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Meetings Coverage

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Rise in Impunity Worldwide ‘Politically Indefensible and Morally Intolerable’, Secretary-General Says as General Assembly Begins Annual High-level Debate

Alarmed by UN’s Inability to Stop Spread of Conflict, Bring Peace to Gaza, Ukraine, Global Leaders Stress Undermining Organization Is Bad for Humanity

The rising level of impunity in the world is “politically indefensible and morally intolerable”, with many Governments and actors feeling entitled to a “get out of jail free” card, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres warned in his address to the General Assembly today as its annual high-level debate began, with world leaders raising alarm about the wars in Gaza and Ukraine.

“We are in a purgatory of polarity,” he said, adding that more and more countries feel they can trample international law, violate the UN Charter, invade another country, lay waste to whole societies or utterly disregard the welfare of their own people. “We see this age of impunity everywhere — in the Middle East, in the heart of Europe, in the Horn of Africa,” he stressed.

Gaza is a non-stop nightmare that threatens to take the entire region with it, he said. Nothing can justify the abhorrent acts of terror committed by Hamas on 7 October 2023, or the taking of hostages. And nothing can justify the collective punishment of the Palestinian people. “The speed and scale of the killing and destruction in Gaza are unlike anything in my years as Secretary-General,” the UN chief said. Now, Lebanon is on the brink, he said, adding that the world cannot afford that country turning into another Gaza.

The war in Ukraine is spreading with no signs of letting up and civilians are paying the price, he went on to say. In Sudan, a brutal power struggle has unleashed horrific violence as famine spreads. The situation is growing increasingly dire even for those who do not live in war zones, he emphasized. Of the world's poorest 75 countries, one third are worse off today than they were five years ago, while the top 1 per cent of people on the planet own 43 per cent of all global financial assets. Noting how massive tax breaks to the ultra-wealthy are exacerbating inequalities, he added that debt interest payments in the world's poorest countries outstrip spending on education, health, and infrastructure combined.

"This year, the urgency of our task cannot be overstated," Philemon Yang (Cameroon), President of the Assembly's seventy-ninth session, told the gathering of Heads of State and Government. He urged them not to divert essential resources into military stockpiles, fuelling an arms race never seen since the cold war era. Instead, they should invest more in building trust and dialogue. "We are not mere spectators of these crises, nor are we powerless to act," he reminded them.

"For almost a year now, the people of Gaza and Israel have been caught in a spiralling cycle of conflict and retribution," he went on to say, calling for an immediate ceasefire, the unconditional release of all hostages and for all sides to abide by international law.

"At our disposal is one of the most powerful tools for positive change: international cooperation grounded in the undeniable truth that even the most powerful nations cannot solve these complex, borderless challenges alone," he said. Freedom and good governance ensure that no one — no individual, no community — is left behind.

In the ensuing debate, 33 Heads of State and Government expressed concern over the spread of conflict and the Organization's inability to bring about peace. They reinforced the Secretary-General's warning about a growing culture of impunity for the world's most heinous crimes and warned that undermining the United Nations is bad for all humanity.

Joseph R. Biden, President of the United States, said the "good news" is the Russian Federation's war in Ukraine has failed and "NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] is bigger, stronger, more united than ever before". "We will not let up on our support for Ukraine," he pledged. Washington, D.C., has also been working around the clock, alongside Doha and Cairo, on a ceasefire and hostage deal in the Middle East, he said. "Now is the time for the parties to finalize its terms, bring the hostages home and secure security for Israel and Gaza," he added, expressing hope that "a diplomatic solution is still possible".

However, other speakers voiced disappointment about the lack of progress on that, with the President of Türkiye, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, lamenting

that “in Gaza, not only are children dying, but also the United Nations system”. Israeli attacks have made Gaza the largest cemetery for children and women in the world. Hamas has repeatedly declared its acceptance of the ceasefire proposal, but the Israeli Government has very clearly indicated that it does not want peace by finding excuses and hampering the process, including by killing the interlocutor it negotiated with. “Just as Hitler was stopped by the alliance of humanity 70 years ago, [Israeli President Benjamin] Netanyahu and his murder network must be stopped by the alliance of humanity,” he underscored.

“The right to defence has become the right to vengeance,” said Luiz Inácio Lula Da Silva, President of Brazil. In Gaza and the West Bank, one of the greatest humanitarian crises in recent history risks spillover into Lebanon. “What began as a terrorist action by fanatics against innocent Israeli civilians has become a collective punishment for the entire Palestinian people,” he said. Meanwhile, the world forgets conflicts in Sudan and Yemen, which cause suffering for nearly 30 million people, he said, adding that the UN must not wait for another world tragedy, like the Second World War.

Many delegates, including King of Jordan Abdullah II bin Al Hussein, echoed the concern that the UN has weakened in recent years. Noting that the Organization’s aid trucks “sit motionless just miles away from starving Palestinians”, he pointed to how rulings of the International Court of Justice are defied, even as “the UN is under attack — literally and figuratively.”

But Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa, President of South Africa, recalled a time when the Organization showed its mettle — it was the great wave of solidarity of the peoples of the world led by the UN that turned the tide against apartheid in his country. “We South Africans know what apartheid looks like [...] we will not remain silent and watch as apartheid is perpetrated against others,” he emphasized, recalling how his country sought an order from the International Court of Justice to prevent Israel from committing genocide against the people of Gaza.

Iran’s President, Masoud Pezeshkian, also stressing the importance of Palestinian self-determination, called for a referendum to be held in the affected territories. His country envisages a lasting peace with all faiths in the region living together. Recalling the historic 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, he regretted former United States President Donald Trump’s unilateral withdrawal and reaffirmed readiness to engage with the Plan’s participants. “We want peace for all and seek no war or quarrel with anyone”, he said, also calling a new paradigm to address global challenges, which should “focus on opportunities and not being obsessed with perceived threat”.

“I want to live in a world that is in peace,” Alar Karis, President of Estonia said, drawing attention to the children who are lost to conflicts, who will

never be old enough to see a high school diploma or learn how to ride a bike. “Russia’s war against Ukraine is as clear as black and white. Russia is the aggressor and Ukraine is the victim,” he stressed, adding that the “smooth talk about dialogue” is only supporting the Russian Federation’s cause. “We are not going to call Russia for a coffee,” he said, calling on that country to accept Ukraine’s 10-point peace formula.

Along those lines, Andrzej Duda, President of Poland, said it is crucial to stop the Russian Federation's brutal aggression against neighbouring Ukraine, not only to end the suffering of the people and punish the aggressor but also to prevent such heinous actions from becoming a model for others to follow. Recalling how his country became the first victim of the Second World War, he said the war crimes that followed left a mark on his nation's history forever.

However, Aleksandar Vučić, President of Serbia, said that the view that aggression against Ukraine is setting a precedent not witnessed in Europe since the Second World War “is the utter untruth”. The UN Charter and Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) were not observed when it came to his country’s territorial integrity, he said, highlighting its suffering during the World Wars and NATO bombings, and accusing powerful nations of applying double standards.

While many speakers today reaffirmed the UN’s role and welcomed the adoption of the Pact for the Future, Javier Gerardo Milei, President of Argentina, dissented from that agreement. “Long live freedom. God damn it,” he said, describing the 2030 Agenda as imposing a supranational government, and the lockdowns imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic as a crime against humanity. The UN has ridiculous policies, such as zero-emissions policies, he said, adding that Argentina does not support any regulations that violate the rights of trade and people, and will be on vanguard of the defense of freedom.

However, David W.R. Adeang, President of Nauru, called on the international community to “focus on building bridges, not walls”, and work towards a more integrated, connected world. Welcoming the Pact for the Future’s ambition, he called on the Secretary-General to appoint a Special Representative on Climate and Security. “Support our efforts to transition to renewable energy, to enhance our climate resilience and to protect our biodiversity,” he said, adding: “Let us be the leaders who bring about a new era of peace and reconciliation.”

Opening Remarks

ANTÓNIO GUTERRES, Secretary-General of the United Nations, said the level of impunity in the world is “politically indefensible and morally intolerable”. Today, a growing number of Governments and others feel entitled to a “get out of jail free” card. They can trample international law,

violate the Charter of the United Nations, turn a blind eye to international human rights conventions or the decisions of international courts, invade another country, lay waste to whole societies or utterly disregard the welfare of their own people. And nothing will happen. “We see this age of impunity everywhere — in the Middle East, in the heart of Europe, in the Horn of Africa,” he added. The war in Ukraine is spreading with no signs of letting up and civilians are paying the price. It is time for a just peace.

Meanwhile, Gaza is a non-stop nightmare that threatens to take the entire region with it. Lebanon is on the brink. Simply put, the world cannot afford Lebanon to become another Gaza. Nothing can justify the abhorrent acts of terror committed by Hamas on 7 October 2023, or the taking of hostages. And nothing can justify the collective punishment of the Palestinian people. “The speed and scale of the killing and destruction in Gaza are unlike anything in my years as Secretary-General,” he said. More than 200 of “our own staff” have been killed, many with their families. The international community must mobilize for an immediate ceasefire, the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, and the beginning of an irreversible process towards a two-State solution.

In Sudan, a brutal power struggle has unleashed horrific violence, including widespread rape and sexual assaults, he continued. A humanitarian catastrophe is unfolding as famine spreads. In the Sahel, the rapid expansion of the terrorist threat requires a joint approach rooted in solidarity, but regional and international cooperation have broken down.

From Myanmar to the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Haiti to Yemen and beyond — the world witnesses appalling levels of violence and human suffering “in the face of a chronic failure to find solutions”, he stressed.

“Meanwhile our peacekeeping missions are too often operating in areas where there is no peace to keep,” he added. For all its perils, the cold war had rules. Now, “we are in a purgatory of polarity,” he emphasized, adding that more and more countries are doing “whatever they want with no accountability”.

Of the world’s poorest 75 countries, one third are worse off today than they were five years ago, he went on to say. The top 1 per cent of people on Earth own 43 per cent of all global financial assets. At the national level, some Governments are supercharging inequalities by doling out massive tax giveaways to the ultra-rich, while short-changing investments in health, education and social protection. No one is being short-changed more than the world’s women and girls. “Every day, it seems we are confronted by yet more sickening cases of femicide, gender-based violence and mass rape,” he said. In Afghanistan, laws are being used to lock in the systematic oppression of women and girls. And in this very Hall this week, less than 10 per cent of speakers at the general debate are women.

He called for reforms including of the Security Council, which must give Africa a permanent seat, and noted that tackling deep-rooted inequalities

also requires accelerating reform of the international financial architecture.

The Bretton Woods institutions no longer provide a global safety net. Debt interest payments in the world's poorest countries now cost more, on average, than investments in education, health and infrastructure combined. Around the world, more than 80 per cent of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets are off track. Getting back on track requires a surge of financing for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

Meanwhile, climate hazards are blowing a hole through the budgets of many African countries, costing up to 5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) — every year, he said. By 2025, every country must produce an ambitious new national climate action plan. These must align with the 1.5°C limit. He urged G20 countries to shift money from fossil fuel subsidies and investments to a just energy transition. Turning to the rise of new technology, he said that artificial intelligence (AI) will change virtually everything — work, education, communication, culture and politics. Without a global approach to its management, AI could lead to artificial divisions across the board — a Great Fracture with two Internets, two markets, two economies — with every country forced to pick a side, and enormous consequences for all, he warned.

PHILEMON YANG (Cameroon), President of the seventy-ninth session of the General Assembly, said that the general debate remains one of the world's most inclusive, representative and authoritative platforms for global reflection and collective action. "This year, the urgency of our task cannot be overstated," he stressed, adding that, with just five years to go, less than 18 per cent of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been achieved. Also, the climate crisis is no longer a distant threat — it is here, now, ravaging ecosystems and dismantling the livelihoods of entire communities, he said. Turning to conflicts from the Middle East to Ukraine and from Haiti to South Sudan, leaving in their wake death, destruction and immense suffering, he called for an immediate ceasefire in all these conflict settings.

"For almost a year now, the people of Gaza and Israel have been caught in a spiralling cycle of conflict and retribution," he underscored, also calling for an immediate ceasefire for the Hamas-Israel war, the unconditional release of all hostages and — on all parties — to abide by international law, including international humanitarian law, and work towards a just and lasting solution grounded in the Charter of the United Nations, relevant resolutions and international law, ensuring dignity for both Palestinians and Israelis. "Indeed, only a two-State solution can end the cycle of violence and instability, ensuring peace, security and dignity for both Palestinians and Israelis," he emphasized.

Referring to the main purpose of the General Assembly which should be coming together for peace and the well-being of citizens, he urged not to

divert essential resources into military stockpiles, fuelling an arms race never seen since the cold war era. Nuclear weapons continue to be a threat to humanity and to our planet, he said, adding that a nuclear war must never be fought while conditions for the use or accidental explosion of these weapons must always be avoided. “We call for urgent measures for the abolition of these tools of the annihilation of the human race and our environment,” he emphasized. Urging to invest more in building trust and practising dialogue, he said that constant dialogue is a powerful weapon all Governments have in their hands, as trust and dialogue are integral parts of human dignity and a precondition for lasting peace and security.

Speaking about gender equality, he said that it remains a distant goal, as many women and girls around the world continue to be denied their basic rights, justice and opportunities. “Globally, we witness a troubling regression in the protection of human rights and human dignity,” he stressed, adding that millions remain trapped in poverty, with their lives restricted by forces beyond their control. Forced labour and modern slavery extending even to young boys and girls of school age are an insult to human dignity and must be combated in every society at all times, he emphasized.

“There is an urgent need to reform the international financial system, as too many countries remain burdened by crippling debt, forced to choose between servicing loans and improving the lives of their citizens,” he went on, adding that the digital divide continues to widen, cutting off entire populations from the tools needed to succeed in the twenty-first century.

“We are not mere spectators of these crises, nor are we powerless to act,” he emphasized, addressing the leaders the world’s nations who were present in the Hall. “At our disposal is one of the most powerful tools for positive change: international cooperation grounded in the undeniable truth that even the most powerful nations cannot solve these complex, borderless challenges alone,” he stressed, adding that this truth was reaffirmed at the Summit of the Future and the consensus adoption of the Pact for the Future, which charts a path forward, reinvigorating multilateral institutions with renewed energy, focus and clarity to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world. “Let us build on this momentum,” he called, underscoring that a better world begins with unlocking the potential of the peoples of the world. Freedom and good governance ensure that no one — no individual, no community — is left behind, he said. “In this endeavour, we must never overlook the challenges faced by the small island developing States, the landlocked developing States, the least developing countries and the small States,” he underscored, calling on the United Nations to do more than just express solidarity. “Specific programmes responding to the unique situations in which these groups of States find themselves must be envisaged,” he said, pledging that this will be a priority for his presidency.

Noting that Africa is one of the priorities of the United Nations and that the African Union's Agenda 2063 presents a bold and transformative vision for the continent, which has the youngest population in the world, he spotlighted that, by 2063, one in four people will be African. "In fact, to truly unlock Africa's vast potential, we must actively cultivate global partnerships that align with the continent's aspirations and drive its success," he said, looking forward to working with Member States of the United Nations on keeping Africa at the heart of the agenda. "In this seventy-ninth session, I also want to prioritize multilingualism as a recognition of our world's cultural and linguistic richness," he announced, adding that the multitude of languages, cultures and perspectives should not be viewed as a source of division, but as a wellspring of strength.

Anticipating a very successful high-level week in addition to the recently concluded Summit of the Future, he announced three upcoming critical high-level events: on antimicrobial resistance; on addressing the existential threats posed by sea level rise; and on the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. "While we may not agree on every issue, we all share the same fundamental goal: to build a better world, for everyone, everywhere," he said. That path ahead, he continued, is difficult, and fraught with obstacles that may at times seem insurmountable but are not impassable. "We have the tools, the knowledge and the collective will to overcome these challenges if we act together, with courage and conviction," he concluded.

Statements

LUIZ INÁCIO LULA DA SILVA, President of Brazil, said the international community's failure to respond to global crises "shows a weakening of our collective capacity for negotiation and dialogue". Even the Pact for the Future is limited in scope. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, no treaty on pandemics was adopted at the World Health Organization (WHO). "We are living in a time of growing anguish, frustration, tension and fear," he continued, noting that conflicts and military budgets have ballooned as "the use of force, not supported by international law, is becoming the rule." Brazil has firmly condemned the invasion of Ukraine and, together with China, has tried to encourage constructive dialogue between the parties as part of the "six-point plan". In Gaza and the West Bank, one of the greatest humanitarian crises in recent history risks spillover into Lebanon. "What began as a terrorist action by fanatics against innocent Israeli civilians has become a collective punishment for the entire Palestinian people," he said, with more than 40,000 deaths, mostly women and children. "The right to defence has become the right to vengeance, which prevents an agreement for the release of hostages and postpones the ceasefire." Meanwhile the world forgets conflicts in Sudan and Yemen, which cause suffering for nearly 30 million people.

Turning to climate change, he stressed that “we are doomed to climate change interdependence”. The planet will “demand payment” from future generations from unfulfilled climate agreements, and denialism is contradicted by the facts: 2024 will be the hottest year on record, environmental disasters wreak destruction worldwide and his country has seen the biggest flood since 1941 and the worst drought in the Amazon in 45 years. Brazil does not tolerate environmental crimes. Deforestation in the Amazon has been reduced by 50 per cent, and it will be eradicated by 2030. Moreover, the country will host the United Nations Climate Change Conference in 2025. Today, the country has one of the cleanest energy mixes worldwide, with 90 per cent from renewable resources. Brazilians have defended against messianic and totalitarian attacks and toppled dictators. Democracy must respond to the legitimate aspirations of those who reject hunger, inequality, unemployment and isolationism, he said, underscoring that neither “false patriots and isolationists” nor “ultra-liberal experiments” further impoverishing an already-poor continent will help citizens.

The future of our region depends on building sustainable, inclusive States and addressing discrimination, he said, free from intimidation by corporations or digital platforms holding themselves above the law. “Freedom is the first victim of a world with no rules,” he warned, stressing that new technologies, including AI, must respect human rights and be a tool of peace — not war — and calling for an intergovernmental authority on AI wherein all countries have a seat. Additionally, the current state of the world financial infrastructure disadvantages low- and middle-income countries, limiting investment in health, education and climate change. It has become a “Marshall Plan in reverse where the poorest finance the richest”. African countries borrow at rates up to eight times higher than Germany and four times higher than the United States. Calling for greater participation of developing countries in the management of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, he highlighted that while the five richest billionaires — and the super-rich paying proportionally less taxes than the working class — have doubled their fortunes, 60 per cent of humanity has become poorer. In response, Brazil has insisted on developing minimal global taxation standards.

At the same time, more than 9 per cent — 733 million people — of the world’s population are undernourished. Hunger is a result of political choice, he said, noting that more than enough food exists in the world to end the scourge. For its part, his Government has committed to ending hunger in Brazil, as it did in 2014. The Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty, which will launch in Rio de Janeiro in November, was born from this political will and solidarity — a result of the Brazilian G20 presidency. Finally, calling for urgent UN reform, he suggested, among other proposals, that the Economic and Social Council be the main forum for sustainable development, that the Security Council revisit its working

methods and veto powers and that it cease excluding Latin American and African countries from holding permanent seats — an unacceptable echo of a colonial past. “We cannot wait for another world tragedy, like the Second World War, to only then build a new governance on its rubbles. The will of the majority can persuade those who cling to the raw expression of the mechanisms of power.”

JOSEPH R. BIDEN, President of the United States, noted that he speaks to the General Assembly for the fourth and last time as President of his country. Recalling historical events, such as the cold war, he observed: “Even from the horrors of war, there’s a way forward. Things can get better.” For instance, his country was at war with Viet Nam, but they are now “partners and friends”. He came to the presidency in another moment of crisis and uncertainty. Outlining several of his achievements, among them a decision to end the war in Afghanistan, he said he was the fourth President facing that difficult task but did not leave it to the fifth. Despite the difficulties in the world today, he refused to despair as a leader. Quoting lines from Irish poet William Butler Yeats — “Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; / Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world” — he said that he sees “a critical distinction” between 1919 and 2024. “In our time, the centre has held. Leaders and people from every region across the political sector have stood together and turned the page.”

With the world again at an inflection point, he said: “The choices we make today will determine our future for decades to come.” When the Russian Federation invaded Ukraine, the United States could have stood by to merely protest. But he and Vice-President Kamala Harris understood that “that was an assault on everything this institution was supposed to stand for”. Therefore, his Administration stepped into the breach, providing massive security and economic and humanitarian assistance, and “our NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] allies and partners and 50-plus nations stood up as well”, he said, urging “the people of this Chamber” to rally behind them. “The good news is [Russian Federation President Vladimir V.] Putin’s war has failed” and “NATO is bigger, stronger, more united than ever before”, with two new members, Finland and Sweden. But “we cannot grow weary [...] and we will not let up on our support for Ukraine”.

He said his country will “responsibly manage” its competition with China so it “does not veer into conflict”, noting that the two sides recently resumed cooperation to stop the flow of deadly synthetic narcotics. However, Washington, D.C., is pushing back against Beijing in economic competition and military coercion of other nations in the South China Sea while maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Straits and protecting the most advanced technologies. Turning to the Middle East, he said the United States has been working alongside Qatar and Egypt on a ceasefire and hostage deal, endorsed by the Security Council. “Now is the time for

the parties to finalize its terms, bring the hostages home and secure security for Israel and Gaza,” he said. Citing the prospect of “a wider war”, including along the Israel-Lebanon border, he said “a full-scale war is not in anyone’s interest” and “a diplomatic solution is still possible”. He then advocated for a two-State solution, with Israelis enjoying peace and security and Palestinians living in security, dignity and self-determination in “a State of their own”. He also stressed that Iran must never obtain a nuclear weapon.

On climate change, he said that “we’ve taken the most ambitious climate action in history”, noting that the United States moved to rejoin the Paris Agreement on day one of his tenure. The country is on track to cut emissions in half by 2030 and on track to quadruple climate financing to developing nations with \$11 billion thus far in 2024, he said, also noting that it — together with the Group of Seven (G7) and other partners — has embarked on an ambitious financing initiative to support developing countries in clean energy transition and digital transformation. Turning to Security Council reform, he said that the UN needs to adapt and bring new voices and perspectives, expressing support for expanding the organ’s membership. It must “go back to the job of making peace” and “of brokering deals to end wars and suffering”. In closing, he said that he made the preservation of democracy a central cause of his presidency. Recalling a decision not to seek a second term as President, he said it was time for the new generation of leadership to take his nation forward. “Let us never forget, some things are more important than power,” he said, declaring: “Never forget we are here to serve the people, not the other way around [...] There’s nothing that’s beyond our capacity if we work together. Let’s work together.”

RECEP TAYYIP ERDOĞAN, President of Türkiye, observed that in the last few years, the United Nations has failed to fulfil its founding mission and has gradually become “a dysfunctional structure”. The massacre in Gaza — where over 41,000 Palestinians have lost their lives — is the most dramatic example of the fact that “the world is bigger than five”. As a result of the Israeli attacks, Gaza has become the largest cemetery for children and women in the world: over 17,000 children have been the targets of Israeli bullets and bombs. “In Gaza, not only are children dying, but also the United Nations system,” he said, asking bluntly: “Are those in Gaza and the occupied West Bank not human beings? Do children in Palestine have no rights?” As Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu drags the Middle East region deeper “into war”, he called on the Security Council: “What are you waiting for to prevent the genocide in Gaza and to put a ‘stop’ to this cruelty, this barbarism?” To those who unconditionally support Israel, he said: “How long are you going to be able to carry the shame of witnessing this massacre?”

He underscored that while Hamas has repeatedly declared its acceptance of the ceasefire proposal, the Israeli Government has very clearly indicated that it is the party that does not want peace by continuously hampering the process, constantly finding excuses and perfidiously killing the interlocutor it negotiated with at a time when the ceasefire was closest. “Just as Hitler was stopped by the alliance of humanity 70 years ago, Netanyahu and his murder network must be stopped by the alliance of humanity,” he asserted, adding: “An immediate and permanent ceasefire should be achieved, a hostage-prisoner exchange should be carried out and humanitarian aid should be delivered to Gaza in an unhindered and uninterrupted way.”

Also, he continued, the international community must extend a helping hand to the people of Gaza trying to survive, especially before winter, when conditions will deteriorate, adding that 70 per cent of the water resources and 75 per cent of the ovens in Gaza have been destroyed until now. Türkiye, he said, is the country that sends the highest amount of aid to Gaza. Although there is an urgent need for a ceasefire in Gaza, the main issue is the occupation of Palestinian territories by Israel.

Turning to other conflicts, he said the economic and humanitarian situation in Syria — which is in the grip of terrorist and separatist organizations — remains dire. Relatedly, he urged the international community to support Iraq’s efforts towards development, reconstruction and reintegration with the region. On the situation in Ukraine, he said: “We are still far from reaching a just and lasting peace.” As the arms race accelerates, the field of diplomacy is gradually narrowing, he said, announcing Ankara’s increased support for efforts to end the war through diplomacy and dialogue, based on Ukraine’s territorial integrity and sovereignty. He further expressed support for the peace process between Azerbaijan and Armenia, adding that the developments that can be achieved in the Azerbaijan-Armenia peace process will also positively impact the Türkiye-Armenia normalization process. He also recalled that Türkiye has rights to the north and west of the island of Cyprus in the declared continental shelf and Turkish Cypriots have rights all around the island.

ABDULLAH II IBN AL HUSSEIN, King of Jordan, noting that “it often feels that there was not a moment when our world was not in turmoil”, said that he cannot recall a time of greater peril than now. He said that, for nearly a year, the sky-blue flag flying over UN shelters and schools in Gaza has been powerless to protect innocent civilians from Israeli military bombardment. “The UN is under attack — literally and figuratively,” he stressed, observing that UN aid trucks “sit motionless just miles away from starving Palestinians”. In addition, the rulings of the International Court of Justice are defied and its opinions disregarded. Noting that “some nations are above international law”, global justice “does bend to the will of power” and human rights are selective, he added: “Undermining our international

institutions and global frameworks is one of the gravest threats to our global security today.”

Turning to the attacks on Israel on 7 October, he observed that, while they have been globally condemned, the unprecedented scale of terror unleashed on Gaza since that day is beyond any justification. “This Israeli Government has killed more children, more journalists, more aid workers and more medical personnel than any other war in recent memory,” he stressed. Furthermore, pointing to Israel’s violence in the West Bank that left 700 Palestinians dead and over 4,000 forcefully displaced, he observed: “How can this war not be perceived as deliberately targeting the Palestinians?” Recalling that he grew up a soldier in a region familiar with conflict, he said that in the absence of global accountability repeated horror is normalized. Calling for a protection mechanism for the Palestinians across the occupied territories, he emphasized that no country in the region benefits from escalation.

He recalled that, for years, the Arab world has extended its hand to Israel through the Arab Peace Initiative, noting that consecutive Israeli Governments, “emboldened by years of impunity”, rejected peace and chose confrontation. For decades, Israel has projected itself as a thriving Western-styled democracy in the Middle East, but the brutality of the war on Gaza “has forced the world to look closer”. “Now, many see Israel through the eyes of its victims,” he added. Noting that the modern, advanced Israel “admired from afar” and the Israel that “Palestinians have experienced first-hand” cannot coexist, he said: “Israel will eventually be entirely one or the other.” Also observing that, for years, the world has accepted the status quo of the ongoing military occupation of Palestine, he said that the current status quo is untenable.

“The world is watching, and history will judge us by the courage we show,” he stressed, adding that the people will judge whether the United Nations will surrender to inaction or will fight to uphold its principles. He added: “This war must end. Hostages and detainees must return home.” Urging States to join Jordan in enforcing a relief effort “Gaza Humanitarian Gateway”, he underscored that humanitarian aid should never be a tool of war. Acknowledging that, a year into the war, the world has failed politically, he cited the words of his father — King Hussein — from 64 years ago, at the fifteenth session of the General Assembly: “I pray that this community of nations may have the courage to decide wisely and fearlessly and act with the urgent resolve that this crisis and our conscience demand.” He further added: “My father was a man who fought for peace to the very end. And, like him, I refuse to leave my children, or your children, a future we have given up on.”

CÉSAR BERNARDO ARÉVALO DE LEÓN, President of Guatemala, said that his country’s democracy would not be complete, nor could it exist, without the determined and courageous support of the people of

Guatemala. In the case of Guatemala, corruption has its roots in a past of authoritarianism, repression, political violence and social exclusion. “But, we are freeing ourselves from the chains of that dark past,” he said. On the international level, it is time to rescue multilateralism, to revitalize dialogue for peace and to take concrete actions to solve urgent problems. He expressed support for the reform of the Security Council. It is unacceptable that decisions in favour of peace are not adopted because a few can exercise power of the veto. The Security Council has a responsibility to maintain international peace and security, he stressed, noting Guatemala’s contributions to United Nations peacekeeping missions.

Guatemala believes in a future where migration is an option, not a sentence driven by a lack of opportunities, violence or hunger. In the last decade, Guatemala has gone from being a country of origin for migrants to increasingly becoming a transit and return country, and to a lesser extent, also a destination. “Our commitment is to give dignified treatment to all people,” he said. Guatemala is making substantial changes in the care and protection it provides to migrants. All migrants deserve the opportunity for a dignified life regardless of the causes that drive them to migrate. He noted that Guatemala recently welcomed 135 Nicaraguans who were released from arbitrary imprisonment by their Government.

Guatemala is committed to resolving the territorial, insular and maritime dispute with Belize before the International Court of Justice, he said. This process must lead to a fair and definitive solution, respectful of the rights and dignity of both countries. Turning to the climate crisis, he said the scourge puts systems, economies, food supply and survival at risk. Climate change is a devastating reality that affects humanity, he added. Further, he called on the most powerful countries to assume the leadership and responsibility that corresponds to them. “The time to act is now,” he added.

“Guatemala is changing, and that change implies a transformation of our relationship with the world,” he continued. Guatemala is committed to the values of peace and global solidarity. It has a very recent authoritarian past. However, with significant support from the international community, it has taken a turn towards the promotion and defence of human rights. Guatemala is also committed to fulfilling the SDGs, with the recent adoption of the Pact for the Future, within the framework of the Summit of the Future.

VIOLA AMHERD, President of Switzerland, recalled her “yes” vote on 3 March 2002, when her country decided to join the United Nations, as the Swiss people expressed the country’s resolve to show its responsibilities and participate in international politics in the spirit of solidarity. Speaking a few days before the Swiss presidency of the Security Council, she stressed that Switzerland is increasingly concerned by worsening tensions around

the world and the emergence of new conflicts. With great challenges like wars and disasters, as well as with the risks and opportunities linked to technological progress, the United Nations, as the only universal organization, is absolutely central in tackling these issues, she emphasized, adding that the request for peace prevails over all else and her country is committed to this, having brought together around a hundred States and international organizations this summer at the high-level conference on peace in Ukraine.

Reminding that the Geneva Conventions, whose seventy-fifth anniversary is commemorated this year, govern the legal basis for war and the protection of civilians, she said that recent United Nations figures paint a bleak picture of the international community. “Not only are people and the civilian infrastructure insufficiently protected, but they are coming under repeated attack,” she said, spotlighting violations of international humanitarian law in Myanmar, Ukraine, the Middle East and Sudan. She also said her country has been firmly committed to ensuring that the Security Council adopts ceasefire resolutions in Gaza and Sudan. The heavy price paid by civilians in these crises and conflicts makes Switzerland even more resolved to continue to view international humanitarian law as a top priority. “Respecting it is at the heart of our commitment within the Security Council,” she stressed, pointing out that, whilst some peacekeeping missions have not always achieved the aims set out, they contribute daily to human security, stability and peace.

Turning to climate change and biodiversity loss that have an existential impact on a growing number of people, she urged to maintain the commitment in these areas and take courageous measures for the future. “I am also concerned by the uptake in disinformation — this undermines freedom of opinion based on facts,” she continued, saying that private and State actors spread false information in their own and other countries in order to deepen polarization, sow discord and destabilize States. “Switzerland is firmly committed to freedom of expression and to freedom of the media — disinformation is a poison,” she emphasized, calling for better distinguishing between what is freedom of expression and what is a manipulation of facts, as well as for debunking illegitimate influence, fostering open and fair debate, providing transparent and objective information as Governments and international organizations.

Recalling that Switzerland is firmly committed to strong and effective multilateralism, she said her country stands out for its regular democratic debates at all levels — in municipalities, regions and the Confederation. “There is an urgent need to restore such a constructive and peaceful debate between States in order to tackle existential challenges,” she stressed, referring to the Pact for the Future which is a strong commitment to multilateralism, with the 2030 Agenda as one of its key dimensions that must be jointly implemented as quickly as possible. Speaking about a

needed framework to work in partnership to find solutions, she reminded that it is the United Nations which provides precisely this framework. “It is up to us to make this institution stronger,” she concluded.

GUSTAVO PETRO URREGO, President of Colombia, said humanity must take a step towards global peace, lamenting that the ability for any President to communicate depends on money, military force, clout and ability to destroy humankind. The power of a country in the world is no longer exercised by the type of economic or political system, but wielded to destroy humanity. Those who speak to sustain life are ignored — especially when they speak out against the genocide in Gaza or ask for debt-for-climate-change spending. Further, the power to destroy life is privileged within the UN, he continued, adding that “the voice of nations is not heard when we ask humankind to unite to preserve existence.” Those who wish to sustain life speak here but are not listened to. Worse still, over 11 million hectares of the Amazon were burned over one month in 2024 due to climate change. Catastrophic for the whole planet, scientists describe the loss of the Amazon as a point of no return. “Bells are tolling for you, for us, for humankind and life” he said, recalling Ernest Hemingway, “and for all of life. The end has begun.”

While Colombia had called for a conference for peace in Palestine one year ago, today 20,000 boys and girls have been killed with bombs and the Presidents of human destruction laugh in the corridors of the UN — aided by mass media and their owners, reordering a world without freedom and democracy. “The democratic project of humanity is dying” while those who stupidly believe that the Aryan race should dominate the world prepare to do just that through bombs and terror. This is what is happening in Gaza and Lebanon, he said, warning that “when Gaza dies, humanity will die.” Social inequality is the reason for this “contemporary Armageddon” he said, citing Oxfam who say in a report that the richest 1 per cent of the world have more wealth than the 95 per cent of the world. The richest 1 per cent is also responsible for climate change from oil and carbon — sadly, politicians in the most powerful countries simply obey them because they fund their campaigns.

These owners of global media conceal the truth of science like in the film *Don't Look Up*, and control what is allowed to be said. Their obsession with the free market will bring about the destruction of our planet, he warned, noting that the free market was not freedom, rather “the maximization of death”. The richest 1 per cent, or a powerful global oligarchy, allow bombs to be dropped in Palestine, Lebanon and Sudan, and impose economic blockades on countries like Cuba and Venezuela that refuse to yield to their power as a scare tactic. “This oligarchy is bringing humankind to the brink of destruction” while “politics just nods its head at them”. “Will the people allow this continue?” he asked, sounding the alarm that there is no more time to waste. “Governments are incapable of halting the extinction of

human life. Today, we must choose between humankind or greed, between humankind and capital,” he said, calling on the people to “Let us fly the flag of life or our people will fill up mass graves.”

Just as once the workers of the world united behind a red flag, today humanity must unite behind a flag of all colours to defend life. Individuals are weak alone, but strong when they help each other, and this mutual assistance will give a new meaning to a global socialism with humankind as its political subject, defending itself against a global oligarchy that seeks to destroy. Distinguishing between leaders and countries, he specified that he is not targeting the current leaders of the United States, France, Germany, China and the Russian Federation, and is even inspired by the countries themselves. The countries, made up of their people and history must combine their knowledge to bring a “global revolution” with the largest army, without weapons nor bank financing, but the power of a united humankind, “warriors for life”. The time has come for the people, he affirmed. Instead of speaking to Governments who do not listen, the people must work together to create another democratic force. If life manages to triumph over extinction, the oligarchy will be defeated, and a global democracy will rise: “A new story is about to begin.”

SHEIKH TAMIM BIN HAMAD AL THANI, Amir of Qatar, highlighted the situation in Gaza, stating that the blatant aggression against the Palestinian people in the Strip is “the most barbaric and heinous and extensive in breaching human values, international charters and norms”. Calling the aggression “a crime of genocide”, he warned against the use of the most sophisticated weapons against a people besieged in a detention camp where there is no escape from the barrage of aerial bombing. One year into the war, “it is no longer tenable to talk about Israel’s right to defend itself” without being complicit in justifying the crime. This occupation has taken the form of an apartheid system in the twenty-first century. The end of the occupation, with the Palestinian people exercising their right to self-determination, is “neither a favour nor a gift from anyone”, he emphasized.

Noting that the Security Council has failed to implement its ceasefire resolution on Gaza, he said the organ also refrained from granting Palestine full UN membership, despite the adoption in May of a General Assembly resolution supporting a request for such status. The State of Palestine’s full UN membership neither establishes its sovereignty nor ends the occupation but at least sends a message to the far-right Government involved in challenging its international legitimacy. Dismissing such a step as harming the peace process is simply “eyewash”, he said. Qatar has opted to undertake mediation efforts to stop the aggression on Gaza and secure the release of prisoners and detainees. Mediation amid a fierce war faced complex circumstances, he said, noting that one party would not hesitate to assassinate counterpart political leaders, as witnessed in the

killing of Ismail Haniyeh, Hamas political leader and the first elected Palestinian prime minister.

The mediation efforts of Qatar, Egypt and the United States culminated in a humanitarian agreement in November 2023, he said, with a brief ceasefire in Gaza, the release of 240 Palestinian prisoners and 109 detainees in Gaza, and an increased flow of relief shipments. “We will continue to exert efforts” until reaching a permanent ceasefire and until the Palestinian people obtain all their legitimate rights, foremost of which is “their independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital on the 1967 borders”. Israel is currently waging a war on Lebanon, and “no one knows to what extent this war could escalate”, he warned. In Yemen, his country looks forward to preserving the 2022 truce and proceeding towards a comprehensive ceasefire.

Qatar has been keen on ending the crisis in Syria under the Geneva Declaration and Security Council resolution 2254 (2015) in a way that will preserve Syria’s unity, sovereignty and independence and meet the aspirations of the people there. Doha also calls on all Sudanese warring parties to stop fighting and supports all regional and international efforts to end the crisis in that country. He also expressed support for the political trajectory in Libya and the implementation of Council resolutions, urging all parties to recourse to dialogue and overcome differences. The war between the Russian Federation and Ukraine has caused great human suffering, with repercussions on Europe and the world. Qatar calls on all parties to implement the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the rules of international law and seek a peaceful solution, he added.

CYRIL MATAMELA RAMAPHOSA, President of South Africa, recalled that: “Thirty years ago, South Africa was born as a new nation; equal, united and free from apartheid.” It adopted a new Constitution, and its “first democratic elections brought the tyranny of apartheid to an end — a system that this General Assembly declared to be a crime against humanity”. “The great wave of solidarity of the peoples of the world led by the United Nations turned the tide against apartheid,” he underscored, pointing out that: “Today, democracy flourishes in South Africa.” Spotlighting the country’s entrenched human rights culture and strong institutions, as well as its agenda for economic growth, poverty eradication and sustainable development, he said: “The South African story bears witness to the enduring role of the United Nations in global matters. In supporting our struggle, the UN affirmed the principles of the UN Charter — fundamental human rights, the dignity and worth of every person, and the equal rights of nations large and small.”

Turning to the situation in the Middle East, he said that the violence the Palestinian people are enduring, following the Hamas attack, is “a grim continuation of more than half a century of apartheid that has been perpetrated on Palestinians by Israel”. “We South Africans know what

apartheid looks like [...] we will not remain silent and watch as apartheid is perpetrated against others,” he emphasized. “Through the United Nations and the [instruments](#) it wields, we must end the suffering that Palestinians are being subjected to,” he urged, recalling that, in December 2023, South Africa sought an order from the International Court of Justice to prevent Israel from committing genocide against the people of Gaza. The Court’s orders “make it clear that there is a plausible case of genocide against the people of Gaza” and that “States must also act to prevent genocide by Israel” and ensure that they are not themselves “aiding or assisting in the commission of genocide”. He once again called for an immediate ceasefire, and for the release of all hostages. “The only lasting solution is the establishment of a Palestinian State that will exist side by side with Israel with East Jerusalem as its capital,” he stressed.

He further urged every effort to bring peace to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan and other parts of the African continent, as well as to Ukraine, and to realize the aspirations of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination. The Security Council must be more representative and inclusive, he emphasized, noting that Africa and its 1.4 billion people remain excluded from its key decision-making structures. “The UN Security Council must be reformed as a matter of urgency,” he stressed, adding that: “Africa stands ready to play its role in building a safer global order by participating in the work of the UN Security Council on the basis of respect and acceptance.” The African Union and its member States are engaged in mediation, dialogue and diplomacy across the continent, to create conditions under which peace and development can take hold. There must be greater collaboration between the United Nations and the African Union towards resolving these conflicts, and in addressing their root causes, he added.

Turning to other pressing challenges, he voiced concern about the spread of Mpox, particularly in Africa, and urged the international community to mobilize vaccine stockpiles. On the economy, he said the Africa Continental Free Trade Area is setting the foundation for a massive increase in trade and investment in infrastructure and will accelerate Africa’s industrialization and economic growth. On the climate crisis, he said South Africa remains committed to contributing its fair share to reduce global emissions. It has adaptation and mitigation programmes and policies in place and its law on climate change will further support its emissions-reduction targets. Noting that industrialized nations are not honouring their climate commitments, he reiterated the call for predictable and sustainable climate financing. He also called on better resourced countries to scale up support to developing countries being stifled by debt. In 2025, South Africa will assume the presidency of the Group of 20 and will use that important role to advocate for the peoples of Africa and for all the Global South, he said.

MOHAMED MUIZZU, President of the Maldives, said: “Humanity is in crisis, and in many cases its man-made. But we look the other way, continuing with business as usual.” “We need nations united in harmony not a United Nations in misery,” he urged, adding that these are important years for his country, which in 2040, will celebrate 75 years as a sovereign nation. Looking ahead to that milestone, he presented his vision for his country as a fully-fledged developed nation by 2040. Becoming a developed nation may seem like a daunting task, but “prevailing and even flourishing against formidable odds, is nothing new for Maldivians”, he said, recounting that in 1965, when Maldives regained its independence, it was among the poorest countries in the world. One-third of its population was illiterate. More than one out of every 10 babies were dying before their first birthday. It had no industries, barely any exports and fewer prospects, he said, proudly noting that in just five decades, the Maldives has reached upper middle-income status.

Detailing his development plan in various sectors for the Maldives, he said: “The result we desire, is inclusive development; where equality of access to opportunities is guaranteed; where women and young people are key players in our development — not mere spectators; and where every Maldivian citizen has adequate housing,” he said. To support these objectives, his [Government](#) has launched a \$6.5 million loan facility, specifically for women entrepreneurs — of which 25 per cent is allocated to those with disabilities. He has also recently launched a Presidential Youth Advisory Board, which will advise and inform him directly on the needs and views of young people. Outlining plans for the tourism sector, which drives the Maldivian economy and is also highly vulnerable to external shocks, he called for support from the international system to anticipate and address these threats, such as armed conflict, terrorism, violent extremism, transnational organized crimes, climate change and ocean degradation.

Recalling world leaders’ commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015 and, just this week, to the Pact for the Future, he lamented: “We can’t keep meeting, talking, pledging but not doing.” Stressing that “the best approach to protecting fundamental rights is to cultivate a culture of respect for those rights,” he said the Maldives has a good track record of treaty ratification, implementation and reporting, and champions the right to environment. He underscored that “violation of a right by any country — large or small, rich or poor, with powerful friends or not — must not be tolerated”. Pointing to “the ongoing massacre — the genocide — by Israel in Gaza” as well as the Israeli raids in Lebanon, he said Israel must be held accountable for these acts of terrorism, for these violations of international law and UN resolutions. We must accept a sovereign and independent Palestinian State on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, he said, urging support for Palestine as a full member of the United Nations.

Turning to his country's planned economic transformation, he urged multilateral development funds, banks and bilateral donors, to view his country as partners, "not just as recipients of aid; to stop looking at our inherent vulnerabilities as limitations; to adopt tailor-made approaches which are mutually beneficial; to reduce the cost of borrowing; to make the financial system work for us — not penalize us...". Stressing that "climate change is the most serious threat to our world," he called on rich and emitting countries to meet the financial pledges already made — especially on adaptation, where the financing gap continues to widen. "Small countries like mine need a multilateral system that champions us. And delivers for us," he emphasized, urging reform and revitalization of the United Nations, which must be representative. The Maldives will not watch and stand idle, while the multilateral system fails and is thus seeking to get elected to the Economic and Social Council for the 2027-2029 term, he said, calling on Member States' support. "If elected, the Maldives will strive to make the UN development system more relevant to our times," he said.

EMOMALI RAHMON, President of Tajikistan, said "it is high time now to take bold and effective steps forward to strengthen the key role of the United Nations in resolving conflicts and restoring peace and stability across the planet." Advocating for a solution to all conflicts through political and diplomatic means, he expressed support for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, whose principal message is reflected in his country's national development strategy. The existence of a wide range of difficulties hinders the financing of sustainable development, he observed, adding that challenges include economic and financial crises, climate change and loss of biodiversity. "We are witnessing setbacks in achieving the SDGs in many developing countries," he said, underscoring the need to remove barriers to development financing. The activities of the international financial and economic systems should meet the needs of developing countries, he asserted.

Recognizing the importance of the Summit of the Future, he said that the adopted Pact plays a pivotal role in ensuring peace and sustainable development. This pact was adopted at a time when millions of civilians are exposed to risks and dangers in different regions worldwide, he said, urging the international community to take action to withstand the threat of international terrorism, radicalism, cybercrime, drug trafficking and weapons smuggling. Furthermore, he voiced concern over the rise of Islamophobia in recent years.

Turning to the security front, he cited the Palestinian crisis as "a matter of deep concern", underscoring that "there is no military solution to the Palestinian case". The ultimate solution lies in the implementation of United Nations resolutions, he stressed, urging the international community to take effective steps to restore lasting stability in Palestine. He also called on the international community to spare no effort to help the people

of Afghanistan — including regions affected by natural hazards — to prevent a humanitarian crisis in this war-torn country.

As a country vulnerable to climate change, he continued, Tajikistan suffers from frequent occurrences of natural hazards, inflicting damage on his country's economy and causing a death toll. Climate change is also accelerating the melting of glaciers, negatively impacting his country's agriculture and industry. Today, over 1,000 out of 14,000 of Tajikistan's glaciers — the region's primary source of drinking water — have completely melted, he said, commanding initiatives for glacier preservation. To advance the glacier preservation agenda, Tajikistan and France have put forward an initiative to declare 2025-2034 a decade of action for cryospheric sciences. Dushanbe has also adopted adaptation strategies, including specific provisions of the Paris Agreement. One of the ways to mitigate climate change challenges is to develop a green economy, which calls for the development of green energy, he added.

GITANAS NAUSÉDA, President of Lithuania, recalled that the Pact for the Future reaffirmed commitment to multilateralism. While the international rules-based world order was never perfect, it helped to search for joint solutions, he said, emphasizing that more than 10 years ago, something entirely different happened. "A permanent member of the Security Council began military aggression against a peaceful Member State," he noted, adding that finally the Russian Federation started the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. "Today, even though we face yet another distressing crisis in the Middle East as well as rising tensions in the Indo-Pacific region, the Russian war of aggression is the most dangerous threat," he stressed, calling for paying attention to the words of Russian leaders and their representatives at the United Nations Security Council: "How many times they have openly admitted that the Kremlin intends to wipe Ukraine from the face of Earth!"

If any sovereign nation is under the threat of complete destruction, no country is truly safe anymore, he stated, adding that what Russia presents to the world is a return to the era of imperial conquest, colonial domination and genocide. He said that Ukraine is not only fighting a war of self-defence but also fighting for the future of all those countries who believe in the Charter of the United Nations and its principles. "Ukraine is fighting for us all, and yet our joint collective response to this day has been insufficient — we have not been able to stop this madness," he stressed, citing the reason — the aggressor is hiding under the cover of the Security Council's permanent membership. "Hiding in plain sight, mocking every one of us with its unrestricted veto power — it is a terrible blow to the very credibility of the United Nations system," he said, urging to support Ukraine, restrict Russia's ability to wage war, ensure the accountability of those responsible for the crime of aggression and crimes against humanity, reform the

Security Council and rebuild the credibility of the Charter of the United Nations.

Recalling that deliberate Russian attacks on critical energy infrastructure have destroyed more than 80 per cent of Ukraine's thermal energy generation and a third of its hydro generation, he urged prevention of a humanitarian catastrophe, as assistance should be swift and focused on the energy sector. He also called on other parties, including Belarus, Iran, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and China, to stop providing Russia with military support, including dual-use materials. "There is only one path towards comprehensive, just and lasting peace — Ukraine's Peace Formula," he stressed, spotlighting that it is based on the universal principles of the Charter of the UN and urging all peace-loving countries to actively engage in these efforts. "Justice will have to be served. Russia will have to atone for its many crimes and pay damages," he said, reminding that President Vladimir Putin is already under an arrest warrant by the International Criminal Court for his crimes.

"We must all join forces in pushing for a comprehensive Security Council reform — there is simply no place for Russia in the Security Council, which was created to maintain international peace and security," he emphasized, adding that his country will not recognize Russia's illegal annexation of any Ukrainian region, be it Crimea, Sevastopol, Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk or Zaporizhzhia. "Today, as political divisions deepen and democracy seems to falter all around the globe, multilateralism remains our greatest hope," he said, highlighting for the United Nations a crucial role to play not only in Ukraine but also in the Middle East, the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and the Indo-Pacific region. He called on all Member States to unite in securing a better future where every sovereign country is protected from imperialism and every human being from arbitrary violence and war.

JULIUS MAADA BIO, President of Sierra Leone, recalling his country's decade-long, brutal civil war, said that his country's hard-won peace today is born out of genuine dialogue and vigilance inside of the country and support from organizations like the UN and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The country's journey to peace informs its work on the Security Council, promoting respect for international law and the Charter, the protection of civilians and the importance of dialogue. The international community's commitment to these principles matters now more than ever with conflicts raging in the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe. Calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and the Middle East, Sudan, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and Ukraine, he said that, not to be achieved in isolation, peace "requires the inclusive political process, economic development and respect for human rights". "For the millions of civilians trapped in armed conflicts, words of condemnation are not enough," he said, hailing leaders in the Sahel and West Africa working to respond to security challenges such as terrorism

while calling on the international community to support African-led peace initiatives and for the United Nations to actively address the root causes of those conflicts.

“We need to build bridges, and this requires the international community’s commitment to working with the regions to implement dialogue-based, region-led, and region-owned solutions,” he said, adding that his country’s current mandate on the Security Council has highlighted the need for urgent reform as its current makeup does not accurately reflect the world today. The Council “has been stuck in time” and “Africa remains the unquestionable victim”. Further, in its current, unchanged form, the Council’s performance and legitimacy are questionable, he said. In that same vein, recalling an open debate held under his country’s presidency, it was clear that the historical injustice committed against Africa must be rectified and that the continent must be prioritized in Council reform. “The legacy of colonialism, economic exploitation, and political marginalization has left deep scars on the African continent, thereby affecting its development, stability and influence in international affairs.” Equitable representation of the continent will better equip the UN to tackle global challenges and foster a more just world, and “Africa therefore demands no less than two permanent seats with all the rights and privileges of the permanent members, including the right to veto”, as well as two non-permanent seats, he said. “Africa’s voice must be heard and its demands for justice and equity must be met now.”

In the spirit of the Summit of the Future, he spotlighted Sierra Leone’s Medium-Term National Development Plan 2024-2030 laying out a framework delivering socioeconomic development aligned with the SDGs. The country will also invest in human capital development with investments in education, health care and agriculture. Among other positive developments such as the “Free Quality Education Programme” and advancements in gender equality, a bill prohibiting child marriage was signed into law in 2024 following the 2023 “Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Act”, both of which ensure women and girls’ national aspiration for a more inclusive society. “I remain steadfast in my commitment to ensuring that every girl and woman lives in a safe environment, with ample opportunities to realize their full potential.” To that end, Sierra Leone will lead efforts on a conference to conclude a legally binding instrument on access to justice for sexual violence survivors, the “Freetown Treaty”.

“Leaving no one behind” means ensuring ending global inequalities, he stressed, adding that the debt crisis and a lack of capital flow combined with impacts of climate change, conflicts and political instability will prevent developing countries from achieving the SDGs. Sierra Leone therefore endorses the “Nairobi IDA Communiqué”, increasing development support in Africa through affordable, concessional finance facilitating economic and

health-care development without becoming buried in debt. Finally, noting that the end of the Second World War united leaders and urged them to cooperate, he recited an African proverb: “Our two hands do not wash themselves — they wash one another,” and called on the Assembly for greater cooperation. “Divisions and unhealthy competition will only lead to humanity’s destruction,” he said, stressing: “We must ensure unity in diversity, where the rights of the weak and the minority are protected.”

ALEKSANDAR VUČIĆ, President of Serbia, expressed concern about increasing global tensions, conflicts and geopolitical struggles, emphasizing his country’s commitment to upholding the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law and the importance of restoring faith in peace. “Despite our declaratory efforts for peace, development and prosperity of humanity, there is no end in sight to this geopolitical nightmare,” he said, voicing his wish that the wise words of former United States President John F. Kennedy — that “mankind must put an end to war, or war will put an end to mankind” — do not become those of a prophet. Deeply sympathizing with the people suffering in the tragic events in the Middle East and Ukraine, he said that it is unforgivable that in the twenty-first century “we are talking about gruesome figures related to children who have died in conflicts”. The world is on the verge of nuclear disaster and nuclear Holocaust. In this regard, he supported a proposal for Africa’s greater representation in the Security Council.

He then highlighted Serbia’s historical experiences and international hypocrisy, noting his country’s suffering during the world wars and NATO bombings, accusing powerful nations of applying double standards, especially in relation to Serbia’s territorial integrity and Kosovo. “The absolute dominance of the Western capitalist way” of manufacturing, its science and technology supremacy and convincing victory against the Eastern contenders, brought the world to complete hegemony of Western ideas in all spheres of social life. Such a dominance also destroyed the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, he added.

He noted a view held by many that aggression against Ukraine opened Pandora’s box and undermined international law — a precedent not witnessed in Europe since the Second World War. “This is the utter untruth,” he declared, stating that the Charter and Council resolution 1244 (1999) were not observed when it came to the territorial integrity of Serbia. The uncontested power helped tear apart Yugoslavia and started doing the same to Serbia. Those who committed aggression against Serbia are trying to convince Belgrade that seceding Kosovo and Metohija from Serbia is the only democratic and reasonable solution. They have been providing arms daily to the so-called Kosovo security forces, which would tomorrow become armed forces of Albanians in the territory of Serbia.

He said that Serbia is committed to joining the European Union and boasts the strongest economy in the Western Balkans. However, the bloc’s

support for Kosovo's independence, influenced by powerful nations, disregards the principles of the Charter of the UN and international law.

Despite being a small country, Serbia prioritizes truth, economic progress, innovation and preserving its sovereignty. He then highlighted Serbia's commitment to peaceful dialogue with Kosovo and its refusal to compromise on its freedom. "I believe in a world based on real and not false values, and I believe that the strength of the developing countries, all of us who have raised our heads and who dare to say the truth, will be a foundation of a new, different and better world."

JOÃO MANUEL GONÇALVES LOURENÇO, President of Angola, said that "today, we are witnessing an attempt to undermine, ignore or even replace the role and importance of the United Nations in resolving the major issues that afflict humanity". Underlining his country's deep commitment to finding solutions to conflicts in Africa, he said that, momentarily, the greatest effort is focused on the conflict developing in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, without neglecting those in Sudan and the Sahel region. As part of the Luanda process, a ceasefire was reached east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. To consolidate the gains made, a proposal for a peace agreement has been put on the table by Angola, with the prospect of reaching an understanding that will justify the convening of a summit meeting to seal the signing of the definitive peace agreement between the two countries.

He further voiced deep concern over the situation in Sudan, where a violent war is raging with humanitarian consequences of dramatic proportions in the face of "a certain apathy" on the international community's part. On the war against Ukraine, he said it has profoundly shaken stability and security in Europe, with strong repercussions for the rest of the world in terms of economic stability and food and energy security. "Although increasingly sophisticated military means are being deployed in the theatre of operations, no military victory is in sight in this war," he said.

Turning to the situation in Gaza, he said that although Israel has the right to protect its territory and guarantee the safety of its citizens, it also has the responsibility to prevent the genocide that the world is witnessing live and the attacks by settlers and expansion of settlements in the West Bank. "It can no longer be allowed that in just 11 months, in a small territory with no escape, nearly 43,000 people are killed and that the perpetrators are not held accountable by the international community," he asserted, voicing concern about the escalation and spread of this conflict.

He further spotlighted Angola's National Development Plan, which has as its main axes the diversification of the economy, the reduction of public debt, the mobilization of domestic revenue and the optimization of public spending in the priority areas of health and education. He pointed to the construction of water transfer systems for areas heavily affected by drought in southern Angola. Also, his country has made a tremendous public

investment in the health sector, rapidly constructing hospital infrastructures. He further highlighted Angola's partnerships to ensure the operation of the Benguela Railway and the Lobito mineral and commercial ports as part of the major transnational transport and logistics project of the Lobito Corridor, which will ensure the faster, safer and more competitively priced transport of minerals and agricultural and industrial products produced in Zambia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola across the Atlantic Ocean to the rest of the world. "This is a catalysing project that will change the economic landscape in Angola and Southern Africa," he added.

MOHAMED OULD CHEIKH EL GHAZOUANI, President of Mauritania, said that "what the world has been through and what it is currently going through" has greatly weakened the individual and collective ability to fulfil the 2030 Agenda, especially on his continent. Noting that it already suffers from structural and circumstantial imbalances that hinder its development efforts, he said that Africa is tackling poverty and unemployment, not to mention the spread of terrorism, armed conflicts and the devastating effects of climate change. Stressing the need to alleviate the enormous debt burden of its countries and correct the imbalances in the development assistance system, he said multilateral cooperation is crucial for enabling economic growth in Africa.

Mauritania has been able to improve many of the SDG indicators, he said, adding that this is reflected in its improved ranking in the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024. Highlighting his country's efforts to enshrine the rule of law and promote democracy, he said it is investing in the independence of the judiciary and combating corruption. Mauritania's efforts to promote human rights also takes the form of fighting against the remnants of modern slavery and human trafficking, as well as protecting the rights of women and children. It is developing strategies that guarantee that young people have education, he said, adding that such efforts have reinforced national unity and social cohesion. Stressing the need to eliminate various forms of injustice, he said the Government is building a social safety net that enable the poorest to access all public services.

Drawing attention to the reform of the education system, he said it aims to embody equality and fairness. Further, Mauritania has created a health insurance system for citizens not covered by traditional insurance programmes. Turning to the negative repercussions of climate change and its security implications in the African continent and the Sahel in particular, he said his country has worked hard to reduce carbon emissions by 7 per cent and to increase the use of renewable energy. It also plans to adopt a green hydrogen development programme and promote clean energy, while continuing the fight against desertification. Industrialized countries must respect their commitments to reduce their emissions and fulfil their pledges from the Paris Summit, he underscored.

Also highlighting a foreign policy based on non-interference in the internal affairs of States and strengthening cooperation, he condemned Israel's war of genocide against the defenceless Palestinian people. "We demand the immediate end of this war," he said, reaffirming the right of the Palestinian people to lead lives of dignity and sovereignty, within the framework of an independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital as provided for in the Arab Peace Initiative. Also calling for an end to Israeli attacks on Lebanon, he expressed support for African efforts to preserve the sovereignty of Libya. Reaffirming the importance of Sudan's stability, security and territorial integrity, he said that dialogue and reason must prevail and lead to an immediate end to the war and the humanitarian suffering of the Sudanese people.

SADYR ZHAPAROV, President of Kyrgyzstan, said that the world is witnessing yearly increases in global military expenditure "while poor and vulnerable States lack the resources needed for their development and survival". Pointing to the "two conflicting realities of our time" — limitless spending on military needs juxtaposed against a lack of aid for States in need — he underscored: "It would be far better if the money spent on war, destruction and death were redirected towards creation or addressing global challenges for the benefit of all humanity." While world leaders have talked for decades on the need to eliminate poverty, "they lack the will to follow through", he observed. "The world is now faced with a critical choice," he said: "We can either choose to increase security through the expansion of armed forces or we can pursue sustainable development aimed at eradicating poverty and supporting the most vulnerable."

"If the resources spent on military expenditure were instead invested in providing access to clean water, educating children in developing countries, combating hunger or addressing climate change, it would make a significant difference," he stressed. Urging a "joint effort between wealthy and needy countries", he said that developed nations must not only increase financial aid, but also focus on targeted infrastructure and social development projects. And, for their part, countries in need must actively participate in international sustainable development initiatives and commit to using resources effectively, he said — "rather than scattering them without direction". Further, wealthy countries must transfer modern technology to those in need, enabling struggling nations to independently develop their economies and reduce dependence on external aid. "The time has come to rethink global security priorities," he emphasized, as true security is achieved not by powerful armies or weapons of mass destruction, but through trust, equality and prosperity.

The international community, therefore, must pay greater attention to sustainable development in the Global South and advocate for the interests of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, he said. Kyrgyzstan, for example, faces a triple

challenge of investing in development, reducing poverty and adapting to climate change. Each of these areas requires special financing — especially the latter — and he urged the promotion of a “debt-for-green-economy exchange mechanism” as well as the replacement of external debt with projects aimed at sustainable development. Noting that over 95 per cent of his country’s energy is produced by hydropower plants — the main driver towards achieving net-zero emissions — he also detailed efforts to develop electric transport infrastructure, promote sustainable agriculture and enhance ecotourism. Additionally, “green” cities are being built on the shores of Issyk-Kul lake and the Kemin district; a hydropower station is being built together with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan; and the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway will enhance trade and transport cooperation.

He went on to note his country’s efforts to protect the snow leopard, both a symbol of long-term sustainable development in the region and Kyrgyzstan’s national symbol. To this end, Kyrgyzstan will submit a General Assembly resolution to proclaim an “International Snow Leopard Day”, and he urged support for this initiative. Also spotlighting the “daily challenges” faced by people who live in mountainous regions — water shortages, food insecurity, poverty, lack of access to basic services — he stressed that these countries “should not be left alone with their problems”. Concluding, he offered words from the Epic of Manas, which embody the “profound depth of friendship, unity and solidarity among peoples”: “Let us unite our strength, as one head from one shoulder and one hand from one sleeve — wherever there is unity, there is prosperity.”

JAVIER GERARDO MILEI, President of Argentina, said he is not a politician but a liberal, libertarian economist and never aimed to be a politician. Noting that this is his first speech before the General Assembly, he wanted to humbly alert different nations about the path they are moving down and the danger of this Organization failing. He said he did not come to tell the world what to do, but to warn of the collective policies that are being promoted under the mantle of the 2030 Agenda. The UN was born out of the horror and the cruelties of two world wars and the international community aimed for these tragedies to never happen again, he said, adding that among the Organization’s fundamental founding principles was that all human beings were born free and equal. Humanity has experienced a long period of peace and the UN has provided an international forum, he observed.

The Organization was able to achieve having five great Powers sit around one table with veto power, he said. The world moved from two world wars through 70 years of relative peace and security as it integrated commercially and prospered. Noting the success of trade over bullets, he said that under the UN’s watch, there were a few decades of outstanding success. “That cannot be overlooked”, he added. Yet that success

stopped after the Organization diverted from its initial aims and started to change. It spread through various tentacles to decide what countries should be doing and imposed an ideology on its members with an endless list of rules. The Organization has become a model of supranational government, with international bureaucrats imposing a specific way of living on citizens.

The UN is going down a tragic path, he said, with the Secretary-General defining a new social contract. For Argentina, the 2030 Agenda is imposing a supranational government, and violating the right to life and freedom.

While the 2030 Agenda purports to end poverty, its adoption is in line with privileged interests and does not represent the principles set down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Organization defended systemic violations of freedoms, such as the lockdowns imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic, which were a crime against humanity. It has voted against the State of Israel, the only State to defend a liberal democracy.

The UN has promoted collective policies that disrupt natural economic processes. It has imposed regulations on countries that wish to develop themselves. It has ridiculous policies, such as zero-emissions policies. And it imposes on poor countries what they should eat, he said.

Issuing a warning, he said the “woke agenda is coming up against reality”.

If the 2030 Agenda fails, the response should not be another ill-conceived proposal. There still is time. “Argentina is in a time of profound change,” he said, adding that his country believes in the defense of life for all, the freedom of expression for all and trade for all. He supported limited government. Nations should be united in the defense of freedoms, he said, stressing that Argentina does not support any regulations that violate the rights of trade and people. He dissented from the Pact for the Future and urged all nations to support that view. He said that Argentina would abandon its policy of neutrality and is on the vanguard of the defense of freedom. “Long live freedom. God damn it. Thank you,” he said.

NAYIB ARMANDO BUKELE, President of El Salvador, noted that, five years after his first General Assembly speech, “I come here as the president of a country that now has a voice in the world”. For decades “we were in chains due to an imported civil war and then a false peace that left behind more dead than war itself”, he said, but over the last five years, “El Salvador has been born again”. The country has a flourishing tourist industry, with sports, surf and entertainment, while thousands of Salvadorans who fled war and poverty are now returning. Once the global capital of homicides, “we've now made this the safest country in our region”, he affirmed. The transformation of El Salvador “is without comparison, and our success is undeniable — anyone can visit El Salvador and see this for yourself”.

El Salvador has become safer as the world has become less safe, while the Salvadoran people have become more optimistic as “the world has

become divided, depressed, concerned and hopeless”, he stressed. Pointing to cities in other countries where streets belong to drug traffickers and gangs, and to citizens of Western countries who have been arrested for postings on social media, he warned: “We are moving towards a scary inflection point.” “As a Salvadoran, I recognize these symptoms because we have experienced all of them,” he said. Having witnessed the collapse of its nation, El Salvador can “only offer a word of warning to a friend who’s going through a dark period”. As the smallest country on the American continent, El Salvador cannot change the world; but it can “become a small refuge in light of the approaching storm”.

“Some people say that we are the country that has imprisoned thousands, but actually, we’ve freed millions,” he stated, noting that El Salvador does not confiscate the “property of people who don’t agree with us — we don’t arrest people for their own ideas” in a country that now has freedom of expression that will always be protected. The Government fosters innovation and new ideas. “In El Salvador, you will find the space to explore your ambitions, be that in technology, energy, medicine, arts, culture, music or architecture,” he emphasized.

Once one of the darkest places on the entire planet, the country was reborn because “we remembered that freedom is something that you take; it isn’t given to us”. It is now a safe country for progress and innovation, as well as for families. “We welcome you all — mainly for our people, but also for anybody who wishes to contribute to our vision,” he said. The next steps may be harder than the previous ones, but El Salvador must maintain its freedom “in a world that is increasingly less free”. He affirmed to the international community that “it’s not too late to build a bridge and to escape the storm”.

MASOUD PEZESHKIAN, President of Iran, said global peace and security will not be achieved unless the rights of everyone are upheld with fairness; and so long as injustice, oppression, greed, and poverty prevail unchallenged in any region, there will be no liberation. He noted that his coming into office aims to lay a strong foundation for Iran’s entry into a new era with strengthened foreign policies. Stating that the world has witnessed the true nature of the Israeli regime, he lamented the fact that that country’s leaders label the genocide in Gaza as legitimate self-defence and the victims as legitimate military targets, and that they tag the protesting world antisemitic and terrorist. He called on the international community to put an end to the aggression and occasion a ceasefire, including in Lebanon, before it engulfs the region and the world.

He announced that there will be consequences for Governments who have fostered this aggression “and have the audacity to call themselves champions of human rights”, adding that the only pathway to end hostilities is the enthronement of self-determination for the Palestinian people. He therefore called for a referendum to this effect to be held in the affected

territories. Iran envisages a lasting peace with all faiths in the region living together, void of any form of apartheid. Emphasizing the importance of unity, he said his country has never initiated a war or occupied any foreign territory or sought resources of any country. “We must recognize that we are neighbours. Because of this bond we will remain together,” he stressed, warning that the presence of foreign Powers in the region is temporary and leads to instability. A new regional order, therefore, must be inclusive and beneficial for all neighbours.

He went on to state that his country has endured threats, war, occupation, and sanctions throughout modern history with no country coming to its assistance or respecting its declared neutrality. Iran seeks to safeguard its security, not to create insecurity for others. “We want peace for all and seek no war or quarrel with anyone”, he said. He further underscored the urgent need to end military hostilities in Ukraine, highlighting dialogue as the only way to resolve crises, as no country’s security and interest can be guaranteed by undermining that of others. There is thus a need for a new paradigm to address global challenges, which should “focus on opportunities and not being obsessed with perceived threat”, he opined.

Recalling the historic 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action whereby his country, together with global powers, agreed to the “highest unprecedented level of nuclear oversight in return for recognition for its rights and lifting of sanctions”, he regretted former United States President Donald Trump’s unilateral withdrawal.

Iran is however ready to engage with the Plan’s participants if its terms and commitments are implemented fully and in good faith. All States operating a counterproductive strategy towards his country, he continued, should learn from history. “We have an opportunity to transcend these limitations and enter into a new era”, which will commence with the acknowledgement of Iran’s military concerns and cooperation on mutual challenges, he said.

Describing the sanctions his country has been meted as destructive and inhumane, some of which not only violate human rights but constitute a crime against humanity, he said “although the wounds inflicted by the sanctions are deep within our society, confronting this bitter experience has transformed us into a stronger nation with unwavering resolve and self-confidence.” Iran hopes to build a better future with robust partnerships with global Powers and expects that they impose no more sanctions but fulfil existing obligations to remove such and lay foundation for more constructive agreements.

ALAR KARIS, President of Estonia said: “I want to live in a world that is in peace,” where sovereign nations, whether big or small, are not conquered and colonized; where artificial intelligence serves and not hinders humanity; and where nobody has to fear oppression based on gender, race, nation beliefs or one's thoughts. Regrettably peace and freedom are under threat, he said, noting that the number of countries where political

rights and civil liberties are diminishing is more than twofold in comparison to those where such freedoms are improving. The international community may condemn brutal acts of violence but without efficient action against atrocities, it is not enough. What “keeps us awake at night”, he said, is the children who are lost to conflicts, who will never be old enough to see a high school diploma or learn how to ride a bike. The happiness of a child is the image that should set the moral compass of the international community, he said.

Stressing the importance of restoring the credibility of the UN, he said now more than ever it is vital to reform the Security Council. Commending the Pact for the Future as a good guideline, he said “we should have been even more ambitious”. The future Council must be efficient, open and accountable and its composition must adequately reflect the current world. The scope and use of the veto right has to be limited, he said, expressing support for all efforts to limit its use, especially on actions aimed at ending or preventing mass atrocities. It is impossible to restore the credibility of the UN when a permanent Council member acts against the UN Charter principles, he said, adding “therefore, let us use wisely the powers of the General Assembly”. Calling on delegates to analyse options to ensure that the Assembly gains more prominence, he added that future peace operations must better respond to existing challenges and emerging realities.

The Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine, he said, causes inhumane suffering, as does the war in Gaza and other conflicts. Since the horrific terrorist attack by Hamas against Israel almost a year ago, there has been too much suffering in Gaza and the region. The two-State solution is the only way to a just and lasting peace, he stressed. Noting how the global community has condemned the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine “in this very room”, he said it must also firmly condemn the actions of those who arm that country in this aggression — Iran and Democratic People's Republic of Korea. “Russia's war against Ukraine is as clear as black and white. Russia is the aggressor and Ukraine is the victim,” he stressed, adding that the “smooth talk about dialogue” and calls on the two countries to engage in direct peace talks is only supporting Russian Federation's cause. “We are not going to call Russia for a coffee,” he said, calling on that country to accept Ukraine's 10-point peace formula.

Highlighting his country's “Fit for Freedom” proposal from last year, he said it calls for a global discussion on how to reinforce multilateralism, how to foster inclusive decision-making of all States and how to ensure human rights and freedoms for all. Estonia's own story is a perfect illustration that positive change is possible, he said, adding: “We have built a digital, cybersecure society where citizens feel that they themselves are the State.” While free societies might need “some updates from time to time

and the latest plugins for optimized user-friendly performance”, if maintained properly they are not crashing and freezing like autocracies, he said. “Estonians have a vivid memory of the times when human rights were denied to us,” he said, adding that this makes the country vigorous, reinforces its commitment to fighting for and to supporting those fighting for their rights today. As a candidate for the UN Human Rights Council for 2026-2028, it stands in alignment with the principle of universality and indivisibility of human rights.

GABRIEL BORIC FONT, President of Chile, noting that 2025 will mark 80 years since 51 countries “took the momentous step of creating the UN”, observed that “the world has changed a great deal” since 1945. Yet, some things remain the same. Pointing to statements made earlier today in support of Security Council reform, he asked: “Is anybody in this Assembly opposed to this?” He therefore proposed that a deadline be set for such reform so that, when the UN celebrates its eightieth birthday, it can do so with a Council that “includes Brazil, India and at least one country from Africa, among others”. Human institutions depend on the will of their leaders — “us”, he emphasized — and those unable to adapt to their era risk failure. In that context, he said that it is “worth remembering the swift collapse of the League of Nations” and added: “There are times when change is the best way of ensuring the continuity of our history — and this is exactly one of those.”

He went on to say that the international community is sometimes accused of double-standards in the face of human-rights violations around the world: “We condemn what our adversaries do, but when an alleged friend is the one violating the UN Charter, we look aside or express ambiguity.” Yet, the Palestinian teenager murdered in Gaza, the Venezuelan workers forced from their homeland, the Ukrainian child abducted by the Russian Federation, the silenced opposition in Nicaragua and the women expelled from school in Afghanistan “are all, above all, human beings”, he said, underscoring that “the voice of all nations should be raised in their defence”. He added: “For this reason, I refuse to choose between the terror of Hamas or the genocide carried out by Netanyahu’s Israel; we have no reason to choose between barbarities — I choose humanity.” Further, the Russian Federation’s aggression against Ukraine must cease, and the UN is the right body to end this flagrant transgression of international law.

Also reaffirming Chile’s commitment to democracy — “the only system capable of maintaining peace, reaching sustainable development and protecting dignity, rights and fundamental freedoms” — he expressed concern over peoples’ increasing disaffection with this form of Government and over the emergence of authoritarian leaders “who persecute or insult those with ideas different to their own”. In Venezuela, “we have a dictatorship that is trying to steal an election, which persecutes its opposition and is indifferent to the exile of millions of its citizens”, he said.

A political outcome that recognizes the opposition's triumph in the latest elections and undertakes a peaceful transition towards democracy is required, he stressed, adding that unilateral sanctions imposed by the United States worsen the conflict because such measures affect vulnerable people more than they do dictators. "Chile is not in a position to receive more Venezuelan migrants," he underscored, noting the 800,000 his country currently hosts.

Turning to artificial intelligence, he said that Chile is committed to its ethical, transparent and responsible regulation. As that technology "reproduces prejudices and stereotypes" due to the biases existent in the databases it uses, he stressed that history teaches that trusting large companies to regulate themselves does not work. If the international community does not act now by demanding traceability in algorithms, data audits and corrective human intervention, "we might, in a few years, see a new form of extermination — digital extermination of non-hegemonic cultures", he warned. Also urging that science not be denied in the face of increasingly frequent droughts, floods and fires, he said that, while humanity faces many challenges, "our fate is not set in stone".

Paraphrasing a warning written by Chilean poet Elvira Hernández — "we are migratory birds, but we have become used to behaving as monuments" — he urged that the UN not become a sterile, static monument but, rather, that "this great historic achievement" become a "renewed bright light for 2024".

EDGARS RINKĒVIČS, President of Latvia, said the future of the multilateral system and rules-based order is in the international community's hands. "We shall not allow selective application or disregard of global norms. The alternative is a terrifying world where force prevails, and law perishes," he said, noting the third year of the Russian Federation's unprovoked full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine. The international community must remain resilient and committed to the rules-based order in the face of Moscow's aggression. "Especially when the aggressor is a nuclear-weapon State and a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council," he added. "Russia tries to tear down what has been built by all of us. Russia tries to rearrange the international system that only benefits aggressors." After enduring 50 years of Soviet occupation, Latvia deeply understands the value of freedom and independence and stands by Ukraine.

He continued calls for an immediate, unconditional withdrawal of all Russian troops and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine. The unprovoked attack has impacted global food security, nuclear safety and the humanitarian situation. He called on the United Nations to take a more active stand on the forcible deportations and illegal adoptions of Ukrainian children to the Russian Federation, and on Member States to support and join the Communiqué adopted at the Peace Summit in

Switzerland and build a peace process based on the UN Charter's principles. The Russia Federation must bear full legal and financial responsibility for its aggression, he said, stressing the need to support and strengthen institutions that investigate and prosecute these crimes, provide justice for victims, and uphold the rule of law. The creation of a Special Tribunal to prosecute the main perpetrators of the crime of aggression would ensure full accountability.

Turning to the Middle East crisis, he said Latvia and other European Union Member States have called for an immediate ceasefire, the unconditional release of all hostages and the provision of humanitarian access at scale. "It is crucial to prevent the deepening of the crisis and avoid regional spill-over," he said. He condemned all terrorist attacks against Israel and recognized Israel's legitimate right to self-defence in line with international law and international humanitarian law. The international community must focus on revitalizing the political process and strive for a lasting peace that addresses the legitimate aspirations and security concerns of both Israelis and Palestinians. Noting that the UN is a place where no country's voice can be dimmed by more resourceful Powers, he said the Summit has demonstrated Member States' commitment to the SDGs — which can be achieved through innovation, a science-based and environmentally friendly economy, quality education and strengthened governance. "Engage with women, youth and non-governmental sector on these matters," he said, adding that Latvia has achieved 63 per cent of the set targets.

Acknowledging the Organization's shortcomings, he said Latvia strongly supports revitalization of the UN system and Council reform, including by expanding the number of permanent Council members to make it more effective, inclusive and accountable and elevate the voice of underrepresented regions. "It is high time for Africa to have permanent presence at the Security Council table," he said. "Africa has been neglected for far too long. That has to change." Small island developing States deserve a non-permanent seat. The decision-making process should be revisited as well, and no single State should have veto power. "Especially when it comes to conflicts the permanent members are involved themselves," he said. "The United Nations once used to be a beacon of hope for the people. Not anymore. We must change that. We must rebuild trust and common values. And we can do this by working together," he said. Prepared to shoulder its part of the responsibility, Latvia, for the first time, is running for a non-permanent Council seat at the 2025 elections. "We stand ready to reenergize this international body."

SANTIAGO PEÑA PALACIOS, President of Paraguay, stated that "we need to be sincere and admit that we are all failing to build a better world".

However, as a great military hero and statesman of his country, Bernardino Caballero, said, "the future is the child of the present". Calling for elimination of the veto in the Security Council, he affirmed that maintaining

peace should be the fundamental pillar of multilateralism. However, some 20 international armed conflicts and more than 110 domestic conflicts around the world show that the institutions created to preserve peace have not fulfilled that mission. Recalling that in the War of the Triple Alliance, Paraguay experienced a war of extermination, he emphasized his country knows better than anyone what it means for a small nation to be invaded or attacked by powerful powers. He therefore reaffirmed firm support for Ukraine, respecting its sovereignty and territorial integrity, calling for diplomatic solutions.

In the Middle East, Paraguay stood firmly alongside Israel following the “heinous attacks by Hamas” on 7 October 2023, and it rejects any biased attempt to equate responsibility between the democratically elected authorities of Israel and the leaders of the Hamas terrorist group. At the same time, he urgently called for a solution that alleviates the humanitarian situation, ends the violence and guarantees the immediate release of the hostages. Expressing deep concern about the situation in Africa — where the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that there are currently around 25 active conflicts — he also cited the extremely difficult situation in Haiti, where gangs control a large part of Port-au-Prince, plunging the country into a spiral of violence that multilateral mechanisms have not been able to de-escalate.

As Paraguay has reaffirmed its commitment to democracy, “I must strongly condemn what is happening to our Venezuelan brothers”, he said, pointing to an electoral process that overlooked the will of the Venezuelan people — characterized by the regime’s persecution of the main opposition actors and arbitrary detentions. He reiterated support for the democratic forces in Venezuela that are fighting against authoritarianism. Recognizing Paraguay’s 70 years of international cooperation with Republic of China — Taiwan, he renewed firm support for its inclusion as a full part of the United Nations system — its exclusion being an injustice.

Turning to domestic issues, he cited two Government programmes: “Zero Hunger in Schools”, a commitment to eradicate hunger in school-age children; and “Che Roga Pora”, the country’s first housing access policy focused on the working class. He noted that Paraguay is a beacon in producing clean, renewable energy. Generation of hydroelectric energy is not only a national project, but a joint initiative with its neighbours, while its position in the heart of South America means it can be a motor for integration. The country will soon host the nineteenth session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Stressing that the rule of law and unrestricted respect for human rights are fundamental pillars, he affirmed that “despite the tremendous challenges we are facing, I am convinced that, as William Faulkner once said, ‘Humanity will not simply endure: it will prevail’”.

TO LAM, President of Viet Nam, said the world is undergoing transformative changes of historic significance with strategic competition among major Powers becoming broader, fiercer and more confrontational.

“The rise of power politics and egoistic nationalism are challenging international law and eroding multilateral institutions and diminishing faith in global cooperation”, he said, observing how poor countries are left further behind with a widening development gap. He recalled the super Typhoon Yagi, which devastatingly ravaged his and other countries in the region, saying it serves as a stark warning of the severe impact that natural disasters and climate change can have on sustainable development.

Contrasting the record 2023 global defence expenditure of \$2.4 trillion with the ensuing struggle to pool \$100 billion for climate action, he decried the fact that 80 per cent of the SDGs may not be met by 2030.

However, with economic pressures and sanctions threatening rapid and sustainable development, the fourth industrial revolution offers opportunities for quantum progress, he noted, “but it also poses security and safety challenges for society and individuals”, which “compel us to unite, act and work together, upholding the role of international institutions”.

He went on to relay his country’s vision for the future to include an increased observance of international law and adherence to the UN Charter by all States, particularly the major Powers. “Each state must act responsibly, fulfil its commitments and abide by international law and the UN Charter, including fundamental principles such as the peaceful settlement of disputes, non-use of force, sovereign equality, territorial integrity and respect for the political systems chosen by the people of each nation,” he stressed.

Further, there must be equitable development for every State, community and individual, as well as an effective utilization and deployment of resources for the same. “We must prioritize resources where they are most needed for implementing the SDGs, with particular attention to assisting developing and less-developed countries, especially through preferential loans, transfer of advanced technologies, investment and trade facilitation and debt relief for poor countries,” he stated. There is an urgent need for the creation of smart, long-term, global governance frameworks for science and technology, particularly emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence to forestall threats to peace, sustainable development and humanity. He therefore welcomed the Global Digital Compact adopted at the Summit of the Future. This, he said, “will serve as a crucial basis for advancing global governance and international cooperation in these areas”.

He called for innovative thinking in all sectors of society and the prioritization of multilateral reforms mechanisms, particularly for the UN system and international financial and monetary institutions, to ensure better representation, equity and transparency. “Enhancing their capability, effectiveness and future readiness is essential for remaining relevant in our

changing world,” he said. Turning to economic restrictions, he reaffirmed solidarity with the State and people of Cuba and called on the United States to lift embargoes and sanctions against that country, expunging it from the list of State sponsors of terrorism. Underscoring the role of unity and cooperation in successfully building a world of peace, sustainable development and human dignity for present and future generations, he assured of Viet Nam’s commitment toward “a future of peace, stability, prosperity and sustainability — not only for our own people but also for all nations worldwide”.

ANDRZEJ DUDA, President of Poland, recalled that 85 years ago, his country became the first victim of the Second World War when Nazi Germany attacked Poland, and was joined two weeks later by its ally, the Soviet Union, fulfilling the agreement between Adolph Hitler and Joseph Stalin. The war crimes that followed left a mark on his nation’s history forever, he said, adding: “In my country, we know very well what war is.”

This is why Poland has always been a strong advocate of measures that prevent conflicts and ensure peace. For the past two and half years, the Russian Federation’s brutal aggression against neighbouring Ukraine has been destabilizing his region and posing a direct threat to global security, he said. It is crucial to stop that war, not only to end the suffering of the people and punish the aggressor but also to prevent such heinous actions from becoming a model for others to follow, he added.

In the Middle East, where the conflict has escalated due to the brutal Hamas attacks of 7 October 2023, he said, while Israel has the right to self-defense, these actions must follow international humanitarian law. Voicing support for a two-State solution that will guarantee both Palestinians and Israelis the right to live in peace, he said the emergence of an independent Palestine will not contradict Israel’s interests. The right of Israel to exist cannot be questioned, he said, adding that “the two nations are united by space and time, which will remain their common destiny”. He also expressed concern about the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Yemen and the struggle for control of the Red Sea. The international community must do everything possible to ease the suffering of the Yemeni people and restore their country’s stability. Noting the many ongoing wars and terrorist actions in Africa undermining prosperity and safety, he said the world must stand with all those affected by insecurity.

“As President of Poland, I consistently repeat the phrase ‘peace through law’”, he said, adding that his country will always demand respect for human rights, regardless of geographic location. Noting that it has decided to apply for a seat on the UN Human Rights Council for 2029-2031, he said its candidacy is an expression of its commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights around the world. “Poles perfectly understand the perspective of countries that experienced colonialism,” he said, adding that his country’s history — from losing statehood in the nineteenth century

to the Second World War to the fall of communism — has taught its people how precious freedom, sovereignty and human dignity are. Therefore, Poland will not stop supporting African societies in building a safer and more prosperous future. Africa has the potential to develop its own solutions to challenges, he said, while expressing concern that halfway through the deadline for the 2030 Agenda, progress in realizing its ambitions is insufficient.

Noting that Poland will serve as Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council this session, he said the motto of its mandate is “Developing in Solidarity”. Further, Poland will begin its Presidency of the Council of the European Union starting on 1 January 2025, he said, adding that his country will seek to give new impetus to relations with developing partners. Despite its imperfections, the UN remains the foundation of the world order, he said, adding that the Summit of the Future has provided an opportunity to reflect on the possibility of improving UN structures to make them more responsive to contemporary challenges. His country is ready to discuss reforms to the Security Council, other key UN bodies as well as international financial institutions. The world is changing, and the UN system must change as well, he said, adding that Poland will support all efforts for peace, human rights and sustainable development.

ALBERT II, Prince of Monaco, recalling the birth of the Charter of the United Nations almost 80 years ago, said that the UN founders held the “firm conviction that there was no power more legitimate than that we vested collectively in this new international Organization”. Now, in a world facing multiplying regional conflict, an accelerating arms race, nuclear proliferation and an “ebbing of collective security”, he stressed that accountability for violations of international humanitarian law is “essential to build a just and lasting peace”. Now is not the time for war or division but, rather, to increase cooperation, help each other and engage in dialogue, and the international community must move from “the way of destruction” to “the way that leads to prosperity”, he urged. The fourth International Conference on Financing for Development to be held in 2025 will provide an opportunity to rethink the international financial architecture and the second World Summit for Social Development — also slated for 2025 — will contribute to fighting poverty, which is the first of the SDGs.

He emphasized, however, that “sustainable development will not be achieved if we do not include women and girls”. Gender equality has yet to be achieved and he called on those present — “step-by-step and whatever the cost” — to promote women’s rights and ensure such equality. Yet, the most threatening challenge humanity faces in the long-term — “without a doubt” — is the multidimensional environmental crisis, he stressed. “In the face of this tragedy of the commons, we cannot show any doubt or dejection,” he said, spotlighting the international instruments that can guide the global community in “navigating this storm” — the Paris Agreement, the

Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. He also expressed hope for the adoption of a new agreement on plastic pollution, and Monaco, for its part, is supporting the creation of an international panel of experts on ocean sustainability.

Noting that 2025 will be “an important year for the planet”, he spotlighted both France’s hosting of the third UN Ocean Conference and Monaco’s hosting of the Blue Economy and Finance Forum in that year. Monaco, he added, is committed to implementing “solid regulation, grounded in the best scientific data, to ensure effective protection of the marine environment before we see any mineral exploitation of the seabed”. Turning to artificial intelligence, he said that “staggering” progress in this technology can both help increase development and provide fertile ground for organized crime and terrorism. Therefore, the international community must establish the right regulations — “now”, he stressed — to ensure ethical use of this technology that respects human rights and fundamental freedoms and prevents its use or diversion for military or terrorist purposes. Disinformation, he continued, is one of the “most insidious” dangers for societies, sowing confusion, eroding trust in institutions and media, destabilizing States and exacerbating international tensions.

“We have the tools we need” to address these threats, he emphasized, underlining the legal, technical and scientific means available to “bring lasting solutions to our contemporary challenges”. The Pact for the Future, for example, offers a historic, unique opportunity to progress the intergovernmental process aimed at reforming the Security Council to make the organ more representative of current realities. Noting that athletes in the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Paris showed that “effort and perseverance — including in adversity — lead to victory”, he urged those present to overcome obstacles without losing sight of the goal — “which is to preserve peace between nations and to guarantee the well-being of the peoples of the United Nations”.

DAVID W.R. ADEANG, President of Nauru, said that as a nation surrounded by water, his country has a vested interest in the responsible stewardship of the ocean’s marine resources, and has led international efforts to protect and sustainably use those resources. That includes developing and adopting the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction and exploring the deep seabed’s mineral resources, in line with the 2050 Blue Pacific Strategy. “The greatest risk we face is not the potential environmental impacts of mineral recovery but the risk of inaction,” he said, calling on the international community and the International Seabed Authority Council to acknowledge the science and progress achieved and work with ocean States to establish and adopt robust regulations to

conserve and sustain the use of marine resources. “We have the science, we have the technology, and we have the imperative. Let us rise to the challenge and opportunity before us, employing our advancements for the good of all, and let the time for action be now,” he said.

He said that for countries like Nauru, equitable access to banking is a lifeline as it faces the growing threat of the loss of correspondent banking relationships. “This challenge transcends financial concerns; it strikes at the heart of our sovereignty and dignity,” he said. He was encouraged by the recent adoption of the multidimensional vulnerability index and called on the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other financial institutions to integrate the index into their frameworks. “It is not just another statistic,” he said. “It is a tool that provides a more accurate picture of our national circumstances, our strengths, our challenges, our potential.”

Turning to peace and development issues, he continued to call for an immediate, unconditional end to the decades-long embargo imposed on Cuba. He encouraged the international community to reaffirm its commitment to build bridges of understanding, nurture empathy and promote reconciliation. “We must focus on building bridges, not walls, and work towards a more integrated, connected world,” he said.

Regarding the long overdue need for Council reform, he said the entity must reflect this century’s geopolitical realities, noting legitimate concerns about representation, effectiveness and the Council’s ability to address contemporary security issues. The imperative for peaceful resolutions and lasting peace in conflict-affected regions underscores the critical need for a reformed and strengthened Council. “Let us be the leaders who bring about a new era of peace and reconciliation,” he said. He continued to call on the Secretary-General to appoint a Special Representative on Climate and Security. Having endorsed the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, he said he eagerly awaits the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on climate change. While welcoming the Pact for the Future’s ambition, he was disappointed by the removal of Action 21, noting that Nauru and the Group of Friends on Climate and Security advocated for its inclusion to address the security threats posed by the climate crises.

He urged developed nations to recognize their historical responsibility for emissions and honour their obligations under the Paris Agreement by providing the promised climate financing and technology transfer. “Support our efforts to transition to renewable energy, to enhance our climate resilience and to protect our biodiversity,” he said. He urged the international community to work with Nauru to establish the robust regulations necessary for responsible mining, and extended a hand in solidarity to fellow developing nations. “Let us share knowledge, resources, and solutions. Let us amplify our collective voice, for in unity, there is strength,” he said. He called on the UN to fulfil its founding promise. “Be a bastion of multilateralism, the resolute champion of the

vulnerable, and the bold catalyst for the transformative change our world so desperately needs,” he said.

KASHIM SHETTIMA, Vice-President of Nigeria, noted his country recently celebrated a quarter century of unbroken democratic rule. However, the return of unconstitutional changes of Government and forceful military takeovers in some countries of the Sahel underscore the fragility of democracy when it is not backed by economic development and sustained peace and security. It is the duty of the international community to bring back confidence in democratic rule, as “we need the substance of democracy, not just the form”, he said. He warned that violent extremism remains an existential threat to both national and international peace, security and development, pointing to the High-Level African Counter-Terrorism Meeting hosted by Nigeria in April 2024 and “The Abuja Declaration” — a promise to provide solutions to the challenges presented by terrorists and insurgents. “Conflict prevention is the main reason why the UN exists,” he stressed, and addressing the root causes of conflicts is often the first step towards providing long-term solutions.

Turning to “the heart-wrenching situation in Gaza and other Palestinian territories,” he affirmed that the Palestinian people deserve their independence, requiring the two-State solution. He reaffirmed commitment to supporting UN peacekeeping operations, recognizing the need for Africa to build strong and professional armies. Consequently, he reiterated the call for international support to operationalize the African Standby Force. Welcoming the change in tone on Security Council reform, he stressed: “Our continent deserves a place in the permanent members category.” As most developing countries are significantly behind in the achievement of the SDGs, he expected that the Pact for the Future will reposition economies and translate into concrete measures — particularly significant in his region and the Sahel, where human development indices are low and depressing.

Reiterating the call for reform of international financial architecture, he emphasized that proceeds of corruption and illicit financial flows constitute a huge chunk of resources needed for sustainable development. The recovery and return of such funds to States of origin is a fundamental principle of the United Nations Convention against Corruption. Further, there is an urgent need to promote fair and inclusive global tax regimes and work towards a UN framework convention on tax cooperation. Countries of the Global South cannot make meaningful economic progress without special concessions and a review of their current debt burden. Meanwhile, as the world transitions into the fourth industrial revolution, his Government believes that natural gas remains central to the search for solutions to Africa’s energy challenges.

On climate action, it is Nigeria’s expectation that the upcoming twenty-ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework

Convention on Climate Change (COP29) in Azerbaijan will provide developing countries — especially African countries — access to loss and damage funds, including the \$100 billion pledged by developed countries. With the evolution of artificial intelligence, the UN should work towards eliminating barriers to digital economy in Africa, such as high costs of Internet services and intellectual property rights. Nigeria's experience, he noted is that "new technologies, when not properly regulated, can facilitate organized crime, violent extremism and human trafficking. On migration, he emphasized that Nigeria is a country of origin, transit and destination, reiterating support for the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

SALMAN BIN HAMAD AL KHALIFA, Prime Minister of Bahrain, said the number of world leaders participating in this year's General Assembly testify to the enduring spirit of global civic responsibility. He noted how the pressing issues he addressed 19 general debates ago — poverty, famine, deadly infectious diseases, civil wars and weapons of mass destruction — not only endure today but have intensified. "We find ourselves in a far more dangerous and unpredictable time due to major tectonic shifts in the global geopolitical order", he regretted. Revolutionary technologies and environmental and health challenges which defy national boundaries have multiplied and grown in complexity, fundamentally altering the world as is. They therefore require concerted efforts, void of individual differences. Pointing out that the "very systems designed to uphold the international order are under strain" in the face of current threats and challenges, he implored that the United Nations, "this important institution, which our global community relies on to safeguard the international rules-based order, must evolve as well."

Bahrain therefore supports calls for a holistic, consensus-driven and all-encompassing reform of the Organization to reflect current geopolitical realities to enable it to endure in fulfilling its mandate for several decades. Observing that the peace following the cold war's end is now distant, he announced that the global community is now "on the precipice of a new era, with new challenges, and we must recommit to peace as the bedrock on which we build collective prosperity and enduring hope for all". He therefore called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza with the release of all hostages and adoption of "an irrevocable path" to an independent Palestinian State, which "must happen now". This, he argued, will prevent the escalation of the conflict in the region. Recalling the conflict in Ukraine and rising tensions in the South China Sea, he worried that, beyond a wider military escalation, these events further erode the integrity of the international rules-based order, "undermine growth, stifle opportunity and endanger the hopes we hold for our children".

His country calls on the international community to convene an international peace conference on the Middle East and urges all nations to

join this initiative. He explained that, because today's global challenges go beyond geopolitical conflict, the world is in many ways more fragile than it was following the end of the Second World War. These challenges must not be treated in isolation as "they are interconnected, and they represent a systemic threat to humanity". Therefore, countries with similar ideologies must come together to revitalize, adapt and renew global institutions to effectively address the day's challenges and deliver on the commitments of the SDGs and the recently adopted Pact for the Future.

"The international rules-based order is not sustained by hopes or dreams", he continued, "it is the product of robust international institutions and security constructs that are fit for purpose". Bahrain remains committed to multilateralism and believes in partnerships, particularly across regions, in diverse areas, including emerging technologies. These wide-ranging partnerships are "crucial to advancing the cause of multilateralism and ensuring that cooperation becomes the cornerstone of our collective security frameworks", he stressed.

GIORGIA MELONI, Prime Minister of Italy, spotlighting the "wound to the international framework founded on rules", stressed that the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine is resulting in destabilizing effects "well beyond the borders within which it unfolds". It contributes, "like a domino", to reigniting other flashpoints of crisis, she said, which include democratic political systems under threat and growing geoeconomic fragmentation. Additionally, the world is witnessing the advent of generative artificial intelligence — "although I am not certain it is correct to call it intelligence, because the intelligent being is the one who asks the questions, not the one to give answers through data processing", she added. That technology, unlike all other innovations throughout history, "sets the blueprint for a world in which progress is no longer meant to optimize human capabilities, but to replace them", she said, noting AI's potential to further verticalize and concentrate wealth.

This, she said, is why Italy, during its presidency of the Group of Seven (G7), placed this issue at the top of the agenda — to contribute to defining a global AI governance that is "capable of reconciling innovation, rights, labour, intellectual property, freedom of expression and democracy". This complexity — compounded by profoundly interconnected global challenges — demonstrates that the problems of the Global South are those of the Global North, and vice-versa. Urging a "firm paradigm shift in international relations", she said this must be based on mutual respect, fellowship and concreteness. The nations of the world must recover their ability to listen to others, and thereby understand them, and she said this is why Italy held its G7 events in an open format — to show that the G7 "is not an armoured fortress, but an offering of values open to the world". Along these lines, she detailed her country's engagement with Africa.

“We intend not to impose, but to share,” she said of that cooperation. In Algeria, this partnership will render fertile 36,000 hectares of desert land for crop cultivation and build a local facility for processing and production. In Kenya, a biofuel plant to be completed by the end of 2025 will sustain up to 200,000 small farming enterprises. And, in Ethiopia, a large environmental recovery plan is in place for a lake in the country’s west. She also underscored her country’s “objective before the tens of thousands of people who face desperate journeys to enter Europe illegally is to first guarantee their right to not have to emigrate”. Recalling her proposal of a “global war against human trafficking” before the General Assembly in 2023, she said that defeating “the slave trade of the third millennium” is possible through joint initiatives between police forces, intelligence services and judicial authorities to “follow the money”. Italy will use this method to strengthen its cooperation with Latin America, she added, which addresses the “common denominator” tying organizations that profit from trafficking in persons and drugs.

Noting that 2025 will mark the eightieth anniversary of the UN Charter — “which enshrines the principles and values that are, at this time, being put into question by none other than a permanent member of the Security Council” — she underscored: “No one is above the law.” Therefore, the international community must support Ukraine’s right to defend its borders, sovereignty and freedom, and must affirm Israel’s right to defend itself from external attacks. Israel, for its part, must respect international law and protect civilian populations. Turning to UN reform, she stressed that this must “start with what is useful and necessary, not what is easier”. It would be a mistake, she added, to create a new hierarchy with new permanent seats: “We want a reform that serves to represent everyone better, not to represent better only a few.”

AZIZ AKHANOUCHE, Head of Government of Morocco, affirmed his Government’s total support for the Secretary-General’s initiatives to tackle global challenges, including through the Summit. He noted that the collective security once enhanced by the United Nations has given way to uncertainty in many areas — including challenges related to consumption, production, governance, the structure of society and the changing climate. “Climate change has imposed a new reality,” he said, adding that some people question whether multilateralism has run up against its limits in today’s world. Morocco’s diplomatic doctrine remains multilateral at its core as it works to cooperate with its partners and set up effective frameworks. His country, he stressed, aims to tackle security and development challenges at the same time. It does not seek short-term opportunism.

While facing constraints and new challenges, multilateralism needs new momentum and reform, he said. All strata of society can contribute to solutions and the Summit demonstrated the need for all groups, including women and youth, to develop solutions to contemporary problems. The

international community must support African States as they are the most affected by the results of climate change, even though they have made minor contributions to it. He also called for creating innovative financing mechanisms to resolve the debt crisis and financial constraints African States face. “And reforms to the international financial architecture are necessary so developing countries can achieve the financing that lets their economies recover,” he said, calling on multilateral financial institutions to develop more flexible financing strategies for these countries. For its part, Morocco, as chair of the Group of Friends of Middle-Income Countries, is aiming to find solutions to help bolster their economies.

Rabat is working to combat terrorism and implement social justice workshops that can help people, he said. It has launched the Atlantic Initiative to give Sahel countries — Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Chad — access to the Atlantic Ocean. The Initiative aims to integrate the Sahel region and is a pillar for peace, development and security. Morocco is also working with Nigeria to help many African countries develop. His Government is committed to the peaceful resolution of conflicts, such as in the Moroccan Sahara, and allow for its development. “We support the Secretary-General’s efforts to relaunch the political roundtables to achieve a realistic political solution in the region, based on relevant Council resolutions,” he said.

Turning to the Middle East, he expressed concern with the serious situation impacting the Occupied Palestinian Territory since the end of last year. A solution is needed to achieve peace in Gaza and lasting peace in the region. Morocco remains in solidarity with Lebanon and respects its territorial integrity. On UN reform, he said the international community must “rethink our working methods,” adding “the United Nations has a collective responsibility and reform is needed as we approach the eightieth anniversary of the Organization.”

ALEXANDER DE CROO, Prime Minister of Belgium, recalled that just after Andrei Sakharov developed the first Soviet hydrogen bomb in 1955, the nuclear arms race and Soviet doctrine seriously troubled him. The fight for human rights turned him into an international advocate, culminating in him being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize 20 years later. “Looking at the world today, it is crucial to remember Sakharov’s legacy,” he said.

Meanwhile, in the Middle East, decades of dehumanizing the enemy have led to a vicious cycle of violence, resulting in the killing of over 40,000 people in less than a year. On 7 October 2023, Belgium immediately acknowledged Israel’s right to defend itself and called for the unconditional release of all hostages. His Government has called for an immediate and lasting ceasefire for many months, and imposed a weapons embargo. Further, it has never ceased support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and has imposed sanctions on Hamas, as well as extremist settler organizations.

With every innocent life lost in Gaza and every discovery of a dead hostage, the prospects of future peace seem more distant than ever.

Asking “where is the human dignity in all this?”, he nonetheless said “there is a way out,” urging for engagement with Palestinian and Israeli leaders and articulating a viable pathway to a two-State solution.

With Russian Federation President Putin waging war in Europe for more than two years, “his madness continues to have devastating consequences for the Ukrainian people,” he stated, adding: “One man alone can stop the killing of thousands of civilians.” Citing widespread disturbing brutality established by various independent international inquiries, he recalled that over the past year the Belgian Ukraine Fund has spent €1.7 billion on military equipment, humanitarian aid and reconstruction, while the country’s development agency is helping Ukraine prepare for joining the European Union. With Ukrainians facing another cold winter soon, Belgium is winterizing energy provision in hundreds of hospitals. As the Russian Federation continues to bomb cities, Ukraine’s call for more air defence is pure self-protection, and in response, the Belgian Air Force will transfer all of its fighter jets — at least 30 over the coming years.

While a polarized and deeply divided world may “lead us to believe that multilateralism has failed on all fronts, this would be a mistake”, he stated — pointing to the United Nations agreement on biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction, the global response to mpox and the response of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention to the outbreak as examples of progress. Extreme weather events are increasing all over the world, including recent flooding in large parts of Eastern and Central Europe — but human ingenuity, sustainable competition and deeply entrenched behaviour changes can mitigate the impacts of climate change. Recalling the lessons of Andrei Sakharov, he noted that in the absence of human rights and human dignity, conflicts loom large and the most vulnerable bear the brunt. A new beginning, with the Pact for the Future, must therefore start with recommitment to the UN Charter, the rule of law and respect for human dignity.

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