Thank you Mr. President for your initiative to convene this meeting and for inviting me to address it.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We meet today at what I think is a truly a pivotal moment for the global system, and at the heart of it the UN; a time of great potential, but also of hazardous peril.

70 years ago, when the UN Charter affirmed our collective determination to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, the founding fathers probably did not anticipate the drastic changes we are witnessing today; changes that compounded the threats, challenges and risks to our collective security. Think of rampant poverty, with all the anger, frustration and violence it creates. Think of the rise of extremism and terrorism. Think of climate change and natural disasters.

These are challenges that are enormous, complex and interconnected. They are challenges that no one country or even a group of countries can single-handedly overcome. And as a result, the world is now looking to the United Nations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In order for the UN to lead the change, it needs reform. The reviews of peacekeeping operations, the peacebuilding architecture and the status of the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda are significant inputs in this debate. The recommendations they present go a distance in bridging the gap between what the organization is expected to achieve, and what it is actually accomplishing on the ground.
But meaningful reform at the UN is a deeply political one, one that requires vision and boldness. One that tackles the right issues. Among these issues, I believe that reforming the Security Council should be a priority.

On one hand, there is a need to strengthen the Council by ensuring better representation for developing countries, in both the permanent and non-permanent categories. On the other hand, and while the circumstance might not yet be fully ripe for drastically changing the way the veto power is applied, it is my belief that the five permanent members should consider voluntarily refraining from using the veto if a measure brought to the Council garners the support of the rest of the membership of the Council. In other words, if 14 of the 15 members of the Security Council vote for a resolution, this expression of global will should not be so easily dismissed, in particular in the case of resolutions dealing with war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and cessation of hostilities between belligerent parties.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Another important proposal for reform is to empower the General Assembly (GA) to shoulder its share of responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. UNGA resolution 377A, also known as "Uniting for Peace", should be revisited and revitalized. This is another way to allow the organization to act in case the Security Council failed to do so, as a result of lack of unanimity amongst its five permanent members.

In this regard, I would like to highlight that 2015 resolution titled Revitalizing the Work of the General Assembly is a step in the right direction. For the first time since the establishment of the UN, there is a clear call for transparency in the process of selection of Secretary-General. Strengthening the General Assembly and its decision-making process will lead in the process to a more representative and democratic UN system.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The recommendations put forward by last year’s reviews tackle extremely important reforms. I would like to commend the emphasis placed by the
High Level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations on the “primacy of politics”. As we discussed in the Arab High-Level Workshop, organized by the Cairo Center for Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping in Africa in March 2016, this should mean a shift from “conflict management” to “conflict resolution” as the guiding rationale for all UN peacekeeping and special political missions. Failure to do so would result in protracted conflict, as we saw in Palestine and as we see today in Syria.

I would also like to highlight the emphasis placed by the reviews on partnerships, especially between the UN and regional organizations. On one hand, the partnership between the UN and the African Union must enter a new phase towards a strategic partnership, where the UN supports African plans, most notably Agenda 2063 and its leading initiative to silence the guns by 2020. On the other hand, the UN and the League of Arab States, should seek explore avenues for further cooperation and coordination.

I thank you, and the President of the General Assembly, for this opportunity, and I look forward to our discussions.