

## [At General Assembly, Baltic leaders spotlight human rights, UN reform as vital issues](#)

19 September 2017 – 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.

[Full statement available here](#)



Republic of Estonia addresses the General Assembly's annual general debate.  
UN Photo/Cia Pak

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.

[Full statement available here](#)