



MORNING DIALOGUES

with the President of the United Nations General Assembly

23 March 2018

Excellency,

Further to my letter of 5 March 2018 providing an update on the *Morning Dialogues* series, I have the honour to transmit herewith a summary of the informal discussions on the theme “Multilateralism Under Fire?”, which was the topic of discussion for the Morning Dialogues held on 15 and 23 February as well as 9 March 2018.

It is noteworthy that our discussions highlighted the need for the United Nations to adapt to the evolving nature of the current global realities. This includes engaging external stakeholders who have become influential in the daily lives of millions of people around the world. At the same time, we found it crucial that the benefits and successes of multilateralism should be effectively communicated to demonstrate the essential role of multilateral dialogue and engagement in our modern world.

I look forward to continuing these engaging interactions with all Permanent Representatives as the *Morning Dialogues* continue in the months ahead.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.



Miroslav Lajčák

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

President of the General Assembly 72nd Session
Summary of Morning Dialogues Nos. 5 – 7
15, 23 February and 9 March 2018

Multilateralism Under Fire?

The Morning Dialogues are a series of informal discussions amongst small groups of Permanent Representatives held under Chatham House rules. The outcomes, though not official, provide food for thought concerning their respective subjects. Bearing in mind regional and gender representation, Permanent Representatives are invited in their personal capacities in these open and informal conversations.

The President of the General Assembly convened three Morning Dialogues on the theme “Multilateralism Under Fire?” to engage Permanent Representatives on the state of multilateralism and the United Nations’ role.

State of Multilateralism

- Participants opined that *multilateralism was being challenged by new developments in the socio-political landscape*. However, the sheer scale of global connectivity and global challenges made multilateralism essential.
- *The United Nations remains the most appropriate forum* but it needs to adapt to evolving changes in the global architecture. More needs to be done to show *the benefits of multilateralism* and the positive work being done, including within countries.
- *Trust, inclusiveness and dialogue* remain key to strengthening multilateralism and ensuring that it supports positive outcomes at the global level.

Partnerships and Other Stakeholders

- *Other stakeholders have appeared and many are gaining global importance and influence* and should be engaged in a more effective way. There is need that these stakeholders also assume responsibility. To do so requires changing the approach and reaching out to them in a language they understand rather than inter-governmental language. We cannot continue to operate in an “echo chamber”.
- *There are new realities on the global level*. Major players and other fora have unprecedented influence. We need to work in a complementary way rather than in competition. We should not lose the inter-governmental nature of multilateralism but remain the agenda setter not follower.
- *Partnership with the private sector* is essential in this new global architecture. At the same time, it is important to *demonstrate the value of partnering with the United Nations*.
- *Youth are a key constituency*. It is important to engage young people about global issues in a way they relate to and using tools they do. We should bring their views into our deliberations and ensure they see themselves as having a stake in finding solutions to global challenges.

Reforms

- *UN Reforms* are critical to ensure that the organisation remains relevant and fit for purpose. Reforms must be an ongoing process.
- *The UN must modernise*, not just physically, but also in its outlook and in its working methods.
- We need to *sharpen focus*, including by examining the agenda, our core activities and the structures in place to deliver.
- To *remain relevant and maintain credibility*, the United Nations must deliver – make a real impact on the lives of people in the field. We must go beyond agreeing on paper to having an effect on the ground.

Communication

- Attention and *investment in new communication strategies and tools* is essential. Information spreads faster and in a more dynamic way, especially with the advent of social media. The *United Nations needs to communicate its success* better.
- *Each representative has a role to play* to promote the positive effects of multilateralism and the United Nations within their own countries. This will help to *demystify what we are doing* here.
- *Branding* is essential. It demonstrates relevance, shows connections to successes, and helps in leveraging the organisation's inherent value.
- We must *connect with citizens* – address their concerns, engage and empower them, show the relevance and effectiveness of multilateral collaboration.

Next Steps

The President of the General Assembly will convene additional Morning Dialogues with Permanent Representatives to explore some of the issues that have arisen in a more detailed way. These include the question of engagement with external stakeholders as well as the readiness of the United Nations to address frontier issues such as new technologies.
