In the headlines:

- President of UN General Assembly urges world leaders to engage in working for the people
- Repair 'world in pieces' and create 'world at peace,' UN chief Guterres urges global leaders
- All nations should embrace their sovereignty, US President tells world leaders at UN Assembly
- Bolivia's Morales, at UN, says natural resources, basic necessities must be viewed as human rights
- During our difficult times, 'we knew we had friends,' says Gambian President Barrow
- Upcoming elections will signal Liberia on 'irreversible course' towards democracy, President Sirleaf tells UN
- UN must update itself to face 21st century challenges, Afghan leader tells General Assembly
- At General Assembly, Baltic leaders spotlight human rights, UN reform among vital concerns
- Striving for peace, decent life for all, 'very pertinent' UN Assembly theme, says Ugandan President
- Marking 25th anniversary of UN membership, Armenia pledges continued support
- Government bodies must serve people, Uzbek President stresses at UN assembly
- 'No room for double standards’ in combating terrorism, stresses Egyptian President at UN Assembly

More stories inside

President of UN General Assembly urges world leaders to engage in working for the people

19 September – Opening the annual general debate, the President of the United Nations General Assembly today stressed the need for more work on prevention, a greater focus on people, and keeping promises made to advance prosperity and protect the planet.

“We are spending too much time and money reacting to conflicts, and not enough on preventing them,” Miroslav Lajcak told more than 120 world leaders gathered in General Assembly Hall in New York.

He called for integrating prevention with development and human rights work, and reviewing how UN does its peace operations and counterterrorism work.

“When people can live decent lives – when rights are respected – when rule of law is present in everyday life – it is harder to turn societies to conflict,” he said.

The Assembly President told the audience that the UN was not made for them, but for people.
“We know that many people have become disillusioned. Countless others around the world, however, have high hopes for us. They see the UN's blue flag as a first sign of safety and the beginning of change,” Mr. Lajcak said.

He noted that the 193 members of the UN General Assembly will face one of its biggest tests with the process of adopting the first Global Compact for Migration at a time when world leaders have varying opinions on the phenomenon.

“We cannot turn this into an exercise of bureaucracy. We cannot be left with an agreement that works only on paper,” he stressed.

Lack of accountability and follow through also potentially plague work to counter international terrorism, and following up on violations of international humanitarian law.

In his first speech to the high-level debate as President of the General Assembly, Mr. Lajcak also called on the international community to keep its promises to curb poverty and protect the environment by following through with commitments made in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

“I see the priority clusters of 'peace and prevention,' 'people and planet and prosperity as three sides of a triangle. They might not all be the same length, or the same width, but one is as important as the other,” he said.

Closing the address, Mr. Lajcak urged world leaders to change the way they work on a daily basis and engage in real dialogue, not a succession of monologues: “We cannot fall for an end to business as usual – and then continue to do business as usual.”

If we are looking for a change in how the UN operates around the world, we should start here in New York.”

**Repair 'world in pieces' and create 'world at peace,' UN chief Guterres urges global leaders**

*19 September* – Addressing the annual gathering of world leaders at the United Nations Headquarters, Secretary-General António Guterres today spotlighted several threats – including the nuclear peril, climate change, and ongoing conflicts – that must be overcome to create a better world for all.

“We are a world in pieces. We need to be a world at peace,” said Mr. Guterres as he presented his annual Report on the work of the Organization ahead of the general debate of the UN General Assembly, in which Heads of State and Government and other high-level representatives from around the world discuss key global issues.

He said that the world is seeing insecurity rising, inequality growing, conflict spreading, climate changing, societies fragmenting and political discourse polarizing.

The UN chief noted that global anxieties about nuclear weapons are at the highest level since the end of the Cold War due to provocative nuclear and missile tests by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

“The solution must be political. This is a time for statesmanship. We must not sleepwalk our way into war,” he warned, as fiery talk can lead to fatal misunderstandings.

On terrorism, the Secretary-General stressed the need to address the roots of radicalization. “It is not enough to fight terrorists on the battlefield,” he said.

Stressing the need for “a surge in diplomacy today” and “a leap in conflict prevention for tomorrow,” he said that it is
possible to move from war to peace, and from dictatorship to democracy. Only political solutions can bring peace to the unresolved conflicts in Syria, Yemen, South Sudan, the Sahel, Afghanistan and elsewhere. That was why he announced the creation of a high-level advisory board on mediation, he added.

On Myanmar, Mr. Guterres said the Asian country’s authorities must end the military operations in Rakhine state, allow unhindered humanitarian access, and address the grievances of the Rohingya Muslims, whose status has been left unresolved for far too long.

He went on to take note of State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi’s address today – and her intention to implement the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State that was chaired by Kofi Annan within the shortest time possible.

On the Israel-Palestine conflict, the two-state solution remains the only way forward, he said.

Turning to climate change, Mr. Guterres urged Governments to implement the historic Paris Agreement with greater ambition.

“We should not link any single weather event with climate change. But scientists are clear that such extreme weather is precisely what their models predict will be the new normal of a warming world,” he said, noting that mega-hurricanes, superstorms and rain bombs are added to the vocabulary to describe what is happening.

While explaining how globalization and technological advances have brought uneven benefits, he also highlighted the dark side of innovation, such as cybersecurity threats as well as the possible negative implications of artificial intelligence and genetic engineering.

Lastly, Mr. Guterres said safe migration cannot be limited to the global elite and stressed the need to do more to face the challenges of migration. Refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants are not the problem; the problem lies in conflict, persecution and hopeless poverty.

To tackle these challenges, he said, the UN has launched initiatives to reform itself.

Looking over the packed General Assembly Hall, he said that the UN is needed, and “multilateralism is more important than ever” when there are competing interests and even open conflict.

“We call ourselves the international community; we must act as one,” he concluded.

**All nations should embrace their sovereignty, US President tells world leaders at UN Assembly**

*19 September* – Noting that the present world is one that offers both immense promise and great peril, the President of the United States told global leaders at the United Nations that it was “entirely up to us” to either lift the world to new heights, or let it fall into a valley of disrepair.

“To overcome the perils of the present and to achieve the promise of the future, we must begin with the wisdom of the past,” Donald Trump said today at the general debate of the 72nd session of General Assembly.

“Our success depends on a coalition of strong and independent nations that embrace their sovereignty to promote security, prosperity, and peace for themselves and for the world.”

Noting that the US would remain a “great friend” to the world, and
especially to its allies, the President underscored that his country can no longer be taken advantage of, and that he would defend US interests above all else.

“But in fulfilling our obligations to our own nations, we also realize that it’s in everyone’s interest to seek a future where all nations can be sovereign, prosperous, and secure,” he noted.

He also called for greater reforms at the UN, urging the Organization to focus more on results, rather than bureaucracy and processes. He also called for more fair cost sharing among UN Member States.

Turning to the crisis emanating from the nuclear weapons programme of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), Mr. Trump underscored if the US is forced to defend itself or its allies, “we will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea.” Recalling recent resolutions adopted unanimously by the Security Council, he urged that country to pursue the path of denuclearization.

In his remarks, he also criticized the Iranian Government and called on the country’s leadership to halt support of terrorists, begin serving its people, and respect the sovereign rights of its neighbours. He also noted the need for de-escalation of the conflict in Syria, as well as on sanctions imposed by the US on Cuba and Venezuela.

Also in his remarks, the President spoke of economic progress made by the United States since his election as well as the progress it has made in terms of healthcare, women’s empowerment and military strength.

Bolivia’s Morales, at UN, says natural resources, basic necessities must be viewed as human rights

President Evo Morales Ayma of the Plurinational State of Bolivia addresses the General Assembly’s annual general debate. UN Photo/Cia Pak

19 September – While some pledges made in the United Nations Charter have been met, “others have come to noting,” the President of Bolivia told the General Assembly today, that the planet’s precious resources and vulnerable people must be protected from greed and exploitation by political elites.

“After more than 70 years, instead of progress, we are moving backwards,” Evo Morales told delegations at the Assembly’s annual general debate, where he denounced what he called the “abusive, wildcat consumer market” that is supporting capitalism and colonialism and sparking crises that were destroying the lives of millions of people worldwide.

He said history has shown that the seizure of natural resources and political world domination led to invasion, the fall of governments, “creating chaos in order to benefit from it.” Many such invasions had given rise of terrorist groups, which in turn led to even greater harms against civilians.

Indeed, wars and violent conflicts persisted, while 2017 was the hottest year in world history. Emphasizing that all countries must comply with the Paris Agreement, Mr. Morales said it was unjustifiable that the United States had decided to turn its back on that instrument. That country was among the main polluters and its Government has now become a threat to Mother Earth. All countries must comply with the accord and work jointly to save the plant.

‘Water is the lifeblood of Mother Earth,” he continued, and that resource must be respected, shared and protected for future generations. Bolivia promoted the recognition of water as a human right, he said, noting that its Constitution prohibited the exploitation of that resource for profit. Where water flowed, so too did peace, he said, adding that it must never be a source of conflict.

Mr. Morales went on to say that the “gulf between those who have everything and those who have virtually nothing” is growing wider every year. “Inequality is immoral,” he said, going on to condemn the building of walls and passing of laws
that criminalize migration. To that end, he called for the creation of a form of “universal citizenship,” saying there should be no difference between a foreigner and a national.

## During our difficult times, ‘we knew we had friends,’ says Gambian President Barrow

**19 September** – Noting that the recent political crisis in Gambia had been a lesson that his compatriots will not easily forget, the Adama Barrow, the country’s President underscored that Gambians made an irreversible choice to close a “dark chapter” in their history and embarked on a national agenda of reform and transformation.

“During those difficult times, we knew we had friends, ones who came to our aid and who have since kept faith with us,” the President said, thanking Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for their timely and firm intervention to bring peace to his country.

“Thanks to your collective efforts, the Gambia is now on a solid path to peace and good governance, and ready to take over our traditional role among the champions of human rights and democracy,” he added.

He also announced that the country was in the process of re-joining the Commonwealth as well as the International Criminal Court.

“Although the Gambia did not go through armed conflict […] we were on the brink of political violence and armed conflict,” he expressed, thanking the United Nations in West Africa, the UN Peace Building Commission and the Peace Building Support Office for the important support they rendered to the country.

Concluding his remarks, President Barrow noted that given the range of its functions, the UN would always require some level of reform of its management systems.

“As you embark on your proposed reforms, we stand ready to give you our full support in the interest of an effective and more relevant world body,” he said, adding also the need for Security Council reform.
Upcoming elections will signal Liberia on ‘irreversible course’ towards democracy, President Sirleaf tells UN

19 September – Addressing the United Nations General Assembly just 22 days ahead of historic elections in Liberia, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf today said the polls will signal the “irreversible course” that the country has embarked upon to consolidate its young, post-conflict democracy.

As she recalled that 11 years ago, in September of 2006, she had addressed the Assembly as the newly elected President of Liberia and the first woman to be democratically elected as head of State on the African continent, Ms. Johnson Sirleaf said the coming elections, which will mark the end of her time in office, will pave the way for the next generations of Liberians to lead the country into the future.

“The [legislative and presidential polls] will mark the first time in 73 years that political power will be handed over peacefully, and democratically, from one elected leader to another,” she said, adding: Democracy is on the march in Liberia and, I believe, on an irreversible path forward on the African continent.”

She said she had assumed office after 25 years of development reversal which was further compounded by a 15-year civil war. “We have made great progress and laid the foundation for the next democratic government. We have reshaped the Armed Forces of Liberia and the Liberia National Police, professionalized our customs and immigration services and small Liberian Coast Guard.”

Further, previously dysfunctional public institutions now have the capacity to respond to the needs of our citizens through decentralized county service centers with ownership by strong local governments. “And from the tragedy of the health crisis, we are strengthening our healthcare systems, prioritizing prevention and delivering capacity at the community level,” said Ms. Johnson Sirleaf, underscoring that Liberia has enjoyed the benefit of multilateralism through full support provided by the UN, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

“Liberia's transformation was powered by a world community that made a shared commitment to deliver peace to a country, and a subregion, beset by civil conflict and cross border destabilization,” she said, noting that the UN and its partner nations were of “one mind,” and from that global unity, a new Liberian democratic state was born.

“Liberia is a post conflict success story. It is your post conflict success story,” stated Ms. Johnson Sirleaf, urging the UN and its Member States to continue to lead, to spread the values of democracy, human rights, and good governance while strengthening solidarity for economic transformation and social resilience. Such leadership should extend to full implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as on UN reform, including of the Security Council.
UN must update itself to face 21st century challenges, Afghan leader tells General Assembly

19 September – The United Nations and its agencies must reinvent themselves to tackle the challenges of the 21st century, Afghan President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani told the UN General Assembly on the opening day of its annual general debate today.

“Overcoming the destructive and disruptive patterns of change in the 21st century requires collective and coordinated action at the global, regional, national, local and individual levels,” he declared.

“Delivering on the promises of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the context of uncertainty requires re-examination of core functions, re-engineering of business processes, reinvigoration of organizational culture and value, and reform of systems of accountability,” he added.

“The inherited model of the UN agencies as instruments of technical assistance and capacity building should be subjected to the market test, namely value for money and sustainability of results in comparison to government, private sector and non-governmental modes of delivery.”

He stressed that the threat of international terrorism has played on Afghan soil, dominating the narrative of Afghanistan and driving the fate of its people for far too long, but also cited his country’s “enormous potential” to be the regional brokers of peace, a hub for economic prosperity, and a beacon of democratic values.

“Afghanistan will, yet again, be the Asian Roundabout for dialogue of civilizations and a model of harmony and culture of tolerance and engagement,” he concluded.

At General Assembly, Baltic leaders spotlight human rights, UN reform among vital concerns

19 September – The international community must give the United Nations a voice to raise against human rights abuses and nationalistic rhetoric, or see it become irrelevant, the Lithuanian president said in her address to the United Nations General Assembly’s high-level debate.

Addressing representatives of 193 countries, Dalia Grybauskaity urged world leaders to stand up against abuses and indifferences to basic international norms.

“Time and time again we have no courage to enforce the rules that we ourselves create. We draw red lines in the sand and then pretend they don’t exist,” Ms. Grybauskaity said, adding that that international community must stop being passive observers.

“Aggression cannot make anyone stronger. It can never earn anyone even a drop of respect,” she said. “The only thing the aggression will bring is contempt, shame and condemnation.”
She said that the international community has to take its share of responsibility, and stop those violating norms and disrupting international peace.

Also addressing the general debate, Kersti Kaljulaid, President of Estonia, underscored to the Assembly that the world is unpredictable. She maintained that stemming largely from climate change, it could be “counterbalanced by rapid technological disruption of our wasteful ways of life.”

The President stressed that her country of just over one million, is sensitive to unpredictability, especially for the inherently weak and “for those made weak by discrimination – often women, ethnic and religious minorities.”

Ms. Kaljulaid also pointed out that many nations suffer from unresolved conflicts, saying: “These are States which could take care of their own population and contribute at the global scene, if we were quicker to manage the conflicts which are holding them back or, worse, threatening to tear them apart.”

Turning to violent extremism, she told the Assembly, “the risk of terrorism is metastatic. Having started from disappointments and disillusionment of people from failed and failing States, it has spread globally.” She emphasized the importance of national, regional and global cooperation, saying “Effective counter terrorism measures and the protection of human rights are mutually reinforcing, not conflicting goals.”

The President concluded by drawing attention to the need for a strong UN to successfully address the challenges. Ms. Kaljulaid welcomed the Secretary General’s reform agenda, saying “We strongly support the efforts to link the reform of UN's Peace and Security architecture with the reform of the UN Development System. We welcome the emphasis on conflict prevention and peacebuilding, creating societies resilient to vulnerabilities,” she said.

Striving for peace, decent life for all, ‘very pertinent’ UN Assembly theme, says Ugandan President

19 September – Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda, took the podium expressing support for the theme of the United Nations 72nd General Assembly – ‘Focusing on People: Striving for Peace and a Decent life for all on a Sustainable Planet’ – questioning why the world’s elites failed to see its pertinence.

“Who would lose if all the people on the globe led a decent life,” he said, namely by having enough food; inoculations for “immunizable” diseases; drinkable water; education; clean electricity; fair-paying jobs; and respectable homes. “Parasitism is the only obstacle to global affluence, prosperity and peace,” he added.

Turning to “the dangerous situation on the Korean Peninsula,” he believed that, as “kith and kin,” the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the Democratic Republic of Korea (DPRK) would do well to alone discuss their re-unification. He cited a unified Viet Nam, as well as that of Germany in 1990. Noting the strength of a unified Korea, he posed the queries, “Why do some actors fear strong nations in the world? Why should the Koreans themselves (North and South) allow external forces to continue to divide them?”

“We always strive not to allow actors, foreign or local, to divide the African peoples, regardless of the complications involved,” he underscored, saying that Uganda accommodates many African refugees on account of a conscious ideological position – “not to allow any actors to divide us. We only fight traitors.”

On “the small issue” of enforcing sanctions against the DPRK, Mr. Kaguta told the Assembly that Uganda is in compliance. “We do not have to trade with North Korea. We are, however, grateful that, in the past, the North Koreans helped us to build
our tank forces,” he concluded.

Marking 25th anniversary of UN membership, Armenia pledges continued support

19 September – Taking the podium at the United Nations General Assembly today, the President of Armenia pledged support to the Secretary-General’s priorities as the country marks the 25th anniversary of its succession to the UN.

President Serzh Sargsyan spoke extensively on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict – listing it as being among the various challenges that Armenia has “withstood with dignity” – recommitting the country to its peaceful resolution.

Mr. Sargsyan called the conflict a human rights issue, saying it can be resolved exclusively through one of the fundamental and inalienable human rights – “the people's right to self-determination.”

Noting that next year the UN would mark the 70th anniversary of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the President said that Armenia would at that time table and invite all member States to support a new initiative towards the international recognition of the Armenian genocide.

Turning to the Middle East, he expressed great pain over the humanitarian situation in Syria that has caused the civilian population great suffering, including the country’s Armenian community.

“Within its means, Armenia strives to mitigate the suffering of the Syrian people by providing humanitarian assistance. We also express our willingness to engage into possible discussions on the peace-making efforts in Syria under the UN auspices and with an appropriate mandate,” he stated.

Government bodies must serve people, Uzbek President stresses at UN assembly

19 September – Noting efforts to advance socio-economic development in Uzbekistan, the President of the country highlighted that the ultimate goal is to build a democratic State and a just society, where the priority is implementation of the principle that “human interests come first.”

“We are deeply convinced: the people must not serve the Government bodies, rather the Government bodies must serve the people,” said Shavkat Mirziyoyev, the President of Uzbekistan, at the general debate of the 72nd session of the United Nations General Assembly.

In his address, the noted the country’s five-year development plan, prepared through nationwide discussions, as well as of initiatives in partnership with UN agencies, including the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on advancing human development and rights.
“The most important vector of reforms is liberalization of the economic system and creation of favourable investment climate. We proceed from one simple truth: the richer the people are – the stronger shall be the State,” he added, noting fiscal initiatives including switching to free conversion of the national currency.

Further in his remarks, he also drew attention to the situation of the Aral Sea and urged for full implementation of the UN programme to assist the populations affected by the ecological disaster.

Turning to the challenges posed by terrorism around the world, President Mirziyoyev called for strengthened multilateral cooperation to build social support for the youth, protection of their rights and interests, to save them from what he said was the “virus” of the ideology of violence.

He also called for promoting universal access to education and for eradicating illiteracy and ignorance promote tolerance and mutual respect.

‘No room for double standards’ in combatting terrorism, stresses Egyptian President at UN Assembly

19 September – Noting that comprehensively addressing terrorism is vital for the future of the regional and international order, the President of Egypt called today for an approach to do so that is based not only on eradication of terrorism but also of its root causes, as well as challenging its supporters and those that grant it safe havens.

“In all candidness, there is no room for any serious discussion on the credibility of any international system that applies double standards,” said Abdel Fattah Al Sisi, addressing the general debate of the 72nd session of the United Nations General Assembly.

“Members of different international alliances should answer the questions we are raising, for answers are usually avoided by those who prefer duplicity in order to attain narrow political interests at the demise of States and at the expense of bloodshed by their people, which we shall not allow to be lost in vain under any circumstances.”

The President also noted that eliminating root causes of international crises and factors that endanger international stability necessitated implementing, in practice, the principle of common-but-differentiated responsibility between members of the international community.

For settling disputes, he urged respect of international law and negotiations based on legal, historic and moral principles, as well as respect of sovereignty of states and principle of non-intervention in their internal affairs.

Concluding his address, President Al Sisi called for a moment of “truthful self-reflection” and recognition of the deficiencies that hinder the international system for delivering on the aspirations it was realized for.

“It is also an opportunity to renew our commitment to establish a more equitable international order, given that the attainment of justice globally remains a necessary condition to confront the immense challenges impacting our world today,” he said.
At UN, Central European leaders spotlight development, countering terrorism and securing peace

19 September – Sustainable development, ensuring peace and security and protecting human rights are the basic goals of the international community and the foundations of the United Nations system, Andrzej Duda, the President of Poland, told the General Assembly today.

Mr. Duda pointed out that Poland has adopted and is fully committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, saying: “We believe that only by means of an effective implementation, will we be able to ensure relevant socio-economic conditions for everyone.

For a number of years, the country has fulfilled its obligations to protect the environment and fight climate change. He noted that Poland surpassed its Kyoto Protocol reduction target, made ambitious contributions to the Paris Agreement and will, for the third time, host the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. “We will continue the leadership in climate negotiations in the spirit of the Paris Agreement, ensuring the participation of all States and the transparency of discussions,” he stressed.

He went on to note that human rights are withheld in too many parts of the world, with persecution of persons belonging to religious minorities, including Christians, “a particularly visible problem,” which Poland strongly condemns, along with all instances of persecution and discrimination based on religion.

“‘Solidarity-Responsibility-Engagement’ are the values that we unceasingly seek to promote in the international arena […] to produce sustainable development, security and peace not only for now, but also for future generations to come,” concluded Mr. Duda.

For his part, Miloš Zeman, President of the Czech Republic, told the Assembly that a terror-based anti-civilization had emerged over the last few decades, stressing that “we all express solidarity with the victims and organize protests, but, unfortunately, we still hesitate to fight terrorist organizations with full power.”

He welcomed the Secretary-General’s new Office for Counter-Terrorism as a reasonable and practical solution along with the appointment of its Under-Secretary-General to solve problems in the fight against Islamic terrorism.

The President recalled that, one year ago, he had criticized the UN for not being able to define the word terrorism, noting that there were currently 38 anti-terrorist organizations and institutions under the UN umbrella and pointing out that as that number increased, more terrorist organizations flourished. He also called for the use of military force against terrorism – in accord with Article 47 of the UN Charter.

On the other side of the same coin he pointed to the issue of migration, which, citing Syria and Iraq, he said was often provoked by terrorist actions. Mr. Zeman also underscored the concern that terrorists often hid within migrant populations. Citing Africa, he flagged the issue of “brain drain” – or the weakening of potential in those countries – with large migration flows. The Czech President explained that by welcoming migrants in Europe, countries are fuelling the brain drain phenomenon, and in turn, reversing progress in countries of origin.

Mr. Zeman concluded by saying the war on terrorism should be based on “historical optimism.” He gave the example of Barcelona, in which the Spanish people said they were not afraid, and recalled United States President Franklin Roosevelt’s proclamation of ‘freedom from fear.’ Mr. Zemen echoed what he called the most beautiful expression of historical optimism by quoting theologian Martin Luther: “If I knew that it would be doomsday tomorrow, I shall go today and plant an apple tree.”
Also addressing the Assembly, the President of Slovakia, Andrej Kiska, opened his speech highlighting the need to build safe, healthy, prosperous and just societies for all people to live a dignified life, telling the Assembly that it is not a mere ambition, “It's our duty. It's the reason why our people trust us with the power to act on their behalf.”

While Mr. Kiska called “the respect for the principles of peace and security” essential, he observed that “far too many are dying in senseless conflicts or suffering in displacement” – pointing out that armed conflicts and the resulting refugee crisis “depletes the much-needed resources for social and economic development.”

The President censured short-sighted interests that are built on spreading instability and undermining collective efforts towards peace and security for crippling “the very core of the UN Charter for securing peaceful coexistence among nations.”

While naming Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova as sovereign nations being undermined by an aggressive neighbour, Mr. Kiska cited the Democratic Republic of Korea as “one of the worst threats to international peace and security in recent history.”

“I strongly call on the North Korean regime to terminate its development of weapons of mass destruction and to return on the path of dialogue and building peace in the Korean Peninsula,” he underscored.

**Mali’s President, at General Assembly, calls on world to help equip regional anti-terror force**

19 September – Mali’s President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita took the podium of the General Assembly today to praise United Nations efforts in aiding his West African country recover from rebel attacks, and called on the international community to help fund a new five-nation force to combat terrorism in the region.

“I am duty-bound to hail the remarkable work of the civilian and military personnel of MINUSMA, who work in conditions that I know are difficult, even often perilous,” he told the Assembly on the opening day of its 72nd annual general debate, referring to the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali.

MINUSMA was established by the Security Council in 2013 after extremists took over part of the north of the country. The Mission currently has over 12,000 uniformed personnel and 1,350 civilians deployed to support the political processes and carry out security-related tasks in the country which has suffered from continuing rebel and terrorist attacks.

Mr. Keita said the UN Security Council-endorsed G5 Sahel group, comprising Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad, is slated to deploy its first joint force next month to combat terrorism and drugs, arms and human trafficking throughout Africa’s sub-Saharan Sahel region.

“I call on friendly countries and partner international organizations to support the G5 Sahel joint force with equipment, logistics, communications. Emergency medical evacuations and the fight against improvised explosive devices,” he added.
Netanyahu, at General Assembly, denounces ‘absurdities,’ anti-Semitism in UN decisions

19 September – Citing “a great revolution in Israel’s standing” in the world, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu today denounced the “absurdities” and “global ant-Semitism” in United Nations decisions on Israel and warned Iran of the “mortal peril” it faced in threatening to annihilate his country.

“For too long, the epicentre of global anti-Semitism has been right here at the UN,” he told the General Assembly on the opening day of its 72nd annual general debate, while praising Secretary-General António Guterres’ statement “that denying Israel's right to exist is anti-Semitism, pure and simple.”

Pointing to the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO) declaring the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron as a Palestinian World Heritage Site, he said: “That’s worse than fake news; that’s fake history,” noting that the tomb is revered as the grave of the three Jewish biblical patriarchs.

Turning to Iran, Mr. Netanyahu warned: “Today, I have a simple message to Ayatollah Khamenei, the dictator of Iran: The light of Israel will never be extinguished.” He cited daily Iranian vows to destroy Israel, and called for “fixing or nixing” the international deal to curb Iran’s nuclear programme, because it is slated to end after 10 years.

“The those who threaten us with annihilation put themselves in mortal peril,” he said, warning that Israel will act to prevent Iran from establishing permanent military bases in Syria and producing deadly weapons in Syria or in Lebanon. “As long as Iran’s regime seeks the destruction of Israel, Iran will face no fiercer enemy than Israel.”

He said Israel’s greater world stature is due the fact so many countries have finally woken up to what Israel can do for them in cutting-edge technology, agriculture, water, cybersecurity, medicine and autonomous vehicles. “After 70 years, the world is embracing Israel, and Israel is embracing the world,” he added.

Mr. Netanyahu made only a passing reference to the Middle East conflict, saying Israel is committed to achieving peace with all its Arab neighbours, including the Palestinians.

At UN Assembly, Turkey calls on world to fulfil aid pledges for hosting Syrian refugees

19 September – Stressing that his country has spent over $30 billion to care for more than three million Syrians and 200,000 Iraqis fleeing war in their own homelands, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan took to the podium of the United Nations General Assembly today to call on the world to fulfil its pledges of aid.

“I would like to underscore that we have not received sufficient support from the international community, especially the European Union (EU), for the efforts we have been carrying out,” he told the Assembly on the opening day of its 72nd annual general debate, noting that the EU has sent only 820 million euros out of the 3 billion euros, plus an additional three billion it promised.
Mr. Erdogan said Turkey is waging “an intensive fight against the bloody terrorist organizations in the region such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL or Da’esh) and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), and denounced efforts to change the demographic structure, such as Iraqi Kurdistan’s drive for independence.

“Ignoring the clear and determined stance of Turkey on this matter may lead to a process that shall deprive the Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government even the opportunities they currently enjoy,” he warned.

On the Middle East conflict, he stressed that the internationally endorsed two-state solution can only be possible if Israel immediately stops illegal settlements on Occupied Palestinian Territory, calling on the international community to support the Palestinian struggle for an independent and geographically unified Palestinian state in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza.

**World must unite in fight against terrorism, Qatar urges leaders at UN Assembly**

19 September – Underscoring that extremism and terrorism remain the most serious challenges confronting the world, the Amir of Qatar called on leaders to take concerted action against terrorist organizations and their extremist ideologies to maintain global security and stability.

“The Governments of the world have no choice but to cooperate in the security confrontation with terrorism, but halting the initiation of terrorism and extremism could be achieved by addressing its social, political and cultural root causes,” Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the Amir of the State of Qatar, said today at the general debate at the 72nd session of the General Assembly.

He, however, cautioned that the fight against terrorism must not be linked with any particular religion or society. “While reaffirming our condemnation of all forms of extremism and terrorism, we reject tackling this phenomenon with double standards according to the identity of the perpetrators, or by linking it with any particular religion, race, civilization, culture or society,” he added.

In his remarks, the Amir of Qatar also spoke against a blockade imposed on his country as well as against the demands made on it.

“The countries who imposed the unjust blockade on Qatar have intervened in the internal affairs of the State by putting pressure on its citizens through foodstuffs, medicine and ripping off consanguineous relations to force them change their political affiliation to destabilize a sovereign country,” he said.

Recalling his country’s engagement and contributions for humanitarian assistance under UN frameworks, the Amir stressed that Qatar will continue to provide support to alleviate humanitarian suffering, in particular among the affected Syrian communities, the Amir urged for a political solution to the conflict in that country.

Concluding his address, the Amir of Qatar reiterated that the nation continue to work to strengthen the UN and that Qatar will remain, as is always the case, a safe haven for the oppressed, and will continue its mediation efforts to find just solutions in conflict zones.
At UN, Guatemalan President pledges government’s full commitment to fight against corruption

19 September – Guatemalan President Jimmy Morales, addressing the United Nations General Assembly today, pledged the firmest intention to strengthen and support the International Commission against Impunity of Guatemala (CICIG), while stressing that no institution should interfere in the country’s administration of justice.

The agreement between the UN and Guatemala that established the CICIG was the first of its kind in the world, he said. It was vital that it was complied with faithfully. Having started its work in 2007, its mandate had been extended five times, demonstrating a firm commitment to strengthen and support its work, he explained.

“Our Government is fully committed to the fight against corruption and impunity,” he said, stressing that it is for that reason that Guatemala has begun the process of revising the interpretation and application of the CICIG agreement.

So his Government hoped that with “objectivity and equanimity we can improve the commission's role by ensuring due prosecution, presumption of innocence, and to avoid selective prosecution and the politicization of justice.

Institutional and international action on migration was an important issue for Guatemala, President Morales continued, including partnership with Mexico, Honduras and the United States. Guatemala was counting on the efforts of Member States to negotiate an agreement on safe, regular and orderly migration. Turning to the situation of the so-called “dreamers” in the United States, he said Guatemala hoped that the American people’s sense of humanity would lead to the US Senate adopting legislation that would allow “dreamers” to enjoy legal status in that country.

No one country can resolve global challenges single-handedly, Zambia stresses at UN Assembly

19 September – Reaffirming Zambia’s commitment to international cooperation to address the challenges facing the planet, the country’s President today called on world leaders to come together and act boldly for the sake of the shared future.

“In this globalized and inter-dependent world, no country, however wealthy or powerful, can resolve all these challenges single-handedly,” said Edgar Chagwa Lungu, addressing the general debate at the 72nd session of the General Assembly.

“Common solutions are, therefore, required through a strong United Nations,” he added.

In particular, he noted the challenges brought on by the impact of climate change – intensified through the increase in natural disasters – and how future generations remain most vulnerable out of no fault of their own.

Underscoring the importance of UN in addressing challenges in an interlinked and interdependent world, the Zambian President called for reforms, in particular to the Security Council to make the Organization more effective and efficient.

The Security Council needs to be more representative, democratic and accountable to all UN Member States, he said, adding...
that as Africa constitutes the second largest bloc of the UN Membership, proposals to reform the Council “should heed Africa’s legitimate call.”

Also in his remarks, the President noted important gains registered by the country, based on both the African Union 2063 Agenda and the global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and that the agendas have been integrated into the national development planning framework. He also spoke of improvements in agriculture, employment generation, manufacturing as well as on deepening of democracy, rule of law and human rights.

“Zambia continues to make tremendous strides in the campaign to end child marriage [and] we are also repealing a number of discriminatory and outdated statutes related to children [to make it compatible with] the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child,” he said, urging everyone to concentrate on efforts to protect children and youth.

**UN must bolster role in coordinating Member States’ efforts to tackle challenges, Tajik leader says**

President Emomali Rahmon of the Republic of Tajikistan addresses the General Assembly’s annual general debate. UN Photo/Cia Pak

**19 September** – Addressing the general debate of the United Nations General Assembly today, Emomali Rahmon, the President of Tajikistan, called on the Organization to carry out its mission, coordinating the efforts of Member States to build resilience to the many challenges and threats peoples and countries face.

He stressed that rapid globalization had led to development as well as challenges that had sometimes jeopardized UN efforts to help people lead secure lives. Moreover, ‘tragic events’ undermined global commitments to bring about sustainable development, he said, citing terrorism, transnational organized crime and drug trafficking in that context.

Stressing that terrorist movements flourished in “hot spots” around the world, he said such horrors were not connected with Islamic teachings and did not know the tolerance of Islam. Confronting those threats required Member States to make monumental efforts and to refrain from double standards.

Peace, stability and cooperation were essential for resolving the situation with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, he said, noting that in Afghanistan, the growing activity of violent terrorist groups was a matter of serious concern. “It is high time to take strong, coordinated measures to tackle terrorism and drug trafficking,” he said, calling on the international community to help, just as his country was ready to do so.

Calling the adoption of the 2030 Agenda a milestone for the international community to work together, he said Tajikistan had made great strides in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For the success of the Agenda as a whole, it would be necessary to help less developed countries, including landlocked nations, that lacked access to ports. They required more assistance and the UN, through the Economic and Social Council and specialized agencies, should play an important role.
At UN, Colombian President says country’s successful peace process could serve as model for others

19 September – In his final address to the United Nations General Assembly as President of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos delivered a message of peace and highlighted the results of the agreement reached between his Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP), which he described as a model for the rest of the world.

“If we were able to put an end to an armed conflict in Colombia that has left hundreds of thousands dead and millions of victims and displaced persons, there is hope for other ongoing conflicts in the world,” stated Mr. Santos Calderón in his address to delegations attending the Assembly’s annual general debate.

Colombia had succeeded thanks to political will and an awareness that peace is a necessary condition for both progress and happiness. Paying tribute to the United Nations, he said a special mission had been established by the Security Council to verify and monitor the disarmament of FARC, as well as the ceasefire between the guerrillas and the Government. More than 900,000 weapons had been destroyed and members of the former guerrilla groups had created a political movement to defend their ideas in a democratic manner.

“This is what a peace process is all about,” he exclaimed, “replacing bullets for votes and ending the use of weapons as a means for political pressure,” said Mr. Santos Calderón, explaining that in the coming days, another mission recently authorized by the Security Council would be established to reintegrate guerrillas into civil life, he said, and ensure security to both the former combatants and communities that had suffered from armed conflict.

Turning to wider issues, he said expressed concern at the situation in Venezuela and the gradual dismantling of its democracy.

He called upon the Secretary General and the international community to support the Venezuelan people. Turning to terrorism, he said it should be tackled with every means possible – military, political, intelligence and international cooperation – while its roots of fear, exclusion and hate must be replaced with love, compassion and respect for difference.

More broadly, the war on drugs had not yet been won and new strategies were needed, he said, pressing States to include human rights in their policies against drugs. Colombia’s vulnerability to climate change had paved the way for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
Transfer of power essential to strengthen democracy, Sri Lankan President says at UN Assembly

19 September – Noting that history is marked with leaders who have sought to consolidate power within themselves, the President of Sri Lanka today underscored that as leaders come into power, they must yield it to build democratic institutions and safeguard democracies.

“I have established democracy in my country and have taken action to get rid of political groups which were moving toward autocracy,” stated President Maithripala Sirisena, noting that since being elected in 2015, he had transferred executive powers to his country’s Parliament.

In his address to the 72nd annual general debate at the United Nations General Assembly, President Sirisena further said that Sri Lanka had suffered a protracted conflict, lasting over 30 years and having devastating impact on the country’s economy.

Therefore, sustainable development must be a priority for Sri Lanka, he added, noting that it should also be a global priority.

Stressing the worsening impact of climate change around the world, the also said that the implementation of the Paris Agreement on climate change was essential for the future of humanity, and highlighted that Sri Lanka is focused on sustainable agriculture.

Concluding his remarks, he said that national reconciliation is important, particularly given the country’s diverse population and expressed that while certain elements expected fast results which he said would merely be “short-term solutions.”

Sri Lanka wants to create peace and unity and to promote brotherhood among its people through prosperity, he added, noting: “ours is a slow and steady pace.”

At General Assembly, France urges return to optimism, values that underpinned UN’s founding

19 September – Citing a litany of world crises and quoting directly from victims of man-made and natural disasters, French President Emmanuel Macron today called for a return to the optimism and universal values that inspired the founding of the United Nations 72 years ago, taking into the account the new realities of the 21st century.

“In the 21st century we need a responsible and efficient United Nations endowed with the means to overcome its own blockages when hundreds of thousands of lives are at stake,” he told the 72nd UN General Assembly on the opening day of its general debate, calling on the UN Security Council’s five permanent members to forgo their right of veto in cases of mass atrocities.

From Syria, Iraq and Libya to Mali and Myanmar, Mr. Macron denounced extremism, terrorism and human rights abuses, called for compassion for refugees and migrants and warned that the root causes behind these disasters must be addressed through development, education and elimination of hunger.

Citing the fate of a compatriot on St. Martin, whose house was destroyed by Hurricane Irma which recently devastated the
Caribbean island, Mr. Macron underscored the vital importance of the 2015 Paris Agreement limiting the emission of global warming greenhouse gases, recognising the United States decision to leave it, but adding that “the door will always be open” for the US to return.

Turning to the nuclear threats facing the world, he called for negotiations and a political solution in the Democratic Republic of Korea’s (DPRK) “furious” race for nuclear weapons, while praising the 2015 accord limiting Iran’s nuclear capabilities. It would be “a grave error” to renounce or fail to respect it, he said, adding he told both US and Iranian leaders that yesterday.

**International solidarity key to address global challenges, urges Nigerian President Buhari**

19 September – Highlighting the importance of international cooperation to address many pressing challenges around the globe, Muhammadu Buhari, the President of Nigeria, urged world leaders to sustain such collaboration, particularly in instances where there resources are insufficient and capacity weak at the national level.

Noting, in particular, the “exemplary show of solidarity” by the international community in confronting threats posed by the Boko Haram and Al Qaida terrorist groups in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin region, he urged greater cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in conflict prevention and management.

“The UN should continue to take primary leadership of the maintenance of international peace and Security by providing, in a predictable and sustainable manner, adequate funding and other enablers to regional initiatives and peacekeeping operations authorized by the Security Council,” said President Buhari, addressing the general debate at the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly.

The President of Nigeria also noted that widening inequalities between societies and gaps between rich and poor nations contribute to increasing instability and called for a continued focus on addressing these challenges.

Further in his remarks, he also urged greater efforts for a peaceful solution to the nuclear weapons development programme of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) and noted that his country proposed a Security-Council led UN delegation, which should include members from all regions, to urgently engage with the country’s leadership.

He also called on all UN Member States to ratify, without delay, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which will open for signature tomorrow.

In conclusion, President Buhari reiterated his country’s commitment to continue to support the UN in all its efforts, including the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
'To each his own’ not a viable alternative in a world facing shared challenges, Swiss President says

19 September – With the world facing complex challenges such as climate change, humanitarian disasters and migration, all spanning geographical borders and requiring collective efforts to effectively address, the President of Switzerland told delegations in the General Assembly today that a strong multilateral system centered on a strong United Nations must be established.

“We need a strong United Nations and the fact that we need to repeat this today should set the alarm bells ringing,” stressed Doris Leuthard in her address to the Assembly’s annual general debate, noting at the same time that it is important to recognize the milestones UN Member States have achieved in tackling global challenges, coming together to adopt the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

“The success of those efforts will depend on how well those instruments are implemented,” she said, also welcoming reforms outlined by the Secretary-General in the areas of peace and security, development and management, expressing particular support for the priority placed on prevention, as the price to pay for conflict in humanitarian, economic and financial terms was much higher than the costs of prevention activities.

Citing the migration crisis in Europe as a challenge requiring cooperation, she stressed: “We need solutions based on solidarity between countries. All countries must do their part.” Turning to the nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula, she said Switzerland is committed to non-proliferation and the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. “Only negotiations and a diplomatic process will make it possible to find a solution to the security problem posed by the nuclear crisis in the Korean Peninsula,” she added.

On other pressing issues, Ms. Leuthard said access to the Internet, the impact of digitization on sustainable development and cybersecurity must be addressed hand in hand. In addition dialogue is essential and must be conducted on large scale and include all relevant parties. Yet, political dialogue has proven insufficient on the issue of climate change. “The Paris Agreement must be quickly implemented,” she said, noting the importance of the private sector’s role in devising solutions.

Indeed, scientific diplomacy has allowed for making the correct decisions, and politicians must base their decisions on evidence-based policy, she said, convinced of need invest in effective multilateral system. “To each his own is not a viable alternative,” she asserted.

Also addressing the Assembly, Albert, II, Prince of Monaco, said the international community could not fail to act in the face of global threats, including the nuclear threat on the Korean peninsula, and must deter those who expose humankind to disaster. Monaco lent its support to collective action for peace and security, he said, noting his country’s membership in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe.

“Working to stop mass suffering is imperative,” he said, expressing support for the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic.

He went on to say that famine in Africa, largely exacerbated by war, has become a humanitarian disaster. Through work with various international organizations and the development of its own strategic plan for public assistance, Monaco is working to guarantee food security and fight corruption. Key to those ideals is the fight against impunity, and his country was committed to respect for justice and peace. Attacks claiming innocent lives affected all of us, regardless of where they took place, he noted.

Climate change remains an imminent threat to humankind, he said. Recent natural hazards put into focus the importance of the Paris Agreement and the need to adapt, he continued, stressing that a change in lifestyle is “long overdue.” Calling attention to “glaring inequalities,” he urged moving forward with a resolve to eliminate sexual exploitation, pointing out that that included those abuses in United Nations peacekeeping missions.
Recalling Monaco had presented its first report on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals to the high-level political forum in the summer, he said Goal 14 on aquatic marine life was of particular importance to his country.

“Our ability to save the ocean from its gradual decline will enable us to save our planet,” he said. In that regard, he outlined Monaco’s various activities on the safeguarding of marine protected areas and other related issues. He concluded by emphasizing that science should guide all States as they worked towards a better world.

The 21st century will be an African century, Guinean President tells UN General Assembly

19 September – The 21st century will see Africa take its rightful place on the world stage, Alpha Condé, the President of Guinea, which also holds the current presidency of the African Union, told the United Nations 72nd General Assembly on the opening day of its general debate today.

“The 21st century will without doubt be a century in which Africans are going to are going to count for more and in a decisive way because there is an ever-greater determination among Africa’s leaders and youth that the hour of renewal has arrived,” he said.

“Africa, formerly subjugated, ruthlessly exploited and molded by the will of others, has awakened. She has arisen to lead the battle for sustainable development, justice and good governance.”

Stressing that Africa’s lack of development is not its fated destiny and that it has been the most dynamic continent over the past decade, Mr. Condé highlighted the need for economic diversification, industrialization and the need to instruct and deploy two million community health workers throughout the continent.

As African leaders have repeatedly advocated at many previous General Assembly General Debates, he called for the enlargement of the 15-member Security Council, the only UN body whose decisions are mandatory and have the force of international law, to reflect the new realities of the world, including permanent seats with veto powers for African States.

‘We need more diplomacy, more negotiating’ Brazilian President tells UN Assembly

19 September – The President of Brazil, the first Head of State traditionally to address the annual United Nations General Assembly’s general debate, pledged today that his country will sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons – reiterating that the nuclear powers undertake additional disarmament.

“Brazil was among the drafters of the Treaty. It will be a historical moment,” President Michel Temer said. “We must acknowledge that there are still issues in the agenda of peace and security that give rise to serious apprehension,” he added, noting the recent nuclear and missile tests on the Korean Peninsula, which Brazil condemns “with the utmost vehemence.”

In an address that covered a wide range of issues, including trade, development, conflicts and the refugee crisis, Mr. Temer told the Assembly that while Organization’s aspirations have not been entirely fulfilled, the UN has represented the prospect for a more just world – one of peace and prosperity, saying “We need more...
diplomacy, more negotiating, [...] we need the UN more than before.”

Maintaining the importance of multilateralism, the Brazilian President advocated for an expanded Security Council aligned with the reality of the twenty-first century, “to listen to the will of the overwhelming majority of the Assembly.”

Turning to the 2030 Agenda, Mr. Temer said: “Brazil’s commitment to sustainable development is a deep-rooted one. It permeates our public policies and our actions abroad.” He pointed to the country’s contributions, including its commitment to the Paris Agreement, and highlighted that Brazil is at the forefront of a low carbon economy in which clean and renewable energy accounts for more than 40 per cent of its energy matrix – three times more of the world’s average. “We are leaders in hydropower and bioenergy,” he stressed.

Noting that Brazil has the largest tropical forest on the planet, he announced that the country’s efforts in combating deforestation have resulted in a more than 20 per cent reduction in the Amazonian region, saying “We are back on the right track and on this track we shall remain.”

Also in South America, Mr. Temer pointed to the deteriorating human rights situation in Venezuela, saying that Brazil stands with the Venezuela people and “have welcomed thousands of migrants and refugees” from that country.

No alternative to international cooperation, stresses Austrian minister at UN Assembly

19 September – Conflicts around the globe, as well as the pressing challenges of poverty, hunger and climate change continue to exact terrible human suffering, said Sebastian Kurz, the Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of Austria, noting that the most concerning issue is the lack of trust in the ability of States and institutions to solve these challenges.

“This is a dangerous development because there is no alternative to international cooperation,” he said, addressing the 72nd annual general debate at the United Nations General Assembly.

Speaking on terrorism, he underscored that in addition to destroying radical groups militarily where they operate, more action needs to be taken to stop radicalism in societies and to prevent youths from being misled.

He also underscored that the migration crisis, could not be managed by any one country on its own.

“Uncontrolled migration leads to chaos, therefore, we need to manage orderly migration and support people as much as possible in their countries of origin,” he added, noting the need for more effective control of borders, combatting the activities of human traffickers and effective support for countries of origin.

Turning to the crisis emanating from the nuclear weapons development programme of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Minister Kurz reiterated that nuclear disarmament remained the “number one unfinished business.”

“Today, we often hear that nuclear weapons are necessary for security. This narrative is not only wrong, it is dangerous,” he said, urging support for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, adopted in July at a UN conference.

Concluding his remarks, he noted that a time when universal values are under threat, the international community needs to stand strong for human rights, rule of law and good governance. “I can assure you that Austria will continue to work for effective international cooperation.”
Mauritanian minister cites country’s successful efforts to combat terrorism

19 September – In his address to the United Nations General Assembly, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Mauritania, Isselkou Ould Ahmed Izid Bih, welcomed the progress made in the fight against terrorism and migration through an approach based on dialogue and openness.

After heavy fighting in 2010 and 2011, and despite a complex regional situation, Mauritania has faced the threat of terrorism successfully. “We have strengthened our defensive capacities while respecting human rights and putting in place a policy of sustainable development,” he explained. In addition, Mauritania has succeeded in building a constructive dialogue with the opposition and civil society, improving governance and reforming institutions, particularly with regard to women’s rights.

Mauritania, he continued, has reformed its legal frameworks on the basis of international agreements, in particular, to better combat terrorism. To this end, he noted the conclusion of agreements with some groups in order to allow their members to reintegrate into society in a productive way.

Mauritania, in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), has eradicated illegal migration from its territory, the Minister continued. “We also set out a roadmap on the fight against terrorism, including through a social assistance program,” he said, adding that repatriation programmes have also been implemented for migrants, in order to enable them to return to the country under favourable conditions.

The Minister also spoke about the problems caused by climate change in the Sahel region. In this regard, he encouraged all parties to the Paris Agreement on climate change to honour their commitments in order to limit the impacts of the phenomenon.

At UN, Central American leaders urge ‘rethink’ of system used to classify development status

19 September – In his address to the United Nations General Assembly, Costa Rican President Luis Guillermo Solis Rivera called for the UN to rethink the concept of per capita income as a reference for determining a country's development, stressing that only a multidimensional vision of development and poverty will allow an understanding of the needs of populations and families.

This would include issues such as access to healthcare, social equality, gender equality, and address social, economic, and environmental vulnerabilities and is especially relevant to the needs of middle-income countries.

He also highlighted the crucial importance of gender equality. “Every day, women strive for a world where the full recognition and exercise of their rights is more tangible,” he said. “Their fights are inherent to the building of truly democratic societies and the inclusive coexistence in all our countries.”

Turning to climate change he said there is enough evidence to support the idea that a transformative solution to climate
change is within human capabilities.

In his remarks, Juan Orlando Hernandez Alvarado, President of Honduras, said his administration is building a “new Honduras” by tackling violent crime and restoring its economy. Together with Guatemala, Honduras is creating a zone dedicated to the free circulation of goods, services and people. He said negotiations are under way with El Salvador and Nicaragua to join the agreement.

Honduras, along with El Salvador and Nicaragua, and with the support of the Central American Bank for Economic Integration, set up the Gulf of Fonseca Development Plan, which will create a pole of economic development. In addition, the implementation of the economic development program "Honduras 2020" provides for the creation of 600,000 jobs over the next five years.

The President also welcomed the progress made by his country in terms of transparency and the fight against corruption. “We have purged the national police, created anti-corruption tribunals and strengthened the Ministry of Public Security,” he said, in addition to signing an agreement with the Organization of American States (OAS) corruption and impunity.

However, he continued, the fight against poverty is the “priority” in the programme of governments of developing countries. “We must overcome the structural conditions that exclude entire sections of our societies,” he said, adding that poverty is the cause of migration, insecurity and violence. He also denounced the classification system used by developed countries to measure the level of development aid, explaining that Honduras, considered as a middle-tier country, is penalized.

Concluding his speech, the President said that migrants are the "new martyrs and new heroes" of our time who have to face all the challenges before they can bring their talents and dedication to their host countries. Honduras, he said, was "making every effort" to improve the living conditions of its citizens so that they did not have to leave their country in search of opportunities.

**UN stands ready to assist following deadly earthquake in Mexico**

19 September – Secretary-General António Guterres voiced sadness at the loss of life and damage resulting from the earthquake that occurred in Mexico today, and expressed the readiness of the United Nations to assist.

“Today’s disaster comes just two weeks after the country suffered a strong earthquake, which already resulted in significant loss of life and suffering,” noted a statement issued by Mr. Guterres’ Spokesman, Stéphane Dujarric.

According to media reports, over 100 people have been killed, including scores in the state of Morelos, which was close to the epicentre of the 7.1-magnitude quake. Dozens were also killed in the capital, Mexico City.

The Secretary-General extended his condolences to the Government and people of Mexico and wished those injured a speedy recovery. He also commended the Government and the civil society for their speedy response.
UN scaling up assistance as number of Rohingya refugees grows to over 400,000

19 September – As the number of Rohingya who have fled to Bangladesh surpasses 400,000, United Nations agencies are scaling up their efforts to assist the displaced and Secretary-General António Guterres renewed his call on the authorities in Myanmar to take steps to address the crisis.

“We are all shocked by the dramatic escalation of sectarian tensions in Myanmar’s Rakhine state,” Mr. Guterres remarked today in his address to the opening of the General Assembly’s high-level debate.

“A vicious cycle of persecution, discrimination, radicalization and violent repression has led more than 400,000 desperate people to flee, putting regional stability at risk.”

He stressed that the authorities in Myanmar must end the military operations, allow unhindered humanitarian access and recognize the right of refugees to return in safety and dignity. They must also address the grievances of the Rohingya, whose status has been left unresolved for far too long, he added.

Marzuki Darusman, the Chairperson of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, told the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva that it is clear that there is “a grave humanitarian crisis” underway that requires urgent attention.

In addition to the over 400,000 people who have sought refuge in Bangladesh since 25 August, Mr. Darusman noted that there are reports that nearly 200 Rohingya villages in the affected area have been emptied.

“It is important for us to see with our own eyes the sites of these alleged violations and abuses and to speak directly with the affected people and with the authorities,” he stated, noting that the Commission has requested the Government of Myanmar for unfettered access to the country.

UN aid agencies scaling up assistance

As the number of those crossing the border into Bangladesh increases, the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) is ramping up its operations, including moving new arrivals into family tents and temporary communal shelters at a new extension site next to the Kutupalong camp near Cox’s Bazar.

Spokesperson Duniya Aslam Khan told a news conference in Geneva that refugees have told UNHCR staff that they suffered from cold and rain during their treks from Myanmar.

“Many had fallen ill, particularly small children. There is urgent need for more latrines, not least to reduce risks of a spread of disease with so many people living in close quarters. Many also complained of hunger and said they had eaten little on their journeys, which took up to 10 days on foot,” she stated.

With an estimated 415,000 refugees having arrived since late August the humanitarian challenges have become immense, according to UNHCR, which noted the “remarkable generosity” by many individual Bangladeshis, with people trucking food and clothes to the refugees in the camps and others camping along the single main road.

However, the Government needs more support, and UNHCR will be issuing an appeal this week for the emergency humanitarian response in Bangladesh till the end of year.

Meanwhile, the World Health Organization (WHO) is providing critical support to step-up health services delivery in Cox’s
Bazar.

“Vulnerable populations require access to health services, including emergency and basic health care. Access for women to reproductive health services is especially important,” noted Dr. Poonam Khetrapal Singh, Regional Director for WHO South-East Asia.

The agency added in a news release that poor nutrition, communicable diseases (including vaccine-preventable and water-borne diseases), injuries and other concerns such as mental health provide immense public health challenges that the Bangladeshi Ministry of Health, WHO and other health partners are working to address.

Also today, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, said her office has been closely monitoring reports of sexual violence committed during the insurgency operations. She is particularly concerned about the security of women and girls who constitute the majority of those crossing the border.

“More than half of the Rohingya women interviewed in early 2017 in a refugee camp in Bangladesh reported experiencing rape or other forms of sexual violence, but due to the acute social stigma, such cases are significantly under-reported,” said a statement issued by the Special Representative.

Interviews with victims and witnesses indicate “disturbing patterns” of rape, gang rape and other forms of sexual violence, such as invasive body searches. “Survivors have described sexual violence being used as a calculated tool of terror to force targeted populations to flee. They describe the perpetrators as mainly members of the military, with the police and Rakhine villagers also identified, in some cases,” added the statement.

Over 40 million people caught in modern slavery, 152 million in child labour – UN

19 September – More than 40 million people around the world were victims of modern slavery – forced labour and forced marriage – in 2016, a United Nations study has found, revealing the true scale of such practices that disproportionately affect women and girls.

Global estimates of modern slavery: Forced labour and forced marriage show that among the victims, about 25 million were in forced labour, and 15 million were in forced marriage.

Of the total, almost 29 million – or 71 per cent – are women and girls. Women represent 99 per cent of victims of forced labour in the commercial sex industry and 84 per cent of people in forced marriage.

The study was prepared jointly by the UN International Labour Organization (ILO) and Walk Free Foundation, in partnership with the UN International Organization for Migration (IOM).

A separate ILO study, Global estimates of child labour: Results and trends, 2012-2016, confirmed that about 152 million children, aged between 5 and 17, were subject to child labour.

Child labour remains concentrated primarily in agriculture, at 70.9 per cent. Almost one in five child labourers, or 17.1 per cent, work in the services sector while 11.9 per cent of child labourers work in industry.

“The world won’t be in a position to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals unless we dramatically increase our efforts to fight these scourges,” said ILO Director-General Guy Ryder.

“These new global estimates can help shape and develop interventions to prevent both forced labour and child labour,” he
The United Nations refugee agency is urging the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to ensure protection for refugees and asylum-seekers following last week’s shooting incident in Kamanyola in which at least 39 people were killed and 94 injured.

“This is a devastating tragedy. It should never have happened,” said UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi.

According to a press release from the Office of the High Commissioner (UNHCR), Mr. Grandi welcomed the announcement from Congolese officials to launch an inquiry into the incident and called for it to be detailed.

The incident took place on 15 September after Congolese soldiers fired live rounds at Burundian protestors in the eastern part of the country, many of whom UNHCR believes were refugees and asylum-seekers. The protest, reported to be initially peaceful, allegedly started after a small group of Burundians were detained by Congolese authorities, creating fears they were going to be deported to Burundi.

The dead included Burundian men, women and one child. The incident also resulted in the death of one Congolese soldier, with six others wounded.

“We need to establish facts and determine responsibility and make sure that such an incident never happens again,” Mr. Grandi said.

UNHCR immediately deployed a team to the area on Saturday where it is working with the medical staff of a partner organization in the local hospital to provide life-saving medical assistance to the injured.

The UNHCR team on the ground reports a tense situation with over 2,400 Burundians seeking protection next to the UN peacekeeping mission’s small base in Kamanyola.

DRC hosts more than 43,700 refugees who have arrived from Burundi since 2015.
UN chief hails transformative power of women’s economic empowerment

19 September – Extolling the benefits of women’s economic empowerment, both for economies as well as societies as a whole, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres today encouraged governments, the private sector, multilateral institutions and others to take measures to achieve the full and equal participation of women in the economy.

“Women’s economic empowerment contributes to more stable and resilient economies, and more peaceful societies,” Mr. Guterres said in his remarks to the meeting of the High-Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment, held at UN Headquarters.

“It is also a necessary condition for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals,” he added, referring to the set of goals world leaders pledged to achieve by 2030 to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all.

Today’s event, entitled “Leave No One Behind: Actions and Commitments for Women’s Economic Empowerment,” was meant to take forward the recommendations made by the High-Level Panel in a report released in March of this year.

The report stressed that building women’s economic empowerment must be done in ways that leaves nobody behind, particularly the most marginalized women at the bottom of the pyramid. It also acknowledged that gender inequalities remain persistent across the world, but they can be overcome if barriers are removed.

In his remarks, Mr. Guterres noted that currently, only 50 per cent of women of working age are in the labour force – compared to 77 per cent of men. In addition, women tend to be concentrated also in informal and precarious employment, and they are paid on average 23 per cent less than men and carry out at least two and a half times more unpaid household and care work.

“This is not only detrimental to women, it represents a loss for society as a whole,” he told the gathering, which included the participation of Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, International Monetary Fund Managing Director Christine Lagarde and UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka.

“Studies show that, if women were able to participate equally in the economy, global GDP could increase by 26 per cent – the equivalent of $12 trillion dollars – by 2025,” he went on to note.

Mr. Guterres called for translating the Panel’s guidance into actions that will bring results for women and girls.

“It is the time to take concrete measures to realize our shared vision of gender equality and women’s rights in the economy.”

Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka highlighted some of the actions taken by UN Women to address the work of the Panel, including the launch of the Unstereotype Alliance, with 20 major companies that have the biggest marketing and advertising budgets in the world – from Unilever to Google, to AT&T to Procter & Gamble and Facebook.

“Theyir goal is to transform themselves so that they do not perpetuate stereotypes against women through their advertising and marketing,” she noted.

UN Women also launched a flagship programming initiative called, “Making Every Woman and Girl Count,” which focuses on data collection and ensuring that it can provide disaggregated data to track the implementation of the SDGs.
She also noted some of the areas where efforts need to be beefed-up, such as the need for more countries to ratify the ILO Convention on domestic workers, and addressing the rights of women with disabilities and those affected by conflict.

**Leaders meeting at UN underscore need to fast-track climate action**

**19 September** – Leaders from various levels of government, the private sector and civil society highlighted the need for climate action as they convened at United Nations Headquarters, where Secretary-General António Guterres warned that current pledges and plans are insufficient to keep global temperature rise to well below 2 degrees.

“Hurricanes Harvey and Irma and Maria and the massive floods in South Asia are just the most recent demonstration of the urgency of tackling climate change,” said Mr. Guterres in his remarks to the Leaders’ Dialogue on Climate Change, held today on the margins of the high-level session of the General Assembly.

“Such events will only become more frequent and more savage, with more dramatic humanitarian and economic consequences,” he added.

In 2020, parties to the Paris Agreement on climate change, which entered force in 2016, will review progress made to date.

“By then, we need to make sure that we have substantially raised the bar of ambition,” Mr. Guterres said, outlining six issues to focus on: investment in clean technology; carbon pricing; the energy transition; risk mitigation; augmenting the contribution of sub-national actors and business; and mobilizing finance.

“Momentum is growing. Now let’s make it grow even more,” he said.

Yesterday, the Secretary-General addressed a gathering of global leaders from local governments, the private sector and civil society, which was also attended by California Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr; UN Special Envoy for Cities and Climate Change Michael R. Bloomberg; and former US Vice President Al Gore.

“Climate change is not a distant problem for future generations,” he told them. “It is here, now, and we need to deal with it.”

Both meetings were held to forge alliances for implementing the Paris Agreement in the run-up to a Climate Summit Mr. Guterres plans to hold in 2019.
In wake of Hurricane Irma, UN launches $55 million plan to assist Cubans in need

19 September – The United Nations system in Cuba today launched an action plan requiring $55.8 million to address the urgent needs of over 2 million people severely affected by Irma, the strongest hurricane ever reported in the Atlantic.

Even as many islands in the Caribbean are trying to recover, Hurricane Maria – the latest in a series of hurricanes – has wrought additional destruction across the region. The UN is standing by to assist those nations and territories affected by the latest hurricane.

In a statement issued by his spokesperson, UN Secretary-General António Guterres voiced his sadness at the destruction caused across the Caribbean region by Hurricane Maria in a context “where many islands are already working to respond to the devastation and suffering arising from Hurricane Irma earlier this month.”

Hurricane Irma left a wake of destruction on several islands in the Caribbean, affecting Antigua and Barbuda, Anguilla, the British Virgin Islands, St. Barthélemy, St. Martin, the United States Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Cuba, the Bahamas, Turks and Caicos and other islands in the Caribbean Sea, affecting millions of people and resulting in massive economic damage across the region.

UN agencies have been assisting with response and recovery efforts, and the Organization launched a $15.1 million regional humanitarian response plan, covering the urgent needs of the most vulnerable populations impacted.

In Cuba, initial assessments found that a number of critical areas have been severely affected, including housing, access to potable water and electric power services, health and education institutions, roads and telecommunications.

The plan of action includes projects in shelter and early recovery; food security; water, hygiene and sanitation; health; education; and coordination. Special attention will be given to assisting priority groups such as the elderly, pregnant women and infants, and young children.

French initiative to create global environment pact deserves support, says Secretary-General

19 September – United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres today urged global support for France’s initiative to create the first international legally binding document on the environment, at an event held on the margins of the annual leaders’ summit of the General Assembly.

“It is about our duty of care to provide an environment that supports the health, well-being, dignity, and prosperity of everyone on this planet,” Mr. Guterres said. “Let us support this worthy initiative.”

According to the Permanent Mission of France to the UN, which organized the event, threats to the environment are increasingly impacting the survival of mankind and the planet. It is, therefore, urgent to act and build a sustainable future.

However, experts have highlighted a clear legal challenge: international environment law is fragmented in many
conventions and international declarations, the Mission noted.

As such, the Global Pact for the Environment will be the first international legally binding document that gathers and harmonizes all environmental laws in one single document.

The objective of today’s event, which drew many world leaders, was to launch an important consultation to elaborate the instrument.

Mr. Guterres stressed that the realization of aspirations for peace, prosperity and sustainable development hinges on the health of the planet.

He noted that there will soon be more plastic than fish in the seas and biodiversity is disappearing at a rate one thousand times faster than the natural rate. In addition, 90 per cent of the population is breathing polluted air.

“Our only hope to solve these problems is to join forces to protect the environment,” he said, adding that this understanding is already common to both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015, and the Paris Agreement on climate change, which entered into force in 2016.

Also addressing the event was General Assembly President Miroslav Lajčák, who said that this proposal deserves consideration and deliberation among Member States and other stakeholders.

Member States need to consider appropriate options for an eventual Global Pact to fit with the more than 500 existing multilateral environmental agreements, he said, while also stressing the need to give due attention to the three pillars of sustainable development, namely the economic, the social and the environmental, in a balanced, indivisible and comprehensive manner.

He also said that the UN system, civil society, the private sector, academia and other relevant stakeholders need to be involved in this ambitious initiative as inclusiveness is key to delivering an outcome that achieves the needed transformation at all levels.