

# [In UN address, Afghan leader lays out vision of peaceful, prosperous State in talks with Taliban](#)

Saying his country had turned a page with its unprecedented overtures to the militant Taliban opposition, Afghan's Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah on Wednesday called on the United Nations, the European Union and State partners to help promote a new Afghanistan in a country that has known nothing but conflict over the past four decades, with hundreds of thousands of casualties.

"I want to express my sincere thanks to all nations, especially the United States, concerned nations and parties, including the Governments of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Indonesia... the UN and others for encouraging all sides to set the stage for a process that would lead to talks and a Just and comprehensive negotiated settlement," he told the UN General Assembly on the second day of its annual general debate.

Mr. Abdullah called on neighbouring States, especially Pakistan, to help deal with the terrorism and extremism threatening the region.

"Since we last met (at last year's annual debate), Afghanistan has turned a page and made unprecedented overtures to the Taliban to be part of a credible Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace process that could lead to a just and comprehensive political settlement through talks and reconciliation," he told the scores of Heads of State and Government," he said.

"Our people, who pose no danger to anyone, are demanding a fundamental change where they can play a constructive and collaborative role across boundaries and help turn their country into a roundabout of people, goods, services, communications, cooperation and ideas across the wider region.

"I believe that with your help we can turn this concept into reality. We hope to further engage our regional partners in helping us bring this vision to fruition. I hope that this Assembly and all concerned member states play their supportive and positive role to put an end to years of agony and open a new path leading to durable peace, stability and prosperity."

[Full statement available here.](#)

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## [At UN, Tonga warns of dire security threats posed by climate change on island atoll countries](#)

As head of more than 170 South Pacific islands, sustainable development and surmounting the 'devastating impacts' of climate change in his country were the focus of King Tupou VI of Tonga in his address at the United Nations General Assembly.

"In contributing towards the implementation of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development and its landmark Goals ([SDGs](#)), including the internationally agreed blueprint for the sustainable development of small island developing States (SIDS), the [SAMOA Pathway](#), Tonga has made both accords an integral part of its [national planning](#) processes," he said on Wednesday.

He emphasized the importance of the UN High-Level Political Forum ([HLPF](#)) on Sustainable Development, which he pointed out will review the SAMOA Pathway in 2019.

"Climate change continues to pose significant security threats to us as island States," he said, noting with concern "the devastating impacts of climate change on our marine environment."

He welcomed the establishment at the initiation of German and Nauru of the Group of Friends on Climate and Security "to further highlight the nexus between the threats of climate change with threats to international peace and security."

He stressed that despite the effects of sea level rise, Tonga's territorial boundaries, established under the [UN Convention of the Law of the Sea](#), should remain unchanged.

"Our Sovereignty must not be compromised by climate change and we welcome the work of the [International Law Commission](#) on this critically important and timely issue for consideration of the [Sixth Committee](#) of the General Assembly," he said, referring to the Assembly's standing body that deals with legal issues.

He was looking forward to the 24th Session of the [UN Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) (UNFCCC) in December to address the adverse impacts of climate change and the need for innovation in adaptation for [small island developing States](#).

King Tupou VI told the Assembly that Tonga has engaged in this year's first [Inter-governmental Conference](#) on the conservation and sustainable use of the biological diversity in the high seas and the seabed and was "hopeful that a gradual convergence of views will result in a zero draft of a legally binding

instrument for consideration at the second and third meetings of the Inter-governmental Conference next year.”

He noted that last year, Tonga had commissioned its first Independent Power Producer-owned Solar Farm and “strongly believes that it can achieve its 50 per cent by 2020 renewable energy target through more and stronger public-private partnership arrangements.”

“Finally,” he said, “sustainable development, whether it be, [among others], through good health and well-being, climate action, life below water, or affordable and clean energy, can only be realized through international peace and security.”

“We continue to look to the Security Council to protect the innocent from threats to international peace and security in whatever form, be they traditional threats such as armed conflict, or newer threats like climate change, to ensure no one is left behind,” concluded King Tupou VI.

[Full statement available here.](#)

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## **At UN Assembly, Mali’s president gives heartfelt thanks for UN’s help in bringing stability**

Malian President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, whose West African country has benefitted from a 15,000-strong United Nations Stabilization Force ([MINUSMA](#)) to bring peace after Tuareg rebels and militant Islamists devastated its northern and central regions, mounted the General Assembly podium on Wednesday to thank the world Organization for “its immense and multi-dimensional” support.

“This is the place to pay homage to the women and men of MINUSMA for their engagement and their sacrifice in a security situation that I know is complex and difficult,” he told Heads of State and Government on the second day of the Assembly’s annual general debate. MINUSMA was set up in 2013.

“I reiterate the profound gratitude of the people and Government of Mali towards the United Nations, our bilateral and multilateral partners, for their constant support in our emergence from crisis.”

At the same time, he called for making the UN even more relevant and efficient for all by adopting reforms, including enlarging the 15-member Security Council, the only UN body whose decisions are legally binding, by increasing representation for African and other developing countries, and

strengthening the powers of the 193-Member Assembly, whose decisions are non-binding.

On the domestic front, Mr. Keita noted that Mali continued on its path to stability with last month's presidential elections, in which he won a second term and which, despite all sorts of challenges were held in conditions hailed by the international community.

He pledged to restore faith between the State and its citizens and highlighted the return of civil administration to northern areas that had been riven by conflict. He also noted his efforts to combat poverty, promote youth and invest in infrastructure, including road building, agriculture, water and energy projects, and affordable housing.

On the regional front, he called on the international community to provide adequate funding for the G5 Sahel, a military task force comprising Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger to fight terrorism in sub-Saharan.

In the international domain Mr. Keita reiterated his support for the [Global Compact on Migration](#), pledging that Mali will do its part in managing migratory flows.

[\*Full statement available \(in French\) here.\*](#)

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## [Lebanon's President says country is working towards stability, but weighed down by 'neighborhood crises'](#)

Although Lebanon 'is groping our way to rise from consecutive crises', President Michel Aoun said on Wednesday that his country was being buffeted by regional crises and called on the United Nations to show global leadership by taking action to resolve conflicts in the Middle East.

Arguing strongly in favour of reforming the UN [Security Council](#), he said that the 15-member body has "failed to adopt fair, and sometimes defining [resolutions](#)" leading to the suffering at "the very heart of our region."

As one example, he drew attention to resolution [425](#) (1978) in which the Council called on Israel to withdraw forces from its territories, saying that 22 years later, due to Lebanese resistance, it was finally implemented.

"There must be a reform project that sets out the enlargement of the Security Council, the increase of the number of Member States and the adoption of a more transparent, more democratic and more balanced system," he underscored.

“It is of the paramount importance for the General Assembly to express better the effective orientation of the international community,” he added.

The President pointed out that although Lebanon has risen from consecutive internal crises, the consequences of neighbouring countries “still weigh heavily upon us.”

Holding up before the Assembly a map provided by the UN refugee agency, he said that there are waves of displaced people “fleeing the hell of war” in Syria pouring into Lebanon, and that while his country has tried to the greatest extent possible to ensure them a dignified and descent life.

Nevertheless, he noted that crime rates have jumped by 30 per cent, unemployment has dropped by 21 per cent and the density of the population has increased from 400 to 600 people per square kilometer, “making it impossible for us to keep shouldering this burden, especially that most of the Syrian territories have become safe.”

“Against this background, I reiterate the stance of my country which seeks to consolidate the right of dignified, safe and sustainable return of the displaced to their land, rejecting absolutely any project of settlement, whether for the displaced or the refugee,” he asserted.

Mr. Aoun then voiced his dissent of “the international political approaches for the Middle East,” which “lack justice and use double standards,” calling Palestine “the best reflection of this picture.”

He cited the Council and Assembly’s vote against the proclamation of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, yet, he said, “despite the results of the two votes, which reflected the will of the international community, some embassies were transferred to it” – undermining “the endeavours of peace and the two-state project.”

Observing that the world today suffers from extremism and fanaticism, Lebanon’s Head of State highlighted a pressing need for dialogue between religions, cultures and races, and for building international cultural institutions to spread a dialogue of peace.

“The road to salvation resides in convergence, dialogue, the rejection of the language of violence, the establishment of justice between the people, and it is the only path that brings back stability and security to our societies, and achieves the sustainable development that we aspire to,” concluded President Aoun.

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

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# UN hails Human Rights Declaration as tool for conflict and poverty prevention

Adopted in Paris in 1948, the UDHR was drafted in the aftermath of the Second World War and the Holocaust. The text describes every individual's inalienable rights, through 30 carefully written articles.

Describing its “revolutionary impact”, UN [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) said the Declaration “has permeated policies and constitutions, from the global level to national and regional frameworks”. He added that it had “unleashed the power of women’s full participation”, as well as “spurred the fight against racism, xenophobia and intolerance.”

Despite these important achievements, “that progress is under threat,” regretted Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. “In many countries, the fundamental recognition that all human beings are equal, and have inherent rights, is under attack. And the institutions set up by States to achieve common solutions, are being undermined.”

This lack of recognition is hampering the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and remains too often the root cause of various conflicts around the world, he said.

“We have ample evidence that state-sponsored human rights abuses are a sign of weakness, not strength. They are often precursors to conflict and even to collapse,” stressed UN chief Guterres.

The Secretary-General called on Governments that have not signed or ratified the two human rights Covenants, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, “to do so urgently”.

Every step towards greater implementation of the human rights agenda is an act of prevention – UN rights chief Michelle Bachelet

“Every step towards greater implementation of the human rights agenda is an act of prevention – strengthening the bonds between communities, and reinforcing inclusive development and peace,” said Ms. Bachelet. “Every step away from it tugs us down, towards suffering, injustice, hatred and conflict”.

Mr. Guterres, who [launched on Monday](#) a bold UN-wide strategy for the empowerment of global youth, entitled “Youth 2030”, stressed the important role that young people can play in the advancement of human rights worldwide.

“There is a special place in my heart for young women and men who are

speaking out for social justice”, he said, urging young people to bring their “energy and passion”, to challenge the ways that things are being done and “to take up the torch for our common humanity”.

“You are the true custodians of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) and the guarantee that it will not succumb,” he added.