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WORLD LEADERS HIGHLIGHT LINK BETWEEN PEACE, DEVELOPMENT AS GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S SIXTY-EIGHTH SESSION HOLDS SECOND DAY OF ANNUAL DEBATE

Speakers Deplore Syria Crisis, Warn against Neglecting Climate Impacts

Deploping conflicts in Syria and elsewhere, world leaders highlighted the complementary relationship between peace and development today as the General Assembly entered the second day of its annual general debate.

President Joseph Kabila Kabange of the Democratic Republic of the Congo said security remained the most important prerequisite for development, which would be “a hypothetical” without it. The Congolese Government was committed to managing natural resources, and had a project under way to produce 40,000 megawatts of electricity — enough to provide energy for half the people on the African continent.

On the other hand, peace in Africa required development programmes that provided real responses to the uncertainty stemming from the poor global economic situation, said President Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso, emphasizing that his landlocked country sought to boost growth and ensure a better quality of life for its people. The theme of the current Assembly session — “The Post-2015 Development Agenda: Setting the Stage” — raised the issue of the relationship between development, peace and security, offering the opportunity to reflect on a new vision of global progress founded on strong international solidarity behind sustainable development.

President Ricardo Martinelli Berrocal of Panama noted that the Millennium Development Goals had been instrumental in improving his people's living conditions, and emphasized the critical and unique role played by the United Nations in coordinating the global conversation on development. The post-2015 development agenda must maintain a central focus on eradicating extreme poverty from the face of the Earth, he said, adding that “development that is not sustainable is simply not development”.

Estonia's President Toomas Hendrik Ilves declared that “the most unsustainable situation” in the world today was the conflict in Syria. The use of chemical weapons was unacceptable under any circumstances and required complete and unreserved condemnation, he stressed. The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the Security Council must agree on legally binding terms to resolve the issue, preferably under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. Even without the use of chemical weapons, military action and brutality in Syria had created a humanitarian disaster of unimaginable proportions.

Herman Van Rompuy, President of the Council of the European Union, recalled the 2012 general debate, which had seen unity among States as they deplored the civil war in Syria, where 25,000 had died and 250,000 had been made refugees. A year later, 100,000 people were dead and there were 2 million refugees, he noted. “What will the situation be when we meet next year?” Prolonging the “paralysis of the international community” was untenable, particularly in light of the chemical weapons attack in Damascus. Despite the financial crisis, the European Union had launched five new missions — in Mali, South Sudan,

the Sahel, on Libya's borders and off the coast of Somalia, he said, adding that the bloc had also renewed the operational mandates for missions in Afghanistan, Georgia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Several of the more than 30 speakers taking the floor today spotlighted robust economic growth in Africa.

President Macky Sall of Senegal said that declining official development assistance (ODA) was not meeting the needs of African countries, and the dynamics of progress were leading them to explore innovative financing mechanisms and social development projects. The continent was no longer "a zone of turmoil and humanitarian emergencies", but "an emerging pole of opportunities and investments", he said. "The world has changed; Africa too has changed," he stressed, adding that a paradigm shift was required in terms of interactions with the region.

In Côte d'Ivoire, President Alassane Ouattara noted, the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals had been deadlocked, but thanks to its favourable economic performance, the country had started moving forward. The Government had adopted an ambitious national reconstruction plan for 2012-2015, with a view to creating 200,000 jobs a year, a considerable number given the country's size. He stressed the need for international solidarity because many African nations were lagging behind in efforts to meet the Goals. Yet, they could now count on the high rate of economic growth in Africa, he added.

Also featuring prominently in today's debate was the detrimental impact of climate change on development, particularly for small island developing States, and the need to better integrate that issue into the sustainable development goals.

President Tommy Remengesau of Palau said the vision established at the 1992 Earth Summit had been sidetracked. Many countries were frustrated by the failure to move it forward, by slow progress, and by the fear that the Millennium Goals were being diluted. Today, it appeared that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change had stalled, the Kyoto Protocol was on life support, and the Rio+20 Conference had not done enough to strengthen the three pillars of sustainable development. The international community's "global warming doomsday" was already set in stone if it failed to act.

"The scientists tell us that calamity awaits, and not just for those of us on low-lying islands," President Anote Tong of Kiribati told the Assembly. "What we are experiencing now on these low-lying atolls is an early warning of what will happen further down the line," he warned. "No one will be spared." He welcomed the announcement of a high-level summit on climate change, to be held in 2014, stressing that support from all nations was critical for positive change.

President Emanuel Mori of the Federated States of Micronesia recalled that, since the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, production and consumption patterns had become increasingly unsustainable, driven primarily by a desire to "develop economies at any cost". Development and the natural environment were inseparable, and the latter had come under attack as societies strove for economic progress, he said, calling for the setting of sustainable development goals on healthy, productive oceans, and sustainable energy.

Other speakers today included the Heads of State of Peru, Timor-Leste, Madagascar, Serbia, Chad, Rwanda, Poland, Swaziland, Georgia, El Salvador, Comoros and Bolivia.

The Assembly also heard from the Prime Ministers of Ethiopia (on behalf of the African Union), Antigua and Barbuda, Fiji, Kuwait, Italy, Libya, Trinidad and Tobago (on behalf of the Caribbean Community), Spain and Tajikistan.

Also delivering statements were the Foreign Ministers of Cameroon and Norway.

The General Assembly will reconvene at 10 a.m., 26 September, to continue its general debate.

Background

The General Assembly today met for the second day of its annual general debate.

Statements

TOOMAS HENDRIK ILVES, President of Estonia, stressed that the most unsustainable situation in the world now was the conflict in Syria. The use of chemical weapons was unacceptable

under any circumstances and required complete and unreserved condemnation. The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the Security Council needed to move forward and agree on the legally binding terms to resolve the issue, preferably under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, and as soon as possible. Even without the use of chemical weapons, military actions and brutality had created suffering and humanitarian disaster of unimaginable proportions.

While there was no easy and quick fix to the complex situation, he went on, “we must keep doing what we can to ease human suffering.” Estonia was among the many other countries that had been helping those who had been forced to flee from their homes and protecting the most vulnerable, namely women and children. Evidence collected by the United Nations Human Rights Council’s inquiry commission indicated that war crimes, crimes against humanity and gross human rights violations had been systematically committed in Syria. Estonia supported the initiative to ask the Security Council to refer the case to the International Criminal Court.

In contrast, he said, hope had been recently restored in Mali. The presidential elections there had been peaceful and transparent, and given rise to optimism. The future looked promising in Afghanistan as well. Estonia, as a long-time partner of that country, remained committed to training and financing national security forces, and continuing to support educational progress, women’s empowerment, rule of law and health care. But for years, Estonia had underlined that protracted conflicts around Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as in Georgia and the Republic of Moldova, must not fall off the international community’s radar screen.

Turning to the post-2015 sustainable development agenda, he said the current Millennium Development Goals should have focused more on reaching the poorest and most excluded groups in society. The main challenge of the post-2015 negotiations was to formulate and reach global agreement on one concrete and measurable set of goals, which would keep the three dimensions of sustainability at its core and maintain a strong focus on poverty eradication and official development assistance (ODA), and continue to play an important role in sustainable development. Also necessary were synergies between different sources of finance, better policies and strong national ownership.

The main driver of sustainable development was inclusive and responsible economic policies, he continued. A key enabler of economic growth was the bold use of modern information and communications technologies. In that regard, cybersecurity and Internet freedom were of worldwide importance. “Let us stay alert and tuned to every single detail that was hindering our common well-being from evolving; be it in developed or developing countries,” he concluded.

RICARDO MARTINELLI BERROCAL, President of Panama, said that the Millennium Development Goals had been extremely instrumental in improving the living conditions of Panamanians. Just as important had been the critical and unique role played by the United Nations in coordinating the global conversation on development. The post-2015 development agenda must maintain a central focus on eradicating extreme poverty from the face of the Earth, he said, emphasizing that “we have realized that development that is not sustainable is simply not development.”

Looking ahead, he said, any development model must integrate the economic, social, and environmental aspects in line with decisions made at the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development. On a national level, Panama had reformed its trade and tax policies, as well as reviewed the regulation of its financial market and productivity. Financing development was not easy, but the capacity was great and the patterns of productivity were increasingly sustainable. International cooperation was imperative, he said, stressing that, “nothing we speak in this Hall will be effective, if we do not forge a global partnership.”

On Syria, he strongly condemned the use of chemical weapons, calling the act a crime against humanity, in need of investigation and punishment. The Security Council must assume its responsibility to enforce international law. The United Nations had the supreme duty to speak clearly and forcefully in favour of world peace and the right of mankind to continue living on the planet, he said, stressing the urgency to address the escalating violence in the Middle East overall before “the atomic mushroom cloud delivers its final verdict”.

Moving on to the request made by Nicaragua to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to extend its continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles, he said Panama felt “deep unease” because it had not been consulted before that request was made. Assuring that Panama, in accordance with its national Constitution, complied with international law norms and recognized the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice, he categorically rejected

Nicaragua's attempt to "delimit" its maritime boundaries. The existing treaties, outlining legitimate maritime rights, were recognized and accepted by the international community.

Concerning the North Korean-flagged merchant vessel *Chong Chon Gang*, detained in Panama since mid-July for attempting to transport an "enormous amount" of war material from Cuba, he reiterated that Panama would respect the results of an investigation outlined in a preliminary report to the Security Council. He had "no problem at all" with the States involved in the matter. Rule of law, mediation, and dialogue must be the tools used to confront any conflicts in the region.

He said that as his presidency approached its conclusion, he was pleased with his legacy of social and political stability. His country enjoyed a literacy rate of greater than 94 per cent, made the greatest investment in the public sector in Central America, and enjoyed a life expectancy of 76 years. Panama was on its way to full development, and he remained "an optimistic man".

ALASSANE OUATTARA, President of Côte d'Ivoire, welcomed Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's personal involvement in the adoption of a General Assembly resolution on conflict in Africa, stressing that his country was now "busy" with rebuilding itself from strife and had already returned to the path of economic development. The Government had built democratic institutions, with reconciliation talks under way. "Challenges remain, but we are on the right path," he declared.

He noted that the theme of the current session, "The Post-2015 Development Agenda: Setting the Stage," called on world leaders to consider the international community's capacity to meet those challenges. Although much remained to be done, it was important to highlight that many countries had achieved the Millennium Development Goals and were ready to build on the progress made in such areas as primary school enrolment, vaccination and the slowing of the spread of HIV/AIDS. By adopting development goals, Member States assumed collective responsibility for the well-being of mankind, he added.

In Côte d'Ivoire, he went on, the achievement of the agreed Goals had been deadlocked, but thanks to favourable economic performance, it started moving forward. The Government had adopted an ambitious national reconstruction plan for 2012-2015, with the aim to create 200,000 jobs a year, a considerable number given the country's size. He also stressed the need for international solidarity, as many African nations were lagging behind in achieving the Goals. Yet, they could now count on the African economy that was growing at a robust rate.

But achieving the desired world was not possible without addressing security, he said, adding that conflict and war undermined development efforts. Terrorism, trafficking in weapons, drugs and human beings, and maritime piracy were among the many threats. The terrorist attacks in Kenya highlighted the urgent need to address terrorism. International governance must become more democratic, he urged, emphasizing the importance of multilateralism. In that regard, he commended international efforts to restore the territorial integrity of Mali and safeguard elections there.

"Threats go beyond the border of the continent," he said, noting the need for a concerted global response, while urging donor contributions. Turning to Guinea-Bissau, he called on Member States to extend support and funding to help the Government hold successful elections in November. The right to development for all, which was upheld by the Millennium Declaration in 2000, must be realized.

OLLANTA HUMALA TASSO, President of Peru, strongly denounced the terrorist attack in Nairobi, before drawing attention to the crisis in Syria. Peru condemned the use of chemical weapons, he said, calling on the Security Council to uphold its responsibilities. He urged the international community to maintain the global commitment to develop peaceful relations among people, such as Peru's recent cooperative management of the maritime delimitation dispute with Chile. However, the main threats to international peace and security did not lie in relations between States, but rather in terrorism, drug trafficking, organized crime, mafias, and corruption. "All these crimes pose a real threat to life, progress and development, mainly affecting the poor," he said.

In light of those and other challenges, he welcomed the theme of the sixty-eighth General Assembly session, especially in relation to the target date for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Peru had been among those with the best compliance indicators, particularly in the fight against poverty, hunger, child mortality, and access to safe drinking water. In 2000, more than half of the Peruvians had lived in extreme poverty, whereas in 2013, that number dropped to a quarter. He announced that the goal was to reduce poverty to one fifth by 2016.

Focusing on Peru's growth, he underlined the emphasis placed on inclusion, as "in an unprecedented way, expenditure is directed towards the poorest and most excluded, through a set of social programmes." The global development agenda must place particular attention on women's empowerment and the protection of the most vulnerable, such as indigenous peoples. Peru had been the first country in the world to have legislated the right to prior consultation on measures that directly affected those peoples, in accordance with International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 169. He stressed the country's concern for migrants' rights, in favour of the free movement of people. He welcomed the Spanish initiative to promote visa-free entry into the Schengen area for Peruvian nationals.

On the post-2015 development agenda, he said the process should lead to greater capacity of the United Nations to contribute to solving urgent problems and development challenges, thus evolving a single and comprehensive development agenda. The quest for equality should be central to those efforts. Growth should not be an end in itself, but, rather, a tool. That was why Peru believed that the correct formula was "include to grow", which was the direction the country proposed for the post-2015 agenda.

Turning to the economy, he said that Peru had been among the fastest growing countries, which had led to job creation, unemployment reduction, diversification of the economy, and development of the tourism sector. He underlined that Peru's economic growth had been the result of effort, rigour, work, democratic continuity, and perseverance. Peru not only had managed to avoid the worst effects of global instability but had attracted investment flows unparalleled in the country's history. Its task was to sustain the foundations that had enabled that growth, namely strengthening democracy, institutions, rule of law, security, building citizenship, and opening spaces for participation. Peru possessed the means to achieve that, as it was a "country of entrepreneurs", where 98 per cent of businesses were small or medium, employing 75 per cent of the economically active population and contributing 42 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP).

In the global arena, he said his country favoured United Nations reform, in order to make the system more legitimate, representative, accountable, and effective. Peru shared the position of a large number of Member States on the need to reform and expand the Security Council to reflect current realities. In closing, he stressed Peru's commitment to the creation of a "twenty-first century State", where the progress of the most vulnerable and the development of a population free of extreme poverty, with health and education for all, would lead to even greater economic growth. He insisted on the new political concept of simultaneous growth and redistribution, with a commitment to social inclusion. "The country we want is a prosperous country, where all Peruvians, without distinction, can enjoy the benefits of growth in a dignified, safe and free manner."

TAUR MATAN RUAK, President of Timor-Leste, said his country's experience showed the great value of the United Nations and the importance of negotiated solutions, dialogue and diplomacy to international disputes. This was the first year with no United Nations mission in the country, as the partnership between Timor-Leste and the United Nations had achieved remarkable successes. Now, the Timorese people were responsible for their own national development, focusing on economic diversification, the promotion of inclusive development and the consolidation of national institutions through improved technical capacities and greater participation of the younger generation. Relations with the United Nations would remain strong, but would focus on assisting with human, social, and economic development and the strengthening of institutions.

Timor-Leste was integrating internationally, he said, pointing to participation in the establishment of the "g7+" group, which promoted a new model of engagement between fragile States and other international stakeholders. The "New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States", promoted by the body, had been well received by the United Nations, development partners and international organizations. Timor-Leste had friendly relations with countries in South-East Asia and the Pacific, particularly Australia and Indonesia, and its reconciliation with Indonesia could be a relevant model across the world. Timor-Leste had applied for membership in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); it was a member of the Non-Aligned Movement and a special observer at the Pacific Islands Forum; and its representatives had been elected to chair the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries.

Turning to the situation in Syria, he welcomed the agreement reached on chemical weapons and expressed support for negotiation. The United Nations should improve its ability to respond to such crises and adapt its composition to better reflect the realities of the twenty-first century. New Powers like India, Indonesia and Brazil should be permanent members of the Security Council, while smaller countries should

also be better represented. To that end, he supported New Zealand's candidature for a non-permanent seat, starting in 2015.

While Timor-Leste had recently celebrated the fourteenth anniversary of its self-determination referendum, he regretted that the Saharan people of Western Sahara had been waiting for decades. Touching on several other issues of importance, he expressed support for the right of the peoples of Palestine and Israel to live side-by-side in peace, dignity and in safety and welcomed resumption of direct talks leading to the establishment of two sovereign States. He called for an end to the United States' embargo against Cuba and for the release of Cuban citizens imprisoned in the United States. He hoped that the recent easing of political and social tensions in Guinea-Bissau would pave the way to the re-establishment of institutional normalcy and democracy. He welcomed the efforts of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS), and he offered his support for intensified dialogue and reconciliation.

He highlighted the problem of malnutrition that affected hundreds of millions of people worldwide. To achieve food security and reduce malnutrition on a global scale, a boost was needed, with coordinated initiatives and greater investment. Also important was progress in meeting the Millennium Development Goals and establishing a post-2015 development agenda. He followed the establishment of the new agenda closely and welcomed the invitation to his Finance Minister to participate in a high-level panel on the matter.

MACKY SALL, President of Senegal, said that despite the progress made after more than a decade of Millennium Development Goals implementation, the magnitude of the remaining challenges was overwhelming. The daily lives of close to a billion people had barely improved; women continued to die in childbirth; inequalities persisted within and between countries; and the global economic crisis was worsening. In the quest for sustainable development, the Paris Climate Conference, scheduled for 2015, would be an opportunity to "pull ourselves together", by reversing such negative trends.

In the fight against poverty, he said, investment in education, training and youth employment was needed. Modernizing agriculture, making electricity accessible to all and developing infrastructure that fostered trade and investment were also critical. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was seeking to promote its Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa, and as the organization's Chair, he welcomed action against tax evasion and other fraudulent practices affecting the economy. Establishing mechanisms to improve transparency in international transactions was also imperative, he said, calling for reform of international economic and financial governance, notably the conditions of access to credit and financing of economic and social development projects.

Plummeting ODA was not meeting Africa's needs, he said, pointing out that the dynamics of progress had led African countries to explore innovative financing mechanisms and social development projects. No longer a "zone of turmoil" and humanitarian emergencies, Africa had become an emerging pole of opportunities and investments. He said: "The world has changed. Africa too has changed," which required a shift of paradigm.

He called for reform of the Security Council, saying it should serve all Member States. Senegal supported the United Nations Mission in Mali, and welcomed the restoration of territorial and constitutional integrity, as well as national reconciliation efforts being deployed by the Malian Government, in accordance with the Ouagadougou Agreement. Although armed groups had been defeated, the terrorist threat to the Sahel remained. More broadly, permanent, coordinated and sufficiently deterrent action was needed to root out security challenges on the continent, in line with African Union plans, such as the African rapid response force.

In Guinea-Bissau, Senegal was supporting the Government in its transition efforts to successfully carry out the elections, he said, urging partners to pursue a resolution through economic recovery, reform of the defence and security sector and the fight against illicit drug trafficking. Similar attention must be paid to the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo in their aspirations for peace and stability. He underscored the need to respect African Union principles against anti-constitutional changes of Government, regardless of the process used.

On Syria, he expressed deep concern over the suffering of its people and urged the Government to exercise restraint and to comply with the agreement concluded for the control and destruction of its chemical weapons. As Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian

People, he called for a resumption of Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations, in support of a two-State solution.

In closing, he said that sexual violence in times of conflict was an act of unbearable cruelty for victims and their families. Such acts were war crimes and serious violations of human dignity, he said, emphasizing that victims must no longer feel isolated and alone, and perpetrators must be tracked down, prosecuted and punished.

JOSEPH KABILA KABANGE, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, paid respect to the victims of the terrorist attack in Kenya before pointing out that the international community was marked by several serious challenges. Indeed, critical consideration of the successes and setbacks of the Millennium Development Goals was overshadowed by the “persistent selfishness” of several States, as well as the up and downs of the global economy. Negative effects of globalization had contributed to the food crisis, famine, sicknesses, and pandemics, as well as to the destruction of the environment, he said, stressing the need for the preparatory process to advance the sustainable development agenda.

In that, he said, harmonization with other United Nations bodies, particularly the Economic and Social Council, would assist in integrating the economic, social, and environmental pillars of sustainability in the post-2015 development agenda. The new programme must be universal, ambitious, and able to respond to today’s immense challenges, in accordance with common but differentiated principles. Women, young people, and civil society must play a role both in the design of the plan and its execution. On climate change, he recalled the result of the Rio+20 document, “The Future We Want”, in managing natural resources. Contributing to limiting the impacts of climate change was the responsibility of all nations, as well as a duty of international solidarity.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo was committed to managing its natural resources, he said. The Grand Inga project, based in his country, once complete, would be capable of producing 40,000 megawatts of electricity, enough to provide energy to half the peoples on the continent. However, security remained the most important prerequisite for development because without it, development was a hypothetical.

Having acted in solidarity by welcoming refugees from Rwanda, the population in the eastern part of the country was now deprived of peace and “continued to count up the dead”, he said. Last July’s attack on women and children — “trapped under a bomb” — in Goma left him questioning the legitimacy of international law. He asked: What happens when refugees are responsible for killing the people of their host country? Even more alarming was the fact that his Government had been conducting talks in accordance with the Addis Ababa Agreement with the armed group responsible for the attack, he pointed out.

He went on to say that the Democratic Republic of the Congo was reforming its security sector, including the army and the police; restructuring public finance management to improve the business climate; and organizing local, municipal, senatorial, and provincial elections. Beyond those efforts, sustainable peace depended on putting an end to impunity in all its forms, he emphasized, underscoring the need for all Member States to strictly respect the Charter.

ANDRY NIRINA RAJOELINA, President of Madagascar, noting that new conflicts arose in the world each year demanding attention, urged the international community to analyse their root causes and take appropriate measures in order to preserve global stability. He said it was a matter of regret that most people’s picture of Africa remained one of States mired in permanent violence, where democracy was in retreat, where there were greater divisions than consensus, and where the natural environment was deteriorating.

He said that, amid the general unfavourable international economic climate, Madagascar found it difficult to achieve the Millennium Development Goals despite the best efforts of its leaders and people. Instead of losing hope, leaders of countries in a similar situation should concentrate more on what they could do better individually to help the collective international effort to improve the daily lives of the people.

The Arab Spring movements were an illustration of the legitimate aspirations of the people seeking better lives, he said, adding that it was important that the world understood them as such. When the people of Madagascar had risen up against their regime a few years ago, the country encountered misunderstanding from the international community. Efforts must be made to end the different ways in which countries in crisis were treated. Madagascar had the ingredients for an explosive and fratricidal

conflict, but, fortunately, its people had not fallen into the trap of an internal conflict. Avoiding civil war was not easy, as it required considerable sacrifices, humility and patriotism. He thanked all the parties involved for their courage and faith, which served as a model for other countries.

Stressing that Madagascar, scheduled to hold presidential elections next month, was starting a new phase in its history, he thanked the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), African Union, European Union, and the United Nations, as well as other regional organizations, for their steadfast support. Asserting that the exercise of power required leaders to be aware of human fallibility, he announced that he would not be contesting the election.

BLAISE COMPAORÉ, President of Burkina Faso, listed the many crises that were calling on the consciences of individuals to work to provide humanity with peace, stability, security, and the tools needed for the better management of global evolution. West Africa retained the stigma of the multidimensional crises that had plagued the region for decades, and the Sahel remained a hideout for drug traffickers and terrorists. He saluted the improved situation in Mali achieved by deployment of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), and he welcomed presidential elections. The United Nations strategy for the Sahel would help enhance stability in Mali and the entire area, and he was determined to contribute to achieving its objectives.

He noted that Burkina Faso had 2,000 peacekeeping troops deployed in missions of the African Union and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and it also supported the resolution of political and social crises outside West Africa. He supported efforts in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Great Lakes region overall, Somalia, and in the Sudan. He also favoured an equitable solution for the people of Western Sahara and lent his support to Morocco's compromise suggestion that the area be granted autonomy rather than full independence. Beyond Africa, he called for the urgent end to hostilities in Syria, encouraging implementation of the agreement between the United States and Russian Federation on chemical weapons. Also welcome had been renewed negotiations between Israel and Palestine.

He was pleased by the climate of dialogue and détente that was characterizing relations between China and the Republic of China (Taiwan), and he called for Taiwan's inclusion in United Nations specialized agencies, particularly the Civil Aviation Organization and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. He saluted Taiwan's efforts to help developing countries in Africa, such as his own.

Peace in Africa required development programmes that provided real responses to the incertitude stemming from the poor economic situation, he said. Burkina Faso was a landlocked country seeking to boost growth and ensure a better quality of life for its people, he said, adding that the Millennium Development Goals deadline was approaching. The theme of the General Assembly session raised the issue of the relationship between development, peace, and security and offered an opportunity to reflect on a new vision of global progress founded on strong international solidarity behind sustainable development. It was important to step up efforts to resolve environmental issues by taking up questions raised during Rio+20.

Enhanced multilateralism was needed across the board, but particularly on the issue of peace and security, he said. A greater push for the application of the principles of the United Nations Charter was needed and it was time to boost the performance of bodies such as the Security Council. The work done in the General Assembly could help to achieve that, he concluded.

HAILEMARIAM DESSALEGN, Prime Minister of Ethiopia, speaking on behalf of the African Union, said the Organization's fiftieth anniversary was a chance to reflect on its relationship with the United Nations. When the United Nations Charter was signed, much of Africa was under the yoke of colonialism, but with the help of the United Nations, almost all vestiges of colonialism had been removed. The African Union and the United Nations worked together closely under Chapter VIII of the Charter, with cooperation and partnership growing over the course of five decades. He deeply respected the United Nations contribution to the Union's efforts to address the continent's multifaceted challenges and said cooperation could still be enhanced.

The "stereotypical narrative" of Africa as "a continent afflicted by poverty, diseases and conflicts" had begun to change, he said, and while difficulties remained, Africa had turned a corner in reducing conflict, boosting democracy and fighting poverty. The continent was "certainly on the rise" and African renaissance was possible, with the launch of a 50-year transformation agenda and adoption of the African

Union Commission's Strategic Plan for the 2014-2017 to contribute to realizing that vision. It was opportune that the launch of the transformation agenda coincided with global efforts to develop the post-2015 development agenda. The high-level committee of Heads of State and Government underlined Africa's commitment to developing a common African position, working to galvanize international support for implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and ensuring reflection of African priorities post-2015.

To ensure food security in Africa, he hoped for a "green revolution". The African Union's theme for 2014 would be agriculture and food security and promotion of the Comprehensive African Development Programme, which would allow reinforcement of the continent's commitment to transforming its agricultural sector. Meanwhile, Africa needed to industrialize to accelerate economic growth, with structural transformation vital to poverty eradication. He called for infrastructure investment, citing two decades of neglect, but also the potential benefits of intra-African trade and regional integration.

Durable peace and security was central to Africa's attainment of its development aspirations, he said, noting the vast efforts made to address conflict and the "drastic decline" in the number of conflicts over the past decade. The African Union had worked to assist political transitions in Egypt and Tunisia, and he welcomed elections in Mali, along with significant progress made in Somalia. The security and humanitarian situations in the Central African Republic remained worrying, and he called for multifaceted United Nations support for the African-led International Support Mission there. Pointing to increased tension in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, he said dialogue was needed to stave off the threat to the Great Lakes region and to the continent as a whole. Sudan and South Sudan were benefiting from the Ad Hoc Investigation Mechanism, which verified allegations made by each side about their support for rival dissident groups. He looked forward to the fruits of regular engagement between the States' leaders.

There was an "unflinching commitment" in Africa to fighting impunity and promoting democracy, rule of law and good governance, he said, noting its expression in the African Union's Constitutive Act. Many States had ratified and upheld the Rome Statute, but the way the International Criminal Court had been operating in Africa was causing concern. "Instead of promoting justice and reconciliation and contributing to peace and stability, it has degenerated into a political instrument targeting Africa and Africans," which, he said, was totally unacceptable. The African Union's requests for deferral of proceedings against President Omer Hassan A. Al-Bashir of Sudan and in connection with post-election violence in Kenya in 2008 had not been acted upon and the Court's recent decision in relation to Kenya was "unhelpful".

WINSTON BALDWIN SPENCER, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, congratulated his fellow countryman on his election to General Assembly President. He went on to say that 13 years after the Millennium Development Goals were implemented, something was "appalling wrong". Deliberations ahead of 2015 presented an opportunity to redirect previous notions of prosperity and development. He welcomed the designation of 2014 as the International Year of Small Island Developing States and hoped that the occasion would reinvigorate that agenda. Also key to strengthening integration and development were partnerships with various regional bodies such as Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas, and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Small island developing States, while contributing the least to the causes of climate change, suffered the most from its effects, he said, emphasizing that developed countries must shoulder their moral, ethical, and historical responsibilities for emitting the levels of anthropogenic greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. In addition, vulnerable developing countries were victims to the globalization of crime and needed greater support in addressing its escalation. He stressed the importance of early entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty, and, touching on other areas of importance, said the rise of non-communicable diseases posed a serious threat to development on his island, adding, "our health-care system, economy and population are burned."

He drew attention to a decade-long trade dispute with the United States, which had the potential to damage the credibility of the dispute settlement system of the World Trade Organization. Although his Government had won the case at both the original and appellate levels, the end was not in sight, he said, calling it a case that "pits the world's largest economy against one of the world's smallest". Reiterating support for Cuba, he condemned the discriminatory policies and practices aimed at serving "no other end but to daunt" the socioeconomic development and well-being of Cubans. He also condemned the recent terrorist attack in Kenya and expressed concern over the inclusion of Cuba by the United States on the list of States that sponsored terrorism.

On honouring the victims of slavery and the trans-Atlantic slave trade, he welcomed the launch of the permanent memorial design and called reparations an integral element of development strategies. Such funds must be directed towards repairing the damage inflicted by slavery and racism. Calling the unrest in the Middle East, and particularly in Syria, heartbreaking, he said leaders must protect civilians at all costs and move quickly to devise diplomatic solutions. The threat of war should be an absolute last resort.

JOSAIA VOREQE BAINIMARAMA, Prime Minister of Fiji and current Chair of the Group of 77 and China, said his country had reached a pivotal moment earlier this month, with the promulgation of a new Constitution, which had introduced the first genuine democracy since independence from the United Kingdom in 1970. “We finally have a Constitution that is worthy of the Fijian people,” he declared, noting that it had enshrined an independent judiciary, a secular State, and a range of civil, political, and economic rights. It recognized indigenous peoples’ customary practices, protected the rights of indigenous landowners and their tenants, demanded Government transparency, and built strong, independent institutions.

By way of background, he said Fiji had struggled for years to be a nation under a system that had created different classes of citizens. The very idea of a just and equal society was being eroded from within — too many elites who believed the best way to entrench their privileges was to sow the seeds of division. As a result, tens of thousands of Fijians had suffered. While the journey had been long, it was with deep honour that he could say: “Our national compass has finally been reset,” with democratic elections slated for September 2014. Four political parties had registered under new laws that created transparency.

Noting that many modern democracies had experienced their own turbulent periods — the United States Civil War, for example — he regretted that such countries had abandoned Fiji, having sought instead to punish it with sanctions and support a form of governance they never would have accepted for themselves. “We hope that they see now that we were true to our word,” he said, stressing that all nations had struggled to correct historic “sins”. Fiji’s political development and foreign policy had been guided by the principle that sovereign States determined their own destinies. Fiji also recognized the need to collaborate with States towards sustainable world peace.

Against that backdrop, he urged that focus not be lost on the imperative of our time, namely, that equality among nations was central to the United Nations survival. Encouraged by the Assembly’s launch of the follow-up mechanisms agreed at the Rio+20 Conference, he said the post-2015 development agenda must be universal, applicable, and relevant to all nations. That could best be achieved through global partnerships that placed peoples’ well-being at their core. With serious commitment to transformation at structural, normative, and institutional levels, it could achieve a paradigm shift in global conditions.

He went on to say that Fiji’s decision to chair the Group of 77 and China for 2013 had shown its embrace of its rights as an equal United Nations member. Underscoring the country’s unwavering commitment to United Nations peacekeeping, he said it had responded to the call to serve for three decades. It must be ensured that all support possible was given to troop and police-contributing countries through clear policy guidance. On sustainable development, he said the Third International Conference for Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in 2014 was critical to addressing the specific challenges faced by those countries.

More broadly, he said Fiji worked through the Melanesian Spearhead Group to accelerate the process of decolonization. On the communications front, Fiji had combined a national framework for information and communications technologies with pragmatic policies, an approach that had achieved 95 per cent mobile coverage and seen Fiji conclude one of the region’s first open auctions for 4G spectrum. As the first country to have ratified the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, Fiji also had kept its oceanic obligations at the core of its foreign policy.

HERMAN VAN ROMPUY, President of the European Council, European Union, recalled last year’s general debate, which had seen unity among States deploring the civil war in Syria, where 25,000 had died and 250,000 had become refugees. A year later, 100,000 people were dead and refugees numbered 2 million. “What will the situation be when we meet next year?” he asked. Prolonging the “paralysis of the international community” was untenable, particularly in light of the chemical weapons attack in Damascus. Syria’s agreement to destroy those weapons helped the world avoid setting a dreadful precedent on their use, which was an “abhorrent crime against humanity”. Once the inventory was complete, the Security Council and OPCW must destroy Syria’s stocks swiftly. He pled for a clear Security Council resolution.

Following the agreement on weapons, he said there was “more scope for quiet hope” than a few weeks earlier. Now was the time to pursue Geneva II and to push all parties to the negotiating table. For Geneva II to work, honesty was needed. The process of ending the war and reaching reconciliation would be hard, requiring political will and compromise, but the cost of hesitation was too great. Europeans knew how difficult reconciliation was, having suffered many wars, but time, courage and perseverance were needed to prevent the destruction of Syria and to ensure that the promise of the Arab Spring was met there. He promised Syrians European help, noting that the European Union was the largest provider of aid.

Additionally, he said, the Union would continue playing an important role on the global stage, as a faithful peace and development partner to many countries around the world. Despite the financial crisis, it had not withdrawn from its global responsibilities and all European Union financing in the common European budget had been maintained. There was also strong European engagement on climate change and support for the Paris Conference set for 2015. The Union had launched five new missions: in Mali, South Sudan, the Sahel, on Libya's borders and off the coast of Somalia. The operational mandates for missions in Afghanistan, Georgia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo had also been renewed.

After being shaken by the financial crisis, Europe was addressing imbalances and putting its house in order, he said, calling on other States to do so as well. Results were emerging in Europe; the existential threat to the Union had been averted and attention was now turned to improving prospects for employment and growth. It would take time to rebuild strong economic growth and jobs, but once established, they would be long-lasting. Economic growth was forecast for all but 1 of the Union's 28 countries and the political will to preserve Europe's unity remained strong.

The international community could and must renew itself, he said, stressing the common responsibility of States to ensure that everyone present translated the positive signs into concrete progress for peace and prosperity. He reiterated his call for dialogue and negotiation and for the conclusion of international agreements to ensure that progress went beyond exchanges of words. It was true for Syria, the Middle East peace process, and Iran, and it was equally true for other major challenges, such as climate change, international trade, and financial regulation, on which meetings would soon be held.

SHEIKH JABER AL MUBARAK AL HAMAD AL SABAH, Prime Minister of Kuwait, said his country's bilateral relations with Iraq had developed positively as a result of communications at the highest level of leadership between both countries. Kuwait looked forward to cooperating with Iraq to find the remains of missing Kuwaitis and third country nationals, as well as Kuwait's national archives. Through Security Council resolution 2107 (2013), follow-up responsibility for those efforts was now with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq.

He described the situation in Syria as approaching a “catastrophe” and stated that, in response, Kuwait had hosted an international donors' conference last January to offset the humanitarian situation, which had raised \$1.5 billion in donations. “This amount has been paid in full to a number of United Nations bodies and agencies, which turned it into emergency relief assistance to the Syrian people, inside and outside Syria,” he reported.

Speaking on the Middle East region as a whole, he said that only the international community had the capability of resolving the long-running conflict in Palestine, and he applauded the efforts of the United States towards achieving a breakthrough in the peace process, and hoped that persistent pressure on Israel would make it accept the resolutions of international legitimacy. With regard to Iran, he said Kuwait supported the right of that and all countries in the region to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes under the supervision and monitoring of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), but he also called on Iran to cooperate fully with the Agency and implement its resolutions.

The Millennium Development Goals, he said, represented a major shift in how the world tackled such issues as poverty and sustainable development; however, security challenges, human rights violations and environmental deterioration necessitated rethinking the preparation of a comprehensive and ambitious development plan as a complement. He reported that the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, having now expanded to include Asian, African, as well as Central and Latin American countries, would remain a key means by which his country supported international assistance and development efforts. Regarding Yemen, Kuwait contributed \$500 million to fund development projects during the 2012-2014 timeframe, in an effort to support the Gulf States Initiative and execution mechanism aimed at ending the crisis and re-establishing security and stability in that country.

ENRICO LETTA, Prime Minister of Italy, said that with the end of the global crisis within reach, it was imperative to make growth and development the first priority. Remarkable progress had been made on the Millennium Development Goals; however, the capacity of economic and social systems to adapt to the world's rapid changes should be increased. Regarding the post-2015 development agenda, he stressed the need to address the causes of the global ills, rather than limiting the efforts to only the side effects. Of the view that sustainable development was "the best antidote", Italy had co-facilitated the establishment of a High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, with universal membership.

He said that development could not simply be reduced to economic growth and statistics, but must pay adequate attention to the quality of life. On the issue of women's rights and gender balance, he said that more female participation in the global economy meant more equality and growth. Food security should be a priority area of action, since it incorporated the crucial issue of a sustainable relationship between consumption and production. Opportunities to exchange best practices on global sustainability in the area of food security and nutrition were welcome. As underlined to the heads of the United Nations agencies based in Rome, Italy called for the launch of a new global consensus on food.

An integrated approach to development involved a focus on social development, he said. The projected rise of the world population highlighted the serious problem of unemployment, particularly among young people. Focusing on small and medium-sized enterprises could create jobs for young people and contribute to social stability. Also in the employment sector, great attention must be paid to people with disabilities. On the issue of migrants, he highlighted Italy's commitment to their fundamental human rights and to the need to prosecute criminals who engaged in human trafficking. "We should all fight what Pope Francis called the globalization of indifference and feel the suffering of these migrants as our own," he said.

He strongly condemned the crisis in Syria, inviting members of the Security Council and other relevant international stakeholders to search for political solutions. He welcomed efforts towards the elimination of Syria's chemical weapons. Faced with the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in that and other countries, Italy had intensified its humanitarian assistance, pledging in 2013 \$30 million, as well as new humanitarian and emergency initiatives for an additional \$50 million. He confirmed the country's support of the Somali Government in its efforts to lay the foundations for a united federal State. As the highest contributor to Libya, Italy continued to support its stabilization and democratic transition. On Mali and the Sahel region, he highlighted the current funding of training for border police in Mali and Niger, in line with the strategy presented by the Special Envoy of the Secretary General for the Sahel.

In sum, Italy's participation in 10 United Nations peacekeeping missions, as well as its financial contributions to the United Nations general budget, was testament to its commitment to peace and stability. But "wherever human rights are at risk, global peace and security are at risk", and thus Italy promoted actions to address those most vulnerable, including women, children, religious and ethnic minorities, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, human rights defenders and humanitarian workers. He also called for religious tolerance, in light of the recent atrocities in Pakistan. At the same time, Italy continued to prioritize the campaign for a worldwide moratorium on the death penalty.

In light of Italy's upcoming Presidency of the European Union in 2014, he called for the European Union to rise to a leading role on the world stage. Increased trade exchanges with the rest of the world were welcome, and he urged Europe to attain more unity and more effective governance. Reform of the United Nations Security Council was absolutely necessary, and to bridge the gap between the different models, Member States should be ready to engage in the next round of negotiations with a higher degree of flexibility and openness to compromise.

TOMISLAV NIKOLIĆ, President of Serbia, said that ahead of the impending deadlines for the Millennium Development Goals, the United Nations and the world were at a crossroads and must take action. In identifying future sustainable development goals, priority should be given to energy efficiency, renewable resources, and climate change. Key development goals should deal with sustainable economic development, because devoid of that, it would be impossible to achieve social development or reduce hunger, poverty, unemployment and inequality, prevent wage disparities, or protect the environment.

However, he stressed, there could be no development — sustainable or unsustainable, economic or social — in war-torn areas. Serbia had been participating in peacekeeping operations for decades and was engaged in multinational operations in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Lebanon, Cyprus, the Middle East region, Uganda, Somalia, and, soon, in Mali. In that capacity, Serbia had no other interest than to "help the friend in need". Along with war, terrorism loomed large over the core values of the United Nations, threatening human rights and impeding business, thus undermining

development as well. As a State party to most global counter-terrorism instruments, Serbia attached great significance to international activities aimed at suppressing terrorism, and it was adjusting its domestic legislation to stem the scourge. As a victim of terrorist attacks, the country understood the need for regional and broader counter-terrorism cooperation and believed it was of utmost importance to make progress on a comprehensive anti-terrorism convention.

Serbia was party to nearly all international instruments and initiatives in the fields of disarmament, non-proliferation, and arms control, he said, adding that its commitment to the Arms Trade Treaty, which it had recently signed, was based on the belief that the establishment of a set of legally binding international standards was a significant contribution to eliminating the illegal arms trade. Serbia had no secret weapons and had never been a threat to any country, nor had it ever or would it ever possess weapons of mass destruction.

The unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo in 2008 was creating a problem, and undermined the system established by the United Nations since its inception, he said. The illegal secession attempted by the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government of Kosovo had never been recognized by the United Nations; however, some countries recognized Kosovo as a State, including some traditional friends of Serbia, because they had been put under constant pressure and blackmail by big and powerful nations. Those problems needed to be solved peacefully, and Serbia intended to protect the Serb community in Kosovo and Metohija as far as possible and to ensure normal everyday life in the province. Further, Serbia did not intend to agree to the admission of Kosovo to membership in the United Nations and other international organizations.

He said the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) should continue. Unfortunately the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia had abused its mandate, and to address some of the wrongs, convicted Serbs should be sent to serve their prison terms in Serbia, with eventual reintegration into society. The Serbia of tomorrow and today should be trusted.

IDRISS DEBY ITNO, President of Chad, said the theme of the general debate was at the heart of his country's concerns. The 2015 deadline year for attainment of the Millennium Development Goals was quickly approaching, but quite a number of countries were lagging behind due to lack of funding, development assistance or debt relief. They would have difficulty in meeting the development targets on time. In the light of shortcomings in the design and implementation of the Millennium Goals, African countries planned to contribute to the development of a post 2015-agenda that could meet the continent's expectations, he said, calling on the international community to support their efforts.

Turning to international security, he said new hotbeds of tension and conflict had appeared everywhere in Africa. Terrorist attacks like the recent one in Kenya added extra challenges. Chad wished to make its modest contribution to maintaining peace, security and stability in Africa and elsewhere whenever necessary, he said. Urging support for Chad's candidacy to join the Security Council in 2014-2015, he expressed concern over various conflicts in African countries, including Mali, Central African Republic, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, while noting that Chad had provided troops to several United Nations peacekeeping operations and sheltered refugees from Sudan.

On the Central African Republic, he said African countries were providing help through regional organizations, citing the deployment of the International Support Mission to Central Africa. He called on the Security Council to adopt a resolution on the provision of logistical and financial support to the Mission. There could be no military solutions to conflicts around the continent, he said, emphasizing the need to promote development and fight against poverty, marginalization, youth unemployment and other social problems.

Speaking of conflicts outside Africa, he encouraged the United Nations and the United States to make greater efforts to facilitate peace talks between Israel and Palestine, with the aim of reaching agreement on peaceful coexistence between two sovereign States. On Syria, he said the international community must use all means to stop the unfolding tragedy there. While welcoming the agreement reached between the United States and the Russian Federation on the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons, he stressed that those responsible for serious crimes must be brought before an international tribunal. He also called for the lifting of the decades-old embargo against Cuba, so as to enable that country to resume its rightful place in the international community.

PAUL KAGAME, President of Rwanda, said that 13 years ago, the Millennium Development Goals had established humanitarian principles for the twenty-first century. Together, Member States and international organizations had stood for the idea that the poorest nations and peoples should not have to live without dignity and hope. The world was a different place now; the international community had witnessed the struggles of the global economy and was reeling from a financial crisis and a deep recession. However, it had also seen a billion people lifted out of poverty, more children in schools, greater care for the sea, and a generation born in a new age of information ready to embrace ever expanding frontiers of technology. But the transformative effect was not yet complete. The shortcomings were as long as the successes, and as the international community thought about the post-2015 agenda, it must have the courage to go beyond business as usual.

The high-level panel and its report, he noted, had laid out an ambitious vision for the future, but leaders must also take an honest look at the Millennium Development Goals, to say what did and did not work, and to forge a new global partnership forged on mutual responsibility and trust.

Nations must tackle greater ownership of their efforts, he said. One of the failings of aid had been the lack of attention paid to countries' specific contexts. Now was the time for the developing world to make their vote and voices heard, to shape the debate, and to ensure that policies and programmes were demand-driven. It must also require Governments to empower those whose lives the international community was trying to transform, to give them a stake in the process and a say in their country's future. Rwanda was working to empower local leaders while demanding accountability as an important catalyst. However, the "centre must remain stable", and so Rwanda placed emphasis on good governance, as that inspired trust in institutions and was a foundation for development.

A far greater focus was also needed on the role of the private sector and its power to create prosperity, he said. For that, a global environment without trade barriers, and greater investment in roads, railways, and airports, were needed to connect domestic markets to regional and global ones. Investments were also needed in energy and electricity. Technology played an important role, as it was levelling the economic playing field for developing countries and beginning to break the cycles of poverty.

Rwanda was on a course to meet all of the Millennium Development Goals, but those were "a floor and not a ceiling", he said. The country would remain tireless in the pursuit of progress, as it knew all too well the cost of failure. Next year would commemorate 20 years since the genocide. Over three long months, flickers of life went out all over the country. But now today Rwandans were standing strong. They had a purpose formed by a tragic past, but they were focused firmly on the future. Moving towards the next chapter of global development, the world must create strong partnerships that positively impacted the lives of all. The post-2015 era should be defined by progress, dignity and hope.

Africans supported the global consensus against impunity and the creation of an international justice system to fight it, he said, adding that such a system should promote peace and security within and between nations and uphold the principles of equal sovereignty. In practice, however, the International Criminal Court had flouted those principles and shown open bias — against Africans. Instead of promoting justice and peace, it had undermined efforts at reconciliation, which humiliated Africans and their leaders, and served the political interests of the powerful. Nowhere had the Court's shortcomings been more evident than in the ongoing trial of Kenyan leaders. The Kenyan people had shown eagerness to heal the wounds of their past, reconcile and move on. That was why they had elected their present leaders, who were under trial. They should be able to move forward, and not have their national judicial capacity undermined. The United Nations General Assembly and Security Council must uphold the principles of international justice and the dignity of Africans.

ANOTE TONG, President of Kiribati, said urgent action to address climate change and sea level rise would be critical to the future of his country. The country's survival, and indeed that of humanity, would be at risk without concrete actions. "The scientists tell us that calamity awaits, and not just for those of us on low-lying islands. What we are experiencing now on these low-lying atolls is an early warning of what will happen further down the line. No one will be spared," he said. With that, he welcomed the Secretary-General's announcement of the convening of a high-level summit on climate change scheduled for next year and said support from all nations was critical for positive change.

He said his country was "taking charge" of its situation and moving forward with its mitigation and adaption strategies. It had finalized a national adaptation framework and was working with partners, including the World Bank, to implement the priorities. Efforts were also being made to improve the skills of

the Kiribati people so they would be able to compete for jobs on the international labour market, should they be forced to migrate due to the effects of climate change.

On the Millennium Development Goals, he said his country was struggling to reach most benchmarks, as scarce resources were being diverted to other priorities related to rising seas and storm surges. The upcoming Third Global Conference on Small Island Developing States in Samoa in 2014 would be an important opportunity to call attention to the special needs and vulnerabilities of low-lying small States. "The ocean is a double edged sword for us in Kiribati," he said, highlighting the establishment of Kiribati's first fish processing plant through a public-private partnership as a recent accomplishment in efforts to utilize available resources in the exclusive economic zone. The annual total catch was around \$400 million, yet as owners, Kiribati only got about 8 per cent of that.

In assessing last year's follow-up sustainable development meeting in Rio, he said: "Unfortunately our track record in delivering on our undertakings has not been good. In fact, in many respects our environment is worse off today than it was over 21 years ago." He called on the United Nations to facilitate a frank and "brutally honest" dialogue on how to attain "the future we want".

BRONISŁAW KOMOROWSKI, President of Poland, said since its creation, the United Nations had made international relations "more civilized" in many areas. That was satisfying, however, it could also hide the Organization's weaknesses and ineffectiveness in addressing situations it was set up to resolve. One such example was the conflict in Syria. Regrettably, the members of the Security Council had spoken out for, and supported individual sides in, the Syrian war in various ways rather than make them stop fighting and commit to peace talks. That revealed a lack of capacity and efficiency in United Nations decision-making mechanisms, and the urgent need for reform.

He went on to note that the Syrian tragedy was symbolic of a broader phenomenon, namely neglect of agreed international values, norms, and obligations. Too often, the immediate national interests of countries had the upper hand, leading to tragic human rights and humanitarian consequences, he said, stressing that solving the difficult, complex and interrelated problems of the Middle East would require a comprehensive, imaginative, and impartial approach.

Recalling Poland's role in initiating and drafting the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, he emphasized that Member States must not allow the erosion of United Nations instruments for the protection of human rights. A mechanism should be established that would, in an objective and uncontroversial manner, force harmonious cooperation between the Security Council's permanent members in the context of situations falling under the "responsibility to protect" principle, in order to ensure that the prevention of such crimes and the effective response to them prevailed over individual geopolitical interests.

Speaking of people's economic and social rights, he said poverty and underdevelopment were not just human rights issues that undermined the dignity of individuals and social groups, but they also hindered peoples and nations from fulfilling their potential. International efforts aimed at helping underdeveloped regions and countries would enable them to enter the path of sustainable growth and leave behind chronic dependence on external assistance. Citing Poland's economic achievement in the past two decades, he said unbelievable progress could be made in just one generation, adding that even the most generous foreign assistance could not replace efforts made internally by a country, such as the empowerment of individuals, the stability of the State, and good governance.

Finally, he called for support for the country's pursuit of a seat on the Security Council in 2018-2019, stressing that Poland was an active participant in the international community and was always endeavouring to create a better international order.

King MSWATI III of Swaziland said he was extremely disturbed by the deadly conflicts taking place in countries such as Syria, where innocent people on both sides were dying and many were forced to flee and become refugees. He encouraged all people of Syria to immediately cease fire and use dialogue as a means to solve their differences. "Using the barrel of a gun" did not help, he added; on the contrary, it left the Syrian people divided and with problems that would have devastating effects for a very long time. The United Nations mission's findings on the use of chemical weapons in the country should be used to chart the way forward. Whatever action took place in Syria must fall within the mandate of the United Nations, which must act quickly, he concluded.

He highlighted the importance for leaders and Governments to be in constant consultations with their people at all times. It was, therefore, imperative to create forums allowing people to have access to their Government and to express themselves, as the lack thereof could lead to violent reactions nationally and have repercussions across borders. His country was committed to a process of consultation with the people, through dialogue with the Parliament and other forums. He drew attention to a recent peaceful election in his country, the most successful in years. His country's system was based on a "monarchical democracy", he explained, which was the result of a "marriage between the monarchy and the ballot box". The ballot box was the will of the people, which provided advice and counsel to the King. In that way, transparency and accountability was ensured, he added.

Regarding the Millennium Development Goals, he said his country had made good progress in the areas of education, gender and empowerment of women, and malaria control. However, further efforts were needed to address poverty, HIV/AIDS, infant mortality, and maternal health. To solicit views on the post-2015 development agenda, intensive consultations were under way with all stakeholders, including traditional leaders, youth, women, business communities, and persons with disabilities, among others. Poverty was still a challenge, he stressed, and the recent financial crisis had contributed to its worsening. Ensuring food security remained a priority and should feature prominently in the next development agenda. To achieve internationally agreed goals, the provision of adequate financial resources, the transfer of environmentally sound technologies, and technical assistance to developing countries were critical. He, therefore, appealed to developed partners to honour the pledges they made towards the Green Climate Fund and sustainable development programmes. Achieving universal access to water and sanitation was also crucial for the people of Swaziland.

Echoing the position of many African countries, he reiterated the importance of reforming the Security Council, in order to have an organ that would give equal opportunities for all regions of the world to voice their opinions on matters of international security. In conclusion, he said that his country "will continue to encourage the positive interaction between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait in the international arena" and was happy to note that "the Republic of China on Taiwan" had increased its participation in United Nations specialized agencies and mechanisms.

MIKHEIL SAAKASHVILI, President of Georgia, said the optimism of the early 1990s, when the spread of liberal and democratic values had seemed natural, had been crushed by a wave of pessimism and cynicism. The world was not at peace, humankind had not reconciled with itself, and the United Nations had not become the soul or the heart of a united globe. Western civilization, once triumphant, was now trying to tackle a deep economic, social and mental crisis. In Eastern Europe, the "coloured revolutions" were challenged by the forces they had defeated a few years ago, while in the Middle East, the glorious images of cheering crowds in Cairo and Tunis had been replaced by the horrendous videos of the gassed children of Damascus. But despite the many good reasons to be disillusioned, the dogmatic optimism of the 1990s should not be replaced by an equally dogmatic pessimism that suffocated hope, he emphasized. History had not ended in 1989 or 1991, and it never would.

Men and women everywhere wishing to live in freedom were confronted by the forces of tyranny, he said. Eastern European countries aspiring to join the European family of free and democratic nations faced constant pressures and threats. Armenia had been cornered and the Republic of Moldova blockaded; Ukraine was under attack, Azerbaijan faced extraordinary pressure and Georgia was occupied, all because an old empire was trying to regain its bygone margins, he said. The Russian Federation had no interest in being surrounded by stable States. Rather, it sought neighbouring countries in constant turmoil. The Kremlin would not agree to discuss the de-occupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and the annexation of Georgian lands by Russian troops continued.

Despite recent friendly statements by the new Georgian Government, he said, the Russian military kept advancing its positions, dividing communities with new barbed wire, threatening the Georgian economy and moving towards the vital Baku-Supsa Pipeline, thereby throwing Georgia's very sustainability into question. The Russian authorities knew perfectly well that as soon as strong institutions were built in Ukraine, Georgia, Republic of Moldova or others, those countries would reflect and enforce the will of their people for full independence and alignment with Europe. Georgia's experience of successful reforms and its creation of a functioning State was therefore considered a virus that threatened to contaminate the whole post-Soviet region, and which should be eliminated by every means possible, he said. That was why the Georgian nation had suffered an embargo, a war, an invasion and an occupation — all since 2006.

That was also the reason why the resistance of Georgia's people and the resilience of its democracy were of the utmost importance for the entire region, he continued. Efforts to roll back the advances of the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the region had a name — the Eurasian Union, shaped as an alternative to the European Union and unveiled by Vladimir Putin as the main project of his new presidency. Georgia's people must decide whether to accept life in a world of fear and crime, in which differences were perceived as threats and minorities as punching bags, and where opponents faced selective justice or beatings, he said. The Eurasian Union was both the recent past and the future shaped for the region by some ex-KGB officers in Moscow, but Georgia would instead be led towards Europe.

Russian mouthpieces identified the European Union with the destruction of family values, the erosion of national traditions and the promotion of gays and lesbians, he said. The threat was that Georgia's traditions would collapse under Western influence, that Christian holidays would be replaced by gay pride events, and Churches by "multicultural Disneylands", and that the Orthodox identity was under threat.

However, Georgia's history taught that tolerance was the basis for sovereignty in the region, he said, adding that it was not only a moral duty, but an issue of national security. Describing the European Union as the greatest political success of recent decades, he said it was built on three pillars: rejection of extreme nationalism, rejection of communism, and rejection of colonialism and imperialism. However, the Eurasian Union was based on precisely the opposite premises. To join the Eurasian Union was very easy, because there were no social, economic, or political criteria to be met. All one had to do was become a colony, which required no effort at all. Passivity and mediocrity were the only requirements, he said, predicting that rejection of the empire would happen not in the coming decades, but in the coming years.

EMANUEL MORI, President of the Federated States of Micronesia, said that since the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, production and consumption patterns had become increasingly unsustainable, driven primarily by a desire to "develop economies at any cost". As such, he stated that a post-2015 development agenda must move beyond addressing basic human needs and focus on sustainable development, which should be carried out in a dynamic and inclusive manner. International cooperation and assistance were crucial to advancing those goals and development and the environment were inseparable, he added. While societies strived for economic progress, he said that the natural environment had come under attack, with climate change the gravest threat to his peoples' welfare.

"It is the survival issue of our time", he said, stressing that the climate change treaty to be adopted in 2015 must impose legally binding commitments that reflected a level of ambition "far higher" than that under the second Kyoto Protocol period. He also called for the creation of a Sustainable Development Goal on healthy, productive oceans, as well as for sustainable energy to be included in those Goals, which were under discussion in New York. On national initiatives, he said his country had an integrated disaster risk management and climate change policy that mainstreamed climate change into its primary governmental and economic decision-making processes.

Further, the Federated States of Micronesia had taken "significant" steps in conserving its limited land and fragile marine eco-systems through the "Micronesia Challenge", he said, having also recently adopted a national energy policy that aimed to ensure a sustainable energy supply. To continue that progress, he called on donors to honour their pledges to allocate 0.7 per cent of their Gross National Income (GNI) to Official Development Assistance (ODA). Turning to sustainable development, he said his Government was tailoring an approach that was inclusive of the situation of women, youth, the elderly and disabled. He noted that their advancement must be mainstreamed into discussions on the post-2015 agenda.

On other matters, he urged addressing non-communicable diseases through the sustainable development goals, and expressed support for the outcome document from the high-level meeting on disability and development. He said that his country was striving to protect its people from human trafficking and supported the United Nations efforts to stop that malice. The global development agenda, he said, would be shaped by the launch of the sustainable development goals and the new High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development would be crucial in monitoring commitments made in Barbados, Mauritius and Rio. He commended the Secretary-General's advocacy of the High-level Summit on Climate Change next year.

In closing, he appealed to United Nations agencies for urgent assistance in the area of reliable data collection. He stated that he had been horrified by the killing of innocents in Syria and elsewhere, especially women and children. "We, in our peaceful islands, condemn violence," he said, stressing that today's world

was too interdependent for any nation to stand aside while generations of internal conflicts hardened into unending hatred and bloodshed. "We are all stakeholders," he said. He called on the United Nations to employ its collective will to pursue the ideals of its Charter and noted that the goal was achievable.

CARLOS MAURICIO FUNES CARTAGENA, President of El Salvador, said the focus on the post-2015 development agenda had set the stage for the Assembly's discussion. He described the challenges faced in recent years by those countries and regions affected by climate change and the global economic crisis, including El Salvador. He said that since taking office in 2009, his Government had had to deal with the loss of 40,000 jobs, a considerable decrease in exports as well as declining incomes and family remittances. That terrible reality was also the result of decades of injustice and backwardness, not only the economic crisis, he pointed out.

Unlike in the past, El Salvador was now at the service of the underprivileged and had put in place a system of governance based on achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Its policies were therefore intended to eliminate poverty and hunger while boosting education. In 1991, 75 per cent of the population had enjoyed access to primary education, and the rate had increased to 93 per cent in 2012. About 1.3 million children received free shoes, uniforms and school supplies, and almost the entire population was literate.

Much had also been achieved in the health field, he continued. An increase in the numbers of doctors, nurses and health centres had translated into a remarkable decrease in maternal mortality. However, no discussion about health care could take place without reference to basic services like drinking water, he said, pointing out that 72 per cent of the Salvadorian population had enjoyed access to improved water connections in 2011. El Salvador was changing, starting from a shift in economic models to ensure the implementation of policies benefiting farmers with small and medium-sized holdings, and increasing food production. However, the Government was also facing other challenges, including gang violence and drug trafficking.

An entire "chapter" must be devoted to climate change because the Central American region was highly exposed in that respect, he said. In recent years, at least five major climatic phenomena had struck the most vulnerable segment of the country's population. Another challenge was establishing a just and democratic society respectful of women. El Salvador had developed important initiatives to meet Millennium Development Goal 3 on promoting gender equality and empowering women, including the "City for Women" project, whereby women could receive sexual and reproductive health care. The initiative had become a model of public management, he said, adding that four centres had been already created and two more were under way. A confidential call centre to report gender violence had led to a considerable drop in the killing of women.

The Government had also ensured the payment of reparations to victims of major human rights violations and war veterans, he said. It had also initiated a process of national reconciliation, recognizing atrocities committed in the past. He said that, as Head of State, he had apologized in the name of those who had been "disappeared", murdered and tortured. A dialogue had been started with organizations representing the victims, and in the next two days a new national reparation policy would be announced. He emphasized that investing in populations that suffered from poverty and exclusion and turning them into the future middle class was the formula for growth that could guarantee access to health services and education.

TOMMY ESANG REMENGESAU JR, President of Palau, said his country's flag bore the image of a yellow moon against a blue ocean — a metaphor for nature's balance and harmony through the consistency of the rising and falling tides. However, floods and "tropical storm after tropical storm" were now passing through the Pacific islands; the full moon and the ocean were no longer a metaphor for balance and harmony, but instead represented imbalance, the world's past excesses and a lack of harmony. In responding to the ever-growing challenges of global warming, it was imperative that the international community do a better job of working together to solve the serious issues at hand, he stressed.

He went on to say that the vision established at the 1992 Earth Summit had been sidetracked, and many countries were frustrated by the failure to move it forward, as well as by slow progress and the fear that its goals were being diluted. Today, it appeared that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change had stalled, the Kyoto Protocol was on life support and the Rio+20 Conference had not done enough to strengthen the three pillars of sustainable development. World leaders must re-invigorate efforts to establish real mitigation commitments and identify immediate, sufficient and long-term implementation financing, he said.

The green economy approach must not become “business as usual”, he continued. Rather, the international community must take concrete action on the Monterrey Consensus and the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development. Only then would the sustainable development goals have a real chance to address worldwide environmental and development emergencies. There was a need for leadership, he said, emphasizing that all nations, large and small, must accept direct and primary responsibility for global issues threatening the planet’s future. Richer nations must actively address actions threatening their poorer counterparts, and human resources must be protected through governing strategies focused on education, health and employment equality.

The international community’s “global warming doomsday” was already set in stone if it failed to act, he warned. A temperature increase of 3° to 5° C would spell the demise of Palau and other Pacific islands. The Pacific Island Forum’s recent “Majuro Declaration for Climate Leadership” acknowledged the gross insufficiency of current efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the primary responsibility for which rested with developed countries, he said. The international community must deal with global warming-related security issues by appointing a special representative on climate and security and establish a joint task force, led by the Secretary-General, to assess and expand the capacity of the United Nations to respond to the security implications of climate change.

Palau had taken measures to address climate change issues, and asked other nations to move in a similar direction by recognizing their unique circumstances in order to protect the planet’s natural resources. One small example would be to prohibit shark fin soup in order to protect shark populations, as the world could clearly do without it. As the United Nations prepared to launch the sustainable development goals, the present “historic” moment would see the relationship between people and the planet defined for the coming generations, he said. The international community must commit itself to a more sustainable use of the oceans covering two thirds of the earth’s surface, which fed a billion people with their fish, but which were not mentioned in the Millennium Development Goals.

IKILILLOU DHOININE, President of Comoros, firmly condemned terrorist attacks, including the recent one in Kenya, before emphasizing the vital need to find a solution to the Syrian crisis. Condemning the use of chemical weapons against innocent people, and the perpetrators of such horrible acts, he said it was also important to call attention to lesser known crises. He paid tribute to Member States that had supported national liberation movements and organizations, particularly in Africa, since the founding of the United Nations, but expressed regret that part of the Comoros territory remained under the domination of France, a permanent Security Council member, despite an unequivocal vote in favour of independence for some of the archipelago’s islands.

He went on to cite various United Nations resolutions adopted since 1960 in that regard, including Assembly resolution 3385 of 12 November 1975, which reaffirmed the need to respect the unity and territorial integrity of the Comoros archipelago, comprising the islands of Anjouan, Grand Comore, Mayotte and Moheli. He asked fellow leaders whether they could imagine the frustration of a Head of State who must deal with such a dramatic situation every day. What serious error had the people of Comoros committed to be treated in such a way, and why must they constantly justify their right to their own history, geography and culture? It was difficult to comprehend the argument that such treatment was valid because some Comorians wished to remain under colonial rule, he said.

Since 6 July 1975, when Comoros had chosen sovereignty and declared independence, the country had called in vain for the application of international law, he continued. The ability of the archipelago’s people to move from one island to another, an inalienable right, was impeded by the French system established in 1944, which required Comorians to obtain a visa to move between Mayotte and the other three islands. That system had led to the deaths of more than 10,000 Comorians, he said, describing the waters separating Mayotte from the other islands as the world’s largest marine cemetery.

All previous Presidents had pursued negotiations with France in order to end the territorial dispute, in line with international law, he said. Nevertheless, France’s stance had remained unchanged for 38 years. He said that, after an initial recent meeting with his French counterpart in Kinshasa, on the margins of the Francophonie Summit, he had seen that the French authorities were finally ready to find a solution. France was also ready to assume its historical role with respect to international law, and what it had just done for Mali was the most eloquent example of that. Comoros thanked the French authorities for having made the critical decision of ensuring that the armed forces of Chad and some West African countries joined France in helping to restore Mali’s territorial integrity, he said, expressing hope that his own country would be able to do the same.

He welcomed his French counterpart's invitation to discuss bilateral relations, particularly on the question of Mayotte, which had led to their signing the Paris Declaration. He also thanked the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for her support in that matter. Calling upon the international community and the Secretary-General to support such negotiations, he said the question of Mayotte would remain on the agenda every year until a lasting settlement was found to the issue of Comoros sovereignty. He also called for support from the United Nations, African Union, International Organization of La Francophonie, League of Arab States, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Non-Aligned Movement and the Indian Ocean Commission.

EVO MORALES AYMA, President of Bolivia, highlighted his country's progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, noting that in the eight years of his presidency, he had seen economic growth increase by 4.8 per cent. Bolivia had successfully reduced extreme poverty and, as a result, 1 million Bolivians had entered the middle class. It had also reduced the undernourishment of children under the age of five, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had declared the country illiteracy-free. There had also been a decrease in mother and child mortality, he said. A programme called "My Water" had been launched to provide access to potable water for provinces without it.

He said all that progress was due to the fact that Bolivia was no longer subjected to the "North American empire", or to blackmail aimed at forcing it to give up its resources to international private companies. "When we feed ourselves politically and economically, we do better," he added. Gas and oil were now the property of Bolivians, whereas in the past, it had been claimed that Bolivians owned only underground resources. The same resources above ground had belonged to so-called "bearers of the titles", which amounted to robbery. Since nationalizing its natural resources, Bolivia's economic situation had started to improve.

Turning to his country's ongoing dispute with Chile, he said it had been submitted to the International Court of Justice. Bolivia had filed the proceedings in relation to Chile's obligation to negotiate an agreement granting fully sovereign access to the Pacific Ocean. The country had provided many examples of Chile's contradictory stance on that question as well as its failure to respect its international commitments.

On another topic, he said much had been heard about democracy, respect and social justice during the debate. "What justice are they talking about?" What democracy were they talking about when countries like the United States could spy even on their democratic allies? There was much arrogance towards the rest of humanity on the part of the United States, he said. What peace could be discussed when there were so many unemployed in that country and yet billions of dollars went to military expenditure every year?

The United States acted as if they were masters of the world, but they had not signed even basic multilateral instruments, he continued. Terrorism was not to be fought with more military spending but with more democracy, more social justice and more education. "Who benefits from the wars?" he asked. "Whose hands do natural resources of a country end up in, its citizens or international companies?" While Bolivia certainly disagreed with the use of chemical weapons, which country had the biggest nuclear arsenal? he asked.

ALI ZEIDAN, Prime Minister of Libya, said his country was forging ahead towards democracy, good governance and the rule of law in an effort to construct a free and modern democratic State. Enumerating the steps taken in recent years, despite the enormity of the challenges and the heavy legacy left by the former regime, he reassured the international community of Libya's abiding commitment to the rule of law, respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, peaceful transfer of power, and international cooperation. Recalling the support Libya had received from the United Nations from its very independence, he said the United Nations Support Mission in Libya was performing a "distinguished effort" in national renewal.

Urging the countries concerned to surrender elements of the former Libyan regime in their territory, he requested the international community to fully lift the ban on arms so that Libya could bolster its security. He also urged the Security Council and countries concerned to ensure the repatriation of Libyan assets frozen in other countries.

Stressing that Libya faced many problems from illegal immigration on the humanitarian, health, security and economic fronts, he called for a concerted regional and international effort to find an urgent

solution, taking into consideration respect for State sovereignty and the dignity and rights of migrants. Emphasizing the threats smuggling of narcotics and arms posed, he underlined the importance of bilateral and multilateral support to national efforts and highlighted Libya's efforts to promote such cooperation. As Libya resumed development activities, he stated it had become imperative to work expeditiously to recover money looted from Libya's treasury and sent abroad. He also requested the countries concerned to safeguard the investments Libyans had made abroad.

Reiterating his commitment to human rights issues, he said Libya was working on amending or repealing legislation inconsistent with its international obligations; ensuring constitutional scrutiny of laws; and ratifying international conventions on persons with disabilities, on the prohibition of torture, and on enforced disappearance. The Government was also devising a practical mechanism to build cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and follow-up on the state of human rights in Libya.

Turning to weapons of mass destruction, he pledged a "serious contribution" to their elimination and called for a legally binding instrument to ensure the security of non-nuclear States from the threat or use of nuclear weapons. Supporting initiatives to convene an Arab League conference on declaring the Middle East a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, he also encouraged efforts to complete a comprehensive United Nations convention on terrorism.

Citing the difficulties many African States faced in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, he called for greater economic assistance, advice and technical support from the developed world. The post-2015 agenda should build on the successes in the implementation of the Goals and the reaffirmation of the principles and findings of international summits to embody a true international partnership for development.

On the issue of reforming the United Nations, he stressed Africa's equitable representation in the Security Council in the permanent and non-permanent categories in order to make the Organization more democratic and efficient. He urged the international community to end the tragedy of the Palestinian people through a comprehensive solution that would establish the State of Palestine with Al Quds as its capital and guarantee refugees the right to return. On Syria, he urged the Security Council to act in accordance with the concept of the "right to protect", and called on the international community to put an end to the human tragedy experienced by the Muslim Rohingya minority in Myanmar.

KAMLA PERSAD-BISSESSAR, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, in her capacity as Chairperson of the Conference of the Heads of State and Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), opened her statement by congratulating John Ashe, President of the sixty-eighth General Assembly, saying his election was testimony to the contribution the grouping of small States continued to make to the advancement of the global agenda for peace, security and development. "Indeed it is evidence of the principle of the sovereign equality of all States enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations," she said, adding that nowhere else was this principle more recognizable than in the General Assembly.

Turning to the Millennium Development Goals, she said that, despite the early faith in the United Nations as a vehicle to assist developing countries, especially the most vulnerable, progress towards the Goals had been uneven. Stating that Trinidad and Tobago had made "tremendous strides" on the Goals, she urged developed countries to do more to help countries that had lagged behind. In addition to honouring their stated commitments, developed countries needed to do more by way of reforming their trade, tax and transparency policies and paying more attention to the regulation of global financial and commodity markets.

Welcoming the General Assembly declaration adopted Wednesday for a renewed commitment to and intensification of efforts towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals agenda, she called for a more inclusive architecture in the intergovernmental process towards the post-2015 agenda based on new partnership to advance action on sustainable development. She urged the international community to recognize the unique characteristics, challenges and vulnerabilities of small islands developing States, some of which were on the frontlines of experiencing a reversal of many of their gains.

Turning to the subject of small highly indebted middle income countries, she said some CARICOM members categorized as such were now deprived of concessional financing, although the impact of natural disasters, sea-level rise and climate change and debt continued to pose a serious challenge to their well-being. Calling for an immediate review of this urgent situation and appropriate remedial measures, she also demanded the end of the "anachronistic" embargo on Cuba. As peace, security and stability provided an

enabling environment for sustainable development, she encouraged all States that had not done so to sign and ratify the Arms Trade Treaty agreed to earlier in the year.

Voicing grave concern on the escalating humanitarian crisis in Syria, she said a solution would have to be found through dialogue. If there was evidence that individuals had committed war crimes within the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, steps should be taken to bring those individuals to justice.

MARIANO RAJOY BREY, Prime Minister of Spain, said his country was firmly committed to the United Nations, as demonstrated by the fact that Spain was the sixth largest contributor to the Organization's budget. That commitment legitimized its aspiration to serve the goals of the United Nations from within the Security Council in the 2015-2016 biennium, he said.

Spain's commitment to working for international peace and security was made evident this year during the crisis in Mali, he went on to note, saying that the country had supported the deployment of the African and subsequently United Nations peacekeeping forces. Defeating terrorism and having regained its territorial integrity was only the first step for Mali, he said, stressing that with the return of constitutional order, constructing open, inclusive national institutions were essential for the future of the country. In the long term, he said the international community must continue to support development throughout the Sahel, as this was the only way to promote security, democracy and prosperity in the region.

Turning to the Syrian crisis, he said the situation there had become "an intolerable, heart-breaking human drama" presenting a growing threat to regional and international peace and security. He said that Spain firmly believed that the brutal chemical attack against civilians must not be repeated. While commending the proposal by the Russian Federation and the United States on chemical weapons in Syria, he stressed it was necessary for the Security Council to adopt a resolution establishing a legally binding prohibition on the use of chemical weapons in Syria and to ensure their destruction. He stated that only political dialogue between the parties could put an end to the increasingly violent conflict, and expressed confidence in the success of the second Geneva Conference on Syria.

On the question of Gibraltar, he reiterated Spain's call to the United Kingdom to resume bilateral dialogue and regional cooperation, stressing that the territory had been included by the United Nations in the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories awaiting decolonization in 1963. As for Western Sahara, he said Spain supported the search for a fair, lasting and mutually acceptable solution, one that would enable the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

Addressing the theme of the general debate, he said the post-2015 agenda should be universal, focused on truly sustainable development and acknowledge the importance of open institutions in achieving inclusive growth. Spain had channeled much support through the United Nations system for helping achieve the Millennium Development Goals, he said, adding that as its economy regained strength, the country would make "generous, intelligent and effective investment" in development cooperation.

OQIL OQILOV, Prime Minister of Tajikistan, emphasized the need to include water resources on the global sustainable development agenda. To highlight the key role of water resources, he said his country had initiated several water-related General Assembly resolutions, including one declaring 2013 as the International Year of Water Cooperation. At the International Conference on Water Cooperation hosted by Tajikistan on 20-21 August, the President had put forward an initiative to develop a "road map" for the implementation of water-related sustainable development goals, he recalled, urging international support for that initiative.

While acknowledging the remarkable progress made in pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals, he pointed out that 768 million people were still using unsafe water sources, and that about 2.5 billion people lacked access to basic sanitation. Besides, the level of progress was unbalanced in different regions, and even different areas of the same countries, he said, stressing the need to accelerate implementation.

It would be impossible to achieve development targets without ensuring reliable and universal access to energy, he continued. It was also essential to increase the share of renewable energy sources in the total energy mix, to enhance energy efficiency and to promote the transfer of technology. As a country possessing huge hydropower potential, Tajikistan was undertaking every effort for the comprehensive development of its power engineering, he said.

Stressing that effective regional cooperation could make a considerable contribution to the formation of a new global partnership for sustainable development, he pointed out that in the Central Asian region, such cooperation depended in many respects on strengthening peace and security in Afghanistan. International aid to that country should be aimed, above all, at full economic recovery, further strengthening of the social sphere and generating new jobs, he said. Meanwhile, Tajikistan called on the international community to help Afghanistan's neighbours strengthen border controls and combat drug-trafficking, one of the major financing sources of terrorism.

In recent years, Tajikistan had intensified its interaction with the United Nations special procedures on human rights, he went said. The desire to contribute to an open and fair dialogue in the human rights field had motivated the country to submit its candidacy for the United Nations Human Rights Council for the period 2015-2017, he said, expressing hope that Tajikistan would win support at the elections to be held during the General Assembly's sixty-ninth session.

PIERRE MOUKOKO MBONJO, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cameroon, spoke on behalf of President Paul Biya, firmly condemning the terrorist attack in Kenya. He commended the end of the crisis in Mali and the subsequent democratic election of Malian President Boubacar Keita, which was a milestone in peacebuilding and reconciliation. Cameroon, he said, would achieve only some of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, adding it had made progress in health care, which was a catalyst for socioeconomic development and poverty reduction. He stated that Cameroon was committed to fighting the HIV/AIDS pandemic, noting that it had allocated substantial resources, distributed free antiretroviral therapy and instituted programmes to prevent mother-to-child transmission. The HIV infection rate, he said, had fallen more than half from 10.5 per cent in 2000 to 4.3 per cent in 2012. He said that to achieve the Millennium target of universal access to primary education, the Government had expanded school infrastructure and lowered the student-to-teacher ratio. Today, Cameroon had one of the highest literacy rates in sub-Saharan Africa, he noted.

It was vital to set the stage for the post-2015 development agenda, drawing on lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goals, he said. As nations grappling with climate change, the financial crisis and food insecurity had difficulty in meeting the Goals, he said it was necessary to look at whether they had been too ambitious, their target date set too early, and if sufficient resources had been made available for implementation. In Cameroon, consultations had been held to enable civil society to issue recommendations for the post-Millennium Development Goals framework, he said. Future goals, he added, should particularly focus on job creation as an economic driver. He remarked that in 2010 Cameroon crafted a strategic document on growth and employment, aimed at reducing poverty and making tangible improvements in people's living conditions, particularly that of women and youth. He said that the post-2015 framework also must address environmental concerns and that there must be better oversight of the financial and raw materials markets in order to enable countries to better resist external shocks. He suggested setting up a support fund, as well as regular regional and global follow-up mechanisms for each new goal set.

Turning to the state of affairs in Africa, he expressed concern over the situation in the Central African Republic, eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and North Africa. To help alleviate the worst humanitarian crisis in the Central African Republic's history, he said Cameroon and other States of the Economic Community of Central African States had sent troops to stabilize the situation on the ground. He supported Central Africa's efforts to operationalize a support mission and mobilize humanitarian aid for the Central African Republic. He said that recurrent acts of banditry such as kidnappings of civilians and maritime piracy were growing at an alarming rate, noting that in 2012, the number of maritime piracy attacks in West Africa had surpassed the number of attacks in the Gulf of Eden and the Indian Ocean. To address the problem, he said Cameroon's Government in June 2013 sponsored in Yaounde a joint summit of the Economic Community of Central African states, Economic Community of West African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission. Those three institutions, he stated, decided to set up an interregional coordination centre in Cameroon to fight piracy. He concluded his remarks by calling for the support of all partners.

ESPEN BARTH EIDE, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway, expressed condolences for the tragic loss of life in Nairobi, saying terrorists must never be allowed to set the agenda. Efforts to work with the African Union to promote peace and stability in Somalia must be redoubled, he said, recalling that in recent years, his country had worked with Colombia to lay the foundation for lasting peace between its Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) movement. In doing so, Norway had learned that peace required the cooperation of neighbouring countries. He also commended the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) for its constructive role in supporting democratic reform in Myanmar.

He said Norway and other Arctic States had deepened their cooperation to implement the Convention on the Law of the Sea, adding that his country had observed global warming close to home. As the polar ice cap melted, it was reminded of the world's shared responsibility to tackle climate change. In the last few years, Norway had striven to develop forward-looking strategies for the safe management of the Arctic Ocean, which had become a maritime crossroads between Asia, Europe and North America.

He welcomed the return to negotiations of Israeli and Palestinian leaders, recalling that earlier today, he had chaired a meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, the international donor group for Palestine. Donors had reaffirmed their commitment to providing vital aid to the Palestinian Authority through the current transition to statehood. That could be the last chance, he said, emphasizing that it was one that the world could not afford to miss.

The use of chemical weapons was unacceptable and a grave violation of international law, and those responsible must be brought to justice, he stressed. The Syrian crisis could only be solved through a political solution, and the Security Council must live up to its responsibility in that regard. Humanitarian access for all parties to all areas must be ensured, and the bloodshed must end.

Faced with scarce resources, accentuated by global economic pressures, the Secretary-General should have greater, not less, flexibility, he said, expressing regret that in 2012, the Assembly had decided to cut the 2014-2015 United Nations budget by \$100 million. "Reducing the budget whilst increasing the number of tasks is a recipe for a weaker, not a stronger United Nations," he pointed out, calling on the Assembly to "be coherent" in its policy. Rather than micromanaging, the Assembly should provide guidance, he said.

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