

'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.](#)