Security Council had enhanced relations between the United Nations and the League of Arab States — an acknowledgment of its constitutional and positive role. In addition, Germany remained very concerned about the still unresolved dispute about Iran’s nuclear programme. In that regard, the “EU3+3” group of States had put forward proposals for a substantive negotiation process, and awaited a “serious response” from Iran. Israel’s security was at stake, as was stability in the whole region. He called on Iran to “stop playing for time”, as the situation was serious. At the same time, he added, those challenges must not lead to losing sight of the necessity of a negotiated peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

Many in the Assembly today were wondering whether Europe could successfully manage its sovereign debt crisis and whether it would continue to play a leading role in the world. “The answer is an emphatic ‘yes’, he stressed. The way out of the sovereign debt crisis was difficult, and required spending discipline, solidarity and growth. But Europe could continue down that road, and it would remain “a force to be reckoned with”. It was the world’s largest donor of development assistance, an inspiration for peaceful regional cooperation, a pioneer in climate action and disarmament, a champion of rule-based globalization and a driving force for United Nations reform. Finally, he said in that vein, Germany felt that the Security Council would be weakened if it failed to adapt to today’s world. He said, to that end, that Germany, India, Brazil and Japan were prepared to assume greater responsibility. A Council that did not have permanent seats for Latin America and Africa or only one for Asia did not reflect current and future realities.

TUILAEPA SAILELE MALIELEGAOI, Prime Minister of Samoa, began his address by recalling that, half a century after his country’s own independence, there were still territories in the Pacific region where people had not been able to exercise their right to self-determination. In the case of French Polynesia, he therefore encouraged the metropolitan power and the territory’s leadership, together with the support of the United Nations, to find an amicable way to exercise the right of the people to determine their future.

Turning to sustainable development, he said that the Rio+20 Outcome Document provided a blueprint of “the future we want”. For Samoa, amongst the gains achieved by that document was the reaffirmation that small island developing States were a special case for sustainable development due to their unique and particular vulnerabilities. “But acknowledging [small island developing States] vulnerabilities without attendant resources to strengthen their resilience makes this goal nothing but a hollow victory,” he stressed. The decision to hold a small island developing States review meeting in 2014 was, therefore, both important and timely, and Samoa’s offer to host the meeting was a matter of record. The year 2014 also held special significance for the country, as it was also slated to graduate from the category of least developed country.

The Millennium Development Goals were not mere “aspirations of what might be”, he continued, but were “tangible outcomes of what should be”. By their very nature, they were a restatement of peoples’ development needs and hopes. Thus, for Samoa, the achievement of the Goals by 2015 was not a matter of pride, but of necessity; the country would do everything possible to bring about that result. Success also meant that the nation would start the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals framework at higher thresholds, which would help to spur greater effort to improve the lives of more of its people.

With regard to those post-2015 Goals, he emphasized that clear, time-bound, targeted and measurable benchmarks were critical. It was important to ensure that the post-2015 development agenda built on the important progress of the Millennium Development Goals and was expanded to cover broader sustainable development issues, as agreed in Rio. In addition, the international community must ensure that the important priorities emerging from the outcome of the 2014 small island developing States meeting were also integrated into global development frameworks, and that such a strategy comprehensively addressed the needs of the small island developing States.

In that vein, he said, climate change was the world’s most urgent problem, requiring a decisive global response. It was a challenge that should unite the international community, not divide it. “Entrenched positions devoid of today’s realities and in pursuit of unrelated agendas do not have a role in our collective effort,” he stressed. All countries were impacted by climate change to varying degrees; no one should stay detached and unconcerned about that common plight. The world must work

together with a sense of urgency to address climate change “today, not tomorrow”. It should not just be science that recommended what should be done, he added, but also the conscience of States and their political will to follow through.

He announced that, this week, he had deposited Samoa’s Instrument of Ratification for the Kampala Amendments to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court to demonstrate the faith of his country in the rule of law. Serious disputes had recently arisen amongst bordering States, he said, and he encouraged resolution through peaceful settlement arrangements. In that respect, “Member States can only do so much”. What was needed was a committed Secretariat that was aware and sensitive to the needs of the peoples it existed to serve. That was why Samoa supported the Secretary-General’s vision to create a professional career service that was flexible and mobile to allow for quick and positive responses to the diverse demands of Member States.

DENZIL L. DOUGLAS, Prime Minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis, welcomed the theme of the peaceful settlement of disputes, and said the complexities and challenges facing Libya and Syria, to name just two, underscore the fact that “social upheaval and human trauma anywhere must indeed concern us all”. The Security Council must continue to ensure that it executes its mandate to enable the institutionalization of a culture of peace and security, with respect for democracy and diversity underlying such efforts. In that light, he condemned the recent attack on the United States embassy in Libya. Grateful to be able to call his country stable and socially cohesive, he expressed deep appreciation to the United States for its support, in the form of the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative against drugs and criminality. Reform had become critical to ensure that youth embraced productive work and a hopeful vision through respect for human life.

However, the continuing flow of small arms into the region and their threat to life and stability still concerned him greatly and he urged agreement on an arms trade treaty and the establishment of a dedicated secretariat to assist States parties in implementing it. His small country, located between “regions of massive drug production and regions of massive drug consumption”, with the related threat of arms inflows, was simply not equipped to deal with the “externally created crime fallout”. The presence of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) had been withdrawn, leaving it to adjust the best it could, at precisely the time when such crime continued to be a major hemispheric challenge.

Describing his country’s efforts to implement a plan of action on non-communicable diseases, he urged that the Assembly move forward on a campaign to curb the global toll of such illness, in light of its effect on development. On HIV/AIDS, he said that the ultimate objective must be eradication of the dreaded disease. He appealed for a wise, determined and discerning onslaught against it at all levels, as well as a recommitment to eradicate stigmatization and discrimination against people living with it.

Turning to climate change, he said, “It is troubling that the largest contributors of greenhouse gasses are still not taking responsibility for the increasing temperatures, rising sea levels, coastal degradation, coral reef bleaching and decimation, infrastructural damage and loss of lives that their actions have wrought,” adding that: “The physical, mental and financial burden that other countries’ energy usage has inflicted on countries like mine has been enormous — plunging us deeper into debt and severely frustrating our efforts to meet our Millennium Development Goals.” He strongly urged that green energy be made an absolute priority globally, and he welcomed the Secretary-General’s initiatives and the assistance of Taiwan and other partners in that regard.

Noting the framework developed at Rio+20 in that regard, he said that “If we are to even approach the potential of Rio+20, it will be essential that we first face up to, and then break, the strictures of indifference and narrow self-interest that have plagued us for far too long.” He applauded, in that light, the decision to convene the third United Nations conference on sustainable development for small island developing States in 2014, and urged that clear targets be developed now for reducing the extreme vulnerabilities of such States. In addition to other problems created abroad, those States had also gone through economic hardships because of the financial crisis that was not of their making and his country had to restructure and work with a raft of partners to alleviate its severity. Finally, he stressed the importance of rule of law at the international level and urged that strictures on Taiwan’s international status be removed and that the embargo against Cuba be lifted, in light of the contributions that both had made to the international community.

MELTEK SATO KILMAN LITVUNVANU, Prime Minister of Vanuatu, said many of the now politically independent nations gathered for the general debate had a shared history with peoples whose larger political freedom was “still bound by the tentacles of imperialism and [colonialism]”. Indeed, for the world’s remaining colonized territories, the Assembly’s annual high-level debate represented a “pinnacle” they aspired to reach one day. For decades Vanuatu had called on the United Nations to strengthen its work towards full decolonization of territories still under administrative Powers, and reiterated that call, including on all free nations, to “complete the story of decolonization and close this

chapter". He also urged the United Nations to support the demands for French Polynesia's right to self-determination and progress. In the same vein, negotiations for self-governance of the indigenous people of New Caledonia must continue, and he encouraged the parties to ensure that process stayed on track.

Turning to other issues, he noted his Government's ongoing concern about the denial to countries of the right to exercise their inherent political freedom and cultural rights over their maritime territories. The 32-year dispute with France over Vanuatu's two southern islands — Mathew and Hunter — "is a reminder that we must continue to uphold the notion that the rule of law should not be used as an instrument for powerful nations to coerce the weak and small". He noted that the Governments of Vanuatu and France had met recently in Paris to begin a dialogue on the dispute, and he thanked the French authorities for "finally opening the door" so that negotiations could start.

He said that Vanuatu was surrounded by the vast Pacific Ocean and was exposed to the "notorious" illegal shipment and trade of arms. That issue had not received adequate attention and, as a result, such shipment lacked proper and coherent regulation and was, therefore, responsible for the loss of countless lives. He joined other countries in urging the United Nations to step up effort to conclude an arms trade treaty, which would provide greater security and controls on such illegal shipments. On other matters of concern for island nations, he recalled that Vanuatu had consistently argued that mechanisms and criteria for "graduating" such countries from least developed country status must recognize their inherent and permanent vulnerabilities.

Indeed, it was unrealistic for the United Nations to make projections without taking such matters into consideration. To that end, he noted that on the 2011 World Risk Report, Vanuatu had scored highest as the country with the greatest disaster risk, due to its high exposure and weak coping capacities. As such, he invited members of the third triennial review of the least developed country category to visit his nation to establish first-hand information prior to moving forward with the graduation process in 2013.

He went on to stress that Vanuatu was among many countries in the region being negatively impacted by climate change, including coastal erosion, coral bleaching and ocean acidification. Beyond climate impacts, there was a need to consider the potential for irrevocable damage that would be wrought on marine environments by pollution, and the projected increase in maritime traffic was only going to make matters worse. Vanuatu, therefore, urged all remaining States that had not done so to ratify the London Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution and its Protocol. Those countries were also urged to put in place and enforce relevant legal measures.

ANTONELLA MULARONI, Minister of Foreign and Political Affairs, with functions of Prime Minister of San Marino, said her country had always believed in the power of dialogue, democracy and respect for others as basis for peaceful coexistence among peoples. Referring to recent attacks on Western diplomatic missions, she strongly condemned any form of violence. "We don't believe that violence is the right answer when someone feels hurt in his personal beliefs or opinions. Human life must be always above everything and everyone," she said, emphasizing that the apt theme of this session came at a time characterized by ever-increasing and bloody conflicts.

In this vein, the United Nations role had become ever more fundamental, making the reform process crucial for future global stability, she said, including revitalizing the General Assembly, the Organization's most democratic body and sometimes the only forum where a small State could express its opinions. Assembly reform was key to strengthening the global governance architecture and the process should include its political role and authority, as defined in the United Nations Charter. "The General Assembly should not be limited to that of a mere body where resolutions are adopted," she said. "On the contrary, it should be a forum for exchange of ideas and debate, where solutions can be found to today's challenges and where a global consensus on issues of common interest can be reached."

Turning to the financial crisis, she said the response from the Group of 20 Summit and their central banks had sidestepped the worst affects, but the situation remained precarious and many developed countries would experience stagnation or recession, she said. Increased food prices had contributed to higher poverty rates and caused increasingly violent social tensions, as the crisis had become a global challenge that needed new strategies and a sense of solidarity among countries and people. The session's thematic debate on the state of the world's economy should be repeated annually, at least until the crisis had been overcome, she said. "This organization should play a leadership role in the promotion of fair and inclusive growth, sustainable development and elimination of poverty and hunger," she said.

Covering a range of security issues, she first emphasized the need for reform to ensure an enlarged, more representative, transparent and efficient Security Council. Over the last few years, some new bloody and violent conflicts had broken out. The world had also assisted a massive popular uprising across North Africa and the Middle East, where young people were at the forefront of the Arab revolution. The world must support them in their struggle for democracy, liberty and social justice, she said. Regarding the Syrian conflict, she condemned atrocities taking place and hoped the Council would soon reach an agreement on how to settle the crisis. The Assembly's commitment to the crisis reflected an important mission: to keep peace worldwide and ensure respect for freedoms and human rights.

With regards to the improvement of disaster prevention and response, she said that theme had recently gained greater importance on the political agenda. A fundamental way to reduce risks was to invest in the most vulnerable regions and build capacities necessary to prevent disasters. In the short term, it was essential to provide political and financial support, she said. She was grateful to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and Central Emergency Response Fund. Humanitarian aid and sustainable development were intertwined and success in providing an efficient response to natural disasters had a direct impact on the capacity to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The General Assembly resolution "The future we want" was an important step. "Now the most important thing is that the commitments undertaken be respected so that the future wanted and written in the resolution will turn into reality," she said, emphasizing that persons with disabilities, women and children must be part of that future.

NARAYAN KAJI SHRESTHA 'PRAKASH', Deputy Prime Minister of Nepal, said that the concept of collective security, the core pillar of the United Nations Charter, had often been undermined with the recourse to means of dispute settlement outside the purview of multilateral mechanisms. Unilateralism and selective interpretation of the Charter risked inviting more conflicts and confrontation, rather than understanding and cooperation. While every country had the legitimate right to pursue its enlightened national interests, international norms and values needed to be observed when a country's action affected another. That necessitated the wider respect for, and observance of, the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and non-interference as the bedrock principles of international relations. "These principles cannot and should not be made subject to political tests under any circumstances," he said.

Nepal reiterated its call for general and complete disarmament of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in a time-bound manner. It was ironic that funding for the global development agenda and the fight against poverty had been overshadowed by global military expenses of over \$1.7 trillion annually. Nepal welcomed the recent initiative towards conventional arms regulation within the United Nations and underlined the importance of an early conclusion to the arms trade treaty. As confidence-building dialogues and deliberations through regional mechanisms could greatly complement the goals of international peace and disarmament, he emphasized the importance of the revitalization of "the Kathmandu process" for promoting regional disarmament.

His country's commitment to democracy, human rights, the rule of law and inclusive development was "unflinching", he said. In that context, to address its post-conflict transition needs, Nepal had established mechanisms and processes for human rights protection and promotion, as well as their monitoring at the highest level and various tiers at the subnational levels. The country was further party to 22 human rights conventions, and was committed to controlling international human trafficking, and to making the maximum effort to ensure that the rights and interests of migrant workers were protected in labour destination countries. The National Human Rights Commission, an independent constitutional body, functioned as the country's all-powerful watchdog for protection and promotion of human rights; Nepal was committed to strengthening that body.

Rio+20 had laid out a broad framework for global action and a post-2015 development agenda, he said. For effective implementation, he emphasized the reinforcement of the three pillars of sustainable development with poverty eradication, inclusive development and environmental conservation at the centre. He also asked for the fuller accommodation of the concerns of the developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, in defining the important aspects of finance, technology transfer and capacity-building. The least developed countries were suffering from dehumanizing marginalization and deprivation from basic necessities of life. "That state of affairs is a blemish on the sheer affluence achieved by the globalized world," he said. Global sustainable development would not be possible without sustainable development of the least developed countries, including a substantial improvement in the quality of life of their 880 million people. The world must pay due attention, in words as well as deeds, to the special and differential needs and requirements of those countries.

Turning to the situation in his own country, he said that Nepal had yet to conclude its historic transition process, in particular with the promulgation of a new constitution from the Constituent Assembly and the completion of the peace process in totality. That Assembly had been elected for the first time in Nepal's history in 2008, and was mandated to draft the constitution, addressing the aspirations of the people for change with the restructuring of the State. However, the Assembly was dissolved in May of this year, without having met its deadline. Nepal had made qualitative progress in the technical side of the peace process, mainly in the reintegration of former Maoist combatants. Political parties remained in dialogue and negotiation and were seriously committed to a consensus solution to end the impasse. Nepal believed that democracy, development and peace were interrelated and interdependent. It also thanked the international community, including the United Nations, for its support for the peace and constitution drafting process, and hoped that it would continue in to the future.

TONIO BORG, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malta, lamented that extremists persisted in their efforts to derail the Arab Spring's call to end oppression and injustice. He stressed the importance of protecting the inviolability of diplomatic premises and personnel as well as reiterating the collective condemnation of the deplorable acts perpetrated recently in various capitals in the region. Many had doubted the success of the Arab Spring and feared its call for change. But "change" did come, as seen in the first seeds of democracy blossoming in places previously unthinkable. And more "change" was yet to come. Malta knew all too well what that call for change was about, as it received those fleeing war, hunger and persecution. "We need to give these people safe refuge, and we do so with a sense of solidarity and a strong belief that every human life is worth saving," he said, stating Malta's commitment to give assistance and continue its historic role of welcoming those bereft of their human rights and dignity.

He called upon the international community to give those people genuine alternatives and to no longer accept that it was a problem in someone else's backyard. "We want to ensure that the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals do not become a simple check-marking exercise, but instead underscore a truly global effort that will lift millions out of deprivation, disease and discrimination," he said. He saluted Libya's recent success in holding its first free and fully democratic elections. The situation in Syria, however, was troubling. Oppression and violence were never the solution. The international community had a moral duty to ensure that the Syrian people were not abandoned to a tragic fate.

Now could be the right time for a new era for the entire Mediterranean basin, which had known too many wars, too many divisions and far too many prejudices, he said. He reaffirmed Malta's commitment to promote peace and prosperity across the region and beyond. Malta's initiative to convene a European Union-League of Arab States ministerial meeting in Malta in 2008 specifically aimed to attain that. He lauded the decision to hold a "Malta II" conference in Cairo in November. In the coming days, Malta would host the 5+5 Heads of State and Government Meeting of the Western Mediterranean Forum, which should offer an excellent opportunity to discuss such issues. He hoped the forum would meet the aspirations of the peoples of the Mediterranean basin to implement concrete action in Euro-Mediterranean dialogue, transcending ineffective declarations, statements and conclusions. "We cannot fail in this regard. We owe it to our peoples," he said.

The call to rise above the stalemate was nowhere more evident than in the Middle East peace process, he said. Bickering over who did what and when should not be the way forward. Forging common ground did not equate with giving in. The international community must redouble its efforts and could not rest until the world welcomed a truly stable, secure Middle East. He reaffirmed Malta's commitment to the efforts of the United Nations and the European Union to achieve a two-State solution. One year from now the world should be talking about a Middle East peace, not a Middle East peace process. The Arab Spring showed that the time to answer the call of history was now. This time it could be different.

URI ROSENTHAL, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Netherlands, recounting his visit to a camp of Syrian refugees on the Turkish border, said that it was clear that the refugees needed the support of the international community for food, shelter and security, but ultimately, "they need an effective United Nations and a strong international legal order". That legal order was enshrined in the Dutch Constitution, was pursued by the efforts of Dutch citizens working in Afghanistan and was embodied by the institutions in The Hague's Peace Palace, the International Court of Justice and the Permanent Court of Arbitration. A stronger international legal order was needed to preserve peace and security, to protect freedom and to promote prosperity.

For peace, he said, the world needed a strong and more united Security Council, as shown by the disagreements on that body that prevented decisive action on Syria. Mediation, arbitration and judicial settlement of conflicts in a peaceful manner were tools that must be cherished and developed. Better implementation of existing treaties on non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament was also of paramount importance. In that regard, Iran must completely fulfil its obligations to the International

Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and abide by Council resolutions. Noting the upcoming hosting of the Netherlands of the next nuclear summit in 2014 and the fifteenth anniversary of the Organization to Prohibit Chemical weapons in The Hague, he said that the international agenda on nuclear, chemical and conventional weapons must lead to concrete results and new treaties. Negotiations on a robust and effective arms trade treaty should recommence as soon as possible.

Turning to protection of freedom, he underlined the need for equal rights and empowerment of women, as well as the need to disseminate awareness, constantly, about the human rights obligations of States. To improve the Human Rights Council, it must be ensured that countries aspiring to membership were genuinely committed to human rights. In that light, he announced his country's candidature for the period 2015-2017, and stressed that every State had an obligation to prevent serious rights violations. If countries could not or would not act, the international community had a responsibility to protect.

A stronger legal order also promoted prosperity and economic growth because trade, investment in innovation and development all benefitted from a predictable and rule-based climate, he said, adding that one of the lessons of what he called the Arab awakening was that an economy could not thrive in societies where human rights were violated, corruption was rampant and Government revenues were wasted. Stronger free trade agreements and a well-functioning World Trade Organization were also needed; foreign direct investment could be promoted by enhanced arbitration and conflict resolution mechanisms. In addition, protecting intellectual property rights fostered innovation. He maintained that the Millennium Development Goals needed a new agenda with greater engagement of the private sector to end poverty and foster sustainable development.

He said an effective United Nations was critical in all such areas, but he warned of a "widening gap" between expectations and what the Organization could actually deliver. For that reason, the Security Council should be reformed, with more influence for emerging powers, while their larger share in the world economy should be reflected in their contributions to the Organization's budget. The Secretary-General's reform proposals for coherence of the entire United Nations system must also be implemented. On their part, Member States must universally respect universal human rights without distinction, including the rights of sexual and ethnic minorities, recognize the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice and join the International Criminal Court.

ALFREDO MORENO CHARME, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Chile, said the Arab Spring had channelled the legitimate democratic aspirations of the Arab people. He called on all parties, particularly the Syrian Government, to immediately cease violence and to engage in dialogue toward a peaceful solution. He rejected the intolerance that had spurred violence in the region. Nothing justified the criminal act committed against United States diplomats in Libya. Further, Chile recognized the Palestinian State and supported its bid to become a United Nations Member State and its right to be independent. Israel also had the right to safe borders. Despite their differences, Latin American countries had learned to live with each others' cultures and forms of Government, and had been able to use dialogue to reach consensus on various issues. Mutual respect and understanding guided Chile's foreign policy. The global community must help countries emerging from crisis, and support their internal reconciliation processes and socioeconomic development. A stronger development component to aid Haiti's recovery must offset the requisite changes to the composition and size of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).

The Security Council must be reformed to become more representative and democratic. He supported expanding the number of non-permanent and permanent seats and making its working methods more transparent. He objected to the veto power, and said it should never be used when addressing crimes against humanity, genocide and ethnic cleansing. Nations must set aside national ideologies. Chile had submitted its candidature for the Council during the 2014-2015 period. If elected, it would contribute its own foreign policy, as well as a Latin American and Caribbean perspective. Chile was firmly committed to the rule of law and to providing support for vulnerable sectors. It supported strengthening of the human rights treaty system, as well as the work of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Latin America's past experience with addressing a fiscal crisis had taught it that Governments must act responsibly and control public spending. Protectionism was inefficient, he said. It undermined productivity, eliminated competition and prevented real development. He advocated free trade as a way to fuel economic growth. Chile had free-trade arrangements with more than 60 countries. At 1 per cent, its average tariffs were the eighth lowest in the world. Thanks to brisk annual growth of 6 per cent on average in the last two years, Chile had reduced extreme poverty and unemployment. Chile had joined Peru, Mexico and Colombia in a free-trade alliance with Pacific rim countries. Thanks to generous outside aid, Chile had recovered from the massive earthquake that rocked the country two years ago. By end of the Chilean President's current mandate, all material damage would be fully recovered. He called for global solidarity to address the repercussions of the increasing number of natural disasters

worldwide, noting that outside support had helped rescue the 33 miners trapped in the San Jose mine in 2010.

Nations must act responsibly to preserve the environment, implement sustainable development goals and meet clean energy objectives, he said. He supported Argentina's legitimate claims over the Malvinas, South Georgia and South Sandwich islands and called for the resumption of talks between that country and the United Kingdom. As for the United States blockade on Cuba, it must end. Also, he categorically rejected the charges against Chile made by Bolivia's President on Wednesday during the General Assembly. There were no outstanding border problems between Chile and Bolivia. Chilean-Bolivian border arrangements were clearly spelled out in their 1904 Treaty, to which Chile had dutifully complied. Bolivia's 2009 Constitution introduced provisions that contravened international law; therefore, they were unenforceable. As a commission of jurists appointed by the Society of Nations in 1921 and the most recent General Assembly of the Organization of American States held in Cochabamba had stated, the issue was a strictly bilateral matter. Chile had readily expressed its desire to engage in dialogue with Bolivia over the existing agreements. It was up to Bolivia to accept that invitation.

BERNARD KAMILIUS MEMBE, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania, said developing countries had fought hard to recover from the 2008 financial crisis, including through stimulus packages to expedite economic growth in areas like agriculture, the mainstay of his and other developing countries. While the global crisis was far from over, the international community had the opportunity to prevail over the turbulent waves by working together. His country had made progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It had attained universal primary education in 2009; made considerable progress towards promoting gender equality and empowering women and towards combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; and achieved moderate results in other goals. But, much work remained to emancipate people from the poverty trap. He proposed a second generation of Millennium Development Goals to ensure all those who had yet to achieve them did so in the post-2015 period and the international community should consider the proposed Sustainable Development Goals. The development needs of Africa should feature prominently in all consultations and decisions in multilateral forums.

While the 2012 Millennium Development Goals Task Force report was alarming in some respects, it offered some hope, he said. Therefore, it was necessary to recommit to fully implement the Millennium Development Goals after 2015 and the internationally agreed commitments on the special needs of Africa and the least developed countries. Since last year, the food insecurity situation had worsened and the vulnerability of many countries had increased. He called for collective action to address food insecurity and malnutrition, increase food production and productivity, strengthen agricultural systems, establish early warning mechanisms and develop effective responses to calamities in the Horn of Africa the Sahel region and elsewhere. The United Republic of Tanzania was a proud member of the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement. The Government had launched various food security initiatives through public-private partnerships. It had hosted the Africa Green Revolution Forum in Arusha, which concluded today. He welcomed the outcome document of the Rio+20 Conference, but said that outstanding issues required further consideration by the Assembly.

United Nations reform was long overdue, he said. Africa was the largest regional group in the Organization, but the only continent without a permanent Council seat. Moreover, most Council discussions were about Africa. African leaders had voiced agreement on the need for two permanent, veto-wielding seats for Africa, and to continue working together based on the Ezulwini Consensus and Sirte Declaration. He appealed to Africa to maintain its solidarity. His Government would continue to support the "delivering as one" initiative, which it had implemented with considerable success since 2007. The 2012 quadrennial comprehensive policy review would take into account those positive achievements.

He applauded the admission of Palestine to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). He appealed to big donors to UNESCO to review their decision to punish the agency by withdrawing funding, which hindered developing countries, particularly in Africa, which were the recipients of up to 65 per cent of UNESCO funds in education, science and culture. He called on the Secretary-General to continue his mediation efforts of bringing together the Moroccan Government and the leadership of Western Sahara to resolve their territorial dispute. He encouraged Morocco to rejoin the African Union, so together they could find a durable solution. Also, he stood in full solidarity with the Cuban people in their demand to end unilateral sanctions and embargoes against them.

DJIBRILL YPÈNÈ BASSOLÉ, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation of Burkina Faso, said that the magnitude of current challenges to international economic development and peace and security called for greater courage, effort, creativity and solidarity from the international community. This year his country had been tested by a food crisis, precipitated by a lack of rain and loss of cereal

crops and exacerbated by the influx of refugees from Mali. He expressed gratitude to the specialized agencies of the United Nations, as well as to donor countries for their assistance that allowed both refugees and the local population to survive the situation with dignity. In regard to his country's consolidation of democracy, he said that, after the successful organization of biometric voter registration of the entire country, this coming December would see legislative and municipal elections, organized with the goal of the greatest transparency and fairness.

Growth and sustainable development were being prioritized to generate a strong and prosperous economy to meet the basic needs of the population, to meet the Millennium Development Goals and to achieve sustained growth along with conservation of natural resources. In that effort, he hoped that his country's development partners would remain at its side. Underscoring the importance of the peaceful settlements of disputes as the theme of session, he called for renewed efforts to that end in all conflicts around the world, noting his country's participation in mediation in the Malian crisis in conjunction with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), with the aim of resolving by dialogue the security and institutional crisis in the country through promoting the implementation of frameworks agreed to by the parties and acceptable to the international community. He said his country, in conjunction with its partners, would continue their work in that regard and he called on the parties in northern Mali to put down their arms, respect fundamental freedoms, distance themselves from extremists and engage in dialogue.

Affirming that the problems in Mali arose from common threats to all countries in the region, he welcomed recent United Nations attention to the problems of the Sahel as a whole. On Guinea-Bissau, he called on all parties to work for a consensual outcome respecting the rule of law, and on Darfur, he called for the implementation of the Doha Document, noting that his country had contributed to peacekeeping in both those countries. A fair, consensual resolution in Western Sahara was also needed, as the status quo was neither viable nor did it benefit either of the parties. He was of the opinion that the Moroccan initiative for negotiation on an autonomous status for the region could be an appropriate route to that end.

In other areas, he said that continuing economic insecurity and natural disasters were testing the cohesion of societies and he called for greater solidarity in response. Rio+20 reminded the international community of its shared, but differentiated responsibilities, and acceptable compromises in all areas were needed. On the empowerment of women, he said that his country had spared no effort to promote the participation of women and defend women's rights, as shown by efforts against female genital mutilation by Burkina Faso's first lady, which he hoped would have the backing of the entire international community. The achievement of gender rights was particularly important in developing countries, he maintained. Finally, he called for granting Taiwan its rightful status in the family of nations, and stressed that reform of the United Nations was critical as the basis for the improvement of global governance as a whole.

AHMET DAVUTOĞLU, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, said: "On many matters, we speak as one, yet we fail to act in unity." Each year there was a commitment to solve frozen conflicts in Palestine, the Nagorno-Karabakh region and in Cyprus, and they remain unresolved. And "while we cannot resolve current problems, each year we find ourselves besieged by ever-mounting new ones". In that respect, he said the world was now witnessing indiscriminate attacks and the collective punishment of civilians by a cruel regime in Syria. "If we fail to hear and rise up to the cry of innocent masses wherever they are, and if we cannot force these brutal regimes to submit to justice and the rule of law, how are we to maintain international peace and security?" he asked. Indeed, the international community's inability to act had become a "tool in the hands of despots and destructive regimes to demolish their cities, towns and villages, massacre their own citizens and make a mockery of the civilized world and the United Nations". "Let us make no mistake", he added, "mercy shown to an oppressor is the most merciless act towards people under oppression".

He underlined that the recent attacks against the Prophet Muhammad and against Islam were outright provocations that aimed to pit nations and peoples against each other. Turkey condemned all sorts of incitement to hatred and religious discrimination against Muslims and peoples of other faiths. Unfortunately, Islamophobia had become a new form of racism, like anti-Semitism, and it could no longer be tolerated "under the guise of freedom of expression". Freedom did not mean anarchy, he stressed in that respect; instead, it meant responsibility. At the same time, he condemned the provocation and violence that followed, saying it "cannot be justified under any pretext". Because of the alarming increase in the number of acts that defame religions, he believed the time had come to establish the denigration of all religions and their followers as a hate crime. He called for a universal policy and legal instrument that, while protecting free expression, should also ensure respect for religion and prevent intentional insults against faiths. "The solution should not be arbitrary," he added, calling on the United Nations, in particular, to lead that effort and provide the international legal framework.

The people of Syria had suffered under the brutality and the tyranny of the regime in Damascus for the last 18 months, he went on, stressing that more than 30,000 people had been killed so far and around 300,000 had fled to neighbouring countries, such as Turkey. About 1 million people were internally displaced. Unfortunately, however, "this humanitarian tragedy has become just a statistic for many". There could be no legitimate explanation for the failure of the Security Council to reflect the collective conscience of the international community by stopping the violence of the Syrian regime. "The responsibility to protect the people of Syria is our fundamental duty," he stressed, not least because the situation in the country had evolved into a real threat to regional peace and security.

Before concluding he focused on a long-standing conflict — the "Cyprus problem". In that regard, he said that a new round of talks, begun in 2008, were now stuck with no end in sight, due to the Greek Cypriots' "intransigence and lack of political will". The Turkish Cypriots had so far proven their firm commitment to a negotiated solution, but yet remained subject to an inhumane and unlawful embargo. "This is simply unfair," he said. The continuation of the problem created additional risks for the stability of the region. Moreover, the unilateral exploration of oil and natural gas by the Greek Cypriots around the island further intensified those risks. Under those circumstances, the United Nations must do more. The Security Council, in particular, should facilitate a solution, rather than merely sustain the status quo. "It is no longer enough to pay lip service to a bizonal, bicomunal federation," he said in that respect, adding, "it is time to act before it is too late."

ZORAN MILANOVIĆ, Prime Minister of Croatia, said his country strongly supported the United Nations as a beacon of multilateralism providing the only universal framework for finding common solutions to international crises and challenges. "But we have to ask ourselves: has the United Nations done enough and what can we do collectively to improve its performance?" If each country became more democratic, more developed, better run, more stable and more responsible, "our combined strength will rise exponentially", he said. Resolving international disputes was at the very heart of the United Nations, which had been created to prevent war and keep the peace through its valuable tools of preventive diplomacy and mediation.

"We have done it ourselves", he continued, referring to his country's settlement of its border dispute with Slovenia. However, not everyone respected peace and international law, and this year was unfortunate in terms of United Nations efficiency concerning conflict-prevention, mediation and protection of civilians. The lack of unequivocal action against the most severe violations of the United Nations Charter was deeply troubling, he said, strongly condemning the recent killing of the United States Ambassador to Libya. He added that prompt action in Syria should help to end the violence and lead to a Syrian-led political transition that would meet the people's aspirations. "There is no peace without justice", he said, expressing support for the rule of law and the work of the International Criminal Court.

"Undoubtedly there are sufficient conflict-prevention tools at our disposal; the question remains whether we can muster enough resolve to use them," he continued. Syria was the most recent and most striking proof of the need for a greater role for preventive diplomacy and mediation efforts in the early phase of a conflict, he said, emphasizing that timely prevention was crucial for successful conflict resolution. The prevailing global crises and the effects of globalization contributed to the rise of popular distrust in the capability of political leaders to produce solutions, he said, pointing out, however, that his country had undergone an extensive but successful political, economic and social transition in a fairly short period.

As Vice-Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, Croatia stood ready to assume its responsibility for creating improved structures, he said, noting that further development of the Human Rights Council's capacity was of utmost importance. Croatia had been successful in its post-conflict transition and stood ready to join the European Union next year, he continued, adding that the country was also preparing to become an active participant in United Nations peacekeeping operations. Among other commitments, Croatia supported efforts to stabilize Afghanistan and improve the lives of its people. "We built a stronger State so we can play a more substantive role in the world's affairs," he said. "We stand ready to share our experiences and contribute constructively to the reforms in neighbouring countries, based on democracy and European values." He added: "Our vision is not just a region devoid of war. We strive to achieve genuine political, societal and economic development."

PATRICE EMERY TROVOADA, Prime Minister of Sao Tome and Principe, reiterated his hope that the United Nations would play a key role in mediating conflicts, even though the Organization continued to suffer from "roadblocks" that prevent urgent decisions from being taken in time, thus allowing impunity for leaders who made martyrs of their own people, paving the way for more international disorder, despair and injustice. Suffering in Syria, Mali, Afghanistan and many other places was prolonged because of that inaction, he said, stressing that the disintegration of national territories must be prevented, and the degrading situations of peoples in oppressive situations remedied.

He said the international community should bring both firmness and dedication to bear in Guinea-Bissau, with which his country maintained strong links, in order to find a credible, inclusive and lasting solution while ensuring that coups did not recur. Applauding international efforts in Mali and the Democratic Republic of Congo, he called on States bordering those two countries to establish more effective cooperation with them, based on trust and mutually beneficial interests. Citing progress in the Horn of Africa, he hailed the accomplishments of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). He also welcomed the progress made towards resolving the dispute between Sudan and South Sudan, as well as the Secretary-General's recommendations on Western Sahara.

On other conflict situations around the world, he expressed solidarity for victims, including the families of diplomats, journalists, members of non-governmental organizations and peacekeepers who had been killed. The Palestinian people must have their State, the embargo against Cuba must end, Iran and other countries must enjoy their right to nuclear technology, while abiding scrupulously by their obligations in that regard, and polluters must pay for their pollution, he said. Sao Tome and Principe also supported ongoing initiatives aimed at allowing Taiwan to make a significant contribution to international issues alongside peaceful efforts to normalize its relations with China.

Transnational crimes, including piracy and trafficking in arms and drugs, were of great concern to countries with long coastlines such as his own, he said, applauding recent Security Council actions on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. As for the global financial crisis, he said it had severe effects on every aspect of life in small countries like Sao Tome and Principe, including the business climate and political stability. Measures were needed to jump-start economies through productive investments, and people all over the world were demanding changes in the rules and practices of the international financial system so as to make stakeholders and speculators more accountable.

Domestically, Sao Tome and Principe was carrying out institutional reforms aimed at reducing poverty and increasing transparency in public management, he said, reporting good progress in meeting the Millennium Development Goals relating to education and health, in particular the fight against malaria. In order to meet all the Millennium Goals, the country hoped to continue receiving international support in many forms, he said, thanking UNESCO and the entire international community for having recognized Principe as a World Biosphere Reserve.

HAILEMARIAM DESALEGN, Prime Minister of Ethiopia, began by paying tribute to his predecessor, the late Meles Zenawi, whose death was a huge loss for his country and Africa. He and his party had facilitated the emergence of a "new Ethiopia", which had rekindled the hope of Ethiopians in the future and strengthened their confidence in being able to overcome adversities. Indeed, there had been many "doomsday scenarios" bandied about regarding Ethiopia's future, but its people had embraced their unity, and the country now enjoyed rapid economic growth of the kind it had never witnessed before in its modern history. The Growth and Transformation Plan was designed to catapult the nation "to that destination which has eluded our people for so long, but which is now within reach".

However, the country's success hinged on a number of conditions being met, he cautioned, saying the first was the question of peace and stability and the challenge of extremism. While neighbouring Somalia was "gradually coming out of the woods", much more remained to be done to ensure that its new Government stood on its own feet. "We would be naïve [...] if we believed that the enemies of peace in Somalia and the region are completely defeated," he warned. It was critical not to lose momentum and to strengthen Somalia's ownership of the national reconciliation process. There had also been progress in the talks between Sudan and South Sudan, he said, describing what had been achieved over the last few days — culminating in the signing of a much-anticipated agreement on vital matters — was a significant breakthrough that must be consolidated and used as a basis for resolving outstanding issues.

The second challenge to Ethiopia's sustainable development agenda related to the "huge deficit" in international cooperation for the development of low-income and least developed countries, he said. That was spelled out in the Paris Declaration, the Accra Agenda for Action and the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, he noted, adding, however, that "the resources have been few and far between". Such challenges had been compounded by climate change, a global problem calling for responsible and wise leadership at the international level. That issue should rest on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, because countries such as Ethiopia — while not having contributed to climate change — were the most affected. Ethiopia would have hoped to see the Rio+20 Conference achieve more than it had, but nonetheless looked forward to meaningful and effective efforts on the part of the Working Group on Sustainable Development, to which Ethiopia was ready to contribute the best that it could.

MOULAY RACHID, Crown Prince of Morocco, said his country took pride in having been one of the first States to contribute to United Nations peacekeeping operations, noting that to date Morocco had sent more than 50,000 members of its Royal Armed Forces around the world. Expressing deep

concern over the deteriorating situation caused by criminal, terrorist and separatist activism in Africa, particularly in the Sahel and Sahara regions, he reiterated his country's commitment to continue providing the people of Mali with aid and supporting the political process there. On the other hand, he commended the notable progress made towards national reconciliation and political normality in several parts of Africa, especially Côte d'Ivoire and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Morocco would remain firmly committed to pursuing cooperation and solidarity programmes with various African nations, he added.

On the Arab region, he said the changes witnessed there reflected the popular will to build democratic societies in which human rights would be respected, and citizens would enjoy equal opportunities and dignified lives. "The people of Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Yemen ushered in a new era and have made much headway towards democratic transition, despite a complex and troubled political environment", he said, urging the international community to provide support and assistance to those countries. Troubled by the ongoing violence in Syria, he said that as the only Arab country on the Security Council, Morocco had contributed significantly to the mobilization of international support for Arab League initiatives and resolutions, and had called for concerted and decisive action to compel the Syrian regime to end the violence. To help refugees and internally displaced persons while easing the suffering of all Syrians, Morocco continued to provide medical services to refugees in Jordan every day, he added.

Concerning the question of Palestine, he urged mobilization of international support for the Palestinian National Authority's efforts to secure enhanced non-Member State status at the United Nations. Negotiations were the best way for the Palestinian people to regain their legitimate national rights and set up an independent, fully viable and geographically contiguous State, living alongside Israel in peace and security, he continued, asking the international community to reconsider its intervention mechanisms and methods so that direct negotiations could resume immediately and under the best circumstances. As President of the Al-Quds Committee, he condemned the "Israeli scheme for the Judaization of occupied East Jerusalem, as well as the designs to wipe out the city's spiritual and cultural identity and to change its demographic and urban features". There would be no peace without East Jerusalem as the capital of an independent Palestinian State, he warned.

He said his country had undertaken initiatives and bilateral contacts to address the security and development challenges facing the five member States of the Arab Maghreb Union. Morocco had contributed in a sincere, dedicated manner to negotiations for a realistic and mutually acceptable political solution to the "regional artificial dispute" over the Moroccan Sahara — one that would guarantee the kingdom's national unity and territorial integrity, allow reunification to take place and respect the characteristics of the region's populations. Emphasizing Morocco's commitment to negotiations based on the principles set by the Security Council, he said it would cooperate with the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) on the basis of the mandate entrusted to it by the Council, which would not change in any way.

EAMON GILMORE, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland, said history revealed that conflict grew in spaces where human rights were denied; that where deprivation, inequality and injustice eroded human dignity and potential, conflict was the consequence; and that war followed hunger as hunger followed war. The United Nations Charter expressed commitments to human rights, but sometimes words could become so familiar that their force faded with time. "We must make these lofty words relevant again to the peoples for whom we speak here," he said. They included the 5-year-old orphan struggling to survive in a refugee camp, the hungry mother cradling a dying infant, and those who could not speak publicly in their own countries. "They believe in the words of our Charter and expect us to act on them."

Describing events in Syria as "an affront to humanity", he said that, with a national army shelling its own people, evidence of massacres and indiscriminate violence on an appalling scale, the priority was to achieve a ceasefire and get a political process under way, with a strong Security Council to authorize targeted sanctions, including an arms embargo, against human rights violators. To prevent further atrocities, Ireland supported calls for the Council to refer Syria to the International Criminal Court, he said. "If the events in the Arab world over the past two years have taught us anything, it is that leaders who deny the legitimate demands for greater political and economic freedom, and who instead resort to waging war on their own people, will inevitably lose the right to rule."

Peace and justice remained elusive elsewhere, he said, emphasizing the need for a lasting resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. A Palestinian State was long overdue and Ireland welcomed plans for an interim step towards that goal that would accord the Palestinian Authority enhanced non-Member State status. There was no alternative to serious negotiations between the Israeli and Palestinian sides for a comprehensive settlement, he said, stressing that if both their leaders were willing to embark on that path, they would have the unstinting support of the entire international community.

He said that as Chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), his country had drawn on its own experience of building peace in Northern Ireland. Quoting distinguished late eighteenth century Irish politician and lawyer John Philpot Curran, he said eternal vigilance was the price of liberty. "If we are to live up to the aspirations of the United Nations Charter, we must also assume the burden of eternal vigilance." Daily challenges to human rights were painfully obvious. "Our response must be clear and unrelenting," he declared. "In the words of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, the promotion and protection of human rights is 'the first responsibility' of Governments. We cannot and must not shirk that responsibility."

MICHAEL SPINDELEGGGER, Vice-Chancellor and Federal Minister for European and International Affairs of Austria, said the conflicts in Syria and Mali, as well as the ongoing reform processes in many parts of the Arab world, demonstrated that today's crises and challenges could only be faced through concerted multilateral action. On Syria, he said the Security Council must assume its responsibility and the violence must stop immediately, to be followed by meaningful dialogue. There would be no solution unless President Assad stepped aside, he added. Expressing full support for the transitions occurring in the Arab world, he encouraged the newly empowered authorities to fulfil their mandates for democratic change in a responsible manner, emphasizing that people's aspirations for dignity and freedom must be satisfied. He also reiterated the strongest possible condemnation of the recent attacks on diplomatic missions.

Turning to other situations, he called on both the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships to finally assume their responsibilities and facilitate lasting peace and security for future generations. The situation in Mali also demanded concerted action, he said, describing the high-level meeting on Wednesday as a move in the right direction. Austria fully supported efforts by ECOWAS to find, together with the United Nations, a lasting political solution in Mali and the Sahel region as a whole, he said, adding that his country would advocate for increased support from the European Union in that regard.

The peaceful settlement of disputes could only be achieved through open dialogue based on mutual respect, of which Austria had a long tradition, he said, adding that his country was proud to host the upcoming Fifth Global Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations, as well as the inauguration of the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue in November. Having been elected to the Human Rights Council in 2011, Austria also fully supported that body and its mechanisms, particularly the Universal Periodic Review. The Council was best placed to react swiftly to human rights emergencies, as shown by its responses to the crises in Syria and Libya. Human rights violations must be investigated thoroughly and perpetrators must be held accountable before credible judicial institutions, including the International Criminal Court, he said.

He went on to say that his country planned to continue working on the priorities it had pursued while a member of the Security Council — protection of civilians, safety of journalists, empowerment and protection of women, freedom of religion and belief, and protection of children. As Chair of the Group of Friends of the rule of law, the country would also continue to work on the follow-up to this week's high-level meeting on that subject. In addition, as host of IAEA headquarters, Austria was deeply concerned over proliferation threats in several regions, he said, adding that the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East was more urgently needed than ever, as was the need for Iran finally to provide credible evidence for the peaceful nature of its nuclear programme and engage in earnest talks. Austria was committed to helping move the stalled multilateral disarmament negotiations forward, he said, emphasizing that it was critical to move beyond a strictly military approach to nuclear weapons as such an existential threat to humankind could no longer be handled exclusively by a few States as a matter of national security.

SAMUEL SANTOS LÓPEZ, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua, said the changes taking place in science, the economy, geopolitics, ecology and culture represented true revolutions, but also cast doubt on the effectiveness of international organizations in conducting global affairs. The current global landscape demonstrated how governance exercised by capitalism was taking the world to the edge of civilization instead of being a factor for positive transformation. The commonly perceived struggle between the market and the State was really a paradox, he said, noting that the State often developed new neoliberal programmes devoid of scruples or disguised as necessary adjustments that were certainly permanent, rather than temporary, measures.

He said the world of 1945 that had seen the foundation of the United Nations no longer existed and there was need for reform, if not complete reinvention, since existing proposals had not progressed due to the politics of some permanent Security Council members. Peace was a supreme condition for ensuring human development, yet dangerous paths had been established, including the blockade of Cuba, he said, calling for its lifting, as well as the release of five Cuban patriots unjustly serving prison terms in the United States. In addition, the peace process in Colombia should be fully supported, as should international law in respect of Ecuador's diplomatic mission in the United Kingdom. Nicaragua

supported Argentina's sovereign rights over the Malvinas (Falkland Islands) and the right of Puerto Rico to full independence.

Strongly condemning acts of terrorism that had cost the lives of high-level Syrian Government officials and civilians, he said such aggression had been condemned by the International Court of Justice in the 1986 *Nicaragua v. United States* case. It was evident that the mediation promoted by the United Nations was "going nowhere, simply because it is being blocked by some Member of NATO and its allies with interests in the region". Nicaragua called for a peaceful solution on Iran, he said, adding that the aspirations of the Palestinian people must be resolved through negotiations. They deserved their own State and to be part of the United Nations. He also strongly condemned the attacks in which the United States Ambassador to Libya and three other citizens had been killed, as well as acts of terrorism against civilization, culture, religion and justice in any part of the world.

He addressed a number of challenges in Central America, reaffirming his country's commitment to disarmament, and describing drug trafficking as a major problem. There was a need for countries receiving the drugs to eradicate both trafficking and consumption through technology and other resources at their disposal. The region had made great strides in strengthening its economic, political, social and cultural integration, and had united through the Central American Integration System and other bodies to further its development. The principles and purposes of the Non-Aligned Movement was a common platform contributing to the development of a multipolar world, he said.

SERGEY V. LAVROV, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, said the Middle East and North Africa had been a "nerve knot" of global politics, with the deep changes sweeping the region intertwining with key problems of modern international relations. A comprehensive approach that rejected ideology-driven patterns and double standards was needed, he said, adding that his Government supported people's aspirations to determine their own destiny and pave the way for more effective governance models. All countries should be interested in making the region stable and democratic, but outside players had made no progress in reaching unanimity on ways to achieve that goal.

Turning to Syria, he said his country's consistent calls to compel the Government and its opponents immediately to end the violence and elaborate a compromise on the pace of reforms was the substance of the Action Group's Geneva communiqué. The Russian Government had proposed that the Security Council adopt a resolution endorsing the communiqué as the basis for negotiations at the start of a transition period, but it had been blocked amid insistence that only the Government cease hostilities, while extremists, including Al-Qaida grew more active. Condemning violence from whatever origin, he called for practical steps, starting with a comprehensive ceasefire, the release of prisoners and hostages, and the supply of humanitarian aid. "This will create conditions to start an inter-Syrian dialogue," he said.

Elsewhere, a just and durable Arab-Israeli settlement envisaging an independent, viable Palestinian State coexisting in peace and security with Israel would significantly help normalize the region, he said. Expressing support for Arab League efforts to advance the Arab Peace Initiative, he also urged participation in the 2012 Conference on Establishing a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. The Russian Federation also supported closer ties between the United Nations and regional organizations, he said, emphasizing, however, that all actions should be based on the United Nations Charter, which contained nothing providing for the right to pursue regime change.

Indeed, the world order was threatened by the arbitrary interpretation of essential principles, he said, citing non-use or threat of force, peaceful settlement of disputes, sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in internal affairs. Decisions on sanctions must be taken with the understanding that they should not lead to isolation, but to dialogue. Urging the Council to resume discussions on the humanitarian limits of such measures, he said unilateral sanctions undermined international efforts. Such issues were linked to the responsibility to protect, he said, noting that discussion of that concept should be held on the basis of approaches agreed upon at the 2005 World Summit, which had reaffirmed the need to observe Charter principles in responding to intra-State conflicts. The concept's ambiguity could be better understood in the context of Brazil's initiative, he said.

On a final note, he voiced concern over the actions of those who glorified Nazis in the name of freedom of speech and desecrated the memory of Second World War victims. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights prohibited war propaganda and incitement of national and religious discord, he noted, recalling that yesterday, the Human Rights Council had endorsed a Russian-initiated resolution on the interrelation between human rights and traditional values. Regrettably, several Western States had voted against it, he noted.

THONGLOUN SISOUKITH, Deputy Prime Minister of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, said emergencies such as political unrest in the Middle East and financial crisis in the European Union had challenged the credibility of the global governance mechanisms designed to address such daunting challenges. Climate change negotiations had shown no progress, despite the impending expiry of the Kyoto Protocol this year, while efforts to formulate an international arms trade instrument had failed. Indeed, the effectiveness of the United Nations must be strengthened, he stressed. Regional organizations, including the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), were playing an increasingly important role in global issues. ASEAN was entering a crucial stage in its quest to establish, by 2015, a community based on three pillars — political-security, economic, and social-cultural. It would transition into a community that was politically stable, economically integrated and socially harmonious.

He said that his country, for its part, had done its utmost to fulfil its international obligations through its policy of cooperation, which was based on the principles of equality, mutual benefit, and respect for the principles of independence, sovereignty and non-interference. In the last year, the Lao economy had grown at an average 8 per cent, while foreign direct investment had jumped more than 30 per cent. At the same time, the country faced challenges, he said, citing the existence of unexploded ordnance, which posed a major obstacle to socio-economic development. He called on States to sign up to the Convention on Cluster Munitions with a view to banning their use.

On other issues, he said the Lao People's Democratic Republic aimed to graduate from least-developed status by 2020, and was honoured to be the host of the Ninth Asia-Europe Summit Meeting (ASEM 9) from 5-6 November, which was aimed at fostering dialogue on global issues of mutual interests. As for the Middle East, he called for implementing Security Council resolutions, and for a two-State solution, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. He expressed support for the enhanced Palestinian membership to the United Nations. On another vital issue, he said the special challenges of landlocked developing countries stemmed from their distance from global markets and high transport costs, and called for a greater focus and more assistance to that vulnerable category of countries by implementing the Almaty Programme of Action and participating in its 10-year Review, to be held in 2014.

KIM SUNG-HWAN, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea, expressed confidence that the international community would overcome such challenges as climate change, poverty, disease, underdevelopment, terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The United Nations, "the symbol of our collective wisdom", should, however, take greater responsibility in coping with them, he said, expressing support for the Secretary-General's "Five-Year Action Agenda".

Describing the outcome of the Rio+20 Conference as a substantial advance for sustainable development, he said great efforts must now be made in follow-up actions such as developing sustainable development goals, strengthening institutional frameworks and mobilizing finance. As part of those endeavours, the Republic of Korea had established the Global Green Growth Institute, he said, adding that 16 countries had signed the agreement on its establishment on the margins of the Rio Conference. Its launch was set for next month. The Republic of Korea was also prepared to host the Secretariat of the Green Climate Fund and to render support for that initiative, he said.

He said his country continued to increase its official development assistance in support of internationally agreed development goals. Domestic experience had taught that investing in education lay at the heart of effective development, he said, expressing strong support for the Secretary-General's Education First initiative. The Republic of Korea also contributed to discussions to shape the post-2015 development framework, recognizing the importance of a comprehensive approach that took into account the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Turning to peace and security, he affirmed that his Government would stand by the Syrian people through their time of suffering, placing high hopes on the efforts of Joint Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi. The recent attacks on diplomats and diplomatic premises could not be justified, regardless of the motivations, he said. Urging all Member States to work for an end to violence against women in conflict situations, he said they should take protective measures, provide effective remedies and reparations for victims, and end impunity.

Respect for territorial integrity and national sovereignty was the guiding principle of stable international relations, he said, stressing that no country should abuse international legal procedures to infringe upon those principles. In addition, he described his country's efforts to combat nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism, adding that emerging threats in cyberspace also presented a serious challenge. By hosting the 2013 Conference on Cyberspace, the Republic of Korea hoped to contribute in multiple ways to maximizing digital networks and helping to pool international efforts to combat threats arising from the misuse of communications technology.

Regarding the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's nuclear programme, he called on that country to take concrete measures towards denuclearization, and to heed the international community's call for improvement in its human rights situation. As a country that had risen from the ashes of war, the Republic of Korea had learned the values of peace and security, he said, expressing its hopes of serving as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the 2013-2014 period.

Prince SAUD AL-FAISAL, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia, said the Palestinian question, which was the keystone of the Arab-Israeli conflict, remained a constant challenge for the United Nations, and could only be resolved by responding to the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, particularly their right to an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital. That would end the Israeli occupation of Palestine and other occupied Arab territories, in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy, the principle of "land for peace" and the texts of the Arab Peace Initiative aimed at achieving a just, comprehensive, and lasting peace to the conflict. "Israel is the side that should bear full responsibility for the stagnation endured by the peace process," he added.

He said the Syrian crisis had resulted in tens of thousands of victims, and hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons and refugees who had fled into neighbouring countries. "We regret that this regime continues to believe that it can proceed with its suppressive procedures to control the situation without any due regard to the high humanitarian losses," he said. The Security Council's failure to take a decision and to stop the bloodshed had given the Syrian regime "a green light" to proceed with its crimes against its own people "in a race against time". Since the first day of the crisis, Saudi Arabia had been keen to deal with it within the framework and resolutions of international legitimacy, and with full respect for the principles of human rights and international humanitarian law. It had acted through the Gulf Cooperation Council, the League of Arab States and the United Nations, in line with the outcomes of the Islamic Summit on the Status of Syria, held in August.

Welcoming the peaceful transition of power in Yemen, he called on the international community to fulfil its pledges to that nation. Turning to Iran's nuclear programme, he described the matter as "one of the most important challenges that threaten international peace and security in general, and the security and stability of the Gulf region in particular". Saudi Arabia supported ongoing efforts to resolve the crisis peacefully and in "a manner that guarantees Iran and all countries in the region the right to peaceful use of nuclear energy according to the criteria and procedures of the International Atomic Energy Agency". In addition, it was important that all parties intending to participate in the conference on the establishment of a Middle East free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction adhere to the mandate and deadlines set out in the outcome document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

CARL BILDT, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, recalled a time when computers had barely been invented and the Internet had been decades away. Today there was instant access to the global information network, and more connected devices than there were people, he said, while stressing that "connectivity carries risks". An odious film clip posted on YouTube had led to outrage and deadly violence 10,000 miles away. However, the opportunities of connectivity were vastly more important than the risks, he said, citing the positive impact of more open societies, more contact, and more trade as a result of global advances in technology and connectivity.

Concerning the ongoing violence in Syria, he stressed the need to prevent the risk of sectarian fragmentation across the region, and called upon the Security Council to put its global responsibilities above narrow national interests. "Violence is easy to start, but difficult to stop," he noted. Urging the Assad regime, in the strongest possible terms, to stop killing its own people and start respecting its obligations as a Member of the United Nations, he said there was no alternative to a political solution. As a direct consequence of the crisis, more than 2.5 million people were in need of humanitarian support, over a million had been displaced and there were a quarter of a million refugees in the region. The regime must grant unhindered access to the displaced and the suffering, he emphasized, adding that Sweden, as one of the world's largest donors, had contributed massively to humanitarian efforts.

The protection and promotion of human rights was one of the international community's central duties, he continued. Critical to those efforts were gender equality and the empowerment of women "because it's right, because it's smart and because it's fundamental to realizing the economic and political potential of societies". In that regard, Sweden was one of the largest financial contributors to the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and was a candidate for the Human Rights Council for the period 2013-2015, he said. Emphasizing the need for the human rights arena also to adjust to the world of connectivity, he said his country would take every opportunity to champion online freedom of expression, the immense development potential vested in the Internet and new communications technology.

He went on to underscore the need for inclusive, equitable and sustainable development, stressing that the Rio+20 agenda should move forward and involve scientists and business in order to explore the potential of information and communications technology. As for climate change, he said the Arctic region was warming twice as fast as the global average, and that the Arctic Sea's ice cover had receded so much that it had reached a new historic minimum. Pointing out that there was less ice this autumn than ever before in recorded history, he called for progress in climate change negotiations and effective implementation of globally agreed outcomes. As the current Chair of the Arctic Council, Sweden would reduce emissions and increase growth to move towards a truly sustainable future, while making use of technology, he said.

ABDULLAH BIN ZAYED AL NAHYAN, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates, expressed regret over Iran's continuing occupation of its three islands — Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb — and demanded full respect for its sovereignty over them. "All actions and measures taken by the Iranian occupation authorities are null and void, contrary to international law and to all norms and common human values", he said, calling on the international community to urge Iran to respond to his country's repeated, peaceful and sincere calls for a just settlement of that issue, either through direct and serious negotiations or referral to the International Court of Justice.

Deeply concerned by the escalating violence, killings and displacements perpetrated by the Syrian regime against its own people, he called upon the international community to stop the heinous tragedies committed against Syrians, noting that the solution to the crisis would only be achieved through an orderly transition of power. He urged all States to contribute to humanitarian efforts, adding that his country would continue to provide relief to Syrians in Turkey and Jordan. As for the wider Middle East, he said peace and stability could not be achieved without resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict and ending Israel's occupation of Palestinian and other Arab lands. It must withdraw from East Jerusalem, the occupied Syrian Golan and the remaining occupied Lebanese territories to the lines of 4 June 1967.

He hailed the completion of Somalia's transition, the convening of its Constituent Assembly, the adoption of its Constitution and the election of its new President, and reaffirmed support for the country's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence. The Emirates also remained committed to supporting the security and stability of Afghanistan, and would continue to provide it with humanitarian and developmental support. He expressed his deep concern about the violence perpetrated against the Rohingya Muslim community in Myanmar, calling upon the international community to urge that country's Government to stop all acts inconsistent with human rights principles.

Reaffirming his country's commitment to nuclear non-proliferation, he reiterated its support for turning the Middle East, including the Gulf region, into a zone free of weapons of mass destruction. The United Arab Emirates demanded that Israel join the NPT and subject its nuclear facilities to the comprehensive safeguards system. He also called for Iran's full cooperation with the IAEA, to implement its international commitments to ensure the programme's transparency, and to dispel all fears and suspicions surrounding it. He said his country had begun developing a nuclear energy programme for peaceful uses in 2009, in order to meet growing demand and to support economic development projects, while ensuring that its rules and regulations were based on the highest safety and security standards and non-proliferation principles.

JOSÉ BADIA, Counsellor for Foreign Relations of Monaco, said the Secretary-General's warning of multiple new threats should inspire and guide the work of the United Nations. Respect for the rule of law at the national and international levels was vital for responsible societies in ensuring the well-being of their citizens.

Recalling that the world had welcomed the spark of democracy in the Arab world in 2011, he said it was now intolerable that extremists were dampening the aspirations of those who wished to live in freedom. He condemned the violence in Syria, where the situation continued to deteriorate, and underlined the importance of ensuring that everyone respected international humanitarian law. Monaco was also concerned about the events in the Sahel, notably Mali, and supported all international actions in the region, given the urgency and gravity of the situation.

Expressing support for the United Nations strategy to address security, governance, development, human rights and humanitarian aspects, he said the Charter's values were based on both common humanity and recognition of difference. In that vein, he paid homage to those serving those values. He condemned attacks on consular missions, urging that their protection be guaranteed in all circumstances. The Assembly's theme on peaceful dispute settlement compelled the international community to unanimity, he said, assuring delegates of Monaco's full support. Emphasizing that law prevailed over the right to wage war, he said international conflict-prevention efforts had fallen short.

He called for a focus on the sustainable development of oceans and the achievement of a “blue economy”, expressing support for all initiatives that sought to improve the work of the United Nations in that area. Underlining the importance of success for the Doha Conference on Climate Change, he said it was vital to agree on a second period of commitments under the Kyoto Protocol. He concluded by pointing out that the size of a State was not the “deciding factor” in solving global problems, but rather its ability to cooperate.

ABDULAZIZ KAMILOW, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan, stressed the need for “unconventional” and “unordinary” decisions to overcome crisis situations in a time of globalization and rapid change. In Afghanistan, tough problems might surface after the forthcoming drawdown of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) by late 2014 and the transfer of responsibility for the country’s stability to the newly created Afghan National Security Forces. “Such development of events may lead to the rise of a stand-off between confronting forces in Afghanistan itself and around it, the growth of extremism and radicalism, a further surge of drug trafficking and aggravation of tension in the whole region,” he warned.

On the worsening global ecological situation, he said that in Central Asia, the Amudarya and Syrdarya rivers were the main sources of water, and the lives of millions of people in their vicinity must be considered, in line with universally recognized norms of international law stipulated in the 1992 United Nations Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, and the 1997 Convention on the Law of Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses. All projects to construct hydropower facilities in the upper reaches of those rivers must be subject to authoritative international appraisal, under United Nations auspices, and obligatorily harmonized with lower-stream countries, he stressed.

Emphasizing also that his country remained committed to preserving peace, stability and security in the region, he said the Government’s Concept of Foreign Policy stipulated that it reserve the right to enter into alliances, join or leave commonwealths and other inter-State establishments. The Government conducted a peace-loving policy, did not participate in military-political blocs, and reserved the right to leave any inter-State grouping in the event of its transformation into a military-political bloc, he said. Uzbekistan’s Armed Forces would not participate in military operations abroad, and the problems of Central Asia must be addressed by countries of the region without interference by external Powers, he said.

ELMAR MAMMADYAROV, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, recalled that during the last two sessions of the General Assembly, his country had co-sponsored two resolutions on strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution. Additionally, during the Azerbaijani Presidency of the Security Council in May, it had organized an Arria Formula meeting to encourage a frank exchange of views, within a flexible procedural framework, on the role of mediation, judicial settlement and justice in promoting durable and international law-based peace and reconciliation.

He said that, while the world continued to face persistent, grave and systematic violations of fundamental norms and principles of international law, there were still instances in which “archaic” patterns of the use of force against the territorial integrity and political independence of States were practised to achieve territorial gains, he said. Hundreds of thousands of people around the world continued to suffer from aggression, military occupation, ethnic cleansing and a prevailing culture of impunity for the most serious crimes of concern to the international community.

The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, for example, continued to represent a serious threat and challenge to international, as well as regional, peace and security, he continued. It had resulted in the occupation of almost 20 per cent of Azerbaijan’s territory and had made internally displaced persons or refugees of more than a million of its citizens. The aggression had severely damaged the country’s socio-economic sphere. “We sincerely believe that there is no alternative to peace, stability and mutually beneficial regional cooperation”, he said, adding that Azerbaijan had remained committed to the conflict-settlement process, confident that its objective was to end the illegal Armenian occupation, restore its territorial integrity, ensure the return of forcibly displaced people to their homes, and guarantee the peaceful coexistence of Armenian and Azerbaijani communities in the Nagorno Karabakh region within Azerbaijan.

He said Armenian attempts to misinterpret the norms and principles of international law, and its insistence on unrealistic annexationist claims — which Azerbaijan would never accept — spoke to the real intentions of the Armenian leadership. That country continued to use force to sustain the occupation of Nagorno Karabakh and seven other districts of Azerbaijan. Additionally, regular ceasefire violations and deliberate attacks by the Armenian Armed Forces against inhabitants of towns and villages situated along the front line and in the border region had become more frequent and violent, resulting in the death and injury of many Azerbaijani civilians.

It was vital to continue efforts for inter-communal peace and coexistence for the sake of both communities, he continued. On a number of occasions, Azerbaijan had accepted proposals by different European non-governmental organizations to hold inter-communal meetings, but the proposals had so far been blocked by officials in Yerevan, he said. Moreover, the Armenian leadership's aggressive rhetoric and undisguised promotion of the "odious ideas of racial superiority", ethnic and religious incompatibility and hatred towards Azerbaijan and other neighbouring nations could only contribute to deepening the mistrust and making the prospect of a speedy negotiated settlement elusive.

INOKE KUBUABOLA, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Fiji, said that from January to April, his country had experienced the worst floods on record, which had inflicted immense human and economic costs, including a 33 per cent drop in tourism. "We feel particularly vulnerable", he stressed, noting that the international failure to address climate change meant that all countries would experience more frequent and intense weather events, which would erode development gains and leave people feeling less secure. It was vital that disaster-risk reduction be integrated into global and national development strategies.

He went on to say that Fiji had undertaken comprehensive reforms that embraced the Millennium Development Goals, as seen in its introduction of standard pneumococcal and rota virus immunizations in efforts to minimize child mortality, making it the second country in the world to have done so. Moreover, it had taken the lead on broadband connectivity, as such technology was essential for improving education, medicine, agriculture and environmental services. It would help unite a dispersed people and the Government, by making it accessible and affordable, could help bring a "universe of wisdom" to the smallest schools and most remote villages.

On security matters, he said Fiji's role in peacekeeping around the world went far beyond what was expected of a country of its size and level of development. It had contributed troops and police to Iraq, Liberia, South Sudan, Darfur and Timor-Leste. In the last year, Fiji had started contributing to the corrections and justice sectors of United Nations peacekeeping operations. Following elections earlier this year, the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) would be able to wind down its operations later in 2012, he said, adding that his country also worked through the Special Committee on Decolonization to ensure that New Caledonia's right to self-determination, as expressed in the Noumea Accord, was faithfully implemented by all parties.

Fiji itself was working through a transition, he said. It was a kind of sustainable democracy based on the principle of "one person, one vote, one value". A new constitution was being drafted, with citizens putting forward their views at public hearings throughout the country. Recommendations by the Constitutional Commission, created in March, would be reviewed by a Constituent Assembly in early 2013. That body would formulate the final document, he said, noting that preparations for the 2014 elections had begun, with electronic registration having been carried out in July and August. Half a million voters had been registered and throughout the process, Fiji had stayed true to the principle that Fijians must determine their own destiny.

After 40 years of strife and instability, the work of true and sustainable democracy was just beginning in Fiji, he said, asking the international community to support his country's quest. Having redefined its world view, it had opened three embassies in 2011 — in Brazil, Indonesia and South Africa — and expanded its diplomatic presence this year with embassies opening in the Republic of Korea and the United Arab Emirates. The Constitution was expected to help build an environment that would promote safe working conditions, and labour laws were being reviewed to ensure compliance with the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Convention 34. Fiji aspired to be a good global citizen, leading by example among island nations, and engaging with the international community in a spirit of constructive contribution, he said.

GILBERT SABOYA SUNYÉ, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Andorra, recalled that a year ago from the same podium, he had reasserted the notion of compromise as an essential value and core feature of political endeavour. That meant compromise as a deep-seated belief in the values of democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law; as the assumption of individual responsibility in a common project; and as a pledge to dialogue and a capacity for understanding. However, "on the path of compromise or the path of the right balance, we cannot and must not abandon the defence of human rights, the rule of law, and the most essential democratic values such as freedom of expression", he stressed, adding: "Establishing the fair balance does not mean engaging in a balancing act. To be fair, the balance must be based on strong principles: there can be no excuse for violence or intolerance."

Welcoming the launch of the Secretary-General's "Education First" initiative, he said his country would embrace education as a tool for encouraging democratic values, respect for human rights and the rule of law. Andorra was sensitive to education, not only in the sphere of international

cooperation, but also domestically, as its unique, multicultural and multilingual approach to education – featuring Andorran, French and Spanish public systems — in a small society with its own identity had not brought problems, but rather had been an asset and an essential part of “our social cohesion”.

While Andorra had one of the oldest and most stable parliaments and political systems on the planet, women had not won the right to vote until 1971, he said. Yet, only 40 years later, in 2011, the people of Andorra had elected a parliament with the second highest number of female representatives in the world. “History shows us that what appeared utopian not so long ago is reality today,” he noted. The need for rapid and profound change had also arrived in Andorra, he said, recalling that a year ago, the country had had one of the most closed economies on the planet, and placed significant barriers to inward investment, while foreigners had had to meet costly requirements to attain full economic rights. Today, only 12 months later, “the Andorran economy is 100 per cent open to foreign capital, and every foreign resident is granted full economic rights from the first day of his or her residency”, he said.

Right of Reply

The representative of Bolivia, speaking in exercise of his right of reply, said he could not remain silent in view of the falsehoods put forward by his counterpart from Chile, who had stated that Bolivia did not have the right to claim a coastal outlet. In 1879, he recalled, Chile had invaded Bolivian territory, seeking to appropriate resources. That event had resulted in an unjust, unfulfilled treaty. Bolivia rejected Chile’s subjective views regarding the last General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS), he said, adding that the regional body’s lawyers had not considered Bolivia’s claim in full.

He went on to reject Chile’s statement that Bolivia’s 2009 Constitution contravened the international legal framework, pointing out that for decades his country had sought to resolve its issues with Chile through dialogue. In 2010, however, Chile had cancelled a three-point agenda containing feasible proposals, claiming the issue was a bilateral matter. However, 11 OAS resolutions were in force, including resolution 426 (1979), he noted, emphasizing that the negotiations should take account of the rights of the parties involved and consider the inclusion of a port, as well as matters of integrated development.

The representative of Chile responded by saying his country respected international law and sovereign equality, and had cooperated with the human rights system. He added that he could not allow the general debate to be used as a pretext to distort the manner in which his country’s relationship with Bolivia had been framed. Unilateral benefits had been granted to Bolivia, he said, recalling that the OAS General Assembly had reiterated in 2011 that the dispute was not to be addressed in an international organization, nor was it based on resolutions that had been offset by recent developments. It had also underlined the bilateral nature of the matter.

He went on to say that in 2011, the President of Chile had given an overview of the dialogue, expressing confidence that the process would end successfully. On that same day, negotiations had been interrupted when Bolivia had stated that it would bring its maritime claims into legal channels. Chile had reaffirmed its commitment to the rule of law at the international level, he said. It was in compliance with all treaties and agreements on peaceful coexistence, and hoped Bolivia would return to the bilateral approach.

The representative of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea responded to the statement by his counterpart from the Republic of Korea regarding his country’s nuclear technology and human rights record by saying he totally rejected such allegations as “provocative”, having “no ground” and “distorting the truth”. The origin of the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula dated back to 1957, when the United States, the largest possessor of such armaments, had introduced the first nuclear weapon, he said. It had not hesitated to increase the number of nuclear weapons on the peninsula to more than 1,000 in 1973.

He went on to describe how United States administrations, including the Bush Administration, had aggravated the situation by listing the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, alongside Iran and Iraq, as targets for pre-emptive nuclear attack. “North Korean people are living under the direct threat of nuclear weapons and blackmailing”, he said, adding that the joint military exercise conducted by the Republic of Korea and the United States already had “a war scenario”. On human rights, he said his delegation “totally rejected” a United Nations resolution on that matter. “The most serious violator of human rights is South Korea”, he said, citing that country’s “outdated” security law which provided “no guarantee of freedom”.

The representative of Iran said the islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb were an integral part of his country’s territory and rejected any claim to them. Measures taken on those islands were based on Iran’s sovereign rights and territorial integrity, he added. Stressing the

importance of good-neighbourly relations between his country and its Persian Gulf neighbours, he said negotiations between Iran and the United Arab Emirates would expand their relations in various fields and help remove misunderstandings relating to the documents exchanged in 1971 on the territorial issue. He went on to emphasize that the "Persian Gulf" was the only historically correct name for the waterway between Iran and the Arabian Peninsula, and any fabricated name, including that used by the United Arab Emirates, was unacceptable, with no legal or political value.

The representative of Bolivia said his counterpart from Chile had referred to 23 March, a day on which Bolivians painfully commemorated the loss of their coastline through the use of force. Chile had failed to comply with the 1904 Treaty, he said. Not only did the legal regime of free transit not exist, but Chile obstructed free transit. What prevailed was the need to rectify injustices that continued to cause suffering, he said. Having underscored the need for dialogue multiple times, Bolivia had received no response 100 years after the invasion. He called for the restoration of Bolivia's maritime access, stressing that his Government would continue to raise the issue in all international forums, guided by international law and justice. Chile had unilaterally called off bilateral dialogue, and Bolivia had applied to all international forums and jurisdictions to regain its sovereign access to the ocean.

The representative of Chile said Bolivia had a distorted vision of history, as the 1904 Treaty had been signed 20 years after another treaty. It was not Chile that had called off dialogue, he said, adding: "Quite the contrary." Chile continued to appeal to Bolivia for understanding. To Bolivia's statement that Chile had not complied with the 1904 Treaty, he said the railway to which his Bolivian counterpart had referred had been destroyed after being operated by a Bolivian company and contaminated by mineral transport. Bolivia had invested thousands to ensure that it would become operative this year, while the country's President had said with pride that national cash reserves had reached \$13 billion. Much of that increase was due to Bolivia's trade through Chilean ports, which was based on the 1904 Treaty, he said, adding that the neighbouring country used facilities provided to it for the sake of free transit.

The representative of the United Arab Emirates said Iran had advanced false allegations about his country's legitimate right to the Tunb islands. The United Arab Emirates had never renounced its historic right to the islands, now militarily occupied by Iran, and rejected all such allegations. Legal documents asserted the sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates, he reiterated.

He went on to appeal to the international community to engage with Iran so that it would commit to unconditional negotiations with his country, under the Charter, in order to end its occupation, or to seek arbitration by the International Court of Justice. Strengthening cooperation and prosperity in the Arabian Gulf region required Iran to establish good-neighbourly relations, based on respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in internal State affairs.

The representative of Iran responded by saying that the islands had been part of Iranian territory throughout history. The Government of Iran stood ready to discuss the issue bilaterally so as to remove any misunderstandings that might arise over 1971 Treaty, he added.

The representative of the United Arab Emirates asked Iran to table the documents to which he had referred, and bring them to the attention of the International Court of Justice, which would examine its allegations. Since Iran had refused to enter into direct negotiations over its occupation of the islands, or submit its claims to the Court, it could not present any legal or historical documents to substantiate its claims, he said, adding that Iran exercised a *fait accompli* policy.

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