

UN must reform, 'win our trust' by proving it can deliver, UK leader tells General Assembly

20 September 2017 – The world is currently facing a raft of challenges “that test who we are,” the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom told the General Assembly, noting that while many, such as terrorism – which struck her country five times this year – did not recognize international borders, they could be addressed by a strong, agile United Nations that upholds global order and values.

Addressing the United Nations General Assembly’s annual general debate, Theresa May noted that climate change is degrading and depleting the planet, and millions were fleeing their homes in search of a better life. Moreover, there are massive inequalities around the world and weaknesses in the global trading system, both of which are pushing some countries towards protectionism.

“As the global system struggles to adapt, some countries are deliberately flouting international rules,” she said, citing the “unforgivable use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime,” and the threat of nuclear weapons use by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

Calling on countries to defend the international order and the values of fairness, justice and human rights underpinning the multilateral system – including through agreements such as the Paris Accord and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty – she said the international system, with the United Nations at its heart, is the “amplifying force” for those values.

Indeed, “we have to strive harder” to defend and reform the UN, she stressed, and those who flouted the rules and spirit of the Organization must be held to account. Noting that the United Kingdom had long supported the UN, she nevertheless said the Organization suffers from a gap between its purposes and their delivery.

“Member States must embark on the Secretary General’s reform agenda,” she said, calling for better cooperation, improved gender equality and reduced competition on the ground. As an outward-looking, “global Britain” – and the world’s second largest donor – the United Kingdom would continue to support the Organization.

However, she stated: “The UN and its agencies must win our trust” by proving they can deliver. In that regard, the UK would now set aside 30 per cent of its funding, to be paid only to those parts of the UN that achieve sufficient results.