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**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. KHURELSUKH UKHNAA,  
PRIME-MINISTER OF MONGOLIA AT THE GENERAL DEBATE  
OF THE 73<sup>RD</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

***“MAKING THE UNITED NATIONS RELEVANT TO ALL PEOPLE: GLOBAL  
LEADERSHIP AND SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES FOR PEACEFUL, EQUITABLE  
AND SUSTAINABLE SOCIETIES”***

New York, 28 September 2018

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*Theme: "Making the United Nations Relevant to All People: Global Leadership and Shared Responsibilities for Peaceful, Equitable and Sustainable Societies"*

Madame President of the General Assembly,  
Mr. Secretary-General,  
Honorable Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Distinguished delegates,

At the outset, I wish to express my heartfelt congratulations to Ms. *María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés* for being elected as the President of the 73<sup>rd</sup> session of the General Assembly.

I pledge my delegation's full support and cooperation in the discharge of your onerous responsibilities.

Madame President,

Today, we are living in the flat, globalized and interrelated world. Our life is digitalized to a great extent and the way of life is greatly shaped by technological progresses. In spite of this development, we are encountering a plethora of global sore points including conflicts, poverty, hunger, and inequality.

Hence, I am glad to represent my Government at this General debate, which will deliberate issues of making the United Nations more relevant to all people and making the world more peaceful, equitable and sustainable.

In the past 73 years, the United Nations outreached every member state through its diligent activities for peace, justice and global understanding. Thus, under the Sustainable Development Agenda, it is timely for the United Nations and in line with its founding principles, to endeavor reaching everyone in the member states.

Mongolia appreciates leadership of the Secretary-General Antonio Guterres reinforcing the joint efforts of member states on leaving no one behind through his reform initiatives.

We are supporting his reform initiatives in the peace and security architecture which is aimed at ensuring stronger prevention and mediation activities and making peacekeeping operations more cost-effective, as well as in repositioning of the UN development system which aspires to reform the UN into a more effective, well-coordinated, transparent and accountable organization.

Madame President,

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute report, the world military expenditure is estimated to have reached \$1.7 trillion in 2017. This is not only an increase from the previous year, but also the highest level since the end of the Cold war.

The armaments race is not declining and situations in some regions are instable due to aggravating conflicts. Use of technological advancements in armed conflicts is making the circumstances more dangerous than ever.

Mongolia has always been standing for its principled position that any conflicts should be resolved peacefully and through dialogue.

Based on our peaceful mind stemmed from the national mentality and religious belief, we always supported peace and security initiatives raised at the United Nations General Assemblies and other fora and strived to be a responsible member of the organization.

Just to cite some of the Mongolia's initiatives proving its contributions to the peace and security at global and regional echelons are the General Assembly resolutions on "Disarmament Week" observed on 24-30 October every year since 1978 and "Declaration on the Right of Peoples to Peace" in 1984 and the declaration of its territory as nuclear weapon free in 1992, which is progressively being guaranteed.

There is a Mongolian saying that "It's better give a needle in time of need rather than gifting a camel when wealthy", or as it is said in English "A friend in need is a friend indeed". Mongolians always try to assist other nations and people when they are in need or seeking peace and stability.

There was an occasion when we brought hundreds of orphans from the DPRK to Mongolia in the post-Korean war time and raised them. During the last decades, we have been stretching our hands within our capacity to a number of countries, which faced natural disasters and terrorist acts, rendering development assistance to some regional countries, and sharing our modest experience of democratic transition.

This year we are celebrating the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations peacekeeping which has contributed immensely to the world peace and security. Mongolia first joined the

United Nations peacekeeping in 2002 with the deployment of unarmed military observers and started deploying the troops in 2006. Nowadays, we are proud by our troops who are praised by the international community for their “robust, calm and appropriate” approach to peacekeeping.

As one of the top 30 troop contributing countries, as well as one the high-rankers in terms of the deployment to per capita, Mongolia envisages at increasing its participation in the UN Peacekeeping Operations and fully supports the Secretary-General’s Action for Peacekeeping initiative.

Madame President,

Addressing security issues in Northeast Asia is indeed one of our foreign policy priorities as it has direct impacts on Mongolia’s security and development.

Mongolia closely follows and welcomes the recent positive developments on the Korean Peninsula, including the Inter-Korean and other bilateral Summits that are giving an important impetus towards confidence-building and ensuring peace and security in the Northeast Asia. However, we are not merely observing the process, but are trying to make our own contributions.

Since 1980’s, we have been consistently pursuing the policy of launching a dialogue mechanism in Northeast Asia. A fruit of these efforts yielded in “Ulaanbaatar Dialogue on Northeast Asia” international conference conducted since 2014 on annual basis. The dialogue is now transforming into an open and inclusive mechanism gathering both government officials and the academia from all countries in the sub-region. Discussion topics cover a broad range of issues including security, energy, infrastructure, green development, opportunities of humanitarian cooperation and others.

On the other hand, Asia is one of the most disaster-prone regions in the world. We actively support the regional cooperation for enhancing disaster resilience, reducing disaster risk and increasing effectiveness of disaster prevention activities. Within this framework, we put forward an initiative to establish the Northeast Asia Disaster Risk Reduction Platform in Mongolia. The proposal has been discussed at the Ulaanbaatar Dialogue on Northeast Asia conferences and the second Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction successfully organized in Ulaanbaatar in last July and received a warm support from regional countries for implementation.

Mongolians believe that neighbors share the same disposition and interests. As Mongolia is determined to develop strategic partnerships with its two big neighbors, it closely follows their initiatives at the regional level and strives to engage in every possible way. Lately, we proposed initiatives on Travel Facilitation for travelers from countries along the

Belt and Road and the Peace, Prosperity, Progress, Promise (PPPP) award for junior diplomats and scholars from the Belt and Road countries.

Madame President,

There is no doubt that numerous armed conflicts, rivalries, insurgencies and terrorist attacks, that trouble us today, are caused by the clash of civilizations and religions.

Mongolia is one of the few nations who has had no religious and ethnic wars in its history. The Great Mongolian Empire established 812 ago was reigned by the written law and it was a genuine home of religious freedom where Christians, Muslims, Confucians and Buddhists treated equally and lived together without any ideological struggles.

In brief, the legacy of religious tolerance and respect in the Mongolian Empire, which had covered an immense territory, is very instructive for the today's world.

More recently, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the époque of the Cold War, we were conducting salient activities for combining voices of international Buddhists for the world peace through the Asian Buddhists' Conference for Peace (ABCP), established in 1969 and were achieving the tangible results in the fight against the ideological divide.

Nowadays, we deem there is a pressing demand for effective dialogue mechanisms, such as the ABCP, which has consultative status at the UN ECOSOC. Thus, we are determined to revitalize its activities at regional and international arenas. In this regard, as a regional hub connecting Northeast and Central Asian countries, we are stating our initiative to host the Conference on Religious Freedom in March 2019 in Mongolia from this honorable podium of the United Nations.

We are confident that our initiative will make constructive contributions in the new developments of culture of peace, religious tolerance and religious freedom worldwide.

Madame President,

Mongolia is one of the early adopters of the national Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through endorsing its Sustainable Development Vision 2030 in February 2016. As per this Vision, Mongolia aspires, by 2030, to consolidate its democratic governance, preserve ecological balance, eradicate poverty in all its forms and be amongst upper middle-income countries.

My Government has been taking important steps to ensure coherence between the SDGs and the national development policy documents, that have been previously implemented, and translate them into short- and medium term plans and programs.

In order to provide financing for development, the Investment Program has been adopted in line with the Government Action Plan. Moreover, the SDGs indicators developed on the basis of multi-stakeholders consultations will be adopted shortly.

Mongolia witnessed the economic resurgence with the accelerated foreign trade turnover, increased investment and budget surplus during the last two years. However, Mongolian economic growth, which is highly dependent on mining and vulnerable to the commodity prices, tends to be instable and risky for ensuring the allocation of financial resources for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in years of commodity price decline.

Moreover, another challenge faced by my Government is to ensure that every citizen is to be benefited from the economic growth. For instance, following the economic growth, unemployment decreased modestly but not poverty. Thus, we are inserting measures aimed at shrinking income disparities and reducing poverty into all relevant Government Programs and sectoral plans, compiling a complete database of low-income households and supporting Public-Private Partnership. In order to resolve the problems comprehensively, the National Program on Reducing Poverty and Unemployment will be launched shortly.

Madame President,

This year we are celebrating 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR), a milestone document in the history of human rights.

Pursuant to the ideology of the Declaration, Mongolia has made remarkable achievements in the field of promotion and protection of human rights. In recent years, particular importance has been attached to the issues such as enhancing gender equality, protecting rights of children, elderly and persons with disabilities, fighting against human trafficking and drug, improving freedom of speech and expression.

In 2016-2018, as Mongolia is serving as member of the Human Rights Council for the first time and it has been an honor for us to contribute to the global endeavors to protect and promote human rights.

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in the UDHR can be fully realized. Following the 2016 New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants, member states constructively negotiated the issue of migration for the last two years. We expect that the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration to be adopted in December in Marrakesh on the historic day of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UDHR will be a valuable document for the protection of rights of all migrants.

In the last two decades, the world is witnessing the highest level of population displacement and this phenomenon did not bypass my country, which has a small population and is located in highlands of the Northeast Asia.

Madame President,

We are experiencing a high volume of internal and external migration due to a number of reasons including unemployment and poverty.

Owing to a large movement of citizens from countryside to cities since 1990's, as of 2017, 45 percent of our total population lives in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar with net annual growth of 22.3 percent. It results in a more social ramification including poverty, unemployment, poor access to health care services and air pollution in the capital city compared to any other places.

Citizens of Mongolia are highly educated and the fact that the second biggest package of the state budget in 2018 was allocated to the education sector, demonstrates the government's firm commitment to prioritize human resource development. However, school availability and quality of education do not always match up with the demographic growth, urbanization pace and modern education standards.

While the pupil-classroom ratio in schools and kindergartens has decreased together with the population density in rural areas, the case is opposite in the urban centers. A memory makes anxious where at one of my public meetings held last year in Ulaanbaatar, a citizen told me how his 10-year-old kid had to walk home at 9 pm through dark streets in winter time at a temperature of minus 20-25 degrees Celsius after attending the third shift at his school which does not provide school bus service.

The Government of Mongolia is planning and implementing policies and programmes that aim, by 2030, to address effectively the challenges faced by the capital city, including shortage of kindergartens, about 30 schools in suburbs functioning in three shifts, overload of family hospitals, hazardous impacts of air pollution on people's health, as well as the issue of unemployed people in Ulaanbaatar which accounts one third of the national unemployment rate.

Furthermore, about 5 percent of our total working age population is working abroad and this number tends to grow. Thus, we need to take comprehensive measures to resolve the issues of their health care, social insurance, dual citizenship and improve the related legal environment.

Madame President,

In our time, climate change is another daunting challenge for humanity that goes hand in hand with peace, security and development issues.

The Paris Agreement has been ratified by 179 countries. However, the implementation does not meet the expectation and the fulfilment of shared responsibilities by member states remains insufficient. Therefore, we welcome and support the Secretary-General's timely initiative to convene the Climate Summit in September 2019 for reviewing the Paris Agreement commitments.

Global warming and climate change impacts all nations which are felt more intensely on the economic and social development of the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states. In this regard I would like to highlight that by the initiative and leadership of Mongolia, the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries has been established in Ulaanbaatar and fully operationalized last May.

The International Think Tank, the first ever intergovernmental organization representing the 32 landlocked developing countries, will conduct policy research works and implement feasible projects to address common challenges and protect interests and positions of those countries with the purpose of augmenting their benefit from international trade. I am confident that you will continue your cooperation and support to the activities of this Think Tank as previously.

In Mongolia, where extreme weather conditions prevail and economy mostly relies on mining and agriculture, the scope, frequency, and negative impact of disasters, such as earthquake, desertification, soil erosion and forestfires have increased in recent years. Taking this opportunity, I wish to inform you that on the occasion of the UN Climate Week, my delegation is launching a documentary titled "Blue Gold". We are sharing this documentary with you not only for showing the devastating impact of the climate change in Mongolia, but also alarming about similar consequences and appealing for timely safeguarding steps.

In conclusion, from this honorable podium of the United Nations, I would like to call on unity of the all nations under mutual trust, consciousness of our responsibilities for the sake of not only current but also future generations, as well as to strive for Peaceful, Equitable and Sustainable societies.

Thank you for your attention.