

At UN, Colombian President says country's successful peace process could serve as model for others

19 September 2017 – In his final address to the United Nations General Assembly as President of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos delivered a message of peace and highlighted the results of the agreement reached between his Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP), which he described as a model for the rest of the world.

“If we were able to put an end to an armed conflict in Colombia that has left hundreds of thousands dead and millions of victims and displaced persons, there is hope for other ongoing conflicts in the world,” stated Mr. Santos Calderón in his address to delegations attending the Assembly’s annual general debate.

Colombia had succeeded thanks to political will and an awareness that peace is a necessary condition for both progress and happiness. Paying tribute to the United Nations, he said a special mission had been established by the Security Council to verify and monitor the disarmament of FARC, as well as the ceasefire between the guerrillas and the Government. More than 900,000 weapons had been destroyed and members of the former guerrilla groups had created a political movement to defend their ideas in a democratic manner.

“This is what a peace process is all about,” he exclaimed, “replacing bullets for votes and ending the use of weapons as a means for political pressure,” said Mr. Santos Calderón, explaining that in the coming days, another mission recently authorized by the Security Council would be established to reintegrate guerrillas into civil life, he said, and ensure security to both the former combatants and communities that had suffered from armed conflict. Turning to wider issues, he said expressed concern at the situation in Venezuela and the gradual dismantling of its democracy. He called upon the Secretary General and the international community to support the Venezuelan people. Turning to terrorism, he said it should be tackled with every means possible – military, political, intelligence and international cooperation – while its roots of fear, exclusion and hate must be replaced with love, compassion and respect for difference.

More broadly, the war on drugs had not yet been won and new strategies were needed, he said, pressing States to include human rights in their policies against drugs. Colombia’s vulnerability to climate change had paved the way for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)).

[Mali's President, at General Assembly, calls on world to help equip regional anti-terror force](#)

19 September 2017 – Mali's President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita took the podium of the General Assembly today to praise United Nations efforts in aiding his West African country recover from rebel attacks, and called on the international community to help fund a new five-nation force to combat terrorism in the region.

"I am duty-bound to hail the remarkable work of the civilian and military personnel of MINUSMA, who work in conditions that I know are difficult, even often perilous," he told the Assembly on the opening day of its 72nd annual general debate, referring to the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali.

MINUSMA was established by the Security Council in 2013 after extremists took over part of the north of the country. The Mission currently has over 12,000 uniformed personnel and 1,350 civilians deployed to support the political processes and carry out security-related tasks in the country which has suffered from continuing rebel and terrorist attacks.

Mr. Keita said the UN Security Council-endorsed G5 Sahel group, comprising Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad, is slated to deploy its first joint force next month to combat terrorism and drugs, arms and human trafficking throughout Africa's sub-Saharan Sahel region.

"I call on friendly countries and partner international organizations to support the G5 Sahel joint force with equipment, logistics, communications. Emergency medical evacuations and the fight against improvised explosive devices," he added.

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

[In wake of Hurricane Irma, UN launches \\$55 million plan to assist Cubans in need](#)

19 September 2017 – The United Nations system in Cuba today launched an action plan requiring \$55.8 million to address the urgent needs of over 2 million people severely affected by Irma, the strongest hurricane ever

reported in the Atlantic.

Earlier this month, Hurricane Irma left a wake of destruction on several islands in the Caribbean, affecting Antigua and Barbuda, Anguilla, the British Virgin Islands, St. Barthélemy, St. Martin, the United States Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Cuba, the Bahamas, Turks and Caicos and other islands in the Caribbean Sea, affecting millions of people and resulting in massive economic damage across the region.

UN agencies have been assisting with response and recovery efforts, and the Organization launched a \$15.1 million regional humanitarian response plan, covering the urgent needs of the most vulnerable populations impacted.

Initial assessments found that a number of critical areas in Cuba have been severely affected, including housing, access to potable water and electric power services, health and education institutions, roads and telecommunications.

The [plan of action](#) includes projects in shelter and early recovery; food security; water, hygiene and sanitation; health; education; and coordination. Special attention will be given to assisting priority groups such as the elderly, pregnant women and infants, and young children.

[At UN, Central European Leaders spotlight development, countering terrorism and securing peace](#)

19 September 2017 – Sustainable development, ensuring peace and security and protecting human rights are the basic goals of the international community and the foundations of the United Nations system, Andrzej Duda, the President of Poland, told the General Assembly today.

Mr. Duda pointed out that Poland has adopted and is fully committed to the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, saying: “We believe that only by means of an effective implementation, will we be able to ensure relevant socio-economic conditions for everyone.

For a number of years, the country has fulfilled its obligations to protect the environment and fight climate change. He noted that Poland surpassed its Kyoto Protocol reduction target, made ambitious contributions to the [Paris Agreement](#) and will, for the third time, host the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. “We will continue the leadership in climate negotiations in the spirit of the Paris Agreement, ensuring the participation of all States and the transparency of discussions,” he stressed.

He went on to note that human rights are withheld in too many parts of the world, with persecution of persons belonging to religious minorities, including Christians, “a particularly visible problem,” which Poland strongly condemns, along with all instances of persecution and discrimination based on religion.

“‘Solidarity-Responsibility-Engagement’ are the values that we unceasingly seek to promote in the international arena [...] to produce sustainable development, security and peace not only for now, but also for future generations to come,” concluded Mr. Duda.

[Full statement available here](#)



President Miloš Zeman of the Czech Republic addresses the General Assembly’s annual general debate. UN Photo/Cia Pak

For his part, Miloš Zeman, President of the Czech Republic, told the Assembly that a terror-based anti-civilization had emerged over the last few decades, stressing that “we all express solidarity with the victims and organize protests, but, unfortunately, we still hesitate to fight terrorist organizations with full power.”

He welcomed the Secretary-General’s new Office for Counter-Terrorism as a reasonable and practical solution along with the appointment of its Under-Secretary-General to solve problems in the fight against Islamic terrorism.

The President recalled that, one year ago, he had criticized the UN for not being able to define the word terrorism, noting that there were currently 38 anti-terrorist organizations and institutions under the UN umbrella and pointing out that as that number increased, more terrorist organizations flourished. He also called for the use of military force against terrorism – in accord with Article 47 of the UN Charter.

On the other side of the same coin he pointed to the issue of migration, which, citing Syria and Iraq, he said was often provoked by terrorist actions. Mr. Zeman also underscored the concern that terrorists often hid within migrant populations. Citing Africa, he flagged the issue of “brain drain” – or the weakening of potential in those countries – with large migration flows. The Czech President explained that by welcoming migrants in Europe, countries are fuelling the brain drain phenomenon, and in turn, reversing progress in countries of origin.

Mr. Zeman concluded by saying the war on terrorism should be based on “historical optimism.” He gave the example of Barcelona, in which the Spanish people said they were not afraid, and recalled United States President Franklin Roosevelt’s proclamation of ‘freedom from fear.’ Mr. Zeman echoed what he called the most beautiful expression of historical optimism by quoting theologian Martin Luther: “If I knew that it would be doomsday tomorrow, I shall go today and plant an apple tree.”



Andrej Kiska, President of the Slovak Republic, addresses the Assembly's annual general debate. UN Photo/Cia Pak

Also address the Assembly, the President of Slovakia, Andrej Kiska, opened his speech highlighting the need to build safe, healthy, prosperous and just societies for all people to live a dignified life, telling the Assembly that it is not a mere ambition, "It's our duty. It's the reason why our people trust us with the power to act on their behalf."

While Mr. Kiska called "the respect for the principles of peace and security" essential, he observed that "far too many are dying in senseless conflicts or suffering in displacement" – pointing out that armed conflicts and the resulting refugee crisis "depletes the much-needed resources for social and economic development."

The President censured short-sighted interests that are built on spreading instability and undermining collective efforts towards peace and security for crippling "the very core of the UN Charter for securing peaceful coexistence among nations."

While naming Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova as sovereign nations being undermined by an aggressive neighbour, Mr. Kiska cited the Democratic Republic of Korea as "one of the worst threats to international peace and security in recent history."

"I strongly call on the North Korean regime to terminate its development of weapons of mass destruction and to return on the path of dialogue and building peace in the Korean Peninsula," he underscored.

[Full statement available here](#)

Netanyahu, at General Assembly, denounces 'absurdities,' anti-Semitism in UN decisions

19 September 2017 – Citing "a great revolution in Israel's standing" in the world, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu today denounced the "absurdities" and "global anti-Semitism" in United Nations decisions on Israel and warned Iran of the "mortal peril" it faced in threatening to annihilate his country.

"For too long, the epicentre of global anti-Semitism has been right here at the UN," he told the General Assembly on the opening day of its 72nd annual general debate, while praising [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres' statement

“that denying Israel’s right to exist is anti-Semitism, pure and simple.”

Pointing to the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s ([UNESCO](#)) declaring the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron as a Palestinian World Heritage Site, he said: “That’s worse than fake news; that’s fake history,” noting that the tomb is revered as the grave of the three Jewish biblical patriarchs.

Turning to Iran, Mr. Netanyahu warned: “Today, I have a simple message to Ayatollah Khamenei, the dictator of Iran: The light of Israel will never be extinguished.” He cited daily Iranian vows to destroy Israel, and called for “fixing or nixing” the international deal to curb Iran’s nuclear programme, because it is slated to end after 10 years.

“Those who threaten us with annihilation put themselves in mortal peril,” he said, warning that Israel will act to prevent Iran from establishing permanent military bases in Syria and producing deadly weapons in Syria or in Lebanon. “As long as Iran’s regime seeks the destruction of Israel, Iran will face no fiercer enemy than Israel.”

He said Israel’s greater world stature is due the fact so many countries have finally woken up to what Israel can do for them in cutting-edge technology, agriculture, water, cybersecurity, medicine and autonomous vehicles. “After 70 years, the world is embracing Israel, and Israel is embracing the world,” he added.

Mr. Netanyahu made only a passing reference to the Middle East conflict, saying Israel is committed to achieving peace with all its Arab neighbours, including the Palestinians.