

# Shun unilateral action, embrace multilateralism, Namibian President urges at UN Assembly

Warning that the world seems to be drifting away from dialogue and towards unilateral action – at great peril to very fundamental tenets of democracy – the President of Namibia called on world leaders, gathered at the United Nations General Assembly, to embrace multilateralism.

“Democracy might have its flaws, but it is by far the best system that enables key values of the United Nations, necessary for sustained inclusive development,” Hage Geingob, the President of Namibia told the General Assembly annual general debate.

The Namibian leader outlined emerging and existing challenges, which continue to hamper efforts towards socio-economic progress and underscored his country’s full commitment to the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) – the global development framework, adopted by UN Member States in 2015.

“As a matter of fact, Namibia has integrated all 17 [Sustainable Development] Goals and their targets in our National Development Plans,” he announced, noting also, the parallels between the 2030 Agenda and the African Union’s Agenda 2063 ‘The Africa We Want’.

The President also highlighted the importance of the [UN Technology Bank](#), established this past June, for its support to countries like Namibia which are at the forefront of seasonal natural disasters such as droughts and floods.

President Geingob also noted the importance of empowering young people and for utilizing their potential for the good of the global community. In that context, he also said technological advances present humanity with many opportunities and the youth are best placed to bring them to reality.

“The onus is on us to understand how these technologies can create opportunities for our youth to become drivers of economic growth and industrial development,” he said, noting also the importance of gender equality and women’s empowerment.

“The late Secretary General Kofi Annan was right when he said, ‘Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance’,” said the Namibian leader.

“The world should do more to make gender equality a reality.”

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## Time has come to rid the world of nuclear weapons, UN officials stress

The time has come to make tangible progress to rid the world of nuclear weapons, top United Nations officials stressed today, citing the grave threat posed by such weapons to global security.

“The only sure way to eliminate the threat posed by nuclear weapons is to eliminate the weapons themselves,” [Secretary-General António Guterres said](#) at a high-level meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate and promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

“Such a challenging goal will not be achieved overnight. But we must take urgent steps now.”

In May of this year, the Secretary-General launched his disarmament agenda, which recognizes that progress towards the shared goal of a world free of nuclear weapons remains uneven. He noted that efforts have stalled and, in some cases, may be going backwards.

“That is why I have called for the resumption of sincere, substantive and results-oriented dialogue towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons, as well as the implementation of existing commitments,” he said, adding that States possessing nuclear weapons have a responsibility to lead.

He appealed to the United States and Russia – “by far the largest possessors of nuclear weapons” – to re-engage in the dialogue necessary to maintain their historic track record of bilateral arsenal reductions.

At the same time, the Secretary-General stressed that all States have responsibilities in the pursuit of nuclear disarmament, primarily the fulfilment of their non-proliferation obligations.

The elimination of nuclear weapons is probably the existential challenge of our times – General Assembly President Espinosa

“No other technology, no other weapon of mass destruction, has the capacity to, quite literally, change the face of the earth, eradicating entire societies.”

In terms of progress, she noted the adoption in 2017 of the [Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons](#) – an historic, legally-binding instrument for nuclear disarmament that includes prohibitions against developing, testing, acquiring, using or even threatening to use, nuclear weapons.

“The Treaty is a testament to the continued need for, and utility of, multilateralism,” she stated.

The [International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons](#), marked annually on 26 September, provides an occasion for the world community to reaffirm its commitment to global nuclear disarmament as a high priority. It also provides an opportunity to educate the public about the real benefits of eliminating such weapons, and the social and economic costs of perpetuating them.

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## [At UN Assembly, Japanese Prime Minister defends free trade](#)

Addressing world leaders at the General Assembly’s annual general debate, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe made a strong case for free trade, highlighting its benefits for countries with little natural resources.

“Other than coal that supported modern Japan’s industrialization, our nation has had no other resources to speak of. But upon devoting itself to reaping the blessings of trade, post-war Japan succeeded in realizing growth that was called a miracle, even though it lacked resources,” said Prime Minister Abe.

“The very first country to prove through its own experience the principle that exists between trade and growth – a principle that has now become common sense – was Japan.”

Alongside the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP11), Japan-European Union partnership agreement and the country’s commitment to the World Trade Organization, Mr. Abe expressed his full support towards negotiations on the proposed free trade agreement “RCEP” in east Asia.

In his address, Prime Minister Abe also emphasized that he will “do everything” in his power to clear the long-standing post-war structure from north-east Asia; and resolve territorial issue with Russia and conclude a peace treaty between the two countries.

Recalling his call on the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), made at the general debate last year, to resolve its abductions, nuclear, and missile issues, the Japanese leader said that DPRK now stands at a crossroads, from which “it will either seize, or fail to seize, the historic opportunity it was afforded.”

Mr. Abe also spoke of advanced capacity building activities in maritime policy, offered by Japan for students from other Asian countries, where they

are imparted with necessary skills and principles to protect and defend a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

He also spoke of a new training programme, starting at the beginning of 2019, for elementary and junior high school teachers from the Gaza Strip, which would allow them to put the situation in Gaza and the Middle East into a wider perspective and work as a solace to them.

Next-generation Japanese youth will work commendably as flag bearers for the 'UN spirit'. I am absolutely certain of that.

"It goes without saying that for peace, efforts must be made on both sides. But hopefully this program of ours will impart a means of hope to the teachers from Gaza and the children in their care," added Prime Minister Abe.

Looking ahead, Mr. Abe expressed hope that future generations will successfully be able to take on challenges they will face, noting that "the duty of our generation is to create an environment that facilitates this."

Mr. Abe also informed world leaders of major upcoming events in his country, including the abdication by the Emperor of Japan and the accession of the Crown Prince to the imperial throne, the Japan's presidency of the G20, and the country's hosting of the 2020 Olympics and Paralympic Games.

In conclusion, the Japanese Prime Minister highlighted a pressing need for reforming the Security Council. He also announced that Japan, together with [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) will push forward with the reform of the Council as well as the reform of the United Nations.

Full statement is available [here](#).

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## [Climate change and multilateralism figure high on first day of UN General Assembly debate](#)

"Peru is one of the most vulnerable countries," Peruvian President Martin Vizcarra Cornejo said. "Our great biodiversity is the principal natural capital on which we rely and thus climate change and extreme climatic events like droughts and deluges put us in a particularly vulnerable position."

Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto highlighted the importance of implementing the UN's [Paris climate accord](#), which seeks to avoid the most catastrophic effects of climate change by keeping global warming well below 2 degrees Celsius above industrial levels by the end of the century.

President Hilda Heine of the Marshall Islands, a low-lying Pacific atoll nation little more than one metre above sea level, which is threatened with annihilation by rising oceans, [called for](#) urgent implementation of the Paris accord.

President Hilda Heine of the Republic of the Marshall Islands addresses the seventy-third session of the United Nations General Assembly. UN Photo/Cia Pak

“The future of the Marshall Islands hangs in the balance,” she warned. “But it is not just us, even if, as an atoll nation, we are the most vulnerable. We are joined not only by other [small island developing States](#), but many other countries who face serious challenges posed by climate impacts.”

Seychelles President Danny Faure [warned](#) that peace and prosperity cannot be disassociated from the effects of climate change and its existential threat to the world as a whole. “Neglecting the effects of climate change will pass on to the next generation a world beyond repair,” he said.

Speaking from the opposite spectrum of low-lying island States, President Sooronbay Jeenbekov of the high mountain Central Asian nation of Kyrgyzstan, [warned](#) that climate change is having an increasing impact on the glaciers and water resources in his country, contributing to the growth of natural disasters.

Neglecting the effects of climate change will pass on to the next generation a world beyond repair – *Seychelles President Danny Faure*

Many leaders recounted the problems and achievements of their own countries. But they also highlighted the UN Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), which seek to eliminate a host of social ills in an environmentally friendly way by 2030, and underscored the UN’s prime role in attaining the global partnership needed to combat climate change and resolve a slew of other problems, including the current worldwide migration crisis.

A discordant note came from United States President Donald Trump, who rejected the ideology of globalism, opposed the new [Global Compact on Migration](#), scheduled to be adopted in Morocco in December, and complained that the US’s trading partners had taken advantage of it, explaining his policy of unilaterally imposing billions of dollars in import tariffs.



UN Photo/Cia Pak

President Alain Berset of the Swiss Confederation addresses the seventy-third session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Delivering a sound [argument against this position](#) was Swiss President Alain Berset, who bemoaned the “tendency at the moment” to seek answers to such problems as globalization, inequality, conflict, extremism, migration and climate change “in nationalist isolation and in a growing mistrust with regard to cooperation between States.”

“We are witnessing a real crisis in multilateralism – paradoxically at the very moment when we are trying to forge the main pillars of the global governance of the future,” he said. “The United Nations is indispensable and ideally placed to tackle contemporary challenges, especially the fight against inequality.”

He also decried “policies relying on trade protectionism and selfish interests” that undermine trade and prosperity, and reiterated his country's support for the [International Criminal Court] as “this unique international cooperative effort in favour of the victims of the most serious crimes.”

The defense of multilateralism must begin here ... The UN and its members need to show their will to act together, not past each other – *Finnish President Sauli Niinistö*

Brazil's President Michel Temer also made the case against protectionism. “Protectionism may even sound seductive, but it is through openness and integration that harmony, growth and progress can be achieved,” he said. He also underlined the importance of adopting the he Global Compact for Migration.

Finnish President Sauli Niinistö also [championed multilateralism](#).



“Unfortunately, there is now reason to be worried for all of us who believe in the benefits of multilateralism,” he said. “The international system we have built together is visibly under pressure. Its capability and credibility are questioned. We can no longer take the rules-based order for granted. It is our common responsibility to actively defend and develop it.”

He called the UN “the core of the multilateral system. “Therefore, the defense of multilateralism must begin here,” he said. “The UN and its members need to show their will to act together, not past each other.”

President Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa addresses the seventy-third session of the United Nations General Assembly. UN Photo/Cia Pak

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa also [robustly defended](#) multilateralism. “We must resist any and all efforts to undermine the multilateral approach to international trade, which is essential to the promotion of stability and predictability in the global

economy, he declared.

Many speakers declared their support for the Global Compact on Migration. “We look forward to its adoption in Marrakech later this year,” Nigeria’s President Muhammadu Buhari [said](#), noting that irregular migration is not a consequence of conflicts alone, but of the effects of climate change and lack of opportunities at home, calling climate change “one of the greatest challenges of our time.”

While stressing the importance of multilateralism, Rwandan President Paul Kagame [highlighted](#) the need for “real multilateralism, where it has too often been lacking.

“The current two-track system of global governance is unsustainable,” he said. “A few get to be the ones to define the norms by which others shall be judged. But standards that do not apply to everyone equally are not universal. Addressing this imbalance in the very foundation of our system is what will give shape to a revival of multilateral cooperation, and renew the legitimacy of the international institutions, that are so crucial to our planet’s future.”

Every nation is important and we all have something to offer  
– *Malawi’s President Arthur Peter Mutharika*

Ecuador’s President Lenin Moreno Garces gave a personal dimension to the value of UN compacts, treaties and conventions, sharing his personal story of suffering an assault 20 years ago that cost him the mobility of his legs. “I see the world from the height of the heart,” he said, referring to his stature in a wheelchair.

“This is not just my story, but that of one billion people in the world,” he

added, calling the UN [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), and its optional protocol, “the best guarantee that, together, we will develop a commitment.”

But it was Malawi’s President Arthur Peter Mutharika who perhaps best captured the true essence of the UN. “Every nation is important and we all have something to offer,” he [declared](#). “There are no minorities here. There are no small nations here. There are only nations in the United Nations.”

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## [Dialogue and multilateralism key to tackling global challenges France’s Macron says at UN, urging leaders not to accept ‘our world unraveling’](#)

Deploing what he saw as a “deep crisis” of the traditional international order, French President Emmanuel Macron on Tuesday warned from the rostrum of the United Nations General Assembly against the temptation towards unilateralism and pleaded for a “new global balance”, crafted by all countries working together.

Faced with the world’s “new instability,” the French President advocated for the advent of a “new balance, based on new forms of regional and international cooperation”.

He reaffirmed key principles in this regard: respect for sovereignty, “the foundation of the [Charter](#)”, the strengthening of regional cooperation and the strengthening of international engagement through the United Nations.

In order to address the “demographic, climate and digital challenges,” he told leaders gathered in New York for the Assembly’s annual general debate that he believed in “universal values, the non-negotiable defense of our values,” such as equality of individuals or gender equality.

Similarly, he argued, human rights “are not a cultural fact, but a body of law enshrined in international treaties”.

### **Enhanced cooperation**

Expressing deep belief in the sovereignty of peoples and, at the same time, enhanced cooperation with multilateral forums and “renewed legitimacy of the United Nations.” Mr. Macron cited several examples related to conflicts, first and foremost Syria, where solutions must be “driven by the Astana Process Guarantors, other regional States or others, and under the auspices



of the United Nations”.

Similarly, in the face of terrorism, he said “we are strong when States can count on their own strengths and rely on forms of regional cooperation”, citing as models the joint forces set up in the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin region.

In this regard, he called for “a better articulation between the United Nations and the African Union” and called for the adoption of a Security Council resolution in that regard “before the end of the year”.

## **Multilateralism in retreat**

“At a time where our collective system is falling apart, sadly, it is most in demand,” he said, adding that France will be there to remind everyone that nationalism always leads to defeat. If courage is lacking in the defence of fundamental principles, global war is a threat.

“Only collective action allows for the upholding of the sovereignty and equality of the,” Mr. Macron said. “This is the reason we must take action against climate, demographic and digital challenges. No one alone can tackle these.”

Acknowledging that some might be tired of multilateralism, he implored people to resist the urge to view it as “trendy”. It was genocide that led to the United Nations, he said, recalling the atrocities of the Second World War and the complacency of the international community at that time. But France is a country that has always fought for universality, he said, imploring people to not succumb to indifference and to not accept history unravelling. “Our children are watching,” he said. “Let us do this on a human level.”