

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

President of the International of Justice, Judge Abdulqawi Yusuf,

High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Michelle Bachelet Jeria,

Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and United Nations Legal Counsel, Mr. Miguel de Serpa Soares,

I am honored to address you by video message today, and would like to thank the Chair, Ambassador Milenko Skoknic, Permanent Representative of Chile, for organizing this meeting to mark International Law Day in lieu of the Annual International Law Week. I hope your conversations are fruitful and impactful, despite this change in format.

Excellencies,

As we enter the 75th year of this organization's existence, I would like to recognize the contribution the United Nations has made to the progressive development and codification of international law and the generations of international lawyers that have drafted and agreed on invaluable legal pieces, from treaties to general principles, from resolutions to judgements and advisory opinions.

Through the work of the International Law Commission and the Sixth Committee, rules and treaties have advanced each of the three pillars of the United Nations: peace and security, development and human rights.

I am very pleased that the High Commissioner for Human Rights is participating in this meeting.

The Human Rights treaty bodies are key component of the United Nations system that support our aspirations for the people we serve to live with dignity in a more just, more peaceful and more humane world.

We should protect and enhance the work of treaty bodies, including by delivering on timely elections of their members and ensuring that the bodies can operate in an effective and efficient manner.

Let us remember your predecessors, who, together with human rights experts from around the globe, drafted those treaties, found compromises and came up with creative solutions to enable those treaties to have attracted such wider adherence among States.

I call upon you to follow their path and to commit to the efforts that will continue to strengthen the international treaty system.

Distinguished Delegates, while we rightly commemorate the United Nation's achievements, let us also use this anniversary to reaffirm our commitment to multilateralism based on the rule of law and actively engage in the promotion of international law.

We should not forget that this Organization has been built on the ashes of a terrible war, the deadliest in history, that brought our founders together under the Charter.

In their honor we need to redouble our efforts to promote dialogue and the peaceful settlement of disputes, in line with Articles 2 (3) and 33 of the Charter, while not losing the human dimension and fighting against impunity for the most serious crimes under international law.

There is no doubt, international law is the backbone of multilateralism.

It does more than give guidance on individual issues.

It gives order to human behavior. It protects us against “might makes right.”

The challenges facing us remain vast. Modern technologies have created a more interrelated world. To support our increasingly global world, we need to improve the way international system works.

That is our role. No other global organization has the legitimacy, the convening power and the normative impact of the United Nations.

No other global organization gives hope for a better world to so many people.

Excellencies,

COVID-19 highlighted the world’s lack of preparedness for unexpected challenges.

Here in the Sixth Committee, the custodian of the rules of procedures of the General Assembly, it is crucial that our work can continue in spite of any unforeseen challenges.

I am encouraged to see a growing consensus among Member States on the need for the General Assembly to be able to perform its duties in any given circumstance.

I urge you, legal experts from the Permanent Missions, to come together to find consensus and turn it into action, so we do not face any further disruptions to our critical work.

Distinguished delegates,

One of my priorities for the session is the promotion of gender equality, so I am pleased to see that two prestigious female international lawyers, Professor Boisson de Chazournes and Professor Galvao Teles, are also participating in the event today.

Despite the statistics that show a continuous increase in the number of female law students around the world, surpassing their male counterpart in many countries, the field of international law is still strongly dominated by men.

In over seventy years of the International Law Commission, only seven women have been members. The first women were elected as late as 2001. In the upcoming International Law Commission elections, I hope Member States will make an extra effort to nominate female candidates.

I warmly welcome the two female delegates, from Czech Republic and Israel, who were elected as Vice-chairs for the Sixth Committee. I am delighted that many resolutions and working groups will be coordinated and facilitated by female diplomats this year, including the most ambitious treaty making exercise this session, on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction, which is chaired by a talented female Ambassador from Singapore.

The voices of women in the international law community are needed and valued and you are important role models.

To conclude, it is clear that strengthening the international legal order is essential to reinforce multilateralism, which is a priority of mine this session. I count on your support to make this a reality.

Thank you.