

President of former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia denounces move to change country's name

Reminding the General Assembly on Thursday that Macedonia had been a co-founder of the United Nations, Gjorge Ivanov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, strongly rejected a referendum on changing the name of his country, calling it "a flagrant violation" of sovereignty.

"The aim is to limit the use of the name 'Macedonian' to the smallest possible space – and that is the space between our two ears, all while keeping our mouths closed," said President Ivanov, adding: "It is a flagrant violation of the right to self-determination."

Negotiations on [the name dispute](#) between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia began in 1993, and have taken place under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General, led since 1999 by his Personal Envoy, Matthew Nimetz.

In the assembly today, President Ivanov said: "As I am speaking here, in my country, the Republic of Macedonia, they are counting the last hours before the referendum on which my fellow citizens have been asked to express themselves on the Prespa Agreement," which would reportedly change the name of his country.

He denounced that Agreement, reached this past June, as a detrimental compromise, and likened it to "a bitter fruit of a tree that has been poisoned a long time ago".

Emphasizing that the right of self-determination means that only the nation itself has the right to determine its destiny, based on autonomy, he stated it is "the right of people to choose their own name and the name of the State they created."

"Only by respecting the right to self-determination will the United Nations be relevant for all peoples," he underscored. "Still, with the Prespa Agreement, Greece is imposing a new name and is asking for an *erga omnes* implementation."

He railed against giving Greece a "permanent monitoring" role over his country, from its name to its institutions, from censoring children's schoolbooks to preventing citizens from expressing their Macedonian identity.

Urging his compatriots to refrain from Sunday's vote, he indicated that if the referendum succeeds, "we will be a State only by name, but not in substance, because others will regulate our way of life."

"However, if the referendum fails, a new possibility will arise," he said,

one to discuss and explore new options for resolving the issue “by respecting our fundamental right to self-determination”

[Full statement available here.](#)

Sierra Leone’s President ‘optimistic’ about country’s new direction as key reforms enacted

On Thursday, the newly-elected President of Sierra Leone, Julius Maada Bio, told the United Nations, that “with a strong belief in a shared vision and a common destiny, Sierra Leoneans stand with the [international community] in meeting the world’s challenges.”

Acknowledging the role that multilateralism and sustainability play in the establishment of a democratic Sierra Leone, he told world leaders gathered for the General Assembly’s annual general debate that “we are a successful model of a stable democracy.”

Mr. Maada Bio said that with this role established, “we should now endeavor to demonstrate the political will to particularly redress the historical injustice done to the African continent.”

“Africa is the only region without representation in the permanent category of the [Security Council](#),” he told the assembled leaders. Pointing out that 70 per cent of the 15-member Council’s resolutions affect some 1.2 billion Africans, he said “people simply want their voices to be fully represented [in that body].”

Spotlighting the necessity of democracy, Mr. Maada Bio stated that “guided by both our specific situation and Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), our governance initiative and policy actions involve strengthening our democratic institutions, opening up democratic spaces, promoting democratic dialogues, and creating a more just and equal society. We see these as precursors for the sustainable growth of our economy and our development as a nation.”

By example, Mr. Maada Bio expressed Sierra Leone’s “commitment to building a more secure world, as espoused in the United Nations Charter, as well as, our commitment to the implementation of Agenda 2030, the [Paris Agreement](#) on Climate Change, and ongoing reform processes of the United Nations.”

Sierra Leone has undertaken reforms to increase healthcare, create resilient criminal justice institutions (in line with [SDG 16](#)), empower women, explore science, technology, and innovation, as well as “resolve mankind’s common

challenges from trade to climate change.”

[Full statement available here.](#)

[Chronic illnesses: UN stands up to stop 41 million avoidable deaths per year](#)

“Heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes, chronic Lyme disease, depression” – just some of the illnesses outlined by World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) chief Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus, who drove home the danger by asking delegates to stand up, when they heard the name of an illness that had killed someone they loved: One by one, every single person in the room, got to their feet.

That was the scene on Thursday, at UN Headquarters in New York, when around 500 people gathered to talk about the prevention and control of chronic illnesses – officially called non-communicable diseases, or NCDs.

Every year, 41 million people are killed prematurely by preventable chronic illnesses, which Dr. Ghebreyesus declared a “needless suffering, expense and death.” The figure represents 70 per cent of all deaths globally.

What’s more, NCDs affect mostly the poor. Of that 41 million total, 85 per cent are in developing countries.

“With an increasingly globalized world, longer life expectancy, a rapidly changing climate and increasing levels of urbanization, we are witnessing shifts – demographic and otherwise – that see the burden of NCDs rising in all nations,” said Deputy Secretary-General [Amina J. Mohammed](#), who was speaking on behalf of UN chief António Guterres.

In addition to explaining the importance of tackling climate change and pollution given their effects on public health, the Deputy Secretary-General insisted on the importance of tackling mental health disorders, including through suicide prevention; the harmful use of alcohol and drugs; as well as issues of under- and over-nutrition.

The issue has gained such importance that – while overlooked in the Millenium Development Goals adopted in 2000 – it is now a major target of the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with Target 3.4, to “reduce by one-third pre-mature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment, and promote mental health and wellbeing,” by 2030.

“I am here to tell you that we are dangerously off course,” warned WHO’s

chief. "At the current pace, less than half of the world's countries will meet that target."

"But we can change course," he added. "We could prevent 10 million of these deaths by 2025," he explained, referring to WHO's "Best Buys", a set of 16 practical interventions that are "cost-effective and feasible for all countries including low- and middle-income countries". The list includes tobacco control measures, vaccination campaigns, and the production of food that contains less sugar, salt and fat.

Stressing that the "benefits go beyond health," Dr. Ghebreyesus noted that "every dollar invested in the Best Buys, will yield a return of at least seven dollars".

He proposed the creation of a "coalition of champions" that would spearhead a three- to five-year commitment for the quick and intense implementation of the WHO interventions, and showcase their potential impact.

Closing his remarks, the head of WHO said that three key things are needed in every country to "win the fight against NCDs" and achieve SDG Target 3.4: political commitment, domestic investment and universal health coverage so everyone can benefit from health care "without worrying about whether they can afford them."

To help advocate for the prevention and control of chronic illnesses worldwide, WHO also announced on Thursday that it had [renewed the appointment](#) of billionaire philanthropist and former New York Mayor, Michael Bloomberg, as WHO Global Ambassador for NCDs and injuries, for another two years.

[World leaders commit to continue UN fight against sexual exploitation and abuse](#)

World leaders joined with United Nations entities on Thursday to reaffirm their continued personal commitment to support efforts to combat sexual exploitation and abuse across the Organization.

In 2017, UN [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) launched a new strategy to prevent and end sexual exploitation and abuse by UN personnel. A major element of this new approach was the creation of a 'Circle of Leadership' for Heads of State and Government to demonstrate resolve and commitment, at the highest political level, to eradicate the scourge.

"We at the United Nations are mobilizing to tackle sexual exploitation and

abuse in our ranks and ensure that the rights and dignity of victims are front and centre,” Mr. Guterres said in a recent [video message](#) on the issue.

Nearly 100 countries have signed voluntary compacts with the UN to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse. The Secretary-General has appointed a UN Victims’ Rights Advocate and a Special Coordinator to align efforts across the system.

In addition, the UN has stepped up training for civilian, military and police personnel; improved and harmonized investigations; strengthened screening of personnel; and made sure that staff who are guilty of sexual exploitation and abuse can never find a job elsewhere in the system.

The Organization is also improving links with communities and civil society organizations, so that victims and survivors know how to respond, reporting these crimes and finding support.

“The era of silence and taboos is over. Everyone, including our own staff, must feel confident to report allegations of abuses,” said Mr. Guterres. “Above all, we must protect those we are mandated to serve.”

As of 26 September 2018, 69 sitting and former heads of State and Government are members of the Circle of Leadership.

On Thursday, 48 of them, along with 21 UN entities, joined the Secretary-General in issuing a “[Collective Statement](#)” to reaffirm their continued personal commitment as global leaders, to support efforts to combat sexual exploitation and abuse.

“We recognize the unique responsibility of the United Nations to set the standard for preventing, responding to, and eradicating sexual exploitation and abuse within the United Nations system, address its impact effectively and humanely, and safeguard and empower victims,” they said.

They also recognized the shared responsibility of the UN and its Member States to protect victims and whistle-blowers and take appropriate action against perpetrators.

[Haitian President at General Assembly calls for essential development aid as UN mission shifts away from peacekeeping](#)

Haitian President Jovenel Moïse on Thursday called on the international

community to provide the necessary development aid as the Caribbean island nation prepares for the transition next year of the United Nations mission to a non-peacekeeping presence in the country.

“From this lofty tribune I would like to tell our technical and financial partners that we must together muster the necessary courage to rethink the development aid for Haiti,” he told world leaders on the third day of the General Assembly’s annual general debate.

“With Haiti’s meager financial resources, we have begun to put the country on the track to progress. Today more than ever, we need this synergy to build our country’s future.”

In the latest iteration of UN missions that over the past two decades have been helping to restore stability following political conflict, a devastating earthquake and frequent hurricanes, the UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti ([MINUJUSTH](#)), is scheduled [transition to a non-peace-keeping presence](#) in October 2019.

Two years ago, MINUJUSTH was [mandated to assist](#) the Haitian Government to further develop the Haitian National Police (HNP); to strengthen Haiti’s rule of law institutions, including the justice and prisons; and to promote and protect human rights – all with a view to improving the everyday lives of the Haitian people.

Earlier this month UN Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Bintou Keita [warned](#) the Security Council that several challenges remain, citing violent protests in July over fuel price increases that led to widespread looting in the capital, Port-au-Prince, as well as in other cities.

Mr. Moïse said the violent discontent must not be under-estimated. “It highlights with especial clarity the central question of the risks associated with extreme social-economic precariousness and the lack of economic perspectives.”

Turning to health matters in the country, the Haitian President stressed that \$ 20 million is needed for the establishment of 122 health centers to meet the needs of the population at the commune level.

“I also take the opportunity to challenge the international community on the obligation to mobilize resources to eliminate cholera introduced by [the previous UN mission, a peacekeeping operation known by the French acronym MINUSTAH] into the country and to compensate the victims,” he added.

[In August 2016, then-Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced the UN’s [new approach to cholera in Haiti](#). Indicating that he deeply regretted the terrible suffering the people of Haiti endured as a result of the cholera epidemic, he said that the United Nations has a moral responsibility to the victims of the cholera epidemic and to support Haiti in overcoming the epidemic and building sound water, sanitation and health systems.]

Full statement (in French) available here.