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UN’s development work must heed calls of the most vulnerable, says Republic of Korea’s Foreign Minister

22 September – Noting that the 2016 is the first year for the United Nations to implement the historic 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea underscored that the role of the global organization is more crucial than ever in an increasingly interconnected and complex world.

“In order to address this multi-layered equation in a sustainable way,” Minister Yun Byung-se said: “The UN should heed calls for inclusive multilateralism [through] multilateral efforts to include the vulnerable, the isolated and the ‘unempowered.’”

Sharing his own country’s experiences, which could be beneficial for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), he said outlined the country’s programmes in the education, women empowerment, science and technology, and rural development.

He also informed the General Assembly that his Government is taking steps to complete ratification of the Paris
Agreement during 2016.

The Minister also underscored that peace, in the fullest sense, can be achieved only when peace and security, development and human rights are advanced together, and he stressed that conflict prevention should be mainstreamed in all UN activities.

Turning to conflicts in different parts of the world, he noted that a signals of looming strife are violations of human rights and the spread of violent extremism and terrorism, and urged world leaders for a holistic, inclusive and multi-stakeholder approach to solve multi-faceted challenges related to peace and security.

He said the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) joined the UN 25 years ago, and in the years since, there could be no starker contrast between the two: “[while the Republic of Korea] has successfully achieved the three goals of the UN – peace and security, development and human rights – the DPRK is impoverished, oppressive and increasingly trigger-happy.”

The Minister explained that this was because of DPRK’s “fanatical and reckless pursuit” of nuclear and missile programmes and added that the country’s recent nuclear tests show that its relevant activities have neared “the tipping point,” with the country now threatening the actual use of those weapons.

Calling for action to address the situation, he urged the international community’s human rights mechanisms to take more robust measures amid the violations in the country, underlined the need to sharpen global focus on DPRK’s “so-called state-sponsored forced labour abroad,” and stressed greater attention to the yearnings of DPRK’s people for freedom and human dignity.

Concluding his address, the Foreign Minister hailed the leadership of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and expressed his confidence that the next UN chief would continue to make the global organization more efficient and stronger by building on Mr. Ban’s legacy.

Guatemala’s President at UN debate, pledges open government, zero-tolerance for corruption

22 September – Addressing the United Nations General Assembly today, the President of Guatemala, Jimmy Morales, voiced his commitment to fight the corruption that weakens institutions.

“Regarding transparency, we are committed to a zero tolerance for corruption and, to that end, open government has become one of the fundamental pillars of our administration,” Mr. Morales told the Assembly’s annual debate.

The election of the new Government was an expression of the discontent among the population, he said, stressing that a reconstruction of society is required, and transparency in governance, healthcare, education and development needs to be improved.

He explained that corruption has weakened the country’s institutions and hampered development. The Government has made primary education and the effective management of hospitals, nutrition and maternal health top priorities.

However, he said, challenges in the areas of human rights and tackling climate change remain. His Government seeks to engage further with the UN Human Rights Council to address relevant issues.

He went on to express his profound admiration for migrants in Guatemala and their hard work. “They are unsung heroes, model citizens in every part of the world who have rights and a greater human dignity,” he said, noting that the Government
is adamant about their protection during all stages of migration.

With regard to the 2030 Agenda, he noted that it is in line with the country’s 2032 K’atun National Development Plan.

He also called for strengthened international dialogue and cooperation to prevent future conflicts in the region, stressing the need to maintain peace and strengthen the rule of law. Guatemala will continue to support UN peacekeeping missions worldwide and remains concerned about the ongoing conflicts in Syria, Mali and Sudan, he said.

**Papua New Guinea decries lack of democracy, female representation in UN bodies**

*22 September* – Calling for reform of United Nations institutions, Papua New Guinea today deplored from the General Assembly podium the lack of democratic principles shown by the pre-eminence of the 15-member Security Council over the 193-member Assembly.

“The international community is all too familiar with the constant and increasing calls by UN Member States and other stakeholders to reform the UN system, including the Security Council, to reflect today's global circumstances,” Foreign Minister Rimbink Pato told the Assembly’s annual General Debate.

“Whilst Papua New Guinea recognizes that changes in any institution are never easy, we remain concerned with the slow and incremental pace of the reforms of the United Nations,” where developing countries have for years been seeking to increase Council membership and counter veto powers held by its five permanent members – China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

“With respect to the Security Council, whilst we welcome the incremental progress made this past year, we have however, witnessed in the process of the selection of the next Secretary-General […] over the past few months, the unjust and archaic procedures and processes that render the majority of UN sovereign member States unequal in the premier multilateral forum that espouses sovereign equality.”

Although in an innovation this year candidates for the next Secretary-General, who will take office on 1 January 2017, have appeared before the Assembly for questioning, final selection remains with the Security Council, which will then forward the name to the Assembly for ratification.

Mr. Pinto also decried “another glaring unfair practice in the existing UN system,” the underrepresentation of qualified women at the senior management level. “The UN must not merely preach about gender equality and empowerment but be seen to be exercising and implementing what it advocates,” he stressed.
Migration challenges must be met with ‘conviction and compassion,’ Prime Minister of Malta tells UN

22 September – Highlighting the magnitude of the refugee and migration crisis, the Prime Minister of Malta said that the outcomes of the recent United Nations Summit for Refugees and Migrants will provide impetus to the work on addressing this challenge, the likes of which the world has not seen since World War II.

“We need to respond to this challenge, not with fear, not with dread, not by closing ourselves within walls. But with tenacity, conviction and compassion,” said Prime Minister Joseph Muscat in his address to the General Assembly today.

“This is what drives my country time and again to push for migration to be high on the agenda,” he added, emphasizing that Malta has been working tirelessly to address the concerns and challenges being presented.

He further called for stepping up sharing of information, improved implementation of national enforcement policies and stronger penalties to punish human traffickers and smugglers, whom he equated to the worst category of criminals, to effectively address this challenge.

The Prime Minister of Malta also stressed that this solution needs a collective approach and a global perspective, and highlighted that closer cooperation is essential for and among the countries of origin, transit and destination.

Noting that the threat of terrorism continues to loom over countries and innocent civilians, he added: “No religion and no discrimination can ever be a defensible cause for maiming, terrorising, and killing others.”

Prime Minister Muscat underscored his country’s belief that UN is central in the global fight against terrorism and said that as host to the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law, Malta believes that the most effective way to counter terrorism is by empowering the rule of law and strengthening the judiciary in the States where such activity is gaining ground.

He further noted that Malta is deeply committed to Euro-Mediterranean dialogue and cooperation and there can be no peace and security in Europe without peace and security in the Mediterranean. He added that this would be the vision that will drive its Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2017.

In conclusion, Mr. Muscat said that in spite of the atrocities the world has witnessed this past year, the international community must continue to hold on to the principles peace and security, development and human rights.

“We must not allow fear to be the driving and at times paralyzing force. And we must continue to keep in mind the larger picture: to recognize that our diversity is our strength; that to understand each other fortifies our progress; and that one people's concerns are collectively our concerns,” he emphasized.
Paraguay’s Foreign Affairs Minister, at UN, urges ‘collective strategies’ to overcome global challenges

22 September – The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Paraguay, Eladio Ramón Loizaga Lezcano, told the United Nations General Assembly this afternoon that we live in a world that is increasingly more complex and interconnected, and in which the international context is continually evolving.

He noted that traditional armed conflicts have practically disappeared, while cowardly acts of terrorism have reached a global scale, characterized by a rise in groups that are each time more cruel and inhumane, and which do not respect fundamental rights and liberties. Added to that are problems of climate change and contamination, which continue to grow, as well as pandemics that threaten the planet, he said.

“These global challenges, which transcend physical boundaries and from which no State can escape, cannot be overcome individually; it is necessary to promote collective strategies with a common responsibility,” Mr. Loizaga said. “Also, we can’t lose sight of other challenges, such as eradicating poverty, fighting inequality and assuring a dignified life to all.”

For its part, the United Nations requires a reform that will bring it up to date and allow it to offer appropriate and effective responses to the complex scenarios the world faces, he said. The General Assembly should be strengthened, as the body represents the highest democratic expression of the nations that comprise it.

“It is the Parliament of the world,” Mr. Loizaga said, adding that the executive branch of the Organization – the Security Council – should also be strengthened.

Turning to his country, the Minister said Paraguay has given a strong impetus to infrastructure and is taking measures to improve the transparency and accountability of public institutions.

In addition, with one of the greatest populations of young persons in Latin America, Paraguay is convinced that it should prepare them for the challenge of continuing to create a better and more just society. For this reason, the Government of Paraguay has instituted a national programme for postgraduate scholarships, he said.
At UN, Greek Prime Minister says economy ‘emerging’; stresses need for refugee management framework

22 September – Addressing the United Nations General Assembly, Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras today stressed the need for a strong international initiative that will establish a new global framework for refugee management.

“Since I last spoke here, over one million migrants entered Greece. Nearly 60,000 migrants remain stranded in Greece today after our northern borders were shut off through unilateral steps of other countries,” Mr. Tsipras told the Assembly’s annual debate, also warning against the rise of xenophobic forces in Europe.

This new framework, he said, must increase support to countries hosting refugees; increase returns for people not in need of international protection and the resettlement and relocation of those in need of it; increase security cooperation against trafficking networks; and increase initiatives to tackle the root causes of migration.

He said that Greece’s economy is now re-emerging, after seven turbulent years of recession, from the deepest social and economic crisis in its post-war history. Greece is working hard to show that a country that has lost 25 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP) in six years and watched unemployment and poverty rates skyrocket, “can stand on its feet.”

It is working hard to create a business-friendly environment that encourages investment and does away with the sins of the old establishment, such as corruption and parasitic business practices. Greece can establish itself as a hub for energy, trade and maritime and railway transportation in the region by taking advantage of its geographic position at the crossroads of three continents.

The country’s efforts are already reflected in the return to positive economic growth rates, the steady downward trend of unemployment, the positive public finance accounts and the revived investment interest from abroad, he said.

Turning to peace and security in the region, he said Greece remains steadfast in its support to intercommunal talks for a just, viable and comprehensive solution to the ‘Cyprus issue’ on the basis of UN resolutions and the status of Cyprus as an EU member State.
Equatorial Guinea’s Foreign Minister urges unity among UN Member States to face ‘complicated world’

22 September – At the UN General Assembly this afternoon, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Equatorial Guinea, Agapito Mba Mokuy, said the world is witnessing an overwhelming and incessant wave of immigrants who are fleeing from conflict zones, particularly in Iraq and Syria, as well as in Africa, towards Europe, in the hope of finding a tranquil area in which to live.

Terrorism continues killing innocent victims in all regions of the world, which is a real threat to the well-being and development of humankind, he said. In addition, he stressed that political instabilities threaten the lives of millions of human beings in many countries, while others suffer as a result of economic crises, malnutrition and poverty.

“In such a complicated world that we live in today, the role of the United Nations is even more essential than ever,” the Foreign Minister said, calling for unity in having a true democratic atmosphere prevail at the Organization to protect the planet, help one another mutually, and work towards universal values.

“In this way, we can strengthen our United Nations and assure a better future for coming generations,” he added.

Turning to progress made in his country, he said that as part of its goal of becoming an emerging country in 2020, the Government of Equatorial Guinea has fully integrated sustainable development objectives in its development programme, entitled “Horizon Programme 2020.”

Under this programme, the Government is prioritizing economic and social transformation, through development and inclusive and sustainable growth, related to modern infrastructure, improved quality of life for citizens, economic diversification, and good governance, he said.

He also congratulated the Government of the United States for re-establishing a dialogue with Cuba.
Kazakhstan at UN Assembly urges cooperation amid 'fragmented' world economy

22 September – Amid the global economic slowdown and new trans-continental trade and investment arrangements that may lead to a fragmented world economy, the international community must seek greater cooperation to safeguard its future, Kazakhstan’s foreign minister warned the United Nations General Assembly today.

“These factors might signal the beginning of a new round of negative and damaging competition between global markets,” Erlan Idrissov told the Assembly’s annual General Debate on its third day.

“The way the global community of nations will evolve in the decades to come will largely depend on our ability to cooperate and find common language,” he said.

He also reaffirmed Kazakhstan’s commitment to strengthening UN peacekeeping capabilities by deploying a company-size unit to peacekeeping operations.

Mr. Idrassov is among the many leaders who will address the general debate of 71st General Assembly which opened this year with the adoption of the New York Declaration as the outcome of yesterday's first-ever UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants. Made up of all the 193 Member States of the United Nations, the Assembly provides a forum for multilateral discussion of international issues covered by the UN Charter.

Political accord remains key to resolving crisis in Libya, Presidency Council Chair tells UN Assembly

22 September – The Chairman of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord of Libya, Mustafa Faiez Serraj, told the United Nations General Assembly today that the political agreement signed by the Libyan parties remains the solution to the current crisis in the North African country.

He said the situation in Libya is of interest to the entire world and the country is grateful for all the assistance it has received to get through this difficult period. To unify the State, he recalled the importance of the separation of powers. Efforts had been made to bring together the voices of the country.

“The Government will continue peaceful dialogue and cooperation and thanked all international partners for their support,” Mr. Serraj said, adding that adequate financial resources are needed to achieve peace and unity. Libya remains committed to strengthen cooperation and dialogue and would welcome the re-establishment of diplomatic missions in the country, he added.

"We are aware of the security concerns, but we are serious about the restoration of security in the country," he said, and all appealed to all Libyans: "Come join us, those of you who believe in a strong State with a strong army that will defend you of any aggressors."
Regarding the fight against terrorism, the President condemned the scourge, including Da’esh [also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, or ISIL], which aims to exploit the country’s natural resources. He added that it is necessary to mobilize efforts and cooperate to fight effectively against terrorism. In this regard, he requested the lifting of the arms embargo on Libya.

Regarding the issue of human rights, he said the Libyan Parliament passed various laws to ensure respect for human rights. He warned that the current situation makes it difficult to enforce these rights but this did not prevent the government to lead a fight against impunity campaign.

In his address to the Assembly’s annual general debate, Algerian Foreign Minister Ramtane Lamamra called for urgent UN reform to tackle the multiple challenges now facing it, a cause championed by the Non-Aligned Movement of which Algeria is a long-time member that seeks to expand the 15-member Security Council and overhaul other UN bodies.

“We have to answer a simple question,” he said. “Are the mechanisms conceived in the aftermath of the Second World War at a time when the vast majority humankind still lived under foreign domination, when the political underpinnings and world balance were quite different, still valid today?”

He also called for redoubled efforts to bring peace to Syria, Libya, Yemen, Somalia and other hotspots and for the establishment of a Palestinian state on the territory seized by Israel in 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Turkmenistan, addressing Assembly, urges close cooperation with UN to tackle global challenges

22 September – Outlining the escalation of conflict in different parts of the world, increased militarization and disrespect of international law, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan today called on world leaders to adhere to and collectively advance the principles of United Nations Charter, international conventions and agreements aimed at resolving conflicts.

“The current state of global realities […] objectively require increasingly closer and more coordinated interaction of States and major international organizations for the sake of achieving the common goal – ensuring international peace and security and preserving legal and institutional frameworks that form the foundation of today’s world order,” said Minister Rashid Meredov in his address to the General Assembly today.

He underlined that threats to peace and stability, that now transcend national borders, political and ideological doctrines, and terrorism, which falls outside the notions of human morality, are now undermining the entire system of world order, its principles, values and foundations.

“It is precisely for this reason that the fight against it must be carried out universally at the global, regional and national levels taking into account the prevailing situation and specific aspects of the political and social realities,” added Mr. Rashid, noting that Turkmenistan continues to advocate for implementation of relevant international, regional and global agenda on these matters.

Emphasizing that the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) last year is a common achievement and now its implementation, a common responsibility, he noted that Turkmenistan, jointly with the UN Development Programme and other UN entities, has developed appropriate indicators that will be used for the elaboration of the country’s national plans.

In his address, he also highlighted the importance of the Paris Agreement on climate change and suggested that a special conference, under the auspices of the UN, that will be dedicated to measures for improving environmental situation in Central Asia be held next year.
He further noted that in after assuming the chair of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, Turkmenistan will discuss with other regional countries and UN agencies means to advance the agenda.

In conclusion, the Minister reaffirmed Turkmenistan’s commitment to continue to cooperate with the UN and active involvement in and support for its political and diplomatic efforts to preserve and strengthen global security and in implementing its programmes in the economic, social, environmental, humanitarian and other areas.

**At UN, Cuba cites progress in US relations, but with embargo still in place, ‘there’s a long way to go’**

22 September – Noting that a little more than a year has elapsed since the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States and while “some progress” has been achieved in bilateral relations, the decades-old economic blockade against Cuba is still in force, and “there is still there is still a long way ahead in order to move towards the normalization of relations,” Cuba’s Foreign Minister told the United Nations General Assembly today.

Bruno Eduardo Rodríguez Parrilla particularly noted progress in in diplomatic relations, dialogue and cooperation in areas of mutual interest, as evidenced by the high-level visits that have taken place, including by US President Barack Obama.

“However, the blockade is still in force; it continues to cause serious damages and hardships to the Cuban people; and continues to hinder the functioning of our economy and its relations with other countries,” he explained, adding: “The executive measures adopted by the US Government, although positive, are still insufficient.”

Moreover, the recent examples of the economic and financial damages caused by the blockade to Cuba and third countries are numerous. “As long as this continues to happen, we will continue to present to this Assembly the draft resolution entitled ‘Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba,’” he said, reiterating the Cuban Government's willingness to continue developing a respectful dialogue with the US Government, knowing that there is still a long way ahead in order to move towards the normalization of relations.

“[This] means building a new model of bilateral relations in our common history, which could never be forgotten. For this to be possible someday, it will be indispensable that the blockade is lifted. The territory illegally occupied by the US naval base in Guantanamo against Cuba's will, must be returned to our country,” he stressed.

Turning to wider development issues, he said: “The gap between our deliberations and peoples' realities persists. The lack of political will of industrialized States becomes evident. The irrational patterns of consumption and production of capitalism which lead to the destruction of the living conditions in the planet are replicated.”

Indeed, Foreign Minister Rodriguez Parrilla said the huge nuclear and conventional stockpiles and the annual military budget of $1.7 trillion give the lie to those who affirm that there are no resources to eradicate poverty and underdevelopment. “However, there are many arguments that justify the urgency of building a new international financial architecture,” he stressed.

Against such a backdrop, he said the UN must be defended from unilateralism, and at the same time it needs to be reformed into a more democratic organization that is closer to the problems, needs and aspirations of peoples; capable of leading the international system towards peace, sustainable development and the respect of all human rights for all.

With than in mind, he called for, among others, reform of the Security Council, both in terms of its composition and working methods – “a task that should not be put off any longer.” The strengthening of the General Assembly and the restoration of the functions that were usurped by the Council should guide the search for a more democratic and efficient
Serbia continues dialogue on Kosovo, seeks integration into EU, Prime Minister tells UN

22 September – Addressing the United Nations General Assembly, Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic today stressed that his country refuses to recognize the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo and is committed to find a political settlement through the European Union-facilitated dialogue.

“I take this opportunity to underline that national priority of the Republic of Serbia is reaching political solution to the issue of Kosovo and Metohija,” said Mr. Vucic during the Assembly’s annual debate.

By defending its sovereignty and territorial integrity, Serbia defends not only international law, the UN Charter and the supreme authority of the UN Security Council in maintaining international peace and security, but also its national and historical identity, he added.

Unilateral actions seriously threaten to jeopardize international order and serve a cautious tale for other regions facing similar attempts of secession and change of internationally recognized state borders.

Economic and social development cannot be achieved without decisively confronting with security challenges of the modern world, he said, warning that Serbia is located in a region that has strong centres used for affirmation of aggressive ideology of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and other terrorist and extremist organizations, including recruitment and sending foreign terrorist fighters to crisis spots.

“Territory of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija is a particular challenge; foreign terrorist fighters’ phenomenon is very visible there. Observed in percentage compared to the number of inhabitants, Kosovo Albanians are the most represented in [ISIL],” he said.

Serbia gives special importance to activities of the UN Mission in Kosovo and Metohija, he said, underlining the status-neutral presence of the Mission. Creating the conditions for the sustainable return of those displaced from Kosovo and Metohija is a key element of the reconciliation process, he explained.

Unfortunately, he said, even 17 years after the end of conflict and despite many years of the international community’s presence, there are no conditions in Kosovo for undisturbed and sustainable return of internally displaced persons. For the past 17 years, only 1.9 per cent managed to achieve sustainable return, and there are still about 204,000 displaced persons within Serbia, he added.

Serbia will continue the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina in the interest of regional stability and better Serbian-Albanian relations, he stressed.

Serbia attaches a significant importance to implementation of the 2030 Agenda and has formed interdepartmental working group in charge of implementation of the Agenda, and will start the process of updating national sustainable development strategy and its financing. Serbia is carrying out a series of reforms with an eye toward integration into the European Union, he said.
'World is at a crossroads,' President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia tells UN

22 September – The world is at a crossroads of numerous crises, with the international community having entered a phase of fundamental changes in the global order and being faced with transformations that are both hard to stop and to control, the President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Gjorge Ivanov, told the United Nations General Assembly today.

“The centrifugal forces of globalization are bringing into question the order established after the Second World War. And along with that order, we redefine its values and principles,” Mr. Ivanov said.

“If we are to describe the current situation in the world today with one word only, it would be instability,” he added.

Since the very beginning of this millennium, the world has been in an open fight against global terrorism, Mr. Ivanov continued. For its part, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is part of the coalition that destroyed many terrorist cells and won a lot of battles in the past 15 years, but has not yet won the war against terror.

“In order to win the fight against terrorism, the sole use of military troops is not enough. It is necessary to fight using ideas; to oppose radicalization with counter-radicalization programmes,” he said.

On the other hand, he said, a new reality is looming on the European horizon. Under the pressure of the financial and debt crisis, the social and political seams holding the European Union (EU) together are slowly beginning to rip. By wiping away internal borders without securing its corridors in the process, the EU is now unable to protect its external borders, and today faces two key challenges – a migration crisis and the threat of terrorism, Mr. Ivanov said.

Moreover, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, an independent country for 25 years, has been facing continuous and direct threats from territories of Member States of the EU and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), or countries under UN administration, he said.

“On our path towards international recognition and integration, we faced many blockades and suffered many damages. We even faced denial of the right to self-identification of Macedonian citizens, without which there is no integrity of human persona, or human dignity,” Mr. Ivanov said. Due to that issue, his country is still blocked from joining international organizations such as NATO and the EU, he stressed.

Mr. Ivanov also discussed the election of a new UN Secretary-General, recalling that his country has nominated the former President of the General Assembly, Srgjan Kerim, for the position.

Expressing appreciation for the efforts in making the election process transparent, Mr. Ivanov reiterated the hope that the new Secretary-General will be elected from the ranks of the Eastern European group of countries.

On the issue of the reform of the UN system, Mr. Ivanov noted that while the Organization represents all countries, “with all their differences,” when making compromises, it is necessary to be careful not to compromise fundamental values, freedoms and vision, as written in both the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
Mr. Ivanov also said that the whole Balkan region is in stagnation, and there is a great need for cooperation and integration. Differences have to be overcome through dialogue and negotiations. Next year, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia plans to host the Brdo-Brijuni Process to enhance regional cooperation, he said.

**UN 2030 Agenda and climate accord must ‘transform peoples’ lives’– Rwandan President**

22 September – Recalling that over the past year, the United Nations concluded landmark agreements on sustainable development and climate change, and renewed its commitment to work together to combat violent extremism, Paul Kagame, the President of Rwanda to the General Assembly today that these are the most serious issues before the international community “and our efforts offer the prospect of transforming our world as a whole, rather than just part of it.”

“The world is changing for the better,” he continued. The preservation of international peace and security depends on maintaining a shared vision of the desired outcomes for the world. This accounts for the continued relevance and durability of the UN. The international community’s collective responsibility for the rights and welfare of refugees and immigrants needed to be seen in that light, and the issue needed to be addressed with consistency and compassion at all times.

The international community could stay on course if it recognized that the ultimate purpose of all these efforts is to transform the lives of real people by enhancing their well-being, safety, and access to opportunity. Member States should also realize the importance on building on lessons learned, especially ensuring that such goals and targets are inclusive, particularly of women. “If they are not reaching their potential then none of us are,” President Kagame said, expressing pride that he has joined the HeForShe campaign and encouraged others to support it.

He went on to stress that access to technology must be part of the strategy for achieving all the global goals, he said. Everyone in the world needs access to high speed Internet. Rwanda has seen the importance of forging meaningful partnerships with the private sector to improve the speed and scale of delivery. Rwanda was pleased to host the new Sustainable Development Government Centre for Africa.

Real continuity between the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the other frameworks that guides the international community’s collective action is necessary, he stressed. “These agreements are not slogans or fashions, but hard-won statements of global consensus,” he added.

Next month, more than 1,000 delegates would gather in the Rwandan capital, Kigali, to consider a ground-breaking amendment to the Montreal Protocol to phase out hydrofluorocarbons, a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. Already one of the most successful international agreements, the 30-year old Montreal Protocol now affords the international community the opportunity to take a significant step forward in implementing the one-year-old Paris Agreement on climate change. Rwanda urged all Member States to join it in passing those important measures.

Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, addresses the general debate of the General Assembly’s seventy-first session. UN Photo/Cia Pak
Angolan Vice-President calls for urgent UN reforms to keep Security Council’s credibility from ‘crumbling’

22 September – Addressing the United Nations General Assembly, the Vice-President of Angola today underlined the urgency of reforming the global Organization, in particular the Security Council, to strengthen the UN’s capability in promoting international peace and security, and to increase its ability to respond quickly in conflicts and challenges.

“Reforming the Council is not merely optional but an imperative which, if not carried out, may hinder the United Nation’s ability to act and cause its legitimacy and credibility to crumble,” stressed Manuel Domingos Vicente.

Angola, he continued, favours increasing the number of both the Council’s permanent and non-permanent members in order to make it more representative. He emphasized that the African continent should be represented among the permanent members.

Further noting that his country, as the current President of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, has been working to address the problems of the vast region, he reaffirmed Angola’s determination to continue to support and promote dialogue, peace, stability and stability in Central Africa and throughout the Great Lakes.

Turning to issues of wider concern, he drew attention to conflicts in the Middle East and said that the instability there, together with the threat of terrorism are major challenges to the international community, as illustrated by the “heart-breaking reality” of forced displacement and called on world leaders to find an urgent solution.

In his address, Vice-President Domingos Vicente said Angola is firmly committed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through adoption of appropriate and comprehensive measures at the national level.

He also underlined the importance of the Paris Agreement on climate change and encouraged its early entry into force, and also highlighted that Angola remains committed to the women, peace and security agenda, to peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

In conclusion, Mr. Domingos Vicente said: “The challenges are greater today as a result of the uncertainty of prices for raw materials in the international market, but we continue to work to adjust our plans of action, as well as to find pathways to economic growth and improve the lives of our people.”
West African nations committed to fighting terrorism in subregion, Liberian President tells UN

22 September – Noting that the United Nations General Assembly is taking place at a time when there is escalation of conflicts engulfing millions of people in many parts of the world, Liberia’s President today stressed that West African States are collectively demonstrating their commitment and preparedness to combat terrorism affecting the subregion.

“The current state of our world, conditioned by the realities of insecurity, requires collective concerted action to avoid unacceptable levels of deprivation, poverty and human suffering,” President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf told the Assembly’s annual debate.

“At our subregional level, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has demonstrated its commitment and preparedness to combat terrorism in Mali, Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Nigeria and other parts of the subregion, with valued support from partners in the international community,” she added.

She expressed optimism about the regional initiatives and collaborations at the levels of the African Union (AU), ECOWAS and the UN aimed at helping to consolidate peace and security on the African continent.

The ECOWAS initiative to bring peace to Guinea Bissau; the AU efforts in Mali and South Sudan, and the Great Lake Chad Basin force that is combating Boko Haram and other terrorist groups in the that area show progress and demonstrate the relevance of regional solidarity, she said.

With a view to strengthening peace and security within ECOWAS, countries in the subregion emphasized the fight against organized crime, especially cross-border trade in illicit small arms and light weapons, drug and human trafficking, and piracy, she said.

She expressed her determination, as the Chair of ECOWAS, to continue efforts for the realization of integration, through infrastructure development, trade and investment, natural resource management, food security, and peace and security.

Turning to a civil conflict that ended in 2003, she said the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has helped the country institute and then consolidate security, peacebuilding efforts and governance gains in the country.

The drawdown plan of UNMIL was successfully executed on 30 June 2016, when Liberian security agencies assumed full responsibility for the security of the nation and its people, she reported.

Liberia has embarked on the process of domesticating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through robust nationwide consultations and dialogues with major stakeholders including the legislature, executive, the judiciary, the private sector, civil society, and faith-based organizations, she said. With UN partners, Liberia is formulating a roadmap to achieve full integration of these Global Goals into its national development agenda. Its democracy, stalled by years of conflict, stands firm as the country marches toward presidential and legislative elections in 2017, she added.
Small island nations urge UN General Assembly to act to save their very existence

22 September – Leaders of low-lying island States threatened with being flooded out of existence by rising seas again took to the podium of the United Nations General Assembly today to appeal for urgent action even as the Paris Agreement moves forward to counter climate change.

“The futures of the most vulnerable, like my people and my country, are at stake,” President Taneti Maamau of Kiribati told the Assembly’s annual general debate on its third day. “We need a major change of global mind-set, a major change in global development pathways, and a major global change in ways we do business.

“We must do this in order to secure the future of my people, and those sharing the same fate, and to ensure that we are not left behind,” he stressed.

He noted that in some parts of Kiribati, whole villages had to relocate due to severe coastal erosion and flooding, while crops have been destroyed and fresh water is increasingly contaminated by the intruding sea.

“We call for urgent assistance from our UN family and for UN family members to look into their hearts and help us address this looming life threatening issue at the earliest; an issue that cannot wait for the Paris Agreement ratification process to happen,” he said of the accord reached last December to reduce global warming emissions and take other mitigating measures.

“This is an opportunity for us as leaders to push for the early entry into force of the Paris Agreement and transform our world for our generation and, more importantly, for future generations. This is an opportunity for us to take care of each other. And we must do it together, as a family.”

President Hilda Heine of the Marshall Islands noted that the Paris Agreement shows the international spirit of cooperation and inter-dependency. “I used to be a teacher. So I implore those of you who have not ratified the Paris Agreement to do so as your next homework from this week! It is imperative that Paris enter into force this year.

“Of course, I know that Paris is not perfect. We need to do more to increase ambition on mitigation, on adaptation and on finance. We must take every opportunity we can to stay below 1.5 degree limit needed for our survival.”

Turning to her own country’s development efforts, she stressed the role of education and other steps to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that seek to end poverty, hunger and a host of other social ills by 2030.

“Our own national growth and well-being must be driven by a commitment to improve delivery on basic social development, our health, food supply and environment, especially targeting the most vulnerable groups in our islands,” she said, noting that the Marshall Islands has the highest rates of diabetes in the world.

“It is a national crisis and our consumption of sugary food and beverages is literally killing us,” she added.
Côte d’Ivoire leader urges donors to respect development commitments to ensure ‘no one is left behind’

22 September – Emphasizing his country’s economic health, Alassane Ouattara, the President of Côte d’Ivoire, told the United Nations General Assembly today that it will mobilize the necessary resources to implement Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and announced that his country would deposit the instruments of ratification of the Paris Agreement on climate change before the end of the year.

"We must [press ahead] with implementation the Sustainable Development Agenda for the next 15 years," he told delegations attending the Assembly’s annual debate.

“We must win the fight against abject poverty and suffering to spare humanity the dramatic consequences” should the latest globally agreed framework fail, he said, calling on developed countries to fulfil their commitments to developing countries towards the achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development.

Turning to other issues, Mr. Ouattara said the Security Council and main stakeholders must do more to end suffering in Syria, the wider Middle East, South Sudan and Mali. The Council, with its present configuration and working methods, could not effectively resolve conflicts. He urged reform in order to bolster its legitimacy. Côte d’Ivoire had experienced an attack in Grand-Bassam, a reminder that no country alone could end terrorism, and the UN must coordinate efforts to combat that scourge.

Without such support, developing countries would have to invest resources in national security, and away from social programmes, with serious consequences for their populations, he pointed out. Worsening security in many countries has increased migratory flows; fear and isolation are not an appropriate response. Overall, there is a need for solidarity in tackling the root causes of that phenomenon.

President Ouattara said countries of origin must do more to improve living conditions and create peace for their citizens. For its part, Côte d’Ivoire continued to modernize its institutions and maintain an annual nine per cent growth rate, enabling it to establish social and economic infrastructure.

“Côte d’Ivoire lives in peace,” he said, recalling that the country organized presidential elections in 2015, and would soon renew the mandates of parliamentarians and vote on a new draft Constitution. Amid such progress, the Security Council this year lifted sanctions imposed in 2004. In June 2017, the UN Operation in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI) would leave the country after 12 years. His Government was proud of those developments.
Holy See calls on international community to ensure UN sustainability agenda has ‘human face’

22 September – Recalling Pope Francis’ message to the General Assembly, last year, where he defined the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as an important sign of hope, Pietro Parolin, Observer of the Holy See, said that the Pope reiterated his appreciation for the actions taken by the United Nations and encouraged all to put these ambitious objectives into practice.

“The protection of our common home requires a growing global political consensus,” said Mr. Parolin in his remarks to the General Assembly and added: “Now governments are obliged to honour the commitments they made, while businesses must also responsibly do their part. It is up to citizens to insist that this happen, and indeed to advocate for even more ambitious goals.”

Emphasizing to conflict is not only one of the biggest challenges to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Mr. Parolin, who is the Holy See’s Secretary of State, said that these also destroy human resources, means of production and cultural heritage.

He also drew attention to the fact that terrorism is also a major threat that degrades social coexistence in countries and undermines the whole international community and said that it also transcends national boundaries, underscoring that “Neighbours [of] Syria and Iraq have increasingly become victims of innumerable barbaric acts. Beyond the Middle East, atrocious acts of terrorism have instilled fear in the daily life of so many across the globe.”

Underlining that while the need and urgency of ceasefires, respecting the dignity and rights of affected people, and access to humanitarian aid are important, it is equally important to facilitate negotiation with those who have direct or indirect responsibility for particular conflicts.

Hailing the recent peace agreement in Colombia, he said the Holy See hopes that “through the facilitation of the international community, various forms of contact and dialogue will be pursued to resolve ongoing conflicts.”

Turning to the urgent issue of migrants and refugees around the world, he said that in addition to looking at solutions to resolve the causes of mass population movements, the international community must also note that migration and development are tightly linked.

In conclusion, he also informed the General Assembly that Pope Francis recently instituted a new Dicastery (department) of the Holy See to promote justice, peace, the safeguarding of the environment, and the care of those most in need.

“The poor and needy are the human face of the sustainable development that we wish to keep ever before us, so that we may become responsible agents of a more just and truly human society,” he said.
Lebanon is ‘not a country of permanent asylum,’ Prime Minister tells UN Assembly

22 September – Lebanon is no longer able to assimilate additional displaced persons, and the United Nations should envision resettling the displaced Syrians within their national borders, the President of Lebanon’s Council of Ministers, Tammam Salam, told the UN General Assembly today.

“We stress once again the temporary character of the Syrian presence in Lebanon, and we declare that our country is not a country of permanent asylum and that it is a final homeland for the Lebanese only,” said Mr. Salam during the Assembly’s annual debate.

He said that Lebanon hosts displaced Syrians that equal in number one third of its population, with limited domestic resources and with insufficient international assistance. Indeed, Lebanon has been disappointed at the level of international response to its needs as a host country.

The UN should set up an overall vision to resettle the displaced Syrians inside their borders and work with the concerned parties to turn this vision into a workable plan as soon as possible, he said.

On the domestic political situation, he said that Lebanon is undergoing a severe crisis due to the inability of the Parliament to elect a president for more than two and a half years. This led to a “quasi-paralysis” of the legislative authority, slowed down the work of the executive branch, and negatively affected the economy.

Noting that this year marks the 10th anniversary of UN Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), which secured a ceasefire in the Israeli-Hezbollah war, he reiterated the country’s call for the international community to compel Israel to halt its violations of the Lebanese sovereignty and withdraw from the northern part of Al Ghajar village, the Shebaa farms, and the hills of Kfarshuba.

On 30 August, the Security Council unanimously extended the mandate of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for one year, expressing concern at the limited progress made towards a permanent ceasefire, a decade after the adoption of resolution 1701.

Originally established in 1978, UNIFIL was greatly reinforced after the 2006 fighting to oversee the cessation of hostilities between the two sides. It is tasked with ensuring that the area between the so-called ‘Blue Line’ – separating Israel and Lebanon – and the Litani River is free of unauthorized weapons, personnel and assets. It also cooperates with the Lebanese Armed Forces so they can fulfil their security responsibilities.
Madagascar leader spotlights universality of 2030 Agenda in UN Assembly speech

22 September – Addressing the leader’s debate at the United Nations General Assembly, the President of Madagascar today underlined the need to take the commitments made in 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development and the Paris Agreement on climate change into practice.

Highlighting that these global development agreements apply to all countries, President Hery Martial Rajaonarimampianina Rakotoarimanana said, “[These] goals are universal, they target all countries.”

“A sustainable world only can be achieved with ecological transitions in the North and responsible development in the South,” he added referring to the developed and the developing countries.

Reporting that his country is integrating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into its national development plan, he noted the national agenda accords particular importance to social justice, education and health.

Underscoring the importance of young people to realizing the benefits of the 2030 Agenda, the President called for collective dynamic movement of all countries to assist each other in supporting developing polices for young people so that they can fully contribute to peace and development.

He also pointed out that promoting gender equality and protecting the rights of women and girls are a major priority for the island nation, and he informed the General Assembly about reforms to the national legal framework, and also noted national efforts to protect the rights of persons with disabilities.

Further highlighting the particular importance of the Paris Agreement for Madagascar, especially as the country continues to suffer the effects of climate change, he called on the global community to adopt “responsible development” practices that preserve the environment such as moving away from the expensive polluting sources of energy which are dangerous for the common environment.

Noting investment opportunities in the country, he called for support from the international community and the private sector in Madagascar’s electricity production and renovation and upgrading its water infrastructure.

“If we wish to breathe new life into our planet for future generations, we must be successful in the transition to new kinds of energy at the national and global levels,” he said.

Further noting that foreign direct investment and official development assistance (ODA) should be well managed and channelled to support the implementation of the SDGs, he invited other countries and partners to attend a donor conference in to be held in Paris that aims to mobilize resources for the country’s development programme.

In conclusion, the President emphasized that he is firmly convinced that the UN embodies a universal conscience and respect for international order and said that it is important to respect and follow-through on the commitments made at the global body.
At UN, Israel’s Netanyahu says conflict is ‘not about settlements’ but existence of a Jewish State

22 September – The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has never been about settlements, or about establishing a Palestinian state, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told the United Nations General Assembly today, saying “it’s always been about the existence of a Jewish State […] in any boundary.”

“The state of Israel is ready, I am ready to negotiate all final status, but one thing I will never negotiate is the right to the one and only Jewish state,” he said, inviting Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to speak to the Israeli people at the Knesset in Jerusalem and “gladly” offering to speak to the Palestinian parliament in Ramallah.

Taking the Assembly podium shortly after Mr. Abbas said “Our hand remains outstretched for making peace” but questioned if Israeli leaders desired a true peace free from expansionism, he stressed that “the issue of settlements is a real one” that can and must be resolved in final status negotiations.

But, he said, nearly 70 years after Israel’s rebirth the Palestinians still refuse to recognize its rights – “not our right to a homeland, not our right to a state, not our right to anything. And this remains the true core of the conflict, the persistent Palestinian refusal to recognize the Jewish state in any boundary. You see, this conflict is not about the settlements. It never was,” he said.

“When the Palestinians finally say ‘yes’ to a Jewish State, we will be able to end this conflict once and for all, because, see, the Palestinians are not only trapped in the past, their leaders are poisoning the future,” he added, accusing them of brainwashing their children, with officials calling on them “to slit the throats of Israelis wherever you find them,” he said.

Mr. Netanyahu quoted Mr. Abbas himself as saying “We welcome every drop of blood spilled in Jerusalem,” and quoted senior Palestinian official Jibril Rajoub as saying that if he had a nuclear bomb, he’d detonate it over Israel.

“This conflict rages because for the Palestinians, the real settlements they’re after are Haifa, Jaffa and Tel Aviv,” he declared. “So I call on President Abbas: you have a choice to make. You can continue to stoke hatred as you did today or you can finally confront hatred and work with me to establish peace between our two peoples.”

Mr. Netanyahu saved some of his most scathing attacks for UN bodies which he accused of constant bias, conjuring up the image of their waging virtual war against Israel. “I have one message for you today: Lay down your arms,” he said.

“The UN, begun as a moral force, has become a moral farce,” he declared, citing “the disgrace” of the General Assembly which last year passed 20 resolutions against Israel and just three against all the other countries.

“And what about the joke called the UN Human Rights Council, which each year condemns Israel more than all the countries of the world combined. As women are being systematically raped, murdered, sold into slavery across the world, which is the only country that the UN’s Commission on Women chose to condemn this year?,” he said.

“Yep, you guessed it – Israel. Israel where women fly fighter jets, lead major corporations, head universities, preside – twice – over the Supreme Court, and have served as Speaker of the Knesset and Prime Minister,” he continued.

“And this circus continues at UNESCO. UNESCO, the UN body charged with preserving world heritage. Now, this is hard
to believe but UNESCO just denied the 4,000 year connection between the Jewish people and its holiest site, the Temple Mount. That’s just as absurd as denying the connection between the Great Wall of China and China,” said Mr. Netanyahu.

But he said he was very optimistic about Israel’s “bright future” at the UN because all this negativity was quickly ending as more and more nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America see Israel as a potent partner in fighting the terrorism of today and developing the technology of tomorrow in agriculture, health, water, cyber and the fusion of big data, connectivity and artificial intelligence.

**Serious global collaboration needed in war on terrorism, Iraqi premier tells UN Assembly**

22 September – Taking the podium of the United Nations General Assembly to declare that most of the land seized by Islamist extremists has been recaptured, Iraqi Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi today appealed to the international community for more aid to re-integrate those displaced and greater cooperation in the war on terrorism.

“Currently we are heading towards liberating Nineveh, the last province remaining under Daesh (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant), from which we regained major areas and we shall complete its liberation by the end of this year,” he told the Assembly’s annual general debate.

“Assisted by our friends in the international community, we started to implement programs for the return of internally displaced people (IDPs) to their liberated areas, where we developed an integrated program for re-stabilization and service provision, particularly water, electricity, schools and hospitals.

“We call on the international community to maintain further their support for the sheltering and return of IDPs, especially, with the forthcoming battle to fully liberate Nineveh and the anticipated increase of displaced persons,” he said.

He praised UN for helping to address IDP issues and the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other international organizations for shoring up Government economic reforms, citing the reduction of expenditure despite the costs of the war against terrorism, the restructuring of state institutions to prioritize citizen services and ease investment, and fight against corruption.

“We look forward to the day when Iraq and the whole region is free of Da’esh [also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant],” Mr. Abadi said. “Nevertheless, our delight would come true only when the whole World becomes free from terrorism that threatens our peoples and nations. This requires serious collaboration to besiege terrorism, dry out its ideological and financial resources, and demolish its networks and recruitment hubs which are all over the world.

“Without such co-operation, terrorism would reach everywhere and refugees fleeing conflict areas would increase in numbers, which has already reached serious and unprecedented levels, he added.”
At UN, European leaders stress importance of international cooperation to tackle global challenges

22 September – Emphasizing in an address to the United Nations today the magnitude of the challenges confronting the world, the Prime Minister of Norway underlined that effective international cooperation is essential to address poverty, conflicts, climate change, migration and terrorism.

In her address to the UN General Assembly, Prime Minister Erna Solberg further noted that in today's interconnected world, instability in the Middle East and North Africa is causing widespread human suffering and also leading to violent extremism in Europe.

“The response should not be to isolate ourselves, but to cooperate and find solutions,” Prime Minister Solberg said, adding that Norway will continue to provide assistance to the countries in need.

Emphasizing that the humanitarian situation in Syria “simply cannot be tolerated,” she called on global and regional powers to act to secure an enduring ceasefire and ensure that humanitarians have urgent access.

She also called for strengthening the capability of the UN to help countries emerging from conflict, and said the international community has a clear responsibility to fight terrorism and prevent violent extremism. “In order to do so, we need to work closely with civil society, women, young people, faith leaders, and with local communities,” she noted.

Ms. Solberg further said that the need to translate the UN women, peace and security agenda into more effective action on the ground and stressed that sexual exploitation and abuse must stop, calling for zero tolerance and firm action by the UN.

She also called for adequate resources for UN peacekeepers, development workers and humanitarian workers and said that Norway would continue to do its part.

Turning to the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), she said that the global development goals are not only ground breaking but also provide a roadmap for attain the future we want.

“The SDGs are all about building inclusive societies, inclusive societies reform better,” she said, underlining that the rights to education and health are imperative in this regard.

Placing particular emphasis on education of girls, she added: “When girls go to school and get an education, this is not only their fundamental right, it is also good for the economy,” and said that global education will continue to be the top priority of Norway's development policy, as would its efforts to strengthen epidemic preparedness and global health security.

She also underlined the growing threat of antimicrobial resistance that is making vaccines and conventional medical treatment increasingly ineffective, she expressed: “If we do not act, we could reach a stage where common infections are once again deadly.”

In her address, the Norwegian leader also underlined the importance of the Paris Agreement on climate change, adopted last year, and called for effective and concerted action to bring down emissions and to meet the ambitious objectives that we have set.

She also spoke of her country's support for reform of UN peace operations and called for promoting an independent and
credible UN that can play a uniting and leading role in the world.

Dutch Foreign Minister Bert Koenders stressed that for all its failings, with geopolitical fault lines deepening, growth stagnating, inequality growing, refugees surging worldwide, and new wars breaking out, the UN, as “the best imperfect global organisation we have” is still the best hope for producing a better world.

“I realize that the UN is often seen as a helpless, fragmented and overwhelmed organization that is struggling to cope with the challenges it faces,” he told the Assembly. “And yet, the UN has no choice but to play a key role in delivering solutions, now and in the future. To make the world safer, more just and better prepared for what the future brings.

“Because there is no alternative. The UN is the best imperfect global organization we have. The only global organisation that embodies the principles of multilateralism: legitimacy, universality and norm-setting authority. An organisation that has not only convening power, but also the ability to deliver services on a global scale,” he said.

He called for reforms, including enlarging the 15-member Security Council to reflect the realities of the world, and warned that the vetoes held by China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and United States should not render the Council powerless, especially when mass atrocities are being committed.

Bulgarian President Rosen Plevneliev called for active reform to strengthen the UN as it faces a host of crises from achieving the SDGs and coping with record refugee flows to ending the bloodshed in Syria and combatting terrorism.

“The United Nations has a crucial role to play in addressing these challenges. Our crisis management efforts require a holistic UN response, preventive diplomacy, mediation, peace-building, resilience and reconciliation,” he said.

“It is widely recognized that the UN must change and adapt to the new realities. We need an Organization that is properly equipped to meet new challenges and is responsive to ever-growing needs. Strengthening transparency, coherence and cost-efficiency of the UN system is of paramount importance.”

Mr. Plevneliev stressed that bringing back peace and reconciliation to Syria can only be achieved through a Syrian-led political process involving an inclusive transition and underlined the important UN role in coordinating comprehensive counter-terrorism actions.

He also urged ensuring equal opportunities for women in gaining access to senior decision-making positions, including that of Secretary-General, adding that with UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Director-General Irina Bokova his own country has “a very strong candidate, a true leader with extensive experience in international relations and excellent management skills.

“A candidate who deserves your trust and support,” he concluded.

In his remarks, Serge Telle, Minister of State of Monaco, said the world would see a steep rise in climate-induced migration in the coming decades. In 2015, the number of climate refugees fleeing damaged ecosystems could increase to as many as 250 million, according to projections by the UN. “This issue is of monumental importance to Monaco and one of the reasons behind the State’s engagement in the 2030 Agenda and in the Paris Agreement, which we will ratify by the end of 2016,” he stated.

Although Monaco is responsible for a small portion of global emissions, the country has the ambition to be a leader in energy innovation, he said. Monaco also has committed to reduce greenhouse emissions by 50 per cent in the year 2030 (from 1990 levels). Those transitions have a cost, but his country is convinced the price for a greener world was “minimal compared to the cost of non-action”. In line with its support for green environmental policy, Monaco remained a loyal supporter of the Green Climate Fund.
‘A wall is not the solution’ for migration crisis, El Salvador’s President tells UN

22 September – In his address to the United Nations General Assembly today, Salvador Sánchez Cerén, the President of El Salvador, urged the international community to meet the complex challenges posed by mass migration with courage and to strengthen the activities of regional and global organizations dealing with the issue, especially to ensure the protection of the human rights of all people on the move.

President Sánchez said El Salvador is aware of the factors that lead many of its people to migrate and has therefore a joint action plan with Guatemala and Honduras with the support of the Organization of American States (OAS) to bolster productive investment, security and human capacity-building in the region, aiming to improve living conditions in the communities of origin to reduce the current flow of populations in the medium- and long term.

“At the same time, El Salvador needs support and guarantees that the rights of our co-nationals will be respected in countries of transit and destination. The wall is not a solution: it will only lead to greater hate,” he declared.

He went on to acknowledge that peace and security would be threatened without sustainable development, and expressed his country’s full support for the UN 2030 Agenda. In particular, El Salvador has made extraordinary efforts to reduce violence in its municipalities, as evidenced by a marked reduction in homicides in recent months – by some 50 per cent – as compared to the first part of the year.

Attempts to destabilize Governments in the region, in particular Brazil, not only fly in the face of the rule of law, but hamper democracy, he went on to say. In that context, he also expressed solidarity with Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro Moros and the Venezuelan people, saying he trusted they would find solutions through dialogue.

He applauded the decisive role of the United Nations in promoting international peace and security, and praised the support given to his country over the past 25 years. The peace accord reached in 1992 after his country’s civil war was a successful example of resolving conflicts through the world body and could be used as a reference to resolving others. El Salvador was happy to share its experience, as it did in the case of Colombia, which itself had just reached an historic accord.
Palestinians still long for peace, but will never accept ‘temporary solutions,’ President Abbas tells UN

22 September – Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas called on world leaders gathered at the United Nations General Assembly to declare 2017 “the international year to end the Israeli occupation of our land and our people,” and exert all efforts to end the decades of injustice imposed upon the Palestinian people and provide a unique opportunity for peace, stability and coexistence to prevail in the region.

In his address to the Assembly’s annual general debate, president Abbas declared that “there is no way to defeat terrorism and extremism, no way to achieve security and stability in our region without ending the Israeli occupation of Palestine and ensuring the freedom and independence of the Palestinian people.”

“Our hand remains outstretched for making peace,” he continued, but noted that the question that keeps presenting itself over and over again is if there is any leadership in Israel that desires to make a true peace and “that will abandon the mentality of hegemony, expansionism and colonization, and that will recognize the rights of our people and will end the historic injustice inflicted upon them?”

Mr. Abbas said the 1993 Oslo Accords were intended to the end of the occupation and achieve the independence of the State of Palestine within five years, but Israel reneged on the agreements it signed and, to this moment, persists with its occupation and continues to expand its illegal settlement enterprise, which undermines realization of the two-State solution on the basis of the 1967 borders.

“The settlements are illegal in every aspect and any manifestation,” he said, calling on the permanent members of the Security Council not to veto a resolution on Israel’s settlements and the terror of the settlers being prepared in consultations with Arab countries and other friendly countries.

Mr. Abbas also pointed out that Israel continues its attempts to evade an international conference for peace, proposed by France, which has received the support of the majority of the world’s countries.

“It remains our hope that such a conference will lead to the establishment of a mechanism and defined timeframe for an end to the occupation,” he said, calling for support for the convening of this meeting before the end of this year.

“There is no conflict between us and the Jewish religion and its people,” Mr. Abbas said, adding that “our conflict is with the Israeli occupation of our land.”

“We respect the Jewish religion and condemn the catastrophe that befell the Jewish people in World War II in Europe, and view it as one of the most heinous crimes perpetrated against humanity,” he said.

It has been 100 years since the notorious Balfour Declaration, by which Britain gave, without any right, authority or consent from anyone, the land of Palestine to another people, he said, explaining that this paved the road for the Nakba of Palestinian people and their dispossession and displacement from their land. Britain should bear “its historic, legal, political, material and moral responsibilities for the consequences of this Declaration, including an apology to the Palestinians.

Israel has violated UN General Assembly resolution 181 adopted in 1947, which is also known as the partition resolution because it called for the establishment of two States on the historic land of Palestine according to a specific partition plan. Israeli forces seized more land than that allotted to Israel.
Mr. Abbas appealed to UN Member States, as a follow-up to General Assembly resolution 67/19 that made Palestine a non-member Observer in the UN, to adopt another text to enable Palestine to present and cosponsor resolutions beyond the question of Palestine and grant it additional responsibilities to chair committees and international groups.

**Post-9/11 security policies may be genesis of today’s borderless violent extremism, Iran tells UN**

22 September – The century that began with terror in New York City should not continue with the spread of hatred, violence and destruction in the Middle East and North Africa, Hassan Rouhani, the President of Iran, told the United Nations General Assembly today, underscoring that the most pressing issue that world leaders need to address is how to tackle terrorism in a comprehensive manner.

“Fifteen years have passed since painful terrorist attack on New York City; a disaster whose human dimensions moved the entire world,” President Rouhani told the Assembly’s annual general debate, stressing that, on 11 September 2001, no one imagined that the terrible events would lead to larger disasters, including a devastating war in the Middle East and the spread of terrorism.

“Today,” he continued, “the most pressing question as to why we are facing such a situation should be on the agenda of international forums,” where an honest debate should take place regarding the flawed polices and erroneous actions “that have paved the way for worldwide insecurity [and] what the world should look like 15 years from now.”

The genesis of borderless violent extremism and terrorism could be attributed to the security strategies developed by major powers in the past 15 years, who are mainly focusing on advancing repression and military intervention under the pretext of creating a secure environment for their citizens, he continued.

“The main lesson to learn from the analysis of this trend is that security in one region at the cost of insecurity in others would not only be impossible but it could also lead to more insecurity everywhere,” he said.

Regrettably, some powers have provided covert and overt support for terrorist groups or condoned their formation, and the same powers are now committing atrocities against innocent people and their defenders under the guise of fighting terrorism, Mr. Rouhani said.

Today in fact, the discourse of hatred and violence in the Middle East and North Africa is spreading with an astonishing speed, he noted. “Palestinians are still afflicted by a web of apartheid policies and atrocities set by the usurping Zionist regime,” he said.

He also said “if the Saudi Government is serious about its vision for development and regional security, it must cease and desist from divisive policies, spread of hate ideology, and trampling upon the rights of neighbours.”

Iran opposes any kind of sectarianism and any attempt to promote religious gaps, he stressed. The Muslim people, be they Shi’as or Sunnis, have lived and continue to live together for centuries in harmony and mutual respect.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) confirmed the peaceful nature of Iran’s nuclear programme through devising confidence-building mechanisms, closing the so-called “possible military dimension” file and reinstating Iran’s right to develop a peaceful nuclear programme, he said. This deal also put an end to unfounded concerns and led to the removal of the brutal sanctions against Iran.

And today, the UN Security Council and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have formally accepted Iran's peaceful nuclear program, he added. The lack of compliance with the JCPOA on the part of the United States in the past
several months represents a flawed approach that should be rectified.

Unfortunately, such illegal actions are not unprecedented, he said, citing the latest case of the US Supreme Court ruling to seize billions of dollars of the Iranian people’s assets. “This experience demonstrated that the Zionist pressure groups could go as far as having US Congress pass indefensible legislations forcing the highest American judicial institution to violate pre-emptory norms of international law,” he said.

Only eight months after the removal of the cruel nuclear-related sanctions, the economy of Iran, as the most secure and most profitable investment destination in the region, is showing clear improvement, he noted. Iran’s economic growth rate surpassed 4 per cent in spring 2016, the inflation rate dropped to single digits, and Iran has come close to pre-sanction level of oil production and export. “All in all, we are witnessing more development in the economic, scientific and technological fields in Iran,” he said.

**At Assembly debate, President of Sierra Leone cites urgent need for UN Security Council reform**

22 September – Calling for urgent reform at the United Nations and in particular at the Security Council, the President of Sierra Leone today stressed that national and global efforts to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will not alone deliver the promise of an inclusive and fairer world.

“Let me put it straight: our premier global institution lacks the democratic competencies to tackle the developmental, security and other challenges facing Africa and many other parts of the world,” stressed President Ernest Bai Koroma in his address to the General Assembly's annual general debate.

“Without the decisive contribution of [Africa], the continent that is mostly affected by Security Council decisions, no solution proffered to our challenges by the UN would be sustainable, inclusive or lasting,” he added, reiterating the position of Africa's “Committee of Ten” on the reform of the UN Security Council, as the Committee's current coordinator, that it firmly stands united behind the Ezulwini Consensus and Sirte Declaration on the issue.

Turning to the theme of the present session of the General Assembly, President Koroma reported that his country has integrated the SDGs and their respective targets into Sierra Leone's national development programme and that it has formulated a national integrated results framework, aligning the Global Goals to national monitoring and evaluation mechanism. He also outlined efforts within the country to counter climate change.

Furthermore, as the current chair of the Group of Fragile States, Mr. Koroma said Sierra Leone accorded great importance to SDG 17 and to the effective management of the country's natural resources to ensuring sustainable socio-economic development and a resilient future for all Sierra Leoneans.

He also emphasized that transitional justice is critical to consolidating peace, reducing poverty and most importantly, preventing countries from relapsing into conflict, and stressed that his Government is fully committed to good governance, post-conflict peacebuilding, as well as strengthening of democratic institutions and access to justice.

He also expressed appreciation to the international community for its support in dealing with the Ebola outbreak and noted that his country is now implementing its post-Ebola recovery programmes. Noting that the country faces enormous resource gaps, he called on international community and bilateral partners to fulfil the pledges they have made.

The President of Sierra Leone also welcomed increased transparency in the process to select the next UN Secretary-General but reiterated that many African countries are concerned at the slow pace of reforms at the Security Council and said that he
urged for the reform process to move faster “so that Africa can take its rightful place in the UN Security Council.”

“The equitable geographical representation, with the attendant privileges in the membership of the Council would only make it more legitimate, representative, effective, transparent and accountable,” he added.

Mr. Koroma is among the many leaders who will address the general debate of 71st General Assembly. The Assembly's high-level segment opened this year with the adoption Monday of the New York Declaration as the outcome of the first-ever UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants. Made up of all the 193 Member States of the United Nations, the Assembly provides a forum for multilateral discussion of international issues covered by the UN Charter.

**Women’s empowerment vital for global development, Lithuanian leader tells UN Assembly**

22 September – Only by fully empowering women can the world achieve the ambitious development goals it has set itself and confront the multiple crises and threats that beset it, Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaite told the United Nations General Assembly today.

“All of today's greatest challenges – from climate change to fighting terrorism or ending world's deadliest conflicts – can only be resolved with full participation of women,” she declared on the third day of the Assembly’s annual general debate, stressing that ending female poverty, hunger and denial of education are critical to successfully implementing the 2030 Agenda.

“Both women and men are affected, but lifting women out of poverty is much more difficult,” she said in referring to the Agenda’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that seek to eliminate poverty, hunger and a host of other social ills by 2030, noting that women are often more impacted because they are left behind and ignored.

As if poverty alone is not hard enough, women also face gender-based discrimination, stereotyping and social marginalization that see them earning 24 per cent less than men, encountering greater difficulty in getting a loan to start a business, and receiving a smaller part of inheritance or nothing when they leave abusive husbands.

“The trend of poverty feminization has to change,” Ms. Grybauskaite stressed. “By not allowing women to prosper we condemn entire families to poverty,” she said.

With regard to hunger she noted that half the world's agricultural work is done by women, yet they are the first to suffer if food is running out, risk being killed on trips to fetch food or water when public order breaks down, and often end up being pushed aside or abused in bread lines in times of hunger, although they give the little food they have to their children.

“Empowering women by expanding land ownership or providing credit would not only feed a family, but would also raise incomes of women and make more food available for all,” she said.

Turning to education, the president stressed that for so many girls and women inclusive learning remains “an impossible dream,” with women accounting for two thirds of the 750 million illiterate adults worldwide, girls sent off or sold into early marriage, criminals selling them into slavery, and extremists burning down schools and killing teachers who educate women.

“That needs to change. Education is a key that opens many doors. Educated women are a tremendous resource and a power for the common good. Women must be free to have access to education, choose the profession they want,” she stressed.
“We cannot afford to fail in this challenge. To achieve this, we need everyone on board. Only if all members of the society, both women and men, are fully represented and engaged, can the world's future be truly sustainable.”

**Negotiated settlement a ‘win-win’ solution to benefit all Cypriots, President tells UN**

22 September – Addressing the United Nations General Assembly, Cyprus’ President today highlighted progress made so far on negotiations between the two communities of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots towards a unified country.

“This year, following a series of frequent meetings between the two leaders, I have pleasure in informing you that progress has been achieved on important aspects of the ‘Cyprus problem,’” President Nicos Anastasiades said during the Assembly’s annual debate.

The problem, he said, “sadly is the second longest-standing unresolved international issue” on the United Nations’ agenda.

“Following the tragic events of 1974 and Turkey’s invasion, the continuing military occupation of more than a third of the territory of the Republic of Cyprus and the forcible displacement of approximately 40 per cent of the population, the Greek Cypriot side, in a spirit of compromise, accepted the evolution of the unitary state to a federal one,” Mr. Anastasiades said.

Since then, he noted, a plethora of UN Security Council resolutions have reaffirmed the basis of the settlement as a bi-communal, bi-zonal federation that is political equal and represents a single international legal personality, a single sovereignty and a single citizenship.

Successive leaders of the two communities have, unsuccessfulty thus far, engaged in numerous rounds of negotiations.

In this year’s talks with the new leadership of the Turkish Cypriot community, the two sides have confirmed, among others, that a united Cyprus should have a single international legal personality, a single sovereignty and a single citizenship and that the federal constitution should prescribe that the united Cyprus will be composed of two constituent states of equal status.

However, he stressed, that differences remain on several issues relating to governance, European Union membership, economy, property, territory, security and guarantees.

Despite those differences, “I do believe that this ambitious goal is achievable,” provided that all interested parties and stakeholders, including Turkey, show a similar degree of commitment to his, the President said, expressing his resolve to reach, if possible by the end of the year, a solution that creates a win-win situation for all Cypriots and addresses the expectations, sensitivities and concerns of both Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

On 26 July, the UN Security Council extended the mandate of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) for six months, until 31 January 2017, and welcomed the progress of the negotiations between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders to reach a comprehensive settlement.

Made up of all the 193 UN Member States, the Assembly provides a forum for multilateral discussion of international issues covered by the UN Charter.
‘This is no longer a time for promises,’ African leaders tell UN, urging action on Global Goals

22 September – While the current session of the United Nations General Assembly has opened in a context marked by turmoil, Paul Biya, the President of Cameroon said this morning there are nevertheless some “bright spots and glimmers of hope,” including the adoption by Member States of landmark agreements on climate change, development financing and sustainable development.

Welcoming the decision to focus on implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as the theme of this year’s general debate, President Biya said that under that ambitious framework, “our common goals is to eradicate poverty and leave no one behind. This is a challenge we have set for ourselves and which we must take up together […] to answer the calls of both our people and history.

At the same time, he recalled that the international community had in the past adopted similarly promising agendas and action plans that had raised the world’s hopes, only to see the multilateral system fail to meet expectations when the agreed actions were only partially implemented.

“Let us get organized and make sure the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) fair better; since the Agenda is transformational, let us rally to meet our ambitions” Mr. Biya continued, urging constant political will that does not “wax and wane” with changing circumstances; the mobilization of sufficient resources; and ensuring the requisite solidarity.

In this way, the international could achieve the Global Goals which will lead to ‘the world we want,’” he said, emphasizing: “This is no longer a time for promises; this is the time for commitment; this is a time for action.”

Noting that wider efforts to achieve the Global Goals would indeed meet serious obstacles, President Biya cited terrorism as a specific challenge for his county. Indeed, it is in “a veritable war” against the scourge.

Combatting terrorism, he said, requires “a collective response, collective determination and collective action,” in line with the targets of SDG 16, which focuses on the promotion and advent of peaceful and inclusive societies, and should serve as a guide for helping to strengthen Cameroon and the wide region by assisting with building capacity at all levels to effectively fight to confront Boko Haram and combat other criminal activity.

“The outcomes of previous agendas and programmes have shown us the urgent need to find wherewithal to achieve our ambitions. If we decide, here and now, to effectively and concretely mobilize our immense resources, and if we decide to devote them to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, then [they] will truly become the push to transform today's world into [one] of peace and shared prosperity,” Mr. Biya concluded.

In his remarks, Patrice Athanase Guillaume Talon, the President of Benin, also welcomed the theme of the general debate, saying the subject of SDG implementation is timely and necessary. Indeed, the world has always managed to mobilize and organize itself when confronted with immense challenges or faced with global threats, such as climate change.

“Our world, as open as it is today, will more than ever suffer from the consequences of poverty, in particular the migration movements, unruly and destabilizing as they are, if nothing is done. Mass poverty has now become a major threat to humanity,” he said that with the same determination that led the world to adopt the Paris Agreement on climate change, “it
has become urgent to put in place a global programme to eradicate mass poverty.”

With this in mind, Mr. Talon called on the most developed countries and the development finance institutions to implement a strong collective action plan with a view to eradicating poverty, which he said is dangerously side-lining most African countries.

“The international community has the capacity and has recently proved so when preventing Greece and Ukraine from collapsing. Efforts made to that end did not ruin the countries or the institutions that mobilized themselves for this rescue operation,” he said, stressing that quickly and efficiently eradicating poverty and underdevelopment in Africa world require “the same will but not necessarily more means.”

Acknowledging that African countries will of course need to take their part of responsibility by doing more for political stability and above all, good governance, he noted that Benin is taking relevant action in that regard. “One can add to this nearly half a century of political stability, as well as a mature democracy; all these elements give Benin the capacity to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, provided the country receives adequate support,” he concluded.

For his part, Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, President of Burkina Faso, said that achieving real sustainable development requires the international community to eradicate poverty and fight inequality. His country had developed a national plan to integrate the goals of the 2030 Agenda and the African Union’s Agenda 2063. In Burkina Faso’s endeavour to efficiently implement those goals, his Government knew that it could count on the active solidarity of all.

Terrorist attacks and unprecedented violence have manifested as a worldwide scourge, he said, and continued by acknowledging the memories of all victims of terrorism. “Our fight will only bear fruit if we destroy the rear-guard and manage to cut the supply source of terrorism,” he continued. That should be done parallel to managing the root causes of terrorism: injustice, exclusivism and poverty.

Peace, security and development are monumental challenges for the world, and Africa in particular, he said. His Government welcomed the progress made in the region, although hotbeds and flashpoints remain.

The security situation in northern Mali continues to cause great concern, requiring a strengthened mandate for UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSMA) and the implementation of the rapid intervention force of the Group of Five Sahel, known as the G-5 Sahel. South Sudan and Somalia are other countries that had to “close the chapter on violence”. Furthermore, his country reiterated its appeal for a political solution to the conflict in Western Sahara.

Protecting cultural heritage from combatants promotes human rights and universal values – Ban

22 September – Safeguarding cultural property that combatants aim to damage encompasses part of larger endeavours to defend human rights and universal values, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said today, calling on the international community to intensify efforts to protect such treasures and end their illicit trafficking.

“Combatants that attack cultural treasures want to damage more than artefacts – they aim to tear at the fabric of societies,” the UN chief said in remarks presented by Irina Bokova, Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) at a high-level event entitled “Protecting Cultural Heritage – an Imperative for Humanity: Acting together against the destruction and trafficking of cultural property by terrorist groups and organized crime.”

“And protection is about more than shielding stones and buildings – it is a part of our effort to defend human rights and save people’s lives,”
he added.

The event – held at UN headquarters in New York this afternoon – was co-organized by the Permanent Missions of Italy and Jordan, in collaboration with the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), UNESCO and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

Lamenting that “we have all been devastated” by attacks on cultural heritage in the Middle East, North Africa, Yemen, Mali and beyond, the Secretary-General said that using such a tactic of war is also a war crime.

“Throughout history, the enemies of human dignity have targeted symbols of knowledge, freedom of thought and freedom of expression. These are attacks on our universal values,” he stressed.

The UN, for its part, has been responding by taking action to restore and rebuild damaged sites. In Timbuktu, UNESCO – the UN body responsible for identifying significant cultural landmarks – helped to rebuild 14 mausoleums. In addition, hundreds of thousands of ancient manuscripts have been recovered, Mr. Ban said.

“Perpetrators are being held accountable. For the first time, the International Criminal Court has opened a trial for the destruction of the mausoleums. This can help an end to impunity,” he said.

Mr. Ban was referring to the trial, on 22 August 2016, of Ahmad Al Faqi Al Mahdi, which opened before Trial Chamber VIII at the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague, the Netherlands. Mr Al Mahdi, a Malian national, “admitted guilt as to the war crime consisting in the destruction of historical and religious monuments in Timbuktu (Mali), between around 30 June 2012 and 11 July 2012,” read a statement from the ICC, following the opening of the trial.

It was the first international trial focusing on the destruction of historical and religious monuments, and the first ICC case where the defendant made an admission of guilt.

Security Council resolution 2199 (2015) on halting the financing of terrorism tackles the specific issue of illicit trafficking in cultural objects.

So far, more than three dozen countries have taken measures to curb the plague, the Secretary-General said, adding that with the support of the World Customs Organizations, UNODC and INTERPOL, “blood antiquities” have been seized in a number of countries.

“Today I call on the international community to intensify the global response to attacks on cultural heritage. We have a strong legal basis that we must apply through action to protect treasures and end illicit trafficking,” Mr. Ban said. “When we ‘unite4heritage’, we will advance our broader campaign for a more just, peaceful and sustainable future.”

This past June, UNESCO and the International Criminal Court (ICC) announced they are working together in the fight against impunity for deliberate destruction of cultural heritage, which they said could constitute a war crime. In addition, in February, UNESCO and the Government of Italy agreed to establish a task force of experts focusing on the conservation of cultural heritage affected by crises around the world.

Next week, the 4th session of the subsidiary committee of UNESCO’s Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property will, among other agenda items, focus on issues such as online sales, a new international mechanism on the repatriation of ceremonial objects and human remains, and money laundering. An action plan for the return of cultural objects illegally offered for sale will also be examined.
Agriculture and food system transformation needed on pathway to zero hunger – Ban

22 September – While the world has seen some progress on combatting the root causes of hunger and malnutrition, the challenge of providing the fundamental right to adequate food to all people must remain a priority, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said today, urging Member States to continue to work together to tackle the problem.

“It is unacceptable in a world of plenty that nearly 800 million people still suffer from hunger,” the UN chief said at a high-level event on “Pathways to Zero Hunger” at UN Headquarters this afternoon.

“This represents a collective moral and political failure,” he added.

The event, co-organized by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP), seeks to galvanize momentum for the Zero Hunger Challenge launched by the Secretary-General in 2012.

The Zero Hunger Challenge reflects five elements from within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which, taken together, can end hunger, eliminate all forms of malnutrition, and build inclusive and sustainable food systems.

At today’s event, the Secretary-General recalled that when he invited world leaders and development partners, through the Challenge, to share his vision of a world free from hunger and malnutrition within a generation, he challenged them to build a world where all people enjoy the fundamental right to adequate food, and a world where food systems are inclusive, resilient and sustainable.

“This vision now lies at the heart the Sustainable Development Goals,” Mr. Ban emphasized. “With the 2030 Agenda we have the opportunity to silence once and for all the deafening cry of hunger and malnutrition that has echoed down through history.”

Noting that the pledge of the SDGs is to “leave no one behind,” the Secretary-General said that the common goal is to transform agriculture and food systems to drive rural prosperity and end poverty; to put agriculture at the heart of the solution to climate change; and to build peaceful societies through food security.

“By tackling the root causes of hunger and malnutrition we can support all the SDGs,” he said.

The UN chief highlighted that he has seen “real progress” in the past four years, citing that the global population of undernourished people has fallen by nearly 70 million since 2012.

In addition, he said that tackling the problem of food waste has become a “global cause,” while sustainable agriculture and food systems are at the heart of the Paris Agreement on climate change and Member States have now committed to ‘Zero Hunger’ as part of the 2030 Agenda.

“The Zero Hunger Challenge will continue to offer a space for diverse partners to come together behind a common objective,” Mr. Ban said. “As I end my term in office, I am asking FAO, WFP and IFAD to take my challenge forward.”

“I am confident that they will not rest until zero hunger is a reality. Together, we can meet the challenge of securing a future of health, prosperity, dignity and opportunity for all on a healthy planet,” he concluded.
Today’s event was held in partnership with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, the Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, and the UN Global Compact.

**Greater focus on women’s empowerment can help achieve Global Goals – UN chief**

22 September – Gender equality remains the greatest human rights challenge of our time, and one way to achieve the goal is by empowering women to have greater choices economically and control over their lives, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon declared today, urging the international community to spearhead efforts that provide opportunities for women and girls.

“I look forward to a time when all societies everywhere can reap the benefits of gender equality,” said the Secretary-General at the high-level panel on women’s economic empowerment event today at UN Headquarters in New York, co-organized by the panel’s secretariat and UN Women.

“As I said this week to the General Assembly – and the world – I am proud to call myself a feminist,” he added.

Mr. Ban launched the 20-member panel at the World Economic Forum earlier this year in order to lead a discussion on closing gaps for women’s economic empowerment and in line with his leadership on and commitment to gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Consisting of representatives of government, business and civil society, and co-chaired by Luis Guillermo Solis, President of Costa Rica and Simona Scarpaleggia, CEO IKEA, Switzerland, the high-level panel is charged with supporting and providing guidance on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to improve economic outcomes for women and promote women’s leadership in driving economic growth. An interim report of the panel was presented to the Secretary-General at today’s event.

UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, said today that gender equality remains the greatest human rights challenge of our time, declaring, once again, that he was proud to call himself a feminist. Mr. Ban was speaking at a high level event on women’s economic empowerment, held on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. Mr Ban said that a 50/50 planet where there is gender equality, can be achieved through women empowerment.

Noting in his remarks that he established UN Women – which was created in 2010 – to be the global champion for women’s empowerment, helping to bring the Beijing Platform for Action to life, the UN chief also recalled that he launched the UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign, and was also the first person to sign up to the #HeForShe campaign to engage men and boys in the fight for gender equality.

“I firmly believe in a ‘50-50 planet’,” Mr. Ban said.

“One way of achieving this goal is through women’s economic empowerment. This is a uniquely potent way for women to have greater choice and exert control over their own lives. At the same time, it will benefit their families, their communities and their countries’ economies,” he noted.

In that regard, the Secretary-General said that the panel is already making progress to curate a portfolio of activities that can overcome barriers and promote fruitful investment.

“I urge you to continue to this work in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Your work is an important contribution to fulfilling the promise to leave no one behind,” Mr. Ban told the panel, encouraging members to set indicators
of achievement by 2020 so that progress towards substantive equality can be measured.

Noting that he has “great faith” in the panel, the Secretary-General said that the group’s work has the ability to transform opportunities for women and girls. He also thanked the panel for its strong commitment and leadership.

The high-level panel is backed by the UN Women, the UN International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, with support for its work provided by the UK Department for International Development.

A second report of the panel, informed by the first year of implementations of the 2030 Agenda, will be issued in early 2017.

Security Council adopts resolution on countering terrorist threats to civil aviation

22 September – The global aviation system is of vital importance to economic development and prosperity, and all States must strengthen, both individually and collectively, aviation security measures, in order to secure a stable and peaceful global environment, the United Nations Security Council declared today.

Adopting resolution 2309 (2016) at a meeting, this morning, on threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts, the Council called on States to work within the UN’s International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to ensure that its international security standards are reviewed and adapted to effectively address the threat posed by terrorist targeting of civil aviation.

Expressing particular concern that terrorist groups are actively seeking ways to defeat or circumvent aviation security, the 15-member body also called on all States to strengthen and promote the effective application of ICAO standards and recommended practices, and to assist ICAO in continuing to enhance audit, capacity development and training programmes in order to support their implementation.

In the resolution, the Council noted with concern that the “terrorism threat has become more diffuse,” with an increase, in various regions of the world, of terrorist acts including those motivated by intolerance or violent extremism. The Council expressed its determination to combat that threat, and also expressed grave concern over terrorist attacks against civil aviation and over the fact that civil aviation may be used as a transportation means by foreign terrorist fighters.

Further to the text of the resolution, the Council called on all States to, among other action, ensure that effective, risk-based measures are in place at the airports within their jurisdiction; take all necessary steps to ensure that such measures are effectively implemented on the ground on a continuing and sustainable basis; ensure that such measures take into account the potential role of those with privileged access to areas, knowledge or information that may assist terrorists in planning or conducting attacks; and urgently address any gaps or vulnerabilities that may be highlighted by ICAO or national self-risk assessment or audit processes.

In addition, all States should strengthen security screening procedures and maximize the promotion, utilization and sharing of new technologies and innovative techniques that maximize the capability to detect explosives and other threats.

Specifically, under the terms of the resolution, States that are able to do so are urged to assist in the delivery of effective and targeted capacity development, training and other necessary resources, technical assistance, technology transfers and programmes.
Furthermore, the Council called on all States to strengthen their international and regional cooperation to boost information-sharing, border control, law enforcement and criminal justice to better counter the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters and returnees.

By the terms of the resolution, the Security Council also encouraged continued cooperation between ICAO and the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate on identifying gaps and vulnerabilities relevant to aviation security.

In addition, the Council requested that its Counter-Terrorism Committee hold a special meeting within 12 months, in cooperation with ICAO, on the issue of terrorist threats to civil aviation.

In July 2014, following the crash of a Malaysia Airlines flight over Ukraine that killed 298 people on board, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2166 calling for an international investigation into the incident, and demanded at the time that armed groups allow unfettered access to the crash site and ensure that its integrity was maintained. Later that month, ICAO convened a special Task Force on Risks to Civil Aviation arising from Conflict Zones.

In September 2014, the Security Council adopted resolution 2178 in response to an unprecedented flow of foreign terrorist fighters and the growth of facilitation networks fuelling conflicts around the world. Under the terms of that resolution, the Council called on Member States to require that airlines operating in their territories provide advance passenger information to the appropriate national authorities in order to detect the departure, from their territories, of individuals designated by the Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee.

Sanitation initiative in south-eastern Haiti shows promising results – UNICEF

22 September – A sanitation initiative in south-eastern Haiti has shown encouraging results, with a major reduction in the number of water-borne infections for local residents, according to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

“Five localities in this region have been declared open defecation free (ODF), which marks progress in the prevention of cholera and other water-borne diseases in the area,” the UNICEF Representative in the country, Marc Vincent, told the UN News Centre.

“In the area of sanitation we have come a long way and there is still a long way to go,” he added. “For UNICEF, we are active in 120 communities and, in total, more than 20,000 people in the country now benefit from living in an ODF environment – this is a substantive change and it inspires hope.”

I also educate children like me, in my neighborhood and at school: I ask them not to defecate on the ground and to wash their hands after leaving the toilet. Anephta Pierre-Louis

The five localities – Nan Merlien, Fatima, Rada and three other communities in the country’s south-east – have been taking part in the UN-backed Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) campaign as part of the Total Sanitation Campaign, which supports the Haitian authorities´ national plan against cholera through the promotion of zero open defecation and increased access to water and sanitation facilities in schools and health centres.

The CLTS Campaign supports local communities in addressing access to water, rehabilitating water systems and ensuring chlorination to combat contamination. At the same time, the initiative is also supporting communities to build toilets and to reduce the contamination of water through open defecation. CLTS has already been implemented in 67 other localities and, as a result, 1,000 self-built household toilets have been constructed and 2,000 more are in progress. Six communities have been certified as ODF and 16 are in process.
A community worker in the Haitian South-East department, Harry Richner, underlined that the effort to convince local residents to change their habits required persistence as many had hoped that others would construct the required latrines.

“I have been engaged in this fight for a long time, and with the combined efforts of several partners we were able to end this practice in the area,” he said. “Thanks to the local CLTS committee of nine adults and two children who helped me do the work, we were able to meet the challenge.”

One of the local committee members in the locality of Fatima Rada, 12-year-old Anephta Pierre-Louis, highlighted the important role that children have to play in the campaign.

“I deal with monitoring in the committee – when a family leaves its toilet dirty, I ask them nicely to clean it so as to avoid catching diseases,” she said. “But I also educate children like me, in my neighborhood and at school: I ask them not to defecate on the ground and to wash their hands after leaving the toilet.”

The UNICEF country representative noted that such steps provide an inspirational example for others to follow.

“When you talk to people in the communities and see how proud they are of having built themselves their own toilets, and how proud they are of protecting their families and children by their own means – when you see that it gives you hope, hope to go further and beyond,” Mr. Vincent said. “Because what we want and have to do is totally eliminate cholera.”

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launched in 2014 with the Haitian Government the Total Sanitation Campaign, which is one of the long-term key pillars to the cholera response in Haiti. This response has also other key components such as the emergency response and the epidemiological surveillance. According to UNICEF, the provision of clean drinking water, the use of safe sanitation infrastructure and good hygiene practices are crucial elements to advance the prevention of cholera and other water-borne diseases in Haiti.

However, despite progress made in fighting cholera in Haiti, UNICEF states much remains to be done and the engagement of the full international community, donors and partners is urgently needed. Currently, according to the country’s national agency for water supply and sanitation - the Direction Nationale de l’Eau Potable et de l’Assainissement – only 28 per cent of the Haitian population has access to adequate sanitation and 42 per cent does not have adequate access to safe drinking water.

Ban calls on global leaders to take forward goals of World Humanitarian Summit

As the international community continues to work towards achieving the core humanitarian responsibilities agreed to at the World Humanitarian Summit this past May, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today presented a road map to promote accountability for commitments made and report on progress attained.

“The Summit confirmed we cannot continue with business as usual,” the UN chief said at a high-level side event entitled “Beyond the World Humanitarian Summit: Advancing the Agenda for Humanity,” taking place today at UN Headquarters in New York, during which he presented his report on the outcome of the Summit.

“Humanitarian crises need political solutions. Greater and longer-term investment is needed to build stable and inclusive societies,” he added.

At the historic Summit in Istanbul, Turkey, governments, humanitarian and development organizations, civil society,
businesses and other stakeholders made more than 3,000 commitments to action to achieve the five core responsibilities expressed in the Secretary-General’s Agenda for Humanity, which presents a framework to guide the changes that are needed to alleviate suffering, reduce risk and lessen vulnerability on a global scale.

Building on those outcomes, Mr. Ban said today that his report presents a simple road map to promote accountability for commitments and continue to advance the Agenda for Humanity.

Noting that first among the priorities is to document the commitments made and those to come, the Secretary-General also announced the launch of an online Platform for Action, Commitments and Transformation, PACT.

“This platform will be a dynamic space to report on progress and showcase results, build engagement and create new partnerships. I count on you to make PACT a success,” Mr. Ban said.

The Secretary-General also said that an annual synthesis report will be produced to assess collective progress and identify areas that may be lagging. In addition, a high-level stocktaking meeting within the next five years will assess progress against the goal of reducing humanitarian needs, risk and vulnerability, which the UN chief said should also identify gaps and new challenges.

He added that he also put forward Member States, civil society, private sector and other forums that can be used to advance the outcomes of the Summit, as all have an important role in facilitating change and broadening the diversity of partnerships and alliances.

“The Summit kick-started concrete changes in the way we address humanitarian need, risk and vulnerability. Now the hard work of delivering this change, and making lasting improvements for people caught up in crisis, is in our hands,” the Secretary-General said.

“These steps are at the core of the 2030 Agenda. They are the basis of our collective pledge to leave no one behind. I count on all of you to champion the outcomes of the Summit and give your strongest political and financial support to the new initiatives and alliances,” he added.

The Secretary-General highlighted that he continues to look to the Security Council to overcome its divisions and take “important steps” to fulfil its “unique responsibility to pursue peace and stability.”

He noted that the Summit also affirmed that a new approach is needed to meet, prevent and reduce humanitarian needs.

“Humanitarian and development actors agreed on a new way of working together towards collective outcomes to accomplish this. We must be steadfast in our resolve that only impartial, neutral and independent humanitarian action will allow us to access people in need, wherever they are,” Mr. Ban said, adding that the Summit marked a clear shift towards longer-term financing and investment in humanitarian operations.

Earlier this week, leaders at the UN Summit on Refugees and Migrants affirmed the need for new approaches and greater responsibility-sharing for refugees, building on one of the key outcomes of the World Humanitarian Summit, which generated hundreds of commitments to ensure that refugees, migrants and internally displaced people are not left behind.