

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
General Debate of the 72nd Regular Session
New York, 20 September 2017

- Excellencies, Heads of State and Government
- Excellency, President of the General Assembly
- Distinguished Delegates
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Every year, the United Nations channels billions of dollars in humanitarian assistance. It also sets the global agenda on key policy issues, from development, to women's rights, while providing a platform for major international agreements.

These are signs of an organisation that is both relevant, and, in many cases, competent.

And yet there is a sense, that the United Nations is not meeting our needs and expectations.

In this context, I would like to commend the Secretary General, for the two important initiatives he championed this week, on United Nations reform, and response to sexual exploitation and abuse.

These steps go to the heart of the matter: the deficit of trust and accountability, in the international system.

To be truly effective at delivering a “decent life for all”, the United Nations must treat all the people it serves with impartiality and respect, and it must be a good steward of the funds entrusted to it.

Abuse and waste are therefore not a mere public relations problem, but an existential threat, which must be tackled head-on.

The Secretary General deserves our full support, to make the United Nations not only effective, but transformational.

We have the tools and the mandates to address the global challenges of our day, from climate change, to peace-building, to human equality and development.

Where we fall short, is in getting things done.

Institutional reform is not a one-off event, like applying a fresh coat of paint.

The essence of reform, is a mindset of constantly striving to improve performance and delivery, and holding ourselves responsible for shortcomings and results.

In this sense, the reform spirit, that has started to take root in both the United Nations and the African Union, is encouraging, and Rwanda is happy to be associated with both.

This positive momentum also positions the United Nations and the African Union, to work more closely together.

Concrete steps can be taken on both sides, to improve the quality of coordination and consultation.

The African Union and the United Nations are already good partners in peacekeeping, and Rwanda is proud to have forces serving under both flags. But we can do much more, and do it better.

We also share the common objective, to meet the Sustainable Development Goals and Africa's Agenda 2063 targets, as well as continue to enhance women's empowerment.

Closer collaboration will help us bridge the growing digital divide through universal broadband access, which connects our people to networks of knowledge and prosperity.

Canada and Rwanda, together with other stakeholders, are working to raise awareness of the tremendous impact we can have, right away, by ratifying and implementing the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol.

This is among the most important actions that a country can take, to directly tackle climate change, and re-affirm the commitment to the Paris Agreement. Fewer than 15 additional ratifications are needed, in order for the Kigali Amendment to come into force, in 2019.

Mr President, distinguished delegates:

Our world faces difficult challenges, but no more so, than in the past. Working together, in a constructive spirit, we can assure our children, the future they deserve.

I thank you very much, for your kind attention.