

[Southern African leaders, at General Assembly, call for levelling the economic playing field](#)

20 September 2017 – Warning that Africa is beset by the double scourge of the disparity of the global economy and illicit financial outflows, South African President Jacob Zuma today called on the United Nations to play a central role in tackling both issues, which are major obstacle to full development.

“The current structure of the global economy continues to deepen the divide between the global north and global south,” he told the General Assembly’s 72nd annual general debate. “While a few enjoy the benefits of globalization, the majority of the world’s peoples still live in abject poverty and hunger, with no hope of ever improving their living conditions.

“We need the political will and commitment from global leaders to address the challenges and obstacles posed by this untransformed structure of the global economy, if we hope to achieve the goals and ambitions of Agenda 2030,” he added, referring to the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) which aim to eliminate a host of social ills, such as hunger and diseases, all by 2030.

Mr. Zuma stressed that Africa continues to lose a significant chunk of its resources through illicit financial outflows, billions of dollars which would otherwise be used to develop the continent, and provide education, healthcare, housing and other critical basic needs, with money laundering, corruption, and transfer pricing by among multinational companies among the biggest challenges.

“We appeal for the cooperation and commitment of every member state of the United Nations, and the International community at large to address this phenomenon,” he said.

“Developed countries in particular, have a historic and moral obligation to contribute to achieving a fair global economic environment, and to eradicate the scourge of illicit financial flows from the continent. The UN should also be at the centre of addressing this problem.”

[Full statement available here](#)



Hage Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia, addresses the general debate of the General Assembly’s seventy-second session. UN Photo/Cia Pak

Also addressing the Assembly today, Hage G. Geingob, the President of Namibia, highlighted the importance of a “development that reaches all people in an equitable manner”.

“Growing income disparities, between nations and within nations, poses the greatest threat for peace within countries and globally,” he said the Assembly’s 72nd annual general debate, stressing that as long as there’s poverty and income inequality in Namibia, lasting peace and social justice would not be achieved.

President Geinbog also noted the Namibian support of gender equality and the importance of including women and girls in development, as well as the youth. “We, in Namibia, believe that gender equity is equally important for a stable and harmonious society,” he added, recognizing also the contribution of women in promoting global peace.

He also expressed the importance of seeing Africa as an “important and equal partner of the international community, with a contribution to make,” instead of “only a source of primary commodities”.

“It is only through unity, that we will bring about a world free from hunger and poverty. It is only through unity, that we will deliver a sustainable planet for our children and their children,” he concluded.

[Full statement available here](#)



Arthur Peter Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, addresses the general debate of the General Assembly’s seventy-second session. UN Photo/Cia Pak

In the same vein, Arthur Peter Mutharika, the President of Malawi underscored that it is the responsibility of the current generation of world leaders to ensure that their actions offer hope of a better future to the next generation.

“The adoption of the [2030 Agenda](#) reflects our global resolve to address the most pressing challenges in the spirit of the human collaboration,” he said, adding that unity among nations is indispensable.

“The cause that rallies us together is that we are one humanity, on one planet. This is the tie that binds us all. All our differences and national interests are secondary to this overriding cause,” he declared.

In particular, the President noted the growing impact of climate change, such as through natural disasters, on the most vulnerable and that his country – where 85 per cent of the populations depend on agriculture – crop failures are a tragedy.

“Therefore,” he added, “let me appeal to all Member States to consider strategies and avenues for collaboration for us to adapt to the fast-changing climate.”

In conclusion, he also spoke against nuclear weapons, noting that it remains the existential threat to humanity, and said that the idea of keeping such

weapons “questions the wisdom of mankind.”

Expressing his country’s categorical disapproval of the spread of ballistic missile technology, he added: “This should not be tolerated in any way by any Member State of the UN.”

[Full statement available here](#)



King Mswati III of Swaziland addresses the general debate of the General Assembly’s seventy-second session. UN Photo/Cia Pak

Also today, expressing his country’s commitment to implementing the [SDGs](#), King Mswati III of Swaziland, highlighted national initiatives to mainstream and localize the global development goals through awareness raising, consultations and education at all levels.

“[We have] also integrated the goals into the National Development Strategy, which was revised to capture its linkages with the SDGs and the African Union Agenda 2063,” he said.

In his address, King Mswati III, also underlined the urgency to mitigate the challenges arising from climate change, which is already showing its impact through severe droughts, new patterns of pest infestation, as well as hurricanes, floods and landslides.

“We urge donors and all nations, to not only fulfil their pledge towards the ‘green fund,’ but also to adopt policies to strike the correct balance between production of essential products and environmental sustainability to protect and preserve the world for future generations.”

Further in his address, the leader of Swaziland also spoke of social development in his country, noting progress in tackling poverty, hunger and disease, and improving the lives of the people.

In conclusion, he also highlighted the importance of South-South cooperation as well as capacity building, enhanced resources and technology transfer to help lower-middle-income countries and to least developed countries.

[Full statement available here](#)



Hery Martial Rajaonarimampianina Rakotoarimanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar, addresses the general debate of the General Assembly’s seventy-second session. UN Photo/Cia Pak

Similarly, highlighting Madagascar’s key poverty alleviation initiatives, President Hery Martial Rajaonarimampianina Rakotoarimanana, thanking international support enabled the country to do so.

“I can say that since 2016, Madagascar raised \$6.4 billion in global investment and aid from institutional donors,” the President announced in his address to the General Assembly.

This feat, he explained was made possible through the easing of political conflicts in his country.

He added that this injection of funds allowed Madagascar to start investing in the key sectors of its economy and for the future of the country.

Thanks to this funding, Madagascar is now working to reduce poverty in a sustainable manner, reaching 92 per cent of the population, he noted, highlighting that policies setting up basic infrastructure in several sectors is also starting to bear fruit, including agriculture, livestock, energy and fisheries.

The President also announced health projects, including the launching of a universal health coverage scheme, the reduction of maternal and infant mortality through a strengthening of the network of health centres, an increase in the Government budget on nutrition, and an advanced epidemiological surveillance system that would allow the Government to monitor some 28 epidemic-prone diseases in real time.

“One year to go to the 2018 Presidential elections, after hard work and continuous determination, I can say that Madagascar has reached a milestone and a stage that now allow room for hope,” the country’s leader expressed.

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

[Window of opportunity for peace in Mali ‘slowly narrowing,’ warns Secretary-General](#)

20 September 2017 – Speaking at a ministerial meeting at United Nations Headquarters, [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today voiced concern over the delayed implementation of the peace agreement in Mali.

“We meet less than a year before the next presidential election,” [said](#) Mr. Guterres, stressing that the coming months will be an opportunity for Malians and their institutions to show their dedication to peace and the rule of law.

Noting that municipal elections in November last year were not held in all regions and suffered a low turnout, he encouraged the Malian authorities to ensure the success of the presidential election.

He added that numerous delays and slow implementation of critical provisions of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali are always a cause of concern, including the postponement of the review of the Constitution.

Delays in security sector reform related to the redeployment of the reformed and reconstituted Malian defence and security forces in the centre and north are also to be noted.

Mr. Guterres added that a number of achievements were recorded in recent months encompassing security, development, reductions in community violence, efforts to prevent the recruitment of youth.

“Yet the country’s achievements – that are remarkable – remain fragile, especially in light of the recent confrontations between armed groups and recurring attacks,” he went on. “Trust is being tested but we welcome the signature, earlier today, of a ceasefire agreement between the two signatory movements which also re-emphasizes their commitment to the implementation of the peace agreement.”

New institutions, processes and laws have yet to translate into significant improvements in the daily lives of Malians, the Secretary-General stated, adding that inclusivity, especially of women, youth and other under-represented social groups, remains insufficient, and constraints to humanitarian access persist.

“The window of opportunity for the Government to provide long-awaited peace dividends is slowly narrowing,” said Mr. Guterres.

The UN chief also urged the international community to ensure unity of purpose in financially and logistically supporting regional undertaking, such as the G5 Sahel Joint Force, to combat terrorism and transnational organized crime because, if successful, the Force can not only contribute to an enabling environment for the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali to fully implement its mandate but also advance progress in the Malian peace process.

But the most sustainable solution remains the strengthening of Mali’s own security architecture, Mr. Guterres said, stressing that the absence of a comprehensive strategy for security sector reform needs to be urgently addressed.

‘Relentless reality of climate change’ transforming long-held notions about development, Chile tells UN

20 September 2017 – Catastrophes such as the most recent devastating

earthquake in Mexico and the successive hurricanes that have hit the Latin American and Caribbean region “remind us that we are at a key moment in human history in which the notion of development that has prevailed until now has been shaken by the relentless reality of climate change,” the President of Chile told the United Nations General Assembly today.

“We can close our eyes and deny a reality whose devastating effects will become more frequent and intense, or assume our responsibility,” Michelle Bachelet said in her address to the Assembly’s annual general debate, where she reiterated the need to join the fight against climate change, because in fact: “there is no space for denial.”

She went on to say that the biggest strength of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development was that all the people of the world must implement it together. In that regard, Chile had established a green tax on carbon emissions in its energy sector and had moved from 6.3 to 17 per cent renewable energy. It is also active in pushing forth ocean initiatives. Some 8 million tons of plastic reached the sea each year, enormously impacting the world’s oceans.

Prohibiting the use of plastic bags in coastal cities is critical to protecting the ocean, going on to outline various initiatives Chile has undertaken to protect its biodiversity. Sustainable development is not “an impossible dream to finance,” Ms. Bachelet stressed.

Describing some challenges currently facing her country, both in the political and business world, she underscored efforts which were particularly focused on making both sectors more inclusive, including through the establishment of a quota to include women in Government.

On Venezuela, she called for concrete results regarding the full restoration of democracy. She also expressed concern for the conflicts in the Middle East and some parts in Africa, and the increasing tension on the Korean Peninsula. It is essential to resolve all those challenges through diplomacy, she stressed, adding that “it is possible to completely eliminate nuclear weapons.”

[Full statement \(in Spanish\) available here](#)

Human rights a precondition for peace; dialogue ‘only way’ to make it sustainable, Montenegro tells UN

20 September 2017 – Reiterating Montenegro’s strong commitment to multilateral cooperation, President Filip Vujanović told the Assembly today

that his country puts good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation in the Balkans at the top of its foreign policy agenda.

He noted the region's success in dialogue and cooperation as the only way to achieve sustainable peace, announcing that early next year Montenegro would organize a regional conference to help in defining new mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution.

Montenegro unequivocally supports nuclear non-proliferation, he said, calling the Non-Proliferation Treaty "a foundation for improvement of the global stability." The country "strongly condemns nuclear weapons tests conducted by North Korea as an act that violates international obligations [...] and poses a serious threat to global peace and security."

Stressing that respect for human rights is a precondition for peace, stability and development, the President said his country attaches special attention to: strengthening the position and role of women in society and prevention of violence against women; child protection and development; fight against discrimination of LGBTI [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex] population and persons with disabilities.

Turning to humanitarian assistance, which is much needed for civilians in conflicts and natural disasters, Mr. Vujanović said Montenegro has invested significant efforts to ensure appropriate legislative and strategic framework for financing international development cooperation and humanitarian assistance.

[Full statement available here](#)

[Growing number of rights defenders facing reprisals for cooperating with UN](#)

20 September 2017 – A growing number of human rights defenders around the world are facing reprisals and intimidation for cooperating with the United Nations, ranging from travel bans and the freezing of assets to detention and torture, says a new report issued by the world body.

"It is frankly nothing short of abhorrent that, year after year, we are compelled to present cases of intimidation and reprisals carried out against people whose crime – in the eyes of their governments – was to cooperate with UN institutions and mechanisms," said Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Andrew Gilmour.

"We should see these individuals as the canary in the coalmine, bravely

singing until they are silenced by this toxic backlash against people, rights and dignity – as a dark warning to us all,” Mr. Gilmour told the Human Rights Council in Geneva, as he presented the Secretary-General’s report.

The report, the eighth of its kind, names 29 countries where cases of reprisal and intimidation have been documented; this is higher than the previous highest number of 20. Eleven of the States are current members of the Human Rights Council, a [news release](#) pointed out. Some have featured in the annual report on reprisals nearly every year since it was instituted in 2010.

“People engaging with the United Nations experienced intimidation, harassment, threats online and offline, derogatory media campaigns, travel bans, arbitrary arrests and detention, enforced disappearances, torture and ill-treatment, disbarment, and dismissal from their posts, amongst other measures,” the report says.

“Beyond the grave impact on the life of persons concerned and their relatives, intimidation and reprisals also systematically undermine United Nations action on human rights and shake partners’ trust in the Organization,” it adds.

Mr. Gilmour told the Council that the problem was much more widespread than presented in the report.

“Since this report is limited to reprisals against people cooperating with the UN, the cases covered in it represent only a small portion of a far more generalized backlash against civil society and others challenging State authorities, especially human rights defenders,” he noted.

The report urges all States to stop reprisals, investigate existing allegations, provide effective remedies and adopt and implement measures to prevent recurrence.