

Secretary-General, Mr President, Your Excellencies.

The tenor of our times is change.

Accelerating with a pace and scale unprecedented in all of human history.

In less than a generation, billions have been lifted out of poverty and billions more enabled to connect to each other and to a world of knowledge and ideas in a manner barely imaginable a generation ago.

Economic freedom between markets and within them, supercharged by the internet, innovation and technology have enabled the longest run of economic progress in the history of the world.

There are threats. At the G20 we focused on how to resist the rising tide of protectionism - which is not a ladder to escape the low-growth trap, but a shovel to dig it deeper.

But most important of all is the threat of conflict and instability.

Where there is peace and the rule of law applies to governors and governed, to large states and small, we have seen remarkable strides in every measure of human progress.

But in too many places there is no peace - wars which seem to have no end, intractable disorder which, in a connected world where technology has trumped geography, affects us all.

And yet despite setbacks to secure lasting peace, notably in Syria, over the past five years the UN system has produced a global Arms Trade Treaty, a pivotal global agreement on climate change, a transformational set of sustainable development goals and a global blueprint for disaster risk reduction.

These successes add to the lower profile, but hugely important work, of the UN in the field – whether it be vaccinating children, helping subsistence farmers to improve their crop yields, facilitating democratic elections or delivering emergency humanitarian support.

They demonstrate the approach we need to take as we face the challenges of the future.

We need strength to respond firmly and decisively in the face of tyranny and abuse - to stand up to those who would seek to divide societies through terror, and against those who seek to exploit desperation to their benefit.

We need compassion to assist those less fortunate than ourselves and to help rebuild communities that have been devastated by war or natural disasters.

And now, more than ever, we need to work together towards common solutions.

Mr President, that is why Australia's response to the global surge in migration is based on three pillars.

First, strong border controls, with effective measures to combat people smuggling and terrorism, supported by a planned migration program.

Secondly, a compassionate humanitarian policy one that doesn't focus merely on the numbers that we take in but offers substantial resettlement programs and supports those countries hosting large numbers of refugees themselves.

And third, effective international and regional cooperation.

These three pillars are inherently interlinked. They cannot and do not work in isolation.

We believe that in order to secure and maintain public support for immigration, multiculturalism and a generous humanitarian program, the public need to know that it is their Government which controls their borders.

In the year before Australia's strong border protection policies were introduced, over 25,000 irregular migrants arrived in Australia by boat.

Over 1,200 people tragically died as a result – the victims of the criminal enterprises that prey on vulnerable people for profit.

Without policies to ensure that we can control who enters Australia, it would not have been possible for our Government to maintain the world's third largest permanent refugee resettlement program.

It would not have been possible for Australia to commit to taking an additional 12,000 refugees displaced by the conflicts in Iraq and Syria.

Nor to increase our broader humanitarian intake by more than 35 per cent.

We are one of the most successful multicultural societies in the world.

We are both as old as the oldest continuous human culture of our first Australians and as young as the child in the arms of her migrant parents.

We are not defined by race, religion or culture but by shared political values of democracy, the rule of law and equality of opportunity - a "fair go".

More than a quarter of us were born overseas, almost half have a parent born overseas and each year we welcome around 200,000 permanent migrants to join our 24 million.

We have a long experience of, and commitment to, settlement services to ensure our immigrants, especially refugees, become successfully integrated into our society.

We are indeed an immigration nation - and our immigrants are as diverse as the society that they have joined.

One such story is Aliir Aliir who grew up in a refugee camp in Kenya after his family fled the bloody civil war in Sudan.

For Aliir, his family, and 150,000 other men, women and children, Kakuma refugee camp was their home.

The camp provided the bare necessities of meals and shelter, but sports equipment was unimaginable. Aliir and his friends would improvise with a balloon wrapped with strips of old clothing to serve as a football.

He was seven when he and his family came to Australia.

Tall, fast and agile, Aliir was a natural for Australian Rules Football and once he took up the game, hasn't looked back.

Earlier this year, I was delighted when Aliir debuted for the AFL team I support, the Sydney Swans.

Now 22, Aliir is one of the first Sudanese immigrants to play AFL and has become a role model in our multicultural nation, especially for young people in Sydney.

There are thousands of migrant stories like Aliir's - leaders of government, of business, of science, of the arts.

Australia would not be the country it is today without their contribution. Their stories are our stories, their successes are our successes.

Of course Mr President, each country must adopt approaches that meet the needs of their own populations and geography.

But Australia's experience sheds some light on what the solutions are - strong borders, vigilant security agencies governed by the rule of law, and a steadfast commitment of the shared values of freedom and mutual respect.

These are the ingredients of multicultural success.

And they are lessons we can share to drive more effective, coordinated approaches to meet our humanitarian responsibilities.

That's why the declaration adopted here at the United Nations on Monday to drive a more orderly and coordinated approach to migration and refugees is so important.

And why Australia and Indonesia, as Co-Chairs of the Bali Process, are working with the countries of our region to protect migrants in vulnerable situations and combat people smuggling.

Now, Mr President, we need to see the world clear eyed as it is, not as we would like it to be, or as we fondly imagine it once was.

Secure borders are essential. Porous borders drain away public support for multiculturalism, for immigration, for aid to refugees.

Most importantly, the only way to stop the scourge of people smuggling is to deprive the people smugglers of their product and secure borders do just that.

Another fact we must recognise is that while it would be desirable for more nations to increase their humanitarian intake, as Australia is doing, the truth is, the scale of the refugee and internally displaced persons problem is so great - 65 million - that resettlement in other countries can never come close to being near enough.

The most urgent priority is to re-establish stability and assure security in the regions of conflict and in addition, ensure that there are greater opportunities for economic advancement in the source countries of so much of this irregular migration.

All of this requires cooperation and that includes, as noted in the New York Declaration, member states accepting the return of their citizens who do not qualify for protection, whether on a voluntary or involuntary basis.

Mr President, regional and national initiatives are crucial in our response to the surge in displaced people.

Ultimately, we will only find sustainable solutions by addressing the root causes and drivers of this displacement. The largest of these are conflict and instability.

Conflict – in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Libya, Yemen and other countries – is taking an unprecedented toll on innocent civilians who, like all of us, wish to live their lives and raise their families in peace and security.

Australia's armed forces are supporting the Government of Iraq in its efforts to liberate its territories from Daesh, and we are, in defence of Iraq, combining with our coalition partners to defeat Daesh in Syria.

It is of vital importance that Daesh's so-called caliphate is defeated in the field. As Nadia Murad said on Monday here in the General Assembly, we must defeat these terrorists, these monsters who killed or enslaved her family, once and for all.

Our support has helped to put Daesh on the back foot – it has now lost around 50 per cent of its territory in Iraq.

But conflict resolution is not enough.

Establishing and maintaining a credible peace in the aftermath of conflict is just as important.

And here, the UN must play a vital role in building and sustaining peace.

Australia is proud to have worked with Angola to facilitate a resolution to reform the UN's Peacebuilding Architecture.

As the sixth largest donor in 2015, Australia is pleased to be a key supporter of the United Nation's Peacebuilding Fund, which provides crucial assistance to peace agreements and supports capacity-building and rule of law projects in post-conflict societies.

The UN's role illustrates that vigilance against the risk of new conflicts requires investing in – and protecting – the international rules based order.

We were all reminded of this recently, when North Korea launched three medium-range ballistic missiles. Days later, Pyongyang conducted what we understand to be its largest ever nuclear test.

The provocative and dangerous actions of this rogue state breach unanimously agreed United Nations Security Council Resolutions and threaten global peace and security.

This shows why it was important that Australia and Myanmar secured agreement at the East Asia Summit to a new commitment to end the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and to work to support non-proliferation.

Such provocation requires action and Australia will work with the Security Council to support additional sanctions against North Korea.

Mr President, it is this maturity and honesty that Australia would bring to the Human Rights Council, should we be elected for our first ever term from 2018 to 2020.

Rather than denying problems - we will seek to identify them, address them and learn from them. And we will hold others to the same standard that we hold ourselves.

Australia has prioritised five key areas in our approach to human rights - gender equality, governance, freedom of expression, the rights of indigenous peoples, strong national human rights institutions and capacity building.

We are committed to providing principled and pragmatic leadership across these five areas – both through our actions at home, and our advocacy and cooperation abroad.

Mr President, over the course of the next decade and beyond, working together to combat terrorism and conflict, preventing global health pandemics, ensuring universal access to clean water and sanitation, and addressing climate change, will require enhanced global cooperation.

I don't need to reiterate the significance and complexity of the threat of climate change.

We all understand what is at stake - the future of generations around the globe and the wellbeing of our planet itself.

It demands every one of us to act together toward a better world.

And we are.

The Paris Agreement last year was a shining example of global cooperation for the common good.

In a historic display of commitment, over 170 nations signed the Paris Agreement in New York in April. Even more have submitted plans for action.

And Australia will play its part.

We are committed to ratifying the Paris Agreement, and we are confident that we will meet our ambitious 2030 target which will have the consequences of us cutting our per capita emissions by 52 per cent – just as we will meet and beat our Kyoto II commitments.

Australia has also increased the profile of climate change in our overseas aid program – including through our \$200 million commitment to the Green Climate Fund - because we know climate change amplifies many development challenges.

We also know that our commitment to action creates new opportunities for innovation and growth, which means more jobs.

We are combining reduction in emissions with strong economic growth - running at 3.3 per cent over the last year, up from 2 per cent a year ago.

Our new Cities Policy too is focused on clean development, enhancing amenity, sustainability and liveability.

And, as the land of droughts and flooding rains, we have learned how to make every drop count and share our experience in water management with other nations, including earlier today here at the High Level Panel on Water.

Mr President, it would be remiss of me not to offer our deepest thanks to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his leadership and his commitment to addressing so many of these challenges over the past decade.

The Secretary-Generals leaves an important legacy that his successor must now take forward with the international community.

And in doing so, we, the United Nations, must stay the course.

We must remain committed to displaying the strength and courage to do what is needed in the face of great adversity.

We must continue to show the compassion and understanding needed to ensure our societies are inclusive, diverse and resilient.

And we must continue to cooperate at the regional and international level to find common solutions to these global challenges.

In doing so, Mr President, I am confident that together, the United Nations, we will ensure a better future for all.

Thank you, Mr President.