

With annual general debate over, time has come for action, UN Assembly President says

25 September 2017 – The United Nations General Assembly wrapped up its 72nd annual general debate today, with its President underscoring prevention of conflicts before they break out, support for UN peacekeeping, sustainable development, and respect for human rights and gender equality among the major priorities raised by the 196 Heads of State, Government and delegations.

“You reaffirmed your commitment to the UN. And to each other. You said we are stronger together, in a system based on dialogue and multilateralism,” President Miroslav Lajčák declared in the vaulted Assembly Hall before the golden column with the UN logo of a world globe, which served as the backdrop for all 196 speakers.

“And you stressed that any alternative would risk repeating the mistakes of history,” he added, while noting that not all the messages delivered were positive, with many criticizing other countries or the UN.

“But that is part of the package. It is your right to do this. And regardless of size, or population, or economy, all delegations have access to the same platform, for the same amount of time. They can speak freely, without censorship,” he said, summing up the main thrust of the debate whose theme was ‘Focusing on People – Striving for Peace and a Decent Life for All on a Sustainable Planet.’

“We addressed many challenges over the past week. You talked about their impact on the countries of the world. Importantly, you also talked about their impact on people. We heard about people running from gunshots – or the force of exploding bombs. People living for a week on the same amount some of us spend on a cup of coffee,” he said.

“People forced to make the decision between risking their lives to stay, or risking their lives to flee. People wondering when the next hurricane will hit, or if their village will be under water in a few decades. People who are beginning to lose – or have already lost– hope in international peace processes. And people still waiting for justice and human rights to become a part of their daily reality.”

Turning to the work that lies ahead for the Assembly’s 72nd Session, Mr. Lajčák cited several milestones, including the high-level event on Sustaining Peace, in April, the adoption of Global Compacts related to Migrants and Refugees next September, and the High-level meeting on human trafficking this week.

[New lab will boost UN efforts to keep harmful insects at bay](#)

25 September 2017 – The United Nations International Atomic Energy Agency ([IAEA](#)) today opened the doors of a new laboratory to help countries use a nuclear technique to keep harmful insects, such as mosquitoes and fruit flies, at bay.

The modern Insect Pest Control Laboratory (IPCL), located in Seibersdorf, Austria, will boost the Agency's ability to assist Member States in applying the Sterile Insect Technique (SIT) to combat insect pests that spread disease and damage crops.

"With new and modern facilities, the IPCL will in future be able to do even more to help Member States control insect pests that endanger our crops, our livestock and our health," IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano [said](#) during the [inauguration ceremony](#).

The environmentally-safe SIT, a form of insect birth control, uses radiation to sterilize male insects, which are reared in large numbers and released in a target area to mate with wild females. Since they do not produce any offspring, the pest population is reduced over time, according to the Agency.

Along with additional space to train experts to support the transfer of SIT to countries, the new lab will facilitate research on the application of the technique for different insects, including mosquitos that transmit malaria, Zika and other diseases.

"The IPCL offers a very tangible example of the enormous practical benefits of nuclear science and technology," noted Mr. Amano.



From left to right, FAO's Ren Wang, Ambassadors Friedrich Däuble (Germany), Christine Stix-Hackl (Austria), IAEA's Yukiya Amano, Ambassadors Darmansjah Djumala (Indonesia), and Tebogo Seokolo (South Africa), at the inauguration of new IAEA/FAO Insect Pest Control Laboratory in Seibersdorf, Austria.
Photo: S. Gas/IAEA

Earlier this year, the IAEA, in partnership with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)), assisted the Dominican Republic in using SIT to eradicate an outbreak of the Mediterranean fruit fly – one of the most damaging agricultural pests in the world that attacks several types of fruits and vegetables.

Thanks to this assistance, the country was able to eradicate the fly within two years, and to regain access to export markets worth \$42 million a year.

[Top UN envoy to Somalia welcomes parliamentary review of media law](#)

25 September 2017 – The top United Nations envoy to Somalia today welcomed the recent introduction of legislation that would amend the 2016 media law, and urged lawmakers to give due consideration to the concerns raised by prominent members of Somalia’s news media about the existing law and the proposed amendments.

According to a [press release](#) from the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSO), President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo’s cabinet approved a package of amendments to the media law in July that fulfilled a commitment he made to Somalia’s leading media associations within weeks of taking office.

The amendments drew criticism from those media associations and some international human rights groups for their limited scope and the introduction of new restrictions on existing press freedoms, the Mission noted.

“A free and independent news media is essential for accountability and democracy,” said the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia and head of UNSO, Michael Keating.

“Some provisions of the current media law do not appear to comply with international standards of media legislation and regulation. A careful and comprehensive review of the law and the proposed amendments will allow all key stakeholders to present their views.

“I hope the outcome of such a legislative process will promote a better environment for Somali journalists to practice their profession without fear.”

The proposed changes to the media law will be taken up by the Federal Parliament in the coming weeks.

[In UN Assembly address, Angola emphasises its ‘decisive’ role in multilateralism](#)

25 September 2017 – Underscoring the importance of multilateralism in solving

global tensions, Angola told the United Nations General Assembly about its strong engagement and “decisive” role in restoring peace and security in the region, with its commitment for economic development and democratic society.

“Angola’s attachment to multilateralism is strongly emphasized in its role in solving problems [...] particularly in the Great Lakes Region,” Ismael Abraão Gaspar Martins, Permanent Representative of Angola to the UN and head of the country’s delegation, told the Assembly’s 72nd annual general debate, adding that Angola has been leading diplomatic efforts with its regional and international partners to find a lasting political solution.

“We are increasingly able and fit to play a decisive role in restoring peace and security, particularly in Africa, and in furthering its economic development,” said Mr. Gaspar Martins.

He further stressed that his country’s recent peaceful election has shown stability and a gradual consolidation of democracy.

As a new cycle of Government begins, economic development will be one of the priorities for Angola and it is strongly engaged in achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) and the [2030 Agenda](#), which are crucial for building a prosperous and democratic society, said Mr. Gaspar Martins.

[Full statement available here](#)

[Timor-Leste is vivid example of what UN can do in peacebuilding, Assembly debate told](#)

25 September 2017 – Timor-Leste, a country which the United Nations shepherded to independence from Indonesia 15 years ago, stands as a shining example of what the world Organization can achieve in establishing peace and stability, the country’s president told the General Assembly today.

“The recent history of Timor-Leste vividly reminds us that when civil values, on which the very existence of the United Nations is built, take the lead – and inspire decisions – in the international scene, the UN and international law become powerful and decisive forces to settle conflicts and restore peace,” Francisco Guterres Lú Olo said in a speech read by Delegation Chair Maria Helena Pires.

Actions by Portugal, Indonesia, Australia, and the United States, and the support of the European Union and other world powers, are “living proof of the United Nations’ ability to save lives and help make the world a safe place,” he stressed.

He highlighted his country's advances since independence in 2002 in peacebuilding and reconciliation at both national and international levels, sustainable development, health, education, and gender equality.

[Full statement available here](#)