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President: Mr. Freitas do Amaral (Portugal)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Ould Lekhal (Mauritania), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Agenda item 9 (continued)

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister of External Affairs of the Republic of Mauritius, His Excellency The Honourable Mr. Ramduthsing Jaddoo.

Mr. Jaddoo (Mauritius): It is with much pleasure and great satisfaction that I join the previous speakers who have already congratulated the President on his election to the presidency of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. The participation of his country, Portugal, at the United Nations has always been active and constructive. My delegation, therefore, is confident that under the President's wise and able leadership our Organization will progress further towards its goals. And we assure him of our fullest cooperation and support in the tasks that devolve upon him.

May I take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to the President's distinguished predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy of Côte d'Ivoire, for the admirable and effective manner in which he conducted the business of the forty-ninth session.

Let me also renew my delegation's homage to Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali for the efficient and committed manner in which he is carrying out his mission as Secretary-General.

Every year, we seize the opportunity of the session of the General Assembly to share our views

and concerns about the state of international relations. In this fiftieth year of the existence of our Organization, I particularly wish to address the Assembly from the perspective of a small island State.

The end of the cold war and the breakup of the Soviet bloc, the globalization of the world economy and the establishment of the World Trade Organization to oversee international trade, the emergence of China as an economic giant, the liberalization of the Indian economy and South Africa's return to the community of nations, in such a short span of time, have all contributed to rapid changes in the global economic scene.

My country shares the belief that regionalization is a first prerequisite for smooth integration into a global economic pattern. It was natural, therefore, that the region of the Indian Ocean could not remain isolated from the movement towards regionalization, despite the fact that the Indian Ocean countries form a heterogeneous zone with a multiplicity of economic systems, political traditions and cultural experiences. It is in this perspective that Mauritius hosted, in March this year, the Indian Ocean Rim (IOR) initiative. Built on the foundations of historic interchanges between nations in the Indian Ocean, the IOR initiative could be seen both as a geographical reality and a natural economic entity. Its objective, as clearly outlined at the first meeting, is to establish a regional forum, tripartite in nature, that will bring together representatives of Governments, business and academia for the purpose of promoting economic cooperation in the region. Although the IOR initiative has been launched with an initial group, may I hasten to add that the IOR is open to all the countries of the Indian Ocean region. As we go along, the initiative will expand progressively to

include other countries, on the basis of a coherent programme and plan of action.

Other existing groupings, such as the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) – to which organization my country has recently been admitted – and the Indian Ocean Commission, have already contributed significantly to greater interaction in our region, and it is our hope that this new initiative will further pave the way for a dynamic integration of the Indian Ocean region into the global economic pattern. In this regard, we look forward to, and will highly appreciate, the support of major regional groups and countries in the implementation of this laudable initiative.

Indeed, while we are making considerable efforts to ensure the prosperity and advancement of our countries, we are also very much aware that this cannot be achieved without the assistance of major players in the global economy. At the same time, it is important that, at a time of growing interdependence among States and economies, efforts must be made to include developing countries in the international economic decision-making process so as to achieve effective management of the global economy.

The Bretton Woods institutions – namely, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund – should be able to devise new ways and means of responding to the development needs, priorities and specificities of developing countries by providing adequate resources without stringent conditionalities. I should like here to appeal to the international financial institutions to put aside, when circumstances demand, their first and foremost role of bankers and act more as partners in the global development process. For it is becoming increasingly clear that development problems cannot be solved by countries on their own, whatever be their sense of commitment and purpose. Africa, where countries are afflicted by deep-seated and chronic problems, is one such example.

My country, therefore, welcomes the views expressed by the Secretary-General in his Agenda for Development, and in particular supports his *démarches* to alleviate problems and sufferings on the African continent. We wish in this regard to see the rapid implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development in Africa in the 1990s and the

Cairo Agenda for Action on Relaunching African Economic and Social Development, as well as the recommendations of the Bandung Asia-Africa Forum. Africa, we know, is not alone, and we were gratified in September last year by President Clinton's statement at the reception for African nations to the effect that

“The United States has been, and will continue to be, a partner in Africa's success story”.

This is comforting, and we wish to see more concrete steps in this direction.

I wish also to seize this opportunity to pay tribute to two decades of partnership between the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific and those of the European Union, through the Lomé Conventions. In a few weeks' time Mauritius will have the privilege and honour of hosting the signing of the second financial protocol of Lomé IV. While I pay tribute to this concrete example of effective partnership between the North and the South, it is our sincere hope that our partners of the European Union will continue to support its traditional friends despite emerging demands nearer home.

Economic and socio-cultural progress cannot be sustained if man does not remain at the centre of development. In this context, education, training and information play a fundamental role. We firmly believe that it is extremely important to invest in human resources. In keeping with this belief, education and training are provided free of charge at primary and secondary levels in my country, to boys and girls and to men and women alike.

An educated and trained individual is in a better position to respond and adapt to the changing needs of society and the developments taking place around him. As such, he is able to provide faster and better results. One of the scourges of developing nations remains an inadequate level of education and the lack of training facilities and access to the latest information. Developing countries, in fact, run the risk of being left outside the network of rapidly evolving information technology. And yet can anyone deny the absolute need for small island States like mine to be connected to the rest of the world through up-to-date information networks? Therefore, while the eradication of illiteracy and the provision

of education facilities should continue to remain a top priority of the United Nations, we should add to this the transfer of information technology.

Women are a major agent of development, and they have often been disadvantaged in their quest for education and training. Of course, to the United Nations, the advancement of women is not a new cause. The year 1975 was proclaimed International Women's Year, followed by the United Nations Decade for Women. Since then, major United Nations conferences, such as the Earth Summit, in Rio, the World Conference on Human Rights, in Vienna, and others have repeatedly brought the plight of women to the fore, the most significant being the recent Beijing Conference. The agreements concluded at Beijing recognized the pivotal role of women in our society and laid down the foundations for their participation as equal partners in development activities. More important, however, will be the "after" Beijing – the need to get down to the implementation of decisions arrived at and the need to find ways and means of building the bridges to allow for greater involvement of women in national and international matters.

The world this year befittingly witnessed two other important United Nations conferences: the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen and the Review and Extension Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in New York.

The Summit on Social Development called attention to the impact of the world economic system on the poor and underprivileged and helped to project new ideas for alternative models of social development. It also allowed the renewal of the world commitment to resolve the problems of poverty, unemployment and social exclusion.

For its part, the non-proliferation Treaty, which came into force in 1970, is important in several ways. It enshrines an undertaking between the five nuclear-weapon States to begin serious nuclear disarmament negotiations and the non-nuclear countries not to acquire nuclear weapons in return for access to peaceful nuclear technology. It is a major international agreement the aim of which is to curb the spread of nuclear weapons and build confidence among the nuclear-weapon States towards a reduction of their arsenals. The Treaty also provides the basis for

legitimate trade in nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

The indefinite extension of the nuclear non-proliferation Treaty in May this year can be considered a landmark in the history of mankind, which has committed itself to free the world from the threat of nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, the optimism generated by the indefinite extension of the Treaty was short-lived in the wake of the resumption of recent nuclear testings. These activities are definitely not encouraging signs for the conclusion of a comprehensive test-ban treaty in the foreseeable future.

In our region, however, we are confident that the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, which was recently finalized in South Africa, will go a long way towards contributing to international peace and security. It covers a large part of the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic Ocean, both containing major sea routes of the world. My delegation sincerely hopes to see the speedy entry into force of this Treaty, which, among other issues, encompasses the integrity of the territory of States members of the Organization of African Unity as a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

The Vienna Conference was a turning-point for world perception of human rights. We hope that the principles and objectives enshrined in the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action on human rights may in time be recognized and effectively respected in all corners of the world. My country has always upheld human rights and favoured their promotion and protection. But at the same time, in the field of human rights, we believe that we have to move with caution lest we run the risk of damaging the interests of those very individuals and societies that we are purporting to protect in the short run.

Nevertheless, this should not prevent us from combining our best efforts in all good faith to bring about a just and equitable society by trying to win the confidence of the peoples, societies and Governments rather than by threatening them economically, militarily or otherwise. The upholding of human values and uplift of humanity should continue to remain our main concern at all times and in the best interests of humanity. It is for this reason that we

should seize every opportunity to applaud the restoration of human rights and democracy, regardless of other considerations. We are delighted, therefore, at the long-awaited liberation of Mrs. Aung San Suu Kyi this year, which we feel has opened up new avenues for dialogue in Myanmar.

During the past few years in particular, the United Nations has become increasingly identified in the public perception with the Blue Helmets. The growing focus on the activities of the peace-keepers is such that their successes and failures often affect the credibility of our Organization. Peace-keeping is an important tool for conflict resolution; its success depends to a large extent on a strong political will on the part of Member States, a clear mandate to the peace-keepers and solid material, logistical and financial support. However, one of the main factors for conflict resolution remains the early identification of potential conflicts and tensions. While arms and weapons can be used to threaten and temporarily silence those involved in the conflicts, lasting peace can be achieved only through moral persuasion, the removal of fear and despair, and the instilling of hope and security in the minds of people. The need, therefore, to strengthen the arms of preventive diplomacy becomes imperative.

In the recent past, the United Nations has been increasingly called upon to carry out peace-keeping and peacemaking operations. In fact, the number of demands made on the Organization is now straining its resources almost to the breaking-point. The erratic and reluctant disbursement of contributions by some Member States has highlighted the shortcomings of such operations and exposed the limits of this approach in ensuring peace and stability. We therefore need more than ever to place much greater emphasis on preventive diplomacy and allocate more resources to this activity. We believe that, in the long run, the cost of supporting programmes in

preventive diplomacy would be far outweighed by the actual costs of dispatching Blue Helmets around the world.

In this respect, we urge the international community strongly to support regional initiatives, such as the mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The experience of my country as a result of my own personal participation in several ministerial missions organized by the OAU in the context of this mechanism has convinced us to put greater reliance in this approach. My delegation would therefore like to appeal to this body to make a strong commitment to the realization of this very important programme.

The establishment of an early-warning system and threat-assessment unit at the United Nations could equally support the proposed OAU early-warning system. This would go a long way towards preparing the United Nations to deal with the contemporary challenges of peace-keeping and peace-building at a more realistic cost. Yet I would appeal for more cohesion and harmonization among the various conflict-prevention and conflict-resolution mechanisms in order to avoid duplication of efforts.

(spoke in French)

At this point, my delegation should like to refer to the increasing activities of the francophone movement in the areas of conflict prevention and peace-keeping. We welcome the encouraging results of the work of the recent conference of French-speaking countries on conflict prevention, which took place in Canada. Among the recommendations of that conference, we note in particular the one relating to the support of the francophone movement for the pan-African mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution.

It is true that the movement has no great means at its disposal, but it has none the less been able to lend considerable support in the recent past to certain United Nations programme in the area of human rights and the process of democratization. With respect to those two areas, I also wish to highlight the important activities of the movement over the past two years in the countries of the African Great Lakes

region following the tragic events that took place there.

In December, at Cotonou, my Prime Minister will be passing on the presidency of the movement to the President of Benin. I wish to take this opportunity to express my great satisfaction at the way in which, during his term of office, the political dimension of the French-speaking movement's work on the international level has developed. I should like to express the hope that this political facet of the movement will in future be able to play a growing role in international forums in striving for the realization of lasting peace in the world.

(spoke in English)

We are already witnessing promising developments in conflict resolution in regions such as Angola, Mozambique and the Middle East. We commend the recent initiatives in Bosnia and exhort all parties concerned to continue to intensify their efforts to find a long-term solution, and hope that the long-awaited peace in this region is achieved not under the threat of guns, but through the goodwill, understanding and tolerance of all concerned.

My delegation recognizes that the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations provides a golden opportunity for the re-examination and the renewal of the United Nations system, and welcomes the initiative launched in the General Assembly to negotiate a reform of the Security Council. We believe that the present 15-member composition of the Security Council does not reflect the realities of the economic and political changes of the past decades. In its present composition, the Security Council can neither claim to take into account the positions of nations in the next 50 years, nor reasonably pretend to speak on behalf of 185 nations for the maintenance of world peace and security. The Security Council has indeed the main task of maintaining peace and security. However, the concept of world security has itself undergone a huge transformation. We are now more at risk from the threat of economic, social, cultural and religious upheavals and turmoils than from the outbreak of war resulting from conflicts between States or a group of States. Consequently, if the Security Council is to command full respect in all parts of the world and enjoy legitimacy, it should undergo a complete overhaul.

In the context of the current exercise on the expansion of the Security Council, we believe that the claim of India, the largest parliamentary democracy, to a permanent seat on the Security Council is legitimate. In the same spirit, countries from other regions, including small island States, could equally aspire to permanent seats in an expanded Security Council.

The world has gradually been reduced to a global village. The regions of the world and their peoples, although still widely separated geographically, are fast realizing that the future of the world community lies in a common shared goal. We are increasingly becoming aware that the world is one family, and that if we are to assure a brighter and better future for coming generations, we have no other choice than to continue our efforts towards preserving and promoting a strong United Nations that will be able to pursue a common purpose for a world of equity, justice and shared economic progress.

In Mauritius, in spite of the existence of many cultures and religions, we have been successful in promoting peaceful coexistence. We have always believed that no meaningful progress can be achieved in the absence of peace and harmony. We have always believed in our people and have actively promoted the culture of tolerance and mutual respect. We remain deeply committed to the principles of democracy and justice. The path of tolerance and mutual respect for different faiths and religions and the acceptance of unity in diversity laid down under the inspiring leadership of the Father of the Nation, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, since independence in 1968 and followed through relentlessly by our present Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth have been largely responsible for the harmonious way of life in Mauritius.

In conclusion, I should like on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of our Organization to share with the international community our rich experience of living in peace and harmony.