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Fifty-eighth session

Official Records

8th plenary meeting

Tuesday, 23 September 2003, 3 p.m.
New York

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte. (Saint Lucia)

In the absence of the President, Mrs. Veiga (Cape Verde), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Address by Mrs. Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President of the Republic of Latvia

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will first hear an address by the President of the Republic of Latvia.

Mrs. Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Mrs. Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President of the Republic of Latvia. I invite her to address the Assembly.

President Vike-Freiberga: I would like to begin by extending Latvia's heartfelt congratulations to Mr. Julian Hunte on his appointment as President of the United Nations General Assembly. Latvia highly values his extensive experience and is confident that he will succeed in his efforts to hasten the pace of reforms within the Assembly. I am pleased that a broad consensus on the main goals of these reforms was achieved during the previous session, and I wish him success in his responsible duties.

Three days ago, the people of Latvia made a historical decision that will influence their country's

course of development over the next foreseeable decades, or even centuries. On 20 September 2003, the people of Latvia decided, in a referendum, to join the European Union. In voting for accession to this influential body of free and democratic nations, my country became the last of 10 candidate States to confirm its commitment to a strong and united Europe and to the extension of a growing family of secure and prosperous nations.

It is our hope that this extended Union of 25 member States will serve not only to promote the welfare of its citizens, but also to become an even more significant contributor to international stability and worldwide prosperity. The European Union is already the world's largest provider of development assistance and Latvia looks forward to undertaking the responsibilities and commitments that this entails. This includes taking an active part in the formulation of priorities to ensure that the assistance provided by the European Union reaches those who need it most.

Latvia and her Baltic neighbours reappeared on the international stage only twelve short years ago, following half a century of totalitarian rule under Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia. Our success story of rebirth and renewal testifies to the fact that through hard work and dedicated effort the re-establishment of democratic societies and functioning market economies can be realized within a relatively short period of time.

Many other nations in transition are now undertaking similar paths of development and reform. Latvia is already sharing its experiences with other

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developing countries, and will continue to do so in the future.

Twelve years ago, when Latvia became a member of the United Nations, the Soviet Union was in the process of breaking up and the Cold War was coming to an end. As the threat of a nuclear conflagration between two mutually hostile superpowers receded, new challenges to world security were coming to the fore, and older ones were showing no sign of going away.

Perhaps humanity's greatest problem lies in its propensity for violence, which manifests itself in all levels of society, starting with the abusive individual in the family household and ending in armed conflict in the international arena. Even peaceful countries with lengthy traditions of non-intervention and domestic tranquillity are finding themselves faced with tragic acts of senseless violence that include the beating and killing of immigrants and political assassinations.

The unrest and turmoil in the Middle East, which has lasted for well over five decades, shows no sign of abating and can only come to an end once violence is firmly forsaken as a means for obtaining political ends. Latvia views the road map for peace, which foresees a free and secure State of Israel living in peace alongside an independent Palestinian State as the only feasible means for ending the dangerous impasse that both sides have now reached. The alternative is a continuing escalation of bloodshed, a never-ending cycle of killing and mounting mutual hostility.

Latvia is ready to promote the establishment of a lasting peace in the region, under the auspices of both the United Nations and the European Union. We encourage the interested parties to do everything within their means to de-escalate tensions and put the peace process back on track.

The establishment of a genuine and lasting peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians would also have an additional benefit. It would remove the Palestinian cause as an excuse for terrorists to justify their actions of murder and destruction. As the events of the last few years so poignantly reveal, terrorism and arms proliferation have become two of the largest threats to world security today.

Currently, the international community is deeply divided about the ethics and feasibility of implementing direct military action against

Governments that are deemed to support and sponsor terrorism. In the case of Afghanistan and Iraq, where undeniably repressive regimes were removed by force through outside intervention, the military measures undertaken by the United States and its allies will have to be followed by comprehensive international efforts to help those countries rebuild their societies and their economies. I am certain that most of us would agree on the need for reconstruction and security regardless of our opinion about the foreign military presence in these two countries.

Within the limited means at its disposal, Latvia has sent humanitarian assistance and military medical personnel to Afghanistan and has dispatched a military contingent to help maintain order in post-war Iraq.

As we collectively seek to avoid a clash of civilizations between different societies in the world, so we must seek to reduce the growing discrepancies between the rich and the poor. Poverty afflicts every single member country of the United Nations. About three billion people, or half the world's population, struggle to subsist on the equivalent of less than two dollars a day. Seventy per cent of the world's poorest people live in rural areas and depend on agriculture for their subsistence. The Millennium Goal of reducing poverty and of halving the proportion of people earning less than one dollar a day can be achieved only by improving the plight of poor farmers and creating viable agricultural communities. Poor farmers in developing countries cannot compete with products subsidized by the treasuries of the world's richest countries.

At this month's World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference in Cancún, Mexico, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan urged the WTO member States to say no to trade policies that aggravate poverty and to say yes to bold and sensible steps that will revive the global economy and set the new course for development.

Poverty also provides fertile ground for modern-day slavery and the trafficking of humans, which continues to occur in nearly all regions of the globe. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, an estimated 27 million people are still being bought, sold, held captive, brutalized and exploited for profit. Together with non-governmental organizations that are working to stop slavery, and through international organizations

such as the United Nations, our Governments must help those slaves break free from their chains.

We all live in a world where such deadly diseases as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and, lately, SARS, to name a few, know no borders. It is only through the continued vigilance of our countries' health officials and through close international cooperation that we will ever be able to keep those mortal dangers in check. I hope that yesterday's AIDS conference has strengthened the resolve and confidence of participants to overcome this great affliction.

The Government of Latvia is actively pursuing its commitments under the Millennium Declaration to attain the Millennium Development Goals. For example, it has prepared a national action plan to address the needs of children in consultation with local authorities, non-governmental organizations and the children themselves. In cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme office in Riga, it has also established a working group that is devoting particular attention to the reduction of child mortality and the improvement of mothers' health.

During the twentieth century, mankind inflicted more environmental damage on our planet than during all of the previous centuries combined. If we do not devote greater efforts to reducing environmental pollution, including greenhouse gas emissions, then future generations stand to inherit a planet with increasingly destructive climate change and with a forest cover that is restricted to scattered nature reserves. We must avoid reaching the stage at which the Earth's energy and food resources become irreversibly depleted. People and Governments must be willing to make difficult economic sacrifices for the sake of a cleaner environment.

Since its foundation in 1945, the United Nations has seen the number of its Member States increase almost fourfold. It has seen European colonialism, the Cold War and apartheid come to an end. It has successfully brokered the cessation of hostilities in Cyprus, East Timor and other countries. It has provided trillions of dollars of development assistance to numerous countries. Latvia believes that the United Nations should remain the principal world body for the mediation of international disputes and for the formulation of universal rules of conduct that all abide by.

However, the United Nations has also been criticized for being slow, unwieldy and ineffectual. Few would disagree that it has reached a point where changes within its structure are required so that it can effectively deal with the new challenges of the twenty-first century. Let us recall that a working group on the reform of the Security Council was created already ten years ago, shortly after the collapse of the bipolar world that had dominated international relations for decades. At that time there were hopes that an unprecedented degree of unity might be reached within the United Nations community. For the moment, however, it appears that any substantial changes within the United Nations will have to await a renewed climate of consensus, which is not likely to precede the resolution of the crisis in the Middle East, the settling of trade disputes and the establishment of greater unity about agricultural subsidies, arms proliferation and environmental issues.

Latvia firmly believes in the universal ideals that this Organization embodies and is ready, within the limited means at its disposal, to contribute to their realization. The United Nations presents our 191 Member States with the unique opportunity to work together for the benefit of humanity. Let us hope that our efforts will be coordinated and constructive, so that we may make the twenty-first century one of security, peace, and continued development.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I would like to thank the President of the Republic of Latvia for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Nicanor Duarte Frutos, President of the Republic of Paraguay

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Paraguay.

Mr. Nicanor Duarte Frutos, President of the Republic of Paraguay, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, it is my honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency

Mr. Nicanor Duarte Frutos, President of the Republic of Paraguay, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Duarte Frutos (*spoke in Spanish*): Two hundred years after the first cry of freedom in Latin America, our peoples are propelled by new winds of emancipation. A fresh generation of leaders has taken up the old flags of our heroes to demand real global interdependence through an economic order inspired by solidarity and by the building of a lasting peace.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the commendable work that he has done to uphold and promote the principles that were enshrined in the Charter 58 years ago.

For too long, Latin America had been on the margins of history. It had been reduced to playing the part of providing inexpensive labour and raw materials to more developed economies, while its most brilliant minds were lured away and absorbed by large urban markets. Our region has also fallen victim to mercenaries, soldiers of fortune and heartless people representing dehumanizing and destructive transnational corporations that overthrew Governments, provoked wars between friendly countries and squandered our countries' resources.

Nevertheless, we are not here to complain about those ignominious days. Nor are we here to cling to the glories of the past. On the contrary, we have come to express our firm will to work together for a dignified present and a secure future for those who are now dying from hunger, thirst, cold and easily preventable and treatable diseases. Our voices today arise from our roots, cultures and traditions, and proclaim a Latin America that is integrated into the world, with a fresh sense of fraternity, to make the lives of our peoples more humane and enriching.

We must seek a multipolar world in which cultures enhance rather than confront one another and regional production promotes peace and prosperity in the world to save present and future generations from the terrible scourge of new major conflicts. Let us make a renewed commitment, without scepticism and with the intrinsic dignity that God has bestowed on every human being.

In Paraguay, a small but dignified country, we are making a major effort at capacity-building with respect

to national and international communities. A sine qua non is to revive production, attract investors back and sell our products on world markets.

Although our peoples have suffered long years of recession and deprivation because of the foreign debt burden, my Government has managed to redirect public resources towards education and to coordinate the efforts of civil society and the State to democratize young people's access to the world of knowledge. Only effective human capital, with ethical principles, will enable us to survive and grow in a climate of globalization. Towards that end, we fervently hope for a globalization that involves not simply economics but also justice, science, technology and development. Our challenge is to achieve global progress.

I come from an island surrounded by land, as Paraguay's renowned writer Augusto Roa Bastos so aptly described the country. But with the advent of democracy, to the credit of the people's self-sacrifice, our country has restored its identity, memories and dreams. We Paraguayans accept our geographical disadvantage as an opportunity to be creative and industrious, as our development requires. For this reason, we appeal for international solidarity to help to implement the plan of action of Almaty, which is designed to overcome the limitations of landlocked developing countries, including Paraguay.

We have a strong ethical belief in this historic objective. The inequality that impoverishes most of the world is immoral. There is not a trace of Christianity in the lack of solidarity with the destitute. In that regard, the individual must be treated as a whole person, so that he may in turn bring well-being to his family, for the sake of all society. If leaders do not provide a moral example, it will not be possible to advance towards a democracy that is embraced by the people and fosters true participation in a society that is distinguished by its moral capital, the essential basis of a humanistic and humanizing economy. A world in crisis requires humanism, not humanitarianism. The world seeks solidarity, and not mere charity.

We must understand that the impoverishment of a large share of humankind jeopardizes world balance. It is true that many countries have become impoverished not simply as a result of outside influences but also because of corruption and impunity on the part of local leaders. But it is equally true that without an ethical belief in the international order and the strong will of

leaders to praise God and renounce historical patterns of greed of rich countries, the world that we leave to our children will not be fit for living.

Unfortunately, while we are shaping a future based on ideals and utopias in this hallowed chamber of world peace, we have not figured out how to end war, since in various parts of the world the arms race continues, as does growing poverty. It bears repeating that, as leaders of our respective countries, we must cease speaking in terms of friends and enemies, which has a weakening and destructive effect. We must use that energy and those resources to ensure just social development in economically less-developed countries. Without pluralistic and equitable participation in crucial international policy decisions discussed here in our Organization and a commitment to multilateralism, the United Nations and, in particular, the Security Council, will inevitably fail in its noble objective of maintaining peace in the world.

In this context, Paraguay supports the aspirations of Latin America and other continents to be represented in the Security Council, where the presence of Brazil as a permanent member would fulfil the great and legitimate interests of our region.

Paraguay would like to reiterate here its full support for the efforts and aspirations of the Republic of China on Taiwan to become a fully-fledged member of the international community through the United Nations. In this regard, we appeal to the principles of universality contained in the Charter so that this long-overdue and heartfelt desire of the sister Republic of China on Taiwan may be fulfilled.

As I said some weeks ago in my own country — and as I reaffirm here — the ethics of fraternity and mutual respect must govern international relations today if humanity is to make progress towards lasting peace inspired by the rule of law and reason.

With the same vigour with which we advocate worldwide peace, we condemn terrorism in all its manifestations and sources. In Paraguay, we have pledged — a pledge we are resolutely fulfilling — to combat the breeding grounds of terrorism and its financial support, drug trafficking. We shall not deviate from that commitment. Likewise, we energetically denounce the terrorist action against the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad that occurred yesterday and that of 19 August. We mourn the death of outstanding United Nations staff members, including

the distinguished Brazilian and Latin American citizen, Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. In that same line of action, in Paraguay we are dismantling organized crime and money-laundering, regardless of who promotes, conceals or commits those crimes.

I reiterate that our country will no longer be a bridge, corridor or end point for such criminal operations. With the same energy with which we combat crime and illegality, we reaffirm our unwavering commitment to respecting human rights, which is an increasingly important part of our domestic and foreign policies, promoting full enjoyment of public and individual freedoms for the peoples of the world.

The fight for freedom, democracy, social equity and world peace will be of no avail if we do not more responsibly face the challenges for the preservation of our environment. Let us seek the well-being of our peoples today but not forget that our children will live on this planet tomorrow. In Paraguay and Latin America, we are determined to be the protagonists and architects of a shared destiny of responsibility, justice and equality.

Finally, may the new global order be more human, supportive, responsible and participative, and may its essential purpose be to promote development, progress and the well-being of all the peoples of the Earth in an environment that is truly more just, fair and balanced. May God bless us and may we build together the peace that our children and future generations need.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Paraguay for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Nicanor Duarte Frutos, President of the Republic of Paraguay, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Hâmid Karzai, President of Afghanistan

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will hear an address by the President of Afghanistan.

Mr. Hâmid Karzai, President of Afghanistan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Hâmid Karzai, President of Afghanistan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Karzai: There is no reality more oppressive than the silence of a nation. For too long, Afghanistan was a silenced nation, a country without a voice. After decades of being suppressed into silence, our nation is beginning to have a voice of its own. Recovering from the tragedy of war and destruction, Afghanistan is determined to reverse the effects of the suffering it has long endured.

A lot has changed in Afghanistan over the last two years. But no change is so critical and pervasive as the animated response of the people of Afghanistan to the recent developments in our country. I find no sight more rewarding than that of our young girls and boys flocking to schools every morning. I find few things more engaging than the company of elderly representatives who come to Kabul from far-flung parts of the country to discuss their priorities for reconstruction. And, in the same order, there is nothing more enthusing than the active participation of Afghan men and women in the process of public consultation for the new constitution.

From the public consultations conducted in connection with the constitution drafting process, we know that the people of Afghanistan want a modern, unitary State that is committed to Islamic values and the preservation of peace and national unity, a State that ensures security for all its citizens, enforces justice and the rule of law and promotes prosperity. As in any post-war society, the need for security and for removing the threat of arms and armed factions is a compelling issue for all Afghans. Our people demand the establishment of truly national and competent institutions, notably the army and the police. Afghans want State institutions that are professional and representative and an administration that is efficient and free of corruption. The Afghan people want tolerance for other religions, protection of human rights and affirmative action to promote the rights of women.

Since I addressed the Assembly in September of last year, Afghanistan has taken significant strides in the path of post-war reconstruction. While total stability may not have been achieved yet, today Afghanistan is more stable and peaceful than in any

other period in its recent history. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), to the credit of the participating countries, has done a tremendous job of securing the nation's capital. That is partly the reason that people from other parts of the country have demanded that ISAF be expanded to their areas, too. We see NATO's decision to take over the command of ISAF in Kabul as a positive development. The Afghan people have also welcomed the provincial reconstruction teams that are supported by the coalition member States. Reconstruction and security are tied to one another, and we are absolutely certain that no matter what flag they fly, forces that ensure stability will be welcomed throughout Afghanistan.

However, we recognize that providing security to the people of Afghanistan is ultimately our own responsibility. We are grateful to the international community, the United States and Germany in particular, for making a determined effort to help us embark on a process of reforming and rebuilding our security institutions, namely the Afghan National Army and the national police.

After an arduous process of restructuring, we have just completed the reform of the Ministry of Defence. That step is now paving the way for the implementation of the nation-wide programme on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, which will begin in earnest in mid-October with assistance from Japan.

A Constitution is the bedrock of the modern State. Under the Bonn Agreement, my Government was assigned the historic task of giving Afghanistan its new Constitution. The commission assigned that task has just finished the draft Constitution. The draft will be submitted in December for approval to a constitutional grand council of the Afghan people, which in our language is called a Loya Jirga. Work on the reform of the judicial system and on drafting new secondary laws has also continued, with notable outcomes achieved in recent months. The laws on political parties and banking have now been officially adopted.

Having started from a below-zero baseline, the 30 per cent economic growth rate that Afghanistan enjoyed last year is a promising start. Committed as we are to an open-market economy, and seeing the private sector as the true engine for growth, we have moved aggressively to create the legal and financial

frameworks needed for a positive environment for the private sector. Our newly adopted laws governing investment, banking and property rights, the new stable currency and the bureaucratic reforms we have enacted provide a liberal and conducive underpinning for rapid economic growth. Like never before, Afghanistan is open to business.

Once, in the past, Afghanistan was at the centre of a global threat, that of terrorism. Our vision for the future is that Afghanistan should be a centre for economic opportunity. We do not call ourselves a land-locked country; rather, we are a land-bridging country. Afghanistan connects South Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East, a fact to which geo-strategists have long been attracted. But it is time that Afghanistan's vast potential for facilitating trade and economic activity is exploited.

Through such nationwide programmes as the National Solidarity Programme, the Government aims to take reconstruction to the villages and households of Afghanistan. Perhaps no other priority features more widely in the demands of the Afghan people than the provision of education. Today, fortunately, almost 40 per cent of the students and teachers in primary and secondary education are female. That is a huge increase from the close to zero percentage that we inherited from the Taliban. Millions of textbooks have been published, and schools are being built at a higher rate than ever. However, in other areas of service-provision the need is much greater than our capacity to deliver.

The struggle against the production of, and trafficking in, narcotics continues. We see a direct connection between narcotics and terrorism, and it is in our absolute national interest to fight both. Both are transnational challenges. We in the region and in the international community must take the strategic decision, in the spirit of true partnership, to fight against both menaces.

As we acknowledge that the road ahead for Afghanistan is long and tortuous, we appreciate the fact that significant achievements have been made over the last two years. The people of Afghanistan are grateful to the international community for its crucial support. While countries that have extended a friendly hand to Afghanistan are far too many to thank individually, it would be unfair not to single out the United States, the European Union and Japan for special thanks. The United States of America has led

the international community by example in offering support for Afghanistan. The additional assistance provided to us under the Accelerated Success Initiative will go a long way towards rebuilding our country. The neighbours of Afghanistan also have a special place in our hearts. Our people will always remember the warm welcome they received from their brothers and sisters in Pakistan and Iran. In addition, Afghans hold Secretary-General Kofi Annan and his Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi in very high esteem. Their kind-hearted attention to Afghanistan is highly appreciated.

Cognizant of our new situation and the emerging opportunities that exist today, we are determined to build friendly, civil and constructive relationships with countries of the world. We continue to extend a sincere hand of friendship to Pakistan and all our other neighbours on the basis of the requirements of a civilized relationship. We will never permit our territory to be used against any other country, and expect the same in return.

We are deeply concerned about the loss of innocent lives in Palestine and Israel. We support the realization of the right to self-determination for our Palestinian brothers and sisters.

We are fully committed to remaining a resilient partner with the international community in the fight against terrorism.

All the achievements I have just noted amount only to a good beginning. Our challenge is to stay the course. That will depend not only on the resolute determination of the Afghan people, but also on the continued engagement of the international community.

While the achievements are significant, and although challenges are inevitable, today, in this forum, I wish to point to what can potentially amount to a critical threat, namely, the ongoing threat of terrorism. The crisis in Afghanistan may well be over, but the forces of violence continue to threaten. Embodied in various manifestations, from militant infiltrations to hateful teachings at places disguised as madrassas, terrorism continues to make inroads into the space of peace and prosperity that we want to secure for our nation.

Islam, our universalist religion, has absolutely no place for terrorism. The apostles of hatred who preach murder in the name of religion and who abuse the name

of Islam and the sanctity of madrassas are the enemies of Islam. They act against all that Islam teaches, namely, peace, tolerance, compassion, social justice and the good of humanity.

Terrorists aim to harm the nation of Afghanistan, a deeply believing Muslim nation that is averse to extremism. They pose a threat to the process of reconstruction in Afghanistan. Terrorists see their lasting defeat in the success of reconstruction. They are therefore maliciously intent on derailing the process of reconstruction in Afghanistan. That must stop. We must defeat the forces and ideas of violence in the region. Today terrorism is a liability to the Governments in the region. Governments must stop using extremism as an instrument of policy. As long as terrorism survives in this part of the world, neither Afghanistan nor our neighbours, nor indeed the rest of the world, can be safe.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Afghanistan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hâmid Karzai, President of Afghanistan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Vladimir Voronin, President of the Republic of Moldova

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Moldova.

Mr. Vladimir Voronin, President of the Republic of Moldova, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Vladimir Voronin, President of the Report of Moldova, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Voronin (*spoke in Romanian; English text provided by the delegation*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate the Honourable Julian Hunte on the occasion of his election to the important position of President, at the fifty-eighth session, of the General Assembly — the most representative and prestigious organization in the world. I am convinced that his election is recognition of both the achievements of the country he represents and his personal merits.

Allow me also to express my gratitude to Mr. Jan Kavan for the responsibility he showed in carrying out his duties as President at the previous session.

I also must point out the remarkable role played by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, in enhancing the authority and efficiency of the United Nations, particularly in the context of the dramatic events that the international community faced during the past few years. For the entire world, the United Nations was and continues to be an organization serving the noble ideals of peace, equality and economic prosperity of the peoples on our planet.

The international community has undertaken enormous efforts to ensure that phenomena alien to the spirit and aspirations of the contemporary world such as poverty, oppression, terrorism and the dangers of ecological disaster are perceived as reasons for general concern that have in turn led to mobilization of all nations' forces. We are aware of how the international community has gone beyond adopting emotive humanitarian declarations to establish institutions and organizations that are not only actively analysing various problems, but are also working to correct economic, social and political developments, wherever they occur.

Global threats are being given a global rebuff, and the chaos of destruction is ever more strongly opposed by integrated ethics and new technology for structuring international relations based on supranational values of human civilization, the universality of the principles of democracy, civil freedoms and life itself.

The epochal Millennium Summit and the summits held at Rome, Monterrey, Doha and Johannesburg marked the foreshadowing of a new system of global priorities aimed at preventing and neutralizing possible threats. Clearly, that system is leaving less and less room for resolving the individual problems of sovereign States and is increasingly opening the way for making use of international mechanisms to that end. That system, which has been increasingly gaining in modern politics, is now determining the new context of the relationship between States and international institutions, excluding the dependent attitude of trivial profiting assumed by national elites towards international assistance and requiring a responsible and decisive approach to the issue of reforming our own

economies and establishing modern social and political standards.

Undoubtedly, we are currently entering a century of integration, an era in which traditional inter-State barriers are coming down. Yet, it is an era in which the local interests of some countries may in fact lead to benefits for the entire community. Therefore, it is extremely important to be aware that the current stage of globalization will not disappoint us, only if, on the way to integration — the integration of values and standards — the initiative for taking the first step belongs to the States themselves. That is a task that in principle is new for all us — heads of State and politicians.

It is not gratuitous that I began my speech with these considerations. I did so at the outset because only such an approach can provide for the success of the State I represent to significant extent.

Moldova embarked on the path of independent development 12 years ago. The chronic Transnistrian problem, de-industrialization and economic recession, poverty, nationalism and separatism served for a decade as the calling card of our country.

The “first step” policy is being implemented in Moldova in two areas of the utmost importance. First, there is the problem of the Transnistrian settlement. We are aware of the fundamental character of the motives that are at the core of this 10-year-old conflict. As the primary way to resolve these contradictions, we have proposed that a new State constitution be drafted and adopted through joint efforts. In the draft that currently is being elaborated, we are insisting on giving up the status of unitary State, which does not take into account the profound specific characteristics of the Transnistrian region. We are laying as the basis of the new State draft the principles of the federative organization of our country, which take into consideration the long-term interests of all the regions of Moldova.

In eliminating the effects of the nationalistic hysteria characteristic of the early 1990s, which divided both the society and the country, Moldova has declared itself determined to build a harmonious multi-ethnic society, based on principles of ethnic and linguistic liberalism and pluralism. I believe that it is precisely this policy that corresponds to those integrationist trends that are replacing isolationism and secessionism.

Unity in diversity — that is the principle of our policy today, and that is the motto of the Moldovan chairmanship in the Council of Europe. We are firmly convinced that only those transformations will be able to serve as the proper basis for resolving both the domestic problems of the Moldovan State and the problems concerning regional security.

In the second place, the Republic of Moldova has proclaimed the path of European integration a priority national strategy of the State. We are well aware of how difficult that path is, and of the responsibility it requires, but at the same time we firmly state that it represents first and foremost an internal political and economic option for Moldova. We know that this option requires effective and comprehensive consolidation of the market economy institutions, further advancement of democratic reforms and the development of civil society and the social sphere. Yet however difficult the task before us may be, we hope that in time our decision will lead to the establishment of a national consensus.

The President took the Chair.

Peace and security on our planet may constitute the guarantee that all States will adopt a joint position regarding the acknowledgement of modern social, economic, political and legal standards. It is clear that there is no other way. Humankind is currently more vulnerable than ever to crises and disasters of every scope and degree. That is why civilization today does not have, and should not have, any local problems; nor does it, or should it, have any dark corners where, as in a hothouse, terrorism, repression and defiant disdain for the opinion of the international community can flourish.

In developing such a position, the most important role lies with the Security Council. In that context, I express my support for the idea of making the Security Council more representative. The Republic of Moldova stands for a reasonable increase in the number of permanent and non-permanent members in the Security Council, which would further ensure the principle of equal geographic representation and would reflect the interests of all regional groups. Fully aware of the difficulty of reaching consensus on that issue, I call upon all Members of the United Nations to make every effort to adopt a definitive decision to that end.

The Republic of Moldova also supports the idea of restoring the role of the General Assembly as the

most important, representative and deliberative body of the United Nations. Along the same lines, I think there is a need to consolidate further the capacity of the Economic and Social Council as the coordinator of United Nations funds and programmes. I am sure that the further development of United Nations institutions and structures will be the best proof of the viability of the principles of the Organization, its growing prestige and its leading role in the world. I express the hope that the United Nations will know how to place itself at the vanguard of current positive developments.

I am firmly convinced that the proceedings of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly will take place in a spirit of sincere cooperation and solidarity, so that the representatives of all States will make sustained efforts to achieve the noble goals of peace, stability and prosperity.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Moldova for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Vladimir Voronin, President of the Republic of Moldova, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

**Address by Mr. Francisco Guillermo Flores Pérez,
President of the Republic of El Salvador**

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of El Salvador.

Mr. Francisco Guillermo Flores Pérez, President of the Republic of El Salvador, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome His Excellency Mr. Francisco Guillermo Flores Pérez, President of the Republic of El Salvador, and to invite him to address the General Assembly.

President Flores Pérez (*spoke in Spanish*): Before addressing the pressing issues before the international community and expressing our position on the issues that have been discussed here, I would like to begin by referring to the concrete example of my own country.

On 6 January 2003, the people and Government of El Salvador received an official communication from the Secretary-General informing us of the

completion of the verification function of the United Nations vis-à-vis the Peace Agreement that ended 13 years of war in our country. Eleven years have elapsed since that historic Peace Agreement put an end to an armed conflict that had been destroying our country for over a decade.

Before the war we were a poor country. Sixty-per cent of our fellow citizens lived under the poverty line. Our country has also been dealt a harsh blow by nature. Every generation of Salvadorans has had to rebuild their lives due to the fact that, throughout our history, there has never been a twenty-five-year period without the occurrence of a natural disaster of enormous proportions. We are also an overpopulated country, with over 6 million inhabitants sharing 21,000 square kilometres. That makes us one of the most densely populated countries of the American continent. Being completely dependant on agriculture, fluctuations in the prices of coffee and sugar have always determined our prospects for development.

A little over a decade ago we stood no chance of meeting our financial commitments. Our debts far exceeded our ability to pay. Poor, small, overpopulated, indebted, dependent upon agriculture, afflicted by natural disasters and immersed in a widespread armed conflict, El Salvador appeared not to have a future barely 12 years ago. Violence, coupled with the harsh realities of underdevelopment, appeared to have doomed us to a vicious circle devoid of hope.

We are a different country today. We view the future with confidence, for we have discovered our capacities. In just 12 years we have reduced poverty by half, from 60 per cent of our population, in 1991, to 33 per cent today. Over 30 per cent of our population had been living in extreme poverty. Today only half as many, 15 per cent, live in that distressing situation. Our efforts have had a direct impact on the standard of living of all of our citizens. Twelve years ago 25 per cent of Salvadorans did not know how to read or write. That figure is only 13 per cent today. The child mortality rate, which had been at 45 per thousand births, stands at 25 per thousand today.

We have accomplished all that by dedicating ourselves to the most pressing needs of our people. In order to connect our most isolated towns, we have built one kilometre of road every day for the last four years. We have also built three schools every day in the same period, so as to educate our poorest children. Similarly,

we have built 106 houses every day for low-income families. And every five days we have built a new health centre.

Having once been completely dependent on agriculture, today we rank number 3, out of 24 Latin American countries, in terms of export growth. During the difficult decade of the 1990s we managed to grow at a much faster rate than our region at large. We have now become the second-ranking country in Latin America in economic growth.

Despite the immense burden posed by reconstruction after the earthquakes of 2001, year after year we have reduced our budget deficit, bringing it to under 1 per cent in 2004. This has allowed us to control inflation, lowering it from 30 per cent to 2 per cent this year, and thus to avoid a decline in family income. We have zero risk of devaluation and today, after having seen interest rates of 30 per cent, we have the lowest bank interest rates of our region — 6.8 per cent. For 11 years now, we have had no fluctuation in exchange rates, allowing us to acquire a rate of investment that is matched in Latin America only by Chile, Mexico and my country.

The living conditions of Salvadorans have changed considerably. Rates of unemployment have fallen from 13 per cent to 6.8 per cent. Having had only 250,000 telephone lines in 1992, we now have 1.6 million. It is less expensive to make a telephone call from El Salvador to United Nations Headquarters than it is from Headquarters to El Salvador. In just over a decade, the number of automobiles has grown by a factor of four. We have managed to increase the supply of drinking water and electrification in rural areas by 50 per cent. We have achieved peace. We have devoted our energies to economic development and our resources to the poorest among us.

I have elaborated on developments in my country in recent years because it seems to me that we in El Salvador have discovered an effective way not only of resolving violent conflict, but also of combating poverty. Such means, which the international community is seeking to confront the complexities of our world, to understand the case of El Salvador is to understand new possibilities for other nations and solutions to other problems.

The two most important challenges for a nation are learning how to live and understanding why we are

alive. The former is an entirely practical matter, requiring knowledge of the workings of the modern world — how it works and what opportunities are available to a poor country in a world that is rapidly evolving. The second is an entirely abstract matter, but it is all the more important for that, because only when we are clear about the meaning of our shared lives can we develop a sense of purpose that allows us to channel the energies of a community towards a national objective.

It is a paradox rich in significance that we Salvadorans, in order to find our commitment to the future, had to delve into the traditions that gave us our identity in the past. When we found ourselves in the dead end of war, we had to rethink our destiny. In spite of our suffering, we had all the resources we needed to move ahead: talent, energy, experience, faith and will. We had the prudence to avoid future dangers and the courage to confront present challenges.

The basic principle on which we have built our country is that every Salvadoran has access to the truth. In every part of our land, it is possible for every Salvadoran to speak out, to express himself or herself without any constraint based on status. It is on the basis of the views of our compatriots that we have built the new El Salvador. We decided that, if this were to become a reality, three principles were needed: freedom, justice and the inalienable right to life. The concrete manifestations of these values are democracy, economic freedom and the rule of law. This applies not only to El Salvador and Salvadorans, but equally to all the inhabitants of our world. Every human being has access to the truth. It is in the human capacity for reason that we find our moral potential. That is why we must be free.

At a time when we wonder about the role of the United Nations, we must recall that the Organization was born to ensure those fundamental rights. This forum cannot be paralysed in debates when freeing a nation from tyranny is at issue. We must all act in the face of oppression. Terrorism is a negation of all the values we share. We need a consensus on the values that unite us and a renewed will for action.

We can debate interminably here the issue of Iraq and the current circumstances of the Iraqi people, but what brooks no debate is the fact that this forum has not acted in a way commensurate with the demands of an increasingly complex world. The United Nations

must be rethought and restructured so that it can meet the objectives for which it was created.

We Salvadorans speak with the solidity that we have gained from having fully shouldered our responsibilities towards the international community. We are participants in the reconstruction of Iraq. We speak with the legitimacy of having been ourselves the battleground of the last conflict of the cold war and we understand how the mediation of the international community can help to find a solution to a conflict and give hope to a desperate nation.

In conclusion, we wish to express our sorrow at the death of United Nations staff members in Baghdad. We reaffirm the right of all nations to have a voice in this forum. The absence of the Republic of China in the deliberations of this forum represents a rejection of the legitimate aspirations of a nation that should speak in its own voice, just as we do, in this body and the community of nations.

The liberator of the Americas summarized, in words far more eloquent than mine, the values that must inspire this forum and our discussions here. He said:

“Peoples, no one can take possession of your sovereignty, unless it be violently and illegitimately. Flee that country where one person alone seeks to exercise all powers. That will be a country of slaves.”

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of El Salvador for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Francisco Guillermo Flores Pérez, President of the Republic of El Salvador, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Alfonso Portillo Cabrera, President of the Republic of Guatemala

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guatemala.

Mr. Alfonso Portillo Cabrera, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Alfonso Portillo Cabrera,

President of the Republic of Guatemala, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Portillo Cabrera (*spoke in Spanish*): I come before this parliament of humankind to present my final report as a Head of State who believes in interdependence and for whom sovereignty is not a closed door separating nations, but rather an open window affording a glimpse into the identity of each one, furthering the respectful interchange of experiences and the quest for understanding and solidarity among peoples.

My presence here reflects Guatemala's commitment to the United Nations, whose presence in my country has been crucial to the implementation of the Peace Agreements concluded in 1996. It also gives me the opportunity to participate in the debate concerning the main subjects that make up the international agenda, while at the same time allowing me once again to express our solidarity with the inhabitants of the great city of New York over the tragic events of two years ago.

I wish to reiterate our energetic repudiation of the treacherous attack against United Nations headquarters in Baghdad that took place just a few weeks ago. We especially regret the loss of valuable officials of the Organization, including the esteemed Sergio Vieira de Mello.

I also wish to express our gratitude to Mr. Jan Kavan, of the Czech Republic, for his enlightened leadership of the previous session. At the same time, I would like very sincerely to congratulate Mr. Julian Hunte on having assumed the presidency of the General Assembly at this session. We are pleased to see a distinguished representative of our own region occupy such an important post. We have no doubt that, with his proven abilities and his well-known experience, he will be quite successful in conducting our deliberations.

Guatemala, just like its brotherly countries in Latin America, has experienced a dramatic period at the close of the twentieth century. That time has been characterized by a complex agenda involving various challenges, including those of entering into the globalization process, building peace with justice and consolidating democracy in a way that includes good governance.

In that regard, during the last four years we have sought to make progress in opening up Guatemala to the world and in making it part of globalization's technological, financial and cultural currents. We promoted the democratization of institutions, mechanisms, practices and values capable of commingling freedom with authority and effectiveness with equality. We have also nurtured the concept of peace based on justice and respect for human rights.

Guatemala is a country where several historical tasks remain to be completed or have been permanently postponed. When I assumed the presidency, in January 2000, I resolved to thoroughly address some of those pending issues. We have freed our country from its captivity by powerful economic interests. There are no longer tax exemptions that favour individuals. Trade policy is no longer manipulated to the detriment of the production of small farmers. Economic policy is now seen as an instrument of social development. After a century of captive markets, local monopolies are now exposed to competition.

The Peace Agreements bestowed on Guatemala a programme for democratization. With an eye towards the twenty-first century, the Agreements constitute a proposal for a wide-ranging reinvigoration of coexistence between Guatemalans. But the Agreements have also presented us with the challenge of simultaneously completing various tasks pertaining to different historical processes that other societies have carried out in stages.

I am pleased to say that we have made progress in various substantive areas. However, I must also admit that we have fallen short, or inadequately addressed, other areas.

Against the opposition of powerful interests, we made a determined effort to increase the tax rate. We achieved a historical level in the collection of taxes, but without attaining the goal that had been set.

We carried out the most significant financial reform since 1945 in order to modernize the banking system, reduce the risks of speculation and restore to the system its true mediation function.

We modernized the labour law, which since 1944 had suffered a series of setbacks. We consistently raised the minimum wage in real terms at an unprecedented pace. On average, workers in the

countryside now earn 50 per cent more than they did four years ago.

Our illiteracy rate has historically been shameful. We therefore adopted plans that made it possible to reduce that rate by almost half. Special attention has been devoted to young girls. Through scholarships and school feeding programmes, we have removed tens of thousands of children from child labour. We have also reformed curricula to include the philosophy of the Peace Agreements. And we have considerably increased school enrolment.

With regard to basic health care, we have confronted structural weaknesses in the critical areas of child and maternal mortality rates and nutrition.

However, much more remains to be done. We are in an unfavourable economic environment. The traditional engines of growth and employment have weakened, and the necessary changes in production are taking place slowly. We have therefore undertaken a massive effort to stabilize the economy and have implemented emergency measures, such as providing small farmers with agricultural supplies so that they can sustain their productive capacity.

The issue of transforming the production process is so sensitive that it was a contributing factor in the civil war that raged for almost 40 years during the last century. Recognizing the urgency of the issue, I introduced reconciliation mechanisms in which all sectors participate in an effort to define the country's strategic policies, including in the areas of economic and rural development.

Our people have made significant advances in the area of participation in the past three years. We have carried out the country's most significant reform by decentralizing our institutions, strengthening local development councils and granting greater powers and functions to municipal governments. Indigenous peoples are now recognized as such and are able to participate in defining a new institutional landscape grounded in their own cultures. Women also have an increased public role and are developing innovative ways of organizing.

All those efforts are aimed at reweaving our social fabric, which had been torn apart by the war. Reconciliation is an essential task in that regard, and the Government must foster a favourable climate for it to take place. That is why I assumed international

commitments to counter violations of human rights. That is also why we have begun a national compensation programme that includes reparations for the families of the more than 200,000 victims of the war, most of whom were indigenous persons. We also trust that the High Commissioner for Human Rights will establish an Office in Guatemala.

Nevertheless, impunity continues to be a difficult issue to overcome. Judicial bodies continue to be weak, which is what led me to put forward an unprecedented temporary measure to strengthen local institutional capacity. I asked for the support of the United Nations in immediately establishing a commission to investigate illegal groups and clandestine security mechanisms, as several repressive groups of the past that are now in league with organized crime are threatening and intimidating human rights activists, judges and journalists.

Civilian authority must be strengthened if we are to restore all aspects of democracy. Our efforts in that regard have been clear. We have established a civilian national intelligence agency, as well as a civilian body responsible for presidential security. We now have a defence policy in keeping with the principles of democratic security that was the product of an open debate among the members of our society. We have designed laws to provide for free access to information, the declassification of secret State archives and the establishment of civilian controls over security functions, which includes an advisory council on security. Those efforts are well under way and should be fully implemented during the next few years.

Promoting a culture of peace has not been easy. The trauma of war continues to hamper trust in our society. Political polarization also exists, as a result of powerful economic and military groups defending their privileges. However, human life is less endangered and the democratization process continues to move forward.

I will fulfil two other basic commitments in the remaining 114 days of my presidency. One of them will be to ensure that Guatemalans are able to take part in a free and transparent electoral process that is closely monitored by the international community and in which all political forces participate without exception. Such an event will be taking place for only the second time in our history during the past century.

The second commitment involves carrying out an orderly transition of power that safeguards the reforms begun in the context of the Peace Agreements. To that end, I have worked with my Government team to come up with a basic transition agenda that includes providing for continuity in programmes and policies and the strengthening of institutions involved in the peace process.

I would now like to turn briefly to some of the issues we will be dealing with during this session. In particular, I would like to respond to the challenge that the Secretary-General put before us this morning, namely, how to rethink the United Nations in these times of fundamental changes.

As I have already said, we fully support the United Nations as the highest proponent of multilateralism. We also firmly support the stewardship of Secretary-General Kofi Annan. We concur with his view that it is imperative that we adapt the Organization to the exigencies of globalization. We will also support efforts aimed at improving the managerial capacities of the Secretariat and at promoting the reform of intergovernmental bodies.

We therefore believe that we should not delay our efforts to make the Security Council more representative, and its procedures more transparent. Moreover, we think that it is necessary to strengthen the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council in order that the three principal organs of our Organization mutually support one another.

We reiterate our opposition to all forms of terrorism and we support the collective efforts of the international community to combat that scourge.

We believe that the United Nations should continue to give priority to the essential issue of development. Along with multilateral financial organizations, our Organization should dedicate itself to the task of ensuring that the benefits of globalization are widely shared among all the inhabitants of the world. We also stress the singular importance of the Monterrey Consensus and the Johannesburg Plan of Action.

We express our disappointment at the lack of progress made at the recent meeting of trade ministers held in Cancún. As part of the G-21, we commit ourselves to working constructively to bring together the positions of all parties to produce a more open and

transparent international trade regime that provides more opportunities for developing countries.

We also underscore the need to give greater importance in the international agenda to the situation of immigrants and migrant workers while focusing on undocumented immigrants, who constitute a vulnerable group vis-à-vis the need to protect human rights.

I would especially like to refer to the subject of children and to the obligation of States to guarantee their rights and protection. A case in point is the effort that is taking place in the context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child to re-establish links between three Guatemalan children and their mother, Gabriela Arias.

We support all efforts to put an end to the tragic spiral of violence afflicting the Middle East and to achieve a just and lasting peace in that long-suffering region.

We associate ourselves with efforts aimed at restoring peace, security and the rule of law in Iraq, as well as to reinstate that country's sovereignty. We share the view that the United Nations should play a significant role in that undertaking.

We support the heartfelt aspiration of the 23 million citizens of the Republic of China on Taiwan to be represented in international organizations such as the United Nations. Guatemala, like all of Central America, believes those aspirations to be a positive force for peace and democracy in the world.

We are making our best effort to strengthen the bonds of friendship and neighbourliness with Belize, without prejudice to the search for ways to peacefully, honourably, equitably and permanently resolve our territorial dispute. We express our complete willingness to continue to seek a negotiated solution to that dispute within the framework of the Organization of American States.

We reiterate our devotion to, and support for, Central American integration, as well as our solidarity with, and commitment to, all of Latin America and the Caribbean.

We live in exceptional times that affect each and every one of our countries, as well as the United Nations as a whole. Such critical moments create opportunities for re-evaluation and change. I hope that God will grant us the wisdom to take advantage of

those opportunities, thereby making it possible for us to overcome the obstacles that have served to distract humankind from a future of solidarity and common welfare.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Guatemala for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Alfonso Portillo Cabrera, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Ms. Megawati Soekarnoputri, President of the Republic of Indonesia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Indonesia.

Ms. Megawati Soekarnoputri, President of the Republic of Indonesia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Ms. Megawati Soekarnoputri, President of the Republic of Indonesia, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Soekarnoputri: Allow me to begin by drawing the General Assembly's attention to the fact that, despite all its deficiencies and weaknesses, it must be admitted that the United Nations has demonstrated its merits and contributions, not only for humanity in general but also, in particular, for its Member States. This world body has maintained minimum standards that every State must meet regarding the protection and promotion of the human rights of all its citizens. The United Nations has developed, and strived to implement, international laws binding upon each and every member. It has also instituted and put into practice an array of legal instruments that are very useful in preventing and settling conflicts among States, as well as in promoting a framework of cooperation among nations.

I would therefore like to take this opportunity to convey the gratitude and appreciation of my country to the United Nations for the invaluable work it has done for our benefit. The contributions of the Organization to our political and economic development are well recorded in our history. Those contributions range from its mediating role during the period of our struggle to preserve our national independence, from 1945 to

1949, to its active participation in our efforts to employ our independence wisely in our pursuit of national development.

Our national State — which may not only be the most heterogeneous but also the largest archipelagic State in the world — is built upon racial, ethnic, religious and cultural pluralities. Our people still live predominately traditional lives, dispersed along the equator throughout over 17,000 islands. The most devastating financial crisis in Indonesia's history not only ignited conflicts between ethnic groups, but also revived separatist movements in several regions. We are doing all we can to contain and defuse those separatist movements. In the process, we have diminished our capacity to strengthen our economic recovery.

Beginning in 2002, while we were contending with those difficulties, terrorism began to inflict its brutality upon our homeland. We believed for quite some time that international terrorism would spare Indonesia because we had a tradition of tolerance for human differences. However, we must now face the reality that Indonesia has become a target of terrorism, and as a result has suffered enormous losses in human lives. We have been wondering why those terrifying acts were carried out. What were the underlying reasons, motives and arguments for them? How were they related to international terrorist networks? What course of action should be adopted to effectively prevent, deter and eradicate them?

We have adopted a strong set of laws to prevent and eradicate the threats posed by terrorism. Equipped with those reinforced legal instruments, we have dismantled terrorist cells in the country, and prosecutors have brought members of those cells to justice. Several of them have already been handed sentences that befit their crimes.

The people of Indonesia, who are predominantly of the Islamic faith, support that national policy. Large and active Islamic organizations, such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, as well as the Indonesian Ulema Council and prominent Islamic figures, are one in condemning those terrorist acts. It should be noted that the terrorists — who are few in number, but fanatical — often claim that they are fighting in the name of Islam. They must be a mere minority, as Islam — which teaches equality, justice and the kinship shared by all humankind — cannot

possibly endorse the indiscriminate killing of innocent individuals. As in other Muslim countries, adherents of mainstream Islam in Indonesia practice moderation and are strongly opposed to violence. Although they are a small splinter group in the large Indonesian community of Muslims, the perpetrators of those terrorist acts represent a branch of international terrorism. The motives and justifying arguments of their movement apparently stem from the prolonged unjust attitude exhibited by big Powers towards countries whose inhabitants profess Islam, particularly as regards resolving the Middle East conflict.

We should truly be prudent and sensible in the face of such a long-outstanding issue. It is difficult to refute the impression that the policy on conflict resolution in the Middle East is not only unjust but also one-sided. Clearly, the Middle East problem is not a conflict of religions or of religious adherents, although some religious nuances may be part of the issue.

We are very much aware of the background of that situation. Whatever the reasoning espoused by any one of us, we must all admit that the absence of a just attitude, exacerbated by a feeling of being sidelined and ignored, in addition to the lack of a formal means to channel aspirations, has fostered a climate for violence and made it grow. In our view, those are actually both the seeds and roots of a problem that has a tendency to grow and expand. Among other things, that problem has also even led to devastating and tragic acts of terror.

At this distinguished forum, I would like to appeal to world leaders to open the doors of their hearts in dealing with that issue, which is crucial to world peace, the welfare of humankind and the destiny of the human race. I believe we will be able to carry out that noble task if we are prepared to look into the problem with clear hearts and minds. Indeed, we cannot be the "most just"; but it is necessary to have a just mind and attitude.

It is depressing to observe that we have been very slow in understanding the root causes of the problem. The war in the Middle East a few months ago is just another reflection of the situation. The war has created many more problems than it was supposed to solve. I do believe that a great many lessons can be learned from the Iraq war.

In order to prevent, deter or eradicate the problem of international terrorism, I should like to propose that

the countries whose citizens have been the main targets of terrorist groups should review their conventional anti-terrorism policies, particularly in dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict. They should adopt a policy that ensures that all parties involved are given just and equal treatment. Indeed, many eminent Muslims in Indonesia believe that once the major Powers behave in a more just manner and make clear their impartiality in the Middle East, most of the root causes of terrorism perpetrated in the name of Islam — which cannot be justified under any circumstance — will be resolved. As the Head of State of the largest Muslim country in the world, I sincerely invite all world leaders to pay particular attention to that issue.

Let us prevent the root causes of terrorism from spreading and triggering the emergence of other unsatisfactory aspirations, including in the social and economic spheres. The failure to reach consensus at the recent meeting of the World Trade Organization and the continued slow progress — not to say stalemate — in the implementation of various social and economic global agendas will only complicate and proliferate existing global problems.

We are all interested in making the world a more peaceful, stable, prosperous, just and humane place. Were those not the noble objectives explicitly stipulated in the Charter of the United Nations at the inception of the Organization, in June 1945? We are all aware that the world has undergone rapid changes. Technology has transformed the world and turned it into an open and almost borderless place. Human life and its inherent value system have been developing very fast, and any institutional and procedural regimes and instruments require adjustment and improvement.

Forty-three years ago, in 1960, our first President, Mr. Soekarno, spoke clearly about that issue. In his address to the General Assembly entitled “To build the world anew”, he referred to the need to reform both the international order and relations among nations of the world. We now all realize and recognize the truth of his call. We are indeed in need of fundamental reform. If, to that end, the performance of the Organization requires improvement to enable it to contribute more constructively to the attainment of a more peaceful, stable, just, prosperous and humane world, then we must have the courage to review, revitalize and empower its institutions and working methods.

We must strengthen international cooperation and reinforce regional engagement. In South-East Asia, we are continuing to enhance the role of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Next month, at the ASEAN summit that Indonesia will host in Bali, we expect to take concrete steps towards forming an ASEAN security community that will support and complement our efforts at becoming an ASEAN economic community. I believe that a stable, peaceful and prosperous ASEAN will significantly contribute to the realization of the objectives of the United Nations.

There are no easy tasks. But building a better region and a more democratic world is worth all our patience and hard work. After all, that is our basic responsibility. From Indonesia’s own experience in striving to become a more fully democratic country, I know how difficult that kind of work can be. We are therefore aware that building a more democratic world is even more difficult. Nevertheless, I wish to reiterate that my country remains committed to fulfilling its international obligations and that we will continue to work with other members of the United Nations to build the new world we dream of.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Indonesia for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Megawati Soekarnoputri, President of the Republic of Indonesia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Obasanjo: On behalf of the Government and people of Nigeria, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as the President of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. I

assure you of the cooperation and support of my delegation in ensuring a successful outcome to this session. Permit me also to acknowledge the excellent work done by your predecessor, Mr. Jan Kavan. I also wish to commend the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his tireless efforts, vision and leadership, and for his inspiring address to the General Assembly this morning.

In recent months, many voices inside and outside of Governments have questioned the utility, relevance and efficacy of the United Nations, the only universal multilateral tool at our disposal. Even more tragically, sinister forces have taken aim at the United Nations and its dedicated staff, as demonstrated by the senseless attack on the United Nations compound in Baghdad. My Government once again joins the international community in condemning that heartless action, which claimed the lives of so many talented and dedicated staff members. We share the sorrow of the Secretary-General and his staff, and extend our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families. In that connection, I wish to reaffirm my country's total commitment to, and support for, our Organization.

My Government is deeply concerned about the persistence of conflicts in many regions of the world, and in particular in our subregion of West Africa. The conflict in Liberia has again tested the will of the international community to respond proactively to conflicts and to the humanitarian catastrophes they leave in their wake. The decision of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to deploy troops to Liberia in the face of obvious hesitation by the international community and despite the strain it placed our resources was therefore indicative of our determination to show that we will not stand by wringing our hands when such catastrophic events occur in our neighbourhood. We are greatly relieved that our forward deployment of troops and the initiative to remove the former Liberian President from the scene have had such an immediate calming effect, which will hopefully be further reinforced by the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping force.

I therefore wish to assure the General Assembly that Nigeria appreciates the decision taken by the Security Council in resolution 1509 (2003), of 19 September 2003, to authorize a multisectoral peacekeeping mission in Liberia in order to continue the achievement of the ECOWAS initiative. I should

like to emphasize the fact that if regional organizations are to play the lead role that the United Nations is increasingly demanding, the international community will not be able to escape its own responsibility to do much more to strengthen the requisite capacities of such organizations.

Let me now turn to another subject that is closely related to the conflicts in Africa. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons has been identified as one of the major factors fuelling conflicts. An effective strategy to deal with that proliferation entails controlling the illicit trade in that category of weapons emanating from the countries where they originate, as well as controlling their transfer to intermediaries and arms merchants. We therefore call for an early conclusion of negotiations on a legally binding international instrument to control the indiscriminate supply of small arms and light weapons, especially to non-State actors. In keeping with our commitment to the eradication of those weapons, ECOWAS has already established and renewed a moratorium on the importation of small arms and light weapons. To make that moratorium as effective as intended, we call for effective cooperation on the part of all producing countries.

In April 2003, the people of Nigeria reaffirmed their commitment to good governance and democracy by holding successful elections. Following our 1999 elections, which marked the transition from military to civilian Government, last April's election represented both our first civilian-to-civilian transition and a consolidation of our democratic process. I consider my re-election to a second — and under our Constitution, my last — term of office not only as a vote of confidence but also as a great challenge to deliver the dividends of democracy to our citizens. To meet that challenge, my Government has developed a programme of economic reforms, the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). The programme, which places people first, is aimed at laying a solid foundation for sustainable socio-economic transformation and poverty eradication. By its design, it will strengthen governance, enhance transparency, intensify the fight against corruption and develop infrastructure — especially in the areas of electricity, water and roads. It also places high priority on food security, agricultural development and the promotion of small- and medium-scale enterprises.

I believe that that ambitious economic reform will constitute an important national contribution to the attainment of the targets of the Millennium Development Goals and of the objectives of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). In that connection, my Government's new reform programme is a clarion call to national mobilization and re-orientation. However, it also envisages active cooperation by our multilateral and bilateral partners. We are all too well aware that the development of our agricultural sector, by which the majority of our people still earn their living, cannot be successful as long as huge subsidies to agriculture in the developed countries continue. My Government, therefore, wishes to use this forum to call again for the reform of the system of subsidies to agricultural production, which is strangulating agriculture in developing countries.

In this connection, it is regrettable that the reasonable proposals made by the group of developing countries at the recently concluded World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference in Cancún were rejected by their negotiating partners, leading to the collapse of the Conference. Creating conditions of fair and undistorted trade would be the most effective way of providing additional resources to developing countries. This is particularly urgent in light of the low levels of official development assistance and the recent sharp decline in the flow of foreign direct investment.

Other areas that we hope the international community will address with determination include the problem of external debt. This continues to be a major obstacle to the development of my country and many other African countries. It is evident that the various initiatives by the international community on debt relief and debt management have been able neither to address nor solve the problems.

While appreciating the efforts by the international community in the context of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, we must observe that these efforts have not provided adequate responses or solutions to the problems. This is even more true in the case of the heavily indebted middle-income countries, like Nigeria, for whom no special debt relief mechanism exists, although such machinery was successfully established for countries in Eastern and Central Europe, for instance.

Nigeria believes, therefore, that bolder steps must be taken to resolve the heavy debt burden, which for a

large number of countries has become unsustainable and a hindrance to development. I am afraid that we have no effective mechanism in place to tackle this problem. Neither the Bretton Woods institutions nor the Paris and London Clubs alone can provide lasting solutions and relief. I therefore believe that this issue is of such significance for the peace and development of such a large portion of the world community that we need to create a mechanism within the United Nations to address the problem in its full scope, based on the principle of the joint responsibility of debtors and creditors alike.

We welcome the ongoing negotiations for a legally binding instrument on the repatriation of illicitly acquired funds stashed away in foreign countries. We call for the early conclusion of the Convention on that issue. This Convention is expected to make more resources available for development and show concretely the global commitment to eradicating large-scale corruption, which is at the origin of the funds. In this connection, I must say that the experience of my country has been one of only lukewarm cooperation by most countries where our looted funds have been traced. Our partners among the great banking nations should recognize that it is contradictory to condemn corruption on the one hand, and, on the other, to hinder us in the recovery of the plundered funds. For our economic and social reform programmes, the funds to be recovered can make a huge difference in meeting our national objectives. I earnestly appeal through this forum for maximum cooperation in repatriating the looted funds. I take this opportunity to thank those countries that have matched their words with actions in assisting us in repatriating looted funds.

Last year, this Assembly endorsed the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) as the framework for development of the continent. We commend the Group of 8 for their Africa Action Plan to support the implementation of NEPAD and hope that this will soon be translated into cooperation on specific programmes and projects. In addition, we hope that the developed countries will also concretely demonstrate their support for NEPAD.

For our part in Nigeria, the Government's economic reform programme is a commitment to continue to make our contribution to an African renaissance, which will underpin NEPAD.

We welcome the establishment by the United Nations of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and urge that adequate resources be provided for its mandate to be discharged effectively.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic continues to ravage our continent, affecting most of all the productive segment of the population. To combat the epidemic, my Government has embarked on a major national programme of action, the highlight of which consists of a nationwide public enlightenment campaign and mass mobilization to deepen awareness and understanding of the disease, the prevention and control of its spread and modalities for providing care and support for people living with the virus. To contribute to the global programme on HIV/AIDS, Nigeria has redeemed its pledge of \$10,000,000 to the Global Fund.

Let me urge all countries that have not yet made pledges to the Global Fund to do so urgently. Those that have made pledges should kindly redeem them early. I wish to acknowledge with gratitude, the efforts so far deployed by the international community on the pandemic, and to thank Secretary-General Kofi Annan for convening yesterday the high-level plenary meeting devoted to HIV/AIDS. However, a lot still needs to be done in a more concerted way to address all aspects of the problem, including the issue of more international funding and access to affordable drugs. These actions must be taken urgently if the Millennium Development Goal of halting and reversing the spread of this dreaded disease by 2015 is to be achieved.

The issue of terrorism has been of great preoccupation to our Organization in the past few years. Several instances of terrorist attacks continue to surface in different parts of the world, involving the loss of innocent lives and vast destruction of properties.

Nigeria reiterates its condemnation of terrorism in all its manifestations, and joins other Member States in the global determination to combat this veritable threat to national and international security. We support the work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee, and reaffirm our conviction that a comprehensive convention on international terrorism will constitute an important instrument for the protection of the individual and collective rights to life.

The situation in the Middle East, which we had hoped would improve with the adoption of the road map for a peaceful settlement of the conflict, has again

deteriorated. We call on the parties to halt the new cycle of violence — a cycle from which neither side stands to gain. We believe that any violation of the terms of the peace plan by either side does a great disservice to the Palestinians, as well as to the Israelis. We therefore appeal to both sides to demonstrate their full commitment to the implementation of the plan so as to create conditions for the peaceful coexistence of a Palestinian State, side by side with the State of Israel.

In conclusion, I would like to comment briefly on the issue of the reform of our Organization so as to make it more responsive to contemporary global needs and challenges. Nigeria has noted with dismay that obstacles continue to be placed in the way of the adoption of any of the constructive proposals for the reform of the Security Council. The changes that are being made in the Council's working methods to make it more open to non-members are appreciated; however, these are no more than marginal. I wish again to reiterate Nigeria's long held conviction that what is required is a more fundamental reform that would democratize the Security Council and thus reposition it to enable it to respond to issues of international peace and security in a more comprehensive, objective and effective manner. The overwhelming membership of our Organization demands no less in the interest of its continued relevance.

We cannot preach and endeavour to practise participation and inclusiveness at the national level while denying it at the global level of the United Nations, and expect that all will be well. Yet we have no substitute for this universal Organization. That point is now becoming evident in the context of the current situation of Iraq. Whatever the circumstances in which the Iraqi war occurred, the role played by the United Nations will be decisive in resolving the present impasse. Our Organization has now established itself in the post-conflict pacification of States. We can use that vast United Nations experience to our advantage in managing the current post-conflict situation in Iraq. We now have the possibility of an independent democratic Iraq, and we must not waste this opportunity.

One obvious point of disagreement relates to the issue of decision-making, both prior to and after the Iraqi war. This may be symptomatic of the deficiencies — to which I alluded — that are not conducive to the well-being of our Organization. Let us therefore undertake the necessary reforms in order to make our Organization work for all of us so that we

can deal effectively and adequately with the pressing issues of the twenty-first century.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (continued)

General debate

Address by The Right Honourable Jean Chrétien, Prime Minister of Canada

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Canada.

Mr. Jean Chrétien, Prime Minister of Canada, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Right Honourable Jean Chrétien, Prime Minister of Canada, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Chrétien (Canada) (spoke in French): It is a great pleasure for me to address this important gathering. I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly and to wish you well.

As is well-known, Canada has always believed in a multilateral approach to global issues — not for ideological reasons, but because it is a proven way to enhance security and to resolve those over-arching problems that transcend national frameworks.

The present era provides us with enormous opportunities for action. We can improve health and extend life expectancy, especially in poor countries; we can safeguard security and the rights of citizens; and we can increase access to education and help people to fulfil their aspirations.

The present era also presents us with urgent challenges: protecting the environment; rolling back diseases such as AIDS and malaria; preventing conflict and ending impunity for crimes against humanity; putting a stop to terrorism and organized crime; and controlling weapons of mass destruction.

Each Government is responsible for taking action within its own borders. In this global era, however, such issues cannot be successfully addressed by States acting alone. Multilateral cooperation is indispensable to ensure the well-being of citizens and to protect them effectively from harm. We need only consider the fight against terrorism. None of us has ever believed that terrorism could be controlled, let alone stopped, without the cooperation of all of us. The task of drying up the sources of terrorist funding also requires coordination and effective legal regimes. Information-sharing is imperative if attacks are to be prevented.

The United Nations has been playing an extremely useful role in this fight. Since the tragic events of 11 September 2001, the Security Council has been undertaking an extensive effort in support of the fight against international terrorism.

We could also consider the issue of health. Distance from the source of new viruses no longer provides us with protection. The next virus may be just an aeroplane flight away. Multilateral cooperation is essential for the management of health threats. We risk disaster if we do not share with each other all information that is available to us and if we do not coordinate efforts to combat epidemics. Coordinated action is also required for development in poor countries and to ensure reasonable access to health care.

We need only consider, furthermore, the ongoing problem of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. The proliferation of these weapons of mass destruction among States and terrorist groups represents a growing threat. Such proliferation must be prevented through coordination, the strict application of export controls, rigorous verification, the enforcement of multilateral treaties and other forms of collective action under international law.

We all recognize that the United Nations has enabled us to successfully address many international challenges. But we also recognize that we have failed in certain other cases. We have been slow to adapt the United Nations to changing circumstances. The time has come to begin bold renewal at the United Nations.

This morning, the Secretary-General set out proposals that are timely, necessary and courageous. I congratulate him on his remarkable statement, and I can reaffirm that Canada subscribes fully to the objectives that he proposes.

The United Nations remains the principal instrument for effective multilateral action. I call on my fellow leaders to make meaningful United Nations reform a priority.

(spoke in English)

We should not be pessimistic about our ability to succeed. Consider some United Nations successes: the 2000 Millennium Summit and, in Monterrey, Mexico, the 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development. We created a shared framework on setting priorities for more effective aid; we set targets and key principles; we spelled out mutual accountabilities for developed and developing countries. That spirit of accountability and shared responsibility also lies at the heart of the New Partnership for Africa's Development and of the Group of Eight Africa Action Plan. And it has led to policy initiatives with respect to market access and the availability of pharmaceutical drugs to poor countries. For instance, this year Canada eliminated virtually all tariffs and quotas on products from least developed countries.

At the same time, the outcome of the World Trade Organization meeting in Cancún is very, very worrisome. Agricultural subsidies of developed countries must be radically reduced to give developing countries — particularly in Africa — the chance to prosper. The developed world has an obligation to act, and to act quickly.

Colleagues, on no issue is progress more necessary or more urgent than on the protection of the innocent. Canada, in partnership with others, advocates putting the protection of people at the heart of the mandate of the Organization. Too often, conflicts are allowed to start, even when the whole world can see what the dreadful consequences will be. Too often, innocent civilians are left to their fate.

Next year will mark the tenth anniversary of the genocide in Rwanda. In all conscience, we must ask ourselves: are we any more ready now than we were then to respond to another Rwanda? I fear the answer, unfortunately, is no.

It was with our collective failures in Bosnia and Rwanda in mind that Canada sponsored the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty. The Commission has done excellent work,

and in its report, it argues that sovereignty entails responsibility as well as rights.

The most fundamental duty of a State is to protect its people. When a Government cannot or will not do so, the responsibility to protect them becomes temporarily a collective international responsibility. Some question that idea because they fear intervention on slight pretexts or with motives other than human protection. Others, owing to their own tragic experience, fear that there would be too little outside involvement. We need to reconcile those two concerns.

We believe — as does the Commission — that, in the face of great loss of life or ethnic cleansing, the international community has a moral responsibility to protect the vulnerable. The primary purpose must be to avert and end human suffering. No entity is more appropriate than the Security Council to authorize military action to protect the innocent. But the member States of the Council have sometimes failed the innocent. Past failures must motivate us to prepare better for future crises. We can reform how this place works, improve its effectiveness, enhance its relevance and inspire its participants.

Before closing, I wish to comment on some of the challenges to peace and security that we face. In Afghanistan, much has been achieved and much remains to be done. For our part, Canada has been engaged in the war on terrorism from the outset. We are the largest current military contributor to the International Security Assistance Force. We have pledged 250 million Canadian dollars for humanitarian assistance and reconstruction. We are committed to helping the Afghani people build a democratic, pluralistic society. In Iraq, we have also joined the international effort to help the Iraqi people. We have decided to contribute 300 million Canadian dollars, one of the largest single-country pledges we have ever made. We are encouraged that the members of the Security Council are exploring how to elaborate upon the United Nations role in the reconstruction and in progress towards Iraqi self-government.

The situation in the Middle East preoccupies us, as it does the entire international community. Innocent lives on both sides are being lost. Israeli families and Palestinian families fear for their children and for their future. Terrorism and violence — in whatever form, to advance whatever cause — simply creates more violence and takes even more innocent life.

For the international community, as for Israelis and Palestinians, despair is not an option. Our goal must remain a political solution based on two viable States, Israel and Palestine, within secure and recognized borders. We need to support Palestinian efforts to develop modern, transparent and responsible government. We need also to support those seeking to promote dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians in the search for practical solutions to the core issues. It is our responsibility to help those who are preparing for peace, which must one day come.

When the time is right, the international community must be able to offer a robust international presence that will guarantee the safety and security of Israel and of a Palestinian State, and we should be getting ready to do so now. In addition, we should be looking for lessons on how the international community has acted in other places to stop violence — as, for example, in Cyprus and in Kosovo.

Regional tensions, the war on terror and efforts at reconstruction in recent hot spots must, nevertheless, not distract us from continuing to help Africans realize their goals for trade and investment, democracy, human development and good governance.

In summary, multilateral cooperation remains indispensable. The United Nations remains at the heart of the multilateral system. New challenges demand new structures, and a historic opportunity has emerged.

Let us seize it, and let us realize the powerful idea that created the United Nations — the idea that nations can unite to save their people from the scourge of war. Let future generations say of us that we did not betray that idea — that we realized the potential of this great body, supported it, renewed it and re-energized it to better serve humanity.

Mr. Jean Chrétien, Prime Minister of Canada, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. José Durão Barroso, Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic.

Mr. José Durão Barroso, Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. José Durão Barroso, Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Durão Barroso (Portugal) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): In September of each year the Member States of the United Nations politically rediscover the Organization of which they are shareholders and beneficiaries.

The practice of business as usual should not mark this session of the General Assembly. The Secretary-General suggested that the heads of State and Government come to New York to make their contribution towards the strengthening of the United Nations. Portugal, as a committed member of this Organization, wishes to take part in this debate with a clear objective: to recognise, as does Kofi Annan, that the United Nations is an indispensable tool, and also to recognise that we must re-examine our practices and our working tools. Inactivity is not an option that this Organization should contemplate.

Rethinking the United Nations means, first of all, reaffirming and rethinking its Charter. Maintaining peace and international security will continue to be our main objective. But the reaffirmation of our faith in fundamental rights, in the dignity and worth of human beings, in equality between men and women and in equality between nations, is also part of our vision for the United Nations, as is the determination to promote, together, social progress and better living conditions for our peoples.

These objectives must not be overlooked when the Organization faces crises of confidence from time to time. The Secretary-General is correct in his encouragement to us to persevere. But a positive mental attitude is not enough. It is also essential that we do not ask more of the Organization than it can provide at any given moment. Otherwise, great expectations will lead to great disappointments.

Realism and pragmatism are necessary, but we must not lose sight of the ambitious objectives that this Organization is intended to serve. It is time for us to look at the United Nations as a reflection of what we are collectively, and not as a convenient scapegoat to mask the incapacity that the Member States sometimes still reveal when we should, but are unable, to act together.

We are also bound to understand, sooner or later, that we are facing common threats that require common responses. At the forefront of these threats is terrorism. In fact, a new type of terrorism has emerged: the terrorism of mass destruction that constitutes a crime against humanity; the terrorism that kills blindly and indiscriminately in New York, in Bali, in Casablanca and in Nairobi, in the name of non-values presented as values on ideological and religious grounds; and the terrorism that did not spare the United Nations itself, as we so tragically witnessed in Baghdad.

The crime which claimed the lives of Sergio Vieira de Mello and his collaborators was an attack on all of the values which the United Nations represents. It was an attack against us all. If there were still lingering doubts or illusions when some thought that terrorism was aimed essentially at some States, they disappeared in Baghdad.

It was not the Iraqi people who murdered Sergio Vieira de Mello and United Nations personnel. Terrorists are responsible for that crime. It is not the Iraqi people who are opposed to the United Nations presence in their country. Again, it is the terrorists. The United Nations must not bow to terrorism.

Portugal believes that the United Nations should have a central role in the definition of a global strategy for fighting terrorism, largely because maintaining international peace and security depends on the outcome of this fight. It is a fight we must undertake without losing our souls, that is to say, the values on which this Organization is built. It is for this reason that more security is necessary, but also more democracy, more dialogue between cultures and civilizations, more development, more and better environmental protection measures and a drastic reduction in poverty.

It is also vital that this fight be undertaken in the name of, and with respect for, our law — international law. The concept of the rule of law should have real global resonance. This is why we defend the improvement of the laws in force, namely through the negotiation of a global convention on international terrorism. But we must also bear in mind that international law will be irrelevant without the imposition of its norms, by force if necessary.

New challenges and new threats require innovative responses from the United Nations. It seems

blatantly obvious that the composition and decision-making process of the Security Council are obsolete. But changes are also needed in this Assembly, which each year automatically re-adopts hundreds of resolutions instead of adopting only those that are strictly necessary. As for the Economic and Social Council, the most that can be said is that the external impact of its actions is not perceptible, while the Trusteeship Council is nothing more than a relic devoid of any relevant objective.

In his report on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration (A/58/323), the Secretary-General focused on this point with particular insight. The proposals that he put forward should guide our thinking and joint action. But there is a particularly worrying aspect, on which we can, and indeed must, act without delay.

I am referring to the need for the establishment of a real preventive culture by the United Nations in matters of armed conflict. In this context, we agree with the relevance that the Secretary-General attributes to preventive diplomacy, to disarmament and non-proliferation measures, to peace-building, to respect for human rights, to good governance and to the development agenda.

In the final analysis, we must be fully aware that the usefulness of the United Nations will always be judged as a function of its capacity to avoid and handle conflicts. In the implementation of that mission, the fundamental role lies with the Security Council, which has, over the years, authorized various peacekeeping operations. The overall result has been positive. Portugal has contributed significantly to those operations and remains available to continue to collaborate with the United Nations.

But conditions on the ground are not always clear-cut, and it is not always possible to separate what is and what is not a conflict, and what would justify or not an intervention by the Security Council. There is an immense grey area that can be perilous in pre-conflict and post-conflict situations.

We must also create the tools for dealing with countries and situations that do not need support in terms of security, namely through a peacekeeping operation. The intervention of the United Nations at the critical phase of a conflict, followed by a premature withdrawal, may well end in failure, which will

essentially lead to the waste of the investment made by the international community up to that point.

This assessment recommends, for example, that the United Nations continue to monitor closely the situation in East Timor. It is a country whose democratic institutions are still in the consolidation phase. Without a tradition of self-government, it has made uncommonly rapid progress in several areas but is still in need of our help and attention. If we truly want East Timor to be a real success story for the United Nations, it is important to give the people of East Timor time to consolidate their institutions.

However, in other cases in which a peace operation is not yet justified and where State institutions are fragile, where there is an enormous lack of basic services and development has not taken off, it is advisable to have a strong United Nations presence, coordinated on the ground by the Secretary-General.

I would also like to take this opportunity to mention Guinea-Bissau, which is frequently overlooked and which once again requires our attention. Having avoided falling into a destructive spiral as has happened to so many countries in the region, that country is still fighting to recover. It must be helped, not ignored. They are a people who can and should be helped by the international community — and indeed deserve to be. For that reason, we support the efforts of the Secretary-General on behalf of democracy and development and applaud the original contribution of the Economic and Social Council.

Under the present conditions, the Security Council does not take into account all the factors involved in prevention: security, nation building and development. Each one follows a more or less independent path.

There is one other factor to add: the Council is fully absorbed with the management of the most pressing matters on the international agenda and at times demonstrates a notorious lack of attention to some countries in pre- or post-conflict situations.

We believe there is a solid case for advocating the creation of a new institutional mechanism: a new commission with the mandate to routinely monitor cases of conflict-prevention and the creation of conditions for peace and development. In conjunction with the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, which would both preserve their respective

areas of competence, this commission could identify and deal with the most pressing needs. For each of the countries in situations of risk, it would draw up integrated strategies allying the objectives of security and strengthening institutions and economic and social development. While other decisions of great importance are being prepared, we can — and should — begin here to deal with pre- and post-conflict situations.

It is not enough for the United Nations to affirm its relevance. It is absolutely indispensable that the Organization is seen as relevant by the Member States and that States act accordingly. The credibility of the Organization must not be questioned. Otherwise its functioning and effectiveness may be severely compromised.

Iraq is undoubtedly the case that requires of us all, in particular the members of the Security Council, that we carefully evaluate the Organization's capacity for action. A collective turn of the page is necessary, since there is no valid alternative to a policy that enables the Iraqi people to freely define their system of Government and political leadership and that maintains the country's political and territorial integrity. To build a democratic society on the ruins of one of the most violent dictatorships of the past century is a challenge the international community must not shrink. It is a task that demands much realism with respect to the difficulties to be confronted.

For that very reason, Portugal has always been in favour of the progressive involvement of the United Nations in Iraq's stabilization process, with a corresponding gradual transfer of power to Iraqi representatives. We also encourage the Security Council to come to a rapid understanding on this matter. For our part, we are already taking concrete steps, including in the security field, to support all those that are already locally assisting the Iraqi people to live in freedom.

A larger commitment by the international community is indispensable for resuming the Middle East peace process. The road map cannot be shelved. It is up to us to demand a proactive attitude from all interested parties. Also, we should not be indifferent to the Palestinian people's legitimate desire for liberty and self-determination. Israel and Palestine will have to coexist in peace and in security, within recognized borders. But here again, terrorism, which only benefits

the enemies of peace, must be condemned without ambiguity.

Great challenges generate great opportunities. It is up to us, the Members of the United Nations, to create the conditions that will allow this Organization to function in accordance with its potential and the ideas that were an integral part of its creation. Those ideas remain valid, and Portugal stands ready to give its contribution.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. José Durão Barroso, Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Kenny Davis Anthony, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, Planning, Information and the Public Service of Saint Lucia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, Planning, Information and the Public Service of Saint Lucia.

Mr. Kenny Davis Anthony, Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, Minister for Finance, Planning, Information and the Public Service, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency the Honourable Kenny Davis Anthony, the Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, Planning, Information and the Public Service of Saint Lucia, and in inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Anthony (Saint Lucia): It is neither pride nor the prospect of privilege that moves us to assume the Presidency of the United Nations General Assembly but a certain determination that is the unspoken strength of islands. Nor is it merely that we are honoured — though indeed we are — but that we also feel worthy, as worthy as any other member of this community and determined to make our contribution to the progress of humanity and the welfare of the world. Saint Lucia recognizes and appreciates that this Presidency became a reality only with the support of the Latin American and Caribbean family.

Our preoccupation is not with size, sovereignty or power but with people, and by this measure we are not small, nor are we just an island, for we do not stand alone. We stand as one Member of this Organization, proud of the legacy and the vision that we can offer the world. We assume this role because we wish to offer that vision to the world — because it is larger than our 238 square miles and larger than our population of 159,000 people. It is a vision we wish to place at the service of humanity.

It is our hope that Saint Lucia's presidency will offer a fresh perspective, an alternative view, and a different, but not discordant, voice to the heart of the Assembly. As such, the people and the Government of Saint Lucia express both their appreciation and their determination to the members of this international community — appreciation for the faith and trust bestowed upon us with the presidency of this institution, and determination that we shall not fail it, but be judged equal to the task before us. If it is a task of Herculean proportion, then we will face it with equal confidence, certain that the rebuilding of our broken humanity is a matter which we encounter in the company of equally resolute and undaunted partners.

Since the end of the cold war, the legitimacy, credibility and relevance of this time-honoured institution have never been so questioned as they are today. The United Nations Millennium Declaration was designed to revive the dying pulse of all humanity but has itself become comatose. Indeed, Secretary-General Kofi Annan was moved to state that:

“It is uncertain whether the consensus and the vision that the Millennium Declaration expressed are still intact.”

Saint Lucia therefore calls on the international community to heed the appeal of our Secretary-General to seek balance between the imperatives of military security and human security. In the interest of redistributive justice, global peace and security, the developed countries must not renege on their commitments to the developing world in the areas of trade, debt relief and aid.

The Millennium Declaration goal of halving global poverty is receding into nothingness, but it can be rescued if developed countries make good on their pledges. Moreover, we might challenge ourselves beyond merely halving global poverty, by aspiring to its virtual elimination. By now, it should be clear to us

all that poverty issues are inseparable from human rights issues, as are environmental issues from economic and political development issues. National security and international stability can be realized only where there is justice.

It was the prophet Isaiah who reminded us that if mankind is brought low, everyone will be humbled. Yet if we, the international community, retreat from the ideals of the creation of a greater humanity, we would also be retreating from the core values and principles enshrined within the United Nations Charter. More importantly, we would be tacitly endorsing the return and consolidation of a global uncivil society — the symptoms of which are already manifest within our global society. Religious intolerance, tribal aggression and civil war continue to ravage many parts of our planet. Among the victims are the poor, the marginalized and the vulnerable — often women and children, who play no part in the making of war but find themselves stripped of their human dignity and basic human rights. Terrorist attacks in Bali, Kenya, Saudi Arabia and Baghdad add to our symptoms of impending rupture.

The arteries of conscience are becoming hardened by the frequency of wanton violence, yet on occasion there are incidents that shock our sensibilities. The murder of Sergio Vieira de Mello and other United Nations colleagues reminds us of the mindless horror at the heart of that darkness. Saint Lucia joins the international community in expressing sympathy to their families, and we reiterate our profound respect to those international workers who are so willing to make the ultimate sacrifice to extend humanitarian assistance, security and comfort to those in peril and in need.

In this environment, it is essential that we maintain a United Nations which steadfastly adheres to its original core values. Saint Lucia will resist any attempt to de-legitimize the United Nations system. Any strategy which claims to embrace peace, security and justice and yet excludes the United Nations belies a flawed and unreal conception of world affairs. This Organization has been instrumental in the preservation of the nation-State within a framework of binding relationships among Governments. More importantly, the United Nations has been a devoted guardian of individual rights and freedoms. Saint Lucia maintains that the United Nations, precisely because of its

diversity, is the only organization with the political and moral legitimacy to deal adequately with global issues.

This universal body — this United Nations — has no other choice but to heed the lessons of the past and the wisdom of the ages in its attempt to better serve humanity. When our predecessor organization, the League of Nations, was discarded as irrelevant, we witnessed the advance of disorder and human catastrophe on a scale never before envisioned. If we stand idly by now, while this time-honoured institution is rendered irrelevant and toothless, we will have commissioned an epitaph for humanity.

Saint Lucia therefore calls for the completion of the efforts at reforming the Security Council to better reflect the realities of this new century and to make it more representative — more democratic, legitimate and transparent. The existing veto system is too easily influenced by national interests to address serious issues afflicting humankind. If a coalition of the willing could be assembled for war, then surely we can also gather a coalition of the willing to address the problems of poverty, disease, illiteracy, hunger, and trade imbalances. There can be no sanitizing of one corner of the globe while contagion, despair and desperation fester elsewhere. There is no security for the one while insecurity plagues the other.

But, ultimately, the strength of the United Nations must come from the political will of the Member States — a political will that must accept that everyone should adhere to, abide by, and implement all the decisions taken and resolutions adopted by the Organization. We cannot, in the name of national interest, observe only some resolutions and expect to have a strong United Nations.

The United Nations cannot be strengthened if we do not have the political will to accept that its activities cannot be dictated by the agendas of a few powerful States. It must embrace, in equal measure, the concerns of the small and the weak that are the majority of its Members. No single State, by virtue of its economic or military might, should determine, on its own, the obligations and responsibilities of the rest of humanity.

“Muscular unilateralism” and the emerging doctrine of diplomatic unilateralism cannot be the preferred approach to serious global issues. Exceptionalism within the international system is certain to fragment international cooperation, making it

less likely that countries will forgo aspects of national sovereignty in the interest of the common good.

It has become abundantly clear that the international community will not succeed in its war against terrorism if it fails to address root causes. The current war on terrorism is designed to capture, confine or eliminate existing terrorist networks without addressing the causes of terrorism. Terrorism does not stem simply from the arrogance and madness of a few dictators and misguided fanatics; it is also the result of deep-seated inequity and, sometimes, bigotry. If the status quo denies opportunity, freedom and fulfilment to those who hunger and dwell in despair, the appeal of chaos and extremism as an avenue to change becomes that much more attractive. If, on the other hand, we perceive that the world order works in the interests of all of us, there will be a universal commitment to sustain that order. Consequently, it is imperative that the international community jointly address economic injustice and political exclusion as common enemies of us all.

Your assumption, Sir, of the presidency of this institution at this time, as a representative of a small island developing State — one of the smallest Members of the United Nations — is both a tribute to the democratic principles of the United Nations and a signal of the need to conclude the process of revitalizing the work of the General Assembly. We must conquer delay, procrastination, repetition and inaction.

Many years have passed since deliberations on the reform of the Security Council began; and yet there is no end in sight. Consultations on the revitalization of the General Assembly first began 13 years ago, and on that issue, too, there is no end in sight.

For some reason, the United Nations seems to enjoy operating in decades. We create decades for our programmes, and when we fail to take action in a particular decade, we simply declare another decade. And so the cycle continues — for decades. This body can no longer afford the luxury of “decade syndrome”, compounded as it is by bureaucratic operations bound by tradition and habit.

We must be extremely proactive on the question of the revitalization of the General Assembly. Saint Lucia therefore wishes to propose that during this session we review all the draft resolutions before us, and determine which need to be consigned to the

record books and which merit the continued attention of the Assembly. We need to restructure the time frame, as well as the working methods, of the Assembly and its Main Committees, so as to make more productive use of an entire year, rather than engaging in a three-month frenzy of activities. Furthermore, we should consider making the agendas of the Main Committees and the Assembly more relevant to the general debate. It is our view that these should flow from the themes enunciated at the general debate.

The United Nations must not compromise its role in global economic governance and development. Saint Lucia calls for Members to resist attempts to dilute the development agenda through cuts and freezes of regular and core budget allocations.

Saint Lucia reiterates the need for reform of the system of global economic governance so as to allow for fair trade and special and differential treatment for developing countries. The current global governance system has failed many small States by eliminating commodity protocols and the quota and price preferences that sustain small economies. Unfortunately, they have been replaced by the conspicuous indifference of neo-liberal economic practice. This has contributed to the decimation of many Caribbean economies. It is Saint Lucia’s earnest plea that the distortions in farm trade about which — despite their prevalence — discussion is conspicuously avoided, will be treated in a manner reflective of the redistributive priorities of this Organization. We are therefore determined that a more inclusive and transparent global governance system should hold as sacred the goals and aspirations of those of us in the developing world who strive against all odds.

Among the most vulnerable countries in the world today are some of the territories that are on the United Nations list of Non-Self-Governing Territories. These countries, the majority of which are small island States in the Caribbean and the Pacific, have yet to exercise the right to self-determination. In the words of the Secretary-General, it is time for the United Nations to bring to a close this colonial chapter of history.

We therefore welcome the cooperation that the Special Committee of 24 on decolonization has recently been receiving from the administering Powers of those Territories and the advances that have consequently been made in the work of the Committee.

We further welcome the negotiations that have just begun, for the first time, between the Special Committee and the United Kingdom on the process of decolonization in the Caribbean. We look forward to continued cooperation with the administering Powers so that the goal of self-determination for all of these Territories can be achieved in less than a decade.

We believe that this General Assembly presidency is both symbolic and strategic — not just for ourselves, but for this Organization and the revitalization of its development agenda. That a small developing country should aspire to and attain such high office is a testament to the magnanimity of this noble institution. It is an opportunity to demonstrate that global equity and universal democracy remain meaningful constructs of the world community.

Our voice can be ignored or it can be heeded, but it will not be silenced. The choice of an appropriate response rests with this community. Our presence here, however, is a manifestation of our belief that humanity demands conscious renewal — renewal to guarantee that the international community resists war, remembers the poor and is prepared to give tangible meaning to the Charter, to which we all subscribe as responsible members of the world community.

But there can be no renewal if faith in the United Nations system is not also restored and retained. The United Nations must remain as the moral epicentre of world politics. Any re-conceptualization of the architecture of global governance that excludes the United Nations will leave the world weaker, more divided, vulnerable and less secure. This cannot and should not be our legacy to future generations, who will judge us not by our words or espoused principles, but by the actions we employ to render this world fit for human habitation.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, Planning, Information and the Public Service of Saint Lucia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Kenny Davis Anthony, Prime Minister, Minister for Finance, Planning, Information and the Public Service of Saint Lucia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Mr. Chimunthu Banda (Malawi), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Address by His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of Kuwait

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Kuwait.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of Kuwait, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me pleasure to begin my statement by congratulating the President, both personally and as representative of his country, Saint Lucia, on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. Given his skills and experience, we are confident that he will competently lead our deliberations as we consider the pressing global issues that face the Organization at this critical time. He may be assured of my delegation's readiness to fully cooperate with him in order to ensure the successful fulfilment of his mandate. I wish also to pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Jan Kavan, for his active and positive role and for his remarkable contribution to the promotion of international cooperation.

In addition, I wish to express once again our appreciation and gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his tireless efforts to bring peace and stability to the various troubled regions throughout the world. Mr. Annan deserves special tribute for his extraordinary performance in maintaining the integrity of the United Nations and its leading role in moving the global agenda forward, despite the enormous challenges and high risks facing the Organization and its personnel. The terrorist attack against the United Nations office in Baghdad last month, which claimed the lives of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Sergio Vieira de Mello, and of a number of his colleagues, is yet further clear testimony of those challenging difficulties and immense dangers. Another similar terrorist attack occurred two days ago, and again the target was the United Nations presence in Iraq.

From this rostrum, I reiterate our condemnation of that terrorist act and of all other similar acts that

have occurred in the cities of Baghdad and Najaf. Those attacks claimed the lives of highly respected religious leaders and symbols and other innocent victims. We believe that such acts are aimed not only at the underpinnings of security, of stability and of the people's sense of confidence, but also at the noble values that we all seek to restore and consolidate in brotherly Iraq.

Perhaps the most appropriate and resolute response to such criminal acts is a two-track approach. The United Nations, together with the international Powers interested in the Iraqi question who are also seeking to establish security and stability in Iraq, should stay the course and resolutely face the continuing violence there. In the meantime, further efforts should focus on enabling the Iraqi people to consolidate national legitimacy and to develop national institutions. In parallel, efforts for Iraq's reconstruction should be intensified in order to make up for many long years of deprivation, oppression, destruction and mismanagement painfully endured by the Iraqi people under the now-defunct regime that was removed by concerted international action anchored in Security Council resolutions related to Iraq's liberation.

Kuwait strongly condemns the inhuman crimes and practices perpetrated by the previous regime in Iraq. The most recent manifestation of those atrocities was the discovery of numerous mass-grave sites in various parts of the country. Those graves contained the remains of thousands of innocent human beings — particularly those of Kuwaitis and third-country nationals — among which 33 were identified by forensic experts as having been prisoners who were executed by shooting in 1991 and 1992. That is further proof of the regime's brutality and of its total disregard for international treaties and for the norms of international humanitarian law. Above and beyond the crimes themselves, for the past 13 years the regime persistently denied any knowledge of those prisoners' whereabouts. It also ignored relevant decisions of the Security Council and of other international and regional organizations calling for its cooperation in disclosing the fate of those victims, only aggravating their relatives' anguish.

Having said that, I should like to add that Kuwait will pursue its efforts, in coordination with the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Tripartite Commission, the interim Coalition Authority and the citizens of Iraq, to determine the fate

of the remaining Kuwaiti and third-country prisoners and detainees. Furthermore, we shall help in hunting down the perpetrators in order to bring them to justice for the crimes they committed against those innocent, defenceless victims.

Responding to its national and legal obligations, Kuwait joined the coalition forces in their endeavour to enforce Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq. Thus, we provided all possible facilities within the framework of that legal structure, which eventually led to Iraq's salvation from an oppressive, tyrannical regime. Let me take this opportunity to say that we welcome that regime's removal from Iraq. We congratulate the brotherly people of Iraq on their liberation, and we wish them prosperity in a secure and stable Iraq.

In addition, Kuwait welcomes the Security Council's adoption of resolutions 1483 (2003) and 1500 (2003), on Iraq. We also invite United Nations Member States to join the ongoing international efforts to restore security and stability to Iraq. That will help the people of Iraq to rebuild their homeland and to re-establish the political and constitutional institutions of a national Government. In that regard, we emphasize the central and significant role of the United Nations in this political process.

Immediately after the collapse of the former regime in Iraq, Kuwait reached out to the brotherly people of Iraq with a wide array of humanitarian assistance. Our response came in the spirit of our common Arab and Islamic heritage. Kuwait rushed material and financial aid to several local and international organizations, as well as to the United Nations specialized agencies operating in Iraq. We also contributed directly to the restoration of electrical power, health care, educational services and water supplies to various areas in the country. In addition, Kuwait set up a humanitarian operations centre to facilitate and coordinate relief aid activities and international emergency relief efforts to deliver aid to Iraq. Kuwait will continue its efforts to ensure the delivery of all kinds of assistance, which we hope will alleviate the suffering of the brotherly people of Iraq.

Now it is our fervent hope that Iraq will safely cross the dire straits through which it is passing and that it will recover its security and stability and will safeguard its independence and territorial integrity. All that will enable the people of Iraq to recommit their

resources and energies to their country's reconstruction so that Iraq will reclaim its legitimate and natural status in the region and in the world. Indeed, we are fully confident that Iraq will overcome the challenges of this critical stage of its history, because it is endowed with enormous natural riches, a profound cultural heritage and skilled human resources.

The Government and people of Kuwait will stand with Iraq at this stage and we look forward to enjoying good, brotherly relations with a free and united Iraq. We hope that our bilateral relations will be characterized by mutual trust, respect and good-neighbourliness, and governed by established treaties and United Nations resolutions. This will help us leave the past behind and shift our focus onto building a better future that will contribute to enhancing security and stability in the region.

Since the tragic events of 11 September 2001 that struck the United States, the phenomenon of terrorism has dominated the global agenda. Kuwait strongly condemned those terrorist acts and all similar crimes committed in other countries. These are horrendous acts of terrorism that have created new realities on the international scene, including a universal conviction that terrorism in its pernicious manifestations is actually an evil not exclusively associated with one nation, religion or culture. All of us also realize that the fight against this evil is an international responsibility to be borne by all Member States, not just one State or a certain group of States. Therefore, we maintain that the United Nations remains the most appropriate forum for examining this issue and developing the most effective means to combat and eventually to stem it. To that end, the universal signature, endorsement and enforcement by all Member States of the 12 international agreements relating to terrorism would represent a real breakthrough in ensuring the deployment of the most effective means to contain and eliminate this pandemic.

As Kuwait firmly reiterates its categorical rejection of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, as well as its renunciation of all acts of violence and extremism, it condemns the vicious orchestrated campaign being waged against a sister State — the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia — by some American media agencies. Instead, we commend Saudi Arabia for its concrete and significant contributions to the global campaign against terrorism, bearing in mind the fact that Saudi Arabia itself has been the target of

terrorists and has suffered as a result. Kuwait fully endorses all measures taken by the Saudi Government in its drive to eliminate terrorism and to consolidate regional security and stability.

In the same context, Kuwait will maintain its efforts, in coordination with the States of the region and the United Nations, to fight terrorism and to further strengthen the measures it has enforced in order completely to fulfil its international obligations, especially those set forth in Security Council resolution 1373 (2001).

Thirty-six years have passed since the oppressive Israeli occupation of the land of the Palestinian people, who continue to suffer an ongoing decline in their economic and social living conditions as a result of Israel's policies and practices, which contravene international and humanitarian laws and norms. Kuwait is following with grave concern the recent escalation in the occupied Palestinian territories. Despite the intense international efforts led by the Quartet, which yielded the road map for the settlement of the conflict within a specific time frame with a view to the attainment by the Palestinian people of their legitimate political rights, Israel persists in its policy of backtracking on its commitments. In fact, it deliberately undermines every promising initiative while paying no heed to the potential consequences of the perpetuation of the cycle of violence, rising tension and instability throughout the region. Against this backdrop, the question of deploying an international monitoring force to ensure scrupulous compliance with ceasefire arrangements is more pressing than ever.

While Kuwait renews its commitment to fully supporting the struggle of the Palestinian people to attain all their full legitimate political rights, including the establishment of their independent State on their national territory, with Jerusalem as its capital, we demand that the Israeli Government commit itself to implementing the resolution adopted last Friday by the General Assembly at its tenth emergency special session and reverse its decision to remove the President of the Palestinian Authority. In the same context, we demand that the Israeli Government fulfil its obligations and pledges set out in relevant United Nations resolutions, primarily Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973); the land for peace formula; the bilateral accords signed with the Palestinian Authority in the context of the peace

process; and the road map in all its provisions and requirements.

In addition, Israel must abandon forthwith its policies of isolating local communities and denying them food supplies, incursions, destruction of physical infrastructures, demolition of homes and arbitrary round-ups and arrests. Israel must also stop its construction of the separation wall and of settlements. It should also release all Palestinian detainees. Recent developments on the ground prove that these policies and practices will not fulfil Israel's goals. Rather, they will fuel the sentiments of hostility towards Israel. They will also reinforce the sense of despair and undermine the Palestinians' prospects for living in freedom and dignity, thus forcing them to pursue the course of national struggle and resistance of occupation. Furthermore, Israel must ultimately withdraw from all the Arab territories it occupied in 1967 as a prerequisite for building the just, permanent and comprehensive peace for which we all yearn.

At the regional level, and in line with Kuwait's compliance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, especially Article 2, which stresses the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes, we call on the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United Arab Emirates to maintain their mutual visits and to deepen bilateral talks with a view to resolving their dispute over the three islands. It is our hope that the resolution of the current dispute will strengthen relations between the two countries and the consolidation of security and stability in the region. In this regard, Kuwait, in its forthcoming chairmanship of the Gulf Cooperation Council, will spare no effort to strengthen all aspects of political, security and economic cooperation among the States of the region. Furthermore, Kuwait, in cooperation and coordination with the United Nations and the regional players, will explore the activation and development of regional security arrangements with interested countries of the region.

Today's world is different in many ways from the world of several years ago. The trade and economic boundaries of States are rapidly disappearing. Cultural interaction and relations among various societies is expanding as a result of the immense achievements in information and communications technologies. However, such technologies have had some negative implications that cannot be brushed aside. Thus, we are now seeing an increasing marginalization of the majority of the developing countries, whose economies

now suffer from a growing set of problems that jeopardize their prospects for meaningful development.

In an attempt to face up to these challenges, which hamper world economic growth, a series of United Nations meetings were convened to address the impediments to global economic growth. Thus, the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in South Africa, and the International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Mexico, developed a framework of action for ensuring equity and fair interdependence and cooperation between the North and the South. Also, specific guidelines and obligations were set for all stakeholders to achieve a more equitable balance in economic relations. At this juncture, we would therefore call on the developed nations to meet their partnership obligations. These include, inter alia, adequate flows of financial and technical aid to the developing countries; the alleviation of the debt burden and cancellation of the debts of the least developed countries; the removal of customs restrictions on flows of goods from the developing countries into world markets; and an exchange of information and expertise that would help developing countries to build and modernize their national institutions.

To this end, Kuwait, for its part, reaffirms its commitment to continue to provide development and financial assistance to developing countries. Our channels will either include the United Nations programmes, funds, agencies and other multilateral organizations or the Kuwait Fund for Economic Development, which has a sterling track record of aiding and financing a wide range of development projects and programmes in more than 100 developing countries across the globe.

As we are still in the early years of a new century, it is our hope that all of us will draw the right lessons from our collective experiences of the past. Only through common action can humankind face the challenges of the present in order to fashion a better future that offers future generations the hope of living in freedom and dignity.

Let us join hands to fulfil our common vision of a life in which law and order prevail — a life governed by the values and principles of freedom, justice and equality for all; a life that upholds the concept of partnership and cooperation as the shortest path to security, stability and peace in the world.

His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of Kuwait, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency, Mr. Louis Michel, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium.

Mr. Michel (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I would like at the outset to extend my sincerest congratulations to you, Sir, on your accession to the presidency of the General Assembly. It comes at a particularly difficult time, which I might even describe as painful, in the history of our Organization.

Indeed, the past year has gravely challenged the capacities of the United Nations to manage the crisis in Iraq to its conclusion, a country to which it was accountable. It saw the pre-eminent role for the maintenance of international peace and security of this institution, symbol of multilateralism and stability, called into question.

Yet, it is not our institution's intrinsic capacity that is the cause of its powerlessness. It is essentially its Members' lack of political determination. We cannot elude this vital debate for a peaceful, more harmonious and more just future indefinitely. Sooner or later, we must answer the essential question: How can we ensure that all Member States of the United Nations will be prepared to accept the binding nature of Security Council endorsements of military action prior to engaging in it?

To make myself perfectly clear, and to avoid any misunderstanding, the question that I ask is as follows: What reforms need to be made to the Organization's operations to placate the often-understandable apprehension or reticence of those who, because they assume specific political responsibilities, refuse to submit their geostrategic options to the rules of our Organization? As long as we remain unable to answer that question, we will continue to live in doubt and uncertainty, if not in helplessness. It is not a question of advocating an institutional shake-up of the Organization; rather debate should enable us to overcome the all-too-many misunderstandings that undermine the credibility of our shared instrument, and from which we can draw conclusions that will help us to make the Organization's mechanisms more credible and up to date. The Security Council was founded on the recognition of the particular responsibility and role of some of our Members, and I fully subscribe to it.

But should we not integrate new perspectives into this state of affairs, such as the regional dimension, present geopolitical facts and also new threats?

This is in no way meant to contest the specific influence of some of those involved in international peace and security management. Rather, our concerted support could help accompany, legitimize and strengthen their approach and their effectiveness, thanks to the indisputably added value of multilateral dynamics. In many cases, this would avoid taking unnecessary risks and misunderstandings. In that regard, I think that, given its role as a global actor, the European Union greatly deserves a permanent seat on the Security Council on its own behalf.

It is this conviction that has inspired my country's position on the Iraq crisis. But now is not the time to determine who was right or who was wrong. All sides clearly had their reasons. One can only respect them for it.

But it is now necessary to contribute to the re-establishment of stability and ensure Iraq's reconstruction. That is the responsibility of us all, for it concerns a region neighbouring Europe, and we cannot tolerate, if only for the sake of our own security, increased instability or the persistence of an uncontrolled spiral of violence that feeds resentment towards the international community, which, as history has taught us, constitutes the principal breeding ground for terrorism.

It is thus necessary to stop the violence as quickly as possible. To this end, I share the opinion of the Secretary-General and of many among us. It is necessary to restore as quickly as possible responsibility for governing Iraq to the people of Iraq. The return to sovereignty, under the watchful eye of the United Nations and of the international community as a whole, is capable of providing the salutary shock needed to reverse the current trend. We must convince the Iraqi people that national union, the re-establishment of State authority and economic recovery are accessible and at hand. This of course does not imply that the international community should demobilize. A strong military force in Iraq will still be necessary for some time to guarantee stability. It is of course up to the United States to assume its management. But from now on this presence must not be regarded as designed to occupy the country, but rather as a way to assist in the reconstruction process

for the sake of the Iraqi people. The Security Council resolution that is currently under discussion must create this prospect so as to insure broad participation by the international community.

The United Nations has a central role to play in accompanying the political reconstruction process in Iraq, even if the tragic events of August have shown how risky and vulnerable that process is. However, such a role requires a clear mandate and sufficient means.

I wish to renew my sincerest condolences to the Secretary-General, to the bereaved families and to colleagues, and express my high regard and admiration for all the United Nations staff members for their involvement, their selflessness and the sacrifices that they accept so steadfastly.

The principal security threat is the uncontrollable proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their potential use by some States in breach of minimal ethical standards or by certain terrorist movements. That threat is serious. We must each confront the threat together, by shouldering our fair share of the actions undertaken.

The European Union and its member States currently possess an essential document which deals with the European security strategy. It should enable us, as Javier Solana quite recently reminded us in Brussels, to plot a European chart of the challenges facing this world to better guarantee the effectiveness of our collective security system. Belgium will actively participate in this endeavour.

Furthermore, we fully share the international community's concerns about the nuclear programme of North Korea. We strongly call upon North Korea to abide by its previous international commitments. We are grateful to China for having offered a useful format for discussion in this respect.

As for Iran, I trust that through a sustained and constructive dialogue it will meet the expectations of the international community and respond to the requests of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Belgium will continue to participate in a determined and proactive way in the international efforts that were initiated two years ago to track down terrorism. In Belgium, there is no sanctuary for terrorism, nor will there ever be. Nevertheless, the fight against terrorism should not be used as an abusive

justification for actions that would undermine the democratic quality and the sacred principles of the rule of law.

Furthermore, I am not one of those who believe that the military option is the exclusive answer, although obviously it should not be excluded. Much more fundamentally, we need to systematically attack the root causes of a phenomenon that is often rooted in the feeling of powerlessness or in feelings of real or perceived injustice.

For this reason, Belgium will also continue to support, together with its European partners, the action of the Quartet for the re-establishment of peace between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. To achieve that goal, it is necessary that Palestinians decide unambiguously to renounce the toleration of blind violence and that Israel, in the same spirit, stop favouring the use of force.

One has the impression that, as difficulties pile up, we have fallen back into the traps of Oslo: a gradualism of small steps and a too-pronounced reliance on sequencing. The road map prescribes parallel advances on the security, political and economic paths. From each side, we need to obtain bolder measures and the acceptance of the risks these imply. There is no alternative to the road map. It has not yet been implemented seriously. We believe it is particularly urgent to create a credible, on-site verification mechanism.

It is in Africa, particularly in Central Africa, that my country commits itself in the most determined way to the restoration of peace and stability. We are encouraged by the successful installation of a transitional Government in Kinshasa that now brings together all the parties. Now, State structures have to be restored and good governance has to be introduced in order to allow for the return of foreign aid and investment. The persisting violence in the east of the country must end.

In this context, I wish to mention the remarkable efforts by the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). I am particularly happy about the success of Operation Artemis. Apart from restoring security in Bunia, this operation has given MONUC the thrust it needed to be able to face up to the challenges of its new mandate.

Now, priority must be given to the preparation of elections in order to grant the Democratic Republic of the Congo a new start on a solid basis and to consolidate its restored territorial integrity. Belgium will be present at all levels and in every phase of this process. But I wish to insist on the fact that the Democratic Republic of the Congo needs the determined commitment of all the instruments of our community. It would be unforgivable not to forge, here and now, the conditions for a complete stabilization of the entire region.

We also need to help Rwanda to continue its national reconciliation efforts, which are indispensable in order to guarantee sustainable stability in that fragile country. I am convinced the recent elections will contribute to this goal.

As for Burundi, the implementation of the Arusha Agreements must continue, and the rebels have to be convinced that they should join this process. My country looks forward to participating actively in the new action on Burundi decided by the Economic and Social Council. We hope that will help Burundi to break through its isolation within the international community.

Finally, my country closely follows the efforts by the United Nations to reactivate the project for a Great Lakes conference, which should seal the re-establishment of peaceful relations and the development of cross-border cooperation among the countries of the region.

The credibility of the United Nations does not depend only on its willingness and capacity to manage crises. It also depends on its capacity to respond to the expectations of men, women and children all over the world, who are directly or indirectly confronted with imbalances and injustice whose causes and solutions both are found only at the global level. It is essential to master globalization, develop the promises it offers and correct its excesses.

It is clear that, in accordance with the analysis of the Secretary-General, this challenge requires fundamental reflection on the architecture of the major instruments of development. That demands openness of mind and should not exclude any option from the start. Has not the time come to reinforce the capacity of the United Nations to act effectively in this field? I wish to repeat a question that I raised at the World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference in Cancún.

Should we not, for example, create a real Economic and Social Security Council, which would derive its legitimacy and efficiency from law and which would have the same power in the management of economic, social and environmental policies as the Security Council has on issues of peace? That is my conviction, especially since those fields form the requisite backdrop to achieving stability and security.

The Economic and Social Council needs to be reformed to give it a more decisive operational role in the control of a world organization based on universal principles of equity. This goal should lead to broad and balanced synergies between international organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization and the International Labour Organization, which should really become instruments of the same project.

The founding principles of such a concept exist already and are being applied in certain countries, such as in mine. I am referring more specifically to fundamental labour standards such as the freedom of unions, the prohibition of child labour and forced labour and the right to quality employment, as well as environmental obligations, which are vital for sustainable development. I am also thinking of the need to exclude services of general interest from the market sphere.

To conclude, it seems to me that such an ambition would opportunely translate the tremendous hope generated by the Millennium Summit. The Millennium Declaration clearly defined the goals at our level. I am pleased with the decision of the General Assembly to make the five-year review of the Millennium Summit in 2005 into an important event, which I think should be a summit of heads of State and Government. That summit should assess the implementation not only of the Millennium Goals, but also of the goals of all the major United Nations conferences.

But the success of that summit implies going further. It should at last boldly lay the foundation for a world in which inequalities between poor and rich countries can be filled in a sustainable way. It should nourish, in an irreversible way, the indispensable confidence the world needs to be safer, more human and more brotherly.

Address by Mr. José María Aznar, President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain

The Acting President: The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain.

Mr. José María Aznar, President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. José María Aznar, President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Aznar (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is always a special opportunity for the leader of his country to speak to this General Assembly. My speech will be brief and may be summed up at the very outset in very few words as follows: I am speaking to you as the President of a European democratic country involved in sustainable development. My compatriots especially value the existence of freedom and respect for the law as factors for progress in Spain. We think these two values, freedom in all areas of life and compliance with the law comprise the best recipe for progress among peoples.

The last twenty-five years of progress in my country have fortunately coincided with the change in the millennium. Freedom of opinion, peaceful political choice and the broadening of fundamental rights have become values which enhance us. Of course, this has not been accomplished without effort and risks along the way. However, I now have the satisfaction of speaking of that progress. The culture of community upon which this democracy is based is openly expressed by the Spanish people of the Iberian Peninsula and we are celebrating this during the commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of our Constitution. We are an open country, trusted throughout the world, and we wish the same principles and situation for others. The determination to increase freedom throughout the world and the concern to ensure that laws of the international community are complied with are values that guide our international policies. We share this position with many countries present here.

The world would be a better place if the rules we make for ourselves are complied with and if those who breach them know that their non-compliance will not prevail. The United Nations embodies international

legality. Compliance with its resolutions is in the interest of all. This is the best way to build a world in keeping with law rather than tyranny, with freedom rather than oppression.

It is probably for this purpose that the Security Council and the Organization require reform. Without doubt, this is a complex issue and we support efforts being made in this connection by the Secretary-General. In any case, we bear in mind that increasing the number of Security Council Members will not necessarily increase the effectiveness of the Council. But above all, the United Nations needs its own Members to respect its resolutions. A resolute effort on the part of all countries is necessary to ensure a more secure, yet freer world.

Although violations of Security Council resolutions exist, all of us must ensure that the resolutions are complied with. All of us must lend a hand because it is in the interest of all for the ideals of the United Nations to become a reality. Thus, we are committed to security, stability and the reconstruction of Iraq. We also are committed to returning sovereignty to the Iraqi people. We spare no effort and do not wish to dwell on the past. We believe that successful results in Iraq will be due to the efforts of the entire international community. We think that the pledging conference to be held in Spain on 23 and 24 October will be a big stride. I would like, from this rostrum, to invite all of you to participate in that conference.

Allow me to present some more concrete ideas. Our efforts must be directed towards restoring the sovereignty of the Iraqi people in a way which will enable them to freely enjoy their own resources. For that purpose there should be an agreement reached to establish a multinational force with the clear mandate of guaranteeing peace and security. Given the situation today in Iraq with its high risk of terrorism, this task cannot be entrusted to a mere interposed force, but rather to one that will specifically ensure peace, security and stability.

An additional agreement on the civil administration of Iraqi resources and public services for the people would be easier to obtain after that. I am referring to a civil administration directed by the United Nations with the participation of the new leaders who would be representing a peaceful and pluralistic Iraq.

Peace, security and freedom have always had enemies and we cannot close our eyes where such threats exist. We have been the victims of blind terrorist violence in this Organization. We cannot forget that vile and cowardly attack in Iraq by which terrorists hoped to expel the United Nations from Iraq and close it off from the world. The States who flout international law are threatening what is dearest to us, our lives and our freedom.

Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction would be even more dangerous. I firmly believe that commitment and true cooperation between all States will make it possible to win victory over terror. Last May, Members of the Security Council shared some considerations concerning the fight against terrorism to which I refer now. We will continue to work on preparing a list of terrorist organizations — things should be called by their proper names — and there should be no political or moral quarter given to assassins. Our priorities must be set. We will shut down the sources of financial support to terrorists and will prevent their access to weapons of mass destruction. The treaties on disarmament with regard to nuclear, chemical and biological weapons will help with this task. To prevent and intercept the trafficking of weapons of mass destruction, a group of countries has implemented the Proliferation Security Initiative whose first meeting took place in Madrid last June. I invite you also to join that Initiative.

We would like to give a voice to the victims of terrorism and for this, three things are required. We must restore truth, regain dignity and pay tribute to the victims of terrorism. If terrorists have sometimes used public tribunals, it is a moral necessity to give an institutional forum to the victims where they can be heard. We must unmask the terrorists and truly listen to the victims.

It has been rightly said, Sir, that the United Nations has not been established to create paradise in the world, but rather to keep the world from falling into an abyss. There is no paradise on earth. Efforts are being made to ensure that the world will be freer and more peaceful and to distance us from the abyss, efforts which make it possible for this Organization to make its lofty ideas a reality. It is hoped that no effort will be spared in this undertaking.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the

Government of the Kingdom of Spain for the statement he has just made.

Mr. José María Aznar, President of the Government of the Kingdom of Spain, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Mrs. Yoriko Kawaguchi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan.

Ms. Kawaguchi (Japan): I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Mr. Julian Robert Hunte, Foreign Minister of Saint Lucia, on his assumption of the office of President for the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. I would also like to commend Mr. Jan Kavan, former Deputy Prime Minister and former Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, for his devoted efforts during his tenure as President of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

First of all, I would like to touch upon the terrible tragedy that occurred last month. Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello and other United Nations staff, working diligently to facilitate the reconstruction and stabilization of Iraq, sacrificed their lives as a result of the cowardly bomb attack in Baghdad. On behalf of the Government of Japan, I take this opportunity to pay tribute to Mr. Vieira de Mello and his colleagues.

Much of our time and energy since the general debate last year have gone into the discussion of the Iraq situation. In that process, questions have been asked about the role of the Security Council and the United Nations with respect to the Organization's primary role of maintaining international peace and security. On the occasion of this general debate, we once again need to earnestly explore the meaning of this matter.

There is no organization on earth more universal than the United Nations. No other organization addresses so many diverse issues as comprehensively as it does. I strongly believe that the United Nations will continue to play an important role that no other international organization can fulfil. The United Nations role should be enhanced through reform in order to restore the confidence that was shaken in the Iraq situation. All Member States are called upon in our joint effort to strengthen the Organization.

Today, we face a situation in which the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the threat of terrorism affect not only particular countries or regions but the world as a whole, presenting a new threat to our lives and our livelihood. It is imperative for each country to regard the issue as its own and to take action in concert with the countries facing such imminent threats.

In order to establish an Iraqi Government run by the Iraqis themselves as soon as possible, the international community must join hands for securing peace and promoting reconstruction, and the United Nations must play an even more prominent role in those efforts. Japan strongly expects that a new Security Council resolution will be adopted, that the path towards Iraqi self-governance will be clarified and that the international partnership will be strengthened to promote reconstruction and security. Together with the international community, Japan continues to make every effort towards the restoration of security and the reconstruction of Iraq and in particular towards the successful conclusion of the Madrid donors conference for the reconstruction of Iraq to be held next month.

With respect to peace in the Middle East, I am deeply concerned that the road map has reached a critical stage. I call upon both sides to exercise the utmost restraint in order to restore calm on the ground. The Palestinian Authority must resolutely disavow the use of terror, work expeditiously to establish a new cabinet and take action to control the extremist factions. Israel, in turn, must act with prudence and caution, mindful of the consequences of its own actions. In particular, the expulsion of Chairman Yasser Arafat can only result in a deterioration of the situation. Japan once again urges Israel not to proceed with the implementation of measures which would result in Chairman Arafat's removal.

From the perspectives of peace and security in North-East Asia and international non-proliferation, the development and possession of nuclear weapons by North Korea must never be tolerated. Japan once again urges North Korea to immediately and completely dismantle all of its nuclear development programmes in a verifiable and irreversible manner. This issue should be resolved peacefully by diplomatic efforts including the six-party talks process. Based on the Pyongyang Declaration between Japan and North Korea, Japan seeks the resolution of various outstanding issues between Japan and North Korea, including the nuclear

issue, the missile issue and the abduction issue, which was addressed explicitly by the Assembly last December in its resolution on the question of enforced or involuntary disappearances (57/215). Upon the comprehensive resolution of those issues, Japan is looking to effect the normalization of its diplomatic relations with North Korea.

With regard to Iran, Japan calls upon Iran to take seriously the resolution adopted at the 12 September meeting of the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Iran must appease the concerns of the international community regarding the nuclear issue. It must comply immediately with all measures prescribed in the resolution, which include cooperating fully with IAEA to rectify problem points by the end of October of this year. Iran must also ratify the IAEA Additional Protocol immediately and unconditionally and implement it in its entirety.

The very urgency of those issues reminds us of the importance of the crossroads at which we now stand with respect to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty regime. The horror and devastation caused by nuclear weapons should not be repeated. Japan is redoubling its efforts to maintain and fortify the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, with this treaty as its core. At the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, Japan will submit a draft resolution entitled "Path to the total elimination of nuclear weapons" and aim to secure adoption of the resolution by an overwhelming majority of Member States. Furthermore, Japan considers the early entry-into-force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to be of extreme importance as a concrete means of strengthening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty regime.

Despite the serious efforts of the international community to combat terrorism in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, precious lives continue to be lost by terrorist attacks in Jakarta, Baghdad and many other locations around the globe. Insofar as improvements in the terrorism-related response capabilities of all nations are required for the eradication of international terrorist organizations, Japan continues to provide capacity-building assistance to developing countries, with special emphasis on Asian countries. In addition, Japan calls upon all Member States to work to bring about the early conclusion of the counter-terrorism conventions as well as the implementation of Security Council resolution

1373 (2001) in order to deprive terrorists of the means for their activities and safe havens.

In the twenty-first century, we cannot address the dangers and threats now confronting the world with military and political measures alone.

Our responses must be well thought out, detailed and sustained, addressing every facet of the issues we face, including the social aspect, humanitarian and human rights concerns, and the question of economic reconstruction. Furthermore, we must strive to guarantee human rights, democracy and good governance by creating a social environment that enables each and every human being to realize his or her maximum potential.

On the basis of this realization, Japan has made the consolidation of peace and nation-building one of the pillars of its diplomacy and its international cooperation efforts, and it is contributing actively in a variety of areas, including peacekeeping operations. Moreover, in the conceptual framework of human security, Japan has made efforts to enhance both protection and capacity at the individual, human level. Japan will continue to work for the realization of the recommendations made in the report submitted by the Commission on Human Security in cooperation with the United Nations, Member States and non-governmental organizations, through diplomatic measures such as official development assistance.

Specific examples of Japan's efforts include assistance in nation-building, such as the deployment of Japan's Self-Defence Forces in Timor-Leste; the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme it is now implementing jointly with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan; and support for the peace process and for reconstruction and development in the form of efforts such as the Tokyo Conference on Reconstruction and Development of Sri Lanka.

Measures against infectious diseases are also crucial in ensuring human security. The example of SARS demonstrated to the world yet again the importance of international cooperation in the mitigation of such diseases. Japan welcomes the results of yesterday's General Assembly High-level Meeting on HIV/AIDS, which reconfirmed both the commitment of every nation to the goals set forth in the Political Declaration and the importance of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

With regard to Africa, Japan has been cooperating for its development on the basis of the principles of ownership and partnership, aiming at poverty eradication through economic growth, as well as providing assistance in conflict prevention in order to secure the peace and political stability which are prerequisites to development. The Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) process is now in its 10th year. TICAD III will convene on 29 September. In response to the ownership of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), TICAD III intends to expand partnerships with international organizations and the countries concerned, and particularly with civil society and Asian countries which have successfully realized development, in order to share the wisdom and experiences of the international community in the area of African development.

As the representative of an Asian country, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight two issues that relate to peace and security in the Asian region.

The first is the detention of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi by the Government of Myanmar. Japan is continuing to make serious diplomatic efforts to bring about the expeditious resolution of this worrisome situation and to facilitate concrete progress towards national reconciliation and democratization.

The second issue concerns the Khmer Rouge trials in Cambodia. Japan believes that it is necessary for each country to extend considerable cooperation in order to ensure that these trials take place and that they exhibit an unswerving application of the principles of law and justice of the international community.

In the community of nations, diversity is both respected and cherished. For that reason, the formulation of a set of common rules under which the entire global community can act as one is of extreme importance. The United Nations has made significant progress in this area to date. I would like to explain some of the agenda items which Japan will be pursuing at the United Nations, here in the General Assembly and elsewhere, in order to formulate such rules. Such rules will constitute the basis for well-thought-out, detailed and sustained responses to a broad spectrum of issues, including socio-economic, environmental and human rights issues.

In the field of the environment, it is imperative that the international momentum for climate change negotiations be maintained. I appeal to the representatives of all nations who are gathered here to recognize the importance of the early entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol and of the formulation of common rules which will facilitate participation by all countries, including the United States of America and developing countries.

The protection and promotion of the rights of disabled persons is also of great importance. Japan welcomes the decision taken in June of this year to establish a working committee which will draft an international convention on the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities; Japan will actively participate in this process.

With regard to the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, Japan looks forward to the adoption of a resolution promoting the creation of an implementation plan in which the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) serves as the lead agency.

Disaster prevention is an indispensable element for a safer world in the twenty-first century, not merely because of its role in the follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, but also as an essential prerequisite for achieving much of the sustainable development agenda. Japan proposes to host the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction in order to develop new strategies on disaster prevention.

For the United Nations to fulfil the role of bringing about a world of peace and prosperity based on common rules embraced by the entire international community, the reform of the United Nations, particularly that of the Security Council, as its core, must be urgently addressed.

Today's conflicts have become more diversified and increasingly complex, as evidenced in cases where a civil war escalates due to the dysfunctional condition of a State. To respond to these new challenges, the Security Council has taken on new tasks, such as the deployment of multinational forces, when necessary, to restore order. Such tasks also include the expansion of the role of peacekeeping activities from military and police activities such as ceasefire monitoring to humanitarian activities, including assistance for the repatriation of refugees, as well as assistance for

democratic elections and reconstruction efforts. The Security Council must take on a variety of these tasks in working for the resolution of today's conflicts.

For the Security Council to address these challenges comprehensively, there is a need to strengthen the functioning of the Council by including countries that are both willing and able to shoulder responsibilities at the global level as permanent members. Japan continues to work diligently for the realization of Security Council reform and would like to assume greater responsibility as a permanent member in a reformed Council.

The issues about which I am speaking today are hardly new. Discussions on the reform of the Security Council have been under way for 10 years now. Yet, despite a series of exhaustive discussions about how the Council should be reformed, we are still unable to see progress in any concrete terms.

It is no exaggeration to say that, if we continue along this path, the ability of the United Nations to respond adequately to new and complex challenges will be seriously brought into question. We must take concrete action now. The Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, makes a strong case for United Nations reform in his report (A/58/323) entitled, "Implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration". He proposes that we set 2005 as a deadline for reaching agreement on the changes that are needed in our international institutions if we are to meet the new challenges, because 2005 not only marks the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations but is also the year in which a review of progress on the Millennium Declaration will take place. I am of the view that a political decision should be taken on the occasion of that review at a meeting of heads of State or Government regarding the reform of the United Nations, in particular the Security Council.

With regard to the "enemy State" clauses in the United Nations Charter, a General Assembly resolution was adopted in 1995, recognizing them to be obsolete. Those clauses have not yet, however, been deleted from the Charter. This is an extremely regrettable situation. Japan will work to find appropriate solutions to this issue, in view of the progress on United Nations reform.

Administrative and budgetary reform of the United Nations is also necessary in order to increase both its effectiveness and its efficiency. With regard to

the size of the United Nations budget, it is necessary to give careful consideration to the financial burden on Member States. Japan calls on the United Nations both to conduct a strict prioritization of its activities and to eliminate those activities which are neither essential nor urgent. We must also consider appropriate methods to make the scale of assessments for all Member States more balanced. Finally, equitable geographical distribution among Member States for the number of staff members of the Secretariat has yet to be attained. The present situation is of concern and needs to be improved.

Japan believes that international peace and prosperity can be achieved only through cooperation among nations, with the United Nations playing an important role. Japan has used all means at its disposal to contribute to United Nations activities, so that the

objectives contained in the United Nations Charter may ultimately be realized. Let me make it clear that Japan will continue to be actively engaged in United Nations activities. However, the perpetuation of the same basic Security Council structure of 60 years ago leads many to question the legitimacy of the system under which the United Nations operates. The legitimacy of the United Nations is at stake.

In closing, I would like once again to urge all Member States to take concrete actions to strengthen the functions of this Organization and restore its legitimacy in the eyes of the nations and citizens of the world.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate for this meeting.

The meeting rose at 7.25 p.m.