

'Not in my backyard' attitude will not resolve crises – Greek Prime Minister

Recalling the challenges confronting Greece not so long ago, and the calls at the time from various quarters urging unilateral steps and disengagement with the international community, Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras underscored at the United Nations on Friday the importance of collective action and wisdom to overcome complex problems.

The “logic” proposed by such groups to crises that hit three years ago: the Eurozone, regional security issues and refugee crises, the Greek leader recalled, “was simple – ‘not in my backyard’.”

Greece, nonetheless, confronted the issues and such ideas “dynamically” he said.

“Not only did we manage to stay standing, overcoming these difficulties, but we became part of the solution, rather than the problem [...] we did this without resorting to a nationalist politics that would lead us to leaving the Eurozone, escalating tensions with neighbours, or violating human rights and international law.”

Highlighting the impact of the refugee crisis on Greece – whose islands are often the first stop for millions of people trying to make their way to mainland Europe – the Prime Minister underscored that his country’s response to the challenge is a practical one, based on human rights.

Without giving in to nationalist and xenophobic voices that called for push-backs, Greece supported the difficult but necessary European Union-Turkey statement, while accepting that those who do not need international protection return to transit countries where they are safe, he added.

“The people of Greece, despite their difficulties, opened their arms to incoming migrants, showing the world what solidarity means,” said the Prime Minister.

In his address, Prime Minister Tsipras expressed that challenges that are common by their very nature, can only be dealt with collective action, based on shared values, and urged international organizations to be more effective in responding to needs on the ground.

In conclusion, the Greek leader also expressed his country’s support for the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), the Global Compact on Migration, the [Paris Agreement on climate change](#) and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Full statement available here.

UN officials urge support as Darfur attempts to 'turn the page' from conflict to peace

Stating that while the Darfur region of Sudan, which for years was torn by strife and displacement, is now increasingly stable, top United Nations officials on Friday urged continued international support to ensure that hard-won gains take hold.

"This is not the time to disengage," Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed [told](#) participants at the [high-level meeting on Darfur](#), held on the margins of the General Assembly's annual general debate.

"We have invested \$16 billion in peacekeeping alone over the past ten years, in addition to humanitarian funding and bilateral aid to alleviate the suffering of the population. As the region recovers from war, now is the time to consolidate gains," she said, adding that it was time to "step up and make sure Darfur moves towards peace and prosperity."

A civil war which broke out in 2003, led to the deaths of tens of thousands of Darfuris and the displacement of nearly two million. In the fighting between Sudanese Government troops and militias and other armed rebel groups, widespread atrocities such as murder and rape of civilians were committed.

Ms. Mohammed noted that today's Darfur "looks very different" from the Darfur of ten years ago when the African Union and the UN deployed their joint peacekeeping mission, known as UNAMID, to help bring stability to the region.

"In the Darfur of today, we see intermittent clashes in the mountains of the Jebel Marra, but violent conflict has subsided. Outside of that zone, fighting has largely ended, and intercommunal clashes have been considerably reduced," she stated.

"This is a significant achievement and a clear expression that our goal of silencing the guns in Africa can be a reality."

In July, the UN Security Council extended UNAMID's mandate until the end of June next year, but reduced the number of troops deployed in the field with an eye towards the mission's eventual exit.

At today's meeting, the Deputy Secretary-General proposed the creation of a "Group of Friends of the Transition in Darfur" to provide political support and ensure the UN Country Team has sufficient resources during this period. It was also proposed to have a pledging conference in the near future to ensure that the UN system can "ramp up" its work and avoid any gap in

critical work as UNAMID draws down.

Echoing these sentiments, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix told reporters after the meeting that today was an important occasion to express support for the transition from an international support based on peacekeeping to one focused on peacebuilding.

The drawdown of UNAMID... doesn't mean a drawdown of the support of the international community – Under-Secretary-General Lacroix

Eldirdiri Mohamed Ahmed, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sudan, said the withdrawal of peacekeeping troops means that his Government will now be entrusted with the primary responsibility of ensuring that security and peace prevails in Darfur. In this regard, he said Sudan is appealing to the international community to help Sudan undertake this responsibility by lifting the sanctions placed on it.

“Sanctions were mostly imposed on Sudan because of what has taken place in Darfur. We believe it is now timely to lift the sanctions so that Sudan can undertake its responsibilities in their entirety,” he told reporters at the UN.

UNGA meeting spotlights the ‘press behind bars’, as experts denounce record number of jailed journalists

Regularly threatened, attacked and killed, journalists are also being imprisoned in record numbers around the world, [an event](#) on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly highlighted on Friday. These practices undermine not only the fundamental human rights of the reporters themselves, but also the public's right to receive and impart information, rights experts warn.

The side event was organised by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), a US-based non-governmental organisation promoting press freedom and advocating for the rights of journalists worldwide.

According to the non-profit group, at the end of 2017, 262 journalists were jailed, including over 70 in Turkey, 40 in China, and 20 in Egypt. About 52 per cent of those jailed, were behind bars because of their reporting on human rights violations, said CPJ.

A May 2018 [report](#) by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)) – mandated with safeguarding the freedom of the press and the safety

of journalists – states that “arbitrary imprisonment of journalists, which fosters self-censorship and impinges on the public’s right to access information, has reportedly continued to rise, although many governments have maintained that particular journalists have been imprisoned for reasons unrelated to their journalistic work.”

“Governments around the world routinely use emergency laws to censor media outlets and publications,” declared Joel Simon, CPJ’s Executive Director. “Increasingly they also bring ‘fake news’ charges against journalists who contradict official statements. They try journalists in military courts, they hold them in pre-trial detention indefinitely.”

“These are all actions that contradict international human rights law, and the standards set by the UN,” he stressed.

Article 19 of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), guarantees the “freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers”. The universality of this was reinforced in the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In 2013, the UN General Assembly declared 2 November as the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, which is increasingly observed across the world.

The event at UN headquarters on Friday highlighted in particular five cases of journalists currently imprisoned, including: Alaa Abdelfattah from Egypt and Azimjon Askarov from Kyrgyzstan, both arrested while covering alleged human rights abuses by security forces; Shahidul Alam from Bangladesh, imprisoned while covering student protests; and the high profile case of two Reuters journalists in Myanmar, Kyaw Soe Oo (also known as Moe Aung) and Wa Lone (also known as Thet Oo Maung), sentenced to seven years in jail, on charges of violating the country’s Official Secrets Act while covering the story of a massacre of Rohingya men by the Myanmar military in September 2017.

“Their conviction and draconian seven-year sentence are a travesty of justice and it is up to the government to set them free,” their legal counsel, world-renowned human rights lawyer, Amal Clooney, to the meeting at UN Headquarters.

Earlier this month, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, said in a [statement](#) that the two journalists’ coverage of the massacre – for which the military subsequently admitted responsibility – “was clearly in the public interest as it may otherwise never have come to light.” She called for their convictions “to be quashed and for them to be released, along with all other journalists currently in detention for their legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of expression.”

The UN warns that the “imprisonment of journalists for their legitimate work not only fosters a culture of self-censorship but also impinges on the broader rights of society to obtain information.”

At UN, China says it will not be 'blackmailed' or yield to trade pressure

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"China stands for a proper settlement based on rules and consensus through dialogue and consultation on an equal footing," Mr. Wang told the Assembly's annual general debate, adding that China is also acting "to uphold the free trade system and international rules and order for the common interests of all countries."

He stressed the importance to adapt to economic globalization, and to ensure such processes are open, inclusive, and balanced to deliver benefits to all.

On the opening day of the general debate, United States President Donald Trump [told the Assembly](#) that he had announced another \$200 billion in tariffs on Chinese-made goods. He said that while he had the "greatest respect" for China, "I have made clear our trade imbalance is just not acceptable. China's market distortions and the way they deal cannot be tolerated."

On Friday, Foreign Minister Wang reiterated China's "clear-cut" answer to pursue multilateralism, adding that "China has never wavered in its conviction to multilateralism and to the purposes and principles of the [UN Charter](#)."

Pursuing win-win cooperation is [prerequisite](#) to uphold multilateralism and we must act upon rules and order, he said.

While calling for a strong United Nations, Mr. Wang went on to say China supports organizational reform, which should be designed to prioritize concerns of developing countries, making the UN more efficient and enhance oversight and accountability.

Turning to the Korean Peninsula, Mr. Wang said China has contributed to the "major turnaround" and supports all-out improvement of relations between the North and the South of the Peninsula, as well as efforts to facilitate dialogues between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the US.

“China encourages the DPRK to continue moving along the right direction of denuclearization,” said Mr. Wang, adding that “it is also right for the US to make timely and positive responses so as to truly meet the DPRK half-way.”

He further underscored that effective settlement of the issue requires complete denuclearization, as well as establishment of a peace mechanism.

“Only when the two wheels move in tandem can the issue be truly resolved and can peace start to dawn,” he said.

On the Rohingya crisis, Foreign Minister Wang said it should be resolved through “a three-phased process” involving cessation of violence, return of displaced persons and economic development.

As for development, Mr. Wang said “there is no one-size-fits-all model,” adding that “every country is entitled to explore a development path that suits itself to deliver happiness and security to its people.”

In this regard, China has worked in partnership with other countries of the international community.

Moving on, Mr. Wang showcased “the Belt and Road Initiative,” which has grown into the largest platform for international cooperation. So far, over 130 countries and international organizations have signed agreements on Belt and Road cooperation with China.

[***Full statement available here.***](#)

[**Unfair, misapplied global policies stack odds against island States, Saint Lucia tells UN Assembly**](#)

At the United Nations General Assembly on Friday, Allen Michael Chastanet, Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, painted a dire picture of the challenges natural hazards pose for [small island developing States](#) and middle-income countries, saying that while the international community widely accepts them, “little or nothing changes.”

“Global policies, programmes and strategies remain unfairly unaccommodating to these very real and true challenges,” criticized Mr. Chastanet, who was among several leaders from Caribbean island nations to address the Assembly’s annual general debate.

Indeed, Saint Lucia remains “economically vulnerable to de-risking and the

loss of correspondent banking relations,” referring to the practice by global financial institutions of [terminating or restricting business relationships](#) with remittance companies and smaller local banks in certain regions of the world.

Small islands and middle-income countries often could not get concessionary finance and their reputations are unfairly tarnished by tax labels.

“We continue to struggle under the weight of international frameworks that do not provide an enabling environment for my country to chart an effective sustainable development path, or even to be able to take control of our own destiny,” he continued.

He stressed that even with the odds stacked against them, small island developing states and [middle-income countries](#) must find innovative new ways to grow their economies while ensuring environmental and social protections.

In preparing for the current hurricane season, he explained that because Saint Lucia had to spend three times as much money than it did last season, it imposed a water tax to assist with desilting its dam, a gas tax for road rehabilitation and an airport tax for a new terminal, highway and flood mitigation around the airport.

“I cannot delay or ignore critical infrastructure projects, therefore have no choice but to increase my debt burden, I cannot leave my country and its citizens exposed,” he spelled out.

Climate change continues to negatively impact SIDS.

“As I speak my country is suffering from the ravages of Kirk, which was on a projected course north of Saint Lucia but changed direction overnight and moved directly over our island,” he said. “This morning Saint Lucia also suffered from an earthquake.”

He said that Barbados has also been impacted and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines now lie in the storm’s path – while Dominica, the British Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico are still recovering, one year later.

He concluded by sharing his hope that as multilateralism evolves, “we arrive at... doing what must be done.”

[Full statement available here.](#)