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AS GENERAL DEBATE CONCLUDES, PRIME MINISTER URGES RELENTLESS PRESSURE ON IRAN,

VOWING ISRAEL WILL NEVER ACCEPT NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN HANDS OF 'ROGUE REGIME'

The world should not ease the pressure on Iran's nuclear programme as that country positioned itself to "race across the red line" before the international community could prevent it from building nuclear bombs, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel said today as the General Assembly concluded its week-long general debate.

"I wish I could believe [President Hassan] Rouhani, but I don't because facts are stubborn things, and the facts are that Iran's savage record flatly contradicts Rouhani's soothing rhetoric," Mr. Netanyahu told the 193-nation Assembly. Combining tough sanctions with a credible military threat was the only way peacefully to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons, he emphasized, adding that the policy was bearing fruit today as the Iranian currency plummeted and its banks became increasingly hard pressed to transfer money.

History had taught that to prevent war tomorrow, one must be firm today, he said, stressing that his country would never acquiesce to nuclear arms in the hands of a rogue regime that repeatedly promised to wipe Israel off the map. It would have no choice but to defend itself against such a threat, and if forced to stand alone, it would do so in the full knowledge that it was defending many others. The possibility of a nuclear-armed Iran and the emergence of other threats in the region had led many Arab neighbours finally to recognize that Israel was not their enemy, he said.

The Prime Minister said his country also sought an historic compromise wherein a demilitarized Palestinian State and a Jewish State of Israel could live side by side, he said, adding that, like his predecessors, he was willing to make painful concessions, but the Palestinian leaders were so far not prepared to offer their own painful concessions, which must be made for the sake of coexistence.

Mariyam Shakeela, Minister for Environment and Energy and Acting Foreign Minister of Maldives, said the true aspirations of the Palestinian people must be recognized through the establishment of their own State on the lands occupied since the 1967 war, with Jerusalem as its capital. The question of Palestine had been discussed enough, she said, declaring that now was the time for action.

Turning to the Millennium Development Goals, she noted that the Maldives had achieved five of them, and she was especially proud of the country's focus on the advancement of women, most notably in the areas of health and education. In formulating the post-2015 development agenda, it was necessary to bear in mind that the Goals were merely a beginning, not a final solution. In that connection, addressing the threats posed by climate change was a very high priority for the Maldives, as low-lying nations faced grave existential threats.

The representative of Dominica said that his country, despite its limitations, had attained all the

Millennium Development Goals, bringing about significant improvements in the lives of its people. Poverty and hunger had been reduced by more than half, children now enjoyed universal access to both primary and secondary education, girls and women had received tremendous support to advance their living conditions, and many enjoyed free access to public health care.

Cambodia's representative said the ambitious post-2015 development agenda should balance all three pillars of sustainable development, see the aims of the Millennium Goals through, emphasize inclusive and equitable economic growth and ensure a regional element. Cambodia had developed a strategic plan for the period 2013-2030 aimed at balancing development and conservation, he said.

Some delegations called for United Nations reform, including Pak Kil Yon, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, who warned that the Organization was being abused under the pretexts of "non-proliferation" and "human rights protection". Highhandedness and arbitrariness by a specific State had undermined peace and security, and should, therefore, be rejected in international relations, with a view to achieving genuine cooperation and development based on sovereign equality, he said.

Speaking in exercise of the right to reply in response to the Israeli Prime Minister's statement, Iran's representative said the Assembly had just heard an "inflammatory statement" against his country's peaceful nuclear activities. No one could dictate to Iran, which was a signatory to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and fully committed to its fulfilling obligations, he stressed.

As the only non-party to the Treaty in the Middle East, Israel should accede to the instrument and place all its activities under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards, he continued. It possessed all types of weapons of mass destruction and its refusal to join the conference on a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East had prevented the convening of that event.

In closing remarks, Assembly President John Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda) said that the general debate had provided a useful measure of stock taking on "the issues at the forefront of our lives", and "it is the only mechanism by which our 193 members can make their voices heard". Those issues included the need to meet the Millennium Development Goals, formulating an inclusive post-2015 development agenda, the link between peace and development, and the conflict in Syria and its impact on humanitarian affairs. Delegations had also tackled other issues, including climate change, the specific needs and vulnerabilities of small island developing States and the challenges facing Africa.

"We are oftentimes accused of being an organization that is all talk and no action," he noted. "Perhaps so, but I submit that our general debates, which occur at this time each year, serve an important purpose; they help us to mark where we are as a global community, and they provide guidelines for where we need to go; they serve as a useful point of peer review and general accountability." It was now up to Member States to find the common ground among priorities as a basis for moving forward with decisive action. In the real world, such healthy compromise was the best outcome of joint efforts, he concluded.

Also speaking today were the Foreign Minister of Botswana and Deputy Foreign Minister of the Dominican Republic. Representatives of Togo, Ecuador, Sao Tome and Principe and Denmark also participated in the debate, as did the Secretary for Relations with States of the Permanent Observer State of the Holy See.

Speaking in exercise of the right of reply were the delegations of Libya, Iran, Azerbaijan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Bolivia, Republic of Korea and Armenia.

The General Assembly will meet again at a time and date to be determined.

Background

The General Assembly met this morning to conclude its General Debate.

Statements

MARIYAM SHAKEELA, Minister of Environment and Energy and Acting Foreign Minister of Maldives, said that challenges, old and new, seemed to be a recurring theme of the present general debate. Challenges, however, were an opportunity to think out of the box. The most pressing issue for the United Nations was that it remain relevant to the realities of the twenty-first century, as the Organization was the ultimate guarantor of the equality of nations, she added. Along with other States, the Maldives called on the reform of the Security Council, so that it could be more inclusive. Only then could the United Nations restore its credibility and legitimacy, she added.

Among the global challenges close to the heart of the Maldivians was the situation in the Middle East. She said that her country was appalled at the human cost of the conflict in Syria, stating that the use of chemical weapons “must not be tolerated”. Her country called on both parties to the conflict to choose the path of dialogue. The true aspirations of the Palestinian people must also be recognized, with the establishment of a Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital on the lands occupied as a result of the 1967 war. The question of Palestine had been discussed enough, she said, now it was “time for action”. Turning to the Millennium Development Goals, she noted that her country had achieved five of the eight Goals. She was especially proud of the focus her country had made in the advancement of women, most notably in the areas of health and education. While formulating the post-2015 development agenda, it was necessary to keep in mind that the Goals were merely a beginning not a final solution. In this connection, addressing the threats posed by climate change was a very high priority for the Maldives, as low-lying nations faced grave existential threats. Any loss regarding biodiversity would be catastrophic, she added.

Small island developing States required a differential treatment given their unique vulnerabilities, she stressed. That is why this issue needed to be given full attention at all levels, including multilateral and financial institutions, as well as become one of the goals of the post-2015 development agenda. Turning to challenges inherent to her country, she mentioned the consolidation of democracy and the strengthening of national institutions, stressing that these could only be achieved without the interference of external forces. There had been often attempts, she said, to shape the outcome of Maldivian domestic affairs. That is why her country had initiated General Assembly resolution 44/51 of December 1989 entitled “The Protection and Security of Small States” and others resolutions. The rule of law must prevail through democracy consolidation, she continued, both in her country and at the international level. That is why the Maldives was seeking its re-election to the Human Rights Council.

PHANDU T. C. SKELEMANI, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Botswana, said that multilateral diplomacy was essential to the success of the current session. The session’s theme was fitting because the international community was on the brink of two major interrelated developments — the imminent target date of 2015 for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the evolution of the sustainable development goals, which would constitute a significant part of the post-2015 development agenda. His delegation was of the strong view that, the formulation of the sustainable development goals should be predicated on the outcome of the current review of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. To this end, the sustainable goals should complement rather than replace the Millennium Goals.

Noting Botswana’s “impressive” achievements in the Millennium Development Goals, he said that the targets had been mainstreamed into the national development planning process, with a substantial portion of the national budget allocated to health, education, infrastructure, human resource development, women and youth empowerment. The country had achieved universal primary education, universal access to HIV/AIDS treatment, care and support services, and had drastically reduced mother-to-child transmission of HIV. It was also working towards the achievement of zero new infections and zero HIV/AIDS-related deaths by 2015.

He believed that the International Criminal Court had a vital role to play in the fight against impunity,

genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity and the crime of aggression. In April this year, Botswana had hosted a regional workshop for African States parties to the Rome Statute. The workshop was aimed at encouraging those States to ratify the 2010 Kampala Amendments to the Statute dealing with the specific question of the crime of aggression. Following the workshop, Botswana had become the first African State party to ratify the Amendments. He urged other States parties to follow suit so that the Amendments could enter into force.

DOMINIQUE MAMBERTI, Secretary for Relations with States of the Holy See, expressed hope that the Assembly would be guided by the same spirit of universal solidarity that guided the international prayer day convoked by Pope Francis on 7 September 2013, which brought together leaders of all religions. In the post-2015 development agenda it was important to create shared goals that would bring together all Member States. The goals should promote the concept of family, based on the union of woman and man, and the protection of their rights. He criticized the exclusion of all non—G20 member States from the negotiations to reform international financial institutions and called for a more open, inclusive negotiation process. Appropriate mechanisms were needed to monitor the Millennium Development Goals and tailor economic policy toward obtaining concrete results in eliminating world hunger and promoting socioeconomic development.

The new development agenda would be incomplete if peace was not addressed, he said, stressing that war, terrorism, organized crimes and other forms of armed violence were the first obstacles to development. With the establishment of the United Nations, the national right of war had been replaced with the right of the Council to use force under the Charter. The international laws and norms created by the Organization aimed to control the use of force between States and to ultimately protect human beings. Despite those norms, conflicts in Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic had occurred. The Christian minority in Syria should not be asked to go into exile. He called on leaders to abandon military solution and instead pursue a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

The responsibility to protect was very important to the Holy See, he said. The legal and political concepts of it, adopted in 2005, had been wrongly translated as the right to take up weapons, instead of their intended purpose of a commitment to ensure that, in light of possible conflicts, emergency measures and mechanisms for dialogue were put in place. The right—to—protect concept should be included in the Council's mandate. A peaceful, lasting resolution of the Syrian conflict would create a significant precedent for the present decade, set the path to avoid conflict and honour the responsibility to protect.

PAK KIL YON, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, said high-handedness and arbitrariness were ever more rampant in international relations. Infringements of sovereignty, interference in domestic affairs and regime change continued unabated under the pretexts of "non-proliferation" and "human rights protection", for which the United Nations was being abused. Such behaviour by a specific State undermined peace and security and should therefore be rejected in international relations, with a view to achieving genuine cooperation and development among countries, based on sovereign equality, he said. The infringement of Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity should not be allowed, and the blockade imposed on Cuba by the United States should be brought to an end at the earliest possible date.

He went on to emphasize the need for reform of the United Nations, saying that issue could brook no further delay. The General Assembly should be empowered to have the final say on key international issues since it represented the general will of the entire membership. Security Council resolutions authorizing sanctions and the use of force should be effective only after the Assembly's approval. Instances of a certain State abusing the Council as a tool of its strategic interests should never go unchallenged, he stressed, recalling that, in January, the United States had "manipulatively" forced the adoption of the unfair sanctions resolution against "our legitimate satellite launch for peaceful purposes", which was recognized under international law.

Turning to the situation on the Korean peninsula, he said the only way to ensure lasting peace there was to end the hostile policy of the United States. That country should respect the sovereignty of the

Democratic People's Republic of Korea, replace the Armistice Agreement with a peace mechanism dismantling the United Nations Command, lift all sanctions and stop military threats. Reunification was a long-cherished desire and the most pressing task of the Korean nation, he said, adding that, thanks to his country's "active and generous efforts", a window of opportunity for improving North—South relations was opening up after a long period of deadlock. However, the outdated confrontational approach of the Republic of Korea authorities was putting relations in danger of falling back into the destructive stage, he warned.

JOSE MANUEL TRULLOS, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic, said that, while there had not been a world war since the founding of the United Nations, global poverty was a cataclysm as lethal and destructive. "It is a war with millions of casualties, which poses the need for a radical change in the economic paradigm and for the emergence of a new culture, the culture of sustainability," he said. At the Rio+20 Conference last year, the international community had embarked on a road map with "profound implications", he said, underlining the urgency of changing a production system that had proven harmful to the economy and a wealth-creation system that had created deep chasms of social inequality and exclusion.

He said the Dominican Republic had committed itself to bold, achievable actions and goals by, among other things, putting people at the centre of its policies; implementing a new development model comprising economics, education and electricity; ensuring greater transparency and public participation; and prioritizing small-scale agriculture. While countries had common problems, their economic, social, historical, geographical, and demographic realities were different, and each dimension played a role in how those problems would or would not be addressed and resolved.

Highlighting his country's vulnerability to climate-change-induced natural hazards and efforts to address them, he said universal sustainable development required a new vision and goal on the international stage. Lauding the United Nations' contributions in pointing the way, he said words and promises now needed to be matched by action in laying the foundations of sustainable development. Although sustainable development may sound like an economic concept, political decisions ultimately would define whether or not the goals would be achieved.

SEA KOSAL, (Cambodia), described his country's successes in meeting the Millennium Development Goals, particularly poverty reduction, reduction of HIV/AIDS and malaria. The ambitious post-2015 development agenda should balance all three pillars of sustainable development, see through the aims of the Millennium Development Goals, emphasise inclusive, equitable economic growth and contain a regional element. He welcomed progress toward the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Economic Community, also praising the positive outcomes of the First Meeting of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Trade Negotiating Committee in Bandar Seri Begawan in May 2013. Cambodia had developed a strategic plan on green development 2013-2030 to balance development and conservation, he said, pointing to the growing threat of climate change to humanity and efforts to eradicate poverty. He looked forward to the Warsaw Climate Change Conference, hoping for ratification of a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol and progress on climate financing. He stressed his commitment to the ASEAN Climate Change Initiative and the ASEAN Action Plan on Joint Response to Climate Change.

He welcomed the signing of the Arms Trade Treaty and underscored the importance of preserving the Southeast Asian Nuclear-Weapon Free Zone and encouraged accession to the Treaty. Landmines and other explosive remnants of war continued to pose a danger and the ASAEAN Regional Mine Action Centre would seek to deal with that. Cambodia was committed to address the threat of mines to human security. Efforts to clear mines and unexploded ordnance had helped to reduce explosion accidents from over 300 cases in 2008 to 186 in 2012. At the Eleventh Meeting of States Parties of the Ottawa Treaty in 2011, Cambodia underlined its commitment to ridding the world of landmines and unexploded ordnance and had committed peacekeepers to mine clearance in several African and Middle Eastern countries. He welcomed positive developments between the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and hoped to see tensions defused and trust built, as well as resumption of the Six-Party Talks. He encouraged the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to comply fully with its obligations to all relevant Security Council resolutions and to cease its nuclear programme.

VINCE HENDERSON (Dominica) said that his country, despite its limitations, had attained all the Millennium Development Goals, bringing about significant improvements to the lives of its people. He noted that poverty and hunger had been reduced by more than half; children now had universal access to both primary and secondary education; girls and women had received tremendous support to advance their conditions of living; and, many enjoyed free access to public health care. Dominica continued to “maintain its coveted title as the nature island of the Caribbean by adhering to self-imposed sustainable environmental practices”.

Sustainable energy was the foundation for long—term socio—economic development, he said. For that reason, Dominica had joined the Sustainable Energy for All initiative. His Government, with assistance from its development partners, was committed to increasing renewable energy generation from the current 30 per cent from hydro, to 100 per cent by adding geothermal energy to the mix. Its goal was not only to become carbon neutral but carbon negative by 2020. That ambition would be achieved by exporting renewable energy to its neighbours. That transformation would deliver significant and multiple benefits for his country, including increased employment from new energy service companies, reduced exchange transfers for petroleum imports, and greater protection from the volatility and unpredictability of energy prices. Sustainable energy should find its rightful place on the agenda of the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States to be held in Apia, Samoa in 2014.

KODJO MENAN (Togo), said the new goals under the post-2015 development agenda would not be truly sustainable unless measures were put in place to increase economic and social development and prosperity for all nations, particularly African countries, who had been weakened by recurrent crisis and faced diverse challenges and threats. He recalled the Rio+20 Summit and the commitments made by all Governments to establish economic, social and environmental policies in order to ensure that development be truly sustainable.

Turning to the Millennium Development Goals, he noted Togo’s commitments to increase universal primary education by removing school fees, as well as its vaccination programme and distribution of mosquito nets to reduce deaths caused by HIV/AIDS and malaria. He also highlighted policies to boost agriculture, reduce unemployment and foster good governance, especially through the new electoral system. On Mali, he welcomed the regional, sub-regional and international efforts to ensure the reestablishment of peace in the country. He also noted the problem of piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea and welcomed the Security Council’s engagement on this issue. He strongly condemned the conflict in Syria and called for a peaceful resolution of the conflict, as well as for the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestine conflict.

XAVIER LASSO MENDOZA, (Ecuador), expressed concern over the international community’s approach to disability. In the context of the post-2015 agenda, it was vital to establish national and global quantitative objectives and development agendas that took into account the needs of disabled people and their families. Every day it was increasingly difficult to reach the “city of sound and diversity”, he said of the Organization’s New York Headquarters. Bureaucrats had installed barriers that were difficult to cross, isolating the United Nations. The host country was aware of the diversity of Member States but revealed its particular likes and dislikes by deciding who could and could not attend the General Debate. That host, the United States, also spied on certain countries. There were many reasons to be careful, but the history of mankind and of the Organization served to increase the rights of all. Technological advances had enabled people everywhere to communicate with each other. It was regrettable that a certain power had set up a global surveillance mechanism that did not differentiate between citizens and non-citizens, criminals and law-abiding people. The extent and reach of that global espionage knew no limits. The confidence between States and Governments that underpinned negotiations, among other things, had been seriously eroded by the unlimited acts of the United States, which spied on the world’s communications. The United States must explain its universal surveillance programs.

The United Nations was the place to defend the right for all peoples to be respected, he said. The time had come to bring an end to the settlements in Israel and for Palestine to be respected and recognised

within 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Along those lines, most countries had called for an end to the “unjust” embargo against Cuba. Cuba’s people should not have to continue to suffer the consequences. Regarding the Malvinas, those islands were close to Argentina and “so far from the United Kingdom,” that conflict should also be resolved. On the development front, desperate efforts for profit without limits were damaging the environment and violating human rights. His country was dealing with a slander campaign by Chevron, which in 2011 was forced to pay \$19 million to the people of Ecuador for its brutal pollution of the Amazon. He rejected violations of human rights and violence everywhere. A military solution for Syria was no solution at all. A holistic solution must be found to that terrible suffering. The Syrian people deserved the staunch support of the international community.

CARLOS FILOMENO AGOSTINHO DAS NEVES (Sao Tome and Principe) said that providing his people with easier access to education, basic health care, safe drinking water, and modern communications, was an enormous effort for a country with sparse economic resources. Welcoming the current session’s theme on development, he said a new agenda must offer a framework to consolidate the significant progress made in implementing the Millennium Development Goals. It was important to adapt to the new challenges of our time. Reform of the United Nations would provide greater agility, representation, effectiveness, capacity and legitimacy that required it to continue to ensure peace, security, and development.

On foreign policy, he stressed the need for stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, and Mali, which he called a country “tormented by a fratricidal war”. Speaking on the Central African Republic, he stated that today represents one of their “worst moments” in history. Combating piracy, especially in the Gulf of Guinea, was conducive to global security. Sao Tome and Principe had also taken steps making it more difficult for it to be used for the purposes of money laundering or financing of other illicit or criminal acts. On Syria, he supported the dismantling of chemical weapons and urged all parties to pursue a compromise that would lead to the cessation of hostilities. He also expressed support for right of a Palestinian State to exist, called for the lifting of the embargo on Cuba, as well as constructive dialogue between Taiwan Province of China and China.

IB PETERSEN (Denmark) said a strong United Nations was more relevant than ever and changes to the Council were necessary to help achieve that. The Council’s leadership was needed to resolve armed conflicts. He welcomed the increased integration of rule of law, human rights and protection of civilians into peacekeeping missions. States should join the global network of responsibility to protect focal points, he said, stressing the need for accountability for human rights violations and calling for the case of Syria to be referred to the International Criminal Court. The New Deal for engagement in fragile States led by the “g7+” provided peacebuilding and State-building goals and would be useful for inspiring discussions on the post-2015 development framework. Regarding that framework, Denmark would shoulder its responsibilities, providing 0.83 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) as official development assistance (ODA). Meanwhile, climate change was another priority, and new technologies were needed to meet growing resource demands with green economies. Calling for ambitious goals to be set in a new climate agreement, he said Denmark would meet all its energy needs with renewable energy sources by 2050.

He called for the return of dialogue and democracy in Egypt, noting the challenges ahead and the need for implementation of a roadmap for return to democratic and civilian rule. The international community was on hand to help and he urged Egypt to accept that help. The United Nations could play an important role. After addressing developments in negotiations between Israel and Palestine, in Afghanistan and in the Sahel, he said Somalia’s New Deal Compact was crucial for reconciliation and peacebuilding and would set priorities for the next three years. He also called on Iran and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to comply with international law and relevant Council resolutions, welcoming efforts to resolve Iran’s nuclear programme.

BENJAMIN NETANYAHU, Prime Minister of Israel, said there was a “striking, extraordinary” contradiction between the President’s words and Iran’s actions. Though he praised Iran’s democracy, the regime executed political dissidents by the hundreds, jailed them by the thousands and had participated directly in murdering and massacring tens of thousands of men, women and children in Syria. President [Hassan] Rouhani had condemned terrorism, yet in the last three years, Iran had planned, perpetrated or ordered attacks on five continents. It was trying to change the regional balance through proxies, actively

destabilizing Yemen, Lebanon, Bahrain and other Middle Eastern countries. While promising constructive engagement, Iranian agents had tried to assassinate Saudi Arabia's Ambassador in Washington, D.C., and weeks ago, an Iranian agent had been arrested while trying to collect information for possible attacks against the United States Embassy in Tel Aviv.

He said that President Rouhani had called on nations to "join his wave against violence and extremism", but the only waves Iran had generated in the last 30 years were the waves of violence and terrorism it had unleashed in the region and across the world. "I wish I could believe Rouhani, but I don't because facts are stubborn things and the facts are that Iran's savage record flatly contradicts its President's soothing rhetoric," he added. He claimed that his country had never chosen deceit and secrecy in its pursuit of a nuclear programme, he continued. However, it had been caught "red-handed", while secretly building an underground centrifuge facility in 2002, as well as a huge underground nuclear facility near the mountains of Qom in 2009. President Rouhani had told the international community not to worry because those facilities were not intended for nuclear weapons, but it did not make sense that a country with vast natural energy reserves would invest billions to develop nuclear energy, defy multiple Security Council resolutions, incur the crippling cost of sanctions on its economy, develop intercontinental ballistic missiles with the sole purpose of delivering nuclear warheads, and build hidden underground enrichment facilities.

Ballistic missiles were not intended to carry TNT across the globe, but nuclear warheads, he said, warning that Iran's missiles would be able to reach New York City in three years. In 2012 alone, Iran had enriched three tons of uranium to 3.5 per cent, doubled its stockpiles, added thousands of new centrifuges, including advanced ones, and continued to work on a heavy water reactor in Iraq, so that it could have another route to the bomb. Since President Rouhani's election, that vast and feverish effort had continued unabated. Iran was positioning itself to race across the "red line" that Israel had drawn, and build nuclear bombs before the international community could detect or prevent it. Yet, it faced the big problem of sanctions, he said, emphasizing that combining tough sanctions with a credible military threat was the only way peacefully to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. That policy was bearing fruit today as the Iranian currency plummeted and its banks became hard pressed to transfer money. History had taught that to prevent war tomorrow, one must be firm today.

To stop the threat diplomatically, he said, Iran must cease all uranium enrichment, remove the stockpiles of enriched uranium from its territory, dismantle the infrastructure for nuclear breakout capability, stop all work on its heavy water reactor and cease production of plutonium. Those steps would end Iran's nuclear weapons programme and eliminate its breakout capability, he said, adding that the international community must keep up the sanctions and strengthen them if necessary. Israel would never acquiesce to nuclear arms in the hands of a rogue regime that repeatedly promised to wipe Israel off the map, he emphasized, adding that it would have no choice but to defend itself against such a threat. If forced to stand alone, then it would do so while remaining fully aware that it was defending many, many others. The possibility of a nuclear-armed Iran and the emergence of other threats in the region had led many Arab neighbours finally to recognize that Israel was not their enemy, he said.

He said that his country also sought a historic compromise by which a demilitarized Palestinian State and a Jewish State of Israel could live side by side. Like previous Israeli Prime Ministers, he was willing to make painful concessions, but so far, the Palestinian leaders were not prepared to offer their own painful concessions, which must be made for the sake of coexistence. Many Israelis had forebears who had worked to transform a "bludgeoned Jewish people, left for dead" into a vibrant and thriving nation defending itself with "the courage of modern Maccabees", he said. The people of Israel had come home, never to be uprooted again.

Right of Reply

The representative of Libya, speaking in exercise of the right of reply, responded to the President of Bolivia, asking who had been in control of Libyan oil under the Qadhafi regime and who owned it today. Under Qadhafi, the oil had belonged to him and his family, and the proceeds were distributed to members of an "international anti-imperialist forum" President [Evo] Morales [Ayma] was familiar with, being a leading

member, he said, adding that the Bolivian leader's comments had been motivated by the loss of an excellent source of financing. Now, the oil and its revenues were in the hands of the Libyan people, repairing what Qadhafi had destroyed by building infrastructure and providing basic services to citizens. Libya had not been attacked, but the tyrant Qadhafi had been killed for indiscriminately killing Libyan civilians. It was sad that President Morales could not acknowledge the atrocities committed, he added.

The Assembly President then reminded delegations that replies to Heads of State should be made in writing.

The representative of Iran stressed his country's inalienable right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, emphasizing that Iran was fully committed to non-proliferation and was cooperating fully with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Sometimes, its cooperation had gone beyond its obligations to build trust and confidence, he said, noting that his country supported nuclear energy for all, but nuclear weapons for no one. Islamic teachings underpinned that stance, he noted, stressing that such weapons were the biggest threat to global security and had no place in Iran's defence doctrine. Iran was committed to meaningful, time-bound and fruitful negotiations to address the concerns of some, and its programme would remain exclusively peaceful, he said, urging the lifting of sanctions against his country.

Noting that the Assembly had just heard an "inflammatory statement" against Iran's peaceful nuclear activities, he rejected that statement, saying no one could dictate to Iran, which was a signatory to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and fully committed to its fulfilling obligations. Israel was the State in need of education, as the only non-party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in the Middle East. It should accede to the Treaty and put all its activities under IAEA safeguards, he said. Israel possessed all types of weapons of mass destruction and was not a party to the treaties banning them. Its refusal to join the conference on a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East had prevented the convening of that event. He said Iran had a "centuries old" policy of non-aggression, but warned Israel against "sabre rattling", because its ability to defend itself was unquestionable.

The representative of Azerbaijan said that Armenia had lied, falsified and ignored facts. Welcoming statements was not enough to reach an actual settlement, particularly when Armenia's deeds were at odds with its pronouncements. It continued illegally to control Nagorno-Karabakh, whereas Azerbaijan wished to see the enclave liberated and those forcibly displaced return. Armenia rejected that position, in violation of international law, continuing to misinterpret Security Council resolutions. There were facts testifying to its continued non-compliance with efforts to settle the dispute under international law. Armenia accused Azerbaijan of aggression, but that was an "utter falsehood" as the Security Council had never mentioned aggression by Azerbaijan. It was acknowledged, even by Armenia's leaders, that Armenia had started the war with the aim of seizing Azerbaijani territory, and had continued to act against international efforts to stop the conflict. Armenia was the most militarized State in the South Caucasus, he added.

The representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea called attention to his region's unique security environment, and the threat posed by the largest nuclear-weapon State's threats and blackmail. The United States had introduced the first nuclear weapons to the Korean peninsula in 1957, he recalled, adding that the number had exceeded 1,000 in the 1970s, making the peninsula the most densely packed with nuclear weapons. He also recalled that, in 2002, the United States Administration had named his country as a member of the "Axis of Evil", calling for the country's elimination. The same Administration had singled out the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for pre-emptive nuclear strikes, and engaged in military drills with the Republic of Korea. That had left the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with no option but to pursue nuclear weapons for self-defence. He added that Israel had no justification to describe anyone as a fully fledged nuclear-weapon State, since it was a "cancer in the Middle East" that shifted the blame to all other countries. The United States remained quiet about Israel's nuclear weapons, he pointed out.

The representative of Bolivia said Libya's statement was "absurd" and "unrealistic", and in violation of the Assembly's rules and procedures. Bolivia would condemn imperialistic attacks anywhere in the world, continuing to draw attention to the true motives of such attacks — the appropriation of natural resources and

the pursuit of geostrategic interests. There could be no diversion of attention from the main issue, which was the ongoing struggle for the values and principles of the United Nations. There could be no more unilateral attacks, violations of international law or looting of people's natural resources, he emphasized, saying he would take any legal action within his power to respond to the words of the Libyan representative in order to ensure a public response to his shameless lies.

The representative of Armenia described his Azerbaijan counterpart's statement as based on lies, without even a single true statement included. That was easy to do when there was no verification of the lies. The people of Nagorno-Karabakh had expressed their right to self-determination in 1988, which had led to hostility and massacres. The President of Azerbaijan had called Armenians enemies of Azerbaijan, which was xenophobic, he said, adding that Azerbaijani leaders spoke two languages — one promoting peace and one working for Armenia's isolation.

The representative of Libya stressed that he had never lied in his entire life, and that anyone wishing to see his documents could do so.

The representative of Azerbaijan said Armenia had made "groundless propagandistic statements" in another unsuccessful attempt to mislead the international community. The lies demonstrated how far it was from engaging in a search for peace in the region, and were an abuse of the right to speak from such a rostrum. Armenia's stance was an open challenge to conflict settlement.

The representative of Bolivia expressed regret over the use of the Assembly as a forum for denigration of a State. Attention was being drawn away from the central theme raised by the President's statement, he said, adding that he supported every word of it.

The representative of Armenia said the measure of Azerbaijan's sincerity could be seen in its response to Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) negotiations. It was the most racist and xenophobic State, he said, questioning whether that was compatible with its Presidency of the Security Council.

The representative of the Republic of Korea, pointing out that its joint military exercises with the United States had been carried out in response to threats posed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, called on that country to abandon its nuclear programme.

The representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea said the remarks by his counterpart from the Republic of Korea were absurd and misleading, stressing that his country's military drills had been neither routine nor defensive. The Republic of Korea had the most sophisticated means for the delivery of nuclear weapons, which threatened the peninsula's security. He said the United States had selected his country for the Security Council resolution out of hostility, which was abuse of power by a permanent member. That was why the Democratic People's Republic of Korea did not recognize the resolution, he said, adding that the issue of joint drills should be raised in the Security Council.

The representative of the Republic of Korea said his counterpart continued to blame others, but the Security Council had not been alone in condemning his country's nuclear tests. The Council had unanimously adopted resolutions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, with all permanent members supporting adoption.

The representative of Iran spoke on a point of order, correcting a misquote in his earlier intervention.

JOHN ASHE (Antigua and Barbuda), Assembly President, then announced the arrangement reached on the rotation of the chairs of the six Main Committees among the five regional groups for the forthcoming five sessions, as follows:

For the sixty-ninth session, First Committee — Latin America and the Caribbean States; Fourth

Committee — Asia-Pacific States; Second Committee — Western European and other States; Third Committee — Asia-Pacific States; Fifth Committee — Eastern European States; and Sixth Committee — African States.

For the seventieth session, First Committee — Western European and other States; Fourth Committee — African States; Second Committee — Eastern European States; Third Committee — African States; Fifth Committee — Asia-Pacific States; and Sixth Committee — Latin America and Caribbean States.

For the seventy-first session, First Committee — African States; Fourth Committee — Eastern European States; Second Committee — Asia-Pacific States; Third Committee — Latin America and Caribbean States; Fifth Committee — Latin America and Caribbean States; and Sixth Committee — Western European and other States.

For the seventy-second session, First Committee — Asia-Pacific States; Fourth Committee — Latin America and Caribbean States; Second Committee — Eastern European States; Third Committee — Western European and other States; Fifth Committee — African States; and Sixth Committee — Asia-Pacific States.

For the seventy-third session, First Committee — Eastern European States; Fourth Committee — African States; Second Committee — Latin America and Caribbean States; Third Committee — Asia-Pacific States; Fifth Committee — Western European and other States; and Sixth Committee — African States.

Mr. ASHE (Antigua and Barbuda) said the Chairs had been distributed without prejudice to the possibility of regional groups swapping among themselves, or to paragraph 22 of General Assembly resolution 67/297 of 29 August, which mandated the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly to prepare, during the current session, arrangements concerning the election of Chairs and Rapporteurs with the aim of establishing a predictable, transparent and fair mechanism.

Election of Committee Officers

In separate meetings, the Assembly's six Main Committees elected their Chairs and other officers, by acclamation.

Ibrahim Dabbashi (Libya) was elected Chair of the First Committee (Disarmament and International Security), with Miloš Nikolić (Montenegro), Fernando Luque (Ecuador) and Peter Winkler (Germany) elected as Vice-Chairs, and Khodadad Seifi Pargou (Iran) as Rapporteur.

Carlos García Gonzalez (El Salvador) was elected Chair of the Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization), while Mafiroane Motanyane (Lesotho), Christina Rafti (Cyprus) and Francesco Santillo (Italy) were elected as Vice-Chairs. The Rapporteur's election will be held at a later date.

Abdou Salam Diallo (Senegal) was elected Chair of the Second Committee (Economic and Financial). The election of three Vice-Chairs and the Rapporteur will be held at a subsequent meeting of the Committee.

Stephan Tafrov (Bulgaria) was elected Chair of the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural), with Maya Dagher (Lebanon) and Thorvardur Atli Thórsson (Iceland) as Vice-Chairs, and Adriana Murillo (Costa Rica) as Rapporteur. The election of an additional Vice-Chair will take place at a later date.

Janne Taalas (Finland) was elected Chair of the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary). The election of three Vice-Chairs and the Rapporteur was postponed until a later date.

Palitha Kohona (Sri Lanka) was elected Chair of the Sixth Committee (Legal), with Ibrahim Salem (

Egypt), Nikolas Stürchler (Switzerland) and Leandro Vieira Silva (Brazil) as Vice-Chairs. Tofiq Musayev (Azerbaijan) was elected Rapporteur.

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