

At UN, Central American leaders urge 'rethink' of system used to classify development status

19 September 2017 – In his address to the United Nations General Assembly, Costa Rican President Luis Guillermo Solís Rivera called for the UN to rethink the concept of per capita income as a reference for determining a country's development, stressing that only a multidimensional vision of development and poverty will allow an understanding of the needs of populations and families.

This would include issues such as access to healthcare, social equality, gender equality, and address social, economic, and environmental vulnerabilities and is especially relevant to the needs of middle-income countries.

He also highlighted the crucial importance of gender equality. "Every day, women strive for a world where the full recognition and exercise of their rights is more tangible," he said. "Their fights are inherent to the building of truly democratic societies and the inclusive coexistence in all our countries."

Turning to climate change he said there is enough evidence to support the idea that a transformative solution to climate change is within human capabilities.



President Juan Orlando Hernández Alvarado of Honduras addresses the General Assembly's annual general debate. UN Photo/Cia Pak

In his remarks, Juan Orlando Hernandez Alvarado, President of Honduras, said his administration is building a "new Honduras" by tackling violent crime and restoring its economy. Together with Guatemala, Honduras is creating a zone dedicated to the free circulation of goods, services and people. He said negotiations are under way with El Salvador and Nicaragua to join the agreement.

Honduras, along with El Salvador and Nicaragua, and with the support of the Central American Bank for Economic Integration, set up the Gulf of Fonseca Development Plan, which will create a pole of economic development. In addition, the implementation of the economic development program "Honduras 2020" provides for the creation of 600,000 jobs over the next five years.

The President also welcomed the progress made by his country in terms of transparency and the fight against corruption. "We have purged the national police, created anti-corruption tribunals and strengthened the Ministry of Public Security," he said, in addition to signing an agreement with the

Organization of American States (OAS) corruption and impunity.

However, he continued, the fight against poverty is the “priority” in the programme of governments of developing countries. “We must overcome the structural conditions that exclude entire sections of our societies,” he said, adding that poverty is the cause of migration, insecurity and violence. He also denounced the classification system used by developed countries to measure the level of development aid, explaining that Honduras, considered as a middle-tier country, is penalized.

Concluding his speech, the President said that migrants are the “new martyrs and new heroes” of our time who have to face all the challenges before they can bring their talents and dedication to their host countries. Honduras, he said, was “making every effort” to improve the living conditions of its citizens so that they did not have to leave their country in search of opportunities.

No alternative to international cooperation, stresses Austrian minister at UN Assembly

19 September 2017 – Conflicts around the globe, as well as the pressing challenges of poverty, hunger and climate change continue to exact terrible human suffering, said Sebastian Kurz, the Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of Austria, noting that the most concerning issue is the lack of trust in the ability of States and institutions to solve these challenges.

“This is a dangerous development because there is no alternative to international cooperation,” he said, addressing the 72nd annual general debate at the United Nations General Assembly.

Speaking on terrorism, he underscored that in addition to destroying radical groups militarily where they operate, more action needs to be taken to stop radicalism in societies and to prevent youths from being misled.

He also underscored that the migration crisis, could not be managed by any one country on its own.

“Uncontrolled migration leads to chaos, therefore, we need to manage orderly migration and support people as much as possible in their countries of origin,” he added, noting the need for more effective control of borders, combatting the activities of human traffickers and effective support for countries of origin.

Turning to the crisis emanating from the nuclear weapons development programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Minister Kurz reiterated that nuclear disarmament remained the "number one unfinished business."

"Today, we often hear that nuclear weapons are necessary for security. This narrative is not only wrong, it is dangerous," he said, urging support for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, adopted in July at a UN conference.

Concluding his remarks, he noted that a time when universal values are under threat, the international community needs to stand strong for human rights, rule of law and good governance. "I can assure you that Austria will continue to work for effective international cooperation."

[Full statement available here](#)

Bolivia's Morales, at UN, says natural resources, basic necessities must be viewed as human rights

19 September 2017 – While some pledges made in the United Nations Charter have been met, "others have come to nothing," the President of Bolivia told the General Assembly today, that the planet's precious resources and vulnerable people must be protected from greed and exploitation by political elites.

"After more than 70 years, instead of progress, we are moving backwards," Evo Morales told delegations at the Assembly's annual general debate, where he denounced what he called the "abusive, wildcat consumer market" that is supporting capitalism and colonialism and sparking crises that were destroying the lives of millions of people worldwide

He said history has shown that the seizure of natural resources and political world domination led to invasion, the fall of governments, "creating chaos in order to benefit from it." Many such invasions had given rise of terrorist groups, which in turn led to even greater harms against civilians.

Indeed, wars and violent conflicts persisted, while 2017 was the hottest year in world history. Emphasizing that all countries must comply with the [Paris Agreement](#), Mr. Morales said it was unjustifiable that the United States had decided to turn its back on that instrument. That country was among the main polluters and its Government has now become a threat to Mother Earth. All countries must comply with the accord and work jointly to save the planet.

'Water is the lifeblood of Mother Earth,' he continued, and that resource must be respected, shared and protected for future generations. Bolivia promoted the recognition of water as a human right, he said, noting that its Constitution prohibited the exploitation of that resource for profit. Where water flowed, so too did peace, he said, adding that it must never be a source of conflict.

Mr. Morales went on to say that the "gulf between those who have everything and those who have virtually nothing" is growing wider every year. "Inequality is immoral," he said, going on to condemn the building of walls and passing of laws that criminalize migration. To that end, he called for the creation of a form of "universal citizenship," saying there should be no difference between a foreigner and a national.

[Transfer of power essential to strengthen democracy, Sri Lankan President says at UN Assembly](#)

19 September 2017 – Noting that history is marked with leaders who have sought to consolidate power within themselves, the President of Sri Lanka today underscored that as leaders come into power, they must yield it to build democratic institutions and safeguard democracies.

"I have established democracy in my country and have taken action to get rid of political groups which were moving toward autocracy," stated President Maithripala Sirisena, noting that since being elected in 2015, he had transferred executive powers to his country's Parliament.

In his address to the 72nd annual general debate at the United Nations General Assembly, President Sirisena further said that Sri Lanka had suffered a protracted conflict, lasting over 30 years and having devastating impact on the country's economy.

Therefore, sustainable development must be a priority for Sri Lanka, he added, noting that it should also be a global priority.

Stressing the worsening impact of climate change around the world, he also said that the implementation of the [Paris Agreement](#) on climate change was essential for the future of humanity, and highlighted that Sri Lanka is focused on sustainable agriculture.

Concluding his remarks, he said that national reconciliation is important, particularly given the country's diverse population and expressed that while certain elements expected fast results which he said would merely be "short-term solutions."

Sri Lanka wants to create peace and unity and to promote brotherhood among its people through prosperity, he added, noting: “ours is a slow and steady pace.”

[During our difficult times, ‘we knew we had friends,’ says Gambian President Barrow](#)

19 September 2017 – Noting that the recent political crisis in Gambia had been a lesson that his compatriots will not easily forget, the Adama Barrow, the country’s President underscored that Gambians made an irreversible choice to close a “dark chapter” in their history and embarked on a national agenda of reform and transformation.

“During those difficult times, we knew we had friends, ones who came to our aid and who have since kept faith with us,” the President said, thanking Economic Community of West African States ([ECOWAS](#)) for their timely and firm intervention to bring peace to his country.

“Thanks to your collective efforts, the Gambia is now on a solid path to peace and good governance, and ready to take over our traditional role among the champions of human rights and democracy,” he added.

He also announced that the country was in the process of re-joining the Commonwealth as well as the International Criminal Court.

“Although the Gambia did not go through armed conflict [...] we were on the brink of political violence and armed conflict,” he expressed, thanking the United Nations in West Africa, the UN Peace Building Commission and the Peace Building Support Office for the important support they rendered to the country.

Concluding his remarks, President Barrow noted that given the range of its functions, the UN would always require some level of reform of its management systems.

“As you embark on your proposed reforms, we stand ready to give you our full support in the interest of an effective and more relevant world body,” he said, adding also the need for Security Council reform.

[Full statement available here](#)