



General Assembly

GA/11298

Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York

Sixty-seventh General Assembly
Plenary
19th, 20th & 21st Meetings (AM, PM & Night)

GENERAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT, CLOSING ANNUAL DEBATE, COMMENDS EFFORTS TO STABILIZE

WORLD'S INCREASING 'GEOSTRATEGIC VOLATILITY AND UNPREDICTABILITY'

Integrating Civilian Protection, Prevention of Genocide Concepts Into Contemporary Security Policy Spotlighted; Syrian Minister Speaks

A week of thoughtful and constructive interventions by the General Assembly's Member States — nearly all of whom had touched on issues related to the theme of the sixty-seventh session, the peaceful settlement of disputes — had catalyzed a "fruitful discourse" on ways to stabilize the world's increasing geostrategic volatility and unpredictability, said Assembly President Vuk Jeremić (Serbia) as he closed the body's annual general debate.

"Let us engage with a readiness to compromise and try hard to strengthen trust in each other," he said, adding that, in so doing, the Assembly would help to fulfil the hopes and aspirations of its 193 Member States.

Many of those individual concerns were fleshed out this week, as more than 100 Heads of State and Government and 70 delegates at the ministerial level took the floor to emphasize, among other things, that deep-seated structural causes often formed the backdrop of the "immediate political symptoms" of disputes, said Mr. Jeremić. Speakers had called for a more comprehensive approach to conflict prevention and resolution, which would encompass, in a truly holistic way, both short-term and long-term disputes.

In that vein, he noted a great number of delegations had emphasized the fundamental importance of respecting the basic tenets of international law, including the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States, placing a strong emphasis on the principle of sovereign equality of States as the backbone of effective multilateralism. Speaker after speaker stressed that respect for the rule of law was essential to achieving everlasting peace, he said.

Attention was drawn repeatedly to the importance of supporting the democratic changes under way in several Arab countries, he said, and many delegations had expressed deep concern about the deteriorating security and human rights situation in Syria. The response was also significant to what the Secretary-General had called the "perfect storm of vulnerability" now sweeping across the Sahel region. "We have heard their disquiet over the growing threat that terrorism, attempts at unilateral secession, and trans-border organized crime pose to regional stability and development efforts," he said.

Today, several Ministers from all corners of the globe spotlighted the absence of international unanimity on ways to integrate such critical concepts as protection of civilians and prevention of genocide in contemporary security policy, expressing particular concern at how those issues had paralyzed the global community, notably in the debate over Syria.

"Until the last syllable of recorded time, the world will remember and history will judge Member States that are allowing the atrocities [in Syria] to continue," said John Baird, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, this morning. People around the world could not understand why the United Nations had been unable to take concrete steps to end the violence, he said, calling unequivocally for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to be replaced by a new order that protected Syria's territorial integrity and respected all religious minorities.

The world had yet to “dig into the roots and causes” of its major crises, said Edward Nalbandian, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, nor had it had “the courage to openly ask difficult questions and face sometimes painful responses”. The situation in Syria directly affected a large Armenian community living in that country, he said; that community — mainly formed by the survivors of the Armenian genocide in the Ottoman Empire in the beginning of the twentieth century — was now struggling for life, as were many Syrians.

Moreover, as a nation that had survived the horrors of genocide, Armenia was convinced that the international community should stand together in the recognition and strong condemnation of genocides, and be able to prevent them. “It is due to the absence of this unanimity that humanity witnesses new attempts of crimes against humanity,” he concluded, urging Member States to recommit themselves to a world where the crime of genocide would never happen again.

Phandu T.C. Skelemani, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Botswana, agreed, stressing that Syrian President Assad had displaced more than 1 million Syrians and slaughtered 20,000 of his citizens to satisfy his lust for power. And yet Syria remained a member of the United Nations, he said, adding, “this surely cannot be right”. Syria’s allies in the Security Council — in particular, the Russian Federation and China, which had long been blocking resolutions aimed at pressuring the Syrian leadership to cease its heinous crimes — should be condemned, he added.

Responding to such criticism, which had echoed in the Assembly Hall since world leaders gathered last Tuesday, Walid Al-Moualem, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Syria, said that some well known States were pursuing “new colonial policies” around the world, including in his country. “Under the pretext of humanitarian intervention these countries interfere in the domestic affairs of States and impose unilateral sanctions that lack a moral and legal basis,” and, he added, under the pretext of concepts such as “the responsibility to protect”, the “drums of war are beaten”, and sedition and unrest were spreading and damaging the structure of national societies.

Perhaps worst of all was to see the permanent members of the Security Council — who launched wars under the pretext of combating terrorism — now supporting terrorism in Syria, he said. For more than a year, his country had been facing organized terrorism that led to bombings, assassinations and massacres, as well as looting and sabotage, which horrified citizens in many parts of Syria. Citing a recent bombing, for which responsibility had been claimed by a terrorist group, he said that it was no surprise that the Council had failed to condemn that act. That terrorism was, in fact, externally supported and accompanied by “unprecedented media provocation” based on igniting religious extremism.

He said that some States in the region either turned a blind eye to the situation, or provided active material and logistical support to armed terrorist groups. “These facts make me question whether this international consensus by our States on combating terrorism was serious, or was it just merely ink on paper?” In that context, he noted the “explicit request of the United States” that the armed terrorist groups not surrender their arms in response to amnesty decrees issued by the Syrian leadership. He also wondered to what extent the statements of Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the United States and France — which clearly induced support for terrorism in Syria — were in line with the international responsibilities of those States in combating terrorism.

Stressing his country’s support for international efforts to resolve the conflict, he said that calls from the General Assembly’s podium for President Assad to step down were a “blatant interference in the domestic affairs of Syria”. The Syrian people were the only party authorized to choose their own future and the shape of their own State. Countries that were proud of their own democracy and freedom of expression should support Syria in its “democratic course” and leave the Syrian people to elect its leadership in accordance with a new constitution.

In that vein, Cuba’s Minister for Foreign Affairs, Bruno Rodriguez Parilla, reaffirmed the Syrians’ rights to self-determination and sovereignty without foreign interference. Violence, massacres and terrorist acts must cease, he stressed, as must media manipulation and the arms and money trafficked to the insurgents. The Assembly must promote a peaceful solution and prevent foreign intervention, which would have serious consequences for the region.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belarus, Vladimir Makei, warned of a double standard, which he said was routinely appearing in foreign policy. The major Powers were willing to go to any lengths to cater to the interests of their “friends”. Yet, when it came to engagement with their opponents, they employed “force inoculation” of democracy and human rights. “Guided solely by their own interests, these parties who were shaking your hand yesterday, today openly contributed to your downfall,” he said. Such “unscrupulousness and barbarity in foreign policy” had all but sidelined the United Nations, and as such, he called for a return to the principles of multilateralism, justice and cooperation.

Other conflicts were cited by delegates as evidence that more should be done to bolster international efforts in the peaceful settlement of disputes. Congo's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Basile Ikouebe, said that the persistence and resurgence of crisis "flashpoints" around the world "mortgaged the promotion and protection of human rights", as well as attempts at development. Congo, having been mired in conflict during the 1990s, had made the choice of mediation and dialogue, he said. It had overcome socio-political turbulence, and the resulting peace had opened up a space for democracy and economic development.

The Minister expressed his country's deep concern with the ongoing crises that threatened the peace and security of the region, in particular the Sahel, which was subjected to ever-worsening instability. The Democratic Republic of the Congo was also undergoing a serious conflict in its eastern region, with the emergence of armed groups such as the "M23"; the political, security and humanitarian effects of that conflict extended to the entire Great Lakes region. He hoped to see more a concrete solution in that country as soon as possible.

Also speaking today were Foreign Ministers or Vice-Ministers from Oman, India, Djibouti, Barbados, Eritrea, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Costa Rica, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, the Philippines, Belize, Suriname, Sierra Leone, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Ecuador and Viet Nam.

Also addressing the Assembly were the representatives of Angola, Grenada, Palau, Denmark, Portugal, Venezuela and Dominica.

The Secretary for Relations with States of the Holy See also participated.

Speaking in exercise of the right of reply were the representatives of Pakistan, Iran, India, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Eritrea.

The Assembly will reconvene on Tuesday, 9 October, to hold its annual meeting on the work of the Organization.

Background

The General Assembly met today to continue and conclude the general debate of its sixty-seventh session.

Statements

JOHN BAIRD, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Canada, said the General Assembly was now two-thirds of a century old, during which time the world had seen great achievements and grave injustices. There had been powerful progress — the launch of humans into orbit and mapping of the human genome, and deep development with the largest terror attack ever here in New York and the failure to prevent genocide in Cambodia and Rwanda. Some events had been predictable, others not, and the only constant was change. Amid such flux, it was all the more important to focus on fixed principles and chart a course towards immutable goals: prosperity, security and dignity. People would judge success by how well States furthered those ends.

Against that backdrop, the United Nations must spend less time "looking at itself" and more time focused on the problems that demanded attention, he said. Canada, the seventh-largest contributor to the United Nations' budget, would not participate in fruitless inward-looking exercises. The United Nations must now look outward. Its preoccupation with procedure and process must yield to substance and results. If the United Nations focused on the achievement of Goals — such as prosperity, security and human dignity — "reform will take care of itself". The United Nations Commission on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health, co-chaired by Canada and the United Republic of Tanzania, was a model initiative to replicate and its recommendations must be integrated into a post-2015 framework.

On trade, he said it was no longer necessary to endlessly debate how to make people better off. "There is no special alchemy required", he said, urging free trade among open societies and under transparent, consistent and fair rules. The fight for economic and social development had been seen in the struggle for open markets, societies and minds. The well-being of Canadians depended on openness at home, and with the world. "We must be a trading nation", he said, noting Canada was expanding trade at a rate of unparalleled ambition. There was no fundamental conflict between national security and the open society: both sought to protect the same values, rights and freedoms.

Turning to Syria, he said the crisis in that country had tested the United Nations' ability to achieve results. "Until the last syllable of recorded time, the world will remember and history will judge Member States that are allowing the atrocities to continue," he said. People around the world could not understand why the United Nations had been unable to take concrete steps. He called on Syria to

ensure that its stockpile of chemical weapons remained secure against the possible use or proliferation by “those who would do evil”, saying Canada stood ready to assist neighbouring States in taking measures to reduce the threat of those weapons. Reiterating the call for an immediate end to the violence, he said President Assad must be replaced by a new order that protected Syria’s territorial integrity and respected all religious minorities.

But, it was the Iranian regime, he said, that represented the most significant threat to global peace and security. A nuclear Iran would embolden an already reckless regime. Canada had listed Iran as a State sponsor of terrorism and suspended diplomatic relations with that country. He was clear in saying that Canada’s quarrel was with the regime, not the people, and urged Iran to comply with its international nuclear obligations and to cease enrichment activities. He also encouraged Iran to look to its neighbours, some of whom Canada had supported in building peaceful-purpose nuclear energy programmes.

He went on to stress that the human rights abuses that did not threaten security were still a concern, whether the “notorious” political prisons in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, forcible recruitment by the “M23” group in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, or the forced marriage of young girls. Wherever they occurred, assaults on human dignity were unacceptable. No one said it would be easy to advance prosperity and dignity. “It is not easy”, he said. “But it is essential”. Despite the setbacks and heavy price, Canada understood that nations and peoples were up to the challenge.

EDWARD NALBANDIAN, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia, recalling that the theme of the Assembly’s sixty-seventh session was the peaceful settlement of disputes, said that, unfortunately, hate and intolerance were continuing to spread in some parts of the world. “We have yet to dig into the roots and causes of such situations, or to have the courage to openly ask difficult questions and face sometimes painful responses”, he said. It was in that context that, year after year, Armenia had been raising its concerns over the militaristic rhetoric, blatant violation of international commitments and “anti-Armenian hysteria” being instilled into the Azerbaijani society from the highest levels of its leadership.

The most recent case was that of the Azeri Government’s release and glorification of the murderer Safarov, who had slaughtered a sleeping Armenian officer with an axe during a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) programme in Budapest. The Azerbaijani leadership had made Safarov a symbol of national pride and an example for youth to follow, he said. The Council of Europe Commissioner of Human Rights had warned that “to glorify and reward such a person flies in the face of all accepted standards for human rights protection and rule of law”; the European Parliament President, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and others had also taken a stand against such actions. “It is clear that the international community should not tolerate the attempts of the Azerbaijani leadership to adjust the international law to their own racist ideology”, he said, adding that the international community must also not tolerate attempts by that country to “replace the rule of law with the rule of oil”.

The Safarov scandal had seriously undermined the negotiation process on the Nagorno-Karabakh region, he said. Azerbaijan posed a threat to security and stability in the region, with threats to use force against Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, and by “unprovoked daily warmongering” by its leadership. Through those actions, among others, it rejected the proposals of the three Co-Chair countries on the consolidation of the ceasefire agreement and on the creation of a mechanism for investigation of incidents on the line of contact. Indeed, while Armenia, together with international mediators, was exerting efforts around the negotiating table, Azerbaijan was multiplying its military budget, increasing it more than twentyfold in the last few years, and “boasting about it”.

“Armenia and the international community are speaking in one language regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh issue”, he said. Armenia’s position was in line with the various conflict settlement documents adopted over the years, including the frameworks of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Astana Summit of 2010 and the Ministerial Conferences of Helsinki (2008), Athens (2009), Almaty (2010), and Vilnius (2011), among other agreements. Despite the intensive efforts of the three Co-Chairs, however, it had been impossible to reach a breakthrough in the conflict resolution, because the Azerbaijani side rejected, one after another, all proposals presented by the mediators.

Finally, he expressed concerns about the developments and the worsening humanitarian situation in Syria, which directly affected a large Armenian community living in that country. The community — mainly formed by the survivors of the Armenian genocide in the Ottoman Empire in the beginning of the twentieth century — was now struggling for life, as were many Syrians. Armenia, for its part, continued to receive refugees fleeing the conflict in Syria. As descendants of a nation that had survived the horrors of genocide, Armenia was convinced that the international community should stand together in the recognition and strong condemnation of genocides, and be able to prevent them. “It is due to the absence of this unanimity that humanity witnesses new attempts of crimes against humanity”,

he concluded, urging Member States to recommit themselves to a world where the crime of genocide would never happen again.

YOUSEF BIN ALAWI BIN ABDULLAH, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs of Oman, calling on his "brothers in Syria" to renounce violence and enter into a political process to end the crisis, called on the Security Council to reach a unified position on the Syrian crisis "away from any political contradiction and without bias to any party," that would usher in inclusive political dialogue for that purpose. The principles laid out by the Action Group for Syria in Geneva could be used as a guideline in that respect, he stated, adding that the time had come for collective action to preserve the security, stability and development of all the countries in the Middle East.

In that light, he said, the role of the United Nations in relation to the Question of Palestine should change "from managing the crisis to seriously searching for a just and lasting comprehensive political solution," which would take into account the interest of both parties and lead to two States living side by side. From that standpoint, he supported the application of Palestine to become a non-member state of the United Nations, hoping it would usher in a new phase in negotiations. He expressed the hope that the upcoming Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) review conference will be able to declare the establishment of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction.

On Somalia, he welcomed political progress there and called on the international community to provide political, economic and humanitarian assistance to the people, urging Somalis of all political and tribal affiliations to reject violence, cease hostilities, engage in national dialogue and place the interests of the nation above their own. Noting the location of his country on the Arabian Sea, he reconfirmed its support for international efforts to eradicate piracy and armed robbery against merchant vessels in that sea and the Indian Ocean. Condemning the recent video that slandered the Prophet Muhammad while rejecting the escalation of violence that followed its dissemination, he said it was incumbent on the United Nations to adopt international legislation that would "hold accountable those responsible" for any deliberate abuse of and slander of the sanctity of people and their beliefs.

Turning to threats to food security, he said that among remedies worth exploring were the establishment of a global food reserve system to meet shortages, with reserve centres in several continents managed through a targeted international fund. He suggested that the Food and Agricultural Organization conduct a study of the matter and encouraged industrialized countries to support more research towards innovative solutions to keep pace with the steady increase in the global demand for food. Describing his country's progress in the areas of health, public services and sustainable development, he looked forward to international cooperation in implementing the results of the Rio+20 conference. He also stressed progress Oman had made in safeguarding human rights, fighting human trafficking, acceding to international treaties and empowering the Oman Council, granting it wide legislative powers.

BRUNO RODRIGUEZ PARILLA, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, said the so-called "Summit of the Americas" held last April in Cartagena once again excluded Cuba because of United States imposition. Argentine sovereignty over the Malvinas islands, which Cuba supported, and the lifting of the blockade against Cuba were the focus of the Summit's declaration. That showed that "Our America", as envisaged by Simon Bolivar, had entered a new era. Latin America and the Caribbean had changed and it was determined to contribute more to the "equilibrium of the world". But, United States policy towards the region remained the same. The United States continued the same security approach and military deployment, rather than a democratic, mutually beneficial relationship between equal, sovereign States. NATO continued to view Latin America as on the periphery of Europe and the Atlantic and a place in which it could intervene to secure interests, even if illegitimate.

The elections in Venezuela would be decisive for the region's common destiny, he said. He expressed full support for the Venezuelan people and their President in the face of "destabilizing attempts". Cuba had always contributed to peace in Colombia. It supported the exploratory talks held this year in Havana and it would provide a venue for the upcoming dialogue between the Colombian Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. He also supported the bid for Puerto Rico's independence. Today's world did not resemble the one envisaged by the drafters of the United Nations Charter. Right now, regime change was being imposed from Washington and other NATO member countries' capitals. The United States and some European Governments had decided to overthrow the Syrian Government and they had armed, financed and trained opposition groups, and resorted to using mercenaries. Due mainly to firm opposition from the Russian Federation and China, it had been impossible to manipulate the Council to impose the interventionist formula used in recent warmongering adventures.

He reaffirmed the Syrians' rights to self-determination and sovereignty without foreign interference. Violence, massacres and terrorist acts must cease, as must media manipulation and the arms and money trafficked to the insurgents. The Assembly must promote a peaceful solution and prevent foreign intervention, which would have serious consequences for the region. Also, the

Assembly should act with resolve and recognize the Palestinian State, based on 1967 borders, as a full United Nations member. It should do so now, with or without the Council's consent or peace negotiations. Further, the global economic crisis had called for a rethinking of the current global economic relations system, which served only to pillage under-developed countries. The United Nations must be reformed profoundly, to put it at service of all nations and end the double standards of a handful of industrialized, powerful countries. The Assembly's key role should be restored and the Council should be made democratic, transparent and truly representative.

The Summit of the Non-Aligned Countries held in Iran reaffirmed the Non-Aligned Movement's position in defence of peace, independence, sovereign equality of States, the right to development, sovereignty of natural resources, full disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, and the right to the peaceful use of energy, he said, fully supporting the Movement. On another issue, he said that on 31 July 2011, the United States State Department included Cuba on an arbitrary, unilateral list of States that sponsored international terrorism. But, the real reason was that the United States wanted to justify its blockade of Cuba. He strongly rejected the use of such a sensitive issue as terrorism to pursue political goals and called on the United States to "stop lying and put an end to this shameful exercise which is an outrage against the Cuban people and the international community", as well as a way to discredit the struggle against terrorism.

S.M. KRISHNA, Minister for External Affairs of India, said developing countries were still recovering from the global economic downturn, with their quest for poverty eradication and sustainable development an uphill task. Despite such challenges, India was committed to addressing climate change through a comprehensive, equitable and balanced outcome based on the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities. India would host the Eleventh Conference of Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity in two weeks, and sought support for an outcome harmonizing strong action on biodiversity with basic development objectives.

He went on to say that, in outlining the Sustainable Development Goals, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) must be integrated into the new framework. In the post-2015 development agenda debate, the focus must be on the word "development". Discussion must be entrenched in the principles of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, and the intergovernmental process at the United Nations. Poverty, employment and food and energy were just some of the challenges that must be given priority. Attention was also needed on ensuring gender equality and upgrading young people's skills for future employment.

He went on to note that India's multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multilingual society was underpinned by peaceful coexistence and tolerance, values that Mahatma Gandhi placed at the core of national life. "Violence cannot lead to greater understanding", he said, urging full respect for the safety and security of diplomatic personnel, and a "zero tolerance" approach to terrorism. It was high time to see the political will needed for a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism, and international action, under United Nations auspices, to address the welfare of seafarers amid the menace of piracy.

Turning to peacekeeping, he said India had taken part in 43 United Nations peacekeeping operations since the 1950s, underscoring that the challenge was to ensure adequate resourcing for such missions, including in post-conflict and peacebuilding contexts. As such, he voiced hope that progress would be made on all outstanding issues between Sudan and South Sudan. There also was a need for renewed consensus on non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament, as well as for meaningful dialogue among all nuclear weapon States to build confidence, and reduce the "salience" of such weapons in security doctrines. Measures must be taken to reduce nuclear risks, including those posed by terrorists' acquisition of weapons of mass destruction. The Conference on Disarmament deserved support in discharging its mandate.

On other matters, he urged all parties in Syria to recommit to resolving the crisis through an inclusive, Syrian-led political process. India supported the Palestinians' aspiration for enhanced United Nations status, underlining the imperative for an independent Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living alongside a secure Israel. In South Asia, India had embarked on resumed dialogue with Pakistan, advocating a step-by-step approach to normalizing bilateral relations. India's position on Jammu and Kashmir was well-known: the area was an "integral part of India" and the people there had chosen and reaffirmed their destiny repeatedly through India's well-established democratic processes. His Government was also ready to partner with the Afghan people as they rebuilt their country. Terrorist safe havens beyond Afghanistan's borders hampered peace and security in that country. Finally, he urged an expanded Security Council in both permanent and non-permanent categories, stressing the need to address the lack of permanent membership for Africa. India also would support developing countries' participation in world economic and financial institutions.

MAHAMOUD ALI YOUSSEF, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Djibouti, said developing countries, particularly least developed countries, were hard hit socially by the global economic crisis. Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in Africa, which had made great effort to achieve them by 2015, was at risk. The fate of least developed countries in Africa must be scrutinized, with a focus on renewing on their production capacity and improving their access to global markets. He called for implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the 2011-2020 period. Any solution to end the global financial crisis must take into account Africa's need. Sustained commitment was needed to make the Rio+20 commitments a reality. The Horn of Africa had greatly suffered from the impact of climate change, a cycle of chronic drought and flooding and the drop in foreign aid. Djibouti's Government had created social policies to relieve extreme poverty. He hoped partners would continue to support those efforts through durable approaches that would allow African countries to move from relying on emergency aid to engaging in long-term development.

He called for a comprehensive global approach to food security and said the "zero hunger" objectives of the Secretary-General were achievable. He thanked partners for aiding Africa's efforts to reduce economic disparity between rural and urban populations and to increase farm production. He cited several Djibouti-sponsored projects to exploit arable land in Ethiopia and Sudan, and an irrigation project on the Awash river on the Djibouti-Ethiopian border. Poor access to and shortage of drinking water and sanitation was a big challenge. Djibouti was among the countries that would be at high risk for a water shortage in the next 20 years. Sustainable development must focus on the population's needs. The Government had made it a high priority to develop the capacity of its citizens, particularly young people and women, and to end gender-based violence and discrimination. He lauded the African Union initiative to ask the Assembly to adopt a resolution calling for greater efforts to end female genital mutilation. His Government had created social policies and programmes to respond to the huge education, health and employment needs of youth.

He lauded Somalia's inclusive, historic elections. As it began a new phase, Somalia would need support from partners, including global financial institutions, to achieve good governance and shore up its economy. He called for stronger and better coordinated action to help Somalia's Government. The end of the Somali transition process, however, did not mean the completion of the peace process. Political dialogue must continue. Millions of internally displaced Somalis needed humanitarian aid and restoring security would not be easy, given the presence of extremist groups in the country. The international community must guarantee predictable, continued funding for the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to aid reconciliation and stabilization. Uganda, Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti had made noble efforts toward peace, but it was necessary to turn the AMISOM into a United Nations force. The Council must support that. He called for a donor conference to raise funds to aid Somalia's economic reconstruction.

Djibouti's border conflict with Eritrea, which started when Eritrea launched an aggressive attack on Djibouti in June 2008, had yet to be peacefully resolved through regional or global organizations, he said. Convinced that dialogue was possible, Djibouti had accepted Qatar's offer to mediate and install troops along the Djibouti-Eritrean border in exchange for Eritrea's withdrawal from Ras Doumeira and Doumeira Island. Council resolutions 1862, 1907 and 2023 addressed the global community's concern over the prospect of a new crisis in the Horn of Africa. But, two and one half years after the mediation agreement was signed, Djibouti was still awaiting the border demarcation and return of prisoners of war. Further, global events in recent weeks that occurred after the posting of an anti-Islam video could not leave the world indifferent. Political and religious leaders must form a common front against extremism and fanaticism. He called for condemnation of any discriminatory act against any group based on religion, particularly Muslims. Tolerance was needed more than ever. Finally, the occupation of Palestine was morally reprehensible and unacceptable. The global community had a moral duty to end the Palestinians people's suffering. Recognizing Palestine as a full fledged State and full United Nations member was a first step.

WALID AL-MOUALEM, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Syria, said that, while the peoples of the world waited to see effective and coordinated international efforts to overcome contemporary crises, reality pointed instead to the escalation of hegemony and domination. Instead of seeking to contribute to the settlement of regional and international disputes by peaceful means, some well known countries continued to pursue "new colonial policies" based on hypocrisy. "Under the pretext of humanitarian intervention these countries interfere in the domestic affairs of States and impose unilateral sanctions that lack a moral and legal basis", he stressed, adding that, under the pretext of concepts such as "the responsibility to protect", the "drums of war are beaten", and sedition and unrest were spreading and damaging the structure of national societies. Perhaps worst of all was to see the permanent members of the Security Council — who launched wars under the pretext of combating terrorism — now supporting terrorism in Syria.

For more than a year, his country had been facing organized terrorism that led to bombings, assassinations and massacres, as well as looting and sabotage activities that horrified citizens in many parts of Syria. Citing a recent bombing, which had taken place just last week and for which

responsibility had been claimed by a terrorist group, he said that it was no surprise that the Security Council had failed to condemn that act. That terrorism was, in fact, externally supported, and was accompanied by “unprecedented media provocation” based on igniting religious extremism. Some States in the region either turned a blind eye to the situation, or provided active material and logistical support for armed terrorist groups. “These facts make me question whether this international consensus by our States on combating terrorism was serious, or was it just merely ink on paper?” In that context, he noted the “explicit request of the United States” that the armed terrorist groups not surrender their arms in response to amnesty decrees issued by the Syrian leadership. He also wondered to what extent the statements of Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the United States and France — which clearly induced support for terrorism in Syria — were in line with the international responsibilities of those States in combating terrorism.

The Syrian Government had responded positively throughout the crisis to each sincere initiative aiming to find a peaceful solution based on national dialogue among Syrians, and rejected external manipulation. Syria had cooperated with the Arab Observers Mission, and the subsequent international initiatives linked to the work of the United Nations Special Envoy Kofi Annan. It had received the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS) and announced its commitment to the implementation of the Six Point Plan presented by Mr. Annan. Syria had also welcomed the appointment of Lakhdar Brahimi as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and stressed its willingness to cooperate with him on the principles agreed by the international community. The success of any such effort, however, depended on the commitment of States supporting armed groups in Syria — particularly Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Libya and others — to stop arming, funding, training and harbouring such terrorist groups, and instead to encourage dialogue and renounce violence.

The crisis in Syria was a two-sided problem, he went on. The first side was linked to the need for political, economic and social reforms demanded by the public, while the second side was the exploitation of those needs and demands for completely different objectives. In the past year the Government had made serious and important reform steps that culminated in a new constitution that embraced pluralism and that was followed by parliamentary elections. Syria was continuing to work with the patriotic components in the opposition to build a new and pluralistic Syria that responded to the aspirations of its people. Calls from the General Assembly’s podium for the President of Syria, Bashar Al-Assad, to step down were a “blatant interference in the domestic affairs of Syria”, and the unity of its people and its sovereignty. The Syrian people were the only party authorized to choose its own future and the shape of its own State, he stressed, urging countries that were proud of their own democracy and freedom of expression to support Syria in “our democratic course” and leave the Syrian people to choose its leadership through elections whose form was defined by the new Constitution.

Inviting the national opposition to join efforts to stop shedding Syrian blood by sitting at the dialogue table, he stressed that the Government of his country still believed in a political solution as the essential way out of the current crisis. He called, therefore, for all parties and political groups — inside and outside of Syria — to take part in a constructive dialogue “under the umbrella of the homeland”. To that end, countries represented in the Assembly should exert pressure to end the violence. The results of that national dialogue, after agreement by all parties, would be the map for a more pluralistic and democratic Syria. The events in Syria had led to growing humanitarian needs in several key sectors in areas affected by the terrorism of Takfiri groups, which had led to the worsening of the living conditions of the Syrian citizens there. While the Government had been working hard to meet the basic needs of the people, some had sought to “fabricate a refugee crisis” through inciting armed groups to intimidate Syrian civilians in border areas and by forcing them to flee to neighbouring countries. He appealed to those Syrian citizens to return to their towns and villages, where the State would guarantee their safe return and their precious lives, away from the “inhumane conditions” they had suffered in refugee camps. He also questioned the credibility of those who called for humanitarian assistance, but at the same time tightened economic sanctions.

In addition, he recalled his country’s natural right to the full return of the occupied Syrian Golan and support for the independent Palestinian State on the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967. Further, he stressed that the insistence of the United States and countries of the European Union, among others, to adopt unilateral economic measures contradicted the regulations of international law and the principles of free trade, and raised questions about the legality and morality of such practices. In that vein, he called for the lifting of the embargo imposed on Cuba by the United States, as well as for the lifting and ending of all unilateral coercive measures imposed on countries including Venezuela, Belarus, Iran, Syria and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

MAXINE MCCLEAN, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Barbados, said that despite being a small island developing State vulnerable to the global crises, her country had retained its stability and made great gains in its standard of living through partnership among all sectors of society. However, efforts to address threats such as rising prices and a decline in foreign investment had been undermined by the fact that, having achieved the classification of a middle-income developing

country, her country had been graduated from grant and concessionary financing by multilateral institutions such as the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank. "There is a clear need for greater equity, fairness and transparency in the process used to determine classifications and resource allocation", she said, stressing that the narrow current criteria used for such purposes, such as per capita income, must be expanded to take into account vulnerabilities, as the Secretary-General himself had advocated. She supported, therefore, work on developing new indices.

Among the threats to the survival of countries like hers, there was no greater one than climate change, she stated. "Inaction or inadequate action is inexcusable and morally indefensible, given the level of certainty of the scientific evidence before us and the technological and financial tools at our disposal to effect the necessary change". A new legally binding agreement that would take effect after 2020 was indeed needed, but it would be meaningless unless ambitious actions were taken now to reduce emissions and support the adaptation of vulnerable developing countries. In Doha, clarity and a greater sense of urgency was needed in both areas to avoid potentially catastrophic impacts. At a high-level conference on sustainable energy for small island developing States, hosted by his co-country and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), some 22 small island developing States agreed to a spectrum of voluntary commitments for transformation to low-carbon renewable energy. Commending development partners that had already agreed to support the initiative, she called for others to join them.

In all areas, she pledged that Barbados would do its part in ensuring successful follow-up to the Rio+20 Conference. Noting that the Assembly this session would consider a resolution on the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea, she affirmed support for an integrated management approach that involved all relevant stakeholders in that regard and she called for international support for the Caribbean Sea Commission. In addition, the great threat posed to the region by trafficking in illicit drugs and firearms underlined the need for legally-binding arms trade mechanisms, she said, emphasizing that an Arms Trade Treaty must cover small arms and light weapons, as well as their components and ammunition. She was profoundly disappointed at the failure of the Arms Trade Treaty Conference to reach agreement. Cooperation with international and bilateral partners was also crucial to counter criminality and she looked forward to the imminent reopening of the Caribbean subregional office of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which her country had again offered to host.

She supported comprehensive strategies for global conflict prevention and stressed the urgency of achieving the Millennium Development Goals while a post-2015 framework was discussed. Reiterating her country's commitment to the rule of law and the principles of the United Nations Charter, she spoke out against the embargo imposed by the United States on Cuba. She encouraged constructive engagement between the two sides to bring about a quick resolution of the issue. Finally, she pledged continued support to multilateralism and reiterated there was a "crucial nexus between development, peace, security and human rights". The United Nations was the only global body with the unquestionable legitimacy to lead a global response to the challenges facing humanity.

OSMAN MOHAMMED SALEH, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Eritrea, said the world had seen much political, economic, social and technological progress in the almost seven decades since the United Nations' creation. Yet, it was clear the United Nations had not succeeded in its paramount purpose of saving humanity from the scourge of war. In fact, there had been hardly a year in which war had not raged. In most of that conflict, some of the big powers had been the architects — the same powers that should have shouldered the biggest responsibility for maintaining peace and stability. At the same time, poverty persisted and an environmental threat risked human survival.

Indeed, it was disconcerting, he said, that the global political, economic and security architecture was inadequate to address such challenges. The General Assembly had been "emasculated", while the Security Council was dominated by one powerful permanent member, with change resisted by those benefitting from an anachronistic order. The United Nations Charter was being "wilfully flouted" and the noble aims of protecting human rights were being selectively employed to justify external intervention, including through the imposition of sanctions.

That assessment, he said, was shared by Africa, most developing countries, the Non-Aligned Movement, the emerging powers and many in the developed world, noting that the consensus now required coordinated efforts to effect real change. No part of the world needed positive change more than Africa, which remained marginalized and almost voiceless, but had "massive" potential. A number of African countries were taking significant steps in the economic, political and social arenas amid a revitalization of the African Union.

He hoped such moves would be supported by a more conducive international environment, and by the United Nations itself. He was convinced that the Horn of Africa would overcome its difficulties and contribute to a prosperous continent. For its part, Eritrea had made "remarkable" progress in rebuilding its economy and modernizing its infrastructure, from a perspective of regional

trade, investment and integration. Eritrea would continue to work to ensure a dignified, prosperous life for its citizens, in a peaceful region and more just, equitable world.

G.L. PEIRIS, Minister for External Affairs of Sri Lanka, said that over 67 years, States' conflicting aspirations had been reconciled through the United Nations intervention. While some disputes remained unresolved, the overall results had contributed to the Organization's longevity. The United Nations provided an "extensive" range of options for resolving disputes. Sri Lanka firmly upheld the tenets of peaceful coexistence, mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and non-interference in internal State affairs. The trend towards selectivity and arbitrary intervention in State affairs flew in the face of the sovereign equality among States, a principle enshrined in the Charter.

He went on to say that the impacts of the financial meltdown had impeded the realization of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. Any strategy to achieve recovery must not impose unjustifiable burdens on developing nations, whose voices must be heard in global discussions on such matters. There was no one-size-fits-all approach and the experiences of newly emerging economies also must be taken into account. Further, the global financial architecture must be restructured, as power had shifted from countries in the industrialized North to "power houses" in the South. Global financial institutions must reflect those "tectonic" changes, as must the United Nations.

On other matters, he pressed developed nations to deliver on pledges to assist developing countries in arresting climate change, stressing the need to identify common policies for achieving social goals and protecting the environment. While the result of the Rio+20 Conference might not have satisfied the expectations of all countries, including his own, it had provided a foundation for achieving higher goals through negotiations. In that vein, he said the transition to a green economy must not create negative externalities that slowed economic growth or perpetuated inequity. Assistance under North-South development cooperation mechanisms must consider global initiatives to mitigate the adverse consequences of too rigid an application of green economic principles. Partnerships created under mutually agreed sustainable development goals did not replace North-South development cooperation.

Touching on a number of Sri Lanka's domestic successes, including a drop in absolute poverty to 7.6 per cent in 2011 from 15.2 per cent in 2005, he said the Government had worked to ensure that the fruits of economic development were equally distributed and accessible. Three years ago, the Government had ended the terrorist challenge largely through its own efforts and now was committed to redressing the grievances of all parties affected by its internal conflict. The country exemplified the challenges of emerging from the shadow of a conflict that had spanned three decades. Progress on the ground over the last three years vis-à-vis the resettlement of internally displaced persons, reintegration of ex-combatants and unprecedented focus on infrastructure had invigorated the economy of the country as a whole, and the Northern Province in particular.

"No one has greater commitment to reconciliation in an all-inclusive spirit than the Government", he stressed, noting that "unhelpful" external pressures that supported partisan interests could derail initiatives that had produced peace on the ground. Sri Lanka's accomplishments were remarkable, considering that many developing nations continued to struggle for equitable social development. In that context, he said Sri Lanka was always ready to share its experience and was expanding its engagement in Africa, especially in the areas of trade and investment. Sri Lanka supported all multilateral efforts to enhance peace and security, and eliminate all forms of terrorism. The restoration of the rights of Palestinians was a long-standing issue that required collective attention, and Sri Lanka supported the implementation of all United Nations resolutions on Palestine that would pave the way to statehood for its people.

BASILE IKOUEBE, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Congo, stressed that the persistence and resurgence of crisis "flashpoints" all over the world "mortgaged the promotion and protection of human rights", as well as attempts at development. In that context, Congo welcomed the choice of theme for the Assembly's sixty-seventh session, which truly addressed the concerns of the hour. Congo, having been mired in conflict during the 1990s, had made the choice of mediation and dialogue, he said. It had overcome socio-political turbulence, and the resulting peace had opened up a space for the nation to evolve its democracy and economic development. Congo expressed its deep concern with the ongoing crises that threatened the peace and security of the region, in particular the Sahel, which was subject to ever worsening instability. The Democratic Republic of the Congo was also undergoing a serious conflict in its eastern region, with the emergence of armed groups such as the "M23"; the political, security and humanitarian effects of that conflict extended to the entire Great Lakes region. He welcomed, in that respect, the recent initiative of the Secretary-General to convene a high-level meeting on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, on 27 September. Congo hoped to see a concrete solution to that situation as soon as possible.

The collapse of democracy in Mali was a regression that Congo deplored, he said, calling for a return to constitutional order in that State. The risks of the contagion of terrorism, in particular, called for the support of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the international community, so that the “dangerous precedent” established in Mali would not happen again elsewhere. He further welcomed positive developments in the process established between the African Union and Somalia, as well as the election of that country’s new president, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud. Of course, there were still great challenges to building a State with the rule of law; Somalia must be assisted in building on the gains of the last few months, and the international community should take an “organized and consistent” approach in that regard. With regard to the conflict between Sudan and South Sudan, he called on both parties to exhibit political will and to sign all comprehensive agreements as called for by the African Union.

Turning to the Middle East, and in particular to the conflict in Syria, he stressed that the world community must not allow the “Arab spring” to bloom “to the detriment of the interests of a people who have the right, like any other, to live in peace in a viable State”. As the situation in Syria confronted the region as a whole with the risk of destabilization, he called for an agreed settlement which took into account the needs of the various parties to the conflict. In addition, it was necessary for nuclear-weapons States to implement measures aimed at real nuclear disarmament, and ensuring that the ban on nuclear proliferation for military purposes. He defended, nonetheless, the right of States to develop nuclear materials for peaceful purposes under the control of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Regarding development, he noted that agreements by major industrialized States were not being complied with. He was concerned about the crisis of the Euro zone, and in particular its effect on commitments that had been made to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. In that context, he underscored the role of the United Nations to forge a “spirit of solidarity and cooperation” in order to ensure respect for development cooperation commitments. Finally, he said, the reform of the Security Council must continue to be a priority concern on the agenda, and he called for the broader competence of the Economic and Social Council, as well as the establishment of an international mechanism aimed at the protection and promotion of sustainable development.

ARVIN BOOLELL, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Regional integration and International Trade of Mauritius, said that severe crises threatened countries that had the least responsibility for their cause, and developing countries were faced with challenges from climate change to youth unemployment. More equitable and inclusive growth, the fight against corruption and the promotion of green growth were overriding priorities. Sound national frameworks were needed, but the increasing importance at the international level was unquestionable, because of the growing interdependence of all economies. Nations must resist protectionist measures as an easy way out and there must be a transformative agenda for integrated sustainable development.

The General Assembly played a crucial role in all such efforts, he said, as did the Economic and Social Council and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Greater regional cooperation was necessary as well, for pooling of resources and coordinating policies, particularly in the area of sustainable energy. International cooperation in tapping the resources of the seas was particularly important, he added, welcoming the recognition at Rio+20 that the small island developing States present a special case. He hoped there would be concrete action in that regard, with focal points established in all United Nations entities for that purpose. Developed countries must honour their commitments in that regard. He looked forward to the follow-up to the Rio+20 Conference, welcoming the appointment of the High-Level Panel on the post-2015 development agenda.

In addition, he said that the world could not turn away from the suffering of Syrians and Palestinians. While affirming the utmost respect for all faiths and religions, he stressed that there was no justification for violence however great the outrage, also supporting the fundamental principle of protection of diplomats and diplomatic premises. Support for the roadmap to a speedy return to constitutional order in the neighbouring State of Madagascar was also an important matter.

The rule of law must be supported at the national and international level, he said, adding that nations, especially the small ones, must have avenues for peacefully resolving all disputes with other States. In that context, he said that the United Kingdom excised part of Mauritian territory prior to independence and had refused to enter into talks in good faith over that dispute, while keeping the issue out of the International Court of Justice. “Thus the decolonization of Africa has not been completed”, he stated. Enforcement mechanisms for international law were also needed. The full realization of his country’s territorial integrity also required a settlement on Tromelin. In that regard, he looked forward to continued dialogue with France in a spirit of mutual cooperation.

ENRIQUE CASTILLO-BARRANTES, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica, conveyed respect and admiration for the complex transitions to democracy propelled by popular will in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and elsewhere in the Middle East, as well as solidarity with the “desperate screams” of the

women and children suffering in Syria. At the same time, he expressed worries over the resurgence of territorial conflicts, war rhetoric among some States and the insensitivity of autocratic regimes. The peaceful settlement of disputes was central to Costa Rica's foreign policy and was deeply rooted in its commitment to diversity, tolerance and the rule of law. A few days ago, the Assembly supported a follow-up text to the July 2011 resolution sponsored by Costa Rica and other countries on mediation. In the 1980s, his country had propelled one of the most successful processes of mediation in the history of the hemisphere, which culminated in the Central American Peace Accord and "silenced the guns." Unfortunately, today the region confronted a challenge of similar proportion. Drug trafficking and organized crime was plaguing Central America, which had become a transit route between drug production centres in the south and consumer countries in the north. The region's limited capacity had impeded regional efforts to prevent and repress those ills. To confront the scourge, it was working to expand opportunities for youth, improve police capacity, strengthen the effectiveness of the judiciary and assist addicts.

Citizen security was improving, he said. Homicide in Costa Rica, the lowest in Central America, fell from 11.7 for every 100,000 inhabitants in May 2011 to nine in May 2012. Reported cases of crime fell from 12 per cent in 2011. Still, as drug cartels remained strong, more well-balanced strategies were needed to combat it. Costa Rica had recognized the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court since 1973. At the end of 2010, it asked the Court to rule over Nicaragua's move to illegally deploy military forces and civil personnel in Costa Rica. In March 2011, the Court ordered Nicaragua to remove its forces from the disputed zone and it gave Costa Rica environmental custody. But Nicaragua had consistently evaded that order to the detriment of bilateral relations and in violation of paragraph 31 of the Final Declaration of the Rule of Law adopted by the Assembly last week. He condemned and denounced that.

He lamented the lack of consensus to reach a global arms trade treaty in July. A co-sponsor of that initiative, Costa Rica would not back down on its attempts to promote such an instrument. Since adopting sustainability as a development model several years ago, Costa Rica had improved its forest cover, generated 90 per cent of energy from renewable resources and turned more than 20 per cent of its national territory into national parks. It aimed to be carbon-neutral by 2021. But that would serve little without the commitment of the biggest carbon emitters and international cooperation for mitigation and adaptation in the most vulnerable countries. Middle-income countries like Costa Rica needed the global community's support to further improve economic conditions and human development. Costa Rica would continue to participate actively to improve the methodology guiding the "graduation" processes of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

He called for making the United Nations more efficient, inclusive and representative. He was committed to Security Council reform; improving its working methods must be ongoing. He stressed the importance of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training recently adopted by the Assembly. Also, it was unacceptable to insult anyone's convictions, practices or religious symbols, but the right path for response was open dialogue and respect for others and respect for human life. He rejected violence as a response to messages considered offensive. He condemned the killing of the United States Ambassador to Libya and his staff. Further, Costa Rica was committed to human security. He celebrated the recent Assembly resolution that advanced the common understanding of that concept, and he stressed the value of the principle of the responsibility to protect. Together with Australia, Denmark and Ghana, it had promoted a network of national focal points on that principle. He invited all Member States to join the network.

ELLIOTT OHIN, Minister of State, Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Togo, said that, in an increasingly complex world, the Assembly's theme allowed Member States to reconnect with the original and founding values of the United Nations. The Organization had long taken it upon itself to address the multiple challenges of a constantly changing world. However, in spite of those efforts and some successes achieved, the use of force continued to emerge too frequently in international relations. In many cases, recourse to force was chosen too quickly, cutting short the process of peaceful negotiations. Indeed, he said it was time to put the "dialogue among nations" back at the centre of the international agenda. "But today we need to go further, and make dialogue within nations an indispensable corollary to the international dialogue", he added. The world today was marked by interconnectedness, and it was rare for an internal conflict not to have repercussions on its neighbours, he said, pointing, as one example, to the current conflict in the Sahel region.

Encouraging dialogue within nations meant, above all, adopting a constructive attitude that promoted international values and took into account local and regional specificities. With that in mind, the West African Economic and Monetary Union, which enjoyed observer status in the General Assembly and over which Togo presided, had decided to give heightened priority to the issue of peace and security. That new choice for an economic organization was guided by the need to make dialogue a priority tool for conflict prevention, he said. In that regard, he affirmed that the decentralization of the settlement of conflicts was one of the most viable options to make the prevention of conflict last throughout the world. However, he stressed, the increased accountability of subregional organizations

should not be a means for Member States to renounce collective responsibility in the area of peace and security. "As Members of the United Nations, we do not have a choice" in that matter, he said.

The establishment of a Peace and Security Council within the African Union in 2002 had created much hope, he went on. That new tool allowed the Union to directly intervene in countries in crisis. However, in the recent cases of Libya and Côte d'Ivoire, it had been demonstrated that, faced with antagonism, organizations had not been able to "fill in the gaps" with that tool. It was, therefore, necessary to enhance cooperation between such new regional mechanisms and those international instruments that had been active for decades. He asked the international community to mobilize to support Mali in re-establishing its territorial integrity and regaining peace. Recent events in the northern part of the Africa continent had once again emphasized the reality that the main responsibility in the settlement of disputes must be borne individually by States.

Togo, which had a non-permanent seat on the Security Council, was resolutely committed to finding peace through dialogue and negotiations. Welcoming the efforts of the United Nations and all friendly partners and countries who had helped Togo move forward and accept the path of dialogue, and to overcome its past, he said that Togo had renewed its economic growth and was in the process of intensifying sweeping institutional reforms, as well as moving forward with a republican agenda. Togo needed to further strengthen its economy and push the country forward to new successes, in particular in the social domain, where there were many current challenges. Its immediate priority was the holding of peaceful, free and transparent elections. "We should leave no stone unturned" in the struggle to avoid allowing elections to become synonymous with violence and chaos, he stressed. Turning, finally, to the much-needed reform of the Security Council — which was demonstrated by that body's inability to agree on certain major matters — he reaffirmed Togo's support for the African Union initiative which sought to grant the African continent more adequate representation within the Council. It was up to the permanent members to "take a small step which would allow all of humanity to take a great leap forward", he said.

WINSTON DOOKERAN, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago, said that there had been a redistribution of wealth and the very nature of global power was shifting. New dynamics were emerging as the world witnessed the growing economies of Latin America, Asia and Africa. Quoting the President of the Assembly's own statement to the Assembly just days earlier, he said that "a growing number of States are determined to enhance their external engagement, aspiring to play greater roles in their respective regions and beyond". As a result, power and influence was becoming more diffuse in the international arena. In decades of engagement, his country had accepted its responsibility and the core of its commitment had been the rule of law. "Too often, we had witnessed the severity of the consequences when States act unilaterally to solve disputes through the illegal use of force." In that respect, Trinidad and Tobago called on all nations to ratify the amendments to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court on the crime of aggression; Trinidad and Tobago expected to ratify those amendments by the next Assembly of States Parties.

The United Nations was the principle vehicle for facilitating the settlement of disputes or situations among States by peaceful means. However, while the architecture was in place to achieve that objective, there was nonetheless a need to strengthen it. To achieve that noble goal the political commitment of Member States, whether large or small, developed or developing, was necessary. Member States must move with haste to reform the Security Council. It was a matter of grave concern to his country that the Council had not been able to effectively address the situation in Syria. "The Council must uphold its sacred mandate under the Charter and ensure that all sides involved in that conflict are made accountable for their actions, which have caused tremendous human suffering and continue to threaten international peace and security", he said. The United Nations must also commit all available resources to mediating a two-State agreement to begin to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian situation, in full accordance with relevant resolutions reaffirming borders existing before 1967. In addition, the completion of Cuba's reintegration, as a full and equal partner, into the international system was an issue close to the Caribbean; the economic blockade of that island was an "anachronism", he stressed in that respect, calling once again for its removal.

While Trinidad and Tobago would have preferred a more equitable geographic representation on the Secretary-General's Panel on the acceleration of efforts to achieve targets set by the Millennium Development Goals, it nonetheless welcomed its establishment, and called for "fresh and bold changes and a paradigm shift" in thinking in the design of the post-2015 development agenda. In that regard, he said, the international community must move decisively to fully implement its obligations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Kyoto Protocol.

With regard to arms control, he said that Trinidad and Tobago deeply regretted the failure of the United Nations Diplomatic Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty, despite the support of an overwhelming majority. He joined in calls for the resumption of that Arms Trade Treaty by the first quarter of 2013, and added that Trinidad and Tobago had recently hosted a high-level discussion on the topic "Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control". He asked all Member States to

support that resolution when it came before the General Assembly this session. In addition, he joined in calling on the major international lending agencies to recognize the special circumstances of middle-income countries, and not to push them "to the margins of the development agenda".

GASPAR MARTINS (Angola) said that the impact of war still had major consequences on the lives of Angola's people, and gave his country first-hand knowledge of the importance of dialogue and negotiation for the peaceful resolution of conflicts. He pledged his Government's continued efforts in that context at the regional and international levels, working with the regional groupings toward which it belonged. He said that the economic crisis demanded reform of the international regulatory system, greater fluidity and transparency in the allocation of capital to the least developed countries and greater support for sustainable development. The Rio+20 outcome offered a solid foundation in formulating national and international policies for the latter. However commitments needed to be translated into intense action on climate change, drought and desertification, natural disasters, urbanization and other areas.

The session's theme of peaceful settlement of disputes related to the need for reform of the Security Council, he said, calling for fair representation of all regions and the broadening of permanent membership in that body. Turning to local conflicts, he reaffirmed his support for the outcome of the Great Lakes summits on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as the position of the African Union and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) on that situation. He urged continued international support for stabilization in Somalia and welcomed recent agreements between Sudan and South Sudan, urging the parties to continue their engagement with each other to resolve remaining differences.

On other conflicts, he called for determination from the international community to preserve Mali's unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity. On Guinea-Bissau, he advocated a comprehensive solution and lasting restoration of constitutional order according to international decisions. On Western Sahara, he called on the parties to continue negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations, so that the people could exercise their right to self-determination. He supported the two-state resolution of the Israeli/Palestinian situation, as well as a negotiated resolution of the crisis in Syria assisted by international mediation. On Cuba, he reiterated the need to end the embargo in accordance with United Nations resolutions. Mutual respect, regional cooperation and respect for international treaty obligations would continue to guide his country's foreign policy, he said.

Turning to domestic issues, he said that ten years after attaining peace, Angola had made significant progress in consolidating democracy, leading up to successful elections on 31 August. Macroeconomic stability and the building of infrastructure had contributed to a progressive improvement of living conditions. It had not been possible to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, but the macroeconomic development rates had permitted consideration of the country's graduation from the least-developed category in the near future. He expressed gratitude for the trust investors had placed in the country, as well as for assistance provided by international partners. He acknowledged that there was still much to do to ensure Angola's economic growth was reflected in systematic improvement in the welfare of the people, through increased employment levels and enhanced investment in social welfare.

ALBERT F.DEL ROSARIO, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, stressed the importance of the rule of law, saying his country had learned from its past. Its advocacy on that subject was not only borne out of its experience as a United Nations founding member, but also out of its national experience. Its freedom was hard-won and democracy had only been realized after decades of dictatorship. The President had placed the rule of law at the centre of governance, and as a result, the culture of impunity had been neutralized, he said, adding that the economy was on the upswing and people's rights and freedom were assured.

The full force of the rule of law must be brought to bear in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, promote nuclear disarmament and end the flow of illicit weapons, he said. The Philippines had presided over the 2010 Review Conference on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and the meeting's historic adoption of 64 action points had strengthened the instrument's legal regime. The Philippines supported nuclear-weapon-free zones, including the one that the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) had created regionally, he said, adding that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was another critical pillar of global disarmament and non-proliferation. Commending Indonesia for having become the latest Annex 2 State to ratify it, he reiterated calls for the remaining eight to accede at the earliest possible time.

He said that, as a major contributor to United Nations peacekeeping operations, his country recognized the importance of women in promoting peace, and continued to deploy more female peacekeepers. The nation aimed to surpass the 10 per cent deployment target for women in terms of country troop contingents and 20 per cent for police deployment. On migration, he said it remained an "unheralded and underappreciated" dimension of globalization today. The reality was that hundreds of millions lived and work outside their native lands, providing benefits to both their host and home

nations. Earlier this year, the Philippines had ratified two key international instruments affecting migrants worldwide — the Maritime Labour Convention and the Convention concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers, bringing those two agreements into force next year.

Recalling that 2012 marked the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the 1982 Manila Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of Disputes, he said that document remained applicable to the present day and was a stark reminder that “we have yet to overcome the barriers that divide countries and people all over the planet.” Given the intensified maritime disputes in Asia, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea had never been more relevant than it was today, he said, adding that all States must respect their obligation to settle maritime disputes by peaceful means, without threats or use of force, under the Convention. A rule-based approach under the Convention could help peacefully resolve the disputes, he said, pointing out that his country faced the most serious challenge to the security of its maritime domain, the integrity of its national territory, and the effective protection of its marine environment.

WILFRED D. ELRINGTON, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belize, said the theme for the sixty-seventh session was most timely and fitting because although his country had gained independence in 1981, after 100 years of colonial rule by the United Kingdom, its sovereignty was still threatened by Guatemala’s territorial claim dating back to the 1940s. However, the Governments of Belize and Guatemala had agreed to a recommendation of the Organization of American States (OAS) Secretary General to allow adjudication of Guatemala’s by the International Court of Justice, provided that was supported by the citizens of both States, which would be determined in simultaneous referenda scheduled for 6 October 2013.

Stressing that Belize was still experiencing all the growing pains that naturally afflicted young nations, he said its situation was further aggravated by the population’s diversity. Given its multiethnic, multi-faith, multilingual and multicultural population, “the urgency for social cohesion cannot be overstated”. That challenge, alongside problems posed by natural disasters, climate change, financial collapse and transnational criminal activity, required not only domestic initiatives, but cooperation with international partners, including the United Nations and its various programmes and agencies.

He said his country supported all regional activities and had joined OAS, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Central American Integration System and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. Noting the direct and devastating impact of climate change on the region, he said his Government worked with its CARICOM partners and the wider Alliance of Small Island States to advance its interests in the climate change negotiations, and would be hosting the CARICOM Climate Change Centre, tasked with providing technical and scientific advice on the formulation of policies.

Regional responses were needed to combat trafficking in human beings, drugs and arms, he said, reaffirming his country’s commitment to implementing the Central America Regional Security Strategy to combat the activities of such “merchants of death and destruction” in the region. Regrettably, no conclusion had been reached to what had appeared to be an emerging consensus on an arms trade treaty. He also expressed concern that Latin America and Caribbean States were wrongly and unjustly classified as middle-income countries, when such “generic classifications” masked the varied challenges they faced in the midst of poverty, severe income inequality, economic vulnerabilities and debt. Finally, he joined others in calling for the lifting of the economic embargo against Cuba and for the full participation of Taiwan in the United Nations. He also urged Member States to address the concerns of the people of Israel and Palestine.

VLADIMIR MAKEI, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belarus, said that while many often recalled “the spirit of San Francisco”, it was important to consider seriously whether the hopes expressed in the world body’s founding city had been realized. “To some extent, they have,” he said. “After all, there is no longer the sharp ideological confrontation that characterized the twenty-first century. There was no longer open conflict between the major world Powers, as there had been in previous centuries. Yet, the spirit of San Francisco was about something more than preventing a recurrence of past mistakes, he said. It was, above all, about the promise of the future, and “unfortunately, it is precisely this part that has failed to become a reality.”

Some countries saw neither the limits of their foreign policy ambitions nor forms of statehood other than their own, which gave rise to many of today’s geopolitical problems. “The States that refuse the pattern imposed from outside and which choose to defend their sovereignty have paid a dear price for it,” he said, offering Cuba as an example. That country, which some 50 years ago had taken an “historic choice” to pursue an independent development path, had since been met with rejection and an economic blockade “by those who think they can continue to write the history of mankind in the twenty-first century in the same manner they [had done] before”. Attempts to make anyone do something against their will were doomed to fail, he warned. “The time of imperialism, in whatever lofty slogans it is

now being dressed — ‘democracy’, ‘human rights’, or ‘good governance’ — is irreversibly gone,” he declared.

Further, many countries were struggling under a burden of economic challenges resulting from four decades of market fundamentalism, he said. That policy, pursued relentlessly by its proponents, had led to a rise in inequality, and had perhaps even left a time bomb that would detonate years from now, causing untold upheaval for future generations. Another troubling trend undercutting the “spirit of San Francisco” was the double standard routinely used in foreign policy, he said. Indeed, the major Powers were willing to go to any lengths to cater to the interests of their friends, yet, when it came to engaging with opponents, they employed “forced inoculation” of democracy and human rights. “Guided solely by their own interests, these parties, who were shaking your hand yesterday, today openly contribute to your downfall.”

Such “unscrupulousness and barbarity in foreign policy” had all but sidelined the United Nations, he said, and as such, reviving the spirit of San Francisco would require a return to the principles of multilateralism, justice and cooperation. Belarus did not have all the answers, but the areas requiring the greatest work included the rule of law, politics, economics and the environment. Above all, to ensure that the law was bolstered on a global scale, international law must be made fully functional, he emphasized, cautioning that “trendy concepts” and “arbitrary interpretations” of the Charter, such as humanitarian intervention and the responsibility to protect, must be eschewed. He said there was a need to tackle structural issues by ending the prevailing “dysfunctional multipolarity” in favour of building an effective global system based on functioning partnerships, balanced economic mechanisms and comprehensive cooperation to tackle climate change.

PHANDU T.C. SKELEMANI, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Botswana, said his country had deferred implementation of several projects of strategic importance following the 2008 global financial crisis. In addition, many traditional partners had virtually abandoned Botswana upon its “graduation” to higher middle-income developing country status, but it now needed more development assistance than ever, due to the gravity of the challenges ahead.

He said the coups in Mali and Guinea-Bissau were a reminder of what had been thought to be a “closed chapter”. They undermined the significant progress that Africa had made in consolidating democracy, good governance and respect for both human rights and the rule of law. Calling on the African Union to remain resolute in rejecting unconstitutional change, and on the international community to support its efforts, he also appealed to both Sudan and South Sudan to commit to the African Union road map, describing the former as the main cause of instability, with a “catalogue” of blatant acts of aggression against the latter.

Turning to Syria, he noted that President Assad had displaced more than a million Syrians and slaughtered 20,000 citizens to satisfy his lust for power, yet his country remained a member of the United Nations. “This surely cannot be right,” he said, emphasizing that Syria’s allies in the Security Council should be equally condemned. The Arab Spring had shown that no amount of force could suppress the will of the people forever, he added. The Council must assume the high moral ground in defence of the victims of war crimes and crimes against humanity, he said, adding that the principle of responsibility to protect should be forcefully applied wherever such crimes occurred.

He went on to condemn in the strongest terms the persistent vetoes by China and the Russian Federation of resolutions aimed at exerting pressure on the Syrian leadership to cease its heinous crimes. Botswana also condemned the violence that had followed the release of a video offensive to Muslims, he said, wondering how it could be in people’s best interests for freedom of speech to cause insult. Freedom of expression allowed for protest, but only peaceful protest, he emphasized, adding that the same was true of freedom of the press. “With all these freedoms, there must be limits.” On the environmental front, he recalled that Heads of State attending the Summit for Sustainability in Africa, in May this year, had adopted the Gaborone Declaration, calling for increased private-sector investment to reduce food insecurity, among other things.

WINSTON G. LACKIN, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Suriname, said a combination of prudent fiscal policies and windfall earnings from trading crude oil, derivatives and gold had created a stable political and economic environment in his country. That stability had in turn become conducive to solid domestic and foreign investment in the more sustainable sectors, in which agriculture and tourism scored high. The design and construction of relevant infrastructure demonstrated a potential to put Suriname on the world map as a player on the supply side of strategic commodities, he said.

A social package presented by President focused on education and health care, he said. The President had made the point that while the nation’s strong international ratings were encouraging for investors, its people, who lacked the right opportunities, would only share in its achievements through job-oriented education at the academic and vocational levels; adequate health services and sport facilities; and access to potable water, information and communications technology, and proper waste

disposal. The challenge of financing such an improved social package made it necessary to empower the productive and service sectors by providing funds and know-how to entrepreneurs.

Recalling that, as a young nation, Suriname was involved in an ongoing decolonization struggle relating both to its structure and mindset, he said building a nation constituted enormous challenges, given that its half-million-strong population comprised a “bouquet” of at least seven different ethno-cultural traditions originating from the Americas, Africa and Europe, as well as India, Indonesia, China and the Middle East. Suriname was known for the presence of a synagogue located next to a mosque in the heart of its capital. Christian churches coexisted with Hindu temples, as well as places of worship with a strong African affinity. The country had managed quite well to convert that challenge into a unique and exemplary benefit, he said, adding that colonial characteristics of “divide and rule” were gradually fading.

When Suriname had become a United Nations member 36 years ago, it was little aware of the Organization’s importance in a number of issues outside decolonization. Now, “we have grown in understanding,” he said, adding “a proper functioning United Nations, including a democratically based Security Council, had the potential to become the single most important stabilizing factor in a world that moved from bi-polarity to multi-polarity.” This Organization was built on the ashes of the Second World War and on the commitment to save successive generations from the scourge of war. Peaceful settlement of disputes was, therefore, the only avenue through which this planet would be saved from annihilation. This principle stand must be applied to all areas of conflict, whether in the Middle East, Africa, the Americas or anywhere else in the world, he noted.

JOSEPH B. DAUDA, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Sierra Leone, said that amidst all the security challenges and global economic uncertainties, Africa continued to strive hard to contain and address resurgent conflicts by peaceful means. At the regional and subregional levels, the past year had been marred by sporadic terrorist strikes by extremists, which had led to extensive loss of life and massive destruction of property. Sierra Leone condemned such terrorist acts and would continue to work with its partners, particularly within the framework of the Mano River Union, ECOWAS, the African Union and the United Nations, in seeking a lasting solution.

He said his country would continue to embrace mediation and other conflict-prevention initiatives in settling disputes and preventing and resolving conflict. It would remain strongly committed to the rule of law, respect for and protection of human rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women. Sierra Leone was also committed to equal access to justice, zero tolerance for corruption, pursuit of internationally agreed development targets, including the Millennium Development Goals, and ensuring participatory governance, as well as free, fair, transparent and credible elections.

Despite the onerous challenges facing the global community, Sierra Leone had recorded significant progress in strengthening its political and economic governance, including improvement in its social indicators, he stated. Foreign direct investment in various sectors of the economy, notably mining, was brightening the country’s economic prospects and hopefully would place it among the world’s fastest-growing economies in the next few years. The “Agenda for Change” continued to provide a strong partnership link between Sierra Leone and the United Nations, as well as other international development partners, he said. The Government also continued to uphold the principles of inter-religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence, as well as respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

At the national level, the Government had enhanced political stability by strengthening good governance institutions, giving them sufficient leverage and latitude to deliver on their respective statutory mandates, he continued. It had established the National Commission for Disabled Persons and enacted the Sexual Offences Act 2012 to address sexual violence against women and girls. As for the presidential, parliamentary and local elections slated for 17 November, he said preparations were in “full gear”, with the support of bilateral and multilateral partners. They would be the third elections held in the decade that had followed the end of the country’s civil conflict, he pointed out, adding that the Government was fully aware that the conduct and outcome of the elections would be a critical benchmark for assessing the gains made in peace consolidation and democracy.

DOMINIQUE MAMBERTI, Secretary for Relations with States of the Holy See, said the world was witnessing the expansion of regional conflicts, making the theme of the sixty-seventh session all the more timely. The United Nations Charter, the Vienna Convention and other core instruments of international law set the framework for ensuring a peaceful and stable world, but while they were indeed ambitious and comprehensive, the world had changed dramatically over the past 65 years, he said. The history of humankind had always been marked by paradoxes, and such was the case today, as the divide between the “haves” and “have nots” continued to grow, especially in terms of economic equality and access to new communications technology.

Regional conflicts remained a serious threat that should serve to rally the international community towards a common cause, he said, noting also that the United Nations, as well as regional organizations, continued to address situations of conflict and tensions, particularly in Africa. Yet, the world body was increasingly seen as dysfunctional — a theatre where political games were acted out. Many people wondered why an Organization built on such a solid legal framework was unable to outline and ensure a comprehensive and functioning system of global governance. Suggesting that the cause could indeed be a moral lapse, as well as a loss of trust in the efficacy of dialogue, he stressed that the priorities outlined in the Charter guided all stakeholders to promote human rights and protect the vulnerable. Nowhere was that goal more critical than in Syria, where the international community must work together to protect civilians and ensure that the Joint Special Representative received adequate cooperation, he said.

Only an international community with values rooted in dignity could provide solutions to such challenges as drug trafficking, economic turmoil and lagging development, he continued. He also called for continuing the debate on reforming and democratizing international financial institutions, especially to correct the damage wrought by short-sighted financial policies. The international community must place a priority on human rights and humanity, and not reduce human beings to “numbers” or “market concepts”. He declared: “Human beings are not numbers; we are talking about people, every one of whom has rights.” Religion worked for the well-being of all and led human beings to work for the benefit of others. All extremist activities contravened religion, as well as the goals of tolerance and peaceful coexistence. The international community had always welcomed the Holy See’s contribution to ensuring family unity, human dignity and religious freedom, he noted. The Holy See also supported the use of harmonious dialogue, he said, stressing that it was only through such values that the United Nations could carry out its duties for all humankind.

PAK KIL YON, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, said Marshal Kim Jong-Un was firmly determined to help his people, who had overcome manifold hardships, enjoy a happy life to “their heart’s content in a prosperous socialist State”. The Supreme Leader’s independent foreign policy was opening a new chapter in relations with “other countries that are friendly” to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, not bound by the past. The people were following Mr. Kim with absolute trust and vigorously advancing to the final victory with full conviction in and optimism about the future, single-heartedly united behind him.

“The most serious issue in the international arena at present is a flagrant violation of the principles of respect for sovereignty and equality,” he said. Unless the high-handedness and arbitrariness of certain countries was eliminated, it would be hard to say that the United Nations was playing its role as the centre for coordinating cooperative relations between States on the basis of sovereign equality, as enshrined in the United Nations Charter. The unjustifiable interference, pressure and use of force that violated Syria’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as the Palestinian people’s right to self-determination and existence should be rejected, he emphasized.

Stressing the need to democratize the United Nations and, in particular, to strengthen the authority of the General Assembly, he said that body’s resolutions on dismantling the so-called “United Nations Command” in the Republic of Korea, and on ending the United States blockade against Cuba, remained unimplemented. It was quite natural for the Assembly, which represented the general will of all Member States, to supervise its own overall activities, he said, adding that it should also be given the authority to undertake the final review of Security Council resolutions relating to peace and security, including those on sanctions and the use of force. Abuse of the Council as a tool for the pursuit of strategic interests by a handful of countries should never be overlooked, he said.

He recalled that last April, the United States had taken issue with his country’s legitimate and peaceful space launch, and had forced the Council to adopt an unjust statement. That alone demonstrated abuse of the organ, he said. The United States had already finalized different “Korean War” scenarios and was waiting for a chance to implement them with a view to imposing military rule in his country after a military invasion, he continued. The United States was continually staging various joint military exercises under different code names in and around the Korean peninsula, driving the situation on the peninsula to the brink of war, he noted. Rubbing salt into the wounds of the people of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea was the Republic of Korea, whose authorities had brought inter-Korean relations to “total bankruptcy”, he said, declaring: “History will bring them justice.”

MARCO ALBUJA, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Political Integration of Ecuador, said it was time to end the illegal use of the United Nations by certain Powers to advance their own political and economic interests, thus de-legitimizing the Organization and distorting multilateralism. Calling for dialogue, respect for human rights and self-determination, he declared: “Enough of imposing geopolitical visions by force.” Hailing Colombia’s steps to foster dialogue in its efforts to resolve its internal disputes, he said persistent unilateral actions by certain Powers jeopardized the ability of international institutions to offer legitimate responses to global problems. Ecuador called for “real reform” to make the United Nations more democratic and modern, and to prevent its illegal use. To

ensure true multilateralism, no Member State should have veto power, and all Member States must be equally represented, he said, advocating comprehensive reform of the Security Council in terms of its size, composition and working methods in order to make it more representative. He also called for revitalization of the Assembly.

An example of the disequilibrium in the United Nations was seen in the United States blockade of Cuba, he continued. Underscoring that the United States could not continue to include Cuba in its spurious list of countries sponsoring terrorism, he said the latter had stated that its territory had never been, and nor would it ever be, used to harbour terrorists. Former President Jimmy Carter recognized that and had stated that the Havana Declaration to foster dialogue between the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia had invalidated the claim that Cuba must be on the list of State sponsors of terrorism, he said, supporting the former president's claim that removing Cuba's name from the list would open the possibility for more sincere dialogue between the two countries. Ecuador supported the Palestinian bid for enhanced United Nations Membership based on 1967 borders, and Argentina's historic right to the Malvinas (Falkland Islands), he said, calling on the United Kingdom to accept its request for direct negotiations over their dispute. On Ecuador's continuing diplomatic confrontation with the United Kingdom relating to the inviolability of diplomatic missions, he said Ecuador had received support from the Governments of the Union of South American Nations and the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas and OAS, he said. He also condemned the 11 September attacks on the United States diplomatic premises in Cairo and Benghazi.

Emphasizing that there could be no double standards in the human rights arena, he said his country's 2008 Constitution aimed to better guarantee human rights and deepen socio-economic reform. Since its passage, the Government had amended archaic policies relating to the rule of law so as to reflect the principle of "*Sumac kawsay*" — life based on dignity, solidarity and equality. Ecuador had been internationally recognized for its efforts to end discrimination against people with disabilities, he said, noting that the Vice-President had been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts in that regard. Ecuador hosted 60,000 refugees, the largest number in Latin America, as well as almost 500,000 economic migrants, who enjoyed political and social protection and economic subsidies. Ecuador had also been the first in the world to recognize the right of nature to develop and reproduce. It was a leading promoter of sustainable development initiatives in the region, and played a critical role in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. As part of its tradition of sheltering victims of political persecution, the Government had granted asylum to the Australian Julian Assange, an incident that presented a unique opportunity for the global community to debate the political, legal and humanitarian aspects of exile.

PHAM QUANG VINH, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam, said the current session's theme was particularly relevant given the ongoing conflicts in various parts of the world, especially North Africa and the Middle East. Calling on the United Nations to continue its work in conflict resolution, peacekeeping, disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, he also urged it to help revitalize the Conference on Disarmament. Stressing the importance of regional organizations, he said ASEAN continued to play a central role in promoting peace, stability and security, including maritime security in the South Asian Sea, and reaffirmed his country's full support for ASEAN's Six-Point Principles on the South China Sea.

The United Nations must strengthen global partnerships for development and lead an inclusive process to formulate the post-2015 global development agenda, he said, urging developed countries to fulfil their pledges to increase development assistance and support developing countries in capacity-building, given the current challenges of the global economy, the stalled Doha Development Round and persistent protectionism. Noting that 2012 marked his country's thirty-fifth year as a United Nations Member State, he said it continued to pursue a growth model that linked economic development with social progress and environmental protection. In addressing recent global economic difficulties, Viet Nam had taken effective steps to maintain macroeconomic stability and ensure social security, he said. It had also continued to strengthen the rule of law and build a State "of the people, by the people, and for the people", promoting their ownership and rights in all spheres.

In pursuit of a proactive international integration, he said, Viet Nam continued to contribute to the work of the United Nations, ASEAN, the Non-Aligned Movement and to the International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF). It also continued to make contributions to multilateral endeavours in addressing issues of nuclear security, weapons of mass destruction, disarmament, security and the Millennium Development Goals. Viet Nam had also implemented, with good results, the United Nations "Delivering as One" initiative. In addition, the country put forth its candidacy for membership of the Human Rights Council for the period 2014-2015, and looked forward to winning the support of Member States in that regard. Finally, he expressed his country's support for United Nations reform, in particular, efforts to strengthen the Assembly, expand membership of the Security Council and reform the Council's working methods.

DESSIMA WILLIAMS (Grenada) said her country's ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in the past year had triggered the instrument's entry into force. In April, Parliament had passed the End Violence against Women Legislative and Policy Reform and would continue its work on protecting women's rights. As an "island of sustainability", Grenada's holistic policy framework was based on sustainable development, with its five development pillars being energy development, education, health and wellness, information and communications technology, tourism and hospitality, and agribusiness.

She said that despite having lost 204 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP), as determined by the World Bank, due to destruction caused by Hurricane Ivan in 2004 and Hurricane Emily in 2005, the country had made great strides in recovery, with the generous help of its neighbours and partners. Also, despite decreased development efforts due to the loss of tourism revenues, port receipts and even remittances caused by the global financial crisis, Grenada remained focused on domestic improvement through the creation of relevant laws, as well as economic and social policies. The country would also co-host a meeting in the Caribbean with Sir Richard Branson to ensure the sustainable management of marine and coastal resources, she added.

Stressing that Grenada, the region and all small island developing States needed a far more supportive international policy and affordable financing for greater sustainability, she welcomed the decision to convene a third conference on the sustainable development of small island developing States in 2014, and called for the international community's support in designating 2014 as the International Year of Small Island Developing States in efforts to raise awareness of their special situation and mobilize international support for their sustainable development. On other matters, she called for a politically negotiated and urgent end to the situation in Syria, the creation of an independent Palestinian State, reform of the United Nations, the complete lifting of the embargo imposed on Cuba and continuing humanitarian contributions to Haiti.

STUART BECK (Palau) said that, having attained independence and improved living standards through the exercise of the rule of law, his country, the last United Nations Trust Territory, was determined to give back in kind to the international community. For that reason, it proudly contributed peacekeepers to United Nations missions and had endeavoured to protect marine ecosystems on a global scale, through efforts that had led to two General Assembly resolutions focused on the odious practice of deep sea-bottom trawling, and by the creation of the world's first shark sanctuary. Palau had also been the first country to sound the alarm on the security impact of climate change, which had then been taken up by the Assembly and the Security Council.

Rio+20 and its follow-up had presented Palau with an opportunity to better integrate healthy oceans and fisheries into the development governance framework, he continued. Emphasizing that sustainable fisheries were his country's lifeblood, he said global fisheries should be fair, adding that if distant vessels sought the fish that traversed Palau's waters, they should respect its laws, fish within set limits and recognize the national right to the benefits of its own natural resources. "Illegal fishing is tantamount to piracy," he stressed, adding that fish stock levels must be maintained to ensure healthy fisheries for the long term, which meant closing fisheries when necessary. Accountability in all those areas was crucial, he said, citing reports that showed that 87 per cent of global fish stocks were now fully or over-exploited. He welcomed the negotiations in 2011 that had allowed the relevant Assembly resolution to better reflect those principles.

Describing his country's progress in the transition to a green economy and in improving its communications connections to the rest of the world for development needs, he said Palau continued to seek partners to help it establish broadband Internet, which could fundamentally improve health, business and civic engagement. Other major efforts included the continued removal, in collaboration with partners, of live explosives left over from the Second World War. As Taiwan was a major partner in such efforts, he called for that country's meaningful participation in the United Nations system. He went on to condemn in the strongest possible terms the recent attacks on diplomatic premises, and expressed hope that tensions in the East China Sea would dissipate through dialogue. Regarding climate change, he said Palau had no intention of relocating its people, as suggested in certain reports on managing risks, as its islands were their home. However, the current situation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was unacceptable, he said. "After more than 20 years of negotiations, we are running out of creative ways to say that countries are being destroyed."

CARSTEN STAUR (Denmark) said it was "smart economics" to focus on prevention rather than cure, whether addressing the global economic crisis, sustainable development or conflict. Turning first to sustainable development, he said Denmark strongly supported the Secretary-General's "Sustainable Energy for All" initiative, noting that improved energy efficiency and increased use of renewable energy were essential for sustainable development. Expressing his Government's strong support for human rights as a means to development, he welcomed today's launch of the high-level task force for the International Conference on Population Development.

Denmark had surpassed the target of allocating 0.7 per cent of gross national income to official development assistance (ODA), he said, calling on others to do the same. Regarding conventional weapons, he said there was an urgent need for a universal and legally-binding arms trade treaty, calling again on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Iran to comply with international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions. He welcomed the outcome of the high-level meeting on the rule of law, and called on all States to appoint national focal points to join the global network of National Focal Points for the responsibility to protect.

Turning to the situation in Syria, he condemned the violence and the massacres of civilians in the strongest terms, urging President Assad to step aside for a democratic transition. The Security Council should refer the case to the International Court of Justice, and further, agree on strong measures — including comprehensive sanctions — to enforce the six-point plan, he stressed. Noting, however, that “democracy does not happen overnight,” he said his country stood firm by its commitments in Libya, and emphasized that it was also time to reach final agreement in the Middle East peace process.

JOSÉ FILIPE MORAES CABRAL (Portugal) said his delegation was three months away from concluding its tenure on the Security Council. It had fulfilled its mandate with rigour and transparency, and had always sought to reinforce the Council's credibility and efficiency. Portugal had reaffirmed the primacy of international law, defended human rights, and worked in pursuit of broader multilateralism, as well as the protection of children and other civilians. Sustainable development, the fight against poverty, food security and the devastating effects of climate change on small island developing States also remained fundamental to its actions within the United Nations. “With equal perseverance, we sought to strengthen the role of the Security Council in the fight against new challenges to international peace and security, such as organized crime, the proliferation of illicit trafficking, terrorism and pandemics,” he said, adding that his delegation had also sought to bolster the body's capacity to prevent conflicts and employ mediation.

He said Portugal had played a key role in tackling current peace and security challenges, including in Guinea-Bissau and Syria, where there “is no alternative other than a political solution”. Such a solution must seek to ensure the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people and allow for a citizen-driven democratic transition. On other matters, he said there would be no peace in the Middle East without a lasting solution to the Palestinian question. While Portugal understood Israel's legitimate security aspirations, it also understood and shared the frustration of the Palestinians, for whom an independent State “is a straightforward question of justice”.

Turning to Africa, he said it was imperative to restore constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau, which would require the nomination of a Government that included the Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde, currently held majority party in the National Assembly. Any and all solutions would have to respect international legality and constitutional order, as well as translate into internal, inclusive and credible political processes, he stressed. Finally, he highlighted the success story of Timor-Leste, noting that the United Nations mission in that country was set to conclude its mandate at the end of the year. A new cycle of cooperation between Timor-Leste and the international community was now open, in line with the priorities set by the Timorese Government. In that context, Portugal would continue to support the country on its path to economic and social development, strengthening its institutions and democratic values, as well as the rule of law and the promotion and protection of human rights.

JORGE VALERO BRICEÑO (Venezuela) said capitalism was in “deep crisis” and new imperialist projects were under way, as seen in attempts to eliminate social policies and eradicate jobs. Meanwhile, the Latin America and Caribbean region had managed to cope with the economic and financial turmoil relatively well, he said. It sought to bolster regional integration with a view to upending and routing the imperialist domination that had haunted it for so long. The Union of South American Nations and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, among others, were regional spaces for dialogue and ensuring that sovereign equality among States prevailed, he said, adding that they promoted social inclusion to overcome poverty.

Diplomatic solidarity was winning the day in the region, even as imperial Powers continued to press States to give up their political independence and self-determination, he continued. Those Powers were implementing their new and aggressive interventionist agenda through the Security Council, making the need to revamp the United Nations all the more urgent. Indeed, international affairs could not be based on “privileges for a few”, he said, stressing in that regard that the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council must not only be revitalized, but their decisions must be respected. He also called for a complete overhaul of the international financial system.

Turning to Syria, he said “we are following the same interventionist script that was promoted in Libya,” adding that foreign Powers were trying to oust the current Government rather than resolve the crisis. “We are concerned by the warmongering and threats by Israel and the United States regarding

Iran," he said, turning to other situations in the Middle East. An attack on that country would have devastating implications for international peace and security, he warned. He went on to express support for all efforts to ensure an independent Palestinian State. Venezuela also denounced inflammatory language targeting certain religions and cultures, while at the same time reaffirming the inviolability of diplomatic premises. He also condemned the decades-long blockade against Cuba.

VINCE HENDERSON (Dominica) said the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development was a commendable effort by the international community to take stock of the human impact on the earth's resources and to commit to reversing present trends. Although the outcome document, "The Future We Want", fell short of Dominica's expectations, it remained a work in progress and presented a useful platform for continued discussions on multilateral solutions to the growing concerns of sustainable development. As a small island developing State, Dominica was committed to the fundamental principle of environmental sustainability, he said, pointing out that his country was at the mercy of countries that promoted and employed unsustainable practices. Dominica was also committed to a multilateral approach to combating climate change, he said. Its impact continued to manifest itself in a number of ways, resulting in greater challenges to the survival of small island developing States.

The failure to reach a legally-binding outcome on climate change was cause for grave concern, he continued, noting that while the debate continued, the challenges to his country were becoming greater. It was crucial to extend and amend the Kyoto Protocol before its expiration, he said. Low-carbon economies in small island developing States provided an opportunity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while reducing dependence on imported fossil fuels. By generating their own energy from natural renewable sources, small islands would be able to achieve energy security, and the savings realized from the avoided cost of importing fossil fuels could be used for adaption and developmental needs.

That was one of the reasons why the Small Island Developing States Sustainable Energy Initiative had been instituted, he said. It was intended to help them transform national energy sectors into catalysts for sustainable economic development and help generate financial resources to address adaptation to climate change. Dominica served as the Chair of the Initiative, he added. The recently concluded test-drilling in the Roseau Valley had confirmed that the nation's geothermal resources had the potential to supply energy for domestic needs as well as for export, he said. That would allow the nation, in the next five years, to move away from importing fossil fuel for power generation while reducing the cost of electricity for its own people. By 2017, all its electricity needs would be met by a combination of hydro and geothermal sources. Dominica would not only be carbon-neutral, but carbon-negative by 2020, he said.

Right of Reply

The representative of Pakistan, speaking in exercise of the right of reply, emphasized that the references to Jammu and Kashmir in President Asif Ali Zardari's statement to the Assembly had not been unwarranted. Jammu and Kashmir was not an integral part of India, nor had it ever been. He went on to read from the President's statement, stressing that Pakistan's leader had called for a comprehensive solution to the issue, including through negotiations and discussions on how to improve the region's social and economic conditions.

The representative of Iran, also speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that a Western delegation speaking today had been among several speakers making negative statements about his country's nuclear programme throughout the debate. Like other NPT States parties, Iran had an inalienable right to research and produce useful energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination, he emphasized, adding that his country's commitment to non-proliferation remained intact. Indeed, Iran cooperated with IAEA, and all its nuclear plants, were under 24-hour surveillance by that Agency, he said, pointing out that its latest report made clear that Iran's activities were in line with its Safeguards Agreements.

What was also clear, he continued, was that Iran was facing politically motivated attacks by those States — many of them nuclear Powers or those under their "umbrella" — that were trying to cover up their own "abysmal records" in the area. Rather than making statements about Iran, those countries should be concerned by the deadly threat posed by the Zionist regime which possessed nuclear weapons, he said. Indeed, that regime was the only threat to international peace and security as it tried to "red-line" the nuclear activities of others while itself crossing all such lines. It must submit to IAEA regulations and comply fully with its international obligations, he said. While Iran stood ready to engage in serious negotiations, it would never compromise on its inalienable right to peaceful uses of science and technology.

The representative of India, responding to references by his Pakistani counterpart, said Jammu and Kashmir State was an integral part of India, adding that Pakistan's illegal occupation of parts of the region was in violation of India's territorial integrity and international law. India rejected Pakistan's claim in its entirety.

The representative of Azerbaijan, responding to the statement by Armenia's Foreign Minister, said his comment about his country was yet another example of falsehood and created a wrong impression. The Minister was "forgetful" about his country's aggression against Azerbaijan, he said, adding that it was Armenia that had resorted to the use of force. He also rebutted Armenia's statement about Safarov, who Armenia said had slaughtered a sleeping Armenian officer with an axe during a NATO programme. That falsehood was characteristic of Armenia's high-ranking officials, he said. The Security Council and the General Assembly had called numerous times for Armenia's complete withdrawal from Azerbaijan, he said. It was well known that Armenia had the largest military in the region, with the largest military expenditure. The most shocking thing was that the current President of Armenia had absolutely no regret about ethnic cleansing, he added.

The representative of Armenia responded by saying that the statement by his counterpart from Azerbaijan was based on "even more lies". He recalled the genesis of the conflict and asked: "How could the Armenians in the 'Nagorno Karabakh Republic' want to live with their murderers?" Apparently, Azerbaijan's strategy was to tell so many lies that people would get used to them. Those racist and xenophobic lies were routine, and even the President of that country had said Armenians were "the enemy", he said, noting that in much of the civilized world, such rhetoric was punishable by law. No Azerbaijani had any historical, moral or legal right to tell the people of Nagorno Karabakh where or how to live, he stressed.

The representative of Eritrea said his delegation had been "surprised" by the statement made earlier by his counterpart from Djibouti. While he would not address the specifics of the events of 2008, he would stress that Eritrea had always sought good neighbourly relations with Djibouti, and that the latter bore responsibility for the two-day skirmish in 2008. The matter of prisoners of war was part and parcel of that issue, which both sides had pledged to address. But unfortunately, it was continually brought up in various forums, including the Security Council, casting doubt on whether Djibouti was serious about addressing the matter. He stressed that the Qatari mediation process was the best way for the parties to seek normal relations. What remained was for both countries to support ongoing efforts and refrain from statements or actions that would undermine the process. The Eritrean Government would continue to back those talks, he said.

The representative of Pakistan said the disputed status of Jammu and Kashmir had been set out in Security Council resolutions and agreed upon by both Pakistan and India. As such, characterizing the region as "an integral part of India" was untenable, he said, adding that the people of Jammu and Kashmir had not exercised their right to self-determination.

The representative of Azerbaijan said Armenia's blatant distortions demonstrated that Armenia was far from engaging in negotiations to ensure peace and stability in the region. Its "irrelevant and out-of-context" comments had failed to actually answer the concerns raised by Azerbaijan. Armenia's "distractive political agenda" would never be realized, he said.

The representative of India, rejecting the comments by his counterpart from Pakistan, reiterated that Jammu and Kashmir was an integral part of India.

The representative of Armenia said he really wondered about Azerbaijan's memory, as he set out the events of the 1990s leading up to the independence of the "Nagorno-Karabakh Republic". Those facts had occurred not so long ago and there was no need to "turn them upside down", he said. Armenia and the international community were speaking "one language" on the issue and it was time for Azerbaijan to listen to that voice.

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