

24 September 2013



General Assembly

GA/11423

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

Sixty-eighth General Assembly
Plenary
5th & 6th & 7th Meetings (AM, PM & Night)

SECRETARY-GENERAL URGES WORLD LEADERS TO SHOULDER WIDE-RANGING RESPONSIBILITIES AS GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S SIXTY-EIGHTH SESSION BEGINS

President Urges Rejection of 'Naysayers' to Make Multilateralism Work Effectively

In a wide-ranging call to action delivered as he opened the General Assembly's annual debate, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon today urged world leaders to shoulder their responsibilities on peace and security, human rights, arms proliferation and sustainable development, calling for increased global commitment to the United Nations system and the principles on which the Organization was founded.

"Let us empower the United Nations to be more than a first responder or a last resort," he said, pointing to the ever more entwined fates of Member States and the transformed global landscape in which new ways of governing, partnering and problem-solving had to be found. Stressing the size of the opportunity before world leaders, he said it was their job to serve their various peoples. "We must prove ourselves fit for purpose," he emphasized. "We must listen to the just demands of the world's people and hear the call of history."

Describing the Syria crisis as "the biggest peace and security challenge in the world", he said it had torn the country apart and left the Middle East dangerously destabilized. The Syrian Government must fully and quickly honour its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention, with the international community bringing to justice those responsible for the "worst chemical weapons attack on civilians in a quarter of a century". Looking forward to the adoption of an enforceable and binding Security Council resolution, he called on the international community to safeguard and destroy Syria's chemical weapons.

Welcoming the diplomatic momentum generated by the response to the chemical weapons attack, he underlined the need for States to stop supplying arms to the belligerents, for the Syrian Government and opposition to uphold international humanitarian and human rights law, and for a political solution to be reached as soon as possible through a Geneva II conference. "It is time to end the killing, and to reach the peace the Syrian people need and deserve," he said.

Stability and coexistence the world over were underpinned by human rights and the rule of law, he said: "There will be little peace or enjoyment of human rights unless we confront a world awash with deadly weapons." Despite the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty, nuclear disarmament was languishing, deadly weapons were proliferating and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was still not in force.

Turning to development, he noted "remarkable gains" made through the Millennium Development Goals but also lagging progress on some targets as well as growing inequality. The new development agenda must inspire like the Millennium Goals, but also go further, he said. Underpinned by balanced sustainable development and finding expression in a single set of goals, women's empowerment must be at its heart.

Echoing the Secretary-General's comments and citing the theme he had chosen for the sixty-eighth session — "The Post-2015 Development Agenda: Setting the Stage" — Assembly President John Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda) said the new development framework was expected to have poverty eradication as its central and overarching goal, and to address the inseparable link connecting economic growth, equity and social inclusion, and environmental sustainability. The new framework was envisaged as the most far-reaching and comprehensive development-related endeavour ever undertaken by the United Nations, he said.

On one hand, he continued, there was an urgent need for tangible results and action by the Assembly, while, on the other hand, high levels of pessimism and cynicism persisted. "Let us prove the naysayers wrong," he urged. Dogged determination and a commitment to negotiate and work cooperatively would be required to achieve that and to make multilateralism work effectively. The current session had convened at a time in history when the Organization was itself in the process of change, he said. "I not only refer to physical changes, but to the task of crafting a more responsive United Nations with a new strategic thrust, which will shape global development beyond 2015."

The annual gathering of world leaders and dignitaries should not be seen as just "another September routine or tradition", he said, but as an opportunity for Member States and other stakeholders to recommit to the noble ideals at the Organization's core. Yet world leaders were facing many serious challenges, from wars to poverty and malnutrition, and from gender violence to climate change. Now, with clear awareness that the scourge of chemical warfare had been unleashed in Syria, the international community was confronted by the need to address that wrong. Despite such hefty odds, world leaders were gathered "to give human expression to the hard work it takes to make multilateralism work for the benefit of all", he declared.

Noting that his role as President exposed him to enormous pressures from various sides on any particular issue relevant to the mandate of the United Nations, he said it was paradoxical that the Assembly President was without power to commit Member States to a particular course of action. He must remain not only neutral, but be seen as such, if she or he was to retain any credibility. He or she could do no more than reflect, and appeal to States to work together, in the hope that appropriate and requisite international cooperation would be achieved.

Despite the many different strengths, challenges and needs represented by the many different leaders from various States, regions, cultures and faiths, he continued, they all shared the single purpose of helping to ensure that the Assembly would "take us further along the road to creating the kind of world envisioned in our Charter — a world of security, peace, justice, adherence to the rule of law, respect for the planet, tolerance, equal rights for all, social progress and faith in the dignity and worth of the human person".

President Barack Obama of the United States said legitimacy of the United Nations was insulted by anyone who questioned the overwhelming evidence that the Syrian Government had carried out the chemical weapons attack of 21 August. The international community must enforce the ban on chemical weapons, to which 98 per cent of humanity had agreed, and a strong Security Council resolution was needed to verify that Syria would keep its commitments or face consequences if it did not. "If we cannot agree even on this, then it will show that the United Nations is incapable of enforcing the most basic of international laws," he said, adding that Syria had taken a first step by accounting for its stockpiles.

He went on to emphasize that he did not believe military action — by those within Syria or by external Powers — could achieve a lasting peace. Neither could a leader who "slaughtered his citizens and gassed children to death" regain the legitimacy to lead a "badly fractured country". The notion that Syria could return to its pre-war status quo was a "fantasy", he said, stressing that it was time for the Russian Federation and Iran to realize that insisting on Assad's rule would lead to the outcome they feared: an increasingly violent space in which extremists could operate. It was important to support the moderate opposition within Syria, while addressing the legitimate fears of the country's minorities.

Diplomatic efforts by the United States were focused on two key issues — resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict and responding to Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons, both of which had caused too much instability for too long, he said. The United States would never compromise its commitment to Israel's security, nor its support for that country's existence as a Jewish State, he said while welcoming the political risks taken by both Israeli and Palestinian leaders to re-start diplomacy. "The time is now ripe for the entire international community to get behind the pursuit of peace," he said.

The isolation existing between the United States and Iran since 1979 could not be overcome overnight, he said, acknowledging that “the suspicion runs too deep”. Although the United States preferred to resolve its concerns over Iran’s nuclear programme peacefully, it was determined to prevent that country from developing a nuclear weapon. The Supreme Leader had issued a *fatwa* against the development of nuclear weapons, and President Hassan Rouhani had just reiterated that Iran would never develop one, he recalled, adding that he would direct Secretary of State John Kerry to pursue that effort with the Iranian Government.

Responding to that statement, President Rouhani of Iran said he did not seek to increase tensions with the United States. On the contrary, Iran sought constructive engagement with that and other nations, and was prepared to enter into “time-bound and results-oriented talks” to build mutual confidence. “Commensurate with the political will of the leadership in the United States, and hoping they will refrain from following the short-sighted interest of warmongering pressure groups, we can arrive at a framework to manage our differences,” he said, adding that “we expect to hear a consistent voice from Washington”.

He said nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction had no place in Iran’s security and defence doctrine, but the world must accept and respect his country’s inalienable right to develop its nuclear programme, which had reached industrial scale, for peaceful purposes. Moreover, it was in Iran’s national interest to remove all reasonable concerns about its nuclear programme, he said, adding that it was unrealistic to expect that programme to be sustained in the face of illegitimate pressure.

Expressing worry over the impact of violence and extremist narratives, he said Islamophobia, “Shia-phobia and Iran-phobic discourse” seriously threatened global peace and security. Containment policies, regime change from the outside and efforts to redraw political borders were also extremely dangerous. Stressing that “peace is within reach”, he proposed, as an initial step, that the United Nations consider creating a World Against Violence and Extremism, or WAVE, and invited all States, global organizations and civil institutions to participate.

King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein of Jordan said global security would long be shaped by current events in the Middle East. “The region’s fires cannot be ignored,” he said, warning that the turmoil in Syria could upend the regional renaissance and threaten global security. The number of Syrian refugees in Jordan could equal as much as 20 per cent of the country’s total population within a year, he warned, noting that while the global humanitarian response had been generous, the demand for food, water and other supplies was greater than even the strongest economies could absorb. The world had a duty to help fast-track a political transition in Syria, end the violence and preserve the country’s unity and territorial integrity.

Describing the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as “the region’s core crisis”, he urged commitment from leaders on both sides to reach agreement within the set time frame, and avoidance of any actions that could derail the still-fragile process. There should be no settlement construction and no unilateral actions that could affect the status quo in East Jerusalem, he emphasized. A two-State solution could be reached, giving Israel real security, normalizing relations with 57 Arab and Muslim countries and giving the Palestinian people their right to a viable and independent State.

Several speakers discussed the state of affairs in Africa. Jacob Zuma, President of South Africa, said that any future development agenda for the continent must focus on eradicating poverty, erasing income inequality and creating jobs. The developed North and developing South must continue engaging in a genuine partnership, he said, calling on Northern nations to meet their commitment to contribute 0.7 per cent of their gross national income to official development assistance (ODA). Investing in the South, particularly Africa, was critical for sustainable development and global stability, he said, adding that it was “unacceptable and unworkable” to delegate some historical responsibilities to new emerging economies in the South, which were grappling with their own historical challenges and backlogs.

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of Liberia, said African Governments were working toward an African Common Position on the post-2015 development agenda. Tremendous economic progress was sweeping the continent, where annual growth averaged more than 5 per cent, surpassing that of other regions. African economies were diversifying, trade infrastructures were expanding, democracies were becoming stronger and more mature, and institutions were leading a process of integration and cooperation, she said. Improvements had also been seen in school enrolment, health indicators, trade and investment. She commended the strong collaboration among regional economic communities, the African Union and the United Nations in responding robustly to the crisis in Mali, which had averted a threat to the peace and security of the entire region.

Also speaking today were the Heads of State of Brazil, Turkey, Nigeria, Chile, Bulgaria, Mozambique, France, Slovakia, Colombia, Qatar, Monaco, Ukraine, Sri Lanka, Costa Rica, Austria, Paraguay, Latvia, Gabon, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lebanon, Switzerland, Uruguay, Uganda, Argentina, Malawi and Zambia.

The Head of Government of Sweden also spoke.

The Assembly will meet again at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, 25 September, to continue its general debate.

Background

The General Assembly this morning opened the general debate of its sixty-eighth session, for which it had before it the Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (document [A/68/1](#)).

Opening Remarks

BAN KI-MOON, Secretary-General of the United Nations, opening the general debate, said the world was in an “era of wondrous opportunity”, as it was the first generation that could wipe out poverty from the face of the Earth. However, pressures on the planet, like youth unemployment, climate change and unresolved conflicts were building, while events on the ground were outpacing institutions and systems designed for another age.

The Millennium Development Goals, he said, “captured the imagination, generated remarkable gains and beat back doubts”, but progress on some lagged badly and inequality grew. The new development agenda needed to inspire like the Millennium Development Goals, but go further. It needed to prioritize ending poverty, with sustainable development at its core, and governance as its glue. It must find expression in a single set of goals — not deferring the environment or social justice for later, once economic growth was assured.

Moreover, he said, women’s empowerment and rights must be at the heart of it all. The equation was simple: when girls were healthy and in school; when legal frameworks and financial access supported women; when women’s lives were free of violence and discrimination, nations thrived. He added his voice to the leaders who would gather this afternoon to adopt a declaration against sexual violence in conflict. “Let the twenty-first century be the century of women,” he declared.

The private sector would also be essential to post-2015 development, he said, encouraging companies to innovate and create jobs. Equally, they needed to remain ethical, responsible and committed to protecting the environment. He recalled the United Nations Global Compact Summit last week when businesses promised to do more to align their goals with those of the United Nations. The United Nations itself needed to find more ways of working with businesses and finance, but also with civil society and philanthropic organizations.

He warned of the threat to sustainable development posed by climate change, saying that the poorest and most vulnerable were first to suffer and suffered the most. The message from the planet, and from scientists, was clear, as would be evidenced once more this week when the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued its latest assessment. There was opportunity amid the peril — a chance to change the way we do business, plan our cities, fuel our homes and factories, and move our goods and ourselves. “A low-carbon path beckons — a path that can create jobs and improve public health while safeguarding the environment,” he said.

The Climate Summit to be held in New York in September 2014, he added, would be a chance to bring bold pledges to innovate, scale-up, cooperate, and deliver concrete action to close the emissions gap and put the world on track for an ambitious agreement through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Turning to the crisis in Syria — the “biggest peace and security challenge in the world” — he said that well over 100,000 people had been killed, more than 7 million people, or a third of the population, had fled their homes; families were under siege; cities and towns lay in rubble; the economy was in ruins; and communities, once alive with a blend of traditions and faiths, had been torn apart.

The region, too, he said, was being dangerously destabilized. “We have seen the worst chemical weapons attack on civilians in a quarter century,” and a lost generation of young people now filled refugee camps. “Who among us can say that they, and their mothers and fathers, are wrong to feel abandoned by the international community?”, the Secretary-General asked.

The Syrian Government must fully and quickly honour the obligations it has assumed in acceding to the Chemical Weapons Convention. The international community must bring to justice the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in Syria — confirmed “unequivocally” by the United Nations investigation mission. The international community must also, with equal determination, ensure the safeguarding and destruction of Syria’s chemical weapons stockpiles and programmes. “But, we can hardly be satisfied with destroying chemical weapons while the wider war is still destroying all of Syria.”

He said most deaths had been caused by conventional weapons, and he appealed to all States to stop fuelling the bloodshed and to end the arms flows to all the parties. He looked forward to the imminent adoption of an enforceable and binding Security Council resolution on chemical weapons, followed immediately by humanitarian action. He called on the Syrian Government and the opposition to uphold international humanitarian and human rights law, urging it to lift all obstacles to humanitarian access and end the “unconscionable” targeting of medical facilities and personnel. It must release the thousands of men, women and children whose detention had no basis in international law.

He called for full accountability for serious international crimes, either through referral to the International Criminal Court or by other means consistent with international law. The response to the heinous use of chemical weapons had created diplomatic momentum — the first signs of unity in far too long. “Now, we must build on it to get the parties to the negotiating table,” he said, stressing that military victory is an illusion. The only answer was a political settlement, he said, appealing to the Syrian Government and the opposition, and, to all those in this Hall with influence over them, to make the Geneva II conference happen as soon as possible. “It is time to end the killing, and to reach the peace the Syrian people need and deserve,” he said.

Apart from Syria, he said, there was tremendous stress and upheaval across the region. Historic transitions had stumbled or slowed; springs of inspiration were giving way to winters of disillusionment. The challenges were immense: building democracy and pluralistic dialogue; dousing the flames of sectarianism; filling the security vacuum after the iron grip of dictators is gone.

But, the story was still being written, he said, adding that everything must be done to help these reforms succeed; “we must seize potential openings and respond to declarations of good will”. Each nation would chart its own course, but “we cannot be complacent where there is backsliding, but rather insist on respect for universal values: human rights, tolerance and political inclusion”, as those were the foundations of peace and prosperity.

He welcomed the re-engagement of Israelis and Palestinians in direct negotiations, and the bold diplomacy that made that possible, adding that if all were serious about achieving a two-State solution, then they must recognize that the window was closing fast. Urging the parties to show leadership — and a sense of the long-term interests of their peoples and the region, he said he would convene a meeting of the Quartet principals meeting later this week.

Looking beyond the Middle East and North Africa, he said he saw Africans “writing a new narrative of dynamism, democracy and sustained, impressive economic growth”. Political progress in Somalia, credible elections in Mali, more robust peacekeeping in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and a new framework of hope for the Great Lakes region were gains to build on.

At the same time, the misery and volatility in the Sahel continues, he said, noting the breakdown in law and order in the Central African Republic, with millions cut off from assistance and facing abuse. Yet, like the humanitarian appeal for Syria, the call for help for the Central African Republic was woefully underfunded. And, in the past week alone, the appalling attacks in Kenya, Iraq and Pakistan were grim reminders about the ability of terrorists to cause havoc and harm.

Throughout the world, he continued, the centrality of human rights and the rule of law emerged as foundations of stability and coexistence. It was time to reinforce the commitment to the cause of international law, and to the International Criminal Court. On behalf of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, he appealed for remedial action to reverse its deep and chronic funding shortage,

saying the court's financial failure would be a tragedy for the people of Cambodia, who had waited so long for justice.

The inability of Member States and the United Nations to prevent and put a stop to large-scale human rights violations had had disastrous consequences, he said, adding that an internal review of United Nations action at the end of the war in Sri Lanka had identified a systemic failure: Member States did not provide the United Nations system with support to meet the tasks they themselves had set; and the system itself unfortunately did not adapt properly or deliver fully.

In this twentieth anniversary year of the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, "we should renew our commitment to the [United Nations'] founding principles," he urged, outlining his plan to help Member States reach consensus to prevent large-scale violations and to ensure that the United Nations upheld its responsibilities.

"There will be little peace or enjoyment of human rights unless we confront a world awash in deadly weapons," he went on. The past year saw the promising adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty, finally regulating the international transfer of conventional weapons, but nuclear disarmament is languishing, deadly weapons were proliferating, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was still not in force and small arms continued to kill and maim. And, at a time of pressing human need, spending on weapons remains absurdly high. "Let us get our priorities right and invest in people instead of wasting billions of dollars on deadly weapons," he said.

To the membership, he said: "You, the leaders, are here to serve we, the peoples. We can be the ones who preside over an end to poverty, give voice to the will of the people and usher in an era of sustainable development and lasting peace. You can tackle the toughest problems today — and make your foresight a gift to future generations."

With that, he urged them to embrace the "global logic of our times". With fates evermore entwined in today's transformed global landscape, new ways of governing, partnering and problem-solving must be found. "Let us empower the United Nations to be more than a first responder or a last resort."

"You, in your home countries, and we, here together, are at a privileged pinnacle. We must prove ourselves fit for purpose. We must listen to the just demands of the world's peoples and hear the call of history," he urged. The duty was to turn hope into action, through hard work, commitment, skill and integrity.

With passion, but most of all with compassion, it would be possible to build the future people wanted — and that the world needed. "Let us build our world better for all. Let us shape our future where everybody can live harmoniously with peace and dignity," he concluded.

JOHN ASHE, General Assembly President, noted that he had been born in a household of seven kids nearly 60 years ago on the twin-island nation of Antigua and Barbuda, in the Caribbean. His parents had never had the opportunity to complete high school and could not provide academic guidance to their offspring. One child, whose paternal grandfather had signed his name with an "X" and whose mother was a descendant of slave plantation owners in the sister island of Barbados, had been determined to be the first in his family's generation to attend university and seek an opportunity, wherever it might occur, to make a difference. "I am that child of those parents," he declared.

The current session was convened, at a time in history, when the Organization was, itself, in the process of change, he said, adding that: "I not only refer to physical changes, but to the task of crafting a more responsive United Nations with a new strategic thrust, which will shape global development beyond 2015." The annual gathering of world leaders and dignitaries should not be seen just as "another September routine or tradition", but as an opportunity for Member States and other stakeholders to recommit to the noble ideals that lay at the Organization's core.

Yet, he noted, the world's headlines were filled with reports of wars — imminent or impending; civil and sectarian bloodshed and strife between, as well as within, States; grinding poverty and malnutrition; gender violence; adverse effects of climate change and loss of valuable biodiversity; and the struggles of men, women and the young seeking to live with human dignity and peace. Now with clear awareness that the scourge of chemical warfare had been unleashed in Syria, the international community was confronted by a need to address that wrong.

Further, the world had seen rising ethnic and religious extremism, gender inequities, growing unrest and political tensions, and increasing socioeconomic inequalities, he said. Women were dying in childbirth, female children were marrying before the age of 10 and young people dared not dream of a future because they knew all too well there might never be one. “And yet, we are gathered here today, despite the odds that are against us, to give human expression to the hard work it takes to make multilateralism work for the benefit of all,” he declared, stressing that effective multilateralism required dogged determination and a commitment to negotiate and work cooperatively.

Confessing that he was exposed to enormous pressures from various sides on any particular issue relevant to the mandate of the United Nations, he said that the paradox was that Assembly President was without power to commit Member States to a particular course of action, and must remain, not only neutral, but be seen as such, if she or he was to retain any credibility. She or he could do no more than reflect, and appeal to States to work together, in the hope that appropriate and requisite international cooperation would be achieved.

Quoting forebears, he said that, when facing overwhelming odds, “it is not our limitations that define us; rather, it is what we do to overcome them”.

There had been some encouraging achievements by the Assembly, he said, referring to the 2 April adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty regulating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, which was signed by 83 States and ratified by four, as well as efforts to craft a post-2015 development agenda. Citing the theme for the current session, “The Post-2015 Development Agenda: Setting the Stage”, he said the new development agenda was expected to have poverty eradication as its central and overarching goal and to address the inseparable link between economic growth, equity and social inclusion, and environmental sustainability. The new framework was envisaged as the most far-reaching and comprehensive development-related endeavour ever undertaken by the United Nations.

On one hand, he said, there was an urgent need for tangible results and action by the Assembly, while, on the other hand, high levels of pessimism and cynicism persisted. “Let us prove the nay-sayers wrong,” he urged.

World leaders assembled here from different States, each with its own particular set of strengths, challenges and needs, and from different regions, cultures and faiths, but all sharing the single purpose of helping to ensure that the Assembly would “take us further along the road to creating the kind of world envisioned in our Charter — a world of security, peace, justice, adherence to the rule of law, respect for the planet, tolerance, equal rights for all, social progress and faith in the dignity and worth of the human person”.

“Recognizing how far we have come, conceding how far there is yet to go, let us all recommit to the path of protecting the planet and ensuring peace, prosperity and dignity for all who inhabit it,” he concluded.

Statements

DILMA ROUSSEFF, President of Brazil, denounced the terrorist attack that had taken place in Nairobi, before drawing attention to the global network of electronic espionage, which, she said, had directly affected her country. She highlighted that citizens’ personal data, corporate information — often of high economic and even strategic value — and diplomatic information had been intercepted, as well as communications of the Office of the President. “Tampering in such a manner in the affairs of other countries is a breach of international law and an affront to the principles that must guide relations among them, especially among friendly nations,” she declared.

The right to safety of citizens of one country, she said, could never be guaranteed by violating fundamental human rights of citizens of another. As many other Latin Americans, she had fought against authoritarianism and censorship, and she could not defend the right to privacy — of individuals and the nation itself. In the absence of privacy, there could be no true freedom of expression and opinion, and therefore, no effective democracy. In the absence of respect for sovereignty, there was no basis for the relationship among nations. She demanded from the United States’ Government explanations, apologies and guarantees that such procedures would never be repeated.

In order to prevent cyberspace from being used as a weapon of war, she presented proposals for a civilian multilateral framework for the governance and use of the Internet, capable of ensuring such principles as freedom of expression, privacy of the individual and respect for human rights, as well as the construction of inclusive and non-discriminatory societies.

She welcomed the choice of the post-2015 development agenda as the theme of the current session, and highlighted the commitment made by Brazil in that regard. She spoke about the adoption of a socially inclusive economic model based on generating employment, strengthening small-scale agriculture, expanding credit, increasing the value of salaries and developing a vast social protection network, through the Bolsa Familia (Family Stipend) Program.

Recalling the outcome of the Rio+20 Conference, she welcomed the central role assigned to social inclusion and eradication of extreme poverty in the post-2015 development agenda. She then listed five major pacts launched in Brazil to support social inclusion, which addressed issues of corruption, urban transportation, taxes, health and especially education. In that connection, she underscored Brazil's commitment to earmark 75 per cent of all petroleum royalties to the education sector.

Speaking on behalf of the peoples of Brazil, she reiterated their support to the reform of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), whose governance should reflect the weight of emerging and developing countries in the world economy. She also addressed the issue of Security Council reform, deeming its limited representation an "issue of grave concern". Only the expansion of the number of permanent and non-permanent members and the inclusion of developing countries in both categories would correct the Council's "deficit of representation and legitimacy".

Turning to the Syrian crisis, she said: "We must stop the death of innocent civilians, of children, women and the elderly. We must cease the use of arms — conventional or chemical — by the Government or the rebels." There was no military outcome, she stressed, adding that the only solution was through negotiation. Syria's decision to adhere to the Chemical Weapons Convention and to immediately apply its provisions was "of great importance" and instrumental to overcoming the conflict and contributing to a world free of those weapons. Their use, she proclaimed "is heinous and inadmissible under any circumstance". For that reason, she supported the agreement reached between the Russian Federation and United States, adding her repudiation for unilateral interventions, without Security Council authorization, which, she said, would only worsen the political instability in the region and increase human suffering.

She said that a durable peace between Israel and Palestine took on new urgency in view of the changes occurring in the Middle East. The time had come to heed the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinians for an independent and sovereign State, and to realize the wide international consensus for the two-State solution. She hoped current negotiations would bring about practical and significant results. She concluded her intervention by appealing for a convergence of political wills to sustain multilateralism, which was at the core of the United Nations system.

BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States, said that, although the end of America's involvement in a decade of war was a shift away from a "perpetual war-footing", a glance at today's headlines indicated the dangers that remained. The convulsions in the Middle East and North Africa had laid bare deep divisions within societies. Peaceful movements had been answered by violence — from those resisting change and from extremists trying to hijack change. Nowhere had those trends converged more powerfully than in Syria. The international community recognized the stakes, but its response had not matched the scale of the challenge. Aid could not keep pace with the suffering; a peace process was still-born; extremist groups had taken root to exploit the crisis; Assad's traditional allies had propped him up, and, on 21 August, the regime used chemical weapons in an attack that killed more than 1,000 people, including hundreds of children.

President Obama asked: "How do we address the choice of standing callously by while children are subjected to nerve gas, or embroiling ourselves in someone else's civil war?" As a starting point, the international community must enforce the ban on chemical weapons. When he stated his willingness to order a limited strike against the Assad regime in response, he said he "did not do so lightly". The ban against chemical weapons had been agreed to by 98 per cent of humanity, and strengthened by the searing memories of soldiers suffocated in the trenches, Jews slaughtered in gas chambers and Iranians poisoned in the many tens of thousands. The evidence was overwhelming that the Assad regime used such weapons on 21 August. It was an insult to human reason and to United Nations' legitimacy to suggest that anyone other than the regime had carried out that attack.

The Syrian Government, he continued, had taken a first step by giving an accounting of its stockpiles. Now was the time for a strong Security Council resolution to verify that it would keep its commitments, or face consequences if it did not. "If we cannot agree even on this, then it will show that the United Nations is incapable of enforcing the most basic of international laws." He did not believe that

military action — by those within Syria, or by external Powers — could achieve a lasting peace. Neither did he think a leader who “slaughtered his citizens and gassed children to death” could regain the legitimacy to lead a “badly fractured country”. The notion that Syria could return to a pre-war status quo was a “fantasy”, he said.

Time had come for the Russian Federation and Iran to realize that insisting on Assad’s rule would lead to the outcome they feared: an increasingly violent space for extremists to operate, he said. It was important to support the moderate opposition within Syrian. The Syrian people could not afford a collapse of State institutions, he underlined, stressing that a political settlement could not be reached without addressing the legitimate fears of Alawites and other minorities. Pursuing a settlement was “not a zero-sum endeavour”, nor did the United States have any interest in Syria beyond the well-being of its people, the stability of its neighbours, the elimination of chemical weapons and ensuring it did not become a safe haven for terrorists. As the international community moved the Geneva process forward, he urged all nations to meet humanitarian needs in Syria, and he announced a further \$340 million in assistance to the country.

Outlining the United States’ policy towards the Middle East and North Africa, he said it was prepared to “use all elements of our power, including military force, to secure these core interests in the region”. It would confront external aggression against its allies and partners, as it did in the Gulf War, and ensure the free flow of energy from the region to the world. It would dismantle terrorist networks that threatened its people and work with its partners to address the root causes of terror. It would “take direct action” to defend the United States against terrorist attacks. Finally, it would not tolerate the development or use of weapons of mass destruction, and it rejected the development of nuclear weapons that could trigger a nuclear arms race in the region and undermine the global non-proliferation regime.

In the near-term, he said, American diplomatic efforts would focus on two key issues: Iran’s pursuit of nuclear weapons, and the Arab-Israeli conflict. While those issues were not the cause of all of the region’s problems, they had been a major source of instability for far too long and resolving them could serve as a foundation for a broader peace. The United States and Iran had been isolated from each other since 1979, and he did not think “this difficult history can be overcome overnight — the suspicion runs too deep”. Although the United States preferred to resolve its concerns over Iran’s nuclear programme peacefully, it was determined to prevent that country from developing a nuclear weapon. The Supreme Leader had issued a fatwa against the development of nuclear weapons, and President Hassan Rouhani has just reiterated that Iran would never develop a nuclear weapon. He would direct United States Secretary of State John Kerry to pursue that effort with the Iranian Government.

He reiterated that the United States would never compromise its commitment to Israel’s security nor support for its existence as a Jewish State. Israeli and Palestinian leaders had recently demonstrated a willingness to take significant political risks, with current talks focused on final status issues of borders and security, refugees and Jerusalem. Israel’s security as a Jewish and democratic State depended on the establishment and stability of a Palestinian State. All sides must recognize that peace was a powerful tool to defeat extremists. Moreover, ties of trade and commerce between Israelis and Arabs could be an engine of growth and opportunity at a time when too many young people in the region were languishing without work. “The time is now ripe for the entire international community to get behind the pursuit of peace,” he urged.

On the Arab Spring, he said that, when peaceful transition towards democracy had begun in Egypt and Tunisia, the world had been filled with hope. However, over the last few years, particularly in Egypt, the world had witnessed how difficult a transition to democracy and openness truly was. The United States would continue its constructive relationship in Egypt and would reject the notion that democratic principles were simply Western exports incompatible with Islam. Promoting peace was the task of a generation, he said, adding that the sectarian violence in Bahrain, Iraq and Syria must be addressed by the peoples of those nations.

Although the United States had a “hard-earned humility”, the danger for the world was not an America that was too eager to immerse itself in the affairs of other countries, but that, after a decade of war — rightly concerned about issues back home and aware of the hostility that its engagement in the region had engendered throughout the Muslim world — might disengage, thereby creating a vacuum of leadership no other nation was ready to fill. Different nations would not agree on the need for action in every instance, and while the principle of sovereignty was at the centre of our international order, it “cannot be a shield for tyrants to commit wanton murder, or an excuse for the international community to turn a blind eye to slaughter”.

"If we don't want to choose between inaction and war, we must get better — all of us — at the policies that prevent the breakdown of basic order," he said. Through respect for the responsibilities of nations and the rights of individuals; through meaningful sanctions for those who break the rules; through dogged diplomacy that resolves the root causes of conflict and not merely its aftermath; and through development assistance that brings hope to the marginalized. Sometimes, all that would not be enough and, in such moments, the international community would need to acknowledge that the multilateral use of military force might be required to prevent the very worst from occurring.

ABDULLAH GÜL, President of Turkey, recalled that, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, there was every reason to be optimistic about the future, as the world's "moral balance" had shifted towards the pursuit of peace. States had understood the imperative of working together for a stable world order and, in a spirit of cooperation, developed effective international responses to the scourge of terrorism. Yet, the most profound crises were emerging from internal conflicts, which were on the rise and driven largely by the problem of political legitimacy.

"Leaders without political legitimacy share a common delusion," he said. "Instead of reading the future and leading transformation, they believe they can buy time with irresponsible actions against their own people." Domestic conflicts escalated into civil wars, such as in Syria, and the actions of those leaders carried implications for peace and security beyond their borders. Domestic peace was the key to regional and international peace — a challenge all nations would face. The world needed a strong, credible United Nations able to force perpetrators of brutal actions to submit to justice and the rule of law. He called for a Security Council that was democratic, effective and accountable.

Focusing on Syria, he firmly supported the United States-Russian Federation agreement to eliminate that country's chemical weapons arsenal, stressing that the accord must now translate into a tangible Security Council resolution. Turkey would welcome the complete and verifiable destruction of those weapons, especially as they had been used against Syrian civilians just a month ago. The perpetrators of that crime against humanity must be brought to justice and the agreement on Syrian chemical weapons provided an opportunity to do so, which he hoped would be a first step in creating a security architecture that ensured their total elimination in the Middle East.

"This conflict neither began with the use of chemical weapons, nor will it end with an agreement to eliminate them," he said, rejecting as immoral any position that was not troubled by the killing of innocent people. It was a disgrace that the Council had failed to uphold its primary responsibility in that case, and further, that "balance-of-power politics" had prevailed over the imperative to end that tragedy. "I cannot emphasize this enough," he said. "Agreement on chemical weapons must not be allowed to substitute for a comprehensive political strategy to address the situation in Syria."

Further, he said, once extremists took root in a State, they formed autonomous structures and threatened security at home and abroad.

He also argued for a sound strategy with well-defined, well-calculated objectives for a peaceful solution, which aimed to end the civil war and ensure a stable transition. "We cannot and shall not leave the Syrian people to their fate," he said, urging the creation and enforcement of a political strategy, led by the "P5" and neighbouring countries. Turning to the broader Middle East, he said advances in the region, including in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt, were irreversible, but the world should not expect emerging political systems to transform into mature democracies overnight.

On the Palestinian question, he said denial of Palestinians' right to a State of their own could not be justified, with illegal settlements on Palestinian land undermining the prospects for a two-State solution. Strongly supporting talks initiated by the United States, he said their success depended on Israel's acceptance of the creation of a viable Palestinian State, as well as a unified Palestinian front. More broadly, he said Turkey was fully committed to finding a just and negotiated settlement to the Cyprus question, and expected the international community to urge Greek Cypriots to reciprocate by engaging in result-oriented and time-framed negotiations.

He strongly urged peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and achievement of sustainable peace in the Caucasus based on territorial integrity. Turkey had proposed a strategy for regional economic cooperation and development, combined with the gradual withdrawal from occupied territories, which could provide a solid basis for regional peace. In the Balkans, Turkey had worked to build strong ties with all Balkan nations. On Afghanistan, he had led efforts to establish the Trilateral Summit Process among Afghanistan, Pakistan and Turkey.

Finally, he said terrorism could be defeated only when States stopped making “my terrorist/your terrorist” distinctions. Islamophobia sought to make an imaginary enemy of the millions of peace-loving Muslims. Rather, a balance must be struck between freedom of expression and respect for faith. He also discussed Turkey’s assistance and direct investment package to least developed countries. If elected to the Security Council for 2015-2016, Turkey would bring an independent voice to that body. In sum, he believed democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights and global welfare would continue to expand in the new millennium.

GOODLUCK EBELE JONATHAN, President of Nigeria, welcomed the theme of the sixty-eighth session and the consultative nature of the post-2015 development agenda, whose global outreach had increased national ownership of the agenda. He added that 2015 was not a destination, but only a milestone to a better world. The “post-MDGs” framework particularly resonated in Africa, where the challenges of poverty, illiteracy, food insecurity and climate change continued to engage the political leadership’s attention.

The good news, he said, was that sustained democratization across the continent had made a difference in governance processes, institutions and structures. A “renascent” Africa had moved away from the era of dictatorship to a new dawn, where the ideals of good governance and an emphasis on human rights and justice were beginning to drive State-society relations. That present African reality “must replace the old prejudices and assumptions about the continent”.

Despite much progress towards democratization, he said, Africa still required continued support. At the same time, Africa was no longer merely a “destination for aid”, but a continent involved in constructive, multisectoral exchanges on the global stage and ready to engage as a partner in formulating a global development agenda. For the post-2015 development agenda to be realistic, it must be “backed up by a robust financing framework”.

On the issue of sustainable peace and security, he underlined Nigeria’s participation in ensuring the continent’s stability through interventions led by subregional and continental organizations. He applauded the recent Presidential elections in Mali and hoped for a successful political transition process in Guinea-Bissau. African leaders sought a transformation of the continent that rebranded it positively.

In support of United Nations’ efforts to address the global initiative to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, he said his country had redoubled efforts to address that onerous challenge within its borders and across the West African subregion. He also recognized the need for a broad-based global partnership in the on-going battle against trans-border crimes, including terrorism and acts of piracy. In Africa, small arms and light weapons were the weapons of mass destruction. He, therefore, welcomed the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty, which fostered an era of accountable conventional weapons trade, noting that Nigeria had ratified it and would engage in its implementation.

Terrorism, he said, undermined the capacity for sustained development and, in Nigeria, the threat in a few States in the northeast challenged national stability. “We will spare no effort in addressing this menace,” he said, adding that the Government was, therefore, confronting it with every resource at its disposal. Declaring that the reign of terror anywhere in the world was “an assault on our collective humanity”, he said that, three days ago, the stark reality of that menace was again brought to the fore by the “dastardly” terrorist attack in Nairobi, Kenya. “We must stand together to win this war together.”

Turning to the situation in the Middle East and Syria, he said that Nigeria condemned the use of chemical weapons and applauded the current diplomatic efforts to avoid a further escalation of the crisis. The nuclear weapon threat, which he defined as “a threat to the survival of human race”, was as unsafe in the hands of small Powers as in major ones, and it was a collective responsibility to urge the international community to respond to the clarion call for a peaceful universe in an age of uncertainty. He called on the international community to adopt measures and policies that would promote nuclear disarmament. He also called for the democratization of the Security Council and announced Nigeria’s candidacy for the 2014-2015 non-permanent seat, which, he noted, had been endorsed by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union.

SEBASTIAN PIÑERA ECHEÑIQUE, President of Chile, stressing that the world of today was very different from the one in which the United Nations had emerged, called for a parallel evolution of international institutions. “A good starting point is progress towards real and far-reaching reform of the Security Council.” Emphasizing the need for enlarging the permanent and non-permanent membership of

the Council to ensure proper regional representation, he urged countries with the right of veto to refrain from exercising that right in situations of crimes against humanity, war crimes, genocide or ethnic cleansing.

Ultimately, he said, the rationale of the veto needed to be abandoned, calling it a relic of a world that no longer existed. Special quorums would be a more suitable replacement, so that the most important decisions concerning international security could be adopted by large and forceful majorities, making them more representative of the community of nations. Reiterating Chile's opposition to the proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, he also called for the dismantling of those already in existence.

Condemning the use of chemical weapons in Syria, he welcomed the recent framework agreement concluded by the United States and the Russian Federation to destroy Syria's stockpile and lauded the international community's efforts to solve the armed conflict there. Chile also hoped to welcome the State of Palestine as a full member of the United Nations. Turning to his region, he noted that Chile, together with Mexico, Colombia and Peru, had embarked on a far-reaching integration initiative in the form of the Pacific Alliance and had abolished tariffs on imports from least developed countries.

Drawing upon his country's experience, the President enumerated four lessons universally applicable to the emerging world. First, were the moral and legal rules — against torture, terrorism, politically motivated assassination, forced disappearances and violence against civilian populations — which must be respected by all. The second was never to take for granted the values of democracy, peace and civil amity. "They are somewhat like a tree that needs to be watered every day in order not to wither and dry up."

The third lesson, he continued, was the close relationship between the quality of democracy, economic progress and social justice, and the need to build mutually reinforcing policies in those areas. The fourth was to avoid being prisoners to history while discussing, interpreting and remembering — "because, when the present is anchored in the past, the only thing we lose is the future".

ROSSEN PLEVNELIEV, President of Bulgaria, comparing the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals to "unfinished work", declared that it was hard to accept today that more than a billion people, including children, still suffered from extreme poverty and malnutrition; millions of children were deprived of education and access to sanitation; and basic health services for many women and new born babies remained a remote luxury. Despite all efforts, war and conflicts continued; causing thousands of deaths and leading to humanitarian crises and human suffering; human rights and fundamental freedoms violations continue, and countries refused to work together for a better future.

He called on the international community to mobilize all available means and resources to "finish what we have started", in order to achieve truly sustainable results for humanity and the planet. He denounced the Syrian conflict; particularly the 21 August chemical weapons attack that claimed more than a thousand innocent lives, including those of children, as a major source of concern and risk to regional and global security. Urging perpetrators of those attacks to be held accountable, President Plevneliev welcomed the framework agreement between the United States and the Russian Federation to place Syria's chemical weapons arsenal under international control, and called on the United Nations Security Council to unite in upholding its responsibilities.

The Bulgarian leader expressed his expectation that Iran would demonstrate a clear political will and address the concerns of the international community by providing credible evidence of the peaceful nature of its nuclear programme. In that respect, he urged its full cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Also concerning the Middle East, he said he was encouraged by the resumption of direct peace talks between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

He condemned terrorism as one of the most horrific crimes and challenging threats to international peace and security. To that end, he expressed Bulgaria's condolences to the people and Government of Kenya for the terrorist attack suffered by the East African nation last weekend. A terrorist attack at a Bulgaria airport in July 2012 "changed Bulgaria forever" and was a reminder that the fight was a common cause, on which the international community must stay united. The last 25 years of Balkans' history was a great example of what could be achieved when neighbours worked together. Building trust, good neighbourly relations, stability and security in south-eastern Europe and in the Black Sea region was among Bulgaria's priorities, and the European Neighbourhood Policy remained one of the most efficient instruments of the European Union.

Touching on several other areas of interest to his Government, he welcomed the high-level meeting on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals with regard to persons with disabilities. On United Nations reforms, his country was convinced that the United Nations should stay the course of its reforms, in order to enhance the system's efficiency, representativeness and transparency. "This includes a revitalized United Nations General Assembly, a strengthened Economic and Social Council and the [United Nations] Security Council reflecting contemporary realities," he declared.

He said that, while world was still a long way from the future it wanted, the Rio+20 Conference had outlined a comprehensive agenda for further work to be completed in the three dimensions of sustainable development. The recently published report of the high-level panel of eminent persons had contributed to the vision for a post-2015 development agenda, and, in his view, represented key proposals for transformative shifts and a global, people-centred and planet-sensitive agenda. Bulgaria believed the new universal and legally binding climate agreement, to be signed in 2015, should reinforce a next, overarching development agenda and speed up the international community's efforts to introduce new sustainable models of growth. He added that culture and education also should be accorded their "rightful place" in that blueprint.

ARMANDO EMÍLIO GUEBUZA, President of Mozambique, said the post-2015 development agenda should be based on such principles as inclusion, national ownership in the context of its sustainability and shared responsibility among development partners in its implementation. The inability of a State to meet the internationally agreed development targets represented a collective failure of the global community because the Goals were a shared responsibility of all States.

Noting that Mozambique had been chosen to carry out a national consultation on the post-2015 development agenda, he highlighted that the trust in the country's civil society in driving that process strengthened the principle of national ownership and created the conditions for the Mozambican social actors to demonstrate their growing vitality, which was a true reflection of the consolidation of democratic processes and inclusive governance there.

The Government, he went on, had been furthering democracy, reinforcing the democratic institutions and consolidating democratic practices through transparency, dialogue, and participation, by instilling respect for the Constitution and broadening the space so that more Mozambicans could get involved in combating poverty. On 20 November, municipal elections would be held for the fourth time, with the fifth general and multi-party elections slated for 2014. "The materialization of this electoral cycle is the beacon in exercising freedom of choice and in ensuring citizens' political participation in the democratic process," he said.

Recalling that Mozambique, last August, had ended its tenure as Chair of Southern African Development Community (SADC), he said his Government, together with other Member States, African Union, United Nations and other partners had engaged in galvanizing the process of regional integration and achieving regional peace and stability. However, instability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remained a challenge and called on all signatories to honour the tenets of the Framework for Peace, Security and Cooperation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the Region. He also expressed support for the political transition in Madagascar and for efforts to stabilize the situation in Guinea-Bissau.

Lastly, he supported self-determination for the Palestinian people, the existence of a Palestinian State based on the relevant United Nations resolutions and the two-State solution. He also backed the self-determination of the Saharan people and reiterated the need to end the economic, trade, and financial embargo against Cuba.

FRANÇOIS HOLLANDE, President of France, said it was up to the United Nations to act where people's liberty was threatened, where their fundamental rights were compromised and where extremism disrupted international security. To that end, action in Syria was essential, where 90,000 people had died in the last year and where a quarter of the population was displaced. The worst moment had come on 21 August, when chemical weapons were used against civilians. United Nations inspectors had confirmed their use. France had wanted strong action against that violation of international law and to dissuade the regime from similar action in the future.

He said that that pressure had prompted negotiations in the Security Council to ensure verification and destruction of chemical weapons. The text, when agreed, needed to open the possibility for the Council to be seized of the issue of chemical weapons at any moment; it needed to envisage coercive measures under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter in response to the Syrian regime's failure to commit, as

those who committed such crimes must be held accountable. After the resolution was adopted, work must continue to ensure that the war — the deadliest of the century — was ended.

A political solution was the only option, he said, but too much time had been lost due to Security Council inaction. The regime had taken advantage by increasing its violence, while extremists had poured in. The Geneva II conference needed to happen and it had to make decisions, not hold discussions. The goal was to see a transitional Government that could establish peace, protect all communities and organize elections. There was real humanitarian urgency stemming from the refugee crisis, with Lebanon directly threatened by the protracted tragedy; 20 per cent of its current population was of Syrian origin.

There were glimmers of hope in the Middle East, he said, looking to the resumed negotiations between Israel and Palestine. An opportunity for coexistence between two States should be seized finally, ending a conflict that had local, regional and global repercussions. Another glimmer could be seen in the statements of the new Iranian President. The question was whether his words would translate into action, especially on the nuclear issue. Continued lack of headway in discussions had led the international community to impose increasingly harsh sanctions on Iran. He expected concrete gestures from Iran, including rejection of a military nuclear programme, adding that, while in favour of dialogue with President Rouhani, he was firm on the issue of proliferation.

Also of concern was Africa, which had fallen prey to terrorism, he said. Victories were possible, as in Mali, where African and French forces had responded to an appeal by the Government. Since the intervention, Mali had re-established territorial integrity, ensured security of its population and held a credible Presidential election. Threats remained in the Sahel, and in Libya, where the authorities still needed assistance. He also raised an alarm about the situation in the Central African Republic, where chaos had taken root, preying on civilians. A Security Council-mandated African force was needed to re-establish stability. Elsewhere in Africa, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission there, known as MONUSCO, needed continued support, and the Addis Ababa Accord should be applied without interference. Events in Somalia and Kenya showed that Al-Shabaab still posed a threat, requiring continuing international support of African countries. In that light, France was organizing a peace and security summit in Africa later in 2013.

The best chance for peace and security was through policies supporting development, he said, underlining the link between poverty and terrorism. Funds were needed to build essential infrastructure and ensure access to basic public goods. France supported innovative sources of financing for development, such as the tax on airline tickets. He had recently raised that tax to help combat AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. A tax on financial transactions, with 10 per cent of the proceeds allocated to development, enabled improvements in the poorest countries, increased security and helped to combat climate change. He hoped for an equitable agreement on the latter issue by 2015, with developed and developing countries alike accepting their respective roles. Any deal should be binding, and to ensure progress, a concrete call to action was needed, backed by the threat of sanctions.

He said that the most serious threat of all was inaction; the worst decision was no decision; and the worst danger was to see no danger. Every time the United Nations did not act, peace suffered. That was the basis of his call for a code of good conduct for the permanent members of the Security Council, with the threat of loss of veto for violations. Additionally, he called for strengthened powers of investigation for the Secretary-General. The United Nations' power rested on its ability to intervene rapidly and effectively, to promote development and to preserve future generations. It held legitimacy through its Charter and needed to honour it.

ABDULLAH II BIN AL HUSSEIN, King of Jordan, said global security would long be shaped by current events in the Middle East. "The region's fires cannot be ignored," he said, warning that escalating violence in Syria threatened to hollow out that country's economic and political future, with extremists rushing to promote and exploit ethnic and religious divisions, upending the regional renaissance and risking global security.

Last month, he said, Jordan had hosted 100 eminent Muslim scholars from around the world, noting that they agreed that there was no single prescription for an Islamic State. They affirmed that a modern Islamic State should be a civic State, founded on institutions, and with an inclusive Constitution based on rule of law, justice, freedom and equality of opinion and faith. He called on the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to adopt the recommendations amid the current turbulence and transformations. Jordan had also convened an international meeting on the challenges faced by Arab Christian communities,

and he stressed the essential role of Christians in the Arab world, urging all countries to stand with Jordan in support of diversity, tolerance and mutual respect.

He said it was time to fast-track a political transition in Syria, to end the violence and bloodshed, neutralize the threat of chemical weapons, restore security and stability, and preserve the country's unity and territorial integrity. The country's future must be Syrian-led, but the world had a duty, an interest and the power to help them. That help should not be delayed.

The number of Syrian refugees in Jordan equalled one tenth of the total population and could reach as high as 20 per cent within a year, he said, adding that their need for food, water, shelter, sanitation, electricity and health care was more than even the strongest global economies could absorb. Jordan was a small economy with the fourth highest water scarcity in the world, and while the response of the United Nations and regional and international donors had been generous, "the need is out-racing the response".

Turning to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which he called "the region's core crisis", he said he was encouraged by resumed talks. The resources that the conflict consumed could be better used, and with willing parties, determined United States leadership and strong regional and international backing, success was possible. He urged commitment from Palestinian and Israeli leaders to reach agreement within the set timeframe, and to avoid any actions that could derail the still-fragile process. There should be no settlement construction and no unilateral actions that could affect the status quo in East Jerusalem. A two-State solution could be reached, giving Israel real security, and normalizing relations with 57 Arab and Muslim countries. That would also give the Palestinian people the rights they deserved: a viable and independent Palestinian State, on Palestinian national soil, based on 1967 lines with East Jerusalem as its capital.

IVAN GAŠPAROVIČ, President of Slovakia, said negotiation was the best approach to resolving the Syrian conflict. "If we thoughtfully consider all the possible consequences of a military intervention in Syria, it becomes clear that there is only one good solution to this conflict — the diplomatic one." He added, "Slovakia principally condemns use of chemical weapons as a crime against humanity and urgently asks to bring the perpetrators before the International Criminal Court." The United Nations' continued engagement was essential.

Mr. Gašparovič said his country was engaged in international crisis management, including in Afghanistan, where it had provided military, as well as civilian and humanitarian aid. Security, economic development, good governance, human rights protection for all and free elections must be the founding pillars in building a new Afghan State. The key to success of all the processes even beyond the presidential election in 2014 was national reconciliation. Afghanistan also needed consistent, predictable and targeted assistance, both from its neighbours and the entire international community. Cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations was pivotal in that regard.

He said Slovakia also had strongly supported the United Nations in addressing conflicts in Africa. There, too, cooperation with regional organizations, such as the African Union, was critical to successful conflict-resolution, although the continent still needed the international community's attention and assistance. Regarding the Middle East, "Slovakia welcomes and supports the renewal of talks between Israel and Palestine", but it seemed, however, that "talks are not enough". There had been no compliance with a number of binding agreements and resolutions; he expected more from agreed solutions.

Touching on other areas of concern, he said terrorism remained one of the most serious threats, and everything must be done to reach agreement on a comprehensive convention. He heralded the recent signing of the Arms Trade Treaty and expressed hope that joint efforts within the international community would ensure the Treaty's swift entry into force. Slovakia also actively supported entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which it considered an important pillar of both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

He said he considered the rule of law an inseparable part of security; "if we cannot give people security, safety, education and jobs, they will be quick to draw guns again in desperation". Unfortunately, his country's own experience proved that. Another challenge was the lack of public funds and resources, which had made attaining the Millennium Development Goals a challenge for Slovakia, particularly since a number of system deficiencies in distribution and control of resources had been revealed as a result of the recent economic and financial crisis. Until recently, Slovakia had received development aid, but given its experience with political and economic transition, the country was now well positioned to take on a more active role in supporting others dependent on assistance from the international community.

JUAN MANUEL SANTOS CALDERÓN, President of Colombia, speaking about a Colombian woman, said that, two decades ago, armed members of illegal groups arrived in her village, determined to impose their rule of terror. They murdered her husband and two other relatives. With her children, she had fled empty-handed, carrying only the weight of her tragedy. Today, that woman, Maria Zabala, was a courageous and inspiring leader for peace. Sadly, there were thousands of cases like hers in Colombia, he said, noting that, over the past 50 years, more than 220,000 people had died because of the conflict — twice as many as the death toll of the Bosnian War, in former Yugoslavia.

In fact, he said, the conflict in Colombia was the oldest and the last in the Western hemisphere. Yet, amid the conflict, his country had achieved much in terms of security, poverty eradication and economic performance. However, continuing to coexist with the conflict would be like sentencing millions of people to more years of violence, fear, poverty and of victimization. “My generation has not seen one single day of peace, and my dream is for my children and the children of all Colombians to have the chance to see it,” he said, adding his hope that the “guerrillas understand that the time has come to leave this 50-year confrontation behind and that the time has come to change from bullets to votes”.

Ms. Zabala was among those who were entitled to justice, truth and reparation, he said, noting that his Government had promoted legislation to recognize and repair the victims of conflict, a bill that he had enacted in the presence of the United Nations Secretary-General. Colombia would bring an end to the conflict, but that did not mean relinquishing justice, truth and reparation for the victims. His might have been the first country to have engaged in such a process. Indeed, the Government had adopted an international strategy for transitional justice and pioneered the implementation of such measures amid the conflict, of the view there could be no impunity for crimes against humanity or war crimes.

Drug trafficking had been the main funding source for violence and terrorism in his country, he noted, exclaiming: “If we manage to get the guerrillas, once they’ve demobilized, to change sides and become an ally of the State, to curb drug trafficking and end illegal crops, just imagine what it would entail!” He went on to express hope that the United Nations special session on drugs in 2016 would discuss conclusions of various studies.

Lastly, he said, Colombia was deeply committed to environmental protection. At Rio+20, his Government had driven the proposal aimed at establishing the Sustainable Development Goals as a mandatory benchmark in the development agenda for the decades to come. “Colombia is contributing a lot,” he said, noting that, a few weeks ago, the area of the largest national natural park, the Chiribiquete Park, in the Amazon had been doubled to roughly the size of Belgium.

SHEIKH TAMIM BIN HAMAD AL-THANI, Qatar, said that the Israeli occupation continued to inflict injustices upon the Palestinian people by extending the scope of settlement activity; Judaizing the city of Jerusalem; intensifying its unjust embargo of the Gaza strip and intensified settlement activity in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights. That could not be accepted as normal, he said, adding that the United Nations was established on the basis of human rights and it was unreasonable that it “could not do anything about the last colonial issue”.

Real peace, he continued, would come only through coexistence, good-neighbourliness and mutual respect. It would come with the formation of two States and the withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Arab territories. The ongoing de facto policy in Palestine “transforms before our eyes into a more complicated issue” as the continuation of settlements led to a destruction of the basis for establishing a Palestinian State. The situation resembled apartheid.

A Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital within the limits of the 1967 borders, was not only an Arab demand, but it represented an international standard for testing the credibility of international legality. He called on the Security Council, therefore, to uphold its responsibility and adopt the required decisions to stop illegitimate Israeli practices.

Moving on to Syria, he said the destructive actions and horrible massacres at the hands of the regime must not go unpunished. Perpetrators of the brutal crimes that have “shocked every human conscience” must not enjoy impunity. Failure to resolve the issue lay with the Council for its inability to take the required decision to stop the bloodshed. “It is obviously impossible to take any decision without the support of the majority of the permanent Member States, but taking a decision should not be monopolized for a long period by one or two States,” he asserted.

The Arab Spring revolutions were also facing difficulties, he pointed out. Rarely have there been revolutions that were not followed by the desperate attempts of former regimes to destroy them. That was why “wise people” preferred that regime change be done gradually and not through revolutions, which carried with them the possibility of counter-revolutions. Qatar opted to play a constructive role at the international level and aimed to serve as a hub for dialogue among different parties to conflicts. Within that process, Qatar was moving towards reform and modernity, which would require a genuine commitment to the rule of law, principles of governance, combating corruption and protecting human rights, as well as empowering women to participate in public life.

The issue of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, in particular, nuclear weapons, in the Middle East, was alarming, he said, reiterating that every State in the region had an absolute right to use nuclear power for peaceful means, according to the standards of IAEA. On another note of importance to his country, he said it remained committed to tackling the negative environmental and economic consequences of climate change, and he outlined several national initiatives taken to combat desertification and drought.

ALBERT II, Prince of Monaco, recalled his statement delivered in 1993, when Monaco had become the 183rd Member State of the United Nations, accepting its responsibility towards the interconnected and borderless challenges the world was facing. The linkage between sustainable development and environmental protection had been recognized during the 1992 Earth Summit. However, growing insecurity characterized by the fragmentation of the societies threatened the progress made, as shown by the recent attacks in Kenya, Pakistan and Iraq. Protracted conflict slowed development and created humanitarian crises, which were unacceptable.

He denounced the rising number of refugees and internally displaced persons in Syria, adding that that conflict worsened through the use of chemical weapons. Monaco added its voice to all the countries requesting a political settlement of the conflict, especially in light of the recent agreements on the control and destruction of chemical weapons in Syria.

He paid special tribute to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and its determination to fulfil its mandate of assisting populations in need. Given current conflicts, natural disasters, climate change and environmental degradation, he called for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to be given the resources and means necessary to implement its mandate.

Despite the remaining challenges, he said, the progress made since the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals demonstrated that the political decisions made on development and security had been the right ones. He lent his country's full support to the initiatives launched by the Secretary-General on education, advancement of women and nutrition, which invited Member States to assume their full responsibilities to the most vulnerable peoples, especially in the least developed countries. He urged accelerated implementation of the plan of action of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

As a General Assembly Vice-President, Monaco supported the establishment of a new development agenda, in order to enable efficient response to upcoming challenges, he said. Concerning climate change, he underlined the need for sustainable production and consumption patterns, as outlined in the Rio+20 outcome document. He emphasized his personal commitment in fostering the role of the ocean and sea in the post-2015 development agenda, stressing that climate regulation, food security, energy, tourism, transport, and international trade were all directly or indirectly linked to oceans. Reinforcement of multilateral cooperation and partnerships was at the centre of the preparations of the third International Conference of the Small Island Developing States in 2014.

JACOB ZUMA, President of South Africa, denounced the terrorist attack in Kenya before saying that any future development agenda aimed at Africa must address poverty eradication, income inequality and job creation. Beyond 2015, development must be based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, in order to equalize the international playing field. Unfortunately, the global economic meltdown had brought new developments that were detrimental, not only to the developing world, especially Africa, but also “renegotiated the rules of the game”. New issues were being introduced as prerequisites for development and partnerships, which had become huge non-tariff barriers including the green economy and clean technology.

The developed North and developing South must continue engaging in a genuine partnership, he said, calling on Northern nations to meet their commitment of contributing 0.7 per cent of their gross national income to official development assistance (ODA). Investing in development in the South, especially in Africa, was critical to sustainable development and global stability. The tendency to delegate some historical responsibilities to new emerging economies in the South was “unacceptable and unworkable”, he said, emphasizing that emerging nations had their own historical challenges and backlogs to deal with. “Development and security were two sides of the same coin,” and ensuring both required good governance and the promotion of democratic values.

He expressed deep concern that the Security Council remained “undemocratic, unrepresentative and unfair” to developing nations and small States. It disenfranchised the majority of the Member States in the General Assembly. “We cannot remain beholden indefinitely to the will of an unrepresentative minority on most important issues of international peace and security,” he stressed.

On Syria, he said that any political transition must be Syrian-led and not the result of a force of arms. He welcomed the recent developments, such as the decision by Syria to accede to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the ongoing bilateral consultations between the Russian Federation and the United States. The international community was presented with an opportunity to demonstrate that matters of such nature were handled correctly through existing instruments within the multilateral global governance system.

Looking forward to South Africa’s twentieth anniversary of freedom and democracy next year, he said that a strong partnership with the United Nations was critical for its future. His country’s founding President, Nelson Mandela, continued to respond to treatment at his home, and his family, as well as the people of South Africa, were humbled by the international support. However, while South Africa celebrated its freedom and democracy, it remained mindful that the struggle was not complete for the people of Palestine and Western Sahara. He was deeply concerned about the illegal settlement activities in the West Bank, which were not only a violation of international law, but also jeopardized the realization of a two-State solution. South Africa would also continue to struggle for Cuba’s economic liberation, he added.

VIKTOR YANUKOVYCH, President of Ukraine, emphasized the urgency of setting the post-2015 development agenda. The theme of sustainable energy was of particular significance to Ukraine, he said, adding that an inclusive approach was needed to ensure comprehensive consideration of security, social and environmental aspects. Meanwhile, Ukraine was making significant progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, thanks to a series of social, economic, democratic and legal reforms. Describing the country’s European integration aspirations as the “determining vector” for its development, he believed that the signing in November of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union would assist the country in achieving development goals.

He said that sustainable development was impossible without international security. Syria was one of the most painful security problems in the world today, and the international community must do more to assist the Syrian people. He welcomed the plan produced by the Russian Federation and the United States to control Syria’s chemical weapons, saying that would leave space for the political and democratic settlement of the conflict. He also drew attention to the issue of cyberspace security, stressing the need to strengthen control over the use of Internet and cyberspace for criminal or other dangerous purposes.

Next year, he noted, would mark the twentieth anniversary of Ukraine’s accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. By ridding itself of the world’s third-largest nuclear arsenal, Ukraine had made an unprecedented contribution to global nuclear disarmament. Considering recent alarming trends in nuclear proliferation, his country would initiate a thematic conference on the topic during the current General Assembly session. He reiterated his insistence that security assurances for the States that gave up their nuclear arsenals and countries that did not take part in such military unions must be reflected in a “legally binding international document”.

As a maritime State, Ukraine had been making efforts to secure navigation safety and combat piracy at sea, he said, adding its intention to contribute further to strengthening peace by actively participating in United Nations missions in hot spots around the world. In the past two decades, it had taken part in more than 20 such operations. Along with other troop contributors, Ukraine was working on existing problems related to peacekeeping activities, particularly regarding the mobility and safety of air operations, legal protection of peacekeepers and investigation of crimes committed against them.

Expressing support for the Assembly President's determination to advance United Nations reform, he said it was critically important to achieve early progress in the modernization of the Security Council, adding that that must account for the legitimate interests of all regional groups including the Eastern European group. That region should be allocated one additional seat of non-permanent membership in the enlarged Council, he said, meanwhile calling for support for Ukraine's candidacy in the Council for 2016-2017.

MAHINDA RAJAPAKSA, President of Sri Lanka, highlighted the significant progress his country had made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, despite having contended with internal terrorism, the 2004 tsunami and the global food, energy and financial crises. Citing recent projections, he urged the United Nations to examine the causes of failure to end extreme poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

Calling upon the United Nations to declare an International Skills Day as part of an effort to mainstream youths into the post-2015 development agenda, he urged international monetary and financial institutions to give a greater voice to the developing world. "Also, those countries that are economically blessed must shed their practice of leveraging through these institutions."

Voicing concern over the growing trend of international interference in the internal affairs of developing countries in the guise of concern for security and human rights, he said the time had come to evaluate whether turbulent movements for political change had led to greater stability in such countries or had produced the opposite result. "The world needs no policing by a few States, particularly when the United Nations is mandated to ensure international security through multilateral engagement," he said, emphasizing that such engagement must extend to protecting humanity against nuclear and chemical weapons.

Citing the recent election in Sri Lanka's Northern Province, he said it had been crucial in promoting political empowerment and reconciliation. He urged the international community to assist with that process and to ensure its success for the benefit of all Sri Lankans. He said that, despite his country's consistent engagement with United Nations mechanisms, there was a disproportionate emphasis on Sri Lanka, which faced unequal treatment through the multilateral framework. "The UN system should be astute enough to ensure the consistency of standards applied, so that there is no room for suspicion or manipulation by interested parties to fulfil their agendas."

LAURA CHINCHILLA MIRANDA, President of Costa Rica, remembered the crucial importance of the United Nations to conjoin, catalyse and protect the international multilateral structure and the rule of law, as well as to guide the international community in its search for solutions. On 2 April, her country had ratified the Arms Trade Treaty, which had been followed by the unanimous ratification of a domestic law ensuring its implementation. In the context of the high-level debate on nuclear disarmament, set for 26 September, she noted that Costa Rica had presided the working group to develop proposals to take forward multilateral negotiations leading to a world without nuclear weapons.

She said the tragedy of Syria had been a major source of suffering and concern, and, after a period of paralysis and confusion, she welcomed the approaching of a possible solution to the stalemate. She stated: "I raise our voice to demand that the Security Council act decisively to eliminate chemical weaponry in Syria, restrain violence, seek a negotiated and democratic solution to the conflict, and make accountable those responsible for the horrible crimes committed there." Costa Rica insisted that the Council refer the Syrian case to the International Criminal Court, and she again called on the five permanent members to refrain from exercising their veto in cases of crimes against humanity.

The Syrian tragedy, she said, reaffirmed the need to work decisively towards the organic application of the responsibility to protect, and she urged all Member States to join the initiative of Australia, Costa Rica, Denmark and Ghana to designate focal points for the prevention of atrocities.

Turning to sovereignty and territorial integrity, she recalled Nicaragua's occupation of part of Costa Rica's territory in October 2010, as well as the measures taken by the International Court of Justice, which, among other things, prohibited the presence of Nicaraguan personnel in the zone under dispute. Nicaragua's scorn for those measures demonstrated the urgent need to establish procedures to guarantee respect for the court's decisions, and Costa Rica committed itself to that goal. The Nicaraguan and Costa Rican people deserve to live in peace, but the Nicaraguan Government insists on preventing it.

Touching on a number of other matters of concern, she said Costa Rica joined the call of Mexico and Guatemala regarding drug trafficking and transnational organized crime to re-evaluate agreed international policies and look for more effective responses to the illegal drug trade. Crime rates in Costa Rica were currently the lowest in the region, she said, welcoming the Declaration of Antigua by the Organization of American States (OAS) as a first step to lead the international community towards holding, in 2016, a General Assembly special session on current policies and strategies to confront the global drug problem.

HEINZ FISCHER, President of Austria, said global security is one of the main issues of concern for his country, particularly given the recent events in Syria. He said that, while Austria had welcomed the agreement reached between the United States and Russia, ultimately, he believed the case should be referred to the International Criminal Court. "Accountability is necessary to stop the atrocities and prevent future crimes," he said. Decisive leadership would be needed to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which he said he had followed for almost 40 years.

He also reported that his country now hosts the Office of the Special Representative of the "Sustainable Energy for All" initiative, based at the United Nations Vienna Headquarters, and the newly established International Anti-Corruption Academy. In the last year, he said that Austria hosted the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Global Forum and the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue was inaugurated.

Speaking about the protection of human rights, he stated his support for the work of the Human Rights Council, saying as a member of the Council, Austria had contributed to efforts to protect journalists and religious minorities and the promotion of the rights of the child. He said violations of human rights based on sexual orientation or gender identity, as well as the use of the death penalty, were other areas of grave concern for Austria.

The slow progress towards nuclear disarmament was another area of grave concern for Austria, he said. "Nuclear weapons should be stigmatized, banned and eliminated." He stated that recent events in North Korea had been particularly troubling, although he said he hoped that the Iranian nuclear issue would be resolved through negotiations. Speaking about his country's commitment to the rule of law, he reported: "The Austrian Government is considering to set up an Austrian Rule of Law Trust Fund to support international actors in strengthening the rule of law and offer legal expertise or deploy legal experts free of charge to developing countries at their request."

HORACIO MANUEL CARTES JARA, President of Paraguay, said he had taken office less than a month ago following an exemplary electoral process that culminated with elections on 21 April which were certified as legitimate and fair by United Nations observer missions and several regional and hemispheric organizations. He stated that institutionalism, consensus building, democracy and respect for human rights and free speech were the cornerstones of his Administration.

He had set poverty alleviation and social investment as top priorities so that Paraguay's people would become engines of the country's development, he said. His Administration, he said, had zero tolerance for corruption. He noted that Paraguay's macroeconomic indicators were encouraging, adding that the country was suitable for investment given its abundant and fertile soil, large freshwater reserves, and clean, renewable energy generated by three hydroelectric power plants.

He said that the Government was committed to providing legal security and clear and transparent rules to safeguard people and their property. A few weeks ago, he noted, he signed the "Agreement for Paraguay" with various political parties in Congress, as well as with other institutions, to work together on strengthening governance and improving people's well-being. His Administration, he said, was committed to defend and promote human rights. He said that the special needs of Paraguay and other landlocked countries must be addressed adequately. Paraguay's longstanding border dispute with Brazil, he added, had given way to creation of the Itaipu Dam, successfully transforming a problem into successful cross-border integration and development. He noted that Paraguay was determined to enhance communications, logistics and infrastructure to better connect beyond its borders.

He expressed concern over the events in Syria, noting that the Organization must play a preeminent role in resolving the conflict. In that regard, he called for support for implementing the United States-Russian Federation framework agreement. He hailed the fact that Taiwan had increased its presence in United Nations specialized agencies and bodies thanks to strong global support. He said that his Administration would continue to encourage such positive interaction.

He encouraged peace, dialogue and harmonious global development and respect for the rule of law. He noted that integration was vital. He added that Paraguay aimed to become a land of opportunity, investment, prosperity, security and reliability. Improving education, he said, was a top Government priority as it was a means to overcome the geopolitical constraints of backwardness.

ANDRIS BĒRZIŅŠ, President of Latvia, said that fragile, conflict-affected and least developed countries faced the biggest difficulties when it came to ensuring sustainable development. He stated that growing evidence had shown that progress on the Millennium Goals was impossible without first achieving peace and security, and thus, one of the cornerstones of the new post-2015 vision would be ensuring a decent life and the enjoyment of human rights through those “basic conditions”. The United Nations, he added, should continue to play a leading role in peacebuilding and promoting the settlement of disputes, which was also high on the agenda.

He said the wider Middle East stood at a crossroads, and events in the region had a global impact. The international community, he said, must take decisive action. Deploping the continuing humanitarian catastrophe in Syria, he said that easing human suffering there was an immediate goal, and he commended international efforts to that end, particularly the hosting of Syrian refugees by neighbouring countries. He noted that the use of chemical weapons in Syria had been confirmed by United Nations inspectors, and those who committed war crimes and crimes against humanity in Syria must face the International Criminal Court. He added that the agreement reached by the United States and Russian Federation on the framework to eliminate Syria’s chemical weapons should be reflected in a United Nations Security Council resolution, with a clear indication that Chapter VII of the Charter would be invoked in the case of non-compliance.

On other regional matters, he encouraged the new Iranian leadership to address the concerns of the international community and welcomed that Government’s stated determination to resolve the nuclear issue, thus building confidence in the peaceful nature of its nuclear programme. He also welcomed the reopening of direct Middle East peace negotiations between Israel and Palestine, and anticipated a peaceful settlement with two countries living side by side in peace and security. Furthermore, he noted that efforts to resolve conflicts in Moldova, Georgia and Nagorno-Karabakh should also be increased and remain high on the international agenda.

He said Latvia was stepping up its assistance to Afghanistan and other Central Asian States, particularly in the areas of transportation and customs, as further integration of those countries into the global economy could be achieved by developing international trade routes. The Northern Distribution Network already connected the region with Europe through Latvia, and he was confident it could become a commercially viable long-term transit corridor after 2014. He added that the international community must remain committed to Afghanistan, and Latvia would continue its own support to that country’s police and military.

Regarding sustainable development, he said that it went hand in hand with prosperity. During a recession, structural reforms, budgetary discipline and economic stimuli were what brought results. But, while there were signs of recovery, he said that there was no room for complacency. He stated that robust economic growth could be ensured by providing quality education to the younger generations, as this was the foundation on which peaceful, prosperous and dignified societies were built. After the 2008 economic downturn, he noted that, since 2011 Latvia has been among the fastest-growing European Union economies and that growth was expected to continue. Among the key drivers in the expansion, he cited an empowered civil society and the country’s engagement in the national decision-making process, including through Internet freedom. He noted that Latvia stood ready to contribute to the most fundamental post-2015 development goals — those of promoting peace, human rights and fundamental freedoms — and was submitting its candidature for the 2014 elections of the Human Rights Council.

ELLEN JOHNSON-SIRLEAF, President of Liberia, referred to the agony of Syria’s people, particularly the innocent women and children suffering the most. Liberia unequivocally condemned the use of chemical weapons in Syria and anywhere else in the world, and urged renewed international efforts to stem the rising scourge of terrorism. Welcoming the “communication revolution” that had provided a broad cyber-platform for the exchange of information, she warned that it must not provide a vehicle for the promotion of terrorism and the spread of unfounded and irresponsible information.

She said she was proud of the tremendous progress taking place in Africa, noting growth on the continent had averaged more than 5 per cent annually, surpassing that of other regions. In addition, African economies were diversifying, trade infrastructure expanding, and democracies becoming stronger and more mature, she said. Institutions were leading a process of integration and cooperation, and improvements were also seen in school enrolment, health indicators, trade and investment.

Commending the strong collaboration among Africa's regional economic communities, she also praised the African Union and the United Nations for their robust response to the crisis in Mali. It had averted a threat to the peace and security of the entire region. Although Liberia still faced the residual challenges of its own conflict, it had been able to contribute troops to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), she said, adding that she was also pleased that neighbouring countries belonging to the Mano River Union were at peace and engaged in consolidating the gains of stability in order to accelerate national transformation through regional integration.

Liberia itself was celebrating 10 consecutive years of peace and progress this year, she continued. The Government had initiated a host of reforms intended to improve governance, enhance accountability and create an enabling environment for the exercise of the basic freedoms of speech and the press. Liberia was on a path of "irreversible progress" that had enabled it to conduct two democratic presidential elections, and was currently laying a firm foundation for economic transformation aimed at moving the country to middle-income status by 2030. "Liberia has come a long way, but still has much more to do," she added.

"Today, more than at any other time, we have an opportunity to transform our world" and to pursue an agenda that would eradicate poverty while ensuring a sustainable future, she emphasized. Governments in Africa were working towards a continental consensus that would convey the African Common Position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. She was also pleased to have been asked by the African Union Summit to chair a high-level committee of 10 Heads of State that would guide and oversee that process. "The future begins today," she said in conclusion, urging all countries to commit to a new global development trajectory that gave all humanity a world of peace, dignity and prosperity.

HASSAN ROUHANI, President of Iran, declared that the age of "zero-sum games" in international relations was over. Coercive economic and military policies, practices used to maintain old forms of domination, and the practice of globalizing Western values negated peace, security and human dignity, as did the persistent "cold war mentality". There was no guarantee that the era of quiet among big Powers would remain immune from violent discourse, practices and action, he said, warning that the impact of violent and extremist narratives must not be underestimated.

He went on to emphasize that "strategic violence" manifested in efforts to deprive regional players of their natural domain of action, describing containment policies, regime change from outside and efforts to redraw political borders as "extremely dangerous and provocative". Propagandist and unfounded faith-based phobia, including Islamophobia, "Shia-phobia and Iran-phobic discourse", seriously threatened world peace and security. The so-called Iranian threat, used to justify a long catalogue of crimes in the past three decades, had assumed dangerous proportions, he warned, emphasizing that those who harped on it were themselves a threat to international peace and security. "Iran poses absolutely no threat to the world or the region."

Describing the continuing practices imposed on the innocent people of Palestine as nothing less than structural violence, he said there was also no military solution to the crisis in Syria. Expansionist strategies and attempts to change the regional balance through proxies could not hide behind humanitarian rhetoric, he said, adding that the global community must work quickly to end the killing of innocent people. Welcoming Syria's acceptance of the Chemical Weapons Convention, he said that extremist groups' access to such weapons, which was the greatest danger to the region, must be considered in any disarmament plan. The illegitimate, ineffective threat, or actual use, of force would only exacerbate violence and crisis in the region. Violence and the use of drones against innocent people in the name of combating terrorism should be condemned, he said, adding that unjust sanctions were inhumane and contrary to peace.

It was vital to promote tolerance and joint action in human society, he said. All challenges could be managed successfully through a smart, judicious blend of hope and moderation. As a regional Power, Iran would act responsibly in regional and global security affairs, and cooperate with other responsible actors. It defended peace based on democracy and the ballot box everywhere, including Syria and Bahrain. Iran sought to resolve problems, not create them, he said, stressing that acceptance of his country's inalienable right was the best solution to the issue of its nuclear dossier. Underlining the exclusively peaceful nature of

his country's nuclear programme, he said nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction had no place in Iran's security and defence doctrine.

National interests necessitated the removal of all reasonable concerns about its peaceful nuclear programme. To fulfil that objective, there must be acceptance and respect for Iran's right to enrichment and other nuclear rights. Nuclear knowledge had been domesticated and Iran's nuclear technology had reached industrial scale. It was an illusion, and extremely unrealistic, to presume that peaceful use of the nuclear programme could be ensured by impeding it through illegitimate pressures. The country was "prepared to engage in time-bound and results-oriented talks" to build mutual confidence and remove mutual uncertainties with full transparency, he stressed, adding that it sought constructive engagement with other countries, not to increase tensions with the United States.

"Commensurate with the political will of the leadership in the United States," he continued, "and hoping they will refrain from following the short-sighted interest of warmongering pressure groups, we can arrive at a framework to manage our differences." Iran expected to hear a consistent voice from Washington. Noting that "peace is within reach", he proposed, as an initial step, that the United Nations consider creating a World Against Violence and Extremism, or WAVE, and invited all States, global organizations and civil institutions to participate. He also proposed the formation of a "Coalition for Enduring Peace" to replace the ineffective "coalitions for war" spanning the globe.

ALI BONGO ONDIMBA, President of Gabon, said that the fight to end poverty needs to remain the focus of international policies. He noted that the Millennium Development Goals could provide input on what still needs to be achieved. Gabon's accomplishments in this respect, he said, had been considerable: poverty, child and maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS and malaria had all been drastically reduced. He added that women in Gabon had become more active in political life. However, he said that his country had drawn two lessons from the delay in achieving the Millennium Development Goals: the importance of supporting good governance and the need for further efforts in the fields of education and health. Gabon's post-2015 development agenda, he said, focused on, among other things, energy, fresh water and sustainable agriculture.

When holding the presidency of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, he had proposed the establishment of a fund destined to promote the training of African youth — Train my Generation — which had been accepted by his counterparts in June. At the Fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development, he said that he had proposed that African countries be allowed to transform their raw materials before exporting them, which translated into an increase in jobs.

When turning to sustainable development, he said that this topic inevitably had to take into consideration the adoption of a binding treaty on global warming. As for transnational crime, he reminded the initiative of his country, along with Germany and other States, to hold a side event on the theme, which was to take place on 26 September. Gabon, he said, was also engaged in the field of human rights, and this was the reason it was seeking the presidency of the Human Rights Council for 2014.

Continuing, he mentioned some of the most pressing African crises. He expressed his concern for the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly the fighting in the country's eastern region, whose highest toll has been paid by women and children. He, therefore, welcomed Security Council resolution 2098 of 28 March 2013 through which the United Nations showed its additional commitment to a settlement of the situation in the Great Lakes region. He similarly commended the action undertaken by the African Union in the Central African Republic through the establishment of a new mission — MISCA — that was to take over the Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in the Central African Republic (MICOPAX). In reference to Western Sahara, he reiterated his country's support to a courageous Moroccan proposal that could result in a final settlement of the question.

"Africa should be able to meet the new threats to peace and security," but cannot meet all this challenges on its own, he added, as its crises have repercussions for all. He, therefore, encouraged the Organization as a whole to support Africa's endeavours and to better fulfil its mandate of keeping international peace and security through conflict prevention. The recent use of chemical weapons in Syria was unacceptable, he continued. In regards to Palestine, he welcomed the renewed negotiations between the parties and supported the vision of a two-State solution.

He concluded by encouraging the United Nations to continue its cooperation with regional organizations but also to transform itself in order to meet its obligations. Reforms, such as the restructuring of the Security Council, were therefore crucial as it was essential that all Member States fully cooperate in

the process of achieving peace through international negotiations. When such diplomatic means fail, the Security Council should take necessary measures, he added.

ŽELJKO KOMŠIĆ, President of Bosnia and Herzegovina, said his Government remained focused on furthering its formal institutional relationship with the European Union, in line with the Stabilization and Association Agreement, in order to become a full European Union member. By expediting implementation of the Sejdic-Finci ruling of the European Court of Human Rights and other remaining activities, he said that Bosnia and Herzegovina would meet all accession requirements. He expressed hope that it would fulfil the conditions of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Membership Action Plan and further integrate into NATO security structures. He added that his country was in the final stages of negotiating accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Turning to his Government's stance on war crimes, he said all those accused of such crimes must be held responsible in either domestic or international courts. He stated that Bosnia and Herzegovina aimed to improve cooperation with neighbouring countries and to improve regional ties in communications infrastructure, industry, tourism, agriculture and energy. Croatia's accession to the European Union, he added, had bolstered Bosnia and Herzegovina's cooperation with that country. According to him, his Government had implemented national development, social inclusion and poverty eradication strategies in cooperation with relevant United Nations agencies. Regional cooperation was crucial for implementing the post-2015 development framework, he noted.

Security Council reform was crucial and must occur as soon as possible, he said. He added that another member from the Eastern European group should be given a seat on the Council, as the number of countries in that group had more than doubled in the last 20 years. Timely conflict prevention, rather than reacting to already escalated conflicts, he said was a more efficient, less costly approach to global peace and security, adding that there was no one-size-fits-all solution to crises; every one merited individual attention.

Tangible steps were needed to prevent nuclear proliferation, he said. States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) must be encouraged to respect their obligations, he said, adding that Bosnia and Herzegovina would sign the Arms Trade Treaty during the arms treaty event. He expressed grave concern over the continuing violence in Syria and asked all parties to honour their obligations in line with international law and human rights. All efforts, he said, were needed to achieve a just, comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Bosnia and Herzegovina was doing its part to advance international relations, peace and security, he said. It participated in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan and the United Nations missions in Liberia, South Sudan and Cyprus. He said that his country was committed to fighting terrorism, which could only be achieved through the comprehensive cooperation of as many Member States as possible. He hailed the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and efforts to set Africa on a sustainable development path. He supported all efforts by the African Union, African Governments and the United Nations to improve the rule of law and strengthen civil society in Africa. He noted that continued financial aid to Africa was vital and that such aid must be used efficiently and transparently.

MICHEL SLEIMAN, President of Lebanon, said that many countries had witnessed uprisings, civil wars and external aggression, but had nevertheless managed to overcome difficulties and constitute their national edifice. Lebanon, he said, had also experienced such wars, resulting in inflows of refugees from other countries. He said that Lebanon had long contributed to constructive openness and communications between East and West and that through dialogue the Lebanese would continue to develop its political system and improve its democratic practices.

Reverting to its commitment to the Baabda Declaration, Lebanon disassociated itself from the negative fallout of the regional crisis and the policy of axes, he said. It was equally essential to reach an agreement on the national strategy to ensure the exclusive defence of Lebanon in the face of Israel's hostilities and continuing threats, he added. The Lebanese, he said, must also finalize the adoption of administrative and legal measures to enable the country to benefit from its resources and sovereign rights to offshore gas and oil fields. To achieve these goals, he said Lebanon would need the help of friendly and brotherly countries.

He noted that major regional challenges were negatively affecting Lebanon, particularly the security and economic repercussions resulting from the Syrian crisis. Despite the Baabda Declaration, he said that

some Lebanese parties had been involved in the ongoing conflict in Syria, and Lebanese territories were under violations and aggressions from the Syrian side of the border. This involvement, he added, coincided with terrorist bombings against civilians, particularly in the southern suburb of Beirut and in the capital in the north, Tripoli. Furthermore, he said that the unprecedented influx of Syrian refugees was way beyond Lebanon's capacity of assimilation, exceeding one fourth of his country's population. As a country with exiguous geographical area, he said that resources and capabilities were limited. He thus called on States to provide sufficient funds and human and financial resources to regulate the presence of the Syrian refugees, and to meet their basic humanitarian and livelihood needs. On this front, he noted pledges made at the meeting of Donor States hosted by Kuwait in January 2013 had only been partially fulfilled. He said that Syrian refugees should be lodged inside safe zones within Syria, outside the reach of the ongoing conflict, since Syria was eighteen times the size of Lebanon, and an international conference should be held to further address the issue.

The main challenge still derived from the repercussions of the Arab-Israeli conflict, he said. Lebanon had suffered from consecutive Israeli attacks, including from "prohibited weapons". He thus called for continued work on imposing and implementing United Nations Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), and thanked those participating in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for their dedication and sacrifice. As for Syria, he condemned the use of chemical weapons and called on the United Nations, including the Security Council, to hold the perpetrators responsible. He said that the last American-Russian agreement regarding those weapons would be an introduction to the desired comprehensive peace solution.

The Arab world, he said, was undergoing a major historical transitional period due to the amazing scientific progress that was "coming up overnight", especially in the fields of communication and information. He said that this progress had spread a character of globalization across all walks of life. However, he noted that regimes had not undergone corresponding intellectual progress. On the contrary, some extremist, terrorist, and isolationist trends refused dialogue and coexistence, he said, adding this had driven some to claim a return to religious "emirates" and racist seclusion. However, amidst those fundamentalist tendencies, he said that Lebanon remained a laboratory and an example for the desired mode of coexistence for tomorrow's world.

UELI MAURER, President of Switzerland, recalled the country's long history as a neutral State with a humanitarian tradition, saying its foreign policy had been anchored in peaceful cooperation among States. Switzerland had been making its neutral soil available for peace talks and would continue to contribute to world peace. The protection of human rights was a key element of Swiss commitment, he said, expressing concern over widespread violence and human rights violations around the world.

Violent conflicts in the Middle East, particularly in Syria, were causing unacceptable suffering for civil populations, he said, stressing that the serious and systematic violations of international humanitarian law and human rights must not be tolerated under any circumstances. He called on the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court, describing the use of chemical weapons as a particularly despicable crime. Appealing to the Council's permanent members to overcome their differences and find common ground for a political solution to the conflict, he emphasized that the international community must spare no effort to pave the way for another peace conference in Geneva.

Citing several Articles of the United Nations Charter, he said they provided a promising foundation for peaceful cooperation among all peoples of the world. In international politics, however, "much is said of how things should be and too little is said about how things actually are." Global problems needed global discussions and collective solutions, he said, adding that the United Nations should be the place where that would happen. In order to live up to that role, the Organization must be efficient, innovative and effective, he stressed.

Expressing concern over the return of "power politics", he observed that large States were once again choosing to exercise their power and strength, while smaller ones were accepted less and less as equal partners. Nations should be free to choose paths of their own design, he said, adding that his country believed in the peaceful diversity of sovereign States treating each other fairly and as partners.

The way in which large nations had acted recently in dealings with small ones had "unnerved" Switzerland, he continued, pointing out that they often placed power above law. Reminding delegates that the principles of equal rights of peoples and the sovereignty of nations were born of lessons from history, he called on Member States to commit themselves to a peaceful world, in which peoples and nations would enjoy equal rights and share equal values.

JOSÉ MUJICA, President of Uruguay, said that he came from the South, from the corner of the Atlantic and the Plate River. His country was gentle, temperate and plain, and a place where livestock grazed. Its history was one of ports and leather, of wool and salted meat. He said that for almost fifty years, the world saw Uruguay as a type of Switzerland, but in reality it was in economic tatters. He went on to say that when the British Empire ended, his country experienced the bitter and terrible terms of trade, and it yearned for the past.

Today, he said that Uruguay had re-emerged in the globalized world, having learned from past pain. He stated that he came to this Assembly from the South with a huge social debt, and a need to defend the Amazon, the seas, and the great rivers of America. He said it was also his duty to fight on behalf of the fatherland of the Americas, and so that Colombia could finally regain peace. It was necessary, he said, to fight against the dirty economy, against drug traffickers, theft, fraud and corruption, and all contemporary scourges. He added that modern life seemed to operate on an opposite set of values, run by those who maintain that “we are happier when we are richer, no matter what means are used”. However, he said humanity had sacrificed the old immaterial god and now occupied the temple of the “market god”. According to him, when people could no longer consume, they were struck by a feeling of frustration, suffered from poverty and were marginalized. But for everyone to consume the way that the average American did, three planets would be needed in order to live, he added.

He said that civilization had mounted a deceitful challenge and that it was not possible for everyone to achieve the fulfilment promised by the market culture. He noted that civilization was destroying the green jungles and creating anonymous concrete ones. He asked whether people were happy, noting there was marketing for everything and everything was business.

He said that the average modern inhabitant of large cities wandered between financial institutions and the routine of offices, dreaming of vacations, of freedom, of being able to pay his bills. Today he said it was time to begin to fight, and to prepare for a world without borders. The globalized economy had no other inclination but that of the private interests of the very few, he noted. What was needed, he said, was to redefine working hours, converge currencies, finance the global struggle for clean water, battle desertification, recycle more, and counter global warming. He said the international community needed a combination of lofty politics and scientific wisdom, with intelligence at the helm.

Today, war was inevitable when politics failed, he said. Every minute, 2 million dollars was spent on military budgets, while funding for medical research made up only a fraction of that, he added. There was a great deal of energy in the world, he said, if only the world could work together to use it properly. He noted that poverty could be eliminated from the planet if future generations could begin to reason as a species, not just as individuals.

YOWERI KAGUTA MUSEVENI, President of Uganda, said that the Millennium Development Goals could not be achieved without socioeconomic transformation. He noted that Uganda had faced a number of obstacles in making this transformation, including: ideological disorientation; weak State institutions; inadequate infrastructure; an unskilled workforce; small internal markets; a lack of industrialization and modernization; and incorrectly assessing the private sector. He said that his country had been aware of these problems from the beginning and had taken actions to address them. As a result, he noted that the country either had achieved or was on the right track to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

On international peace and security, he emphasized that wherever international action was needed, regional and global consensus must be sought. He said that where there was a need for freedom, people could fight for themselves and did not have to be sponsored by external forces.

Expressing anger towards actors who habitually ignored the African Union's positions on African matters, he said although the “patriotic forces” had been taken by surprise by the renewed arrogance of the “old mistake makers”, they would react appropriately to protect Africa against hegemonism. The latest manifestation of arrogance was from the International Criminal Court in relation to the elected leaders of Kenya, he said. Many African States had supported the establishment of the Court as they hated impunity, but it, in a “shallow, biased way”, had continued to mishandle complex African issues. This was not the right way, he said, adding: “Kenya is recovering; let her recover.”

Turning back to development, he noted that in the process of socioeconomic transformation, Uganda's biggest problem was funding. Initially, the country had to rely on external funding, which was “limited, slow in coming, not always focused and erratic”. Although its economy had achieved an average growth rate of 6.5 per cent over the past twenty years, with reliable funding, particularly for the infrastructure,

the country could have achieved more. He noted that with more of its own money, Uganda had been able to move much faster in infrastructure development. However, he said that still, additional external funding, if focused, sizeable and on time, could be very useful.

Uganda and many other African countries were moving ahead robustly, he said, adding that the future was bright and their forward movement was irreversible.

CRISTINA FERNÁNDEZ, President of Argentina, expressed solidarity with the victims of terrorist attacks in Kenya, Pakistan and elsewhere around the world, saying her own country had also been a victim of such attacks, in reference to the 1992 attack on the Israeli embassy and that of 1994 on the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA) building, both in Buenos Aires. Some family members and relatives of the victims in those two incidents had accompanied her to the general debate, she said, calling for solidarity and condemnation of all terrorist actions.

Turning to Syria, she said the way in which the Security Council operated had proven to be obsolete, as exemplified by its handling of the crisis in Syria. When it came to conflict management, veto power in the hands of interested stakeholders became an obstacle to solving the problem. The international community had responded strongly to the chemical attack on 21 August, but the crisis had been going on for two-and-a-half years, with most of the casualties having been caused by conventional weapons, she pointed out. Questioning the delay in handling the Syrian crisis, she called for the much-needed reform of the Security Council. Meanwhile, she welcomed the recent agreement on Syria, stressing that Argentina opposed direct intervention in or the bombing of Syria.

On its dispute with the United Kingdom over the Malvinas (Falkland Islands), she said the Special Committee on Decolonization had approved numerous resolutions calling for the two countries to solve the issue through dialogue. Regrettably, the United Kingdom had been disregarding those calls.

Expressing hope that the new Government of Iran would bring about change, she said that due to the suspected involvement of Iranian citizens in the AMIA bombing case, Argentina had repeatedly called on Iran to cooperate with the investigation. A year ago, the Iranian Government had agreed to engage in talks to seek a solution. While the Argentineans were neither naïve nor foolish, they believed in the goodwill of others and in their wish for peace, she said, stressing that Iran deserved a chance to show the world that it would be different.

She went on to talk about her country's disputes with certain hedge funds holding its defaulted bonds, referring to them as "vulture funds". In 2001, Argentina had been forced to default on its debt. However, it had then managed to strike a deal with more 90 per cent of its creditors to restructure its debt at a discounted rate. The country had been consistent and timely in repaying its debt and lowering its debt-to-GDP ratio, but the "vulture funds", which had bought most of the debt at a great discount after the default, wanted to collect much more than they had paid, she said, adding that Argentina would continue to pay its debt in the same way that it had been doing.

JOYCE HILDA MTILA BANDA, President of Malawi, recalled that when she had assumed her country's presidency, she had outlined her Government's commitment to addressing the political and economic governance problems it had inherited. Painful but necessary reforms had been undertaken, but today Malawi was registering a strong economic recovery. Foreign exchange and fuel were now available, the currency had stabilized and inflation was declining, she said, adding that the "warm heart of Africa is warm again".

She highlighted the important role played by the Millennium Development Goals in concentrating international efforts around the common purpose of eradicating poverty and in providing a common framework for monitoring progress. Malawi was on track to achieving four of the eight Goals — reducing child mortality, combating HIV/AIDS, ensuring environmental sustainability and developing a global partnership for development.

As 2015 approached, Malawi had identified best practices, as well as challenges upon which to reflect and act, she said, adding that gender inequality and the lack of women's empowerment were among the latter. The strength of the Millennium Goals lay in their being targeted, she continued. Another positive factor was strong political will and "transformational partnerships". However, "different continents were at different levels of development" when the Goals had been set. The report of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons provided a strong foundation for an overall vision aimed at ending extreme poverty by 2013.

However, there was a need to reverse the top-down approach on which the Millennium Development Goals were based. Income for poor households must come first because many issues concerning population growth were affected by the lack of income — malnutrition, girls' access to education and maternal health, to mention a few. Her Government, therefore, was trying to break the vicious cycle of underdevelopment and poverty, particularly in rural communities. She said that, as a mother, she felt compelled to emphasize the need to attain global peace and security, particularly as the international community looked forward to the post-2015 development agenda. Conflict, instability and civil unrest disrupted development, she noted.

MICHAEL CHILUFYA SATA, President of Zambia, said that the African continent had crossed a significant milestone in May with the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Organization of African Unity, the forerunner of the African Union. The Union was a symbol of the collective hopes and aspirations of a resilient continent, he added. The occasion, he said, fell almost jointly with the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of Zambia's independence, which would take place in 2014. He noted that his country continued to enjoy political stability and had embraced democratic principles, which formed the basis for social and economic transformation for its people.

He said that the Millennium Development Goals were set to address peoples' aspirations. At this point in time, he stated it is critical what countries do between now and the closing date for the achievement and how they will move beyond 2015. He noted that Zambia had made tremendous progress on Goal 4 to reduce child mortality and on Goal 5 to improve maternal health. Great strides had also been made in the fight against HIV/AIDS, but challenges were still immense, he said, citing poverty and unemployment. He noted that marginal progress, in fact, had been made in reducing the prevalence of hunger. Food insecurity was also enhanced by social exclusion, he added.

Turning to the post-2015 agenda, Zambia believed that the importance of the intergovernmental process on sustainable development was critical and could not be overemphasized, he said. He, therefore, reiterated the need to have a single set of universally agreed sustainable development goals reflecting sustainable development priorities, which should be actionable and concise and whose implementation should resonate with the different development and economic levels of Member States. To this effect, he said it was necessary to build global partnerships that are supported by the commitments towards regional and international cooperation.

Addressing poverty-related issues was important for the achievement of sustainable and inclusive development of his country, he continued. Zambia, he said, attached great importance to the needs and welfare of all, but particularly of women, children and youth. To this end, he noted that initiatives had been taken in the fields of wealth and employment creation, quality education and quality health care, among others. To ensure continuity and sustainability, it was imperative that the post-2015 development agenda take into account the momentum attained in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals, he added.

His address to the Assembly would be incomplete without underscoring Zambia and Africa's desire to realize a more democratic and representative Security Council, he continued. He, therefore, called for greater progress in the negotiations and reiterated his country's position as defined in the Ezulwini Consensus. The United Nations, he said, boasts an all-inclusive multilateralism, which was "obviously lacking" when it came to the Security Council. The effectiveness and legitimacy of this organ should manifest in its adaptation to the prevailing global realities, he concluded.

FREDRIK REINFELDT, Prime Minister of Sweden, said the rapidly-changing world was already a very different place from what it had been when the Millennium Development Goals had first been set. It was important to understand the nature of those changes in order to have influence and shape the future. The world was currently witnessing the fastest reduction in poverty in human history, child mortality rates had fallen, and deaths from malaria and tuberculosis were decreasing, as were new HIV infections. Sweden's average life expectancy 100 years ago had been below 60, while many children born today would celebrate their 100th birthdays. Those were amazing developments, he said. The world economy was growing and this year developing countries' share of it would surpass that of developed countries, he continued. Technological change was also rapid, and the number of mobile phone users had risen from less than 1 billion to more than 6 billion, he noted. However, there remained plenty of challenges, and it was crucial to intensify efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

He said the issue of gender equality was first and foremost a question of ensuring the same human, economic and social rights for half of the world's populations. However, a billion women were subjected to sexual or physical violence every year. Women were denied equal access to health services,

including sexual and reproductive health and rights, and every day, 800 of them died from preventable complications related to pregnancy and childbirth. Further, legal restrictions prevented women from owning, inheriting or acquiring property in many countries, while many girls and women were refused access to education. Against that background, Sweden had been one of the strongest supporters of and biggest donors to UN-Women, since ensuring gender equality was also a way to improve a country's productivity, economy and rule of law. Educating girls and women led directly to increased national economic output, and closing the gap between male and female employment substantially increased GDP. "To be clear, it is neither acceptable nor very smart to discriminate against women and girls," he emphasized.

To achieve sustainable development, there was a need for democratic governance encompassing all individuals, he said. Every person's human rights must be respected regardless of origin, religion, handicap, gender, sexual preference or transsexual identity. It was only when people could freely express their political opinions that they could truly participate in a thriving civil society; only with functioning courts could they make safe business investments; only with respect for the rule of law could organized crime and corruption be tackled; and only through democratic principles could freedom from conflict be ensured. Violence and oppression were among the main threats to societal development, which was why conflict was sometimes called "development in reverse", he noted.

There were currently several conflicts causing death and suffering, hunger and disease, rape and sexual violence, while depriving men, women and children of their right to a prosperous life and a future of hope, he said. The war raging in Syria must come to an end, and those responsible for the systematic violence — including the use of chemical weapons — must be held accountable. It was time for a new era in which countries in conflict could join the rest of the world in achieving the Millennium Goals, and for that, the international community needed a strong United Nations, including a well-functioning Security Council, he stressed.

Regarding the post-2015 agenda, he said protectionism was very expensive, as it raised prices and lowered standards of living. According to the World Trade Organization, consumers in rich countries paid \$350 billion a year to support agriculture — enough to "fly their 40 million dairy cows first class around the world". Sweden was working hard to get a transatlantic deal in place, as freer trade and openness meant that new impulses and trends affected a country faster. Trade also helped with peaceful relations, since no salesperson wished to start a war against a country in which it had customers. It was everyone's duty to strive for a society that gave everybody the chance create his or her own future, because people were the true wealth of a nation, he said in conclusion.

* * * * *

For information media • not an official record