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UN General Assembly President hails annual debate as ‘historic and seminal’

3 October - The United Nations General Assembly wound up its 70th annual General Debate today, attended by the highest number of Heads of State and Government ever, with Assembly President Mogens Lykketoft calling it a “historic” event crowned by the “truly seminal commitment” to achieving ambitious new development goals by 2030.

In a closing speech he summarized the multifaceted issues raised by speaker after speaker who took the podium in the Assembly hall, both at the six-day General Debate and the three-day summit on the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that preceded it.

“As we commemorate the 70th anniversary [of the founding of the UN], it was fitting and reassuring that leaders recalled and reaffirmed the spirit and the principles of the Charter and confirmed their faith in the central role of UN in international cooperation,” he declared.

He noted that the one of the matters most consistently raised over the past six days, was the plight of refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants right across the world.

“It was stressed again and again that this unprecedented crisis of global dimensions calls for an unprecedented global response rooted in international law and international solidarity,” Mr. Lykketoft said.

“Indeed, the tragic humanitarian emergency in many parts of the world - not least in Syria and its neighbouring countries – was highlighted repeatedly. In relation to that particular conflict, many called for a renewed effort from global and regional powers to find a necessary and peaceful political solution.”

He underscored the emphasis many Member States laid on the need to address the particular obstacles to peace in Africa, in parts of Europe and beyond, stemming from instability, violent conflict, and the spread of extremism and terrorism, calling

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the actions of the so-called Islamic state group, Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab and other extremist groups an affront to common humanity.

He also noted that numerous speakers stressed the pressing need for reform of the Security Council to effectively fulfil its mandate and reflect the geopolitical realities of the world of today, and they voiced the hope for a transparent process over the coming year to identify a new Secretary-General to take over the helm of the UN in 2017.

**At UN, Latin American leaders underline ‘insufficient’ progress, urgent need to address climate change**

*3 October* - Opening the floor at the United Nations General Assembly today, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of El Salvador said “we have concluded a stage in the world’s history marked by important progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), however, this progress has not been sufficient.”

“The fight against poverty and inequality still remains,” Hugo Roger Martínez Bonilla told Government representatives on the last day of the annual debate. “Economic and financial crises have increased the vulnerability of the poorest.”

“Minister Martínez Bonilla stressed that special attention must be paid to the matter of sovereign debt. “The negative impact of debt servicing on the needs for development and the effective enjoyment of human right in our countries is enormous, since it directly affects the capacity of the State to generate public investment and to stimulate private investment.”

“The Salvadoran Minister said that to attain the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a new vision of international cooperation is required: “We must work towards achieving a change in the current structure of financing for development and we must strengthen South-South cooperation without delay.”

“On the issue of migrants, he said El Salvador recognizes that this group is mentioned as a vulnerable one in the 2030 Agenda, adding that migrants also make an “undoubted contribution” to the development of the countries in which they live. In addition, he said El Salvador insists that the international community and organizations involved with migration, in particular the UN, guide actions to strengthen cooperation initiatives in the area of international migration.

“Meanwhile, Suriname was also represented at today’s general debate by its Minister of Foreign Affairs, Niermala Badrising, who said climate change is high on the national agenda of his Government.

“Although Suriname is the smallest South American country, we are housing about 8 per cent of the world's untouched tropical forest,” he declared. “With approximately 94 per cent of rainforest covering our country, we can proudly inform this Assembly of Nations that we are the greenest nation on Earth.”

“He added that Suriname “can be regarded as quite special” since it is one of the few carbon negative countries in the world, noting that his Government looks forward to a new global agreement at COP-21[the climate change conference] in Paris, France, later this year.

“Minister Badrising also stressed that despite many positive developments over the last seven decades, the socioeconomic development and the existing social inequality in a number of regions remain “alarming,” and that in his country’s view, social and economic developments are interlinked and interdependent.

“In her address to the Assembly, the Minister of Foreign Affairs for Dominica, Francine Baron, spoke about the recent devastation caused by Tropical Storm Erika and also urged the international community to take action on climate change.

“She said that, when preparing for the 70th session of the General Assembly, her delegation decided to highlight “the challenges brought about by the increasing concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and the resulting changes in
global climate.”

“Climate change, she said, is a major threat posed to our planet that has a disproportionately high impact on Small island developing states (SIDS).

“Our concerns have magnified since August 27, 2015,” she said, noting that Tropical Storm Erika brought “up to 18 inches of rain in 16 hours” in Dominica, with rapid flash flooding and numerous landslides. Some 13 people have been confirmed dead and 17 are still missing as a result of the storm.

“She added that 90 per cent of Dominica’s Gross Domestic Product had been wiped out, and World Bank estimates indicated a loss of $483 million in infrastructure.

“Thanking the international community for its relief support, she said they would now build a “stronger and more climate resilient Dominica.”

“Ms. Baron also noted the upcoming climate change conference in Paris, saying her country expected all parties to “heed the warnings of the scientific community and the plea of us who experience the impact of climate change on a daily basis, and make a serious commitment to combat global warming.”

Island States at UN call for ‘genuine and durable partnership’ to meet Global Goals

3 October - Speaking at the United Nations General Assembly today, leaders of small island States called for the urgent need to expand genuine and durable partnerships within the international community to successfully implement and meet the objectives of Agenda 2030 and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

“If our collective will to implement the 2030 Agenda is sincere, then it is essential to greatly enhance the means and mechanisms of implementation on a much greater scale than those recommended in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda,” said, Caleb Otto, Permanent Representative of Palau to the United Nations, referring to another recently adopted plank making up the UN post-2015 framework, this one dealing with development financing.

“Such scaling up is the only way to achieve the promise of a more inclusive and sustainable world that is without hunger and where poverty is eradicated, he added.

“He also noted that the recent adoption of the 17 SDGs reflects a very clear recognition, that the results of the MDGs would have been more impressive had they addressed the underlying causes of poverty and environmental degradation, and had Goal 8 – Partnerships – been better realized.

“I am hopeful that in 2015, we will all embrace the last, and perhaps most important, of the new Sustainable Development Goals, that is, our commitments to one another to ‘revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development’,” he added.

“Mr. Otto also added that world leaders must recognize the need to develop these partnerships, and through such initiative, dedicate themselves to a much expanded and more accessible financing, technology and human resource capacity.

“Dunya Maumoon, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Maldives, also reiterated the need to encourage holistic and stronger partnerships within the Member States to meet all the objectives of the Global Goals.

“We are ready to be part of the solution. In Samoa last year, the small island developing States (SIDS) asked for building partnerships as the way forward. Alone, we might be weak: but united, we can move mountains,” she declared.

“She also stressed on the need for a system-wide reform at the UN, including its approaches to finding resolutions in order
to make the Organization more resilient and efficaciously face emerging challenges of our time.

“Last week, we adopted a new Agenda for Sustainable Development. It recognizes at its core that development must be holistic; that poverty is a multi-dimensional problem; that what matters is the human being, whose rights must be protected, and promoted,” she asserted.

Yet here in the United Nations, “we remain trapped in silos: hiding away, behind the excuse of mandates. Why is it that the Security Council must only discuss guns and bombs? Why can't the Economic and Social Council discuss war and peace? Why can't development, why can't war, have a human rights dimension? Why must issues be confined to one specific body?” Ms. Maumoon asked.

“Turning to climate change, she also remarked that this has turned now to a security threat in Maldives.

“It damages our economy, deprives us of our rights, of our land, and our way of life. It is a threat to the very existence of our nation,” she said. “Together with other small island developing States, we have taken urgent action to keep the rise of global temperature below 1.5 degrees Celsius. We are reducing our emissions,” she stressed.

**European leaders at UN Assembly highlight complexities of region’s mass migration crisis**

3 October - Two leaders from the European continent took to the United Nations General Assembly podium today, beginning with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary, Péter Szijjártó, who said many States are marking the 70th anniversary of the United Nations “but there are no major reasons to celebrate.”

“During the last five years, we have witnessed 15 wars and armed conflicts, launched or renewed,” Minister Szijjártó stated. “And nowadays Europe has to face a war as well,” he added, referring to the conflict in Ukraine.

Turning to economic issues, the Hungarian politician said no one has to be an economist to see that the situation is “unsustainable,” noting that Europe contains 7 to 8 per cent of the world’s population, producing 15 to 16 per cent of the world’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP), while distributing “50 per cent of the world’s “social welfare spending.”

Meanwhile, he said mass migration had been the most difficult challenge, but that unfortunately “Europe has not been able to find the proper answers yet.”

“What we have been facing is not a refugee crisis, it’s much more than that and much more complicated than that,” he underlined, adding that Hungary is located on the most “intensive” migration route. “This mass migration is composed of asylum seekers, economic migrants, and also some foreign fighters, unfortunately,” he declared, adding that if Europe does not address the challenge now, it will have to face it in the future.

Furthermore, he stressed that the situation has resulted from a series of “bad international political decisions,” as well as from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) gaining additional territories.

“If we cannot get control over our borders, if we cannot decrease the influx, if we cannot decrease the pressure, then Europe can be destabilized as well – first the peripheries, and then even the centre – so I would like to stress again it’s a global challenge, that needs a global answer, global solution, based on global participation.”

He added that instead of addressing the consequences of conflicts, the UN must focus on stabilizing the situation, while Member States needed to put together a proposal to set quotas and ensure that Europe is able address the increase of services.

Meanwhile, in his remarks, the Permanent Representative of San Marino to the United Nations, Daniele D. Bodini, spoke
about the global challenges of international migration and conflict.

“Every day we are witnessing the tragic migration from Africa and Asia towards Europe,” said Mr Bodini. “These desperate people leave their countries and their families behind to flee from conflicts, violence, and persecution. Thousands of them already died in the Mediterranean Sea.” He said that his county was pleased to see the organization of a high-level meeting on strengthening cooperation on migration and refugee movements to address the issue.

Mr. Bodini also spoke about Iraq and Syria, “where an ongoing inhumane ethnic and religious cleansing is carried out with unprecedented ferocity.” He said that he hoped that, a diplomatic solution would be achieved in the near future.

He also noted the need for Security Council reform, saying: “We believe that a reform of the Council shall include an enlargement in the category of non-permanent members and a more balanced geographical distribution,” he said, adding that he believed it should be achieved with “the widest possible consensus.”

Oman Minister, in Assembly address, says dialogue is key to dispute settlement

3 October - Addressing the United Nations General Assembly, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Yousef Bin Alawi Bin Abdullah, has been looking forward to a peace and justice world with solving all forms of conflict through dialogue.

“We are convinced that dialogue is the natural foundation upon which all forms of conflict can be resolved,” he said, noting that throughout history, mankind has aspired to enhance confidence on the basis of agreed and conciliatory ideas, and that principles of the UN Charter deepen and widen common interests and mutual benefits.

“In this vein, the Foreign Minister welcomed the agreement between international negotiators and Iran on that country’s nuclear programme, and expressed hope that the “historic” deal would reflect positively on regional and international peace and security, and pave the way for a new area of relations, based on cooperation, respect, and mutual trust.

“Strongly concerned about global crisis, he reiterated that his Government’s humanitarian program in Syria would be continued for providing protection to the refugees. He also called on all parties in Yemen to respect the rules of international law and refrain from any act that would violate their international obligations.

“We also call upon the United Nations and the parties sponsoring the peace process in the Middle East, to exert more efforts, so as to reach an agreement for settling this crisis, instead of merely proceeding with managing it,” he added at the Assembly.

“Meanwhile, Oman indicated that the international community should put the economy, commerce, and environment at the forefront of urgent issues that need to be addressed. “My country is looking forwarded to convening the international conference on climate in the [France],” the Minister said, adding that hoped a balanced international programme could be reached.
At UN, Canada urges focus on financing for climate change mitigation, adaptation

3 October - The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, Daniel Jean, addressed the United Nations General Assembly today, noting the importance of the new sustainable development agenda and of ensuring the proper financing of climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts.

Mr. Jean said that Canada is proud to support, “in word and deed,” the commitments in the 2030 Agenda. The Organization – and the international community it represents – deserves our praise for aiming to eliminate poverty on a global scale.

He also spoke about the need to promote “fundamental freedoms” and the rule of law in parts of the world where these were absent.

Turning his attention to Canada, he said his country has identified maternal, newborn and child health as development priorities, and has committed $3.5 billion to support this over the next five years.

Mr. Jean then noted challenges to security and human rights around the globe, particularly in Iraq and Syria, and “the abuses which follow in the wake of acts of aggression such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the illegal annexation of Crimea, and continued interference in eastern Ukraine.”

Speaking on the issue of climate change, he said that Canada was working with all parties under the UN Framework Convention (UNFCCC), in order to reach agreement at the upcoming conference in Paris.

“For Canada, an effective agreement must address both mitigation and adaptation,” he said, adding that his country, by 2030, aimed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30 per cent below 2005 levels.

He also noted that financing would be a key part of the discussions, and said that Canada had already pledged $300 million to the Green Climate Fund, in addition to a prior investment of $1.2 billion under Fast-Start Financing, which has supported climate related projects in over 70 developing counties.

Côte d’Ivoire tells Assembly it stands as living example of UN’s role in averting chaos

3 October - Côte d’Ivoire, where the United Nations played a major role in restoring peace and stability after violently disputed presidential elections in 2010, stood before the General Assembly today to praise the world Organization for its “irreplaceable” contribution to advancing peace, security and development over the 70 years of its existence.

“I wish to here reiterate the gratitude of the Ivoirian people for the invaluable role the United Nations played and continues to play at our sides,” the West African country’s Permanent Representative Claude Bouah-Kamon told the Assembly on the sixth day of its 70th annual General Debate.

“Thanks to this precious support, Côte d’Ivoire has resumed its march forward, thus finding the path of stability, growth and economic and social development.”

“The UN Operation in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI), which in 2011 helped restore legitimacy and stability along with French forces after incumbent President Laurent Gbagbo’s refusal to concede defeat in the 2010 elections to Alassane Ouattara, currently maintains some 7,000 uniformed personnel in the country.
“Mr. Bouah-Kamon warned the despite the numerous UN successes, the world must not lose sight of the many challenges still confronting it, such as ongoing conflicts, transnational crime and extremism, including that of the Nigerian-based terrorist Boko Haram group, as well as the need to achieve the ambitious new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

“Poverty, terrorism, epidemics, food and climate insecurity, which today are the new threats to international peace and security provide fertile terrain for intolerance, fundamentalism and extremisms of all stripes which threaten the fragile edifice of a world at peace to which all our peoples aspire,” he declared.

“It is thus undeniable that the world is confronting a period of great challenge, but it is also true that we are presented with an historic opportunity to consolidate the foundations of inclusive development and a better world, as much for present-day generations as for those of the future.”

**With transparent elections imminent, ‘dynamic democracy’ taking root in Guinea, Minster tells UN**

*3 October* - In his address to the United Nations General Assembly today, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Guinea, Francois Lounceny Fall, confirmed the imminent holding of presidential elections in his country, hailing the polls as a sign of a “democratic dynamic” taking root there.

"Our country will spare no effort to participate in this exciting [exercise], especially when it is anchored in a democratic dynamic that will materialize on 11 October with the holding of transparent presidential elections," Mr. Lounceny Fall told delegations on the closing day of the Assembly’s general debate.

"In this context, I welcome the leading role of the United Nations and all partners in the dialogue process that culminated in the signing of the global agreement of August 20, 2015, between the presidential camp and the opposition," he said.

"From the inter-Guinean dialogue initiated this past June, with the support of the United Nations, the subsequent agreement with the opposition had indeed helped ease the political tensions in the country, which was crucial with the polls then just months away.

"The Minister added that the election will mark "a new beginning towards a true economic and social development," particularly in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, adopted last week by the General Assembly.

"On other issues, Mr. Lounceny Fall welcomed the fact that Africa resumed its growth and is investing in defence and security capacities to maintain the stability of its States. Those efforts strove to put an end to all “flashpoints” hindering democratic progress at a time when the continent is facing terrorism that was affecting all regions.

"The elimination of economic and social inequality, and the participation of people and countries in inclusive development will stand as a “bastion against terrorism,” he said, underscoring that: “We must find ways to stem the scourge that strikes at the very heart of our people our people, attacks the symbols of our nations and causes profound humanitarian crises.”

"This goal, could not be won without a "participatory and collaborative dynamic of our people and our country” to define inclusive development policies and programs capable of fighting against marginalization, frustration and downturn, he said.
Outdated UN system a reflection of world’s dysfunction, Eritrean Minister tells Assembly

3 October - Addressing the General Assembly today, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Eritrea, Osman Saleh, focused on bolstering his country’s socioeconomic and also emphasized the need revitalize the United Nations to create a more agile, democratic and equitable multilateral system.

Mr. Saleh said that, 70 years after the birth of the UN, “it is undeniable that we continue to live in an unfair and unequal world, where conflicts and wars rage, extreme poverty persists in the midst of plenty, children die from easily preventable diseases and justice is routinely trampled.”

“The United Nations Organization itself is a reflection of this unfair, unequal and undemocratic global order,” he continued. “In the UN, the overwhelming majority of member States are marginalized. This assembly of nations, which should be the most powerful organ, is bereft of real power and influence, with decision-making dominated by a few among the few.”

He added that there is a need “to persist in our efforts to rebuild and revitalize the United Nations” and “strive and cooperate at the national, regional and global levels for sustainable and equitable development.”

“Today, Eritrea is making remarkable progress in building a nation based on citizenship and an inclusive state and the respect of human dignity and rights. It is peaceful, stable, secure and harmonious.”

He added that it was also “building a solid basis for sustainable development with social justice,” as well as fighting human trafficking and giving youth and women “adequate opportunities to pursue a high quality of life and build their nation.”

Afghanistan: Kunduz hospital airstrikes ‘tragic and inexcusable,’ say UN officials

3 October - Senior United Nations officials today condemned what they called a “tragic” and “inexcusable” air strike on the Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) hospital in Kunduz early this morning, which resulted in the deaths and injuries of medical personnel, patients and other civilians.

“Hospitals accommodating patients and medical personnel may never be the object of attack,” said Nicholas Haysom, the Special Representative for Afghanistan in a news update, noting that international humanitarian law also prohibits the use of medical facilities for military purposes.

Mr. Haysom commended Médecins sans Frontières for its work, and expressed condolences to the medical personnel, their patients, family and friends.

“I reiterate my call on all parties to the conflict to respect and protect medical and humanitarian personnel and facilities,” the UN envoy added.

Meanwhile, the UN’s Humanitarian Coordinator for Afghanistan, Mark Bowden, said he is “deeply concerned” for the MSF staff and their patients, and the loss suffered by the people of Kunduz. “The civilian population is now facing a further acute situation, finding themselves cut off from vital medical support,” he warned.
From Geneva, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said there must be a swift, full and transparent investigation into the airstrikes that hit the clinic.

“This event is utterly tragic, inexcusable, and possibly even criminal,” Mr. Zeid said in a news release. “International and Afghan military planners have an obligation to respect and protect civilians at all times, and medical facilities and personnel are the object of a special protection. These obligations apply no matter whose air force is involved, and irrespective of the location.”

According to MSF, pro-Government forces had been informed of the precise location of the medical facilities. While it has yet to be established whether or not the hospital or immediate surroundings were the target of the attack, or were recklessly endangered by it, airstrikes reportedly continued to hit the area for a further 30 minutes after pro-Government forces were informed they were endangering a medical facility.

According to the Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR), a United States spokesperson has reportedly been quoted saying US planes were carrying out airstrikes at around the time the hospital was hit.

The UN Human Rights chief said it was essential to ensure any inquiry was independent, impartial, transparent and effective. “This deeply shocking event should be promptly, thoroughly and independently investigated and the results should be made public,” he said.

"The seriousness of the incident is underlined by the fact that, if established as deliberate in a court of law, an airstrike on a hospital may amount to a war crime," he explained.