

'We cannot abandon' rules-based world order, Singapore urges in UN speech

Multilateralism may have occasionally been “oversold as a panacea”, but the world cannot abandon the rules-based world order which has brought peace and prosperity during the lifetime of the United Nations, Singapore’s Foreign Minister told the United Nations General Assembly on Saturday.

Compliance with agreed rules is not only essential for global stability and the governance, Vivian Balakrishnan said, but also for the very survival of small States such as Singapore. He bemoaned growing inequality within societies across the world, and the looming spectre of a trade war between the United States and China.

Mr. Balakrishnan warned delegates in the General Assembly Hall in New York that the negative impacts of protectionism will ripple through the global supply chain and undermine growth.

Noting the urgent need to promote the adoption of rules and norms in cyberspace, he urged the international community to develop a trusted and open cyberspace underpinned by international law.

A targeted and sophisticated cyber-attack in July on one of Singapore’s national health databases, showed how vulnerable countries are, he said, noting that his nation had been ranked first in cyber-security by the UN International Telecommunication Union ([ITU](#)) last year.

He said Singapore was ready to contribute to the Organization’s work in developing norms and rules on cybersecurity, and especially supported the reconvening of the United Nations Group of Government Experts.

He said it was urgent to promote tougher rules enshrining a trusted and open cyberspace, underpinned by international law.

Turning to regional cooperation, he added that as Chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) this year, Singapore will continue to work with partners to ensure that the regional architecture remains open, inclusive and rules-based.

He noted his country’s small contribution towards easing tension over the Korean Peninsula, by hosting the summit between the leaders of the United States and North Korea (DPRK) in June. The Summit, as well as the three inter-Korean dialogues held this year are important steps towards lasting peace and stability, said the Minister.

As Members of the United Nations, he concluded, all States have a responsibility to work together to improve and adapt the multilateral system, built painstakingly over the last seven decades: “We owe it to our people, to find solutions and to build consensus.”

[Full statement available here.](#)

[‘Lack of trust’ among nations threatens progress, rules-based order, Suriname Minister tells UN](#)

Suriname agrees with the United Nations Secretary-General that a lack of trust among countries is the fundamental issue confronting the international community, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Suriname told UN General Assembly on Saturday.

Yldiz Pollack-Beighle affirmed her nation’s commitment to upholding internationally accepted principles which “provide for predictable actions in our international relations, thereby creating a climate of trust, understanding and respect,” and a “rules-based world order which is necessary to address global concerns.”

A major concern for Suriname is climate change and, in particular, as a low lying coastal state, the rising sea level: Ms. Pollack-Beighle noted that the international community is being “urged to move beyond the rhetoric and take immediate action.”

Suriname, she continued, has been badly hit by the sharp downturn in gold and oil prices three years ago and the closure of bauxite operations in 2016 led to a recession and severe loss of government revenues.

Following a change in monetary policy, the exchange rate has stabilized, monthly inflation rates have fallen to less than one per cent and there is no longer a current account deficit in the balance of payments.

The Government, said Ms. Pollack-Beighle, is committed to continuing efforts to restore the primary fiscal surplus, noting that the International Monetary Fund ([IMF](#)) and international ratings agencies have commended its actions.

However, Ms. Pollack-Beighle noted that the classification of Suriname as a middle-income country is an unjustifiable obstacle to development which does not reflect the country’s vulnerabilities or the full set of challenges with which it is faced. She called for the matter to be addressed with urgency, so that the country can gain access to concessional funding.

Returning to climate change, Ms. Pollack-Beighle said that global commitments are not yet being translated into tangible results. Although Suriname contains some 20 per cent of the world’s tropical forests, storing 18 per cent of tropical forest carbon, the country is not fully benefitting from

global arrangements associated with sound forest management.

Next February, she continued, Suriname will host a High-Level Conference on Climate Finance Mobilization which will “seek to initiate and implement new economic models of eco-sustainability to improve the quality of life for all.”

Turning to drug trafficking, Ms. Pollack-Beighle said that illicit drug trafficking, transnational organized crime, terrorism, as well as trafficking in arms and persons, are placing an unprecedented burden on small developing countries: Suriname needs to work with surrounding countries to effectively combat transnational organized crime, and this cooperation must yield results.

She went on to pledge Suriname’s support for the creation of a United Nations agency dealing with youth, and voiced her expectation that the [UN Youth Strategy](#) will be “inclusive and deliver on the aspirations of the world’s young people.”

Ms. Pollack-Beighle concluded by saying that, “if there were no United Nations, today, we would be calling for its creation,” and the we should “focus on what binds us, rather than what divides us.”

[Full statement available here](#)

Standing together to oust terrorists, Iraqis prevented a ‘historic catastrophe’ from occurring, Minister tells UN Assembly

Speaking from the podium of the United Nations General Assembly, the Foreign Minister of Iraq said ISIL is “breathing its last breath”, and urged world leaders to continue to stand with his country as it works to usher in a future of promise and prosperity for all its people.

In his address at the UN Assembly’s annual debate, Ibrahim Abdulkarim Al-Jafari, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, said that much has changed since he last addressed the august gathering.

Four years ago, a third of his country was occupied by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh), and millions of Iraqis were forced from their homes or had died in the violence.

“This could have been a historic catastrophe from which we might never have recovered.”

Instead, we stood together and rose to liberate our land, he added, noting that ISIL “is now breathing its last breath,” across the border, in Syria before being snuffed out.

Iraq is now turning the page in its story, he went on to say, highlighting the country’s plan for national economic, social and cultural progress – with a focus on young people and women –to reduce unemployment, provide job opportunities, protect diversity and combat extremist narratives.

Iraq is now working to help those returning home and to strengthen its State institutions, he added, noting that it has joined the club of democratic nations, built on an inclusive, constitutional consensus.

In his address, the Minister also welcomed the work of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and called on all countries to fulfil the financial commitments made for Iraq during the UN-backed donor conference in Kuwait, in February.

Concerning the wider region, he said that peace will come to the Middle East until Israel completely withdraws from the Occupied Palestinian Territory and an independent Palestinian State is established. On Syria, the Minister urged a balanced political solution rather than attempts to impose a military solution, and called for an end to all “external meddling” in Yemen.

[Full statement \(in Arabic\) available here.](#)

[Philippines successfully ‘salvaging’ itself from becoming ‘a Narco State’, Foreign Minister tells Assembly](#)

The Philippines, under the leadership of President Rodrigo Duterte, is on track to reverse its decline towards becoming a “Narco State”, or one that is being “held hostage” by the rich and powerful, said its Foreign Affairs minister at the United Nations General Assembly’s annual debate on Saturday.

Alan Cayetano, said his country was “at one with the UN, in being uncompromising on the issues of rule-of-law” and the protection of “each and every human being’s rights”.

“We are on track in salvaging our deteriorating country from becoming a Narco-State, or a State held hostage by the rich and powerful who ignore the

plight of the poor, powerless, and marginalized – or both,” he declared.

[According to](#) the UN human rights office ([OHCHR](#)), since President Duterte was elected in July 2016, thousands of Filipinos have reportedly been killed for their alleged involvement in illegal drug use or trafficking. It is suspected that many incidents have involved extra-judicial killings in the course of police anti-drug operations.

Mr. Cayetano said that the “hunger for change, for peace, for law and order, is genuine” across the Philippines, and added that “in cases where we have to choose between protecting the rights of law-abiding citizens and law enforcers, versus the rights of drug lords and criminals, it is clear we will protect the former.”

He said the Government was also prioritizing economic development, “so that 10 million Filipinos abroad may choose to work at home and abroad, and not be forced by poverty, to find high paying jobs at the expense of leaving the country and separating from their families.”

The Foreign Affairs Minister praised the principle of “love thy neighbour” which he said underpinned the UN-convened [Global Compact for Migration](#): “Issues on migration cannot be swept under the rug, but should be discussed openly, frankly and thoroughly”, he said, thanking “migrants around the world, for inspiring us to have the first, inter-governmentally negotiated compact to cover holistically, and comprehensively, all dimensions of international migration.”

Mr. Cayetano praised the UN’s enduring value as the place “to resurrect our hopes and dreams of a better world”.

“Making the United Nations relevant to all, is a dream, yet it is a dream worth fighting for,” he said.

[Full statement available here.](#)

[Help Pacific ‘Ocean of Peace’ live up to its name, Papua New Guinea’s Foreign Minister tells UN](#)

Welcoming the growing attention the world is paying to the Pacific Ocean, Rimbink Pato, Papua New Guinea’s Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, urged the international community to ensure that the Ocean becomes a “zone of cooperation, of stability and security, of pristine beauty and prosperity,” and expressed his hope that the it lives up to its name: “the Ocean of Peace.”

Mr. Pato's comments were part of his UN address, delivered during High-Level week of the [General Assembly](#) at UN Headquarters in New York.

As host of this year's Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum ([APEC](#)), Papua New Guinea, said Mr. Pato, will see many major issues discussed, including several related to the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, particularly climate action and gender equality.

Mr. Pato described the Agenda as "a solid pathway that holds much promise for the international community." He acknowledged that it is essential that Papua New Guinea fully harness the potential of its young people, who comprise some 60 per cent of the population, and ensure that women and girls have full equality in Papuan society.

Almost a year after the closure of the Australian-run Manus Island migrant detention centre in Papua New Guinea, Mr. Pato said that his country is working closely with Australia in resettling qualified asylum seekers.

Migrants still remain in Papua New Guinea and that each will be addressed on a case by case basis, he said, adding: "that is our contribution to the extent possible, in partnership with Australia, to address human trafficking, people smuggling and transnational crime.

Turning to the implementation of the [Bougainville Peace Agreement](#), the Minister noted the international community's increasing interest in the referendum, one of the pillars of the Agreement, which is scheduled for 15 June 2019.

He announced that his country's Government is fully committed to the Agreement, and has appointed former Irish Prime Minister, Bertie Ahern, to preside over the work of the Bougainville Referendum Commission.

On Friday, UN chief António Guterres recognized the efforts of the Pacific Islands Forum ([PIF](#)), of which Papua New Guinea is a member, for taking forward peacebuilding priorities, and congratulating the Government of Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Bougainville Government on implementing the Agreement: Mr. Pato expressed his gratitude to the UN, and other partners, for working with Papua New Guinea on this "important national issue."

[***Full statement available here***](#)