

[FEATURE: See what happened when the world came together at the UN](#)

28 September 2017 – Every year in September, world leaders gather at the United Nations in New York for the General Assembly’s annual high-level session. The diplomatic confab draws veteran politicians as well as new faces from all corners of the globe in what is always an interesting and intense week for all involved. Also in attendance are representatives from civil society, academia, the private sector, the media, and the arts and entertainment worlds.

At the centre of it all is the General Assembly, one of the six main organs of the UN and the only one in which all Member States have equal representation: one nation, one vote. All 193 Member States are represented in this unique forum to discuss and work together on a wide array of international issues covered by the UN Charter, such as development, peace and security, human rights and international law.

This year all 193 Member States addressed the 72nd annual general debate, on the theme “Focusing on people: striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet.”

As world leaders began to gather in New York, Secretary-General António Guterres kicked things off by participating in a Facebook Live session moderated by Juju Chang of ABC News. He shared his thoughts on issues such as preventing conflicts, gender equality, what it takes to be a successful diplomat and how individuals can influence the policies that shape the world.

The Assembly debates pressing issues that affect millions of people around the world, including peace and security, human rights and development. Each year, on the eve of the opening of the Assembly’s annual session, a prayer service is held with religious and ecumenical leaders at the Church of the Holy Family in New York City.



UN Photo/Ariana Lindquist

Preparations for the high-level week begin months in advance and involve staff from across the Secretariat, from security and interpretation services to catering and media liaison. Tekila Mitei, left, and Ian Seals, right, who are both with the Department of Safety and Security, help to set up the Delegates Lounge for the official State Luncheon by steaming the flags.

The view from the podium in the General Assembly Hall where world leaders deliver their statements. At this year's general debate, the longest statement lasted 43 minutes and was delivered by the President of the Observer State of Palestine, and the shortest statement, which lasted 5 minutes, was delivered by the President of Lithuania.

The high-level week brought together world leaders from around the globe, including over 100 heads of State and government. Seen here is French President Emmanuel Macron (front, centre left) with Argentinian Vice President Gabriela Michetti (front, centre right) outside the General Assembly Hall on the first day of the general debate.

Thousands of journalists descended on UN Headquarters to cover the myriad events that take place in addition to the speeches delivered by world leaders, including this group awaiting the arrival of delegations to address the general debate.

The SDG Media Zone at UN Headquarters served as a platform for editors, bloggers, content creators and influencers to discuss ways to engage on the Sustainable Development Goals, which commit governments to end poverty, reduce inequalities and protect the planet by 2030. Among the participants were Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed (left) and Alison Smale, Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications.

Attendees at the high-level session included renowned personalities who serve as advocates for a range of issues at the heart of the UN agenda. Among them is Nobel Laureate and UN Messenger of Peace Malala Yousafzai (right), who focuses on girls' education. She is seen here giving an interview to UN News while her father, Ziauddin Yousafzai, looks on.

The high-level week saw UN officials, governments, civil society and celebrities rally around a number of initiatives, including on financing education for all, advancing the Sustainable Development Goals and promoting maternal and child health. Seen here is actor and UN Development Programme Goodwill Ambassador Nikolaj Coster-Waldau shining a light along with other attendees at the launch of the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative for the elimination of violence against women and girls.