



Newsletter

H.E. Mr. Volkan Bozkır



INTRODUCTION

This week marks my 90th day as the President of the United Nations General Assembly. I wanted to take this special occasion to share with you some of my activities and the work of the General Assembly, since the release of my first Newsletter on 22 October 2020.

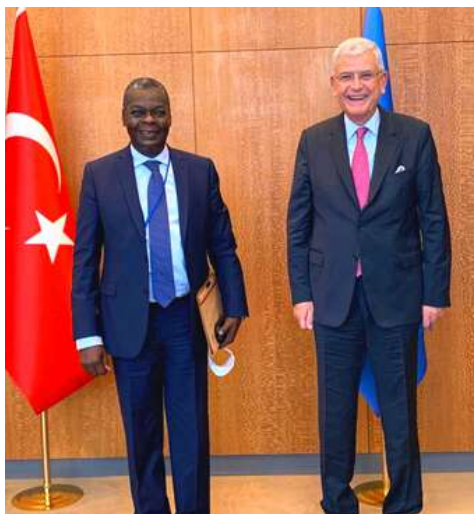
Despite the challenges arising from the pandemic, we have held critical meetings, conducted elections and adopted important decisions and resolutions, all while following medical guidance. I am delighted that we are on track to conclude the main part of the session this month and that already five of the six Main Committees have concluded their work after taking decisions on various complex issues that affect people around the world.

I thank Member States and the Secretariat for their cooperation throughout the most difficult circumstances. As the world continues its battle against a deadly pandemic, it is important to demonstrate that we are united in working for the people we serve.

Allow me to wish you happy holidays and season's greetings. These will be very different holidays, and we must stay safe and vigilant.

ENGAGEMENT WITH MEMBER STATES

I had a telephone conversation with the Foreign Minister of Japan, and held meetings with the Permanent Representatives of Andorra, Bhutan, Canada, Cuba, Denmark, Finland, Ghana, Guatemala, Iceland, Iraq, Jamaica, Kyrgyzstan, Libya, Malaysia, Myanmar, Namibia, North Macedonia, Norway, Paraguay, Philippines, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Timor-Leste and the United Kingdom, among others. I also met with the Permanent Observer of Palestine and the Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States.



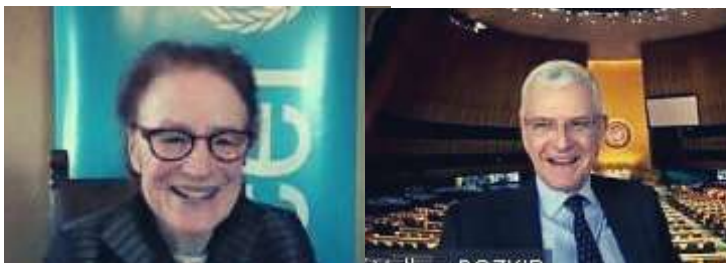
ENGAGEMENT WITH MEMBER STATES

We continued our fruitful discussions with the Permanent Representatives in various formats.



ENGAGEMENT WITH KEY U.N. FIGURES

I held meetings with: António Vitorino, Director General of the International Organization for Migration; Guy Ryder, Director-General of the International Labour Organization; Sanda Ojiambo, CEO & Executive Director of the UN Global Compact; Maimunah Mohd, Executive Director of UN-HABITAT; Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger, President of the Human Rights Council; Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization; Grete Faremo, Under-Secretary-General of the UN Office for Project Services; Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director of UNAIDS; Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees; Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women; Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf, President of the International Court of Justice; Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Secretary of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification; Joshua Phoho Setipa, Managing Director of the UN Technology Bank; Henrietta H. Fore, Executive Director of UNICEF, among others.



COORDINATION MEETINGS

I continued to hold coordination meetings with the Presidents of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and Security Council as well as with the Secretary-General to ensure coherence and complementarity.

My meeting with H.E. Inga Rhonda King, Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in her capacity as the President of the Security Council for the month of November included discussion of how to ensure a smooth process for the ICJ elections held concurrently in the UN Security Council and the General Assembly.

In our monthly meeting with the Secretary General in November, we discussed how to ensure continuity of business in the face of COVID-19, preparations for the special session on COVID-19 and the follow-up on the UN75 Declaration.

In December, we held our periodic coordination meeting with the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council for the month of December, Ambassador Matthews Matjila of South Africa.

During this period, I coordinated with H.E. Ambassador Munir Akram, President of ECOSOC as part of our efforts to strengthen relations between the principal organs of the UN and increase collaboration and coherence, including on UN reform and financing for development.



THE 31ST SPECIAL SESSION IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

On 3-4 December, I hosted the 31st special session of the General Assembly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This was a historic gathering aiming at addressing the gravest challenge humanity has faced since the UN's founding.

We needed a forum to discuss the experiences of all Member States, take stock of the UN response, and show people around world that we are working together to beat the pandemic.

The high level of representation demonstrated the continued commitment of all Member States to cooperate to end the pandemic. We heard from pioneers in the field of medical research, global health experts, heads of UN entities and advocates from civil society. The discussions were thoughtful, informative, and engaging, providing impetus for all stakeholders to recommit to the multilateral response and mobilize access to COVID-19 tools, including vaccines, for all.

Our discussions represented a microcosm of the global efforts to end COVID-19, safeguard humanity and recover better. Holding this special session was a test for multilateralism, and I am pleased that we could start the comprehensive multilateral conversation on COVID-19 before the end of the year.

The Special session is in no way the end of our joint recovery efforts. Indeed, as we look ahead to 2021, the commencement of vaccination programs in more and more countries gives us hope that it is the beginning of the end of this pandemic. However, as governments focus on immunizing their citizens, we must remember that no one is safe until we are all safe. Furthermore, the socio-economic consequences will be felt long after the virus is finally under control. Effective multilateral cooperation and support for the most vulnerable remains essential.

I also addressed a side event on the "infodemic" and was happy to welcome Dr. Deborah Birx, Ambassador-at-Large and Coronavirus Response Coordinator at the White House.



THE 31ST SPECIAL SESSION
IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19



PANEL I: The UN System Response to COVID-19

 Melissa Fleming, Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications	 Dr. Tedros Adhanom, Under-Secretary-General, World Health Organization	 Dr. Robert Foy, Executive Director, WHO Emergency Programme & Chair of the UN Crisis Management Team	 Mark Lonsdale, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator	 Michelle MacLean, Under-Secretary-General, High Commissioner for Human Rights
 Achim Steiner, Administrator, United Nations Development Program	 Filip Reynders, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	 David Malison, Executive Director, World Food Programme	 Inge Høiby, Chief Executive Officer, Save the Children International	 Dr. Abdulrahman, Secretary General, Global Health Security

United Nations General Assembly 31st Special Session COVID-19 RESPONSE

PANEL II: The Road to a COVID-19 Vaccine – a Global Public Good

 Lynn Steward, BBC Presenter and Chief International Correspondent	 Dr. Tedros Adhanom, Under-Secretary-General, World Health Organization	 Dr. Joanne Swaminathan, Executive Director & Chief Scientist, World Health Organization	 Professor Uwe Gellert, Chief Executive Officer, BioNTech	 Dr. Susan Tracy, Chief Medical Officer, BioNTech
 Professor David Collier, Oxford University	 Dr. Mark Bellamy, Chief Scientist, Office, GSK	 Henrietta H. Tarkenton, Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	 Dr. Rakesh Khosla, Chief Executive Officer, Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI)	 Dr. Andrew Wiley, WHO Special Envoy for the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator

United Nations General Assembly 31st Special Session COVID-19 RESPONSE

PANEL III: Resilience and Recovering Better from COVID-19

 Fred Oke, International Journalist	 Dr. Tedros Adhanom, Under-Secretary-General, World Health Organization	 Dr. Zsuzsanna Jakab, Deputy Director-General of the World Health Organization	 Dr. Natalia Kanem, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund	 Wen Xia Pingping, Managing Director for Development Policy and Partnership of the World Bank
 Phumthit Manopragob, Executive Director of UNICEF	 Guy Ryder, Director-General of the International Labour Organization	 Robert Anderson, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations	 Pascal Lamy, President, WFP	 Phumthit Manopragob, Executive Director of UNICEF

United Nations General Assembly 31st Special Session COVID-19 RESPONSE

#VACCINES4ALL

On 30 November, I launched my #Vaccines4All initiative, calling on all Member States to support multilateral efforts to achieve fair and equitable access to vaccines, when they become available.

"Providing everyone with access to vaccines is both the right thing to do & the smart thing to do. Throughout the 75th session, I will continue to work towards achieving #Vaccines4All, to uphold our pledge to leave no one behind."

The initiative aims to strengthen political and resource support for global efforts that are managing the complexities of vaccine production, storage, distribution and access.



ELECTION OF JUDGES TO THE ICJ

The General Assembly and the Security Council, in a timely and organized manner, elected five judges to the International Court of Justice for the period 2021-2030.



U.N. DAY CONCERT

This year's United Nations Day concert was organized by the Permanent Mission of Italy with a special performance by the Teatro alla Scala in Milan. Celebrated artists once again unified us through music and art, in celebration of the United Nations and all that it stands for.



U.N. DAY AND RECOMMITMENT TO THE VALUES AND PRINCIPLES OF THE U.N. CHARTER

I convened a commemorative event to celebrate UN Day. We heard testimonials from UN staff and their vision for the world we want.



The UN Charter continues to be the backbone of the United Nations. On UN Day, I invited Member States to stand and join me for a solemn moment to collectively reaffirm our commitment to the UN Charter.



Upon an initiative by the women Permanent Representatives to the UN, and in the context of the UN Day celebrations, Member States showed their recommitment to the values and principles of the Charter by signing the Preamble of the UN Charter.

"Around the world, at any given time, tens of thousands of UN personnel are working for the betterment of humanity. All these people are the unsung heroes of the UN system. Today the United Nations General Assembly honours them."



INTER-GOVERNMENTAL PROCESSES

I appointed the Permanent Representatives of: Australia and Namibia as co-facilitators of the High-level Meeting on HIV/AIDS process; Oman and Spain as co-facilitators of the 7th Biennial Review of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy; Austria and Senegal as co-facilitators of the ECOSOC/HLPF Review process; Poland and Qatar as co-chairs of the Intergovernmental Negotiations on UN Security Council Reform; Antigua and Barbuda and Malta as co-chairs of the Steering Committee on partnerships for SIDS; Denmark and Grenada as co-facilitators for the Oceans Conference; and Paraguay as the lead for the UN Pledging Conference for Development Activities



ADVISORY BOARDS

I established a Board of Advisors on Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, to provide guidance and technical inputs to advance our critical work in support of these countries. The Board kick-started its work and held its inaugural meeting on 24 November. We discussed our intended programme of work, and the need to ensure that the COVID-19 crisis does not worsen the inequalities that lie between these groups of countries and the rest of the world.



Following the Beijing+25 Summit during High Level Week, I established an Advisory Group on Gender to bring critical thought, analysis, guidance, and support on gender issues, to bolster my work as the President of General Assembly. The Group held its inaugural meeting on 19 November and provided recommendations on how to advance my objectives on gender equality and women's empowerment throughout the 75th session. I am looking forward to working with this diverse group throughout my tenure to ensure a gender lens is applied to all General Assembly mandates for this Session and beyond.

I also formally joined the group of International Gender Champions to break down gender barriers.



MORNING DIALOGUES

Since assuming office, I have held four Morning Dialogues, a space for Ambassadors to engage in frank exchanges on issues of concern to the membership. So far we have discussed biodiversity; Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States; digital cooperation; and reform and revitalization. Participants shared their national and regional experiences, highlighted issues of global concern, and made recommendations. Some take-aways are:

- Ambitious and effective action on biodiversity underpins the success of the post-2015 development agenda.
- LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS must be at the centre of the multilateral agenda for the session to ensure they do not fall further behind.



- COVID-19 has increased reliance on digital technologies; widened digital divides both amongst and within nations; and exacerbated vulnerabilities of millions of people, especially women, minorities and children.
- The Alignment Process, which falls under the revitalization umbrella, offers an avenue to make some real progress. It presents a critical opportunity to examine the agendas that guide the work of the General Assembly and ECOSOC, with a view to making these bodies more relevant and fit for purpose.



EVENTS AND OTHER IMPORTANT ENGAGEMENTS

I convened a joint high-level informal plenary meeting with the President of ECOSOC to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the World Summit on Social Development. I addressed a FAO side-event on agri-food systems & inclusive rural development in the context of COVID-19. I participated in the 13th session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. I spoke at the Ministerial event marking the 20th Anniversary of the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, and others. I attended the meeting of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.



I was also pleased to have very interesting and refreshing discussions with other stakeholders who follow and make particular contributions to the work of the UN and the General Assembly. I met with Mr. Taha Ayhan, President of the Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum; with Prof. Dr. Uğur Şahin & Dr. Özlem Türeci, scientists who founded BioNTech and developed a COVID-19 vaccine; with Mr. John Frank, Microsoft's Vice-President for UN Affairs, and with the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Mr. Hendrik Daems, among others. I addressed the United Cities and Local Governments at the World Council Session.



I also met with various formal and informal groups of countries. I addressed the Group of 77 + China at its annual Ministerial Meeting, met with Ambassadors of the Eastern European Group, with members of the Bridge Group, with the Like-Minded Group of Countries Supporters of Middle-Income Countries and MIKTA members. I also consulted with major UNSC reform groups: C-10, Uniting for Consensus, G-4 and L.69 before appointing the co-chairs of the Inter-Governmental Negotiations on UN Security Council reform.

In line with the commitment of my Office to multilingualism, we have prepared the summaries of the first ever UN Biodiversity Summit and the High-level meeting on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, in all six official UN languages.



COMMEMORATIONS

At events and on social media, I commemorated Human Rights Day, International Anti-Corruption Day, the International Day for the Commemoration & Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and for the Prevention of this Crime, International Volunteer Day, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, World AIDS Day, the International Day to End Violence against Women, Africa Industrialization Day, World Children's Day, World Toilet Day, the International Day for Tolerance, World Science Day for Peace and Development, the International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict, World Tsunami Day, and the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists. I also added my voice to the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence and I "took the ball" for #SDG3 - health and well-being for all.



**Office of the President
of the General Assembly**
75th Session

