

French initiative to create global environment pact deserves support, says Secretary-General

19 September 2017 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today urged global support for France's initiative to create the first international legally binding document on the environment, at an event held on the margins of the annual leaders' summit of the General Assembly.

"It is about [our duty of care](#) to provide an environment that supports the health, well-being, dignity, and prosperity of everyone on this planet," Mr. Guterres said. "Let us support this worthy initiative."

According to the Permanent Mission of France to the UN, which organized the event, threats to the environment are increasingly impacting the survival of mankind and the planet. It is, therefore, urgent to act and build a sustainable future.

However, experts have highlighted a clear legal challenge: international environment law is fragmented in many conventions and international declarations, the Mission noted.

As such, the Global Pact for the Environment will be the first international legally binding document that gathers and harmonizes all environmental laws in one single document.

The objective of today's event, which drew many world leaders, was to launch an important consultation to elaborate the instrument.

Mr. Guterres stressed that the realization of aspirations for peace, prosperity and sustainable development hinges on the health of the planet.

He noted that there will soon be more plastic than fish in the seas and biodiversity is disappearing at a rate one thousand times faster than the natural rate. In addition, 90 per cent of the population is breathing polluted air.

"Our only hope to solve these problems is to join forces to protect the environment," he said, adding that this understanding is already common to both the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015, and the [Paris Agreement](#) on climate change, which entered into force in 2016.

Also addressing the event was General Assembly President Miroslav Lajčák, who said that this proposal deserves consideration and deliberation among Member States and other stakeholders.

Member States need to consider appropriate options for an eventual Global Pact to fit with the more than 500 existing multilateral environmental agreements, he said, while also stressing the need to give due attention to

the three pillars of sustainable development, namely the economic, the social and the environmental, in a balanced, indivisible and comprehensive manner.

He also said that the UN system, civil society, the private sector, academia and other relevant stakeholders need to be involved in this ambitious initiative as inclusiveness is key to delivering an outcome that achieves the needed transformation at all levels.

[World must unite in fight against terrorism, Qatar urges leaders at UN Assembly](#)

19 September 2017 – Underscoring that extremism and terrorism remain the most serious challenges confronting the world, the Amir of Qatar called on leaders to take concerted action against terrorist organizations and their extremist ideologies to maintain global security and stability.

“The Governments of the world have no choice but to cooperate in the security confrontation with terrorism, but halting the initiation of terrorism and extremism could be achieved by addressing its social, political and cultural root causes,” Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the Amir of the State of Qatar, said today at the general debate at the 72nd session of the General Assembly.

He, however, cautioned that the fight against terrorism must not be linked with any particular religion or society. “While reaffirming our condemnation of all forms of extremism and terrorism, we reject tackling this phenomenon with double standards according to the identity of the perpetrators, or by linking it with any particular religion, race, civilization, culture or society,” he added.

In his remarks, the Amir of Qatar also spoke against a blockade imposed on his country as well as against the demands made on it.

“The countries who imposed the unjust blockade on Qatar have intervened in the internal affairs of the State by putting pressure on its citizens through foodstuffs, medicine and ripping off consanguineous relations to force them change their political affiliation to destabilize a sovereign country,” he said.

Recalling his country’s engagement and contributions for humanitarian assistance under UN frameworks, the Amir stressed that Qatar will continue to provide support to alleviate humanitarian suffering, in particular among the affected Syrian communities, the Amir urged for a political solution to the conflict in that country.

Concluding his address, the Amir of Qatar reiterated that the nation continue to work to strengthen the UN and that Qatar will remain, as is always the case, a safe haven for the oppressed, and will continue its mediation efforts to find just solutions in conflict zones.

[Full statement available here](#)

[UN chief hails transformative power of women's economic empowerment](#)

19 September 2017 – Extolling the benefits of women's economic empowerment, both for economies as well as societies as a whole, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today encouraged governments, the private sector, multilateral institutions and others to take measures to achieve the full and equal participation of women in the economy.

"Women's economic empowerment contributes to more stable and resilient economies, and more peaceful societies," Mr. Guterres said in his [remarks](#) to the meeting of the High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment, held at UN Headquarters.

"It is also a necessary condition for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals," he added, referring to the set of goals world leaders pledged to achieve by 2030 to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all.

Today's event, entitled "*Leave No One Behind: Actions and Commitments for Women's Economic Empowerment*," was meant to take forward the recommendations made by the High-Level Panel in a report released in March of this year.

It is the time to take concrete measures to realize our shared vision of gender equality and women's rights in the economy.

The report stressed that building women's economic empowerment must be done in ways that leaves nobody behind, particularly the most marginalized women at the bottom of the pyramid. It also acknowledged that gender inequalities remain persistent across the world, but they can be overcome if barriers are removed.

In his remarks, Mr. Guterres noted that currently, only 50 per cent of women of working age are in the labour force – compared to 77 per cent of men. In addition, women tend to be concentrated also in informal and precarious employment, and they are paid on average 23 per cent less than men and carry out at least two and a half times more unpaid household and care work.

“This is not only detrimental to women, it represents a loss for society as a whole,” he told the gathering, which included the participation of Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, International Monetary Fund Managing Director Christine Lagarde and UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka.

“Studies show that, if women were able to participate equally in the economy, global GDP could increase by 26 per cent – the equivalent of \$12 trillion dollars – by 2025,” he went on to note.

Mr. Guterres called for translating the Panel’s guidance into actions that will bring results for women and girls.

“It is the time to take concrete measures to realize our shared vision of gender equality and women’s rights in the economy.”

[At UN Assembly, Turkey calls on world to fulfil aid pledges for hosting Syrian refugees](#)

19 September 2017 – Stressing that his country has spent over \$30 billion to care for more than three million Syrians and 200,000 Iraqis fleeing war in their own homelands, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan took to the podium of the United Nations General Assembly today to call on the world to fulfil its pledges of aid to conflict torn countries.

“I would like to underscore that we have not received sufficient support from the international community, especially the European Union (EU), for the efforts we have been carrying out,” he told the Assembly on the opening day of its 72nd annual general debate, noting that has sent only 820 million euros out of the 3 billion euros, plus an additional three billion it promised.

Mr. Erdogan said Turkey is waging “an intensive fight against the bloody terrorist organizations in the region such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL or Da’esh) and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), and denounced efforts to change the demographic structure, such as Iraqi Kurdistan’s drive for independence.

“Ignoring the clear and determined stance of Turkey on this matter may lead to a process that shall deprive the Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government even the opportunities they currently enjoy,” he warned.

On the Middle East conflict, he stressed that the internationally endorsed two-state solution can only be possible if Israel immediately stops illegal

settlements on Occupied Palestinian Territory, calling on the international community to support the Palestinian struggle for an independent and geographically unified Palestinian state in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza.

[Full statement available here](#)

No one country can resolve global challenges single-handedly, Zambia stresses at UN Assembly

19 September 2017 – Reaffirming Zambia’s commitment to international cooperation to address the challenges facing the planet, the country’s President today called on world leaders to come together and act boldly for the sake of the shared future.

“In this globalized and inter-dependent world, no country, however wealthy or powerful, can resolve all these challenges single-handedly,” said Edgar Chagwa Lungu, addressing the general debate at the 72nd session of the General Assembly.

“Common solutions are, therefore, required through a strong United Nations,” he added.

In particular, he noted the challenges brought on by the impact of climate change – intensified through the increase in natural disasters – and how future generations remain most vulnerable out of no fault of their own.

Underscoring the importance of UN in addressing challenges in an interlinked and interdependent world, the Zambian President called for reforms, in particular to the Security Council to make the Organization more effective and efficient.

The Security Council needs to be more representative, democratic and accountable to all UN Member States, he said, adding that as Africa constitutes the second largest bloc of the UN Membership, proposals to reform the Council “should heed Africa’s legitimate call.”

Also in his remarks, the President noted important gains registered by the country, based on both the African Union 2063 Agenda and the global [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development and that the agendas have been integrated into the national development planning framework. He also spoke of improvements in agriculture, employment generation, manufacturing as well as on deepening of democracy, rule of law and human rights.

“Zambia continues to make tremendous strides in the campaign to end child marriage [and] we are also repealing a number of discriminatory and outdated statutes related to children [to make it compatible with] the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child,” he said, urging everyone to concentrate on efforts to protect children and youth.

[Full statement available here](#)