UN General Assembly’s annual debate to ‘focus on people,’ ensuring decent life for all

18 September – Global leaders gathering at United Nations Headquarters in New York this week for the annual round of top-level diplomatic talks known as the General Debate will shine a spotlight on the needs of the world’s people, with discussions on vital issues such as sustainable development and climate change, and set the stage for what the President of the UN General Assembly has dubbed a “year of firsts,” which will see the negotiation of the first intergovernmental compact on migration and the signing of the first agreement on the elimination of nuclear weapons.

The theme of the Debate of the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly is ‘Focusing on People – Striving for Peace and a Decent Life for All on a Sustainable Planet,’ and in that spirit monarchs, presidents and prime ministers are also expected to launch discussions that will define international responses to many of the global challenges of the day, including protracted conflicts, extreme poverty and hunger, and the refugee crisis.
On Tuesday, ahead of the Debate, which runs through 25 September, UN Secretary-General António Guterres will present his annual Report on the work of the Organization. This year’s Assembly President, Miroslav Lajčák of Slovakia, will then deliver the keynote opening speech. This will then be followed by Brazilian President Michel Temer, whose country holds the traditional role of first national speaker. He will be followed by United States President Donald Trump, as leader of the host nation.

Mr. Guterres began this week of intense diplomatic activity Monday with a round of high-level events, among others, on UN reform, financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Other highlights include an event tomorrow on women’s economic empowerment; a ministerial-level Security Council debate, set for Wednesday 20 September, on reform of UN peacekeeping operations; as well as, immediately after the debate, a special meeting of the Assembly to commemorate the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons and a two-day high-level meeting on the UN Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, set for 27-28 September.

**World leaders pledge to eliminate sexual exploitation and abuse; UN chief outlines course of action**

*18 September* – United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres today called on the world to stand in solidarity to condemn sexual exploitation and abuse as he detailed the key initiatives at the heart of his victim-centred approach to address the scourge across the UN system.

“Sexual exploitation and abuse has no place in our world,” said in his remarks to the unprecedented High-level Meeting on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse at UN Headquarters today.

“It is a global menace and it must end,” he added.

The high-level political event demonstrates the international community's solidarity in condemning and committing to combating the scourge – while placing victims' rights and dignity at the forefront of collective efforts.

Underscoring the need for *bold, urgent and much-needed action* to root out sexual exploitation and abuse once and for all, Mr. Guterres said: “We are here in solidarity to specifically focus on the behaviour of individuals who exploit their authority to mistreat those who look to the United Nations for protection.”

The UN chief emphasized that the unspeakable acts of a few should not be allowed to tarnish the work of thousands of men and women who uphold the UN's values “often at great personal risk and sacrifice.”

Stressing that no country or family is immune, the Secretary-General notes that the UN has a responsibility to set a global standard for preventing, responding to and eradicating the scourge – and addressing its impact.

“It pains me to say that this behaviour is perpetrated by both civilians and uniformed personnel, and in settings ranging from humanitarian crises to peace operations to refugee camps – where people are vulnerable and public safety is largely absent,” said Mr. Guterres.
Measures to fight the scourge

The Secretary-General thanked the Member States that had contributed to the Office of the Special Coordinator on improving the UN response to sexual exploitation and abuse and announced the appointment of Jane Connors as the first-ever UN Victims' Right Advocate.

“The Victims' Rights Advocate will develop system-wide mechanisms and policies to promote reliable gender- and child-sensitive processes for victims and witnesses to file complaints,” he explained.

He also recognized Member States that had signed a Voluntary Compact that encompassed specific prevention commitments – urging “all to engage and to join.”

Mr. Guterres also announced the creation of a 'Circle of Leadership' for Heads of State and Government to demonstrate resolve and commitment at the highest political level to eradicate sexual exploitation and abuse.

Noting that humanitarian organizations and civil society provide frontline life-saving assistance and act as “a critical interface” between communities and the UN, he underscored, “we cannot succeed without their partnership.”

“I will establish an Advisory Board of external experts and representatives from civil society,” he added.

Acknowledging that much work is still needed, the UN chief spelled out: “We will not tolerate anyone committing or condoning sexual exploitation and abuse. We will not let anyone cover up these crimes with the UN flag.”

“Every victim deserves justice and our full support. Together, let us make good on that promise,” he concluded.

Woman at forefront of stamping out scourge

In his remarks, General Assembly President Miroslav Lajcak outlined three guiding principles to exterminate the scourge, namely conflict prevention, scaled-up UN efforts to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, and boost women's participation.

With women disproportionately affected, he said they “must be at the core of efforts to find solutions,” as he pushed for better implementation of the Women Peace and Security Agenda; women's full participation in mediation and peacebuilding; and ensuring gender mainstreaming.

“Condemnation alone is not enough, what we need now is action,” he concluded.

In her address, Ms. Connors said sexual exploitation “is rooted in gender inequality and abuse of power.”

“It crushes the dignity of those most at risk,” she said, calling her role as one of advocating for those at risk.

She presented a two-pronged task of identifying ways to prevent abuses and, should they occur, “to protect the human rights and dignity of the victims.”

For his part, Atul Khare, the UN Under Secretary-General for Field Support, said the single-focused meeting was testament to the “depth of harm” caused by UN personnel in every case, which “degrades” the Organization's duty to protect the vulnerable.
UN and partners launch initiative to reach equal pay for women at work

18 September – Striving to raise up women’s pay across the world to equal men’s, a new global coalition – which includes the United Nations labour agency and Organization’s entity promotion of women’s rights – launched today on the eve of the General Assembly debate.

The Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC) includes the UN International Labour Organization (ILO), UN Women, and the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

“One hundred years is too long to wait, and we must all work together to make equal pay for work of equal value a reality,” said Guy Ryder, the Director-General of the ILO, noting that equal pay for equal work is enshrined in the ILO Constitution of 1919.

Median monthly earnings for women in 2014 were on average 17 per cent below those of men, according to OECD. In addition, in many countries, the higher the level of earnings and skills, the larger the differences in pay between men and women.

Equal pay for women translates into lifelong benefits for them as well as their families, ILO said in a press release, boosting career prospects and lifetime earnings, greater independence, and higher investments in their children’s education and health.

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women, said “there is no justification for unequal pay for a woman when her job is of equal value to a man’s. This injustice has been unseen for too long, and together we are changing that.”

In addition, equal pay empowering women, impacts other key goals, such as promoting inclusive societies, reducing poverty, and creating conditions for decent work and gender equality, EPIC will “bring together a diverse set of actors at the global, regional and national levels to support governments, employers and workers and their organizations, and other stakeholders, to make equal pay between women and men for work of equal value a reality,” according to the press release.

The aims tie in to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular the target under Goal 8, which calls for equal pay for work of equal value by 2030.

Conflict keeps 27 million children out of school, with girls at high risk of abuse – UN report

18 September – Some 27 million children are out of school due to conflict, with girls facing a heightened risk of sexual and gender-based violence, the United Nations said in a report released today, calling on States and international organizations to integrate all uprooted children into the education system where they live.

“Many of the 50 million uprooted children in the world are in desperate need of education – not despite being uprooted from their homes but because they are uprooted from their homes,” the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) stressed in the report.

“For without education, how will they gain knowledge and skills to rebuild their lives? How will they be able to chart a path to a more peaceful and prosperous future for themselves, their families, their communities and the world?” queried the agency.
“Finding ways to provide education for uprooted children will require funding, creativity and commitment. Together, we can, and must, find solutions so every child can go to school and learn. Children’s futures – and our own – depend on it,” said UNICEF.

In 2015, nearly 50 million children were uprooted, more than 28 million of them forced from their homes because of violence and insecurity, with 27 million children of primary and lower secondary school age out of school in 24 conflict-affected countries, the report noted.

According to UNICEF, refugees are five times more likely to be out of school than other children, with only 50 per cent of refugee children enrolled in primary school and less than 25 per cent in secondary school.

In countries affected by conflict, girls are 2.5 times more likely to be out of school than boys and are more likely to become victims of sexual and gender-based violence.

Xenophobia, exclusion and stigmatization can create inhospitable, even dangerous environments for children seeking to join a new school system, while only 10 European Union Member States recognize the right of undocumented migrant children to enter the school system and five explicitly exclude them.

**Integrate uprooted children in education systems where they live – UNICEF**

In 2016, UNICEF reached 11.7 million children in emergencies, providing learning opportunities and materials, teacher training and offering life skills classes and is currently hosting the secretariat of Education Cannot Wait, which has mobilized over $113 million from government donors and a pledge of $100 million in both financial and in-kind support from the private sector.

The agency called on its partners to integrate all uprooted children into the education system where they live, invest in high-quality learning opportunities, provide psychosocial counselling and language instruction, and engage with partners including the private sector to provide technical assistance, expertise and talent that can be tailored to needs of uprooted children.

“UNICEF seeks partners willing to tackle the specific challenges of providing learning opportunities that deliver the skills and knowledge children need to rebuild their lives and prepare for the future,” the report concluded.

“The job requires resources, creativity and a commitment to high-quality education for every child, especially children who have been uprooted from their homes.”

**UN chief outlines strategy to reshape global finance for sustainable development**

18 September – As the high-level week of the United Nations General Assembly gets underway, Secretary-General António Guterres today stressed the role of the UN to help reshape “unproductive and unrewarding” finance and redirect investment to creating a better world for all.

“The choices we make on finance will be critical,” Mr. Guterres told a special event held at the UN Headquarters in New York on financing for global development goals.

Mr. Guterres noted that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – adopted by UN Member States in September 2015 – are a blueprint for building an inclusive, sustainable fair globalization.
“We can choose to bemoan the lack of financing for the 2030 Agenda in a world awash with so much unproductive and unrewarding finance. Or we can grasp the opportunity to reshape finance, according to our urgent, collective needs,” he said. “The choice is clear. Let us invest in the 2030 Agenda and finance a better world for all.”

However, today’s global financial system, which manages some $300 trillion in financial assets, is simply not fit for purpose, the UN chief said, recalling that the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, adopted in 2015 at an international conference in the Ethiopian capital on financing for development, highlights the importance of being innovative in leveraging resources and financing for development.

The UN’s three-part strategy for enhancing its support to financing the 2030 Agenda would help achieve short- and medium-term results, he said.

The Secretary-General said that he will lead UN efforts to ensure that the objectives of the 2030 Agenda are fully reflected in international economic and financial policies by working closely with key inter-governmental platforms, such as the G20.

Second, he will reform the UN development system to strengthen its country teams, and third, he will champion key international initiatives that can harness large-scale changes in financing and financial system development, such as in the fields of digitalization and climate finance and in cooperating with major investment initiatives.

Also addressing the event was Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, who said that trillions of dollars need to be mobilized a year by tapping into the savings of citizens around the world, official development assistance (ODA), domestic financing and the world’s financial system.

The UN has always been engaged in this financing agenda, with its partners, allies and of course Member States, but “our question is whether we are doing enough, and the answer, in short, is no,” she said, explaining that this event is timely as it highlights progress and opportunities from parts of the UN’s leadership team, key partners such as the World Bank, private sector actors, and Member States.

As climate change makes bad weather worse, countries must strengthen resilience, UN officials urge

18 September – Noting the ever-increasing impact of extreme weather events, top United Nations officials, including Secretary-General António Guterres and Miroslav Lajčák, the President of the General Assembly today urged efforts to boost resilience and strengthen damage mitigation measures.

“[This year’s hurricane season] fits a pattern: changes to our climate are making extreme weather events more severe and frequent, pushing communities into a vicious cycle of shock and recovery,” said Mr. Guterres at a high-level event on Hurricane Irma, recalling that the past month alone saw four major hurricanes in the Atlantic Ocean, causing much damage and destruction.

“Extreme weather linked to climate change has an impact all over the world, including floods in southern Asia and landslides and droughts in Africa,” he added, noting also the impact of rise in ocean surface temperature on weather patterns.

In addition to controlling the carbon emissions to help control the rising temperatures, as well as adaptation methods, he urged better preparation ahead of storms, for mitigating their effects and to recover from them.

Such efforts, he noted, are also important to protect the progress made towards agricultural and economic development as well as to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
Also speaking today, Miroslav Lajčak, the President of the General Assembly also highlighted the growing impact of climate change and that the current trend of greenhouse gases emissions would increase likelihood of severe weather events.

“The impact of Irma, Maria and other recent systems reminds us of the importance of adaptation and resilience to climate change and further strengthening mitigation efforts, through the implementation of the Paris Agreement [on Climate Change], which is a milestone for collective engagements towards the planet’s sustainability,” he said, adding:

“Let us not let the lives lost be in vain. Rather, let us be inspired to take personal and collective action to support the victims and survivors rebuild their communities, homes and lives, stronger than even before.”

The high-level meeting was co-hosted by the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly, and saw the participation of a number of top Government officials from UN Member States, including Gaston Browne, the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda; Darren Henfield, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Bahamas; Bert Koenders, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands; Alistair Burt, the Minister of State for International Development and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom.

It was also attended by Achim Steiner, the Administrator of the UN Development Programme; Mark Lowcock, UN Emergency Relief Coordinator; and Kristalina Georgieva, the Chief Executive Officer of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and International Development Association at the World Bank.

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

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

The plan aims to reach an estimated 265,000 affected people until the end of this year.

**UN emergency relief fund releases $10 million to assist with Irma response**

In related news, the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) allocated $10 million to enable humanitarians to help tens of thousands of people in need of assistance following the devastating category five hurricane.

According to a news release issued by the Fund, the allocation will enable UN and other organisations support the national and regional response, including providing immediate food, critical health care, clean water and other urgently needed aid to the people most affected by Irma, in particular women and girls.

“We will continue to stand in solidarity with the people of the Caribbean to ensure maximum support is available to the commendable national and regional efforts,” Mr. Lowcock, who manages CERF on behalf of the Secretary-General, said in the release.
'Window of opportunity’ closing on non-communicable diseases, warns UN health agency

18 September – Millions around the globe are dying prematurely from diseases such as cancer or heart disease, the United Nations health agency warned, urging governments to step up efforts to control non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

“Limited national progress has been made in the fight against NCDs – primarily cardiovascular and chronic respiratory diseases, cancers and diabetes – which are the world’s biggest killers,” noted the UN World Health Organization in a news release today.

According to estimates, 15 million people aged 30-70 succumb to these diseases annually. Furthermore, the latest edition of the WHO Non-communicable Disease Progress Monitor shows that progress around the world to control such conditions been uneven and insufficient, and over three-fourth of the deaths in low- and middle-income countries.

“Bolder political action is needed to address constraints in controlling NCDs, including the mobilization of domestic and external resources and safeguarding communities from interference by powerful economic operators,” said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the WHO Director-General, in his foreword to the Progress Monitor.

The findings also reveal that the world is not on track to meet one of the key health targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on reducing premature mortality from NCDs by a third by 2030.

Underscoring that “the window of opportunity is closing,” on being able to save increasing number of people, particularly children and adolescents, Douglas Bettcher, the Director the Department for Prevention of NCDs at WHO urged: “If we don’t take action now to protect people from NCDs, we will condemn today’s and tomorrow’s youth to lives of ill-health and reduced economic opportunities.”

The Progress Monitor provides data on 19 indicators in all of WHO’s 194 member States, such as setting time-bound targets to reduce NCD deaths, developing comprehensive policies to address NCDs; implement key measures to reduce tobacco demand; reduce harmful use of alcohol, and promote healthy diets and physical activity; as well as strengthen health systems through primary health care and universal health coverage.

Findings contained in this year’s edition will form the basis for a WHO study later this year which will be released ahead of the third UN High-level Meeting on NCDs (to be held in 2018).
More than 128 countries back pledged reforms to shape ‘21st century UN’

18 September – Pledging to overhaul the United Nations bureaucracy to make the world body stronger and more responsive to the people it serves, Secretary-General António Guterres today launched a pledge of support for reforms that has the backing of 128 countries.

“Our shared objective is a 21st century UN focused more on people and less on process, more on delivery and less on bureaucracy,” the Secretary-General said at the event co-hosted by United States President Donald Trump.

He added that “value for money while advancing shared values – this is our common goal.”

Mr. Guterres said someone recently asked him what kept him awake at night – bureaucracy, was the simple answer. “Fragmented structures. Byzantine procedures. Endless red tape,” he added.

“To serve the people we support and the people who support us, we must be nimble and effective, flexible and efficient,” he stated.

The 10-point Declaration for support for UN reforms aims to simplify procedures and decentralize decisions, with greater transparency, efficiency and accountability, according to Mr. Guterres.

In recent months, the UN embarked on plans to achieve gender parity among the Organization's middle and senior-management positions, and is working to reorganize the peace and security sections so they are refocused on prevention and mediation.

The UN has also prioritized ending sexual exploitation and abuse. At a high-level meeting scheduled for today, the UN is due to announce a 'Circle of Leadership' which will include Heads of State and Government committed to ending impunity and strengthening measures to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping and political mission, among other international deployments.

In his speech today, Mr. Guterres also noted reforms to the UN's development system, to become more coordinated, focused on the people and more accountable to better assist countries along the 17 priorities in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

These aims, Mr. Guterres said, will be measured through “tangible results in the lives of the people we serve” and in “the trust of those who support our work through their hard-earned resources.”

The UN chief quoted President Trump who he said on multiple occasions noted that “the UN has tremendous potential.”

“All of us have a responsibility to make sure we live up to it,” Mr. Guterres said.
School meal funding crisis puts 1.5 million West, Central African children at risk, UN agency warns

18 September – As the 2017-2018 school year starts, more than 1.5 million children across West and Central Africa risk going to school hungry or dropping out altogether, due to lack of financing for nourishing school meals, the United Nations food relief agency said today.

“By failing to fully fund school meals, we are collectively short-changing the next generation and Africa's future,” said Abdou Dieng, West and Central Africa Regional Director of the World Food Programme (WFP) in a news release.

“School meals are one of the best investments the international community can make to ensure a head start for young children in some of the world's poorest countries.”

In many areas of the region, WFP is the sole or main provider of school meals. Over the years, however, WFP has shrunk its coverage for lack of funds.

In Burkina Faso, WFP's school meals programme for nearly 83,000 children is 0 per cent financed, while the programme in Senegal is only five per cent funded.

In conflict-torn Central African Republic, the programme for more than 200,000 youngsters is half funded, and in Niger, the programme for more than a quarter of a million pupils is 19 per cent financed.

Other particularly at-risk countries include Liberia, Mali and Mauritania, but the funding dearth stretches across the region.

Altogether, WFP's regional programme faces an $76 million funding gap, the agency warned, as experts were meeting in Montreal, Canada, for an annual forum on child nutrition, co-sponsored and hosted by WFP's Centre of Excellence against Hunger.

The news release noted that repercussions are dramatic, since the hearty and nutritious WFP-provided lunches and snacks are the only meal many youngsters eat all day. More broadly, the funding crunch puts at risk a whole generation, with broader spill-over effects on national economies and development.

“This is a crisis for education, but also a crisis for nutrition and food security which are the fundamental pillars of development,” said Mr. Dieng.

Studies show the meals help improve attendance and performance rates. They are also a key incentive for parents to send their children – particularly girls – to school and to keep them there.
Use political weight to eliminate sexual exploitation and abuse, UN official urges global leaders

17 September – Ahead of a high-level United Nations meeting on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse, the Organization's Special Coordinator on the issue is urging global leaders to join the “Circle of Leadership,” lend the political weight of their offices, and act – both at the national and international levels – to eradicate the scourge.

“Sexual exploitation and abuse is not an issue that is only concerning peacekeeping or military or uniformed personnel, it is a scourge that exists everywhere across our system,” Jane Holl Lute, the Special Coordinator on improving the UN response to sexual exploitation and abuse, said in an interview with UN News.

“Through this initiative [we are] asking political leadership, to personally, associate with this agenda and lend the political weight of their office to its success.”

The High-level Meeting on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, to be held on Monday at UN Headquarters on the eve of the high-level segment of the General Assembly's 72nd session, will see Secretary-General António Guterres announce the Circle of Leadership on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse in UN operations. The Circle will comprise Heads of State and Government committed to ending impunity and strengthening measures to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse in international deployments.

UN chief's priority since assuming office

Combatting the scourge is one of the key priorities for Mr. Guterres, who since being elected to the position took a number of steps to stomp it out. In his first week in office, the UN chief established a special task force to look at the issue and to recommend concrete actions.

The matter was also the subject of his first report to UN Member States in March this year, in which, among other matters, he called for the High-level Meeting to make a political demonstration of solidarity with the Organization's efforts to eliminate sexual exploitation and abuse.

He also called for a system-wide Victims' Rights Advocate, who will stand for the rights and dignity of victims alongside their need for assistance and attention in the wake of allegations and abuse.

The meeting will also introduce Jane Connors, the Victims' Rights Advocate, who was appointed last month.

“It will also present the state of the Secretary-General's Trust Fund for victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, and make an appeal for additional contributions, and we will also update Member States on the state of the compacts between them and the UN on more specific measures to combat sexual exploitation and abuse,” added the Special Coordinator.

Indicators of progress

Speaking on progress made in combatting sexual exploitation and abuse, Ms. Lute highlighted the appointment of the Victims' Rights Advocate, as well as practical actions such as the use of a new, uniform information reporting form to consistently collect information, mandatory e-learning course, surveys and increased awareness.

But above all, the generation of a “kind of trust” has been a key marker, stressed Ms. Lute.

“On the ground we are seeing a few more cases being reported. We take that as a sign that our systems are beginning to
generate the kind of trust that we want them to generate so that people know if they bring an allegation forward, it will be handled discretely, humanely, and that we are seeking the appropriate and rapid justice for victims,” she said.

Follow-up after the High-level Meeting

On actions following tomorrow's meeting, Ms. Lute spoke of a follow-on consultation with civil society at which the UN will solicit views on what the Organization needs to do to visibly and tangibly achieve its goals, as well as what support they can provide to the UN.

The Special Coordinator also spoke of the personal commitment of the Secretary-General for the cause and his leadership at the highest level.

“I think it is impossible to find someone in the UN system who does not know about this issue, and does not know about the importance the Secretary-General places on it, we need to translate that knowledge and awareness into action,” she underscored.

UN-supported campaign to immunize 150,000 Rohingya children against deadly diseases

17 September – As thousands of Rohingya refugees – including many children – having fled violence in Myanmar continue to arrive in Bangladesh, a United Nations-supported vaccination campaign has been initiated to prevent the spread of potentially deadly diseases.

According to a news release by the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the agency and the UN World Health Organization (WHO) are supporting the Bangladeshi Ministry of Health-led campaign targeting measles, rubella and polio to inoculate some 150,000 Rohingya children below the age of fifteen in 68 refugee settlements near the country's border with Myanmar.

“We are happy that we were able to initiate the immunization campaign so quickly to protect the population from a possible measles outbreak” said Navaratnasamy Paranietharan, the head of WHO in Bangladesh.

The seven-day campaign was planned by the UN health agency, which is also managing and monitoring its field implementation. UNICEF has provided vaccines, syringes and Vitamin A capsules.

“Measles is a very infectious and dangerous disease during emergencies, especially for children who are already weak and malnourished,” added Edouard Beigbeder, the head of UNICEF in Bangladesh.

“With thousands of children crossing the border every day, vaccination is crucial to prevent the spread of potentially deadly diseases.”

In addition to the vaccination campaign, the two UN agencies are also helping the Government reinforce maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health services; renovate delivery and new-born care units; improve water, sanitation and hygiene in health facilities; and strengthen disease surveillance, early warning and health-related information systems.

According to estimates, more than 410,000 Rohingya refugees have arrived in Bangladesh since August 25, with children making up about 60 per cent of that number.
UN refugee agency 'shocked' by killings in eastern DR Congo

16 September – Expressing shock and sadness over the violent death of numerous Burundian nationals – among them likely refugees and asylum seekers – in Kamanyola town, eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the United Nations refugee agency called for an investigation into the incident.

According to initial reports more than 30 have been killed and over 100 injured, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said in a news release today.

“The precise circumstances are not yet clear [but] reports indicate that in the course of a confrontation with Burundian demonstrators, Congolese security forces opened fire on the crowd,” the UN agency added.

The town hosts some 2,005 refugees and asylum seekers from Burundi, most of whom arrived in 2015. There are a total of 43,769 Burundian refugees living in DRC.

The news release also noted that UNHCR and its partners have sent teams to Kamanyola, including medical staff, to treat the injured.

On International Day, UN highlights importance of collective action to protect ozone layer

16 September – Commemorating the International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer, senior United Nations officials, including Secretary-General António Guterres highlighted the contributions of the Montreal Protocol – an international environment agreement on the elimination of ozone depleting substances.

“When scientists found that everyday products were destroying the fragile ozone layer, the world responded with the Montreal Protocol,” said Mr. Guterres in his message on the International Day.

“It rallies Governments, companies, doctors, scientists and citizens to reverse the damage [and] saves millions of people from skin cancer and cataracts each year.”

Also in his message, Mr. Guterres underscored the importance of Montreal Protocol to help combat poverty, address climate change, and protect the food chain. He also noted that new business opportunities have been created by the treaty, highlighting that it will save the global economy over $2 trillion by 2050.

This year also marks the 30th anniversary of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, which was agreed on this day in 1987.

As part of the celebrations, the Ozone Secretariat (which supports parties to the Protocol in implementing actions to protect the ozone layer) in partnership with Marvel, the company behind some of the world's most beloved superheroes, is conducting the #OzoneHeroes campaign, highlighting the accomplishments of the Protocol and to increase public recognition of its success and impact.

In his own message marking the anniversary, Erik Solheim, the head of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP),
applauded the global effort in support of the Protocol to protect the health and wellbeing of millions.

“This collective power is effective only because of individual actions of Ozone Heroes everywhere,” he underscored, calling on all stakeholders to mark the anniversary to support the ratification of the Kigali Amendment to stop hydrofluorocarbons from harming the planet.

“But to make that happen, we all need to be Ozone Heroes.”

**Iran implementing its nuclear commitments, UN atomic agency chief stresses**

18 September – Iran is implementing its commitments under “the world’s most robust nuclear verification regime,” the United Nations atomic agency head said today, while at the same time voicing “grave concern” at the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s (DPRK) nuclear programme.

“The nuclear-related commitments undertaken by Iran under the JCPOA are being implemented,” UN International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Yukiya Amano told the opening of the Agency’s annual General Conference in Vienna.

Endorsed unanimously by the UN Security Council in 2015, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), between its five permanent members (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States), plus Germany, the European Union (EU) and Iran, set out rigorous mechanisms for monitoring limits on Iran’s nuclear programme, while paving the way for lifting UN sanctions against the country.

“Iran is now subject to the world’s most robust nuclear verification regime,” said Mr. Amano, who was appointed by acclamation today to another four-year term as Director General of the 168-member Agency.

Turning to the DPRK, he called upon it to comply fully with its obligations under all relevant Security Council and the IAEA resolutions.

“The nuclear test by the DPRK on September third, its sixth and largest to date, is extremely regrettable,” he said. “The Agency is working to maintain its readiness to return to the DPRK when political developments make this possible.”

On 11 September, the Security Council unanimously imposed tighter sanctions on the DPRK, including limits on oil exports to it, banning its textile exports and its access to gas liquids, and more closely inspecting cargo ships going in and out of its ports.

The Council has passed eight resolution over the DPRK’s nuclear programme since it withdrew from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 2003, many involving increasingly severe sanctions.

Turning to other matters within the Agency’s remit, Mr. Amano stressed its unique role in transferring nuclear technology to developing countries, and its work in supporting countries achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals in energy, food and agriculture, industry, water management and health.

“The Agency will continue to deliver high-quality programmes and respond promptly to Member State needs,” he said, noting that the modernization of the IAEA nuclear applications laboratories near Vienna was making excellent progress and the new Insect Pest Control Laboratory would be inaugurated in a week’s time.
“When completed in a few years’ time, the expanded laboratory complex will greatly increase our capabilities as a technology holder,” he added.

Inclusive and sustainable development key to prevent violent extremism – deputy UN chief

18 September – Noting that sustainable development and sustainable peace mutually reinforce one another, United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed called for greater investments in basic services and in building equitable societies.

Speaking at the event, 'Rebuilding Shattered Lives and Communities: Chibok and Yazidi Girls and Women,' Ms. Mohammed said the atrocities against them require immediate and compassionate care, and comprehensive services.

“Chibok and Yezidi girls and women are not only survivors of violence,” she said.

“They are a testament to the failure of the international community to prevent violent extremism and to address the root causes of conflict.”

Underscoring that the best means for prevention is inclusive and sustainable development, the Deputy Secretary-General stressed that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development offered the solution to do so.

Most importantly, education – especially for girls – needed to be prioritized, she said, adding that access to schooling would also be a critical component in rebuilding.

The problem is most acute in Nigeria, which has the highest illiteracy rate in the world, and two-thirds among them are women and girls. Conflict in the country displaced some 2.5 million people – over half of them children – and killed hundreds of teachers and damaged or destroyed some 1,200 schools.

“All UN agencies must join forces to address this, and all the needs and rights of women and girls,” said Ms. Mohammed, reaffirming the Organization's commitment to a system-wide approach so communities can be assisted quicker and better and with greater national ownership.

“Our efforts to magnify their voices and their stories, and ensure their health, justice and rights is an investment in our collective future,” she concluded.

The event, held on the margins of the ongoing high-level week of the General Assembly, was co-organized by Canada, Denmark, Iraq and Nigeria, the European Union and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA).
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 test 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 defended 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

Bolivia’s 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
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 combating 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**

*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.

“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

President Jimmy Morales of Guatemala addresses the General Assembly’s annual general debate. UN Photo/Cia Pak

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

President Edgar Chagwa Lungu of the Republic of Zambia addresses the General Assembly’s annual general debate. UN Photo/Cia Pak

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**

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 owns 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 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 combatting 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, combating 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.”
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 Daily News • www.un.org/news

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
DR Congo: UN agency urges Government to protect refugees after tragic killings

19 September – 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.

“Their 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. Barthélémy, 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.
Palestinian leader, at General Assembly, calls on ‘duty-bound’ UN to end Israeli occupation

20 September – From the podium of the United Nations General Assembly Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas today called on the world Organization to face up to its responsibilities to end Israel’s “relentless” occupation ensure the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

“The United Nations bears a legal, political, moral and humanitarian obligation to end this occupation and enable the Palestinian people to live in freedom and prosperity in their independent state of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, on the 4 June 1967 borders,” he said.

“We recognized the State of Israel on the 1967 borders, but Israel’s continuous refusal to recognize these borders has put into question the mutual recognition we signed in Oslo in 1993,” he added, referring to the accord providing for a two-state solution to the Middle East conflict with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace within secure borders.

He demanded that Israel commit to the borders of 1967 as basis for the two-state solution, urged those States that have not

For information media - not an official record
yet done so to recognize the State of Palestine, and called on the UN Security Council to approve full membership of the State of Palestine to the UN.

“The path we have chosen as Palestinian and Arabs, and the path chosen by the world, is that of international law and international legitimacy,” underscored Mr. Abbas.

“I address the Israeli people, across the spectrum of their society and tell them: We want to live in peace,” he stated. “Do not listen to those who try to convince you that peace between us is not possible.”

Devastating ‘season of natural disasters’ demands action to address extreme weather events – Dominican Republic

20 September – Amid a “devastating season of natural disasters” in the region – widespread catastrophe that extends to Mexico, hit by two destructive earthquakes, and to the southern United States, viciously punished by Hurricane Harvey – the Foreign Minister of the Dominican Republic today called on the United Nations to consider “new actions we must take, urgently, to counteract extreme climatic phenomena.”

Addressing the General Assembly’s annual general debate in the wake of the massive destruction caused in the region by Hurricane Irma and as Puerto Rico was being battered by Hurricane Maria, Miguel Vargas Maldonado expressed solidarity with all countries that had suffered these back-to-back extreme weather events and said that the deaths and material losses have been immense.

He said one thing was clear, that the damage caused during this hurricane season alone far exceeded the Dominican Republic’s gross domestic product (GDP). Moreover, the “lethal power” of these recent storms – which had been intensified by climate change – had eroded more than roads and beaches, it had shattered lives and destroyed dreams.

“Our economies, our way of life, and our development potential are at in danger. The Caribbean vulnerability and that of our Dominican Republic pose a risk that we cannot face alone,” stated Mr. Vargas Maldanado, and although his country had been fortunate not to suffer human losses during the catastrophic passage of Irma, “we are aware that, like every other Caribbean island, we will always be vulnerable to this type of phenomenon.”

Indeed, this reality has led him to raise once again to the General Assembly, the imperative need to join forces to confront these threats. “It compels us to act in a responsible, cohesive way for the sake of our people’s lives,” he said, stressing that it is not enough to send messages of solidarity or humanitarian aid after natural catastrophes have caused death and devastation.

“And it is absolutely not enough to sign agreements on climate change; It is critical for these agreements to be coherent, move forward a joint agenda, and develop concrete action plans,” said the Foreign Minister proposing the creation of a special fund to deal with natural catastrophes, to foster awareness, prevention, and resilience strategies, which will allow us to preserve life.

“We must act on this or otherwise the future will judge us for our total lack of responsibility,” he warned.
‘Relentless reality of climate change’ transforming long-held notions about development, Chile tells UN

20 September – Catastrophes such as the most recent devastating earthquake in Mexico and the successive hurricanes that have hit the Latin American and Caribbean region “remind us that we are at a key moment in human history in which the notion of development that has prevailed until now has been shaken by the relentless reality of climate change,” the President of Chile told the United Nations General Assembly today.

“We can close our eyes and deny a reality whose devastating effects will become more frequent and intense, or assume our responsibility,” Michelle Bachelet said in her address to the Assembly’s annual general debate, where she reiterated the need to join the fight against climate change, because in fact: “there is no space for denial.” She went on to say that the biggest strength of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was that all the people of the world must implement it together. In that regard, Chile had established a green tax on carbon emissions in its energy sector and had moved from 6.3 to 17 per cent renewable energy. It is also active in pushing forth ocean initiatives. Some 8 million tons of plastic reached the sea each year, enormously impacting the world’s oceans.

Prohibiting the use of plastic bags in coastal cities is critical to protecting the ocean, going on to outline various initiatives Chile has undertaken to protect its biodiversity. Sustainable development is not “an impossible dream to finance,” Ms. Bachelet stressed.

Describing some challenges currently facing her country, both in the political and business world, she underscored efforts which were particularly focused on making both sectors more inclusive, including through the establishment of a quota to include women in Government.

On Venezuela, she called for concrete results regarding the full restoration of democracy. She also expressed concern for the conflicts in the Middle East and some parts in Africa, and the increasing tension on the Korean Peninsula. It is essential to resolve all those challenges through diplomacy, she stressed, adding that “it is possible to completely eliminate nuclear weapons.”

At General Assembly, Iran’s leader denounces those seeking to rip apart nuclear pact

20 September – Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, speaking at the same United Nations podium from which the United States yesterday denounced the accord curbing Iran’s nuclear programme as one of the ‘worst deals ever,’ today pledged his country’s continued adherence to the pact.

“I declare before you that the Islamic Republic of Iran will not be the first country to violate the agreement, but it will respond decisively and resolutely to its violation by any party,” he told world leaders on the second day of the General Assembly’s 72nd annual general debate.

“It will be a great pity if this agreement were to be destroyed by ‘rogue newcomers’ to the world of politics, the world will have lost a great opportunity,” he said. “By violating its international commitments, the new US Administration only destroys its own
credibility and undermines international confidence in negotiating with it, or accepting its word or promise.”

Endorsed unanimously by the UN Security Council in 2015, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), between its five permanent members (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States), plus Germany, the European Union (EU) and Iran, set out rigorous mechanisms for monitoring limits on Iran’s nuclear programme, while paving the way for lifting UN sanctions against the country.

Turning to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Mr. Rouhani said Iran never threatens anyone but also does not tolerate threats, adding that peace, security, stability and the progress of all nations are intertwined.

“It is not possible that a rogue and racist regime trample upon the most basic rights of the Palestinians, and the usurpers of this land enjoy security,” he declared. “It is reprehensible that the rogue Zionist regime that threatens regional and global security with its nuclear arsenal and is not committed to any international instrument or safeguard, has the audacity to preach peaceful nations.”

UN must reform, ‘win our trust’ by proving it can deliver, UK leader tells General Assembly

20 September – The world is currently facing a raft of challenges “that test who we are,” the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom told the General Assembly, noting that while many, such terrorism – which struck her country five times this year – did not recognize international borders, they could be addressed by a strong, agile United Nations that upholds global order and values.

Addressing the United Nations General Assembly’s annual general debate, Theresa May noted that climate change is degrading and depleting the planet, and millions were fleeing their homes in search of a better life. Moreover, there are massive inequalities around the world and weaknesses in the global trading system, both of which are pushing some countries towards protectionism.

“As the global system struggles to adapt, some countries are deliberately flouting international rules,” she said, citing the “unforgivable use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime,” and the threat of nuclear weapons use by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

Calling on countries to defend the international order and the values of fairness, justice and human rights underpinning the multilateral system – including through agreements such as the Paris Accord and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty – she said the international system, with the United Nations at its heart, is the “amplifying force” for those values.

Indeed, “we have to strive harder” to defend and reform the UN, she stressed, and those who flouted the rules and spirit of the Organization must be held to account. Noting that the United Kingdom had long supported the UN, she nevertheless said the Organization suffers from a gap between its purposes and their delivery.

“Member States must embark on the Secretary General’s reform agenda,” she said, calling for better cooperation, improved gender equality and reduced competition on the ground. As an outward-looking, “global Britain” – and the world’s second largest donor – the United Kingdom would continue to support the Organization.

However, said stated: “The UN and its agencies must win our trust” by proving they can deliver. In that regard, the UK would now set aside 30 per cent of its funding, to be paid only to those parts of the UN that achieve sufficient results.
Japan’s Abe, at UN General Assembly, calls for ‘action now’ on DPRK nuclear programme

20 September – Saying that “all options are on the table,” Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe today took the podium of the United Nations General Assembly to call on world leaders to provide the necessary action now to curb the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s (DPRK) nuclear and missile programmes.

“We consistently support the stance of the United States: that ‘all options are on the table’,” he told the Assembly’s 72nd annual general debate, voicing appreciation for the unanimous adoption on 11 September of the latest and most stringent of many UN Security Council resolutions, further intensifying sanctions against the DPRK.

“But I must make an appeal to you. North Korea has already demonstrated its disregard of the resolutions by launching yet another missile. We must prevent the goods, funds, people, and technology necessary for nuclear and missile development from heading to North Korea,” he stressed.

“What is necessary is action. Whether or not we can put an end to the provocations by North Korea is dependent upon the solidarity of the international community. There is not much time left. The resolution is nothing more than the beginning,” he stated.

Mr. Abe went through a litany of two decades of failed dialogue with the DPRK, which during all that time used the talks as the best means for deception and buying time. “We must make North Korea abandon all nuclear and ballistic missile programs in a complete, verifiable, and irreversible manner,” he said. “What is needed to do that is not dialogue, but pressure.”

Multilateralism is the only clear path for tackling today’s challenges, Romania tells UN

20 September – People across the globe suffer from war, poverty, inequality and injustice, the President of Romania told the United Nations General Assembly today, citing rising tensions over cultural identity and faith along with terrorist attacks, which deepen insecurity.

Noting that some perceive that the UN is not effectively managing the complexity of today’s crises, Klaus Werner Iohannis underscored that “no other path serves us better than multilateralism in finding viable solutions for the current global challenges.”

At the same time, he noted that the UN agenda not only covers conflicts and crises, but also sustainable development, promoting human rights and dealing with issues such as building a safe, sustainable planet and ensuring prosperity as the best way to prevent instability and crises. “Focusing our actions on people should remain the ultimate goal,” maintained Mr. Iohannis.
He cited the UN’s stabilizing role in setting broad parameters of international relations, as the reason why efforts to improve its effectiveness should remain strong. “We need a UN with robust policy planning capabilities, able to project visions for the global peace and well-being beyond the crises of the day,” he said declaring Romania’s support for an institutional structure for crisis management.

Against the backdrop of increasing violence and disinformation, Romania remains convinced that extremist trends facing youth today can only be countered through quality education, saying “The use of identity ‘fears’ and of the ‘us versus them’ paradigm cannot be left unanswered.”

**World oblivious to suffering of other minorities in Rakhine, says Myanmar Vice-President**

_20 September_ – Informing world leaders that the violence, suffering and mass displacement in Myanmar’s Rakhine province affects not just Muslim and Rakhine communities, but also other minority groups – to which most of the world has been oblivious – the country’s Vice-President stressed his Government’s deep concern over the situation.

“There is no denying that this is a problem of significant magnitude,” said U Henry Van Thio, the Vice-President of Myanmar. “I am [however] happy to inform you that the situation has improved. No armed clashes have been reported since 5 September.”

Noting that his Government is also concerned over reports that the number of Muslims crossing into Bangladesh remains unabated, the Vice-President said that the reason needed to be found for the exodus.

What is little known is that the great majority of the Muslim population decided to remain in their villages, he stated.

Acknowledging that it is his Government’s “first and foremost” responsibility to respond to the challenges in Rakhine province, he announced the adoption of an integrated national strategy to address the situation there.

Humanitarian assistance also remains a top priority, said the Myanmar leader, adding that the Government is committed to ensuring that aid is received by all those in need, without discrimination.

Further, noting that there has been a call for the repatriation of the displaced people who fled northern Rakhine to Bangladesh, the Vice-President recalled the Myanmar State Councillor’s announcement yesterday in which, according to him, she stated that “Myanmar was prepared to start the verification process at anytime.”

“Our two neighbours have had the experience of such a process in 1993 through the establishment of a joint working group for implementation of repatriation process. We can develop a process based on the experience of 1993,” said the Vice-President.

“The recent events in Rakhine state are a painful reminder that we face difficult challenges ahead on the long journey towards peace, prosperity and democracy,” he added, and further recalled State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s first address to the General Assembly, in which she said:

“As part of this commitment, we have made the national reconciliation and peace process our top priority. Our vision here is clear: to achieve a democratic, federal Union, based on the principles of freedom, justice, equal rights and self-determination.”

Noting that his country has made real progress, he expressed that his Government knows that the road ahead is “long and...”
convoluted.”

“Our democratic transition is fragile. At this important juncture in our nation's history, we only ask that the international community continues to support our efforts to achieve peace, prosperity and democracy,” urged the Vice-President of Myanmar.

Southern African leaders, at General Assembly, call for levelling the economic playing field

20 September – Warning that Africa is beset by the double scourge of the disparity of the global economy and illicit financial outflows, South African President Jacob Zuma today called on the United Nations to play a central role in tackling both issues, which are major obstacles to full development.

“The current structure of the global economy continues to deepen the divide between the global north and global south,” he told the General Assembly’s 72nd annual general debate. “While a few enjoy the benefits of globalization, the majority of the world’s peoples still live in abject poverty and hunger, with no hope of ever improving their living conditions.

“We need the political will and commitment from global leaders to address the challenges and obstacles posed by this untransformed structure of the global economy, if we hope to achieve the goals and ambitions of Agenda 2030,” he added, referring to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which aim to eliminate a host of social ills, such as hunger and diseases, all by 2030.

Mr. Zuma stressed that Africa continues to lose a significant chunk of its resources through illicit financial outflows, billions of dollars which would otherwise be used to develop the continent, and provide education, healthcare, housing and other critical basic needs, with money laundering, corruption, and transfer pricing by among multinational companies among the biggest challenges.

“We appeal for the cooperation and commitment of every member state of the United Nations, and the International community at large to address this phenomenon,” he said.

“Developed countries in particular, have a historic and moral obligation to contribute to achieving a fair global economic environment, and to eradicate the scourge of illicit financial flows from the continent. The UN should also be at the centre of addressing this problem.”

Also addressing the Assembly today, Hage G. Geingob, the President of Namibia, highlighted the importance of a “development that reaches all people in an equitable manner”.

“Growing income disparities, between nations and within nations, poses the greatest threat for peace within countries and globally,” he said the Assembly’s 72nd annual general debate, stressing that as long as there’s poverty and income inequality in Namibia, lasting peace and social justice would not be achieved.

President Geingob also noted the Namibian support of gender equality and the importance of including women and girls in development, as well as the youth. “We, in Namibia, believe that gender equity is equally important for a stable and harmonious society,” he added, recognizing also the contribution of women in promoting global peace.
He also expressed the importance of seeing Africa as an “important and equal partner of the international community, with a contribution to make,” instead of “only a source of primary commodities”.

“It is only through unity, that we will bring about a world free from hunger and poverty. It is only through unity, that we will deliver a sustainable planet for our children and their children,” he concluded.

In the same vein, Arthur Peter Mutharika, the President of Malawi underscored that it is the responsibility of the current generation of world leaders to ensure that their actions offer hope of a better future to the next generation.

“The adoption of the 2030 Agenda reflects our global resolve to address the most pressing challenges in the spirit of the human collaboration,” he said, adding that unity among nations is indispensable.

“The cause that rallies us together is that we are one humanity, on one planet. This is the tie that binds us all. All our differences and national interests are secondary to this overriding cause,” he declared.

In particular, the President noted the growing impact of climate change, such as through natural disasters, on the most vulnerable and that his country – where 85 per cent of the populations depend on agriculture – crop failures are a tragedy.

“Therefore,” he added, “let me appeal to all Member States to consider strategies and avenues for collaboration for us to adapt to the fast-changing climate.”

In conclusion, he also spoke against nuclear weapons, noting that it remains the existential threat to humanity, and said that the idea of keeping such weapons “questions the wisdom of mankind.”

Expressing his country’s categorical disapproval of the spread of ballistic missile technology, he added: “This should not be tolerated in any way by any Member State of the UN.”

Also today, expressing his country’s commitment to implementing the SDGs, King Mswati III of Swaziland, highlighted national initiatives to mainstream and localize the global development goals through awareness raising, consultations and education at all levels.

“[We have] also integrated the goals into the National Development Strategy, which was revised to capture its linkages with the SDGs and the African Union Agenda 2063,” he said.

In his address, King Mswati III, also underlined the urgency to mitigate the challenges arising from climate change, which is already showing its impact through severe droughts, new patterns of pest infestation, as well as hurricanes, floods and landslides.

“We urge donors and all nations, to not only fulfil their pledge towards the ‘green fund,’ but also to adopt policies to strike the correct balance between production of essential products and environmental sustainability to protect and preserve the world for future generations.”

Further in his address, the leader of Swaziland also spoke of social development in his country, noting progress in tackling poverty, hunger and disease, and improving the lives of the people.

In conclusion, he also highlighted the importance of South-South cooperation as well as capacity building, enhanced resources and technology transfer to help lower-middle-income countries and to least developed countries.

Similarly, highlighting Madagascar’s key poverty alleviation initiatives, President Hery Martial Rajaonarimampianina Rakotoarimanana, thanking international support enabled the country to do so.

“I can say that since 2016, Madagascar raised $6.4 billion in global investment and aid from institutional donors,” the President announced in his address to the General Assembly.
This feat, he explained was made possible through the easing of political conflicts in his country.

He added that this injection of funds allowed Madagascar to start investing in the key sectors of its economy and for the future of the country.

Thanks to this funding, Madagascar is now working to reduce poverty in a sustainable manner, reaching 92 per cent of the population, he noted, highlighting that policies setting up basic infrastructure in several sectors is also starting to bear fruit, including agriculture, livestock, energy and fisheries.

The President also announced health projects, including the launching of a universal health coverage scheme, the reduction of maternal and infant mortality through a strengthening of the network of health centres, an increase in the Government budget on nutrition, and an advanced epidemiological surveillance system that would allow the Government to monitor some 28 epidemic-prone diseases in real time.

“One year to go to the 2018 Presidential elections, after hard work and continuous determination, I can say that Madagascar has reached a milestone and a stage that now allow room for hope,” the country’s leader expressed.

Human rights a precondition for peace; dialogue ‘only way’ to make it sustainable, Montenegro tells UN

20 September – Reiterating Montenegro’s strong commitment to multilateral cooperation, President Filip Vujanović told the Assembly today that his country puts good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation in the Balkans at the top of its foreign policy agenda.

He noted the region’s success in dialogue and cooperation as the only way to achieve sustainable peace, announcing that early next year Montenegro would organize a regional conference to help in defining new mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution.

Montenegro unequivocally supports nuclear non-proliferation, he said, calling the Non-Proliferation Treaty “a foundation for improvement of the global stability.” The country “strongly condemns nuclear weapons tests conducted by North Korea as an act that violates international obligations […] and poses a serious threat to global peace and security.”

Stressing that respect for human rights is a precondition for peace, stability and development, the President said his country attaches special attention to: strengthening the position and role of women in society and prevention of violence against women; child protection and development; fight against discrimination of LGBTI [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex] population and persons with disabilities.

Turning to humanitarian assistance, which is much needed for civilians in conflicts and natural disasters, Mr. Vujanović said Montenegro has invested significant efforts to ensure appropriate legislative and strategic framework for financing international development cooperation and humanitarian assistance.
A more flexible UN can have real, positive impact on the ground, Latvia tells Assembly

President Raimonds Vejonis of the Republic of Latvia addresses the general debate of the General Assembly’s seventy-second session. UN Photo/Cia Pak

20 September – The President of Latvia, Raimonds Vejonis, told the General Assembly today that while the United Nations remains the central forum for multilateralism and a rules-based global order, if the Organization is more transparent and flexible it could “bring positive, real influence to people on the ground.”

He expressed Latvia’s deep concern over nuclear proliferation, strongly condemning all nuclear tests and ballistic missile launches by Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. While saying that a peaceful and diplomatic solution to this situation is a “a priority,” he noted that in the meantime, “all States must fully implement relevant UN Security Council resolutions.”

Mr. Vejonis also reiterated Latvia’s call for “long overdue” Council reform and encouraged “especially the veto-wielding members” to move beyond their domestic interests to address global challenges.

He spoke about the rules-based security order in Europe, underscoring the territorial integrity of independent States, and calling Russia’s “unprovoked aggression against its neighbours” a serious breach of international security rules.

The Latvian President concluded by underscoring that all Member States must work together to ensure that the UN adapt to a changing global environment, focus on priorities and deliver results.

Kuwait to host donors conference on rebuilding Iraq, Prime Minister tells UN Assembly

Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al Sabah of the State of Kuwait addresses the general debate of the General Assembly’s seventy-second session. UN Photo/Cia Pak

20 September – Kuwait intends to host an international donors conference in the coming year to help Iraq rebuild the areas devastated by the war against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL or Da’esh) terrorist group, the Kuwaiti Prime Minister told the United Nations General Assembly today.

“The position of the State of Kuwait in condemning terrorism in all its forms and manifestations is principled and constant,” said Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al Sabah, congratulating the Government and people of Iraq on victories that its forces are achieving on the ground against ISIL.

He expressed hope those victories and national reconciliation efforts will eventually create the appropriate environment for starting rebuilding and reconstruction efforts, and for the return of the refugees to their homes.

He went on to note that Kuwait hosted international donor conferences in 2013, 2014 and 2015, in support of the
humanitarian situation in Syria, and co-chaired the 4th international donor conference, held in London in February 2016, as well as the 5th international donor conference held in Brussels, in April 2017.

On the Israel-Palestine conflict, the Prime Minister appealed to the international community and the UN Security Council to continue to pressure Israel to implement the UN resolutions towards the attainment of all the legitimate political rights of the Palestinian people, and the recognition of their own independent state, over their own territory, with East Jerusalem as its capital, along the borders of 4 June 1967.

On the Security Council reform, he renewed his country’s call for the necessity of that 15-member body to reflect new international realities and ensure permanent Arab representation commensurate with the number of Arab States and their contribution in supporting the different activities of the United Nations.

UN must lead global battle against counterfeit medicines, Congo tells General Assembly

20 September – The Republic of Congo today called for a United Nations-wide global battle against the proliferation of counterfeit and sub-standard medicines, warning the General Assembly on the second day of its 72nd annual General Debate that Africa was particularly vulnerable.

“The proliferation of counterfeit and sub-standard medicines presents more and more a serious and multi-tentacled threat to the world, and in particular for developing countries, President Denis Sassou Nguesso said, noting that the scourge claims 800,000 lives a year, according to the UN World Health Organization, and the traffic also funds international terrorism.

“About 10 per cent of medicines currently in use in the world are believed to be counterfeit, with the figure rising to 40 percent in Africa and the countries of the South, and even 60 per cent in some regions,” he said.

“In addition to the efforts of the World Health Organization, far-reaching action should be taken at the level of the UN General Assembly to draw up a global strategy to fight this peril,” he added, stressing the need for substantial funds.

On other challenges, he cited the growing reach of terrorism, new tensions on the Korean peninsula, fighting in Syria and Iraq, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well crises in Africa in Burundi, Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Libya and South Sudan.
‘We bear responsibility for a fruitful future,’ says Argentine leader at UN Assembly

20 September – Addressing the 72nd annual general debate at the United Nations General Assembly, the Vice-President of Argentina, Gabriela Michetti, set out her vision for the future, expressed her passion for human rights and hope for a prosperous global society.

“A natural disposition to unify,” and “an ability to envision the long-term,” are vital attributes in sustaining an inclusive society, she explained.

Ms. Michetti acknowledged this is a time of much conflict, but this does not come without ample chances for improvement. She said: “The historical time we live in is full of challenges and opportunities.”

Speaking for her country, she said Argentina reaffirms its will to become more globally integrated through building bridges with the international community.

This commitment, she said, is reflected in the plans for Argentina to be the host of the eleventh World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference in December.

Detailing more efforts to improve and expand cross-cultural relationships, the Vice-President underscored the importance in addressing the long-standing dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom.

In conclusion, Ms. Michetti expressed that the international community carries an “enormous responsibility to sow a fruitful future.”

“Our society should be, without a doubt, a work of love. Because justice and the search for the common good are a manifestation of love in the public sphere.”

International community must remain united to address global challenges, stresses Italian leader

20 September – Stressing that terrorism and violent extremism continue to cause much suffering around the globe, Paolo Gentiloni, the President of the Council of Ministers of Italy, called for broad collaboration among countries as well as regional and global organizations to successfully tackle the threat.

In particular, he underscored the need to act against all the dimensions employed by terrorist groups, including the Internet and social media, as well as financing of terrorist activities.

In his address to the 72nd general debate at the United Nations General Assembly, Mr. Gentiloni also highlighted Italy’s close involvement in assisting crisis-struck countries around the world, and said that addressing such distressing situations, such as many conflicts across Africa, required dialogue and reconciliation.

Turning to the heightened tensions on the Korean Peninsula due to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s (DPRK)
nuclear weapons development programme, he underlined that unity in the international community and determination in its response is vital.

“Full implementation of the pertinent Security Council resolutions […] is crucial […] North Korea must immediately end its missile and nuclear proliferation and all provocative actions,” he said.

He also noted the progress made by the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – under which Iran reaffirmed that it would not seek, develop or acquire nuclear weapons – and said that it remains a “success story in the framework of global efforts to counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.”

Further in his remarks, the Italian leader stressed the importance of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and expressed his country’s pledge to do its part to ensure its strong implementation.

Mr. Gentiloni also expressed his nation’s support for the reform plans proposed by Secretary-General António Guterres as well as his focus on empowerment of women and girls, and gender equality.

Healthy oceans, safe climate imperative for small islands to survive, Pacific island leaders tell UN

20 September – As the high-level segment of the United Nations General Assembly continued today, Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of Nauru, expressed deep sorrow and condolences to those who have suffered from the recent successive hurricanes in the Caribbean and United States and earthquakes in Mexico, stressing that “your suffering and grief is shared by us all.”

Mr. Waqa agreed that the full implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) be at the centre of the coming year’s work, underscoring that the five words – ‘people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership’ – which guide the goals, are broad enough to encompass collective ideals, while accommodating tremendous diversity.

“In the case of Nauru, our status as a small island developing State underlies every aspect of the lives of my people,” he said.

Noting that Nauru was among the first countries to ratify the Paris Agreement, the President pointed out that “more than most, our prospects depend on a stable planet, including a safe climate and healthy oceans.”

“Climate change will be the defining security challenge of the century and we are simply not prepared for life on a hotter planet,” Mr. Waqa asserted. For that reason, Nauru supports the appointment of a UN Special Representative on Climate and Security.

He also urged that the mounting threats to the health of the world’s oceans be tackled ambitiously. Pointing to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing as a great threat and economic loss to his country’s small economy, he emphasized that “security of our Oceans is a problem which must also be tackled by us all.”

Also taking the podium, the Prime Minister of Fiji, Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, said his people share a special sense of solidarity with those affected by the recent hurricanes and earthquakes, recalling that Fiji lost 44 individuals and a third of its economy last year when struck by the biggest cyclone ever to make landfall in the southern hemisphere.

As the incoming president of the 23rd session of the States parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Mr. Bainimarama is deeply conscious of the need to lead a global response to the underlying causes of these events. “The
appalling suffering in the Caribbean and the United States reminds us all that there is no time to waste,” he said.

“Unless we tackle the underlying causes of climate change, we already know that some places will become uninhabited and others will disappear altogether,” he stressed, noting that Fiji has offered refuge to the people of Kiribati and Tuvalu, its neighbours at risk.

Climate change affects Fijian lives, whether it is entire villages being moved away from rising seas; the loss of ancestral burial grounds; salinity affecting crops; or the constant threat of destruction to homes and infrastructure.

Noting that 2018 will mark 40 years that Fiji has helped to make the world more secure through its contribution to UN Peacekeeping, Mr. Bainimarama expressed his determination that his country would make a successful contribution to the wider security of the planet through its leadership of the next climate change conference.

‘We all share a responsibility’ to combat terrorism, President of Senegal tells world leaders

20 September – Addressing the United Nations General Assembly, the President of Senegal expressed his desire for a peaceful and secure African continent – one that does not serve as a sanctuary for terrorists defeated elsewhere in the world.

“Senegal, I reiterate, strongly condemns terrorism, wherever it strikes. Nothing, let alone religion, can justify such violent fanaticism,” President Macky Sall of Senegal told world leaders gathered at the 72nd annual general debate.

“At the same time,” he underscored, “we cannot accept that Islam is associated with violence. We cannot accept that Muslims be held responsible for violence that they themselves are victims to.”

“We are all concerned by the terrorist threat and therefore have a responsibility to work together to find concerted solutions to this scourge,” he noted.

Noting that this was the purpose of the Dakar International Forum on Peace and Security in Africa, the fourth session of which will be held in November, President Sall informed the Assembly that the Forum will focus on responding to violent extremism.

“We want an Africa in peace and security; an Africa that does not serve as a sanctuary for terrorist groups fought and defeated elsewhere,” the President noted, explaining that because of this reason Senegal – remaining committed to seven peace missions, including the UN Integrated Multidimensional Mission for Stabilization in Mali (MINUSMA) – welcomes the efforts of the G5 Sahel (Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad) and the partner countries in the fight against terrorism.
Addressing Assembly, Portugal highlights need for UN reform, conflict prevention measures

20 September – Portugal’s Prime Minister António Luis Santos da Costa took the podium of the General Assembly to reiterate his country’s support of the Secretary-General’s agenda, which includes boosting conflict prevention activities and creating a stronger more adaptable world Organization.

“Your priorities, Mr. Secretary General, are the same as ours: an Organization that is stronger, offers greater solidarity and is capable of preventing conflicts, alleviating human suffering and promoting peace and prosperity,” the Minister said, also mentioning the importance of having a “more transparent, more effective and more adaptable” UN.

As for organizational reform, he said consolidating a culture of conflict prevention requires action across the board and an integrated vision of the three pillars of the UN system – peace, human rights and sustainable development – as well as closer institutional cooperation between the organs of the Charter, namely the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Mr. Santos Costa said the Security Council must be reformed to ensure a better representation of today’s world. “The African continent cannot be denied a permanent presence, and Brazil and India are also two inescapable examples,” he added in his address to the Assembly’s annual general debate.

During his speech, he positioned Portugal as a multilateral country contributing to the battle against terrorism, supporting the protection of migrants and refugees, and makes participation in peacekeeping operations one of the clearest priorities of its foreign policy.

“Multilateralism is the only framework for the defense of the common good of humanity and the collective promotion of peace, security and development. In no way does it diminish the sovereignty of each nation, nor the capacity for decision of their people and institutions,” he told world leaders.

Conflict prevention, migration and terrorism key concerns for EU and member countries at UN

20 September – On the second day of the United Nations General Assembly’s high-level debate, Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, underscored that the UN must rise to address many global challenges, including forced displacement and terrorism.

Mr. Tusk said the European Union (EU) continues to receive people in need of protection. He echoed his appeal to the international community to take responsibility for refugee protection and irregular migration, underscoring the EU’s support of the UN process to develop Global Compacts on Refugees and on Regular, Safe and Orderly Migration.

“Your engagement is needed right now, both in terms of money for humanitarian assistance, and more resettlement for those displaced by conflicts in Syria, Yemen, Myanmar, and especially across Africa,” he
told the Assembly.

In connection with the refugee crisis, Mr. Tusk urged a “crackdown on human smugglers that exploit vulnerable people and violate sovereign borders,” and welcomed the International Criminal Court investigation on smugglers in Libya for crimes against humanity.

Against the backdrop of repeated terrorist attacks, he stressed the need for the constant strengthening of the global fight against that scourge and violent extremism, including doing more on counter-radicalization. He reiterated his plea to the world’s Muslim leaders to stand strong against Islamist extremism as a real support in fighting terrorism. “In short,” the President said “we must be more determined than they are.”

In his address, the President of Finland called the Secretary-General’s determination to reform the UN “laudable,” spotlighting that transparency, accountability, efficiency and gender balance “should be the guiding principles of the UN system.”

Sauli Niinisto also welcomed the Secretary-General’s focus on conflict prevention, advocating for the marginalized to be given a voice in peace processes. “Women, children and adolescents often pay the highest price in conflicts but they can also help to pave a way out of the crisis,” he told the Assembly, while pointing to Finland’s contribution in establishing a Nordic network of women mediators who provide inclusive and meaningful participation in all phases of peace processes.

Pledging his support for UN peacekeeping reform, he drew attention to Finland’s increased participation in UN police missions – now through seven UN operations, including a specialized team on sexual and gender based violence in South Sudan. “It is my strong view that no UN peacekeeper nor any other UN personnel should be associated with misconduct of any shape or form. In particular, there must be ‘zero tolerance’ with regard to sexual exploitation and abuse,” he stressed.

Turning to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Mr. Niinisto called that country’s nuclear weapons programme “a threat to global peace and stability,” that must be stopped. While stressing the importance of the continued unity of the Security Council, he underscored: “Such behaviour cannot be tolerated by the international community.”

Before leaving the podium, Mr. Niinisto expressed his strong belief that global challenges and threats be addressed together by the world community. “Peace and security, human rights and development belong to all of us. Only together can we make this world a better place,” he concluded.

Also taking the podium, President Rumen Radev of Bulgaria spoke in depth about international peace and its links to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), telling the Assembly that the UN peace and security architecture, together with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, “have provided a solid foundation for achieving peace and prosperity.”

Mr. Radev stressed that Bulgaria supports a surge in diplomacy for peace that places prevention as an overarching priority. “Prevention and mediation are essential means of reducing human suffering, including in addressing the root causes of forced displacements, bringing humanitarian, development and peace-building efforts together,” he elaborated.

The President pointed out that armed conflicts in many parts of the world continued to undermine peace and human values, asserting that “protracted conflicts require a holistic UN response encompassing preventive diplomacy, mediation, peace-building and effective special political missions.”

Calling climate change “one of the biggest challenges of our time,” he noted that the phenomenon not only impedes the well-being of countries, but also poses security threats to many of them.

Mr. Radev wrapped up his address by drawing attention to the need for promoting equality, countering discrimination and ensuring respect for human rights as keys to achieving lasting peace and sustainable development, saying “we believe that the protection of human rights should be placed at the centre of all action undertaken by the UN.”

For his part, Netherlands Prime Minister Mark Rutte pointed out that the problems confronting today’s world, such as climate change, migration, terrorism and cybercrime, are by definition international.
“No single country can tackle them in isolation. We need each other. […] In this turbulent world, the importance of the UN is growing every day, he told the Assembly.

The Prime Minister said “cooperation is key” when it comes to preventing terrorism, and that the UN is the prime forum for international cooperation. As a good example of cooperation, he pointed to the Global Counterterrorism Forum, saying its work “is not high-profile – most of it goes on behind the scenes – but it saves many lives.”

Turning to conflict, Mr. Rutte flagged that not enough attention is being devoted to the early its early stages of development, saying “That has to change.” He pointed to the MINUSMA peacekeeping mission in Mali where the Netherlands is using intelligence to carry out long-range reconnaissance work in anticipation of conflict – instead of waiting for it to happen.

Conflict prevention ties in with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which he calls “the ultimate prevention agenda” as “they address the drivers and root causes of instability and conflict.”

“No one country can tackle the problems associated with migration, Libya tells global leaders

20 September – Recalling the situation in Libya since the 2011 revolution, Faiez Mustafa Serraj, the President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord said that international support is essential to ensure progress in the country.

The Political Agreement which had been reached between the different parties after two years of negotiations remains the cornerstone for building new political institutions and transition in the country, he said, noting that the aim is to ensure broad and inclusive participation; the transition is vital to achieve stability.

In his address to the 72nd annual general debate at the United Nations General Assembly, Mr. Serra announced that all parties in the country are ready to meet the challenges confronting Libya.

He further informed that those displaced within Libya are now returning to their homes and that the Government is working to establish stability.

On the economic side, he announced that oil production reached about one million barrels per day and urged for the resumption of international financial assistance as well as the repayment of Libyan financial assets abroad which have resulted in enormous losses to the country.

Speaking on migration and human trafficking, he expressed that no one country can tackle the issue by itself and urged for international support for his country to address the challenges it confronts.

Also in his address, Mr. Serraj reiterated the need for strategic partnerships with friendly countries, and drew attention to the ongoing work to unify the country’s security forces and to make them capable of confronting the threats posed by terrorists.

He also informed the General Assembly of adoption of new laws, with the technical support of the UN, to ensure protection of human rights in the country.
Côte d'Ivoire is inspiring example of UN peacekeeping success, country’s leader tells Assembly

20 September – The President of Côte d'Ivoire, Alassane Ouattara, today cited the success of United Nations peacekeeping operations in his West African country as an inspiration for the world Organization to increase its initiatives.

“The lessons of this peacekeeping operation, recognized as one of the rare successes of our world Organization in maintaining peace over the past several decades must inspire the United Nations further in initiatives in favour of peace,” he told the 72nd annual General Assembly general debate on its second day.

The UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), which in 2011 helped restore legitimacy and stability along with French forces after violence broke out in the wake of an electoral crisis, with up to 7,000 uniformed personnel in the country, completed its mandate in June.

Turning to the issue of terrorism, Mr. Ouattara said that despite some encouraging operations in the Middle East, the world is struggling to find a satisfactory response in Africa. “These successes will remain empty and the terrorist threat a constant worry if Africa continues to be the soft under-belly of world terrorism,” he said.

He called for international support for the Security Council-endorsed G5 Sahel group, comprising Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad, which 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.

Africa must be allowed to play rightful role in international affairs, Moroccan Minister tells UN

20 September – With the world at a crossroads – battered by climate change, threatened by terrorism and extremism, and struggling with deepening inequality – it is not only time to bolster multilateral cooperation, but to make use of the vital capacities that can be provided by the dynamism of the African continent, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Morocco told the General Assembly today.

Addressing the Assembly’s annual general debate, Nasser Bourita cited a raft of global ills, and noted that while globalization has driven the international economy it has also increased employment instability and widened the economic gaps between and within nations. Similarly, the Internet had created unprecedented opportunities for growth and development but it has also has also provided a space for extremists and terrorist groups to promote their nefarious aims.

“All this means our collective working mechanisms need to be reformed,” said Mr. Bourita, stressing that Morocco is convinced that a global organization that is effective and truly multilateral can help solve the problems the world is facing. Morocco is equally convinced that Africa can no longer be seen as a burden on the global community – the continent must play its role in tackling global challenges, including broader development.

“Africa has not held its rightful place in the [international arena]. It should not be dealt with based only on how much
assistance it receives, or how “many agenda items it takes up” at UN meetings. Indeed, Africa has imbued with immense human and natural resources. In that regard, Morocco viewed South-South cooperation as a major opportunity for forming development partnerships that could assist African countries, bolster foreign direct investment and increase African participation, with increased equal footing, in global mechanisms.

UN has ‘narrow window of opportunity’ to turn the tide on raft of global ills, warns Ukraine President

20 September – Transnational terrorism and use of force international relations, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, human rights violations and environmental fragility are but a few of today’s global challenges, the President of Ukraine to the United Nations General Assembly, calling on the world body to “act now” to tackle those and pressing concerns.

“Now is the time to act, and although only a narrow window of opportunity exists, the United Nations should be at the forefront of that process,” Petro Prorshenko told delegates in New York for the Assembly’s 72nd annual general debate.

He said Ukraine could not have agreed more with the call for the universal respect of sovereignty, as expressed in the General Assembly Hall yesterday. And while the UN was founded on the principles of peace and security, based on sovereignty and respect for borders, those principles had been flagrantly violated by a permanent Security Council member against his country.

“Ukraine has suffered from conflict for the last three years, resulting in the deaths of 10,000 people and the occupation of seven per cent of its territory, while 20 per cent of the economy has been seized, destroyed or simply stolen,” Mr. Porshenko explained, adding that the “most horrific [action] was the Kremlin’s tactic to increase human suffering.”

He said Russia has violated Security Council resolutions and ignored requests from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) for full access to the occupied parts of Crimea. “The situation requires a proper response from the international community,” he said, noting that Russia is not contributing to international security, but is rather its biggest threat, “as it is in conflict with almost all its neighbours and has undermined every effort to restore Ukraine’s sovereignty.”

For decades, Ukraine had been a resolute contributor to global peace and security, he said, notably by giving up its nuclear arsenal. An advocate for non proliferation, Ukraine resolutely condemned the recent actions by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, he said, also expressing deep concern over the conflict in Syria. Concerned by the numerous, unresolved conflicts in Africa, he expressed Ukraine’s commitment to the 2030 Agenda and implementation of the Paris Agreement.
Supporting spirit of UN reforms, Rwanda urges world leaders to address global challenges

20 September – The United Nations must treat all people with impartiality and respect, and be a good steward of the funds entrusted to it, the President of Rwanda today said in his annual address to the General Assembly debate in New York, adding his country’s support to the spirit of reform taking root at the Organization.

“Abuse and waste are therefore not a mere public relations problem, but an existential threat, which must be tackled head-on,” Paul Kagame said.

He urged support for Secretary General António Guterres, who is leading the reform effort, which President Kagame said would make the UN “not only effective, but transformational.”

Mr. Kagame urged other world leaders to address global challenges, saying “we have the tools and the mandates but where we fall short is in getting things done.”

“The essence of reform, is a mindset of constantly striving to improve performance and delivery, and holding ourselves responsible for shortcomings and results,” he stated.

He also noted areas for closer cooperation between the African Union and the UN on issues related to peace and security, as well as development.

Panama vows to combat drug trafficking, asks for help to eliminate ‘blood money’ driving scourge

20 September – The most effective way to solve problems that affect the world’s people is always placing human beings at the centre of all decisions, the President of Panama told the United Nations General Assembly today, stressing that his country, which joins North and South and which is bordered by the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, would continue to be a beacon of cooperation and understanding.

“I have always been aware of Panama’s calling as facilitator of dialogue and understanding; a country [that will] work in the service of the international community [and] contribute our resources to address the common problems affecting the region” contributing to wider peace and security, Juan Carlos Varela Rodriguez said in his address to the Assembly’s annual general debate.

While the countries of the wider region, including Colombia, are indeed making solid progress, he said “our continent faces a problem which transcends borders: increasing production of drugs and drug trafficking,” he said calling on leaders to tackle this pressing challenge head on.

Panama, for its part, reiterated its commitment to maintain a fight against drug trafficking, putting all its capacities and resources at the service of the region to eliminate the scourge. “At the same time, I appeal to the leaders and Heads of State of producing countries and consumers of drugs to support us in this struggle; every dollar generated by the drug trafficking represents a death in our region,” he underscored.
Turning to Venezuela, he said it would be a serious miscalculation for that country’s Government to try to impose a single-party political model. Among other things, such an action would increase outward migration. Amid such challenges, he vowed to remain “on the front line” of efforts to strengthen unity among countries of the Americas and called on Panama’s neighbours to do the same.

“We do not have time and space to waste in squabbling amongst ourselves,” he said as he turned to global challenges. Condemning all acts of terrorism, he called on the Security Council to strengthen measures to foster lasting peace in such places as Syria and Iraq, and condemned the irresponsible leadership of such Governments as that in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, which sought to destabilize regions.

At UN Assembly, South American leaders urge commitment with global development goals

20 September – Addressing the general debate at the 72nd session of the United Nations General Assembly, leaders from South American countries urged the global community for greater cooperation and collaboration in addressing a range of pressing issues – from poverty to security challenges.

Underscoring the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), David Granger, the President of Guyana, said that the Goals represent the international community’s collective desire and determination to eradicate hunger and poverty, and ensure equal opportunities in education, employment and social justice for both men and women.

However, advancement of these Goals, he noted, is obstructed by violations of human rights, as well as by conflicts and violence that is displacing many from their homes, adding that the challenge before the UN is “to resolve to reinforce respect for the rights of citizens within the governance structures of [its] Member States.”

He also underscored the need to combat the impact of climate change, and expressed his country’s commitment to the Paris Agreement on climate change.

“Climate change is not a fiction of a few extremists,” said the President, noting that most recently, Caribbean islands and North American countries had felt the devastating impact of five successive hurricanes.

Also in his remarks, the Guyanese President reiterated that humanity must continue to striving for peace and highlighted the important role the UN through the International Criminal Court and the Security Council have in ensuring peace and respect for justice. “Peace for the world’s peoples is the mandate of the UN. It can be achieved by addressing the world’s humanitarian crises, promoting justice within and between nations and resolving long-standing conflicts between states,” he concluded.

Also speaking today, Horacio Manuel Cartes Jara, the President of Paraguay, underscored the importance of the UN in confronting global challenges such as poverty and inequality, climate change, transnational crime, drug trafficking and terrorism.

Reaffirming his country’s commitment for the implementation of the Paris Agreement, President Cartes Jara urged all States, and in particular those with greater responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions, to take all necessary measures to preserve the planet from the consequences of global warming.

“In Paraguay, we have taken a social responsibility perspective, by fostering greater production of clean and renewable
energy,” he said.

The President also informed the Assembly of Paraguay’s efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including building an innovative and inclusive institutional architecture to advance progress towards the SDGs and targets.

He also spoke of work in his country to combat poverty, build opportunities for the indigenous and rural communities, promote greater investments, as well as increase transparency and efficiency in Government processes.

Turning to the crisis emanating from the nuclear weapon development programme of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, the President reiterated Paraguay’s condemnation of the nuclear tests conducted by the DPRK, in clear defiance of its international obligations, and urged a “firm rejection” by the UN General Assembly of such acts by the country.

Also addressing the General Assembly today, President Lenín Moreno Garcés of Ecuador said the road to achieving peace and successfully implementing the SDG’s depends on cooperation and dialogue.

Reflecting on misuse of resources, the President asked: “How could it be possible that resources allocated to implementing the SDG’s have been wasted on the absurdity of war?”

He added that fallout from conflicts extends beyond economic damages – they also rob people of “true freedom and democracy.”

For this reason, he said, it is important to respect sovereignty of States and reject the notion that militarism is the solution, which, he stressed “brings suffering, pain and death.”

Also in his remarks, Mr. Garcés informed the General Assembly of a temporary bilateral ceasefire signed just a few days ago in the Ecuadorian capital, Quito, between Government of Colombia and an armed group, as an example of regional strides towards achieving peace.

In conclusion, the President expressed optimism about coexisting in “a more human, and just world,” can be attributed to the power of dialogue, political decision-making power, and collective action.

At General Assembly, Bosnia and Herzegovina stresses central role of UN in preventing war

20 September – The leader of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a country born two decades ago in the deadliest fighting in Europe since the Second World War, today stressed the centrality of the United Nations in resolving crises before they degenerate into war and the flight of refugees.

“In Bosnia and Herzegovina, unfortunately, we know too much about the high price of wars,” Dragan Covic, the Chairman of the country’s Presidency, told world leaders from the podium of the UN General Assembly on the 2nd day of its annual general debate.

“On a global level, the United Nations system must be at the heart of all activities using preventive measures to resolve the crises and prevent people from leaving their homes. Again, much of the responsibility for prevention lies with other levels. Within our communities, we must counter all the symptoms of trouble and
conflicts,” he added.

He highlighted the importance of correcting social injustice, reconciling the seemingly irreconcilable, persevering in compromise and striving for pluralistic and inclusive solutions.

In a wide-ranging speech Mr. Covic denounced violence against civilians in Syria, backed the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, called terrorism “undoubtedly the greatest evil of today,” and highlighted the importance of gender equality in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that seek to eliminate a host social ills like hunger and poverty.

At UN, Azerbaijan urges respect for Security Council measures; cites support for cultural diversity

20 September – Addressing the General Assembly, the President of Azerbaijan, spoke about the country's successes in socio-economic development and support of cultural diversity and said that while Security Council resolutions calling for the withdrawal of Armenian troops from its territory have been ignored, Azerbaijan remains an “engaged” Member of the United Nations.

In his speech to the Assembly’s annual general debate, Ilham Heyday Oglu Aliyev said Security Council resolutions must be respected and that “double standards” regarding their implementation, including by Armenia, are unacceptable. Against the backdrop of Armenia’s continued occupation of its territories and violation of international law, Azerbaijan nevertheless remains committed to the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

“The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict should be resolved on the basis of international law and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council,” the Azerbaijani leader said, adding that Azerbaijan’s territorial “must be restored.”

Despite this challenge, Azerbaijan is an engaged member of the UN, he said. All fundamental freedoms are being fully provided, including the freedom of speech, media freedom, freedom of assembly and religious freedom. “Azerbaijan is a centre of multiculturalism,” with all religions and ethnic groups living in peace and harmony.

He stressed that Azerbaijan recognized multi-ethnicity as an asset and had hosted several interreligious dialogues in recent years, including one in partnership with the UN Alliance of Civilizations. Further, the main goal of the Baku Process is aimed at strengthening dialogue and partnership between the Muslim world and Europe, he added.

On the economic front, he said Azerbaijan’s economy continues to grow exponentially, while unemployment is among the lowest levels in the world at five per cent. Poverty is also on the decline. The country is also highly ranked on the human development scale, and exports not only agricultural goods, but also intellectual products, while its “zero tolerance” towards corruption and bribery make it attractive to investors.
Focus on people’s prosperity key to sustainable development, says Kyrgyz leader at UN Assembly

20 September – Noting that the only source of power in his country is its people, the President of Kyrgyzstan highlighted that the country’s path to sustainable development has a focus on ensuring the Kyrgyz peoples welfare and prosperity.

Over the last five years, extreme poverty has fallen by 45 per cent, said Almazbek Atambaev, adding that system-wide efforts have been introduced to address corruption and that the country has embarked on major projects to improve infrastructure, achieve energy independence and create a stable energy sector.

“Kyrgyzstan is among the most free and stable in the Euro-Asian region and boasts a strong civil society,” he highlighted.

In his address to the 72nd annual general debate at the United Nations General Assembly, President Atambaev said Kyrgyzstan is elaborating a strategy for sustainable development through 2040, which is aimed at creating jobs, ensuring social well-being, raising living standards and promoting a parliamentary democracy with a strong civil society.

Turning to the challenges posed by climate change, he said that being a mountainous country, Kyrgyzstan is particularly prone to its effects, with all sectors feeling the impact. Calling the transition to sustainable development “a matter of survival,” the President said the protection of endangered wildlife, such as the snow leopard, is also critical.

Further in his remarks, the Kyrgyz President underscored that future prosperity is, in part, contingent on the effective use of scarce water resources, he urged for cooperation among countries to resolve any disputes.

In conclusion, he also drew attention to the increasing threat of terrorism and extremism and urged international collaboration and cooperation to combat the scourge, including through tackling the issue of money-laundering and drug trafficking.

UN offers up new strategy to advance peace, stability in Libya

20 September – Secretary-General António Guterres today launched a United Nations strategy to help bring about peace and stability in Libya and end a protracted crisis that has caused immense suffering and contributed to instability beyond the country’s borders.

“It is my deep belief that there is an opportunity for a political solution in Libya,” Mr. Guterres said at the high-level event held on the margins of the annual debate of the General Assembly, adding that everyone needs to come together to ensure that this opportunity translates itself into a reality.

Despite a nearly two-year-old Political Agreement, Libya remains fraught with numerous challenges, including insecurity, frustration, political dysfunction and economic despair.

“The Libyan people have suffered too much,” stated the Secretary-General, voicing deep concern about the political, security, socio-economic and humanitarian situation in the North African nation.
“Looking ahead, it is crucial to fashion a Libyan-led and Libyan-owned political solution.”

Mr. Guterres outlined the UN strategy, which has seven main priorities, beginning with reinvigorating an inclusive political process by building on recent positive developments.

The other priorities are: building credibility with the Libyan people; strengthening security arrangements and national security architecture; coordinating international engagement, including the efforts of Libya’s neighbours, so that all are part of a single common agenda; improving socio-economic conditions and the provision of goods and services, for a true peace dividend to be felt by the people; supporting migrants and upholding long-standing international norms on migration; and securing predictable support for humanitarian assistance.

The Secretary-General added that his Special Representative for Libya, Ghassan Salamé, will strive to unify and consolidate the various initiatives, and to promote dialogue towards the formation of a unified national government and the immediate end of parallel institutions.

Elaborating on next steps, Mr. Salamé said that the first stage must be to amend the Libyan Political Agreement, which in its current state is not adequate. Once the amendments have been adopted, the second stage is a National Conference that will open the door to “those ostracized, those self-marginalized, those players who have been reluctant to join the political process.”

Following the conference, the House of Representatives would be expected to prioritize the legislation for a constitutional referendum, as well as presidential and parliamentary elections. In parallel, the Constitutional Drafting Assembly will review and refine its work, taking into consideration the observations and suggestions expressed during the National Conference.

Mr. Salamé, who heads the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), noted that this political sequence must be underpinned by concrete progress in a number areas, including preparation by the High National Election Commission for electoral events; dialogue with armed groups with the aim of integrating their members within the political process and civil life; an initiative to unify the national army; and continued and intensified local reconciliation efforts.

“This process, in all its stages, is indeed meant to prepare the proper conditions for free and fair elections, which will usher Libya into institutional and political normalcy,” said the Special Representative.

“There is much to be done, and this plan is certainly ambitious. However, if the Libyan people can come together in the spirit of compromise and together write a new common national narrative, this plan is achievable.”

**Treaty banning nuclear weapons opens for signature at UN**

*20 September* – The world’s first legally-binding treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons opened for signature today at United Nations Headquarters in New York at a ceremony at which speakers from international organizations, governments and civil society hailed this milestone in achieving a world free of such arsenals as well as the work that remains to be done.

“The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is the product of increasing concerns over the risk posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons, including the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences of their use,” UN Secretary-General António Guterres said at the ceremony, held on the margins of the General Assembly’s high-level debate.

“The Treaty is an important step towards the universally-held goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. It is my hope that it will reinvigorate global efforts to achieve it,” he added, acknowledging
the contributions made by civil society and the hibakusha – the atomic bomb survivors.

At the same time, Mr. Guterres, highlighted the difficult road ahead by recalling that there remain some 15,000 nuclear weapons in existence. “We cannot allow these doomsday weapons to endanger our world and our children’s future,” he said.

The Treaty – adopted on 7 July this year at a UN conference in New York by a vote of 122 in favour to one against (Netherlands), with one abstention (Singapore) – prohibits a full range of nuclear-weapon-related activities, such as undertaking to develop, test, produce, manufacture, acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, as well as the use or threat of use of these weapons.

However, nuclear-armed States and most of their allies stayed out of the negotiations. Immediately following its adoption, the United States, the United Kingdom and France issued a joint press statement saying that they “have not taken part in the negotiation of the treaty… and do not intend to sign, ratify or ever become party to it.”

The Treaty will enter into force 90 days after it has been ratified by at least 50 countries.

At today’s ceremony, chaired by UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu, 42 countries signed the Treaty, with more expected later in the day. The Holy See and Thailand not only signed but also ratified it.

The President of the General Assembly, Miroslav Lajcak, noted at the ceremony that the Treaty demonstrates the will of Member States to bring about change.

“It will raise public awareness about the risks of nuclear weapons. It will keep us on track for achieving our goal of a world in which nuclear weapons exist only in movies or books. But we need to do more to get the whole way there.”

Not enough new antibiotics in the pipeline, UN report warns

20 September – Too few new antibiotics are under development to combat the growing threat of antimicrobial resistance, a United Nations report has found.

The report released today by the World Health Organization (WHO) says most of the drugs currently in the clinical pipeline are modifications of existing classes of antibiotics and are only short-term solutions.

“Antimicrobial resistance is a global health emergency that will seriously jeopardize progress in modern medicine,” said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom in a press release.

The report found very few potential treatment options for those antibiotic-resistant infections identified by WHO as posing the greatest threat to health, including drug-resistant tuberculosis which kills around 250,000 people each year.

"There is an urgent need for more investment in research and development for antibiotic-resistant infections including TB, otherwise we will be forced back to a time when people feared common infections and risked their lives from minor surgery," Mr. Adhanom said.

In addition to multidrug-resistant tuberculosis, WHO has identified 12 classes of priority pathogens – some of them causing common infections such as pneumonia or urinary tract infections – that are increasingly resistant to existing antibiotics and urgently in need of new treatments.

The report identifies 51 new antibiotics and biologicals in clinical development to treat priority antibiotic-resistant pathogens, as well as tuberculosis and the sometimes deadly diarrhoeal infection Clostridium difficile.
Among all these candidate medicines, however, only eight are classed by WHO as innovative treatments that will add value to the current antibiotic treatment arsenal.

There is a serious lack of treatment options for multidrug- and extensively drug-resistant M. tuberculosis and gram-negative pathogens, including Acinetobacter and Enterobacteriaceae (such as Klebsiella and E.coli) which can cause severe and often deadly infections that pose a particular threat in hospitals and nursing homes.

The report also found that although oral antibiotics are essential for treatment outside hospitals or in resource-limited settings, few are in the pipeline.

“Pharmaceutical companies and researchers must urgently focus on new antibiotics against certain types of extremely serious infections that can kill patients in a matter of days because we have no line of defence,” said Suzanne Hill, Director of the Department of Essential Medicines at WHO.

To counter this threat, WHO and the Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiative (DNDi) set up a research and development partnership.

According to Mario Raviglione, Director of the WHO Global Tuberculosis Programme, research for tuberculosis is seriously underfunded, with only two new antibiotics for treatment of drug-resistant tuberculosis having reached the market in over 70 years.

“If we are to end tuberculosis, more than $800 million per year is urgently needed to fund research for new anti-tuberculosis medicines,” he said.

**European Union and UN launch new initiative to eliminate gender violence**

*20 September* – The European Union and the United Nations today launched a joint initiative to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, one of the most widespread and devastating human rights violations across the globe.

“It is a harsh but true reality – one in three women will face violence throughout their lifetime,” UN Secretary-General António Guterres said at the launch event, held on the margins of the General Assembly’s high-level annual debate.

“Violence against women and girls devastates lives, and causes pain across generations,” he added.

The EU-UN Spotlight Initiative is supported by a multi-stakeholder trust fund, with the EU as its main contributor in the order of half a billion Euro, which is open to other donors.

“The European Union is committed to combatting all forms of violence against women and girls, as they undermine our core fundamental rights and values, such as dignity, access to justice and gender equality,” EU High Representative Federica Mogherini told the event.

“We need first to ensure that we keep women and girls safe, in order to empower them to deploy their full potential.”

Over the next few years, comprehensive programmes will be implemented to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, such as sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices; trafficking and economic exploitation; femicide; and domestic and family violence.
Core areas of intervention will include strengthening legislative frameworks, policies and institutions, preventive measures, access to services and improving data gathering in Africa, Latin America, Asia, the Pacific and the Caribbean.

Consistent with the principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the initiative will apply a rights-based approach, and give particular attention to the most marginalised women and girls in order to ‘leave no-one behind.’

The Spotlight Initiative is “truly historic,” said Mr. Guterres. “When we shine a spotlight on the empowerment of the world’s women and girls, everyone’s future is brighter.”

One year on, UN officials take stock of efforts to address large movements of refugees, migrants

20 September – United Nations officials today highlighted the need to continue working together towards more equitable ways to share the responsibility for refugees, as well as achieve safe and orderly migration, at an event to take stock one year after the international community agreed to find solutions to better manage human mobility.

“I believe we can and must find a way through, based on a humane, compassionate, people-centred approach that recognizes every individual’s right to safety, protection and opportunity,” Secretary-General António Guterres said at the General Assembly side event on refugees and migrants.

Recognizing that the issue of large movements of refugees and migrants is too vast for any one country to handle on its own, the UN convened a meeting of world leaders in September 2016 with the aim of finding durable solutions.

At the High-Level Summit on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants, all 193 Member States came together around one plan, the New York Declaration, expressing their political will to save lives, protect rights and share responsibility on a global scale.

Today’s event provided an update on two key commitments of the Declaration – the global compact on refugees, and the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration.

Mr. Guterres pointed to several priority areas for the year ahead as Member States work to advance the two compacts, including re-establishing the integrity of the refugee protection regime, developing national and international cooperation mechanisms that take human mobility into account, and greater accountability for the human traffickers and smugglers who profit from exploiting the despair of the most vulnerable.

The Special Representative for International Migration, Louise Arbour, underscored that the ability to better manage human mobility rests on both compacts being widely-supported; human rights-centred, and with the needs of those most vulnerable firmly at their heart.

Ms. Arbour, who is responsible for leading the follow-up to the migration-related aspects of the 2016 High-level Summit, urged that the global compact for safe, orderly and migration be grounded in reality.

“The overwhelming majority of migrants move in a well-regulated fashion. Migration is a net positive to migrants and the communities from which they come and in which they settle.”

The crises that drove the adoption of the New York Declaration have not abated, High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi told the gathering. “And the need for international protection for those fleeing in search of safety is more compelling
than ever.”

He noted that the root causes of refugee flows and the triggers of irregular migration are often intertwined, and in mixed migratory movements, refugees and migrants often face overlapping risks.

“More safe and regular pathways for admission and the creation of a more tolerant and accepting environment, would bring important benefits for both groups,” he stated.

**World leaders gathered at UN commit to boosting investment in education**

20 September – World leaders today pledged to tackle the education crisis that is holding back millions of children and threatening economic development, at a high-level event at United Nations Headquarters in New York aimed at securing finance for this critical goal.

“Financing education is indeed the best investment we can make for a better world and a better future,” stressed UN Secretary-General António Guterres in his remarks to the event, titled “Financing the Future: Education 2030,” held on the margins of the General Assembly’s annual debate.

“I started as a teacher. I saw for myself decades ago in the schools and slums of Lisbon why education is a basic human right, a transformational force for poverty eradication, an engine for sustainability, and a force for peace,” he said.

More than 260 million children, adolescents and youth are out of school. Despite some progress in achieving gender equality in the world’s poorest countries, far more girls than boys still do not have access to a quality education, according to a news release.

Also addressing the event was UN Messenger of Peace Malala Yousafzai, who said girls in many parts of the world are pushing back against poverty, war and child marriage to go to school.

“We have big goals, but we will not reach any of them unless we educate girls,” she said, referring to the Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by UN Member States in 2015.

The event – co-organized by governments, the private sector, civil society and UN agencies – was held to boost political commitment and investment in quality early-childhood, primary and secondary education.

“Delivering an education to all – and not just some children – is the civil rights struggle of our time,” said Gordon Brown, the UN Special Envoy for Global Education.

“Confronted by the largest refugee crisis since the close of the Second World War, and with education receiving less than 2 per cent of humanitarian aid, it is vital we marshal the funds to provide an education for all children – especially those left out and left behind: refugee children,” he added.
Time to translate nuclear test moratorium into legally binding obligation – UN chief

20 September – Secretary-General António Guterres today expressed the readiness of the United Nations to help bring into force the global treaty banning nuclear tests, adopted more than 20 years ago, while noting that the “destabilizing and provocative” actions by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) seek to undermine the global norm against nuclear explosions.

“If there is something I take very seriously it is the fact that, as Secretary-General, I am the depository of the Comprehensive-Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT),” said Mr. Guterres in his remarks to a biennial conference on facilitating the Treaty’s entry into force, held at UN Headquarters in New York.

“A CTBT that is in force would be a milestone on the road to a world free of nuclear weapons. It has the potential to prevent a nuclear arms race and an escalation of regional and bilateral tensions,” he added.

Since its adoption in 1996, 183 States have signed the Treaty and 166 States have ratified it.

However, for the Treaty to enter into force, it must be ratified by all the 44 States that formally participated in the 1996 session of the Conference on Disarmament and possessed nuclear power or research reactors at the time.

Of the 44 States, China, Iran, United States, Egypt and Israel have signed the treaty but not yet ratified it. DPRK, India and Pakistan have not signed it.

Mr. Guterres noted that for almost 20 years, with the sole exception of the DPRK, all countries possessing nuclear weapons have helped to create a global culture against nuclear testing through their voluntary unilateral moratoria.

“Sadly and dangerously, the destabilizing and provocative actions by the DPRK seek to undermine this norm – and along with it, global stability,” he said, reiterating that it is time to translate this shared norm into a legally binding obligation.

Also addressing the meeting, General Assembly President Miroslav Lajčák said that when the CTBT enters into force, a complete halt to all nuclear testing will be in even clearer sight.

“Make no mistake: we need this Treaty,” he stated.

“If we want to eliminate the risk of nuclear attacks, we need to stop nuclear testing. If we want to stop nuclear testing, we need a legally binding instrument. And if we want an instrument, we need political will to achieve it.”
UN rights chief urges all States to outlaw discrimination against LGBTI people

20 September – While many governments are moving in the right direction, too many are falling short when it comes to protecting the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people, the United Nations human rights chief said today, urging all States to outlaw discrimination against this community.

Speaking at a ministerial event during the General Assembly’s high-level session, High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein said that he understood that in many parts of the world this is a difficult topic to broach.

“When pressed, officials sometimes tell me their hands are tied: the public, they say, will never accept equality for LGBTI people. But surely this is back to front. If public opinion is hostile towards LGBTI people, that makes it all the more urgent for governments to act to protect them,” he said.

Reports by his Office (OHCHR) frequently reveal “a landscape of brutal violence and widespread discrimination, fuelled by negative public attitudes and in many cases actively sanctioned by the State,” the High Commissioner noted.

“We ask all governments to allow individuals to love whom they choose, to outlaw discrimination, tackle hate crimes and the bullying so frequent in schools, and to protect intersex children from harm – including by banning medically unnecessary surgery on intersex infants. The onus has to be on governments to protect and respect rights – and explain to the public why these measures are needed,” he added.

While gay and lesbian people – and to a lesser extent trans people – have seen huge gains over the past 20 years, many of those gains are fragile and face backlash, stated High Commissioner Zeid.

“As always, when rights are rolled back, it’s minorities that are most exposed – immigrants, religious minorities, racial minorities and, of course, lesbian, gay, bi, trans and intersex people. Invariably, those who lose the most are those who have the least to begin with – the least power, money and public support,” he said.

He stressed that governments alone cannot end discrimination and called on all – the media, schools, faith leaders, the business community – to stand up for the human rights of LGBTI people.

Next week the High Commissioner will be launching a new set of global standards, developed by his Office, which highlight the actions that businesses can and should take to end discrimination against LGBTI people, in the workplace and beyond.

“We must push forward and overcome the obstacles to equality – in workplaces, schools, the law-courts and the streets. The time for justice is now.”
Window of opportunity for peace in Mali ‘slowly narrowing,’ warns Secretary-General

20 September – Speaking at a ministerial meeting at United Nations Headquarters, Secretary-General António Guterres today voiced concern over the delayed implementation of the peace agreement in Mali.

“We meet less than a year before the next presidential election,” said Mr. Guterres, stressing that the coming months will be an opportunity for Malians and their institutions to show their dedication to peace and the rule of law.

Noting that municipal elections in November last year were not held in all regions and suffered a low turnout, he encouraged the Malian authorities to ensure the success of the presidential election.

He added that numerous delays and slow implementation of critical provisions of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali are always a cause of concern, including the postponement of the review of the Constitution.

Delays in security sector reform related to the redeployment of the reformed and reconstituted Malian defence and security forces in the centre and north are also to be noted.

Mr. Guterres added that a number of achievements were recorded in recent months encompassing security, development, reductions in community violence, efforts to prevent the recruitment of youth.

“Yet the country’s achievements – that are remarkable – remain fragile, especially in light of the recent confrontations between armed groups and recurring attacks,” he went on. “Trust is being tested but we welcome the signature, earlier today, of a ceasefire agreement between the two signatory movements which also re-emphasizes their commitment to the implementation of the peace agreement.”

New institutions, processes and laws have yet to translate into significant improvements in the daily lives of Malians, the Secretary-General stated, adding that inclusivity, especially of women, youth and other under-represented social groups, remains insufficient, and constraints to humanitarian access persist.

“The window of opportunity for the Government to provide long-awaited peace dividends is slowly narrowing,” said Mr. Guterres.

The UN chief also urged the international community to ensure unity of purpose in financially and logistically supporting regional undertaking, such as the G5 Sahel Joint Force, to combat terrorism and transnational organized crime because, if successful, the Force can not only contribute to an enabling environment for the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali to fully implement its mandate but also advance progress in the Malian peace process.

But the most sustainable solution remains the strengthening of Mali’s own security architecture, Mr. Guterres said, stressing that the absence of a comprehensive strategy for security sector reform needs to be urgently addressed.
Growing number of rights defenders facing reprisals for cooperating with UN

20 September – A growing number of human rights defenders around the world are facing reprisals and intimidation for cooperating with the United Nations, ranging from travel bans and the freezing of assets to detention and torture, says a new report issued by the world body.

“It is frankly nothing short of abhorrent that, year after year, we are compelled to present cases of intimidation and reprisals carried out against people whose crime – in the eyes of their governments – was to cooperate with UN institutions and mechanisms,” said Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Andrew Gilmour.

“We should see these individuals as the canary in the coalmine, bravely singing until they are silenced by this toxic backlash against people, rights and dignity – as a dark warning to us all,” Mr. Gilmour told the Human Rights Council in Geneva, as he presented the Secretary-General’s report.

The report, the eighth of its kind, names 29 countries where cases of reprisal and intimidation have been documented; this is higher than the previous highest number of 20. Eleven of the States are current members of the Human Rights Council, a news release pointed out. Some have featured in the annual report on reprisals nearly every year since it was instituted in 2010.

“People engaging with the United Nations experienced intimidation, harassment, threats online and offline, derogatory media campaigns, travel bans, arbitrary arrests and detention, enforced disappearances, torture and ill-treatment, disbarment, and dismissal from their posts, amongst other measures,” the report says.

“Beyond the grave impact on the life of persons concerned and their relatives, intimidation and reprisals also systematically undermine United Nations action on human rights and shake partners’ trust in the Organization,” it adds.

Mr. Gilmour told the Council that the problem was much more widespread than presented in the report.

“Since this report is limited to reprisals against people cooperating with the UN, the cases covered in it represent only a small portion of a far more generalized backlash against civil society and others challenging State authorities, especially human rights defenders,” he noted.

The report urges all States to stop reprisals, investigate existing allegations, provide effective remedies and adopt and implement measures to prevent recurrence.
Peace operations ‘not a substitute’ for diplomatic efforts, Security Council told

20 September – United Nations peace operations must be deployed in support of – not in place of – active diplomatic efforts, Secretary-General António Guterres told the Security Council today, as he outlined some critical changes necessary to make these missions more effective.

“Today we gather to fortify this flagship UN activity,” Mr. Guterres said during an open debate on the reform of UN peacekeeping, noting that every day, peacekeepers create the conditions for lasting peace. Yet, he added, they also often face unreasonable and dangerous demands.

Over the years, 55 UN peacekeeping operations have successfully completed their mandate as have many political missions.

Mr. Guterres outlined his reform efforts, noting that they aim in part to bring about the critical shifts called for in the 2015 report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations.

First, the ‘primacy of politics’ must be recognized so that peace operations are deployed in support of active diplomatic efforts, not as a substitute,” he stated. “If we can do better on prevention, mediation and peacebuilding, we can reduce the unrealistic and dangerous demands on our colleagues in uniform.”

Second, peace operations should be properly equipped, and third, they must embody UN values, meaning that sexual exploitation and abuse are not acceptable.

Fourth, the UN must build stronger partnerships with regional and sub-regional organizations, such as the African Union and the European Union.

Recalling the framework for enhanced partnership signed by the UN and the African Union in April, the Secretary-General said he looked forward to signing a similar agreement with the European Union and to exploring the possibility of establishing trilateral collaborative mechanisms.

José Ramos-Horta, the former Chair of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, told the Council that the 2015 report “reflected the collective experience and recommendations of hundreds of people from many walks of life – retired and serving military and police officers who saw wars close up, community leaders and activists who live in the midst of conflicts.”

He welcomed the Secretary-General’s focus on conflict prevention and proposals for restructuring the peace and security pillar, including the delegation of authority to the field.

At today’s meeting, the Council unanimously adopted a resolution stressing that “the primacy of politics should be the hallmark of the approach of the United Nations to the resolution of conflict,” and that conflict prevention remains a primary responsibility of States.

The 15-member body also reaffirmed its determination to pursue more prioritisation when evaluating, mandating and reviewing peacekeeping operations.
Concerned at ongoing rights violations in Yemen, UN advisers back call for international probe

20 September – As civilians continue to bear the brunt of the conflict in Yemen, two United Nations Special Advisers have voiced their concern over continued allegations of grave human rights abuses and expressed support for the call by the High Commissioner for Human Rights to establish an international investigation.

According to the Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR), the total number of verified civilian casualties since March 2015 stands at 13,920, including 5,159 people killed and 8,761 injured. The actual numbers are likely to be “far higher,” said the Office, which also noted that coalition airstrikes continue to be the leading cause of civilian casualties, including of children.

In addition, the UN estimates that 17 million people are food insecure, including seven million people on the brink of famine. The unprecedented rise in the cholera epidemic has reached over 690,000 suspected cases with 2,090 associated deaths – the largest ever outbreak in a single year.

“We call on the international community – and particularly the Security Council and Human Rights Council – to take action to end the carnage and remedy this man-made crisis,” Adama Dieng, Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, and Ivan Šimonovic, Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect, said in a statement issued on Tuesday.

“The international community has a moral and legal responsibility to support accountability in Yemen by immediately establishing an impartial international mechanism to comprehensively investigate allegations of serious abuses and violations of human rights law and international humanitarian law committed by all parties to the conflict, and their allied forces with a view to ending impunity.

“The perpetrators must be brought to account. Justice must be served to the victims. It is incumbent on the international community to halt the suffering that is being inflicted on the Yemeni population,” the Advisers stated.

OHCHR said yesterday it was “very disturbed” that civilians, including children, continue to be killed in attacks carried out by both the Popular Committees affiliated with the Houthis and army units loyal to the former President, Ali Abdullah Saleh, as well as by the Saudi-led coalition.

Just over the past five days, the Office has confirmed that three children died and seven others were injured in attacks by Houthi/Saleh forces in the Salah district of the city of Taizz; while a coalition airstrike in Marib killed a further five children along with seven adults.

These are just the latest in a series of incidents that demonstrate “the horrific impact on children and families, and all civilians, of the ongoing brutal war,” OHCHR spokesperson Rupert Colville told reporters in Geneva.

“Once again, we urge all sides to exercise restraint and to cease all indiscriminate attacks and take all possible precautions to properly distinguish military objectives from civilian objects and to ensure that their attacks are never directed either at civilians or civilian objects.”
UN chief condemns terrorist attacks in Nigeria, Cameroon

20 September – Secretary-General António Guterres has condemned the terrorist attacks that took place earlier this week in Borno state, Nigeria, as well as in Kossa, Cameroon, which targeted vulnerable people already affected by Boko Haram violence.

“The Secretary-General extends his condolences to the people and Governments of Nigeria and Cameroon for the loss of life,” his spokesperson, Stéphane Dujarric, said in a statement.

“He wishes a speedy recovery to those injured and calls for those responsible for these repeated acts in the countries in the Lake Chad Basin to be swiftly brought to justice.”

Mr. Guterres also reiterated the UN’s solidarity and support to the Governments of the Lake Chad Basin countries in their fight against terrorism and violent extremism.
Hurricane Irma erased ‘footprints of an entire civilization’ on Barbuda, Prime Minister tells UN

21 September – The Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, Gaston Alphonso Browne, told the United Nations General Assembly today that after the largest storm ever in the Atlantic Ocean, “the island of Barbuda is decimated; its entire population left homeless; and its buildings reduced to empty shells.”

As all its inhabitants were evacuated to Antigua in the wake of Hurricane Irma, in addition to providing shelter and basic necessities to the residents, the social services on Antigua are under great strain – providing places for 600 additional children; medical services for the elderly; and a means of income for the able-bodied.

“For the first time in over 300 years, there is now no permanent resident on Barbuda. The footprints of an entire civilization have been emasculated by the brutality and magnitude of Irma,” he said.

Mr. Browne stressed that Barbuda is not only a natural disaster, it is a humanitarian crisis that now consumes Antigua. “Whatever position on climate change any nation takes, the evidence of global warming is now irrefutably stronger,” he underscored. “We are the least of the polluters, but the largest of the casualties. The unfairness, injustice and inequality are painfully obvious,” he added.
He pointed out that according to preliminary estimates, rebuilding would cost Barbuda about $250 million – representing 15 per cent or more of the country’s gross domestic product (GDP) of approximately $1.5 billion. “Antigua and Barbuda urgently requires the assistance of the international community, including the international development and finance institutions, to accomplish this vital task of rebuilding Barbuda,” he said.

Caribbean islands need to construct more resilient buildings and infrastructure, requiring international developmental and financial institutions to provide financing at concessionary rates without artificial impediments – or cost in lives and property would be “too frightening to contemplate.”

**Russia’s Lavrov backs view on primacy of sovereignty in international relations**

21 September – Russian Foreign Minister Sergey V. Lavrov endorsed at the United Nations General Assembly today United States President Donald Trump’s affirmation of the primacy of national sovereignty in international affairs.

“The world keeps changing,” he told the 72nd annual general debate, citing last December’s Assembly resolution on the ‘promotion of a democratic and equitable international order,’ which deemed unacceptable interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States, which the US under former President Barak Obama voted against.

“It is gratifying to note, as the US President Donald Trump unequivocally stated from this podium Tuesday, that it is important to comply with the principles of sovereignty in the international affairs; it is necessary to ensure leadership by example and not impose one's will on other nations,” he said.

“I believe that anyone can sign under these words, especially, if the US foreign policy is conducted precisely on this basis. Sovereignty, refraining from interference into internal affairs, equality of people and mutual respect – Russia has always adhered to these principles and will continue to uphold them,” Mr. Lavrov underscored.

He lamented that Russia’s Western partners have not reciprocated Moscow’s good-faith efforts to eliminate the legacy of the Cold War, and have instead chosen “the path of reckless eastward NATO expansion and provoking instability in the post-Soviet space and encouraging anti-Russian sentiments. This policy is precisely the root cause of the protracted conflict in South-Eastern Ukraine,” he added.

Turning to the crisis over the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s (DPRK) nuclear programme, Mr. Lavrov said Russia resolutely condemns “the nuclear missile adventures of Pyongyang in violation of the UN Security Council resolutions.

“However, the build-up of military hysteria is not only a dead-end but also deadly,” he stated. “It goes without saying that all UN Security Council resolutions must be implemented. But all of them, along with sanctions, contain provisions on the need to resume talks.”
'We can’t build strong relationships if we refuse to have conversations,’ Canada’s Trudeau says at UN

21 September – Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau took the podium at the United Nations General Assembly today with condolences for those affected by recent successive natural disasters, including the earthquakes in Mexico and hurricanes in the Caribbean, saying his country is ready to “lend a helping hand in whatever way it can.”

He spoke extensively on Canada’s indigenous people, of the injustices they face and the efforts being made to improve the relationship with First Nations, calling it “righting historical wrongs.” He noted how Canada is implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on a national level to improve their lives, saying that the Goals are “as meaningful in Canada as they are everywhere else in the world.”

Mr. Trudeau cited a few examples of the SDGs in action in indigenous communities, such as bringing safe and clean drinking water (SDG 6), working with them to help build and refurbish homes, making safe and sustainable places to live (SDG 11), and combatting gender-based violence and giving women and girls equal opportunities to succeed (SDG 5).

The Prime Minister noted that his country fully supports the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples “without qualification” and is working with Canada’s indigenous leaders to correct past injustices. “Indigenous Peoples will decide how they wish to represent and organize themselves,” he told the Assembly.

“We can’t build strong relationships if we refuse to have conversations. We can’t chart a more peaceful path if the starting point is suspicion and mistrust. And we can’t build a better world unless we work together, respect our differences, protect the vulnerable, and stand up for the things that matter most,” Mr. Trudeau concluded.

Addressing Rohingya crisis, Bangladesh proposes UN-monitored ‘safe zones’ in Myanmar

21 September – Myanmar must stop “ethnic cleansing” in Rakhine state, and “safe zones” should be created inside that country to protect all civilians, under the supervision of the United Nations, Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina told the General Assembly today.

“I have come here just after seeing the hungry, distressed and hopeless Rohingya from Myanmar who took shelter in Cox’s Bazar in Bangladesh,” Ms. Hasina said during the annual general debate. “This forcibly displaced people of Myanmar are fleeing an ‘ethnic cleansing’ in their own country where they have been living for centuries.”

She noted that her country is currently sheltering over 800,000 forcibly displaced Rohingyas from Myanmar and that the ongoing atrocities and human rights violations in Myanmar’s Rakhine state once again aggravated the situation at the Bangladesh-Myanmar border.

She proposed that Myanmar unconditionally stop the practice of “ethnic cleansing” in Rakhine immediately and forever and the UN Secretary-General immediately send a fact-finding mission to Myanmar.
She also proposed that “safe zones” be created inside Myanmar to protect all civilians irrespective of religion and ethnicity under UN supervision and all forcibly displaced Rohingyas in Bangladesh return to their homes in Myanmar in a sustainable manner.

As a major troop- and police-contributing country, Bangladesh underscores the importance of upholding effectiveness and credibility of UN peacekeeping operations, and maintains a ‘zero tolerance’ approach to any allegation of sexual exploitation and abuse, the Prime Minister said, adding that she endorsed the UN “voluntary compact” on this issue.

**With world at epic crossroads, UN seems like it’s on ‘silent’ mode, Jordan tells Assembly**

21 September – While the United Nations is “our global conscience,” Al Hussein Bin Abdullah II, Crown Prince of Jordan, said today that for too many in his country and elsewhere trying to do good, it sometimes feels like the world’s conscience is on ‘silent’ mode.

“It's time to break the silence and start finding answers. In doing so, we can unleash a global current that carries our common humanity to safer shores,” said the 23-year-old Crown Prince, addressing the General Assembly two years after he chaired a Security Council meeting which adopted an historic resolution on ‘youth, peace and security,’ aimed at empowering young people to participate in peace efforts.

“Today, I stand before you […] as a member of the largest generation of young people in history [with] the world at an epic intersection, driven by the confluence of deepened globalization and disruptive technologies,” he said, and amid such seismic changes, young people are asking, among other questions: In which direction does our collective moral compass point, and can it guide us safely to justice, prosperity and peace for all?

Drawing on the experience of his own country to explore those issues, he noted that Jordan has been affected by border conflicts, as well as by the global financial crisis and the energy crisis. Speaking about the direct cost of the Syria crisis on his country, which has been hosting 1.3 million Syrian refugees, he said that crisis is now consuming more than a quarter of the Jordan’s budget.

“Housing, food, energy, healthcare, education, jobs: all are under pressure,” he added, underlining that the country is not turning its back on people in need, but needs answers for its youth.

“How can it be that a country as small as ours struggles in the face of such crushing adversity, only to be told that its friends are suffering from donor fatigue? Financial institutions often remind us that on a per capita basis, we are a top recipient of aid. Yet, on a per capita basis, few countries have endured as many external shocks or contributed to global peace and security as Jordan has,” he said.

The sad reality is that war economies are thriving to the benefit of a few, while real economies are suffering to the detriment of all. “It just doesn't add up,” he said, calling on the international community to start asking tough questions, work harder to involve young people in finding the answers to bolster the values that anchor global citizenship today.
At UN assembly, Croatia calls for treating migrants humanely while also tackling ‘root causes’

Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic of Croatia addresses the general debate of the General Assembly’s seventy-second session. UN Photo/Cia Pak

21 September – Croatia, a major way-station on the path of tens of thousands of refugees from the Middle East and Asia in 2015, called from the podium of the United Nations General Assembly today for a holistic approach that respects migrants’ rights while tackling the root causes of their flight.

“Croatia in the past has been faced with acute refugee and migrant crises,” Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic told the Assembly’s 72nd general debate. “The approach we took has always been – and will always be – one that puts people first.

“In the context of the upcoming negotiations on the Global Compact on Migration, we would advocate an approach to human mobility that prioritizes safety, dignity and human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants, no matter where they come from and where they are headed.

“As with all global challenges, here too a holistic approach is required. We therefore need to work together to fight the root causes of mass migrations – be it poverty, failing States and wars or climate change and natural disasters – while standing against exploitation and abuse in the context of human trafficking and people smuggling.”

On conflicts, Mr. Plenkovic said that while a consistent approach by UN, and in particular the Security Council, is essential for its credibility, copy-pasted “one-size-fits-all” approaches are not the most effective way to proceed.

European ministers tell Assembly UN is proper place to tackle phenomenon of mass migrations

Alfonso María Dastis Quevedo, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain, addresses the general debate of the General Assembly’s seventy-second session. UN Photo/Cia Pak

21 September – From the podium of the United Nations General Assembly today, European foreign ministers called for humane treatment of the hundreds of thousands of refugees flooding into the continent and the orderly management of migrant flows that benefit the countries of origin, transit and destination.

“Large displacements of people have reached unprecedented levels in recent years,” Spanish Foreign Minister Alfonso María Dastis Quecedo told the Assembly’s 72nd general debate.

“The two Global Compacts on Refugees and Migrants that we have undertaken to adopt in 2018 should confirm the concerted, equitable and humane response to the phenomenon of refugees,” he added.

In a wide-ranging speech that touched on all major world crises, as well as development and climate change, Mr. Dastis expressed “the sincere gratitude of the people of Spain for the multitude of heartfelt displays of support and affection we have received from around the world” following last month’s terrorist attack in Barcelona.
“Terrorism will be vanquished through unity, perseverance and the full weight of the law,” he said.

Luxembourg’s Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn, said the UN was the appropriate place to tackle the phenomenon of mass migration.

“The causes are manifold: demographic pressures, climate change, conflict, humanitarian catastrophes. Perfectly respectable economic motivation, both in the country of origin and that of destination are also often the cause of such movement,” he added.

He also called on the five permanent Members of the UN Security Council to forgo the use of the veto in cases of mass atrocities, such as genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Also addressing the UN General Assembly today was Ulla Tøernæs, Minister for Development Cooperation from Denmark, who highlighted the “ever more inter-connected” threats and challenges facing the international community, including displacement and irregular migration, as well as violations of human rights and armed conflict.

Given the evolving global landscape, there is a need for leadership and common purpose to steer the UN in a new direction by breaking the status quo and reforming the UN development system, bridging immediate relief and long-term development objectives.

“Staying on the current path is not an option if we want to maintain the legitimacy of the United Nations. Fundamental and ambitious reform is the only way forward,” Ms. Tøernæs said.

Peace and stability vital for sustainable development in a fragile world, Kazakh minister says at UN Assembly

21 September – Addressing the 72nd annual general debate at the United Nations General Assembly, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan reiterated his country’s commitment to sustainable development and urged global leaders to remain steadfast in their battle against climate change, including through the use of renewable energy.

In particular, noting that peace and stability are essential to ensure sustainable development, Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov stated that the world does not have “the luxury of being able to make mistakes and then going back to correct them.”

“[Therefore] we call on all world leaders to redouble their efforts and goodwill to head towards lasting peace and prosperity for all,” he added.

Noting of the growing danger posed by nuclear weapons, the Minister condemned the actions of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) – the only State in the 21st century continuing nuclear weapons development programme despite condemnation from the entire international community and called on the country to take serious steps to recommit to a political resolution to the crisis.

In his address, he noted the importance of the Astana process on Syria and his country’s efforts for a peaceful settlement in that country, and underscored that success at both the Geneva and Astana platforms are critical and that they should be supported by the entire international community.

Also in his address, he noted that the UN system may be subject of criticism but at the same time it remains the “beacon of hope” for billions around the globe and a universal institution that brings with it the promise of better, safer and more
sustainable future.

Boost regional cooperation, for the ‘sake of peace and prosperity,’ Belarus tells global leaders at UN

21 September – The past few decades have been fraught with two contradictory tendencies – enhanced political fragmentation and increased economic globalization, Belarus’ Minister for Foreign Affairs told the United Nations General Assembly today.

Vladimir Makei noted that the former has been associated with global political instability resulting from wars, conflicts, terrorism, xenophobia and other factors – giving rise to mounting chaos and despondency. This predicament came about because there was no peace treaty to end the Cold War, as is usual in other major wars. “We were left without a universally accepted framework, which could have guided our subsequent behaviour,” he explained.

“But it is never late to do what is right,” continued Mr. Makei, pointing to the possibility of a negotiating process in which key global powers collectively strategize on building new constructive relations. “Agreements emanating from the dialogue would, essentially, put an end to the last epochal war,” he explained, adding that the UN would have a role in its implementation.

While the second world tendency – increased economic globalization – has contributed to progress and economic development, it appears that the majority of the world’s population did not benefit, especially over the last few decades. “As a result,” said Mr. Makei, “we have not been able to eliminate poverty, while inequality has been steadily on the rise.”

Belarus believes that regional integration is a key feature of the contemporary world, as it leaves less room for political fragmentation. While acknowledging that everyone might not agree on the importance of tightening cooperation among regional integration processes, Mr. Makei said “what, however, we are firmly convinced of is that it is high time for all of us to demonstrate urgency in action and cooperation for the sake of peace and prosperity.”

At UN Assembly, Pacific small islands urge collective action against climate change impacts

21 September – Addressing the 72nd annual general debate at the United Nations General Assembly, leaders from Pacific small Island developing states highlighted the growing impact of climate change on the lives of their people and called for concerted action to address the threat.

“As small island Pacific countries, we are no longer protected by our isolation,” said Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, the Prime Minister of Samoa, adding: “Climate change, like other global challenges, cross borders seamlessly. It has no respect for sovereignty and does not discriminate countries between rich or poor.”

“Its dire consequences are real including [for] those who remain in denial,” he underscored, urging global leaders to collectively prioritize the implementation of the Paris Agreement on climate change.
Also in his address, Prime Minister Malielegaoi, spoke of the importance of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and highlighted that, for small island development States, the 2014 ‘Samoa Pathway’ is their sustainable development roadmap which highlights their key tasks and priorities and links closely with the 2030 Agenda.

The Samoa leader also noted the escalating crisis in the Korean Peninsula and called for visionary leadership to ensure that peace is given a chance. Concluding his remarks, he also informed the General Assembly of the Summit of Leaders of discussions and outcomes at the Pacific Island Forum, which Samoa hosted earlier this year.

Also addressing the general debate today, Tommy Esang Remengesau Jr., the President of Palau, said the natural disasters wreaking havoc across many parts of the world are a “harbinger of wars to come on a hotter planet,” underscoring the need to the full implementation of the Paris Agreement.

“Palau in the Pacific have experienced, first hand, the impact of climate extremes,” he said, adding: “[Climate change impact] is a ticking time-bomb – no one knows when or where the next disaster will strike – but we are a keenly aware that it can wipe out years of progress in a span of hours.”

Noting the importance of expanding cooperation with all stakeholders, including with the private, public and non-profit sector, to address the complex challenges facing the planet, he added that UN is the crucial link that can bring global efforts together, and that concerted and united efforts are also crucial to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Concluding his address, President Remengesau also spoke of the need of strong multilateral efforts, within the UN framework, to resolve challenges ranging from international peace and security, global terrorism, large-scale migration and many other difficult issues.

For the success of such efforts, the UN system must be strengthened so that all its Member States can believe in the fairness and effectiveness of the overall international negotiation and dispute resolution process.

Joining the Pacific leaders expressing concern over the threat posed by climate change, Enele Sosene Sopoaga, the Prime Minister of Tuvalu, also underscored the importance of the Paris Agreement, especially for the tens of millions living in low-lying islands and coastal areas around the world.

“The Paris Agreement is our common hope of a decent life on a sustainable planet. For Tuvalu, it is our hope of security and survival,” said the Prime Minister, noting however, that the hope, is however, “dimmed with the announcement by the United States that it will abandon the Agreement.”

In his remarks, the Prime Minister also highlighted the importance of the 2030 Agenda and referring to challenges within his country in its implementation, thanked the international community for their help in overcoming them.

He also expressed his country’s support for a ‘global pact on the environment,’ explaining that it would be an international legally binding agreement on the protection of rights to a safe and clean environment.

“We are but on one canoe for humanity, no one country must jump ship! We either must paddle together to keep us afloat and safe. Or allow the canoe to sink, and we all drown. It is our hope, that with this ‘Global Pact’ and the Paris Agreement, the canoe, we can save Tuvalu, and if we can save Tuvalu we can save the world.”

Also delivering his address before the General Assembly, Charlot Salwai Tabimasmas, the Prime Minister of Vanuatu stated that the United Nations offered the “best hope and catalyst” for addressing global challenges including those related to peace and security, as well as the environment problems.

In particular, he said that as the impact of climate change continues to grow unabated, world leaders must consider a legal framework to address the issue of climate change refugees, who would be left stranded once their homes and lands disappear.

In his remarks, the Prime Minister also called on Security Council to move beyond political interests of its members and to
find compromise solutions. He also said that his country supports Security Council reforms to accord fairer regional representation.

Further in his address, Prime Minister Tabimasmas underscored the importance of implementation of the Paris Agreement and he urged the United States to reconsider its decision on the Agreement and to support its full implementation.

Turning to crisis emanating from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea nuclear weapons development programme, the Prime Minister reaffirmed his country’s commitment to denuclearization of the Pacific region and welcomed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Climate change requires most urgent mitigation measures, African leaders tell UN Assembly

21 September – Citing the spate of recent devastating hurricanes, African leaders – from small island States to larger landlocked countries – mounted the podium of the United Nations General Assembly today to call for urgent measures to mitigate the effects of climate change.

“We urge the international community to not only respond generously to these countries’ calls for support, but to take far more seriously the need to upscale the urgent action required to prevent, prepare for, adapt to and recover from such increasingly destructive climate-related disasters,” Seychelles President Danny Faure said, citing recently afflicted countries.

“The thoughts of the Government and people of Seychelles go out to the millions of people in South Asia, Africa, the United States, and Mexico, and our island brothers and sisters in the Caribbean who have suffered unimaginable losses from floods, hurricanes and other forms of extreme weather these past months,” he told the Assembly’s 72nd general debate.

Mr. Faure called for an inclusive approach to stepping up implementation of the Paris Agreement on limiting global warming greenhouse emissions. “According to the latest science, all stakeholders need to be involved if the international community is to drastically scale up our collective climate action to achieve our targets,” he said.

Vice-President Mokgweetsi Eric Masisi of Botswana appealed to the United States to re-consider its decision to withdraw from Paris accord. “As you would be aware, the challenge of climate change requires collective action, as no single country can successfully address this challenge on its own,” he said.

“It is as if the recent hurricanes and their disastrous effects were to underscore to the American Administration that climate change is real,” he added, stressing that the adverse impacts of climate change undermine the ability of all countries to achieve sustainable development.

The leaders also addressed a host of world issues, from terrorism to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s (DPRK) nuclear programme, and from the need for expansion of the 15-member UN Security Council with permanent African representation to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that seek to haul hundreds of millions of people out of poverty, hunger and social ills by 2030.
Sao Tome and Principe President Evaristo do Espirito Santo Carvalho lamented that funding for measures mitigating climate change lacks the support of the international community.

“Cooperation agreements should be established with ambitious funding for climate issues, as well as ensuring effective and efficient transfer of technology by the more developed countries,” he said.

“Combating the phenomenon of climate change is perhaps the most complex objective for which all humanity is called upon to intervene. The success of this fight is perhaps the greatest legacy we can leave to future generations."

Mauritian Prime Minister Pravind Kumar Jugnauth said addressing climate change is critical to successfully implementing the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that aim to eliminate a host of social ills, including hunger, poverty and lack of access to education and health care.

“With the increasing number and intensity of climate related disasters – storms, droughts, flash floods, to name but a few – it would be naive on our part to dismiss the climate change,” he said.

Mitigating the effects of climate change will require substantial effort and resources, especially for small island developing States. “While we welcome the generous pledges made so far, including the creation of the Green Climate Fund, we need to streamline and simplify the procedures for these States to access these funds, especially in the light of the recent events.”

Guinea-Bissau Prime Minister Umaro Sissoco Embaló the threats of climate change were of “a planetary scale with prospects of frightening, and not unlikely, consequences.”

On the situation in his own country, which has had a troubled past, he said: “We continue to experience a period of institutional challenges… These are challenges related to the functioning of some of our core political institutions, namely parliament and the government.

“But it is with profound gravity that I inform you that civilian peace reigns in my country. There are no reports of universal human rights violations that merit complaints or are worthy of concern.”

Togo’s Prime Minister Selom Komi Klassou stressed the need to carry out the Paris accord as well as the SDGs.

“The challenges facing our world have a real impact on development of Africa,” he said. “And one of the imperatives, in order to confront it effectively, remains the continent’s economic transformation.

“We realize this transformation depends, firstly on the responsibility of the African elite, but international solidarity is also prerequisite,” he added. “Investment needs to be increased in the fields of science, industry, agribusiness and high technology.”
To address terrorism, ‘we must stamp out its root causes,’
Pakistan leader says at UN Assembly

21 September – Addressing the United Nations General Assembly today, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, the Prime Minister of Pakistan underscored that any strategy to combat global terrorism must focus on addressing the issue of State sponsored terrorism, as well as resolve the root causes behind such violence.

“[Root causes] are not only poverty and ignorance, terrorism is even more an extreme response to real or perceived political and other grievances, including foreign intervention, oppression and injustice,” the Pakistani leader told world leaders.

“Unless such root causes are addressed, it will be difficult to counter the twisted narrative of terrorist groups,” he added.

In his address, Prime Minister Abbasi also drew attention to climate change as the new and existential threat to humankind’s future with its consequences felt around the world – from the United States to Nepal – and called on global leaders to collectively rally behind the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

He also noted the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for all of humanity and said that initiatives such as China’s ‘Belt and Road’ offered a clear path to prosperity as well as a model of South-South cooperation “worthy of emulation.”

Also in his address, he urged an international investigation mechanism be sent to Kashmir “to verify the nature and extent of India’s human rights violations,” identify the perpetrators and hold them accountable.

Further, urging for a just, peaceful and expeditious resolution of the dispute over Kashmir, Prime Minister Abbasi called on the Security Council secure the implementation of its own resolution on the region.

“To this end, the UN Secretary-General should appoint a Special Envoy on Kashmir [whose] mandate should flow from the longstanding but unimplemented resolutions of the Security Council.”

Solidarity strengthens nations addressing severe challenges,
Georgia’s Prime Minister tells UN Assembly

21 September – Offering his condolences to the victims of the recent natural disasters in North America, Georgia’s Prime Minister, Giorgi Kvirikashvili, told delegations at the United Nations today that no country is immune from natural disasters, saying “solidarity is what strengthens nations addressing these severe challenges.”

Observing that this year marks the 25th anniversary of Georgia’s UN membership, Mr. Kvirikashvili noted that his country had transform itself from a UN humanitarian aid recipient to a top reformer. Against that backdrop, he pledged support to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by translating them into the national policies.

The Prime Minister enumerated the changes and commitments the Government was making, including constitutional reform, as a reflection of Georgia’s aspirations to attain full European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) membership. “Georgians...
understand this to be their destiny, as Georgia has long been an integral part of Europe's broad cultural and historical tapestry,” he said.

Mr. Kvirikashvili recounted that the Russian Federation continues to occupy two regions of its sovereign territory – in violation of its international obligations, including Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. “Georgia is firmly committed to the peaceful resolution of the Russia-Georgia conflict,” he said thanking the world leaders that supported his country’s territorial integrity and addressed in their speeches, the need to accelerate a peaceful resolution.

The world needs ‘a true global partnership,’ Indonesia’s Vice-President tells UN Assembly

21 September – At the United Nations General Assembly today, Muhammad Jusuf Kalla, the Vice-President of Indonesia, underscored three points to achieve ‘Peace and a Decent Life for All on a Sustainable Planet,’’ the theme of the 72nd session.

Stating that “peace is never a given,” Mr. Kalla explained that it must be developed and nurtured through dialogue, inclusiveness, peaceful settlement of disputes, and non-use of force. “More importantly, we must develop the UN as a robust global institution that emphasizes the maintenance of peace, security and stability,” he said, expressing Indonesia’s support for UN reform.

Secondly, the Vice-President pointed out the need for synergies between sustaining peace and the development agenda – stressing that peace and stability must be cultivated to achieve sustainable development. Mr. Kalla noted the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement as among agreed-upon global commitments that must be translated into concrete actions.

The urgent need for a global action plan and partnership to combat terrorism, radicalism and violent extremism was another of his main points. He maintained that root causes must be tackled, citing extreme poverty, illiteracy and massive youth unemployment. Through a combination of “hard” and “soft” power, strengthening the rule of law and fostering community engagement, Mr. Kalla asserted, “we have de-radicalized over one thousand six hundred extremists, in over 72 prisons in Indonesia.”

As global challenges become more complex, it is evident that unilateralism is not a sustainable solution. “The world needs strong partnership [...] A true global partnership,” Mr. Kalla concluded.
Reform vital for achieving sustainable development, Zimbabwe’s Mugabe tells UN Assembly

21 September – Without deeper international cooperation and reform in the international system, the gap between the rich and the poor will persist, President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe today warned in his address to the General Assembly debate.

Praising the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as “ambitious, revolutionary, transformative, universal and encompassing every single facet of human life,” he noted that its success demands a radical and unprecedented paradigm shift.

“For us in Africa, the current antiquated system perpetuates a historic injustice, one that can never ever be justified today,” Mr. Mugabe said. “The 2030 Agenda represents new wine, and we call for a new wineskin lest we ruin the new wine.”

Among the reforms the veteran leader noted called for was the reorganization of the Security Council, and greater emphasis discourse among nations.

“We are left to wonder, justifiably so, whether those who enjoy, and sometimes abuse the power and privileges of the current set up, are sincere interlocutors in these discussions,” he said.

Dialogue, peaceful dispute settlement ‘indispensable’ to achieving peace, El Salvador tells UN Assembly

21 September – Delivering a strong message in favour of promoting unity among countries to solve the problems that afflict humanity, Salvador Sánchez Cerén, the President of El Salvador, told the United Nations General Assembly today that dialogue and the peaceful settlement of disputes are indispensable to achieving world peace.

“As a country that has experienced an internal armed conflict for more than a decade that could yet find lasting solutions only through dialogue and negotiation, we know very well the importance of peaceful means to resolve differences,” he explained in his address to the UN General Assembly’s annual general debate.

Citing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, he said that it is essential to recognize the positive contributions of migrants in destination societies. To that end, he advocated that the United States Government extend the Temporary Protection Status (TPS) to the thousands of Salvadorans living in that country.

Turning to national issues, he stressed that El Salvador allocates more than half of public spending to education, health and safety. He also emphasized that his preventive approach to dealing with violence has halved homicides and extortion.

Finally, he reiterated El Salvador's commitment to disarmament, arms control, the fight against organized crime and the unity to address the challenges of climate change.
'The people and Government of Mexico stand,’ quake-hit country’s leader tells UN Assembly

21 September – In midst of recovery from two major earthquakes in the last two weeks, Luis Videgaray Caso, the Minster for Foreign Affairs of Mexico told world leaders today that his country takes comfort in the global solidarity shown during this tragic time.

Praising this coming-together, evidenced by emergency assistance from countries both near and far, the Minister expressed his appreciation for the support in the aftermath of the disaster and added that being a member of the United Nations through such an ordeal, means “being among family.”

He said the degree of international unity being demonstrated in Mexico today is the sort of remedy other global challenges are lacking, and that the root of many world challenges stem from a mistrust in multilateralism.

“No country, as powerful as it may be, is capable of responding alone to the enormous challenges shared during our time,” he noted.

Turning to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Mr. Caso reaffirmed the power of solidarity, saying that for his nation, the agenda is a state commitment, and that UN Members States should collectively channel the Organization as a means of prioritizing human prosperity.

In his address, the Mexican leader also underscored the importance for protecting human rights, ensuring women and girls are not vulnerable to sexual abuse and violence, and combatting discrimination.

Underscoring the need to strengthen measures promoting inclusion, Mr. Caso reaffirmed his country’s openness to the world and expressed hope for cross-cultural bridges to neighbors near and far.

Acknowledging his country’s socio-political tension with the United States, Mr. Caso noted that Mexico is proud of being a member of North America and underscored support for fellow Mexicans “regardless of immigration status.”

“The Mexican Government has a moral and legal obligation to protect and support you,” he said, and celebrated the “dreamers” – undocumented immigrants brought to the US as children – who through this legislation were able to pursue education and hopes for a better life.

Concluding his remarks, Mr. Caso recalled the tragic disasters that hit Mexico, adding: “My message to you today is that we Mexicans will overcome this catastrophe and our nation will emerge stronger.”

“The people and Government of Mexico stand.”
Nationalist worldview is recipe for ‘more conflict, less prosperity, Germany tells UN Assembly

21 September – Germany warned the United Nations General Assembly today not to be lured by the siren song of ‘our country first,’ calling it a recipe for more conflict and less prosperity that must be eschewed in favour more international cooperation and the strengthening of the UN.

“A world view which puts one’s own national interests first and is no longer engaged in a balancing of interests between the nations and countries of this world is gaining ever more ground,” Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel told the Assembly’s 72nd annual general debate.

“National egoism is worthless as a regulatory principle for our world! For this world view describes the world as an arena, a kind of battleground, in which everyone is fighting against everyone else and in which everyone has to assert their own interests, either alone or in alliances of convenience.

“In this world view, the law of the strongest prevails, not the strength of the law. Ladies and gentlemen, I am convinced that we have to rise against this world view. We need more international cooperation and less national egoism, not the other way round,” he declared.

The motto ‘our country first’ not only leads to more national confrontations and less prosperity. In the end, there will only be losers,” he added. “In international cooperation, no one loses sovereignty. Rather we all gain new sovereignty which we could no longer have as nation-states on our own in today’s world.”

Turning to individual world crises, Mr. Gabriel stressed that international community had made clear it will not accept the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s (DPRK) nuclear provocations, and called for using all diplomatic means to defuse the situation and find a long-term solution.

He cited the international agreement curbing Iran’s nuclear programme as a way out of an impasse, provided all terms are rigorously adhered to.

China, at UN Assembly, urges DPRK not to go ‘further along a dangerous direction’

21 September – There is still hope for peace, ‘and we must not give up’ on solving the nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula, China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi told world leaders at the United Nations today, while urging the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s (DPRK) not to go “further along a dangerous direction.”

“Negotiation is the only way out, and deserves every effort. Parties should meet each other halfway by addressing each other’s legitimate concerns,” he told the Assembly’s 72nd annual general debate, adding that China has tirelessly sought peace on the Korean Peninsula, and would stay firmly committed to its denuclearization.

He said that 19 September marked the 12th anniversary of the Six-Party talks Joint Statement, in which the parties, including China, formulated a roadmap towards the denuclearization of the Korean
Peninsula. While some felt that statement has now become outdated, such peaceful trends never become obsolete.

Underscoring tireless efforts China has made for peace on the Korean Peninsula, he urged the DPRK not to go further along its dangerous direction, while calling on the United States to honour its commitments in the region.

However, “we are once again at a crossroads,” he said, noting that the world is faced with the choice between unity and division. In particular, he cited the Syrian crisis and the Israeli-Palestinian issue, highlighting that the work of the UN must be driven forward, and all must embrace the spirit of the UN as a “guardian of world peace.”

Turning to development, the past five years have witnessed a momentous journey for China, said Mr. Wang, citing remarkable achievements on a number of fronts, which will bring more benefits to the world as it is an “anchor of world peace.”

China’s project of the century “Belt and Road” initiative, he highlighted, will not only offer a new paradigm for efforts to promote world peace, but it will also inject fresh impetus to the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

**Sustainable development possible only if global community works together, Slovenia tells UN**

21 September – Effective international cooperation with the United Nations at its core is essential to address global challenges which have become even more complex and intertwined, the Prime Minister of Slovenia told world leaders today, urging unity among the international community.

Noting that the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change are the “true test,” Prime Minister Miro Cerar stressed that now is not the time to go back on commitments.

“We need to turn them into real progress that will benefit people around the globe,” he urged, addressing the general debate at the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly.

Noting that partnership and collaboration among the entire global community is vital not only for achieving sustainable development, but also for addressing the challenges associated with the scale of migration and refugee flows seen around the world.

In his address, the Prime Minister also underscored the importance of respect for human rights, including rights of children and women, rule of law, and gender equality and women’s empowerment.

He also noted the reform efforts initiated by Secretary-General António Guterres, and expressed his country’s support for the same.

The Prime Minister, further spoke of the need to combat terrorism in all its forms as well as violent extremism around the world, as well as advance the non-proliferation and disarmament agenda and urged for full implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

In that context, the Prime Minister strongly condemned the violations by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) of numerous Security Council resolutions as well as its own international commitments.
“They pose a serious threat to peace and security in the region and wider,” he stressed.

**Yemeni President, at UN, urges ongoing support as country seeks to end war, secure lasting peace**

21 September – Addressing the United Nations General Assembly today, President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi of Yemen affirmed his readiness to bring an end to the country’s three-year conflict and seek a “strong, fair and lasting peace,” out of a sense of full responsibility for the Yemeni people.

“I reaffirm […] our readiness to stop the war and reach peace; we are not advocates of war or revenge, but advocates of peace and harmony,” President Hadi told delegations attending the Assembly’s annual general debate, where underscored that he has, and will continue, to “extend my hand to sustainable peace because we feel our full responsibility for all our steadfast Yemeni people.”

The Yemeni President expressed his thanks to Saudi Arabia and said that it has a leading role in alleviating the humanitarian tragedy through its ongoing support from the King Salman Centre for Humanitarian Relief.

Stressing that the challenge in Yemen is not a political one that could be managed only at the political dialogue table, “or even a coup in the [traditional sense];” Yemen is facing religious extremist sects that believe they have been given a divine right to rule, allied with groups seeking only revenge on the Yemeni people. “They are destroying all State institutions and replacing them with their own institutions; all our resources have been depleted. The private sector has virtually disappeared.”

The violence and destruction being perpetrated by the Houthi militias in Yemen are being fully supported by Iran, which Mr. Hadia accused of working to destabilize the region “by supporting groups that are out of control.” Sustainable peace cannot be achieved unless Iran stops interfering in the affairs of the region.

“We only want to preserve the lives of every Yemeni, including those who fire bullets and missiles at us., he said, underscoring that the country needs ongoing support “to spread security and stability and activate services in the liberated areas.” He called upon donors, international organizations and friends of the country to provide urgent support to Yemen and to honour the pledges made at the Geneva donors conference.
'We are in it together,’ Ghana tells UN Assembly, reaffirming Global Goals for planet and people

21 September – While sceptics feared the landmark Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were “too many and too complex” to be tackled, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of Ghana told the United Nations today that the Organization’s experience has proved that “once the world puts its collective mind to something, the chances are, we would get it right.”

Addressing delegations at the General Assembly’s general debate, he underscored that the recent devastation caused by floods in the United States, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Dominica, Puerto Rico, Antigua and Barbuda, St. Martin and Niger was a reminder that as inhabitants of this planet, “we are in it together,” at the mercy of nature.

Mr. Akufo-Addo said he was speaking today because of elections that voted out an incumbent Government. “We continue to be a beacon of democracy and stability on the continent, our institutions of State are growing stronger, and we have made more progress with our economy than at any time since independence,” he said. While Ghana has made strides towards the SDGs, he said that it continues to grow its economy and open up opportunities for all Ghanaians.

Turning to Africa’s commitment to remaining a nuclear weapon-free continent, Mr. Akufo-explained that three weeks ago, highly-enriched uranium was flown out of Ghana back to China, “signalling the end of the removal of all such material from the country.” He underscored: “A world, free of nuclear weapons, must be in all our collective interest.”

Drawing attention to UN reform, Ghana zeroed-in on “the longstanding injustice” that the Security Council’s current composition represents for African nations. “We cannot continue to preach democracy and fairness around the world, we cannot insist on peace and justice around the world, when our global organisation is […] seen by many as helping to perpetuate an unfair world order,” stressed Mr. Akufo-Addo.

At UN Assembly, African leaders call for more support to fight terrorism in sub-Saharan Sahel

21 September – Highlighting the dangers posed by terrorism in Africa’s sub-Saharan Sahel region, African leaders mounted the podium of the United Nations General Assembly today to appeal for the resources needed to make the multinational force set up to counter the scourge fully operational.

“Owing to the gravity of the situation, we must take advantage of the Secretary-General’s follow-up report to reinforce the joint multinational force’s mandate by providing it with the resources it needs to succeed in its mission,” Burkina Faso’s President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré said.

In June the UN Security Council endorsed the formation the G5 Sahel joint force, comprising Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, to combat terrorism and transnational organized crime in the restive region.

“One of the major challenges is the mobilization of resources,” he said, noting that the northern regions of both his own
country and neighbouring Mali have been affected by terrorism and extremism and need an urgent investment programme to lessen the vulnerability of the people living there, especially women and the young.

“The struggle against terrorism can only succeed if it is based not only on a sub-regional approach but also on the dynamic of economic development for the most vulnerable areas,” he explained.

Gabon’s President Ali Bongo Ondimba lauded the establishment of the G5 Sahel force. “It is a question of multi-dimensional long-term battle which demands inter-State cooperation and solidarity with the victims of the atrocities,” he told the Assembly.

His own country is part of a subregional anti-terrorist initiative by central African States “to combat the terrorist hydra in all its forms and whatever its motivation.”

He stressed that a military response had to be accompanied by other measures, including action to reduce the funds flowing to criminal organizations.

Mr. Ondimba also called for determined action against poaching that is decimating Africa’s fauna and flora, and its natural resources.

Comoros President Azali Assoumani called terrorism “his absolute negation of what is human [which] has become a scourge that we condemn and must fight together without mercy and on a planetary scale with all our forces.”

Decrying the association of terrorism with Islam, he said there was no Islamic terrorism, just as there is no Christian or Jewish terrorism. “Terrorists are simply barbarians,” he stressed.

“We condemn without reserve the atrocities perpetrated against minorities and communities, yesterday in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and today in Burma (Myanmar) against the Rohingya and other minorities wherever they are, whose inhuman and savage victimization is all the more shocking in that its extreme violence is directed towards the ethnic cleansing of those who have the least resources.

“I dare to hope that our Organization will know how to defend the most elementary rights of the oppressed, regardless of origin, race, sex, or belief,” he added.

The leaders also addressed a host of world issues, from climate change to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s (DPRK) nuclear programme, and from the need for expansion of the 15-member UN Security Council with permanent African representation to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that seek to haul hundreds of millions of people out of poverty, hunger and social ills by 2030.

President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea said his own country had suffered terrorism, piracy and attempted attacks from outside seeking to undermine its “peaceful and democratic system of Government, disrupt peace and stir up revolts for the benefit of fortune-seeking adventurers.”

This had led to unjust and gratuitous accusations against the country’s leaders.

He cited a whole litany of obstacles from international terrorism, extremism, xenophobia, and human trafficking to piracy, mercenary attacks, trans-border crimes and the economic crisis confronting the whole world.

“All these phenomena make it necessary to awaken a greater awareness among nations, and to promote a more direct inter-State cooperation, and undertake a dynamic and coordinated action by all nations in solidarity,” he declared.
Multilateralism is pathway forward to a better world, Cyprus tells UN Assembly

21 September – As the high-level segment of the United Nations General Assembly continued today, Nicos Anastasiades, President of Cyprus, spoke extensively about multilateralism as the only way to preserve the planet; peacefully resolve conflicts; end terrorism and extremism; prevent natural disasters and alleviate humanitarian crises around the world.

Only collective efforts can address crises “like the current one with North Korea, which threatens […] the peace and security architecture of the region and beyond,” he stated. Mr. Anastasiades also pointed to international, multilateral cooperation as being vital in dealing with terrorism, while also calling “education, dialogue, economic growth and social inclusion” essential to prevent and counter violent extremism within societies.

Enhancing societal resilience is a key aspect of multilateral endeavours he said, telling the Assembly “our determination to implement the 2030 Agenda must remain high on our list of priorities, sustainable development is at the heart of dealing with the root causes of forced migration.”

The President also pointed to the need for “a just, effective and efficient global governance system,” for which Cyprus is in accord with the Secretary-General’s reform priorities to ensure that multilateralism remains relevant and effective.

Mr. Anastasiades stated Cyprus’ opinion that “the most vital pillar to achieving inter-State, regional and global peace is through respecting and ensuring the full and unhindered independency, territorial integrity and sovereignty” of each UN Member State as the only way to avoid inter-State conflicts that, in turn, establish conditions for protracted destabilization, violence and uncertainty.

Turning to matters closer to home and the recent UN-facilitated negotiations on Cyprus, he stressed that the vision of the people of Cyprus is on ending the unacceptable status quo and establishing a federal state which would ensure to the generations of Greek and Turkish Cypriots, conditions of stability for a safe, prosperous and peaceful future.

“A State free from any foreign interventions and dependencies; ‘a normal state,’ as the UN Secretary-General very correctly stated. A State led by Cypriots for Cypriots,” he said, urging Turkey and Turkish Cypriot compatriots to realize that it is only through mutual respect and compromises “and not obsolete fixations to failed practices that we will achieve a viable and lasting settlement.”
Countering extremism in Middle East requires socio-economic measures, Lebanese leader tells UN

21 September – Recalling the tragic 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States that sparked the global ‘war on terror’ – which has since “lost its way” – the President of Lebanon today told the United Nations that the while many Middle East had borne the brunt, terrorism has spread like wildfire to all continents and must be tackled at its roots.

“No one knows how far this terrorism will reach and how it will end,” Michel Aoun said in his address to the General Assembly’s annual debate. While Lebanon had been one of the phenomenon’s earliest targets, the Government has prevented anyone from crossing the “red line” of national security and stability. Indeed, despite terrorists’ abilities to organize in some towns and cities, Lebanon had been able to eliminate cells, as had recently been seen in its victories against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh) along the border with Syria.

When the war began in Syria, he continued, Lebanon had been able to preserve its unity despite severe political divisions it was experiencing. “The Lebanese people have proven that they are humanitarian and responsible,” Mr. Aoun said noting that they had welcomed Syrian refugees, sharing food, schools and other resources with them.

Nevertheless, waves of displacement and refugees had increased Lebanon’s population by 50 per cent, he said, citing severe overcrowding, a deteriorating economic situation and increased crime. More dangerous was the fact that terrorists had taken shelter among the refugees, making the need to resettle displaced persons to their homelands urgent.

Mr. Aoun stressed that Lebanon distinguished between “voluntary” and “safe” return, based on the reasons for displacement. In cases of individual asylum for political reasons, political refugees would voluntarily decide when to return, with acceptance by the host country. Lebanon considers the collective asylum taking place in its territory – for economic and security reasons – as displacement, rather than asylum, as it had not received host country acceptance, and thus, constituted “population invasion.”

Noting that conflicts trapped the Middle East in poverty and turned it into a “hotbed of extremism,” he said any solution should be accompanied by economic and social measures aimed at achieving growth and improving social conditions for young people. He called on the UN to seriously consider establishing a “joint Eastern market.”
Republic of Korea, at General Assembly, calls for more active UN role in solving nuclear crisis

21 September – The United Nations must play a more active role in resolving the crisis posed by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s (DPRK) nuclear and missile programmes, both by promoting dialogue and through sanctions, Republic of Korea (ROK) President Moon Jae-in told world leaders today.

“The most important role the United Nations is asked to play today is to come up with fundamental measures to stop the vicious cycle of increased provocations and heightened sanctions,” he told the General Assembly’s 72nd general debate, stressing the need for a political solution to what UN Secretary-General António Guterres has called ‘most dangerous crisis we face today.’

“In the wake of the (recent sixth) nuclear test, the Korean Government has made enhanced efforts to convince countries in the region and beyond of the necessity for stronger sanctions and pressure to make North Korea stop its provocations and choose the path of dialogue,” Mr. Moon said, vowing that his country seeks neither the DPRK’s collapse nor unification by absorption.

Calling on his northern neighbour to “cease making reckless choices that could lead to its own isolation and downfall and choose the path of dialogue” by abandoning its hostile policies against other countries and giving up its nuclear weapons programme, he held out the prospect of a new economic era for the Korean peninsula.

“The spirit of the United Nations is to realize global peace through multilateral dialogue,” he said. “The Korean Peninsula is where that spirit is most desperately needed. The realization of peace is the issue for which the United Nations was created, for which it is aiming and which it is in the process of achieving. We need the United Nations to play a more active role on the Korean Peninsula.

Highlighting the need to prevent the outbreak of war, Mr. Moon called for “stable” management of the situation “so that tensions will not become overly intensified or accidental military clashes will not destroy peace.”

Haitian President backs Paris climate accord, calls on UN to honour commitments on tackling cholera

21 September – Addressing the United Nations General Assembly today, Jovenel Moïse, President of Haiti, expressed deep commitment to the environmental targets in the global goals on sustainable development and said his island nation is seeking to build its resilience against the natural disasters and extreme weather events that consistently beleaguer its people and other countries in the Caribbean.

“My Government is committed to the Paris Agreement on climate change,” Mr. Moïse told delegations gathered for the Assembly’s annual general debate, adding that he wished to see those countries most responsible for greenhouse gas production contribute the resources necessary for implementing that accord.

In the Caribbean, recent back-to-back extreme weather events had
drawn attention to the ways in which climate affects Haiti. “Such weather phenomena are due to the impact of humans on the environment,” he stressed, and noted that in January 2018, when Haiti assumed the presidency of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), it would organize a regional conference aimed at establishing an inter-State commission that would devise a strategy for addressing climate issues, such as the availability of climate insurance.

More broadly, he said Haiti has taken steps to consolidate democracy and the rule of law, having made significant efforts to promote development and political stability. Noting that corruption has “infected” and eroded Haiti’s economy, and compromised its political situation, he said it is time that official development assistance (ODA) and domestic resources upheld the interests of the Haitian nation. In the meantime, Haiti’s new leaders are waging an unwavering struggle against corruption.

Addressing two phenomena stemming from the UN presence in Haiti – heinous sexual abuse and exploitation by peacekeepers and other personnel, and the cholera epidemic – he said the Organization is morally obliged to provide the recourses to ensure that cholera left the country.

Improving Haiti’s health system, including by eradicating cholera, is a Government priority for his Despite some progress, the number of cholera victims stood at 10,000 people and continued to grow. Further, there were tens of thousands of cholera orphans. The United Nations must live by and give tangible form to its noble ideals, including the announced ‘new approach’ to dealing with cholera, he stressed, by shouldering all its responsibilities to remedy the situation, which had caused grave harm to the Haitian people.

At UN, Serbian President discusses future of peaceful, prosperous Western Balkans region

21 September – Kicking off the third day of the high-level segment of the United Nations General Assembly, Aleksandar Vucic, the President of Serbia, drew attention to the future of the Western Balkans region – with a focus on how to preserve peace and ensure prosperity.

Mr. Vucic said that while Serbia does not recognize “the unilateral declaration of independence of the so-called Kosovo,” he would not speak about disrespect for his country’s territorial integrity and sovereignty, but instead about Serbia’s efforts to resolve the problem because “peace and reconciliation are more important than gaining easy political points.”

Noting his country’s commitment to responsible fiscal practices, he laid out a list of its achievements that included a decrease in unemployment, a new flexible labour market and its investment in it youth. “Digitalization and artificial intelligence are becoming important topics in Serbia and not only in the most developed countries of the world,” the President explained.

A better and improved economy is also a priority for the region, including Serbia. Mr. Vucic stressed that Serbs are eager to continue with economic reforms along with the creation of the Regional Economic Zone. Telling the Assembly that the former Yugoslavia is a respected market that attracts investors and international attention, he pointed out that today, the regional countries are too small as individual markets, but he believed that “unique customs zone and taxation system is the future of the region.”

As part of Serbia’s economic progress, the President also underscored the importance of its becoming a member of the European Union. Calling the EU Serbia’s “most important trade and investment partner,” he elaborated that membership is seen as “a path towards greater stability, economic progress and strengthening democracy acquis.”
UN hails landmark pricing deal for faster rollout of ‘game-changing’ HIV treatment

21 September – Senior United Nations officials today welcomed a breakthrough pricing agreement by global partners to accelerate the availability in low- and middle-income countries of the first affordable, generic, single-pill HIV treatment regimen.

“What we are talking about today with this life-changing announcement is about the quality of medicine, is about equity, is about the dignity, is about access to medicine as a human right,” Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), told a press conference at UN Headquarters.

The pricing agreement, he explained, will help ensure that the treatment will be made available to 92 countries, and people there will be able to benefit from “one of the best medicines we have” for first-line treatment.

At around $75 per person per year, the HIV treatment regimen containing dolutegravir (DTG) will be available to public-sector purchasers in these countries.

The agreement is expected to accelerate treatment rollout as part of global efforts to reach all 36.7 million people living with HIV with high-quality antiretroviral therapy. UNAIDS estimates that in 2016, 19.5 million – or just over half of all people living with HIV – had access to the life-saving medicines.

DTG, a best-in-class integrase inhibitor, is widely used in high-income countries and is recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) as an alternative first-line HIV regimen. It is also a preferred treatment by the United States Department of Health and Human Services Panel on Antiretroviral Guidelines for Adults and Adolescents, among others.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom also welcomed the agreement, stating that “this will save lives for the most vulnerable, bringing the world closer to the elimination of HIV […] WHO will support countries in the safe introduction and a swift transition to this game-changing new treatment.”

The agreement was announced by the Governments of South Africa and Kenya, together with UNAIDS and many other partners.

Earlier today, during an event entitled “Fast-Track: Quickening the pace of action to end AIDS” held on the sidelines of the General Assembly, Mr. Sidibé called on world leaders to maintain “global solidarity” to end AIDS.

UNAIDS leads global efforts to achieve its shared vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths.
Security Council approves probe into ISIL’s alleged war crimes in Iraq

21 September – The United Nations Security Council today authorised the establishment of an investigation team to support Iraq’s domestic efforts to hold the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh) accountable for acts that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide committed in the country.

According to the unanimously adopted resolution, the team will be headed by a Special Adviser to be appointed by the Secretary-General, and will consist of both international and domestic experts who will work “on equal footing,” with an initial mandate of two years.

The Council underscored that the team should operate with full respect for the sovereignty of Iraq and its jurisdiction over crimes committed in its territory. In addition, evidence of crimes collected and stored by the team in Iraq should be for eventual use in fair and independent criminal proceedings conducted by competent national-level courts, with the relevant Iraqi authorities as the primary intended recipient.

Another Member State may request the team to collect evidence of acts committed by ISIL on its territory, but only with the approval of the Security Council, which may request the Secretary-General to submit separate terms of reference.

The Council requested the Secretary-General to establish, as a supplement to financing by the UN, a trust fund to receive voluntary contributions to implement the resolution.

UNICEF urges countries to prioritize early childhood development

21 September – There is no period more critical in a child's development than the first 1,000 days of life, and yet 32 countries – including Bangladesh and the United States – lack three basic national policies to support parents of babies and young children, says a new United Nations report issued today.

According to Early Moments Matter for Every Child, published by the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), only 15 countries – including Cuba, France, Portugal, Russia and Sweden – have the three policies critical to support young children's healthy brain development: two years of free pre-primary education; paid breastfeeding breaks for new mothers for the first six months; and adequate paid parental leave.

These policies, UNICEF noted in a news release, help parents better protect their children and provide them with better nutrition, play and early learning experiences in the crucial first years of life when the brain grows at a rate never to be repeated.

The report states that around 85 million children under five are growing up in 32 countries without any of the three critical policies in place; 40 per cent of these children live in just two countries – Bangladesh and the US.

“What's the most important thing children have? It's their brains. But we are not caring for children's brains the way we care for their bodies – especially in early childhood, when the science shows that children's brains and children's futures are rapidly being shaped,” said UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake.
“We need to do more to give parents and caregivers of young children the support they need during this most critical period of brain development.”

The report also points out that millions of children under five live in areas affected by conflict, are starved of nutritious food, and are deprived of stimulating activities fundamental for healthy brain growth.

Urging governments to invest in children and their families, UNICEF called for actions to support early childhood development. Among these is to make family-friendly policies, including two years of free pre-primary education, paid parental leave and paid breastfeeding breaks, a national priority.

“Policies that support early childhood development are a critical investment in the brains of our children, and thus in the citizens and workforce of tomorrow – and literally the future of the world,” said Mr. Lake.

At the beginning of 2017, UNICEF launched the #EarlyMomentsMatter campaign, aimed at raising awareness about the critical impact that early experiences have on children's brain development during their first 1,000 days of life.

More than half of children and youth worldwide 'not learning' – UNESCO

21 September – About 617 million children and adolescents worldwide are not achieving minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics, signalling “a learning crisis” that could threaten progress on global development goals, a report from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) shows.

“The figures are staggering both in terms of the waste of human potential and for the prospects of achieving sustainable development,” said Silvia Montoya, Director of the UNESCO Institute of Statistics, in a press release.

The report suggests some 387 million children of primary school age (or 56 per cent) and 230 million adolescents of lower secondary school age (or 61 per cent) will not achieve minimum proficiency levels in reading and math.

Across Sub-Saharan Africa, 202 million children and adolescents are not learning these fundamental subjects. Nearly 90 per cent of children between the ages of about 6 and 14 will not meet minimum proficiency levels in reading and math.

Central and Southern Asia has the second highest rate, with 81 per cent, or 241 million, not learning.

Surprisingly, two-thirds of the children who are not learning are in school. Of the 387 million primary-age children unable to read proficiently, 262 million are in classrooms. There are also about 137 million adolescents of lower secondary age who are in classrooms, but unable to meet minimum proficiency levels in reading.

The report indicates that along with a lack of access to school and a failure to retain children in school, the poor quality of education in the classroom is among the three common problems.

Ms. Montoya said the new data was a “wake-up call” for far greater investment in the quality of education.

The global goals for education are clear: Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) signals a commitment from governments to ensure an “inclusive and equitable quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all.”
UN officials urge sustained support for humanitarian efforts in Lake Chad Basin

21 September – United Nations officials today underscored the need for sustained international support for the humanitarian response in Nigeria and the Lake Chad region, where millions are in need of emergency assistance.

“We can and must help the millions of people displaced by the crisis as well as those hosting the displaced across the beleaguered Lake Chad region,” Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock told participants at a ministerial event held on the margins of the General Assembly’s high-level session.

Mr. Lowcock, who is also UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, visited Niger and Nigeria earlier this month to raise the global profile of the Lake Chad Basin crisis, which is affecting some 17 million people in the region.

In Niger, the number of food-insecure people is around 1.8 million. Some 800,000 children are affected by acute malnutrition and almost 250,000 people are either internally displaced persons, returnees or refugees from Nigeria.

In northeast Nigeria, around 6.5 million people need life-saving assistance. Nearly 5.2 million are severely food-insecure and 450,000 children will suffer from severe acute malnutrition, this year.

The $1.1 billion appeal for the country is currently only 48 per cent funded.

“Together, we have managed to avert famine, but we cannot pause or slow down. We must continue to step up so that the millions of people who are still just a step away from starvation are not allowed to perish,” said Mr. Lowcock.

Humanitarian needs likely to remain high

Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed noted that for the past eight years, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria have suffered the horrendous consequences of the Boko Haram insurgency.

“Humanitarian needs will unfortunately remain high into next year and beyond. Sustained support is essential.”

The Deputy Secretary-General also noted that the crisis is “a powerful example” of the complex, multi-dimensional and interlinked challenges that the region faces, and shows why an integrated, comprehensive and coherent approach is needed to address the humanitarian-development nexus and its link to peace.

These challenges, she said, are driven by under-development, economic and political exclusion, environmental degradation linked to climate change, demographic shifts and structural fragility. Countries in the region are dealing with violent extremists at the same time as they are hit by economic recession and low oil prices.

“I myself grew up in Maiduguri in Nigeria – the heart of the Boko Haram insurgency,” she said. “I know better than anyone that no child is born a terrorist. Children and young people are indoctrinated and radicalized by circumstances, conditions and influences.

“Governments must act to address the root causes of violence, including the full spectrum of social, political, economic and religious grievances.”

She added that preventing crises requires investment in strengthening resilience and building the capacity of institutions and...
communities; investment in people and in social cohesion; reducing inequality and vulnerabilities; and expanding opportunities for all.

“The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development is the best preventive tool we have,” she stated, referring to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals adopted by world leaders in 2015 to end poverty, reduce inequality and tackle climate change.

**Nepal: UN chief welcomes holding of local elections as ‘crucial step’ for upcoming polls**

21 September – United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has welcomed the holding of the third phase of the local elections in Nepal earlier this week and congratulated the people of the South Asian nation for the peaceful conduct of the polls.

“This marks a crucial step in the transition towards federalism as enshrined in the 2015 Constitution, and will be followed by elections to State Assemblies and the Federal Parliament,” noted a statement issued by the Secretary-General’s Spokesman, Stéphane Dujarric.

“The Secretary-General encourages the Government of Nepal and political parties to continue their efforts towards ensuring peaceful and inclusive upcoming elections.”

Mr. Guterres also encouraged all stakeholders to continue the implementation of the Constitution in line with its principles of inclusion and representative governance.

“The United Nations stands ready to support such efforts.”

**Global action keeping famine at bay but failing to prevent suffering, UN chief warns**

21 September – Nearly seven months after the United Nations issued an urgent call for action to counter the threat of famine in South Sudan, Somalia, north-east Nigeria and Yemen, global efforts have kept that crisis at bay but millions of people still suffer and many are dying at this very moment, Secretary-General António Guterres warned today.

“To keep famine at bay doesn’t mean to keep suffering at bay,” Mr. Guterres said at a high-level event on famine prevention and response, organized by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the World Bank.

“So, millions and millions of people suffer, millions and millions of people are not food secure, and we have people dying at this very moment,” he added.

The Secretary-General noted that since the call for action was issued in February, 60 per cent of the $4.9 billion required to cover urgent humanitarian operations has been received.

Humanitarian agencies and their partners are reaching close to 30 million people each month with life-saving food, livelihood support, health, water and sanitation and nutrition assistance, he added.
However, in each of the four countries, people’s needs have deepened since February.

In South Sudan, 6 million people are now severely food insecure – an increase of one million, and more than half of the population.

In Somalia, 3.1 million people are now unable to meet their daily food needs – an increase of 200,000 since the call to action.

In Yemen, the scene of the greatest humanitarian crisis in the world, a staggering 17 million people are now food insecure, 6.8 million of whom are one step away from famine.

And in north-eastern Nigeria, around 5.2 million people are severely food insecure and in need of emergency assistance. Of an estimated 450,000 children who will suffer from severe acute malnutrition this year, one in five is likely to die without specialized treatment.

Unfortunately, despite the generosity of some donors, $1.8 billion is still urgently needed, and that figure is expected to increase by the end of the year, Mr. Guterres said.

Humanitarian aid is saving lives, but a long-term solution depends on ending and preventing conflict, a most important factor behind these crises, he added.

Also addressing the event was Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, who stated that global attention must remain fixed on the task of saving lives and investing together in the future as “the risk of famine has clearly not passed.”

Iraq: Security Council voices concern over planned referendum in Kurdistan Region

21 September – The United Nations Security Council today expressed concern over the “potentially destabilizing impact” of the Kurdistan Regional Government’s plans to unilaterally hold a referendum next week.

In a statement issued to the press, members of the Council noted that the planned referendum is scheduled to be held while operations to counter Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh) – in which Kurdish forces have played a critical role – are ongoing.

The referendum “could detract from efforts to ensure the safe, voluntary return of over three million refugees and internally displaced persons,” the 15-member body added.

Secretary-General António Guterres earlier this week voiced similar concerns about the timing of the vote in a statement issued by his Spokesman, which noted that all outstanding issues between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government should be resolved through structured dialogue and constructive compromise.

“The Secretary-General calls upon the leaders across Iraq to approach this matter with patience and restraint. The United Nations stands ready to support such efforts.”
Disarmament and non-proliferation ‘mutually-reinforcing,’
Security Council told

21 September – The United Nations disarmament chief today warned against emerging technologies that make the acquisition and use of weapons of mass destruction easier, and stressed the need for effective approaches combining diplomacy, international cooperation and implementation of Security Council decisions.

“The Council’s engagement on weapons of mass destruction has always been grounded on a common understanding that measures for disarmament and non-proliferation are two sides of the same coin and are mutually-reinforcing,” High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu said, as she briefed the 15-member body on the threat posed by the proliferation of such armaments.

She noted that the disarmament and non-proliferation efforts by the Council over the past 25 years have achieved important and historic outcomes, even as the international community continues to grapple with isolated cases of proliferation and the unresolved question of disarmament.

In responding to the 1991 invasion of Kuwait, the Council required Iraq to eliminate its weapons of mass destruction programme and mandated on-site inspections toward this end. It has since been confirmed that those obligations were carried out and the Council has effectively normalized Iraq’s international non-proliferation obligations, Ms. Nakamitsu said.

As for the Iranian nuclear issue, direct engagement and a shared commitment to dialogue and cooperation resulted in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which the Council endorsed in resolution 2231. Two years later, international inspectors continue to verify the implementation of Iran’s nuclear-related commitments.

In Libya, timely action by the Council enabled international inspectors to help the Government secure and remove vulnerable stockpiles of chemical agents.

In Syria, successful engagement by Russia and the United States resulted in that country eliminating its declared chemical weapon programme under UN supervision and with unprecedented international cooperation.

“Regrettably, we continue to find evidence of the use of toxic chemicals as weapons” by the Government of Syria and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh), she added.

On the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), she said their “provocative and dangerous” nuclear and ballistic missile activities have undermined international norms against nuclear proliferation and nuclear testing. She urged the Council to remain united and facilitate the resumption of diplomacy for a peaceful settlement.

Ms. Nakamitsu explained that resolution 1540, adopted in 2004, continues to stand as a pioneering achievement in cooperative action to prevent non-State actors from acquiring weapons of mass destruction and related material.

For that resolution to remain effective, it is imperative to keep pace with global trends and emerging technologies that continuously lower the threshold for the acquisition and use of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear material, she said.

Ms. Nakamitsu went on to stress that the most effective approaches to non-proliferation must involve a mixture of active, robust and wise diplomacy, strong international cooperation and a solid commitment to fully implementing the decisions of the Council.
Sustained engagement vital to address immense humanitarian needs in Syria – UN official

21 September – Sustained international attention and engagement is vital as the Syrian conflict moves into its seventh year and the suffering of civilians shows no signs of waning, a top United Nations official said today.

“Life-saving humanitarian needs remain enormous and the delivery of assistance through the most direct routes remains critical,” Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock told the High-level Meeting on Syria, held in the margins of the General Assembly.

Mr. Lowcock, who is also UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, reported that de-escalation has resulted in calm in some parts of the country. But an increase in operations in the east to combat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh) has caused fresh suffering and displacement.

“In Raqqa, to Idleb, to Deir ez-Zor, civilians continue to face serious protection concerns as fighting and access constraints continue. This year alone, another one million people have been internally displaced,” he stated, adding that all parties to the fighting must be pressured to respect international humanitarian law.

In April in Brussels, some $6 billion was pledged by over 40 governments for the humanitarian response this year, with a further $3.7 billion pledged for 2018.

“There was also a clear agreement that the civilians whose lives have been destroyed by years of conflict must remain at the forefront of the international community’s agenda,” said Mr. Lowcock.

“That was expressed by voicing unconditional support to meet humanitarian needs inside Syria and the region; and by highlighting the importance of support for early recovery and resilience-building for displaced Syrians and their hosts.”

Mr. Lowcock stressed the need for all pledges to UN-coordinated appeals for Syria and the region turned into contributions, noting that the humanitarian response plan for inside Syria is only 36 per cent funded, while the regional refugee and resilience plan just 39 per cent funded.

“We can and we must do better for the Syrian people,” he stated. “Ultimately of course, the only sustainable way to address the humanitarian crisis is to end the conflict through a credible political agreement.”

Among the other participants at the meeting were the UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi.
Industrialization can drive growth, sustainable development in Africa, stress UN officials

21 September – While much of Africa has achieved impressive economic growth, United Nations officials today encouraged countries on the continent to take further action to advance inclusive and sustainable industrial development.

“We all have to acknowledge a simple fact: Africa is growing,” Miroslav Lajcak, President of the General Assembly, said at a high-level event focusing on the Third Industrial Development Decade for Africa.

Mr. Lajcak noted that this is true for the continent’s economy, with successive growth recorded since the early 2000s. It is also true for its population, particularly in relation to its youth. By 2050, Africa will be home to 38 out of the 40 youngest countries in the world.

“This growth presents great opportunity. It could lead to the eradication of poverty and an improvement in livelihoods. But, for this to happen, growth must be inclusive. And it must be sustained,” he stated. “Industrialization has the potential to drive this kind of growth.”

The General Assembly last year proclaimed the period 2016-2025 as the Third Industrial Development Decade for Africa, underlining the need for the sustainable industrialization of the continent.

According to the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the need for a new approach to the sustainable industrial transformation of Africa is clear. What is needed now is a broad-based and country-owned process that leverages financial and non-financial resources, promotes regional integration, and mobilizes cooperation among Africa’s development partners.

Addressing today’s meeting, UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed highlighted some achievements, including the fact that 16 African countries were among the world’s top 30 fastest growing nations. In addition, last year, the 10 fastest growing African economies posted GDP growth rates exceeding 5 per cent.

At the same time, continued commodity-dependence – coupled with fluctuations in commodity prices – makes African economies vulnerable and hampers their ability to create decent jobs and effectively tackle poverty, she noted.

“Hence the need for African countries to take further action to advance inclusive and sustainable industrial development.”

She appealed to all partner institutions to use their influence and expertise to promote industrialization and inclusive sustainable development that will benefit all the nations and people of Africa.
DR Congo: Security Council condemns attack against UN peacekeeping mission

21 September – The Security Council has strongly condemned the attack this past Sunday in Mamundima, in North Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), that killed a United Nations peacekeeper from Tanzania and injured another.

In a press statement issued today, the 15-member body called on the Congolese Government to swiftly investigate all attacks against the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO), and bring the perpetrators to justice.

The Council underlined that attacks targeting peacekeepers may constitute war crimes under international law.

It also expressed its deepest condolences and sympathy to the family of the peacekeeper that was killed, as well as to the Government of Tanzania and MONUSCO, and wished the injured a speedy recovery.

UN chief calls for ‘meaningful’ youth engagement in peace efforts, not just symbolism

21 September – Young people must be meaningful partners in conflict prevention and sustaining peace, and the United Nations should think outside the box on how to relate to youth globally, Secretary-General António Guterres told a ministerial event held today on the margins of the General Assembly’s annual debate.

“Young women and men and their contributions to peace should stand at the very core of what will become our new common approach,” Mr. Guterres said, explaining that he has set in motion reforms to rethink the UN’s work on preventing war and sustaining peace.

The event, co-chaired by Jordan and Norway, was held in support of Security Council Resolution 2250, a ground-breaking resolution adopted in 2015 which recognizes that “young people play an important and positive role in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security.”

Mr. Guterres noted that in today’s uncertain and unsettling world, young people find themselves left out of decision-making and increasingly unemployed.

“We must do better in bridging these gaps and drawing on the enormous initiative, energy and ideas of the world’s young people. We must make the most of the power of young women and men as drivers of a culture of peace,” he said.

In a larger sense, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by UN Member States in 2015, provides a tremendous foundation for action, he said, as it rightly defines young people as “critical agents of change” and as a priority across its 17 Goals.

“In all we do, our destination is clear: empowerment,” he said. “We must commit to engaging young people fully – not as a symbol or to simply check a box. The goal must be meaningful participation.”

In June, Mr. Guterres appointed Jayathma Wickramanayake as his Envoy on Youth to advance youth rights and priorities.
Global Goals a ‘blueprint’ for fair and equitable development, Kenya tells UN Assembly

22 September – Speaking at the 72nd annual general debate at the United Nations General Assembly, Kenya highlighted that the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have provided the globe with a blueprint for a more peaceful world and for making development and globalization “fair and equitable for all.”

In her address, Amina Chawahir Mohamed, the Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Kenya said that her country a firm believer in multilateralism and that it acknowledges the UN’s “remarkable role” in sustaining peace and providing a platform for cooperation and solidarity among nations.

“We know the UN can do better,” she added, noting that the Organization must embrace reforms to adjust to current times, and be more accommodative, more democratic and more effective.

She also voiced concern at “exclusion of countries” at the Security Council, noting that it continues to be “dominated by a small club of countries.”
“This exclusion continues to undermine the legitimacy and even efficiency of the Council; while its operations, on the other hand, raise issues of accountability and transparency.”

Also in her address, the Cabinet Secretary informed the General Assembly of efforts within her country to accelerate implementation of the SDGs as well as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. She also spoke of Kenya’s assistance to refugees and on efforts to combat trafficking in persons.

At UN, Cuba urges relief to assist storm-hit Caribbean; cites ’setback’ in bilateral relations with US

22 September – In the wake of successive hurricanes Irma and Maria, which tore through the Caribbean and left communities in desperate conditions, Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla urged the international community to “give the highest priority to this situation and mobilize resources to assist the small Caribbean Island States and territories.”

Expressing heartfelt sympathies all those affected – including in Mexico which was hit with two earthquakes this month, and the United States, where Hurricane Harvey had struck several southern states – he went on to describe the scene in Cuba, speaking of heart-touching moments from the disaster that also carried a message of hope, scenes such as rescuers saving a girl and giving her back to her mother and of strangers helping one another.

Conveying his country’s gratitude for the offers of assistance from the global community, he also offered strength to neighbouring islands which were also hit hard by the hurricanes and natural disasters.

Turning next to political matters, Mr. Rodriguez Parrilla referred to the address by the US President at the General Assembly earlier in the week, t noted statistics on extreme poverty, hunger and refugee crises, asking how could global challenges be overcome with an “America first” view.

Calling the new Cuban policy of the US “a setback” in bilateral relations, he said it undermined the basis established two years ago for advancing ties characterized by respect and equality. He condemned the “disrespectful, offensive and interventionist” statement made against Cuba by that country’s President, reminding him that the US had no moral authority to judge Cuba.

Despite longstanding tensions with the US, the Minister expressed that he believed in the possibility for coexistence and respect between the two nations.

Concluding his address, he reiterated that the Cuban people will keep up their struggle to achieve the most just society possible. “We will continue to steadily advance down the path of revolutionary transformations that has been sovereignly chosen by all Cubans to further improve our socialism.”
Nordic leaders call for reform that places UN at the centre of global multilateralism

22 September – A reformed and strengthened United Nations is more than ever necessary to tackle the host of challenges confronting the world, from conflicts and terrorism to climate change and sustainable development, Nordic ministers told the General Assembly today.

“The need for a United Nations that seeks to save us from humanity’s worst impulses remains. However, in these days of uncertainty we must also learn from, and build on, what is positive in our world, and in the United Nations,” Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallström told the Assembly’s 72nd annual general debate.

“This is the moment for multilateralism, not unilateralism. We must grasp it or risk the consequences. The United Nations is at the centre of this effort. It is a tailor-made space for the world to find the solutions to the common challenges of our time. And, despite the sometimes justified, criticisms, it is clear that we still believe in the United Nations’ power.”

Founded to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and promote better standards of life in larger freedom, the UN has prevented a repetition of the catastrophic wars that preceded its founding, she noted. Extreme poverty has fallen to an historic low, life expectancy continues to climb and millions of people are reached every year with life-saving humanitarian assistance.

“The broad support for the Secretary-General’s reform agenda illustrates the importance we attach to an effective United Nations, its role at the centre of multilateralism, and as a platform for the delivery of our common commitments,” Ms. Wallström stressed.

Icelandic Foreign Minister Gudlaugur Thórhóðarson also recalled the UN’s founding amid the catastrophe of world war.

“Just as this great building was renovated so successfully a few years ago, so too must the UN be renovated and made fit for purpose in the modern era.

“We strongly support the work of the Secretary-General in management reform, development reform, and his sustaining peace agenda,” he said.

“We live in a world of opportunity: Never have we had such potential to end poverty and hunger, to end human rights violation, to focus on the people striving for a decent life. We can either succeed or we can fail. It is a choice, it is a decision. This is our responsibility, this is our task.”
At UN Assembly, small island States press for action to mitigate impacts of climate change

22 September – The President of Kiribati, Taneti Maamau, told the United Nations General Assembly that the theme of its current session – ‘Focusing on People’– reminded world leaders of their responsibility to ensure that human lives, dignity and values prevail over “dollar value.”

Indeed, the shared goal is to “provide a peaceful and secure world, without nuclear weapons, and to promote social progress, better living standards, human rights and dignity for all our citizens,” he told the annual general debate.

Offering condolences to those affected by the recent string of natural disasters in the Caribbean, United States and Mexico, and elsewhere, he stressed that while the plight Kiribati, Tuvalu, Marshall Islands, the Maldives and other small island developing States may not capture global attention, those countries and their people continue to suffer daily from the impact of climate-driven disasters.

“The United Nations must focus on the most vulnerable and underprivileged members of our global family, such as the least developed countries and small island developing States,” emphasized Mr. Maamau. “We must make sure they are not left behind in our global journey towards achieving the global development Agenda […] We must make sure their voices are heard,” he added.

Asserting that oceans have a strong connection to people, peace and prosperity, the President urged for the formulation of an international legally-binding instrument to manage the use of biological marine diversity beyond national jurisdiction. “We must ensure that urgent and collective action for conservation of our ocean is made so that we do not repeat the same mistake we made with our atmosphere,” he stressed.

Mr. Maamau pointed out that in the quest for sustainable development, the focus is often on economic fundamentals at the expense of human values. He urged compassion for the most vulnerable to transform the world’s challenges, saying “Love, compassion, respect, understanding and kindness are priceless solutions to the mounting problems that we continue to battle.”

Also addressing the Assembly, King Tupou VI of Tonga shared his concerns over the conservation and sustainable use of global resources, underscoring the importance of partnerships in collectively achieving the targets, goals and objectives stipulated under international law and internationally-agreed outcomes.

Turning to the 2017 High-Level Political Forum, he highlighted the value of reviewing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), commending the initiative to examine the complex sustainability challenges facing small island developing States.

The King of Tonga fully supported Fiji's Presidency of the Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change this year, to strongly address the adverse impacts of climate change and the urgent need for innovation in adaptation for those island States, and called for the appointment of a UN Special Representative on Climate and Security.

“We have, and continue to, experience the negative impacts of ocean degradation to our livelihoods and culture due to the anthropogenic activities and inter-related devastating effects of climate change,” he said.

To Tonga, the successful implementation of SDG 14 – on the ocean and its resources – is critical for the pathway towards sustainable development and its inter-connection with achieving other goals, such as those related to food security, water and sanitation, health, economic growth, and sustainable production and consumption.
He urged strong political will on mainstreaming ocean-related actions in international, regional and national development plans and strategies for the inclusive participation of all stakeholders. “We may be small islands [we are all] large ocean States,” he stated.

Manasseh Sogavare, Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands, spoke at length about the negative impacts of climate change, which are occurring at an alarming rate on its shores, as presenting a clear and present danger.

“For us Pacific Island nations, climate change continues to be our enemy [and] we are invaded by this enemy every day,” he said.

He also condemned the recent testing of ballistic missiles by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea over the Pacific Ocean as an insult to the people of the Pacific. “We are ocean people. The sea is our sanctuary. It is the foundation of our heritage,” he underscored, denouncing any pollution and contamination of that ocean, which its peoples depend on for their livelihoods.

The Prime Minister highlighted that an unstable climate, and the subsequent displacement and relocation of people, can exacerbate some of the core drivers of conflict – such as migratory pressures, clash of cultures and competition for resources. “These are threats to the very existence of humanity and could very well morph into threats to global peace and security,” he said, adding that Pacific small island developing States have been requesting the Security Council to address the issue of climate change.

**International rules-based order in jeopardy Australia’s Foreign Minister tells UN assembly**

22 September – Australia’s Minister for Foreign Affairs, Julie Bishop, told the General Assembly today that while the United Nations had been established to build an international rules-based order for peaceful dispute resolution, “we are now in a time when the challenges to that order are increasing.”

“The most egregious example is North Korea,” continued Ms. Bishop, pointing out that the country is openly defying the UN Security Council, putting millions of people at risk. It is crucial for all UN Member States to strictly implement the Council’s sanctions to compel Pyongyang to abandon its “illegal programmes.”

Other threats highlighted by the Foreign Minister were the increasing activities of non-State actors, terrorism and violent extremism. “Global terrorism – and the extreme Islamist ideologies driving it – must be confronted and defeated,” she stressed. Ms. Bishop maintained that terrorism can be effectively battled, and beaten, if everyone worked together, sharing knowledge and resources.

Ms. Bishop drew a link between security and economic development, saying that one cannot be achieved without the other. She endorsed a UN development system more focused on sustainable economic development that provides opportunities and facilitates partnerships with the private sector.

Noting that economic resilience can be undermined by natural and man-made disasters, she cited the 2030 agenda, Paris Agreement, Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction and the World Humanitarian Summit's Grand Bargain as “a blueprint for global action on those problems which can only be addressed by working together on challenges that don't respect national borders.”
Mitigating climate change impacts vital for sustainable future, Somali leader urges UN Assembly

22 September – Noting that countries across the globe – including his own – continue to pay a dear price for acts of terrorism and violent extremism, the Prime Minister of Somalia urged global leaders to “spare no effort” to neutralize the growth and influence of terrorist groups.

“In Somalia, we have made significant strides, which have weakened the capacity of Al-Shabaab,” said Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khayre.

He added that to ensure the sustainability of such gains his nation is strengthening its military capacity and in that context, urge an ease of the sanctions against Somalia.

In his address, the Prime Minister also urged global leaders at the United Nations General Assembly for committing themselves to make sure that environmental degradation and impacts of climate change are addressed given their direct link to crop failure, vanishing water sources, extreme weather and devastating disasters.

Building a sustainable future, he expressed also depended on advancing the society. In that context, he noted Somalia’s initiatives for gender empowerment and ensuring the respect for human rights of all people, including through the establishment of national human rights institutions, as well as empowerment of youth and strengthening economic institutions.

Concluding his address, Prime Minister Khayre echoed the words of other world leaders, noting the need for reforms at the UN and said that reform efforts instituted by Secretary-General António Guterres would lead the Organization to achieve greater efficiency, dynamism and responsiveness.

No time for scepticism, ‘but for decisive climate action,’ Ethiopia’s Prime Minister tells UN

22 September – Like many other countries, Ethiopia is dealing almost every day with the adverse impacts of climate change, its Prime Minister told the United Nations General Assembly today, urging decisive action by the international community.

“Now is not the time to doubt the devastating impacts of climate change while millions of our fellow humans are losing their lives and their hard-won development achievements,” Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn said during the annual high-level debate.

“This is high time to act – and act urgently and decisively – to combat the adverse impacts of climate change, particularly its disproportionate adverse effect on the most vulnerable countries, which – as it has been repeatedly stated – bear almost no responsibility in causing climate change,” he added.

He noted that Ethiopia successfully dealt with the El Nino-induced drought in 2015, but is again facing the adverse impact of climate change.
While expressing appreciation to bilateral and multilateral partners for support, he said Ethiopia will continue to implement its national strategy of building a green and resilient economy.

As the President of the Security Council this month, he said, Ethiopia welcomed the unanimous adoption of the draft resolution it tabled on Wednesday. Through the resolution, the 15-member body reaffirmed its determination to pursue more prioritisation when evaluating, mandating and reviewing peacekeeping operations.

“As one of the leading troop contributing countries, Ethiopia attaches great importance to strengthening the role of United Nations peacekeeping to address challenges to international peace and security,” he said.

**President of former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, says human rights must be at centre of global action**

22 September – Promotion and protection of human rights, democracy and the rule of law must remain at the core of international action, the President of the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia said today, lamenting that despite the fact that the United Nations has a robust human rights architecture, violations continue worldwide.

“The current blatant human rights violations around the globe, widespread impunity and lack of accountability, remind us that there is much to be done, Zoran Zaev told the annual high-level debate of the UN General Assembly.

He also said “monstrous terrorist attacks have increased. Our actions must focus on prevention of violent extremism and radicalization as major factors for terrorist recruitment.” In that regard, he welcomed the establishment of the new structure of the UN Office for Countering Terrorism where one of the priorities areas is prevention.

Turning next to the to the main theme of the debate, ‘Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet,’ Mr. Zaev said States must remain focused on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. “This remarkable undertaking laid the foundations for future development framework. This has implications on many other important areas of common concern.”

Many vital issues for global prosperity are related to implementation of the new Agenda, he said, and it is therefore important to continue to encourage and build new avenues of cooperation and new partnerships. “This is central for the integration of the economic, environmental and social dimensions of sustainability. These are the fundamentals for development, a hopeful future, and our peace, stability and security.”
At UN Assembly, United Arab Emirates stresses its resolve to fight terrorism

22 September – Rejecting extremism and terrorism, a senior minister from the United Arab Emirates today told the United Nations General Assembly debate that the region must work together to eradicate the threat and its ideological roots.

“The elimination of this threat from our Arab region is within our reach,” Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, told the international community.

Despite its commitment for collective action, the UAE representative said that the country is committed to protecting its national interests and security in the Arabian Gulf by not making alliances with any organization that seeks to destabilize its peace.

“We have a clear choice with no alternative: to stand against terrorism in all its manifestations and to stand against all perpetrators without exception,” the Minister said.

“We must demonstrate zero tolerance to those who spread violence, fear and destruction among innocent people, and those who provide support and safe haven to terrorist groups.”

Sierra Leone, at UN debate, stresses preventive diplomacy for regional peace

22 September – A senior minister from Sierra Leone today stressed the importance of mediation and regional partnerships to preserve peace, urging the international body to reflect on reform measures that will uphold the United Nations’ collective responsibility to maintain peace.

Samura Kamara, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, called on the international community to “generate innovative ideas and credible mechanisms that will bring all conflicts to a peaceful end; promote social progress, peace and security, human rights and fundamental freedoms; and secure better standards of life for humanity.”

With a nod to the country’s decades-long civil war, Mr. Kamara said that Sierra Leone “learned from experience” that for mediation efforts are fruitful only if accompanied by a timely cessation of hostilities, credible cease-fire agreements, and the timely deployment of peacekeeping or observer missions, among others.
Algeria tells Assembly reformed UN necessary for dealing with world’s many crises

22 September – Faced with the same backdrop year after year of unresolved old conflicts and new deadly outbreaks, climate change, impoverishment and under-development, the world has no alternative but to place its hopes in the United Nations, Algeria told the General Assembly today.

“Who better to assume this role than our Organization which, even it needs to be improved in many respects, still remains more than ever this unique and irreplaceable instrument in the service of nations, Foreign Minister Abdelkader Messahel told the Assembly’s 72nd General Debate, calling for institutional reform.

The time has come, he said, for a radical reform starting with the 15-member Security Council, the only UN organ whose decisions have the force of international law, increasing its membership to take account of the vastly different situation existing today from that when the UN was founded seven decades ago.

At every session over the past decades developing countries have sought additional seats, both permanent and elected, to give a greater voice to their continents, especially Africa.

Mr. Messahel promised that Algeria would do what it could to help resolve the conflicts in its neighbours – Mali, Libya, Yemen and Syria.

While pledging Algeria continuing fight against terrorism in all its forms, he called on countries to oppose the advance of Islamophobia, both individually and collectively.

Hungary, at UN, says roots of terrorism must be tackled; warns ‘migratory waves’ bring terrorists to Europe

22 September – The migration crisis and associated threat of terrorism are the greatest threats ever faced by the European Union, Péter Szijjártó, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Hungary, told the United Nations today, denouncing those that encourage ‘waves’ of migrants, which were only putting thousands of people in danger.

“Western Europe used to be the most secure and safest region globally,” he said in his address to the General Assembly’s annual general debate. Indeed, he said that only a few years ago, events in the Middle East would not have happened in Europe.

But the current fear of terrorist attacks was now a part of daily life – as beaches, concert halls and shopping malls have become “venues of execution” – a direct consequence of the massive influx of illegal migrants over the last two and half years.

Some 1.5 million illegal migrants had entered the European Union without any control, Mr. Szijjártó continued, which had given terrorist organizations the chance to send their fighters to the European continent. “We have to admit that social
integration procedures in Western Europe failed. Some integration processes of former migrants have been unsuccessful, and in many places, parallel societies have been constructed.”

“It is shocking that after the barbaric terrorist attacks in Europe and massive violations of nation and international law, and after thousands have lost their lives on the Mediterranean Sea and elsewhere,” there are still leaders of international organizations and representatives of large countries who emphasized that migration was favourable and to be encouraged.

That was “extremely unacceptable and irresponsible behaviour,” he said. Encouraging migratory waves, knowing that terrorist organizations will take advantage’ had only placed thousands of people into danger. All States had a fundamental right to guarantee security for their people and to protect their borders.

He went on to recall that Hungary was a Christian country that was obliged to help people in need. The rights of people must be restored where they had been violated, he said, and people must be helped to return home as soon as possible. The solution to the migration crisis was in tackling the causes of conflict and stopping terrorist organizations.

**Technology vital for small nations to meet development goals, Lesotho’s Prime Minister tells UN**

22 September – Small countries, especially those in Africa, should be empowered with technologies to deal with and adapt to climate change challenges, as well as meet their development goals, the Prime Minister of Lesotho told the United Nations General Assembly’s high-level debate today.

“Attainment of sustainable development will elude us if there is no genuine commitment by all, including our development partners,” said Motsoahae Thomas Thabane.

“Indeed, the principles of common but differentiated responsibility and economic might and capability between the developed and the developing nations, are critical for our success in building a sustainable world.”

The Prime Minister called on the international community to continue mobilizing and providing additional financial resources to Africa for climate-friendly technologies.

“In the same vein, we urge countries that have reneged on their support to the Paris Agreement to reconsider their position and come back to the fold,” he said.

Agreed by 195 nations, the 2015 Paris Agreement seeks to combat climate change and unleash actions and investment towards a low carbon, resilient and sustainable future. Its main aim is to keep global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius and to drive efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

While climate change is also a concern for Prime Minister Jose Ulisses de Pina Correia E. Silva of Cabo Verde, calling on the international community to prioritize efforts that would prevent destruction to the island.

“Each island that disappears because of climate change will be a nightmare for humanity,” he said.

Among other topics raised in his speech, the Prime Minister underscored the small country’s aims for “relevance” on the global scale.

“Despite our smallness, we want to make Cabo Verde a country with relevance in the Middle Atlantic in terms of economic
stature, security, and diplomacy for peace and the promotion of freedom and democracy,” he said.

Resulting from mergers between Europe and Africa, Cabo Verde wants to position itself as a transit hub in the Middle Atlantic for tourism, air transport, port operations, financial and investment operations, business localization and business development in the digital and nano-technological economy, he said.

Similarly, the country wants to position itself as a “useful interlocutor in the concert of nations for dialogue, peace and tolerance.”

Also addressing the Assembly, Benin’s Foreign Minister Pascal Iréné Koupaki highlighted the importance of multilateralism as an ethical and political imperative for peace.

“Our session opens at a time when the world faces a multitude of complex problems,” he said. “Violent extremism and radicalism weigh heavily on international security and stability. The attacks against multilateralism, and thus attacks against the United Nations, are part and parcel of this pernicious tendency which we must reject.”

**Tunisia, at UN, calls for comprehensive response to global terrorism**

22 September – The threat of terrorism has forced Tunisia to double the budget of its military and security expenditures, Foreign Minister Khemais Jhinaoui told the United Nations General Assembly today, stressing that more international support was needed despite the Government’s efforts to stamp out the scourge.

Indeed, the world’s “hotbeds” of terrorism are fueled by poverty and war, and linked to organized crime, refugee flows and large-scale violations of human rights, and he called for a comprehensive global response to the terrorist threat.

On development, Mr. Jhinaoui said Tunisia has mainstreamed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in its national plan for 2016-2020, also aligning its development priorities with African Union’s ‘Agenda 2063.’

Noting that Tunisia would present its first report on the implementation of the Goals at the next session of the UN Economic and Social Council High-Level Political Forum, he said it was critical to consider countries’ specific situations as they implemented those targets.

Indeed, reductions in financing to developing countries – especially those in Africa working to achieve those Goals – would have a negative impact. Tunisia had also signed the Paris Agreement, having committed to reducing its emissions by 41 per cent by 2030.

More broadly, he called for resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict centred on the prompt establishment of an independent Palestinian state. Voicing concern about the conflict in neighbouring Libya, he said Tunisia is playing a mediation role, along with Algeria and Egypt. All solutions to that issue must be in line with Security Council resolutions and avoid creating a leadership vacuum, he added.
**Enhancing connectivity, market access ‘priority’ for landlocked nations, Mongolia tells UN**

**22 September** – Due to climate change, Mongolia is exposed to multiple environmental challenges, namely desertification, drought, land degradation, wildfires and other calamities, its Foreign Minister said today at the United Nations General Assembly.

“Thus, preserving ecosystem balance, protecting natural resources, ensuring their appropriate use and rehabilitation, as well as promoting green economic growth are the main goals of the Government Action Plan for 2016-2020,” said Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsend Munkh-Orgil during the high-level annual debate.

For its part, Mongolia will work to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 14 per cent by 2030, he said.

Mongolia’s national agenda for sustainable development envisages the country becoming an upper middle income country by 2030 with poverty eradicated in all its forms while preserving ecological balance and strengthening its democratic governance.

Enhancing connectivity is an urgent priority for all landlocked developing economies, he said, noting that, according to the World Trade Organization, trade costs of these countries amount to applying an ad valorem tariff of 260 per cent to international trade.

To further improve market access to main trading partners, Mongolia is studying the feasibility of free trade agreements with the Eurasian Economic Union, China, and the Republic of Korea. An economic partnership agreement is already in place with Japan, he added.

**Multilateralism key to address complex global challenges, urge South East Asian leaders at UN Assembly**

**22 September** – Speaking at the 72nd annual general debate of the United Nations General Assembly, leaders from South East Asia today highlighted the importance of the spirit of multilateralism to address the myriad challenges confronting the global community.

“This year, we witnessed multiple natural disasters, inflicting heavy losses in human life and property in Cuba, Mexico, the United States and other Caribbean countries,” said Pham Binh Minh, the Deputy Prime Minister of Viet Nam in his address, noting also the challenges related to global economy, inequality between and within countries and impact of climate change.

Adding that while the world remains fraught with uncertainties, the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development offered the most appropriate path to a better future and that it is incumbent upon the international community to bring this “ambitious plan” into reality.

In his address, the Deputy Prime Minister also highlighted the need to ensure sustainable peace, noting that with a commitment to multilateralism, the goals can be achieved. He also noted the need to bolster efforts towards disarmament,
non-proliferation and arms control and rein in migration and humanitarian crises around the world.

He also spoke of Viet Nam’s close cooperation with member nations of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and said that the country looked forward to hosting the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum (APEC) this year.

Also speaking today, Don Pramudwinai, the Foreign Minister of Thailand recalled the philosophy of “sufficiency economy” which places emphasis on every person’s potential to mould their lives in harmony with nature.

“When each person can contribute meaningfully to [their] community, the life of the nation will surely be good,” the Foreign Minister, told global leaders, adding that based on the philosophy, which was advocated by the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand, the country has formulated its key development frameworks to “focus first on people.”

Noting that on top of challenges such as terrorism, conflicts, irregular migration along with environmental degradation, climate change and disasters, the world faces the grave threat of nuclear weapons, making the current time one in which “humanity is being truly tested.”

In his address, the Thai leader urged the international community to rally behind the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and also expressed concern over the crisis in the Korean Peninsula.

Concluding his remarks, Minister Pramudwinai hailed the importance of multilateralism and called on the UN to take transformative steps in view of current realities and expectations.

Further today, addressing the UN General Assembly, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cambodia, Prak Sokhonn, underscored the importance of all dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

“The 2030 Agenda is inextricably linked to many issues that perturb the world today, the most pressing one being climate change, which is not only a direct threat in itself but also a multiplier of many other threats – from poverty, diseases and food insecurity to mass migrations and regional conflicts,” he said, highlighting his country’s efforts in address these at the national level.

Also in his address, the Cambodian Minister voiced concern over targeting of his country by some UN agencies and non-governmental organizations over human rights issues, and questioned the impartiality and neutrality of the criticism.

“The issue of human rights and democracy is raised only when the specific interests of certain major powers are at stake, at the vagaries of the moment. Otherwise, it is sheer silence, and often a conspiracy of silence,” the Minister said, adding that non-governmental organizations are “far from being politically neutral.”

Noting that his country had been the victim of political manipulation during the 12 years of the Khmer Rouge regime, during which egregious mass crimes had occurred, but which he said, were denied by the international community.

Also in his address, he voiced concern over the situation in the Korean Peninsula and urged all parties to exercise utmost restraint.

Also, speaking today, Pehin Dato Seri Setia Lim Jock Seng, Minister at the Prime Minister’s Office and Second Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Brunei Darussalam highlighted his country’s efforts to creating a better life for its people, in particular the youth, and noted that such efforts were built on the foundations of ensuring a sustainable future.

“[We] will continue to do what it can to contribute […] to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, our efforts rest on promoting efficiency in energy consumption and gradually deploying renewable energies,” he highlighted.

In his address, the Minister also said that his country would continue to pursue stronger engagement with partners, including ASEAN members, to continue to contribute to global peace and development.

He also noted that Brunei Darussalam looks to the UN to address pressing issues around the globe and in that context,
highlighted that it is vital for the Organization to enhance its working relations with all partners and pursue efforts to make itself more strong, effective and efficient.

“As such, we support the Secretary-General’s ideas to reform the UN and reposition it to focus more on conflict prevention measures, including mediation,” expressing hope that such efforts will help the UN optimize its work and resources and “above all, save lives, safeguard people's dignity, and promote peace and security around the world.”

In the same vein, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, Dato Sri Anifah Aman, also highlighted his country’s efforts to translate into action, the vision of growth which is based on the prosperity and wellbeing of its people while protecting the environment and strengthening peace.

Recalling Malaysia’s presentation of its voluntary national review at this year’s session of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, the Minister reiterated that the Government “strives to ensure that each and every Malaysian has an equitable share in the prosperity and wealth of the country, and that no one will be left behind.”

In his address, the Minister also underscored the threat to the global community from weapons of mass destruction and called for steadfast commitment to international obligations on disarmament and international security through various national, regional and international approaches.

In that context, he also expressed concern over the crisis in the Korean Peninsula and called on the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to desist from conducting further nuclear tests and missile launches, to halt its nuclear and ballistic missiles programme, and to comply fully with its international obligations in the interest of the maintenance of international peace and security.

He also drew attention to the plight of Rohingyas who have been displaced from Myanmar and forced to seek refuge in Bangladesh.

“If the current situation is not addressed judiciously, the desperate people in Rakhine will become easy prey to recruitment by extremists. Prolonged frustration, anger and deprivation provide fertile breeding ground for it,” he warned.

Concluding his address he underlined the need for reforms at the UN and expressed support to the Secretary-Generals for his efforts for the same.

**After spate of recent disasters, facts of climate change ‘impossible to deny’ Caribbean nations tell UN**

**22 September** – While some continue to doubt the scientific assessments, the facts of climate change are impossible to deny, the President of Saint Lucia told the United Nations General Assembly today, echoing other leaders from the region who detailed the havoc extreme weather events are wreaking on their homelands and people.

Allen Michael Chastanet told the Assembly that the UN’s promise to small island developing States is being tested today more than ever. “The world is experiencing extraordinary change at a breath-taking pace – change that is reshaping the way we live […] and the very nature of peace and security.” he said.

Calling the intensification of extreme weather events the “new normal,” he recounted small islands’ repeated warnings that an inadequate response to climate change would condemn future generations to certain doom. “I daresay, we do not have the luxury to be silent on this front anymore – we must act,” he stressed.
“Never forget that we are all in a symbiotic relationship, we should all be our brothers’ keeper,” said Mr. Chastanet, offering condolences to Mexico, which faces a mounting death toll from recent earthquakes. Noting that the world is increasingly integrated, and economies, natural environment and people are all connected, he said: “a disruptive event in one country begets similar or worse events in neighbouring countries, and spreads, impacting us all and testing our social, political and economic systems.”

He maintained that the international community “must change with the times,” calling “unconscionable” the need to depend on commercial rates to rebuild broken economies. “The model has to change to allow the opportunity to build back stronger and more resilient, the infrastructure that can secure our futures and that of our people,” exhorted the President. He asked the Assembly to remember that we share a common future – “a future that will only be secure if we meet threats, challenges and opportunities together, with greater cooperation and understanding.”

“Today, it is a barefaced insult to the intelligence and experience of the peoples of Island States and coastal areas to call climate change a hoax,” the Deputy Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines told the Assembly as he took the podium.

“Almost every year is hotter than the preceding one. Almost every hurricane season more intense. Almost every storm, drought and flood more destructive than the previous one,” said Louis Straker, pointing to the death and destruction wrought by the current hurricane season.

“They are the manifestations of climate change; the symptoms of the prescient predictions made by the overwhelming majority of scientists,” he stressed, reaffirming that small island developing States are the most vulnerable to climate change, while contributing the least to the emissions that cause it.

Turning to the Paris Agreement, the Deputy Prime Minister underscored that it views any attempt to disavow the agreement designed to arrest climate change and assist the most affected as an act of hostility, saying “we draw a direct, causal connection between any such abdication and the future death and destruction that island states face as the result of increasingly frequent and intense weather events.”

Mr. Straker said his country puts the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the centre of its national development strategies. “In areas of climate change, pollution and biodiversity, we have banned Styrofoam products, banned the hunting of turtles, tightened restrictions on internationally permitted indigenous whaling activity, and implemented new coastal protection regulations,” he relayed, adding that by investing in geothermal and solar energy, it hopes to generate 80 per cent of its energy needs from renewable sources within the next three years.

Also addressing the Assembly, Wilfred Elrington, Belize’s Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, pointed to security and climate change as equally fundamental threats to his country’s survival.

“We have been at the forefront of the global fight to protect and preserve our shared natural environment against environmental degradation and climate change and to ensure sustainable use especially of our ocean which sustains life on earth” he said. He noted that the region is pioneering innovative approaches to build resilience and facilitate its transition to low and no carbon economies.

Mr. Elrington stated that Belize has embraced the 2030 Agenda – launching its own strategy that integrates the SDGs and is complimentary to the Paris Agreement. Mentioning that Belize has met several goals on road safety, marine protection and sustainable fisheries, he said “already we are seeing the dividends of that early investment in policy and action.”

Calling his country’s early accomplishments “mere benchmarks,” he explained that Belize knows that it must go “above and beyond” for its sustainable development. For that reason, it is setting even more ambitious targets. “At the Oceans Conference,” he said, “we announced our commitment to further strengthen the legislative and regulatory framework on fisheries; to increase marine reserves from three per cent to 10 per cent of our territorial waters; and to implement legislation to curb the use of plastics/microplastics.”

“Belize is committed to zero emissions growth in its forestry sector and aims to achieve 85 per cent renewables in electricity
production by 2027,” he added.

For her part, Maxine Pamela Ometa McClean, Barbados’ Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, cautioned the Assembly about the ramifications of unchecked climate change, echoing past remarks on the existential threat faced by vulnerable small island developing States.

She noted that for years many leaders from small islands have warned of the inherent danger to lives, livelihoods and the very existence of sovereign nations without the sufficient action taken to reduce global emissions and provide support for resilience building in vulnerable countries. “This clarion call from the Caribbean was ignored.”

“Today,” she added “we bear witness to the results of this act of reckless indifference.” The Foreign Minister reported, not on a potential threat, but rather on the destructive impact of climate change on the globe, speaking specifically of the utter devastation of several small islands developing States in the Caribbean overwhelmed by an unprecedented wave of hurricanes.

“For Barbados and other [small island developing States], whether in the Caribbean, the Pacific, Asia or Africa, climate change is a matter of life or death,” Ms. McClean underscored, saying that the issue is for sterile debates and endless meetings but about loss of life and livelihood.

**Facing a grim reality, we need more than ‘declarations’ to ensure better world, Albania tells UN**

22 September – Tackling the numerous complex challenges society is confronted with today will require more than just “declaratory undertakings,” Edi Rama, Prime Minister of Albania told the United Nations, stressing that real progress demands responsibility and action.

Pointing to the links between the threats of terrorism, climate change, and inequality, and the ways in which they have merge in unprecedented fashion to undercut safe, healthy and enjoyable livelihoods across the globe, Mr. Rama told delegations attending the UN General Assembly’s annual debate today that on one hand, “we live in inspiring times […] but on the other, it seems like the world has lost its energy and vision.”

He said global terrorism and radicalization have become a peril that continues to strike blindly and persistently. At the same time, some 65 million people, the highest number since World War II, have been forcibly displaced from their homes due to these acts and threats, among others. The ills are being exacerbated by climate change-driven extreme weather events, which are becoming more frequent and more intense.

Citing the universal desire for safety, including freedom from oppression, persecution and violence, Mr. Rama said: “To achieve these goals, we need to go beyond declaratory undertakings. People rightly demand us to show responsibility and ability to act.”

As such, he called for concerted action towards the 2030 Agenda and its landmark Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and went on to detail Albania’s commitment to human rights, citing his pride in the number of women joining the country’s Government leadership.

Turning to international relations, Mr. Rama described his country’s mission to join the European Union as a main priority. “It is not just one objective in our foreign policy; it is not a contractual relation of sorts. For us, the European integration lies at the heart of our overall development since it touches every cell of our development architecture,” he explained.
‘No room for complacency’ when survival of future generations is at stake, Bhutan tells UN Assembly

22 September – Addressing global leaders at the 72nd annual general debate at the United Nations, the Prime Minister of Bhutan underscored that the impacts of climate change – illustrated by devastating hurricanes and floods, and record-setting temperatures year after year – are very real.

“After centuries of neglect, fighting climate change is complex and expensive,” said Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay, underlining the need for all countries to fulfil their respective commitments.

“I am optimistic that we will be able to prevent the worst effects of climate change. But for that we must work together.”

Underscoring the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), he highlighted that poverty eradication is a critical component of all 17 Goals, and that while the endeavour is a complex challenge, it is possible with concerted effort.

The Prime Minister also spoke on the challenges posed by terrorism, as well as threats to international peace and security, and urged all countries to contribute to making the world a safer place.

Also in his address, the Mister Tobgay noted the reform initiatives by Secretary-General António Guterres and urged all UN Member States to support those measures. He also highlighted the ‘gross national happiness’ approach to development adopted by Bhutan as well as efforts to strengthen democracy in the nation.

European leaders at General Assembly stress UN’s vital importance in resolving global crises

22 September – European leaders mounted the rostrum of the United Nations General Assembly today to spotlight the vital importance of the world Organization in resolving global crises from climate change and sustainable development to conflicts and refugees and migrants.

“Our goal for the United Nations must be the construction, day after day, of an efficient Organization in the service of the common interests of its Member States,” Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel told the Assembly’s 72nd annual general debate.

“When regional actors and the United Nations are on the same page and work together, great things can be achieved,” he said, noting that globalization has generated fears and doubts in which even the very essence of the UN is sometimes questioned.

He cited the recent spate of catastrophic hurricanes and other environmental disasters as a clarion call for urgent action.

“‘It’s no longer a question of putting off to tomorrow what we must do today,” he declared. “Doubt is no longer permissible. For numerous countries, especially the island States of the Pacific, the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean, these natural
phenomena have an immediate impact for their survival.”

For his part, Moldovan Prime Minister Pavel Filip stressed that the UN has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security.

“I am confident that with his competent leadership and the joint efforts of the Member States, we will succeed in redefining the role of the United Nations and adjusting it to the requirements of the modern world,” he said.

“Today, more than ever, we need a joint commitment of all UN Member States to face those challenges,” he added, citing armed conflicts in the Middle East, terrorism, poverty, the excessive accumulation of conventional weapons and the development of nuclear programmes.

“An international environment marked by the threats to use force, including nuclear arms, greatly exacerbates the sense of insecurity and lack of trust,” he said, also noting that devastating natural disasters occurring with increasing frequency in a warming world affect hundreds of millions of people.

Maltese Prime Minister Joseph Muscat stressed the importance of Agenda 2030, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which seek to eliminate a host of social ills, from hunger and poverty to the lack of access to education and health care.

“Challenging times require us to be on time for the challenge. That time is now, sooner rather than later. Purposeful and systematic action by multi-stakeholders, at all levels and across all strata is crucial if the ensuing benefits are to be felt by the people in all corners of the world,” he said.

“The UN is the prime mobilizer and anchor of international peace, security and stability [and] has a quintessential role to play, if we are to secure a peaceful, sustainable and a better world for all, he continued, adding: “We are strong believers in the overarching power of multilateralism. We do not believe the UN is simply a sum of its parts, but rather a force that grows exponentially when we think and act as one, rather than alone.”

San Marino’s Foreign Minister Nicola Renzi noted that the complexity of the challenges facing the UN today is unparalleled in its history.

“The interconnected nature of the challenges reminds us that countries must act together to be more effective in the fight against climate change, global terrorism, poverty and to build more inclusive, safe and just societies for all,” he said.

“The United Nations must adapt quickly to the new global challenges, but also to the new opportunities offered by an increasingly interconnected world, in order to be more effective in carrying out its mandate.

“Therefore, reforms are crucial to future world stability and maintenance of international peace and security, and must remain at the centre of our actions. We reject any downsizing of the role of the United Nations due to the impossibility of finding a common agreement on the reforms needed to improve its functioning.”

Also addressing the high-level debate, Liechtenstein Foreign Minister Aurelia Frick called on all Member States to expand the authority of International Criminal Court set up 20 years ago to judge cases of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes to include illegal use of force.

“Today we often manage and contain armed conflict rather than preventing it in the first place. We must do better. This year we have the opportunity to make a historic step forward. For the first time since the creation of the United Nations, we can give an international tribunal jurisdiction over the crime of aggression,” she said.

“The most serious forms of the illegal use of force will be punishable. The tribunal in charge will be the International Criminal Court, the centrepiece of our common fight for accountability. I appeal to all of you today: Live up to the commitment we have made when signing on to the UN Charter.
“Let us enforce the prohibition of the illegal use of force by making it punishable in the highest court of criminal law that we have,” she underscored.

For his part, Antoni Martí Petit, Prime Minister of Andorra, describing his country as a “faithful defender of the multilateral order,” called for effective cooperation to address global challenges. No country, no matter how powerful, could handle today’s challenges alone. Meeting development goals required the recognition of the nexus between peace and development.

To that end, development goals would never be met if climate change went ignored. Catastrophic climate events affected all nations, he said, noting that Andorra is prioritizing the development of renewable energy, production of electric vehicles and finding more effective ways to heat households.

On other issues, he said mutual respect would lead to a more peaceful world, he assured. The link between peace, human rights and inclusive development could not be ignored. Because of that, Andorra would support the International Criminal Court’s capacity to act as a matter of course in the most serious issues without the need for Security Council intervention. He also called for limiting veto powers within the Council when dealing with cases of mass atrocities. He insisted “inclusive multilateralism” had to be the guiding principle of all Member States.

At UN, Central African Republic President outlines country’s peace, reconciliation process

22 September – The President of the Central African Republic (CAR), Faustin Archange Touadéra, reaffirmed today at the United Nations General Assembly his determination and that of his Government to make the peace efforts succeed, but stressed that the country suffers from limited capacity as it continues to cope with a raft of post-conflict challenges.

In addition to the weak State response to the violence of armed groups, Mr. Touadéra regretted that even the staff of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission, known by its’ French acronym, UNMISCA, is not sufficient to cope to the challenges of protecting civilian populations.

“The increase in security threats due to violence imposed by armed groups required that steps be taken to curb the risks of widespread crisis," he told UN Member delegations attending the Assembly’s annual general debate.

With this in mind, he called on the international community to increase the military strength of MINUSCA, particularly in view of the immensity of the territory it must cover. Mr. Touadéra also urged that the operation’s mandate, which is coming to an end very soon, be revised to assist the Government in regaining control over areas with natural resources.

He went on to welcome the unprecedented mobilization of international solidarity in for CAR towards the implementation of the Rehabilitation and Peacebuilding Programme (RCPiCA), after the November 2016 Brussels Donor Conference. "To follow up on the implementation of this plan, we have concluded an Agreement serving as a new framework for mutual engagement between the Central African Republic and the international community," said Mr. Touadera.

He outlined his hope that steps would be taken in 2017 to establish dialogue with the armed groups, noting that other major efforts would focus on implementing the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. He would also seek greater dialogue with regional actors in hopes they would provide political support for the road map for peace and national reconciliation.
Greece, at UN, spotlights ‘soft power’ to forge regional, international cooperation

22 September – Situated close to what continues to be an extremely turbulent region such as the Middle East and parts of North Africa, Greece is a pillar of stability, its Foreign Minister stressed today at the United Nations General Assembly, also noting that the country remains committed to the protection of human rights of migrants.

“Our main objective is to develop a positive, manifold agenda of cooperation in international affairs, focusing on synergies and joint activities, especially through culture as one of the main drivers of soft power in international relations, and other areas of cooperation, such as trade, education and research,” said Minister for Foreign Affairs Nikos Kotzias during the annual high-level debate.

He explained that enhancing regional cooperation in the Balkans is the core thinking behind another Greek initiative – dialogue among Greece, Albania, Bulgaria and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – launched in April 2016.

With a view to responding to the refugee crisis effectively and in line with European democratic values and principles, the four countries will focus, during their upcoming meeting in October, on identifying ways for better interaction on issues such as return operations, exchange of information, tackling smuggling, human trafficking, terrorism, organized crime and energy networks, he added.

Greece has reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring full and effective implementation of the New York Declaration and its annexes adopted last year to address the large movements of migrants.

In parallel, Greece will remain committed to work in the context of the Global Compact for Migration that is to be concluded by 2018, Mr. Kotzias said.

‘Surge of solidarity’ can halt spread of poverty, Cameroon’s President tells UN Assembly

22 September – The first speaker to take the podium on the fourth day of the United Nations General Assembly annual high-level debate, President Paul Biya of Cameroon, underscored that peace, essential for the survival of humanity and sustainable development, “is dangerously under threat,” notably from terrorism, conflicts, poverty and climate disruptions.

“Today, I would say, we are all ‘beggars for peace.’ And such persistent threats are of utmost concern to us all,” he said, pointing to terrorist attacks around the globe.

Mr. Biya condemned ongoing conflicts in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East that are wreaking hardships, deaths, refugees and displaced persons. Noting that his country – hosting thousands of refugees from the Central African Republic and Nigeria – understands their struggles, he urged policies, behaviours and actions to re-focus attention on people.
Turning to climate change, he cited the two main challenges for Africa: the ongoing forest degradation in Central Africa, calling it “the earth’s second lung;” and the desertification affecting Lake Chad, “which is essential for the survival of communities and biodiversity.”

Despite the numerous UN declarations and resolutions, as well as ‘development decades,’ plans of action and other agendas, the result, noted Mr. Biya has been that poverty persists and the gap between rich and poor countries continues to widen.

“Let us all mobilize in a powerful surge of solidarity to roll back poverty. Let us match our actions with our words,” he pressed. To provide conditions for a decent life, “let us thus focus on People!” urged President Biya.

**Funding shortfall jeopardizes humanitarian response in Yemen, UN aid chief warns**

**22 September** – Efforts to respond to the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, currently the world’s largest, are being hampered by insufficient funding and other challenges, the top United Nations relief official warned today.

“Despite the extraordinary scale of the suffering linked to the brutal conflict, including the threat of famine and the world’s worst cholera outbreak, Yemen does not receive the international attention it deserves,” Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock told a high-level event held in the margins of the General Assembly.

Mr. Lowcock, who is also UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, noted that nearly 21 million people are in need of emergency aid or protection, most of them children, and that this year’s humanitarian response plan for Yemen is just 45 per cent funded, which means short-changing famine prevention efforts, and discontinuing programmes.

The World Food Programme (WFP) did reach 7 million people last month, helping to avert potential famine – but this came at the cost of cutting rations for about half of recipients to 60 per cent of the normal level.

“Yemen is an absolute catastrophe,” WFP Executive Director David Beasley said at a separate event today. “Of the less than 30 million people that live there, 20 million literally don’t know what’s going to happen from day to day; 17 million of them are on the brink of famine.”

He noted that WFP has received about half of the funds its needs, adding that the Gulf States, in particular, need to “step up and fill in the gap.”

Mr. Lowcock called on donors to provide full funding for the Humanitarian Response Plan, noting that the Yemen Humanitarian Fund is one of the quickest and most effective ways to support the most urgent priorities.

Although only negotiations and a political settlement can put an end to this appalling, man-made crisis, all parties to the fighting in Yemen must be repeatedly reminded to comply with international humanitarian law, taking constant care to spare civilians and civilian infrastructure, he said.

The coordinated effort by partners in all sectors is making an enormous difference, he added, but much more remains to be done.

Among the other challenges faced, Mr. Lowcock cited the delay or blockage of humanitarian assistance or the movements of
humanitarian staff – including for the cholera response by de facto authorities in Sana’a; commercial imports restrictions; the closure of Sana’a airport to commercial traffic; and salary arrears for health workers, teachers and water and sanitation staff that are accelerating the collapse of essential services.

“Overcoming each of these obstacles is within the reach of the international community,” said Mr. Lowcock.

In an interview with UN News, UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Yemen Jamie McGoldrick said he met with Member States this week in New York and asked them to provided more funding.

Mr. McGoldrick also met with those involved in the conflict and reminded them of their obligations to abide by international humanitarian law.

“Enough is enough,” he said. “The suffering should not be the DNA of the people in that country.”

UN officials hail establishment of Technology Bank for world’s poorest nations

22 September – United Nations officials today hailed the establishment of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), which will go a long way in addressing one of the major challenges facing the world’s poorest nations.

The Bank, to be headquartered in Gebze, Turkey, also marks the achievement of the first target of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, namely SDG 17.8.

“This achievement is not only highly symbolic but also of great strategic importance to the LDCs in the overall achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals,” said Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu, the UN High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

There are currently 47 countries on the list of LDCs, comprising more than 880 million people (about 12 per cent of world population), but accounting for less than 2 per cent of global GDP and about 1 per cent of the global trade in goods.

“We must ensure that the LDCs are not yet again left behind,” Ms. ‘Utoikamanu told a press conference at UN Headquarters, stressing that access to technology, science and innovation are critical for this group of countries.

The establishment of the Technology Bank was a priority under the Istanbul Programme of Action adopted in 2011, which represented the vision and strategy for the sustainable development of LDCs. Its importance was confirmed in the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda, adopted at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, and then again in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Bank is expected to broaden the application of science, technology and innovation in the world’s poorest countries. It will improve technology-related policies, facilitate technology transfer and enhance the integration of the LDCs into the global knowledge-based economy.

It will also serve as a knowledge hub, connecting needs, resources and actors; facilitate the access of LDCs to existing technology-related projects; and foster joint initiatives with relevant organizations and the private sector.

“We strongly believe that this Bank will help fill the technology gap and it will also speed up the structural transformation in the LDCs,” said Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavusoglu.
With the signing of the host country and contribution agreements, the Turkish Government has committed to provide the Bank with $2 million annually for five years, and also provide personnel and premises in Gebze, which is located outside of Istanbul. It is also planning to implement joint projects with the Bank.

Welcoming the signing of the agreements, Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed said: “We now have a collective responsibility to turn this tool into an effective mechanism for strengthening the science, technology and innovation capacities of LDCs.

“I appeal to Member States and other stakeholders, including the private sector and foundations, to contribute generously to the financing of this Bank so it may reach its potential.”

**Torture during interrogations not just wrong but also counterproductive – UN rights chief**

*22 September* – The torture and ill-treatment of persons suspected of crimes is not only “deeply wrong” but, from an interrogator's perspective, also counterproductive, the United Nations human rights chief said today at an event held in New York.

“Abundant scientific and historical evidence demonstrates that the information yielded by people who are being subjected to violence is unreliable,” High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein said at the event, entitled “Torture during Interrogations – Illegal, Immoral, and Ineffective.”

Today’s event, organized by the High Commissioner’s Office (OHCHR) and held on the sidelines of the annual high-level segment of the General Assembly, sought to inform discussions among Member States about the development of standards and guidelines on investigative interviewing by police and other law enforcement agencies, with the aim of assisting States to meet their fundamental legal obligations to prevent torture and ill-treatment.

Among the participants in the event were the lead investigative interviewer in the Anders Behring Breivik case in Norway, and a former NCIS Deputy Assistant Director for Counterterrorism from the United States.

The High Commissioner noted that people who are in police custody for a very broad range of reasons are frequently subjected to torture or other forms of ill-treatment. This is particularly true, he said, in the first hours and days after their arrest, when – although they should benefit from the presumption of innocence – suspects may have no access to legal assistance or independent medical examination, and have not been brought before a judge.

“Alarmingly, in the past, some States have resorted to using psychologists to design brutal interrogation methods such as waterboarding, forcing detainees into small containers, forcing them to hold painful positions for hours or slamming them into flexible walls,” he stated.

“Furthermore, conditions for detainees are often so squalid and inadequate that they may amount to torture or other forms of ill-treatment under the terms of the Convention against Torture. This is true even in numerous developed countries.”

The High Commissioner cited the example of an allegation in which a pre-trial detainee in one of the richest countries in the world had died after prison guards cut off his water supply for seven days, to punish him for a violent outburst – leading to his death from dehydration.
“These abuses should matter, very deeply, to every member of the community,” he said. “Not only do they violate the rights of the individuals concerned, they also corrode what should be the protective and principled function of every police force.

“Officials required to enforce the law should not undermine the rule of law,” he continued. “If police break the law in pursuit of law enforcement, the message is one of capricious and abusive power. The institution which should protect the people becomes unmoored from principle; unresponsive to the law, it is a loose cannon.

“This destruction of public trust is profoundly damaging. When added to the perception that police abuses and humiliation of specific communities is tolerated – based on economic, geographic, ethnic, religious or other distinctions – it will certainly exacerbate tensions and may lead to serious violence.

OHCHR is planning to co-create a Manual on Investigative Interviewing, with the UN’s Police Division, for use by UN police officers. The Convention against Torture Initiative and the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights are also preparing guidance on investigative interviewing that does not rely on threats and brutality.

**UN scales up response as number of Rohingya refugees fleeing Myanmar nears 500,000**

22 September – With the number of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar arriving in south-east Bangladesh edging towards half a million, United Nations agencies are stepping up delivery of life-saving aid to two official refugee camps, where the health concerns are quickly growing.

At the request of Bangladeshi authorities, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is speeding up the distribution of plastic sheeting to get as many people as possible under at least minimal protection from monsoon rains and winds.

“On Saturday, we plan to begin distribution of kitchen sets, sleeping mats, solar lamps and other essential relief items to an initial 3,500 families who have been selected by community leaders,” UNHCR spokesperson Andrej Mahecic told a press briefing in Geneva.

Refugee volunteers and contractors are helping newly arriving refugees moving into emergency shelter, but it is vital that UNHCR site planners have the opportunity to lay out the new Kutupalong extension in an orderly way to adequately provide for sanitation and to make sure structures are erected on higher ground not prone to flooding.

In total, more than 700,000 Rohingya refugees are now believed to be in Bangladesh; 420,000 of them have arrived in the past three and a half weeks.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi will be in Bangladesh this weekend to get a first-hand look at the scale of the crisis as well as UNHCR’s response, and meet with refugees.

Meanwhile, the World Health Organization (WHO) said that camps are bursting at the seams and there is a huge risk of disease.

“WHO is very concerned about the health situation on the border between Myanmar and Bangladesh, given the very crowded settlements, most of them spontaneous,” said Fadela Chaib, the agency’s spokesperson in Geneva.

“It has been challenging to roll out the emergency response, not least because of the difficult terrain and the very heavy rains, and the fact that the population in question is dispersed, mobile and often injured,” she added.
Ms. Chaib said the greatest risk is related to water and sanitation, with poor conditions increasing the risk of vector- and water-borne diseases. Cholera, which is endemic in Bangladesh, cannot be ruled out. WHO has provided some 20,000 people with water purification tablets.

“Immunization rates among children is very low,” she said, explaining that when children are malnourished and exposed to the elements, the risk of childhood diseases such as measles are very high.

WHO, together with other agencies, recently launched an immunization campaign against polio and measles. Owing to the poor weather conditions and the continuous influx of people, the campaign has been extended.

Around 40 WHO staff have been dispatched to Bangladesh, and the agency will deploy a team of epidemiologists over the weekend to support risk assessment for infectious diseases.

For its part, the World Food Programme (WFP) has now reached at least 385,000 people with food aid as of today. Together with its partners, WFP feeds more than 5,000 people daily in the area.

“The situation is dire and WFP is on the frontlines trying to reach people as quickly as possible,” spokesperson Bettina Luescher told reporters in Geneva.

**Darfur: AU-UN mission urges restraint after clashes at camp for displaced persons**

![A section of the Kalma camp for internally displaced people (IDP), near Nyala, in South Darfur. Photo: UNAMID/Albert González Farran](image)

**22 September** – The joint African Union-United Nations peacekeeping mission in Darfur today urged “the utmost restraint” by all parties after clashes between government forces and internally displaced persons at the Kalma camp led to the death of at least three IDPs and injuries to some 26 others.

“I call upon everyone involved in this situation to restore calm as soon as possible. A peaceful resolution of differences is the only way forward for the Darfuri people,” said Jeremiah Mamabolo, the Joint Special Representative and head of the AU-UN mission (UNAMID).

A medical team from UNAMID is currently at Kalma camp, located in South Darfur, to assist local authorities in treating the injured. The mission is also engaging with the state government and IDP leaders to peacefully resolve the issue.

The incident reportedly occurred after Sudanese Government forces dispersed a group of IDPs protesting against President Omar Al-Bashir’s visit to South Darfur.