

At UN, Central European Leaders spotlight development, countering terrorism and securing peace

19 September 2017 – Sustainable development, ensuring peace and security and protecting human rights are the basic goals of the international community and the foundations of the United Nations system, Andrzej Duda, the President of Poland, told the General Assembly today.

Mr. Duda pointed out that Poland has adopted and is fully committed to the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, saying: “We believe that only by means of an effective implementation, will we be able to ensure relevant socio-economic conditions for everyone.

For a number of years, the country has fulfilled its obligations to protect the environment and fight climate change. He noted that Poland surpassed its Kyoto Protocol reduction target, made ambitious contributions to the [Paris Agreement](#) and will, for the third time, host the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. “We will continue the leadership in climate negotiations in the spirit of the Paris Agreement, ensuring the participation of all States and the transparency of discussions,” he stressed.

He went on to note that human rights are withheld in too many parts of the world, with persecution of persons belonging to religious minorities, including Christians, “a particularly visible problem,” which Poland strongly condemns, along with all instances of persecution and discrimination based on religion.

“‘Solidarity-Responsibility-Engagement’ are the values that we unceasingly seek to promote in the international arena [...] to produce sustainable development, security and peace not only for now, but also for future generations to come,” concluded Mr. Duda.

[Full statement available here](#)



President Miloš Zeman of the Czech Republic addresses the General Assembly’s annual general debate. UN Photo/Cia Pak

For his part, Miloš Zeman, President of the Czech Republic, told the Assembly that a terror-based anti-civilization had emerged over the last few decades, stressing that “we all express solidarity with the victims and organize protests, but, unfortunately, we still hesitate to fight terrorist organizations with full power.”

He welcomed the Secretary-General’s new Office for Counter-Terrorism as a

reasonable and practical solution along with the appointment of its Under-Secretary-General to solve problems in the fight against Islamic terrorism.

The President recalled that, one year ago, he had criticized the UN for not being able to define the word terrorism, noting that there were currently 38 anti-terrorist organizations and institutions under the UN umbrella and pointing out that as that number increased, more terrorist organizations flourished. He also called for the use of military force against terrorism – in accord with Article 47 of the UN Charter.

On the other side of the same coin he pointed to the issue of migration, which, citing Syria and Iraq, he said was often provoked by terrorist actions. Mr. Zeman also underscored the concern that terrorists often hid within migrant populations. Citing Africa, he flagged the issue of “brain drain” – or the weakening of potential in those countries – with large migration flows. The Czech President explained that by welcoming migrants in Europe, countries are fuelling the brain drain phenomenon, and in turn, reversing progress in countries of origin.

Mr. Zeman concluded by saying the war on terrorism should be based on “historical optimism.” He gave the example of Barcelona, in which the Spanish people said they were not afraid, and recalled United States President Franklin Roosevelt’s proclamation of ‘freedom from fear.’ Mr. Zeman echoed what he called the most beautiful expression of historical optimism by quoting theologian Martin Luther: “If I knew that it would be doomsday tomorrow, I shall go today and plant an apple tree.”



Andrej Kiska, President of the Slovak Republic, addresses the Assembly’s annual general debate. UN Photo/Cia Pak

Also address the Assembly, the President of Slovakia, Andrej Kiska, opened his speech highlighting the need to build safe, healthy, prosperous and just societies for all people to live a dignified life, telling the Assembly that it is not a mere ambition, “It’s our duty. It’s the reason why our people trust us with the power to act on their behalf.”

While Mr. Kiska called “the respect for the principles of peace and security” essential, he observed that “far too many are dying in senseless conflicts or suffering in displacement” – pointing out that armed conflicts and the resulting refugee crisis “depletes the much-needed resources for social and economic development.”

The President censured short-sighted interests that are built on spreading instability and undermining collective efforts towards peace and security for crippling “the very core of the UN Charter for securing peaceful coexistence among nations.”

While naming Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova as sovereign nations being undermined by an aggressive neighbour, Mr. Kiska cited the Democratic Republic of Korea as “one of the worst threats to international peace and

security in recent history.”

“I strongly call on the North Korean regime to terminate its development of weapons of mass destruction and to return on the path of dialogue and building peace in the Korean Peninsula,” he underscored.

[Full statement available here](#)

[Netanyahu, at General Assembly, denounces ‘absurdities,’ anti-Semitism in UN decisions](#)

19 September 2017 – Citing “a great revolution in Israel’s standing” in the world, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu today denounced the “absurdities” and “global anti-Semitism” in United Nations decisions on Israel and warned Iran of the “mortal peril” it faced in threatening to annihilate his country.

“For too long, the epicentre of global anti-Semitism has been right here at the UN,” he told the General Assembly on the opening day of its 72nd annual general debate, while praising [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres’ statement “that denying Israel’s right to exist is anti-Semitism, pure and simple.”

Pointing to the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s ([UNESCO](#)) declaring the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron as a Palestinian World Heritage Site, he said: “That’s worse than fake news; that’s fake history,” noting that the tomb is revered as the grave of the three Jewish biblical patriarchs.

Turning to Iran, Mr. Netanyahu warned: “Today, I have a simple message to Ayatollah Khamenei, the dictator of Iran: The light of Israel will never be extinguished.” He cited daily Iranian vows to destroy Israel, and called for “fixing or nixing” the international deal to curb Iran’s nuclear programme, because it is slated to end after 10 years.

“Those who threaten us with annihilation put themselves in mortal peril,” he said, warning that Israel will act to prevent Iran from establishing permanent military bases in Syria and producing deadly weapons in Syria or in Lebanon. “As long as Iran’s regime seeks the destruction of Israel, Iran will face no fiercer enemy than Israel.”

He said Israel’s greater world stature is due the fact so many countries have finally woken up to what Israel can do for them in cutting-edge technology, agriculture, water, cybersecurity, medicine and autonomous vehicles. “After 70 years, the world is embracing Israel, and Israel is embracing the world,” he added.

Mr. Netanyahu made only a passing reference to the Middle East conflict, saying Israel is committed to achieving peace with all its Arab neighbours, including the Palestinians.

[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 – Extoling 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.”