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**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. KHURELSUKH UKHNAA, PRESIDENT OF MONGOLIA,
AT THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 76th SESSION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

(New York, 22 September 2021)

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I wish to convey my heartfelt congratulations to Your Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid on your unanimous election as the President of the General Assembly and wish every success in the work of the 76th Session. I pledge my delegation's full support and cooperation in carrying out your responsible duties.

In the past two years, countries around the world have been plagued by the unforeseen pandemic and going through arduous times together. On behalf of the people of Mongolia, I would like to express my deepest condolences for the loss of 4.6 million lives worldwide due to the coronavirus. Taking this opportunity, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to doctors, medical personnel and frontline workers, who are tirelessly serving to safeguard precious lives and health of people in every corner of our planet.

I also would like to express my sincere appreciation to the United Nations and its system organizations for their tremendous role in combating the COVID-19 pandemic by uniting and assisting all Member States, and providing them with information and guidance.

Mr. President,

As the pandemic has affected not only global health, but also all spheres of economic, social and political life, it became evident that the human history will be divided into pre- and post-COVID-19 periods.

We have learned a number of lessons from the pandemic. Mongolians say that "Disease never knocks on the door", which implies that the disease does not discriminate by race, age, gender, and wealth.

This proverb also demonstrates the Mongolian morality of taking care of ones in trouble and ensure not to maltreat them.

We should think that rather than discriminating each other, we should focus on combining our strengths and overcome this perilous pandemic the humankind is facing.

Moreover, there were protests and insurgencies against lockdowns and home orders in some countries.

As a so called “oasis of democracy” in the region, Mongolia has been closely observing human rights issues stemmed from the pandemic lockdown.

The fact that Mongolia and many other Asian countries have been going through the COVID-19 crisis without substantial human rights conflicts discloses the advantage of communalistic culture of Asians over the individualistic one. I firmly believe that respecting each other’s culture and value, as well as learning from each other’s successes and failures are of utmost importance in collectively overcoming the challenges that humanity may face in the future.

The sudden outbreak of COVID-19 has placed an enormous strain on the global health, particularly in human resource, infrastructure and supply chain, and with the lingering spread of COVID-19 infection, the reality of social injustice has been revealed vividly.

The outbreak of the pandemic has also alarmed the modern nation states that the health sector possesses an existential importance equal to the defense sector.

The concept of global development should not only be green and accessible socio-economic development, but also there is an emerging need that it needs to be formulated in deep consideration of health and health diplomacy. Moreover, there is a pressing need in health sector to improve risk management, preparedness, investment, promotion of public-private partnership, and expedited penetration of high technology and innovation.

World countries and international community are directing their collective efforts and mutual assistance to vaccination, as it is considered to be the best protection from COVID-19.

As of today, the COVAX program, which aims to ensure equitable access to the COVID-19 vaccine, have delivered 190 million doses of vaccines to 138 countries, which is an invaluable support to low- and middle-income countries.

In Mongolia, 65 percent of the population has been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 with the support of other countries and the Government procurement in addition to the COVAX supply.

In Mongolia, there is a declining trend in virus spread though it has been high in the last months; thus, the Government has started taking gradual steps to return to normal life by opening services, launching classroom training and increasing the number of international flights.

Mr. President,

The pandemic has challenged ruthlessly the world economies, their liquidity and resilience more than ever. Estimates indicate that in 2020, the virus reduced global economic growth by 4.9 percent, global trade fallen by 5.3 percent, however the global economy is projected to experience recovery in 2021.

During the pandemic, information technology was the main engine of social life and has proved firmly its role and position in the life of the 21st century. Prior to the COVID-19, the use of information technology was deeply ingrained in economic, business and financial relations, but during the pandemic, remote diagnostics and treatment, e-learning, and home-based working were expanding and bringing new forms of labor organization.

Over the past two years, we learned that isolation from society and loneliness are more fearful than the coronavirus itself, at a time when humanity is increasingly in need of socialization. We also witnessed that aparting from live communications between family members, friends, children, colleagues and between states and nations negatively impacts businesses, education, social behavior and relations, and mental health.

It is worth noting that if we accept the challenges facing the world as opportunities to save resources, time and space, we will be able to adapt and recover faster in this new environment.

Mr. President,

The year of 2021 marks the centennial anniversary of the People's Revolution and the 60th anniversary of Mongolia's full-fledged membership to the United Nations.

As a result of the People's Revolution of 1921, in Mongolia, the monarchy was abolished and consequently, the First Constitution was adopted, and a republic proclaimed. However, membership in the UN in 1961 served as an additional guarantee of our independence and sovereignty, and we became a full-pledged member of the world community. Hence, we consider this anniversary as an important event in the national history and are marking it in a broad echelon.

We, Mongolians, view the United Nations, as an organization for peace and security, human rights and development of nations in five continents, and as a faithful companion of the past 60 years and a reliable partner of many more 60 years ahead us.

Mongolians say that "a person with friends lives in a wide space like a steppe and a person without friends lives in a tight space like a palm". Nowadays, Mongolia has diplomatic relations with 193 countries of the world and became a member of more than 70 international and intergovernmental organizations. Moreover, we deem that the fact of Mongolia's accession to more than 290 international treaties is a proof of our increasing position, roles, and responsibilities at international arena and global affairs.

The UN system organizations have made a significant contribution to Mongolia's development. In particular, we have cooperated fruitfully in different fields, including strengthening democracy and good governance, improving the legal environment, ensuring human rights, reducing poverty, protecting maternal and child health, and promoting the environmental and sustainable development.

On behalf of the people of Mongolia, I wish to convey my sincere gratitude to the UN and its system organizations for rendering a multifaceted assistance and creating groups of

donors and supporters throughout the challenging times of our country, such as social and economic transition in the 1990-ies, the repeated winter calamities and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. President,

For the last 60 years, Mongolia has been actively engaged and contributed to the achievement of the objectives and principles of the UN Charter. My country has initiated and tabled more than 90 UN General Assembly resolutions on nearly 20 agenda items, including Disarmament Week, the Declaration on the Right to Peace, nuclear-weapon-free status, economic development, environmental protection, cooperatives, situation of women in rural areas, literacy and education for democracy.

Amongst them, Mongolia declared its territory as a nuclear-weapon-free in 1992 and has been working actively in this direction ever since.

Furthermore, I would like to emphasize the facts that we have been actively participating in the UN peacekeeping operations since 2002, the period of 2003-2012 was proclaimed as the UN Literacy Decade at the initiative of Mongolia and the International Think-Tank, the first ever intergovernmental body for Landlocked Developing Countries, has been established in Ulaanbaatar.

As we continue the work to ensure the special needs and interests of landlocked developing countries, based upon the advantage of our geographical location, we strive to develop into "Transit Mongolia", a transit, trade and service hub connecting Asia and Europe.

Taking this opportunity, I would also like to underscore that Mongolia is committed to participating in economic integration in the Asia-Pacific region, such as becoming ASEAN Dialogue Partner as well as joining East Asia Summit and APEC.

Mr. President,

The coronavirus pandemic is the major disaster since the World War II. Although 103 years have passed since the World War I and 76 years since the World War II, the dangers of the war have not yet been fully eliminated, and the attempts to resolve issues by military means persist to this day.

Therefore, in today's world, this horrendous phenomenon called war must be completely eliminated from the future of mankind and human propriety, and the role and pertinence of resolving any conflicts and misunderstandings only through peaceful means and dialogue as well as promoting preventive diplomacy are on the rise.

There is a widespread misconception that our ancestor Chinggis Khan was a vicious man who conquered many nations. However, world history and studies show that he was adherent of diplomacy, and he was a peacemaker with true desire to set borders without hostilities.

His dream was realized through a solid peace that lasted for almost 200 years on the great chessboard of Eurasia and world scholars call this period "Pax Mongolica" which made a noteworthy contribution to the development of humankind. We, Mongolians, have inherited this spirit of cherishing peace from our ancestors, and today, Mongolia is internationally recognized as a peace-loving democratic nation.

In 1990, we were able to peacefully transit to the democratic system without a single gunfire. We have no territorial or border disputes with our neighbors. We have no religious or ethnic conflicts. Mongolia is a country that pursues peaceful, open, independent and multi-pillar foreign policy.

Therefore, with a view to build an intellectual immunity against war in human beings, we present an initiative to observe September 2, the day, when devastating World War II, that involved more than 100 million people from more than 30 countries and took the lives of millions, had ended, as international day to commemorate "Humanity's Victory Over War". We are confident that countries and peoples of the world will support this initiative.

We see emerging military, political, and security-related issues, increasing number of armed conflicts associated to religion, cultural difference, economic competition and globalization, growing flow of refugees as well as environmental degradation. Accordingly, the UN political and peacekeeping operations policy, its type and scope have been modified.

We support efforts to increase peacekeepers' role and change in the requirement for them as well as the desire to take immediate action with a compact force equipped with modern weapons, equipment and facilities in line with the relevant mission's operational situation.

Since 2002 Mongolia has deployed nearly 20 thousand Blue Helmets to 13 UN peacekeeping operations in three different continents and ranks high in the world in terms of per capita deployment of peacekeepers and number of military personnel. In the future, Mongolia aims to increase its participation in the UN peacekeeping operations and is preparing to deploy Quick Reaction Force Company, Construction Engineering Company, and Level Two Hospital to the UN missions.

Moreover, Mongolia pursues a policy to increase percentage of women peacekeepers to 15 percent in accordance with the UN Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security.

In that regard, Mongolia will host an international conference on participation of female peacekeepers in the UN PKOs next year in Ulaanbaatar. We call on the Department of Peace Operations and Member States to support and cooperate in organizing this conference.

Mr. President,

Even though the pandemic and vaccination would remain major concerns in the near future, we should not overlook the matters of future progress and sustainable development.

In line with the global development trend and the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030, the State Great Khural (Parliament) of Mongolia adopted the “Vision 2050”, Mongolia’s long-term development policy.

Due to the COVID-19, my country’s economy, which had been growing steadily in the three years prior to the pandemic, contracted by 4.5 percent in 2020.

Nevertheless, due to the step-by-step measures taken by the Government to support the domestic economy and the favorable external economic environment, Mongolia’s economy is expected to recover and grow by an average of 4.8 percent in 2021-2022.

International financial organizations have emphasized that budgetary and fiscal measures taken by the Government of Mongolia to protect its economy from the pandemic are higher than those of some developed countries compared to its economic capacity.

Moreover, major banking and financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, have repeatedly highlighted that Mongolia has been particularly effective in protecting incomes of the low-and-middle income people and preventing them from falling into poverty.

Mongolia’s economy, dominated by agriculture and mining, remains vulnerable to any risk and disaster. In the aftermath of the pandemic, we are planning to focus on structural reforms, economic diversification, investment promotion, maintenance of fiscal and financial stability to create environmentally friendly, sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

Foreign direct investment will continue to play a key role in developing countries during and after the pandemic. Creating a favorable business environment and promoting foreign direct investment will remain a fundamental goal in the economy of Mongolia.

We look forward to working more actively with foreign and domestic investors, businesses than ever before on mutually beneficial basis. In doing so, we will comply with the principles of respect for the environment and protecting the traditional way of life from negative impact.

We also attach great importance to intensifying governance reform at all levels of the public and private sectors and reducing corruption including through e-transition which is the most realistic mechanism to ensure transparency, accountability, effective service, and good governance.

Mongolia aims to transfer at least 90 percent of all public services available on the integrated “E-Mongolia” system and strives to become a “Digital Nation” for 2021-2024.

Mr. President,

Climate change is having a devastating effect for the past decades. Proper diagnosis of the causes is key to overcome its harmful effects. One of the causes of adverse climate change is oblivious human activity. It is the result of our own careless behavior toward the nature and environment. Humans have been largely debating over ethical conduct towards each other,

but not towards the mother nature which has led to the current environmental and ecological disasters.

During the pandemic lockdown, we witnessed certain signs of natural self-recovery, at least for a short period of time, such as quick recovery of the ozone layer, reduction of air pollution, purification of rivers and waters and revival of the fauna and flora. This is the showcase that we need to change the behavior and attitude of humanity toward the nature and make tangible efforts to induce positive results.

This also evidenced by the fact that the frequency and scope of wildfires, hurricanes, floods, droughts and dzuds are increasing every year, causing devastating damages in all corners of the world.

From ancient times, we, Mongolians, have honored the eternal blue sky as “father” and the land as “mother”, worshipped the surrounding mountains and waters with deep love and respect and been recharged by their vital energy.

Our ancestors thoroughly followed and delicately discovered the nature’s demeanor in a way that allowed them to process and use animal-derived products and food in both environmentally- and human health-friendly ways. We used the earth’s blessings such as trees, water, animal and other natural resources, only according to our own or household needs, and saving resources for the next generations.

The natural self-recovery reminds me of the nomadic know-how of leaving the pastureland “fallow” or “leaving the pastureland for rest”. This is a Mongolian herders’ wisdom to offer to the motherland an opportunity to rest a while and to recover and revive itself.

In our fight against climate change, let us draw lessons from the Mongolian traditional “nomadic civilization” to treat and regard the nature respectfully and combine it with achievements of modern science and technology as well as best practices and traditional experiences from all over the world.

Desertification that is threatening the livelihoods of more than two billion people in the world and the sand storm originating from Mongolia are becoming major problems for us.

Currently, a big portion of Mongolian territory is affected by desertification or land degradation to certain degree. Main reasons are 2.2°C increase of the mean temperature and 7 percent decline in annual precipitation level for the last 80 plus years.

The most efficient way to reverse desertification is planting trees. We, Mongolians, ponder that planting trees, writing books and raising children are the three superior deeds. Hence, we have launched a campaign to plant billions of trees by 2030 from this podium of the General Assembly in order to contribute to the global fight against climate change.

Climate change and ecosystem degradation pose a real threat to the future of humankind irrespective of borders or ethnicity. Conscious of this critical turning point, the countries around the globe have decided to gather in Glasgow in November for the COP26 (Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change).

I urge you, my fellow leaders, to increase and renew your respective contributions and pledges on fostering green development, reducing Greenhouse gas emissions and developing environmentally friendly society and economy.

Mr. President,

The key approach to a swift recovery from the damages of the pandemic and restoration of our blue planet is our close cooperation, mutual understanding and assistance, as well as commitment to continue and intensify implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, such as the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Last month, the Summer Olympic Games, symbol of peace and unity of humankind, was successfully organized in Tokyo, allowing athletes from five continents to gather together. Unlike the General Debate of the last 75th session of the UN General Assembly, where the heads of delegations spoke virtually, this year, we are meeting in person here in the General Assembly Hall and are able to greet each other warmly. These developments give us hope that the threat of the pandemic is slowing down and we will surmount it eventually.

May the eternal blue sky bless us - the humanity.

Thank you for your attention.