

At UN, Nicaraguan Foreign Minister calls for 'commitment to continue fighting for peace' amid threats to sustainable development

While the world was in the midst of a crisis largely sparked by interventionism and "savage capitalism", Nicaragua continued to bolster peace, strengthen security, "and...promote and defend human rights," Minister for Foreign Affairs Denis Moncada Colindres told the United Nations General Assembly on Monday, underscoring his country's commitment to the [UN Charter](#).

With democratic institutions in Nicaragua imperiled after a recently unsuccessful attempted coup d'état, Mr. Moncada made clear that the success of the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) set out in the [2030 Agenda](#) is "in crisis."

"The attempted coup d'état that we have conquered in Nicaragua is the result of this interventionism, he explained, denouncing the events as "terrorism disguised as peaceful protest," which had led to, among others, the heinous killing of citizens and policemen, as well as extortion and torture.

In a call to action against the growing tide of unilateral and interventionist policies, the Minister told the assembled leaders "we must work for justice, peace, respect, dialogue, [and] sovereign security in the world.

He called for "complete nuclear disarmament," and supported the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, hailing this as a "breakthrough to alleviate the tension."

Condemning economic sanctions against neighboring Cuba, he emphasized that "Nicaragua rejects any coercive economic measures to try to bend the will and spirit of freedom and sovereignty of peoples."

The Minister spoke strongly that Nicaragua's virtues of "social development, poverty reduction, gender equity, and citizen security" provide a strong impediment against terrorist incursion, and stand with Syria in that country's continued fight against international terrorism.

Turning to climate change, he said that "those responsible for depredation, degradation, and imbalances in nature must recognize our losses and damages and contribute with the recovery."

Mr. Moncada concluded that "to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, we need to repeal the unilateral coercive measures that are in violation of international law and that impede the development plans of our countries." Only through "negotiation, above all, free from the use or threat of the use

of force,” can this be accomplished.

[Full statement available here.](#)

[Thailand endorses Secretary-General's call to make UN more effective, Minister tells General Assembly](#)

The United Nations needs to adapt to meet the challenges facing the world, Thailand's Deputy Foreign Minister Virasakdi Futrakul told the General Assembly on Monday, endorsing [Secretary General António Guterres](#)'s efforts to make the Organization more effective.

“The United Nations needs to adapt to meet the challenges of the VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity) environment to fulfil its noble mission of peace and security, development, and human rights,” he said on the last day of speeches by delegation leaders to the Assembly's annual debate, which has seen scores of presidents and prime ministers lay out their vision for the future.

Declaring that Thailand has been actively translating principles enshrined in the [UN Charter](#) into practices, to promote peace and security, to foster sustainable development, and to safeguard human rights, Mr. Virasakdi cited Thai participation in 20 peacekeeping and related missions since 1950 and highlighted his country's efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) by 2030.

He noted Thailand's efforts to improve health, human rights and economic development, mitigate natural and manmade disasters, clean up oceans, and promote, and promote public-private partnerships in facing multiple challenges.

“We support the Secretary-General's commitment to forge stronger linkages between peace, security and sustainable development, as we believe that it is indeed the economic and social development of the communities, and of the people, that stands at the centre of sustaining peace,” he declared, calling for reforms to make the UN Security Council more representative, more inclusive and more democratic.

Tobacco control measures are working, but too slowly for low and middle-income countries: World Health Organization

“Great progress” has been made in tackling tobacco consumption and saving lives but more needs to be done to challenge the industry’s attempts to “bypass” international regulations, the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) said on Monday.

At an international meeting on tobacco control in Geneva, the WHO reported that that nearly two-thirds of the 181 States parties to the WHO Framework Convention for Tobacco Control ([WHO FCTC](#)) have developed strategies “to prevent tobacco industry interference with tobacco control policies”.

As a result of the treaty, countries have increased taxes on tobacco, established smoke-free spaces and made it obligatory for manufacturers to show graphic health warnings on their products, as well as using plain packaging.

Despite these advances, “this is not a time to be complacent,” [said Dr Vera Luiza da Costa e Silva](#), head of the WHO FCTC Secretariat. “With astronomical budgets, the tobacco industry continues its furious efforts to undermine the implementation of our treaty.”

Smoking is a development problem because it hits the most vulnerable and strains already overstretched health systems, feeding a vicious cycle of poverty and inequality. –
Michael Møller, UN Geneva Director-General

According to the WHO 2018 Global Progress Report, 85 per cent of the States parties have prohibited sales of tobacco products to minors and a growing number of countries have increased the minimum age to purchase tobacco products.

Health warnings on tobacco packs are also required in almost 90 per cent of States parties and at least 14 countries “are implementing or planning to implement” plain or standardized packaging.

In addition, tobacco-dependence diagnosis and treatment services are included in national tobacco control programmes in more than two-thirds of the Parties; significant progress, compared to just one half in 2016.

But there is still room for improvement, the report notes, particularly in banning self-service shelves for cigarettes, and vending machines, while also

highlighting the emergence of new and novel tobacco products.

The WHO report – a publication based on national submissions to the Convention Secretariat – also indicates that implementation of tobacco control measures has consistently improved since the accord entered into force in 2005.

Nonetheless, progress towards implementation of the various articles remains uneven, with rates as low as 13 per cent in some countries, and as high as 88 per cent in others, the data shows.

To illustrate the scale of the challenge still facing States parties to the Convention, the head of the UN in Geneva, Michael Møller highlighted the fact that there are 1.1 billion smokers today; 80 per cent of whom, live in low- to middle-income countries.

The burden this creates is immense, in terms of health costs caused by tobacco-related sickness, the UN Geneva Director-General said, before calling for the need to link tobacco control measures with sustainable development strategies.

“Smoking is a development problem because it hits the most vulnerable and strains already overstretched health systems, feeding a vicious cycle of poverty and inequality,” Mr Møller said.

“Reaching the 2030 Agenda and lessening the burden of non-communicable diseases requires early, widespread action at every level.”

Also speaking at the Eighth Session of the WHO FCTC Conference of Parties in Geneva on Monday, UN health agency chief, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, hailed the tobacco control convention as “one of the greatest public health achievements of the past 20 years”.

Several countries including Kenya and Uganda have passed comprehensive tobacco control laws in recent years, he said, while Gabon and Gambia have increased tobacco taxes.

Elsewhere, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand have introduced large graphic health warnings, the WHO Director-General continued, before highlighting that many countries have banned smoking in public places, from Afghanistan, to Cambodia and El Salvador.

Several cities in China have implemented smoke-free laws, Mr. Tedros said, adding: “We have made great progress. We have saved lives.”

In line with previous trends, the most successfully implemented tobacco control policies have been in protection from exposure to tobacco smoke (Article 8), Packaging and labelling of tobacco products (Article 11), public awareness (Article 12) and sales to and by minors (Article 16).

Implementation has been less successful on protecting the environment and the people’s health (Article 18), Liability (Article 19) and support for economically viable alternative activities (Article 17).

On the issue of increased tobacco taxation or over-the-counter price increases, the report also notes that significant advances have been observed among States parties, with more than 90 per cent now implementing the initiative.

The same percentage have also banned smoking in public all places, the report says, noting that “a considerable number” have also shared their experience with other States on extending smoking bans to outdoor environments, and on amending existing smoke-free legislation to incorporate new tobacco products.

[Scientists from UN-run climate change panel to present key global warming report for world leaders](#)

Scientists from the United Nations-run Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change ([IPCC](#)) and representatives from its 195 member governments, are meeting in South Korea, to reach agreement over a key summary for policymakers into the impact of a 1.5 degree Celsius increase in global warming, above pre-industrial levels.

In 2015, the [Paris Agreement](#) to combat climate change set a long-term goal of keeping global average temperatures to well below 2°C, and pursue efforts to limit the increase to 1.5°C.

With relatively little known about the impacts back in 2015, the IPCC, which is co-sponsored by the World Meteorological Organization ([WMO](#)) and United Nations Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)), was commissioned to prepare a report that would define the likely risks and challenges of living in world which is either 1.5 degrees warmer, or 2 degrees.

Opening the week-long meeting, IPCC Chair Hoesung Lee [said](#) “Three weeks ago in New York, the UN Secretary General [António Guterres](#) described climate change as the great challenge of our time. But, he also noted that, thanks to science, we know its size and nature. Science alerts us to the gravity of the situation, but science also, and this special report in particular, helps us understand the solutions available to us.”

Underscoring the importance of climate action, South Korea, which is hosting the meeting, has experienced its hottest summer on record, with temperatures in some parts of the country topping 40°C for the first time on record.

Addressing the delegates, WMO Deputy-Secretary-General Elena Manaenkova said, “This year is, yet again, expected to be one of the warmest years. We have witnessed extreme weather ranging from record heat in northern Europe and

historic flooding in Japan, India, southeast Asia and the southeastern United States. The consequences were devastating, but advance predictions helped save many lives.”

Subject to approval, the IPCC will release the Summary for Policymakers of the report at a press conference on 8 October. The full report is due to be published in time for this year’s climate conference, [COP24](#), due to be held in Katowice, Poland in November.

[Global Goals promise to ‘leave no one behind’ warrants special attention for middle-income countries, Belarusian minister tells UN Assembly](#)

In spite of the criticism levelled against the United Nations, there is no other such platform for cooperation or a multilateral mechanism based on “equal and respectful attitude towards each and every country and their needs,” the foreign minister of Belarus told the General Assembly.

“The search for answers to global challenges, the quest for ways to address common objectives clearly points out the following – no country can solve them alone,” asserted Vladimir Makei, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the land-locked eastern European nation.

“Individual headway is impossible without collective progress.”

In his address, Minister Makei also underlined the unique position of middle-income countries when it comes to implementing the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) – adopted by UN Member States, in 2015 – noting that while they offer the greatest potential for economic growth and are home to nearly three-quarters of the global population, middle-income countries also account for an overwhelming majority of the world’s poor.

This group of countries, he continued, are also the most vulnerable to global economic fluctuations, effects of conflicts, natural and man-made catastrophes, impact of climate change and epidemics, “which all combine to threaten social and economic stability and widen inequality.”

Further in his address, the Belarusian Minister underlined urgency of bringing to an immediate end the “unwinding spiral” of geopolitical chaos that has plagued the international community over the past three decades.

To that end, he called for States retaining their role as the primary

international actors and that ensuring the respect for State sovereignty; strengthening the State and its role in domestic affairs; and a willingness among States to dialogue, listen to arguments and embracing reasonable compromises.

“We are convinced that only dialogue can help resolve the deep crisis of trust in international relations and produce mechanisms conducive to peace and International security, as well as to sustainable development,” he concluded.

[Full statement available here.](#)