

Your Excellency Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, President of the 77th Session of the General Assembly,

Your Excellencies Heads of State and of Government,

Your Excellency Mr. António Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mr. President,

At the very outset, allow me to congratulate you on your well-deserved election to the office of the President of the General Assembly for the 77th Session. Your illustrious career as a diplomat assures us of a successful session. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation during your tenure of office. I also wish to commend your predecessor, H.E. Mr. Abdulla Shahid, for his skilled stewardship in discharging his duties during the previous session.

To Secretary General Guterres, I extend my country's gratitude and support for the tireless efforts in the daunting task of finding lasting solutions to the persistent problems that face our organisation.

We particularly commend you for your wide-ranging reform efforts to equip the Organisation to provide more effective support to Member States across the spectrum of challenges they face, including stronger partnerships for the 2030 Agenda. We also welcome “Our Common Agenda” Report which focuses on the next 25 years and represents your vision on the future of global cooperation through reinvigorated multilateralism with the United Nations at the centre of our efforts.

Mr. President, Excellencies,

From the humble beginnings of a fledgling organisation more than seven decades ago, to a massive expansion in membership today, the United Nations has undoubtedly stood the test of time. Our organisation has witnessed several changes in the configuration of international relations. Some were traumatic, while others were benign. The survival of the U.N. through all those tribulations testifies to its resilience and the enduring validity of its mission.

Some of the great strides that the United Nations has made span peaceful settlement of disputes, restoring calm in many countries through peacekeeping, decolonisation, raising awareness of human rights and eradicating diseases.

Despite these laudable achievements, numerous challenges still remain in the path towards assuring humanity of a bright, prosperous, dignified and secure future. The continuous eruption of armed conflicts throughout the world, terrorism, climate change, diseases and the lingering effects of the economic and financial crises and many others continue to transcend our borders and have remained in the foreground of international relations and pre-occupied the international community. It is in this context that we welcome the theme for our general debate, namely; **“A watershed moment: transformative solutions to interlocking challenges.”**

Mr. President,

We are living in uncertain times. The COVID 19 pandemic has changed the nature of multilateral engagement, diplomacy, business, and of basic human interaction. The pandemic has not only hastened the pace and scale of the digital revolution, but has also increased the gap between the “haves” and the “have-nots”, and furthermore exposed our vulnerability as Africa’s land locked least developed country. We, therefore, need to make concerted efforts to protect lives and empower the citizenry across the globe through innovation and digital technologies to achieve sustainable recovery. It is of paramount importance for us as African leaders to be proactive in investing in research and development in readiness for certain future pandemics.

At the same time, the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's), which was already anaemic prior to 2020, has been aggravated by the pandemic. The expectation of the international community was to intensify the Decade of Action to achieve SDGs, but sadly, we find ourselves in a pro-longed period of recovery.

As we ushered in the new 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on 1 January 2016, Member States, were optimistic that the better life for all is in sight. However, the 2030 deadline for the achievement of the SDGs is gradually approaching, yet there is still no significant progress in their attainment due to several factors that have adversely affected implementation. In addition to the pandemic, these include unpredictable global shocks including wars, climate-related events and lack of predictable financing.

The environment in which we operate is significantly less favourable than it was when we began six years ago. Our room to manoeuvre is much more constrained. Nevertheless, our quest to pursue a sustainable future must never wane. Unless we can work towards the SDGs in a true spirit of partnership, where each partner lives up to expectations, the Decade of Action will end as a Decade of Disappointment.

As Secretary General stated during the election of the President of the General Assembly in June this year, “The 77th Session can be a moment of transformation; a time to recalibrate multilateralism and strengthen the foundations of global cooperation”. In this regard, I appeal to all Member States to use the 77th Session to renew their determination to work together for the benefit of mankind and to recommit themselves to the cardinal principle of multilateralism. The role of multilateralism and the United Nations, has, therefore, become ever more important. It is morally imperative that we unite our wills and pool our efforts for the well-being of humanity.

Mr. President, just recently, Lesotho was amongst the 45 countries that presented their Voluntary National Reviews during the High-Level Political Forum on sustainable development. Among other things, our review highlighted the pressing challenge of climate change which has a direct bearing on food insecurity and poverty, not only in my country but in Africa as a whole. Climate change destroys our ecosystems and results in land degradation as well as contribute to the decline of agricultural productivity, which is the mainstay of small economies.

In this connection, my delegation calls upon all Member States to use the COP-27 meeting to be held on African soil, as an opportune time to address Africa's challenges on climate change as well as support our needs and priorities in the form of affordable and sustainable energy, capacity adaption and mitigation.

We disagreed for far too long on the subject of climate change, until we were confronted by the glaring and compelling scientific evidence that the link between global warming and human activity is indisputable. Sadly, catastrophes have begun to hit, mostly affecting the poorest and most vulnerable countries.

While we appreciate that there are resources aimed at helping developing countries to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change, we are concerned that such funds are difficult to access. The global climate-finance architecture is complex, with variable structures of governance and modalities. Some finance is channelled through multilateral agencies, sometimes even outside the funding mechanisms of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and some flows through bilateral development assistance institutions, thereby making coordination difficult. Lesotho calls on the international community and our development partners to simplify the accessibility of funds earmarked for climate change.

Mr. President,

The state of peace and security in the world is gradually getting worse with recurring conflicts and eruption of new ones in many parts of the world. The emergence of new extremist groups and terrorist entities has not only compounded the problem but, is a stark reminder, that we must act collectively to discharge the moral responsibility resting on us to ensure that people everywhere enjoy the right to peace, development, and the sanctity of life. The use of military force alone as a strategy for combating terrorism has never been a panacea for eradicating that menace. Terrorism requires a holistic approach that addresses its root causes. Similarly, we as leaders, should not turn a blind eye on the plight of civilians in all conflict areas. The international community should be consistent in dealing with humanitarian crises in different parts of the world.

We do not derive any comfort, **Mr. President,** from the simmering trade and political tensions between two of the Founding Members of the United Nations, namely the United States of America and the People's Republic of China. We must remember that we came together as Members of the United Nations under the premise that we are all peace-loving nations. The United Nations Charter enjoins us "to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good

neighbours, and to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and to employ international machinery for the promotion of economic and social advancement of all peoples”. In this regard we call upon these two great nations to show their fidelity to the principles underpinning our Organisation and resolve their differences amicably. Military power and aggression can never beget peace.

In the same vein, the ongoing war in Ukraine and other parts of the world inflicts a reputational carnage on our beloved Organisation. Whereas peaceful settlement of disputes lies at the heart of the work of the UN, we have, however, not sufficiently utilised tools at our disposal, such as mediation for solving conflicts between and among our Member States. Some take sides and support conflicts in one form or another, while others remain in hibernation. Lesotho, therefore, wishes to implore the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, to live up to its Charter and be an honest and impartial mediator in conflicts. The resolution of international disputes based on dialogue, justice and the equality of all States must be at the heart of that strategy if it is to succeed. We must shun those who fan the flames of discord among us and indeed we must not allow ourselves to entertain any thoughts that through divisions there will be one side that will win. We will all perish and be on the precipice.

We are mindful, however, that it will be difficult for the Security Council to effectively discharge its mandate while it remains an epitome of the 1945 architecture of the world as seen by the victors of the Second World War. The reform of the United Nations, including the Security Council, can no longer be delayed. A reformed, transparent and more democratic United Nations, in which Africa is represented along the lines of Ezulwini Consensus, is necessary for preserving international peace and security and for confronting the challenges of development. All Member States need to garner the necessary political will to advance the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform.

We note with satisfaction the statement by President Biden, delivered before this august House on the 21st of September 2022, in which he clearly articulated America's support for representation of Africa and other unrepresented regions, in the UN Security Council, particularly in the permanent category. **Let us make the seventy-seventh session one for decisive action on this matter.**

Mr. President,

Today, we see heightened geopolitical tensions that have led to the re-emergence of protectionist trade policies. The economic war in terms of sanctions has the potential

to make global supply chains less efficient, subtracting from long term growth and adding pressure on prices. This state of affairs flies in the face of the resolve of the representatives who gathered in San Francisco to finalise the Charter of the United Nations more than seven decades ago, who dreamed of a world of equality and shared prosperity. They renounced a vision of a world in of unilaterally imposed economic sanctions and financial blockades against others, or one in which peoples were denied their right to self-determination or were subjected to occupation.

It would, therefore, be remiss of me not to unequivocally call for the lifting of all economic and political sanctions against Zimbabwe. In the like manner, we express solidarity with the tenacious people of Cuba for having endured economic sanctions for so many years. We are confident that the United States of America, under the leadership of President Biden, will re-visit its position on the embargo against the Republic of Cuba and expand cooperation with Cuba on areas of mutual interest, including on trade and commerce, for the benefit of the Peoples of both countries. This, the United States did in 2016, through the Presidential Policy Directive, and it can surely do it again. We also want to express our unwavering solidarity with the People of Western Sahara, who have languished under the hegemony of colonialism for far too long. I wish to underline, in particular, the General Assembly Resolution 40/50 of 02nd December 1985, in terms of which the Assembly reaffirmed the fact

that the question of Western Sahara was a question of decolonisation which remained to be completed on the basis of the exercise by the People of western Sahara, of their inalienable right to self-determination and independence. Equally, the UN Security Council in its Resolutions 1920 (2010), 1979 (2011) and 2044 (2012), recognised that the consolidation of the status quo in Western Sahara was unacceptable and called for an intensified pace of meetings and strengthening of contacts between the Parties in order to advance the organisation of the referendum. We call upon the international community to intensify efforts to bring to an end the question of Western Sahara.

In the same vein, we express our unwavering support to the People of Palestine. Since the founding of the UN, the Question of Palestine has been at the centre of the agenda of our Organisation. Yet, today, the Palestinian territory still remains under foreign occupation and its People endure untold pain and suffering. We call on the United Nations to intensify its efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Question of Palestine.

Mr. President,

Allow me to conclude my remarks by pointing out that the regime of the Charter of the United Nations has so far done its part in preventing a third world war, thereby

fulfilling one of the dreams of the architects of our beloved Organisation. The continued success and the relevance of the United Nations will depend, in large measure, on its capacity for self-renewal in readiness to meet modern-day challenges.

We, the United Nations, should continue to be the voice of the voiceless and the best hope for all humankind. Now is the time for leaders everywhere to join the race for transformative action that can drive peace, democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law, human dignity, economic competitiveness and sustainable prosperity for all. Lesotho will continue to be a persistent and resilient part of that initiative.

I thank you for your attention.