

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**ADDRESS TO THE GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

21 September 2021, 9:00 am

Mr. President,
Excellencies,

I am here to sound the alarm:
The world must wake up.

We are on the edge of an abyss —
and moving in the wrong direction.

Our world has never been more
threatened.

Or more divided.

We face the greatest cascade of
crises in our lifetimes.

The COVID-19 pandemic has supersized glaring inequalities.

The climate crisis is pummeling the planet.

Upheaval from Afghanistan to Ethiopia to Yemen and beyond has thwarted peace.

A surge of mistrust and misinformation is polarizing people and paralyzing societies.

Human rights are under fire.

Science is under assault.

And economic lifelines for the most vulnerable are coming too little and too late — if they come at all.

Solidarity is missing in action — just when we need it most.

Perhaps one image tells the tale of our times.

The picture we have seen from some parts of the world of COVID-19 vaccines ... in the garbage.

Expired and unused.

On the one hand, we see the vaccines developed in record time — a victory of science and human ingenuity.

On the other hand, we see that triumph undone by the tragedy of a lack of political will, selfishness and mistrust.

A surplus in some countries. Empty shelves in others.

A majority of the wealthier world vaccinated. Over 90 percent of Africans still waiting for their first dose.

This is a moral indictment of the state of our world.

It is an obscenity.

We passed the science test.

But we are getting an F in Ethics.

Excellencies,

The climate alarm bells are also ringing at fever pitch.

The recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was a code red for humanity.

We see the warning signs in every continent and region.

Scorching temperatures. Shocking biodiversity loss. Polluted air, water and natural spaces.

And climate-related disasters at every turn.

As we saw recently, not even this city — the financial capital of the world — is immune.

Climate scientists tell us it's not too late to keep alive the 1.5 degree goal of the Paris Climate Agreement.

But the window is rapidly closing.

We need a 45 per cent cut in emissions by 2030. Yet a recent UN report made clear that with present national climate commitments, emissions will go up by 16% by 2030.

That would condemn us to a hellscape of temperature rises of at least 2.7 degrees above pre-industrial levels.

Meanwhile, the OECD just reported a gap of at least \$20 billion in essential and promised climate finance to developing countries.

We are weeks away from the UN Climate Conference in Glasgow, but seemingly light years away from reaching our targets.

We must get serious. And we must act fast.

Excellencies,

COVID-19 and the climate crisis have exposed profound fragilities as societies and as a planet.

Yet instead of humility in the face of these epic challenges, we see hubris.

Instead of the path of solidarity, we are on a dead end to destruction.

At the same time, another disease is spreading in our world today: a malady of mistrust.

When people see promises of progress denied by the realities of their harsh daily lives...

When they see their fundamental rights and freedoms curtailed...

When they see petty — as well as grand — corruption around them...

When they see billionaires joyriding to space while millions go hungry on earth ... When parents see a future for their children that looks even bleaker than the struggles of today...

And when young people see no future at all...

The people we serve and represent may lose faith not only in their governments and institutions — but in the values that have animated the work of the United Nations for over 75 years.

Peace. Human rights. Dignity for all. Equality. Justice. Solidarity.

Like never before, core values are in the crosshairs.

A breakdown in trust is leading to a breakdown in values.

Promises, after all, are worthless if people do not see results in their daily lives.

Failure to deliver creates space for some of the darkest impulses of humanity.

It provides oxygen for easy-fixes, pseudo-solutions and conspiracy theories.

It is kindling to stoke ancient grievances. Cultural supremacy.

Ideological dominance. Violent misogyny. The targeting of the most vulnerable including refugees and migrants.

Excellencies,

We face a moment of truth.

Now is the time to deliver.

Now is the time to restore trust.

Now is the time to inspire hope.

And I do have hope.

The problems we have created are problems we can solve.

Humanity has shown that we are capable of great things when we work together.

That is the *raison d'être* of our United Nations.

But let's be frank. Today's multilateral system is too limited in its instruments and capacities, in relation to what is needed for effective governance of managing global public goods.

It is too fixed on the short-term.

We need to strengthen global governance. We need to focus on the future. We need to renew the social contract. We need to ensure a United Nations fit for a new era.

That is why I presented my report on Our Common Agenda in the way I did.

It provides a 360 degree analysis of the state of our world, with 90 specific recommendations that take on the challenges of today and strengthen multilateralism for tomorrow.

Our Common Agenda builds on the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Paris Climate Agreement.

It is in line with the mandate I was given by the UN75 Declaration to seek a pathway to a better world.

But to reach that land of our promises, we must bridge Great Divides.

Excellencies,

I see 6 Great Divides — 6 Grand Canyons — that we must bridge now.

First, we must bridge the peace divide.

For far too many around the world, peace and stability remain a distant dream.

In Afghanistan, where we must boost humanitarian assistance and defend human rights, especially of women and girls.

In Ethiopia, where we call on all parties to immediately cease hostilities, ensure humanitarian access and create the conditions for the start of an Ethiopian-led political dialogue.

In Myanmar, where we reaffirm unwavering support to the people in their pursuit of democracy, peace, human rights and the rule of law.

In the Sahel, where we are committed to mobilizing international assistance for regional security, development and governance.

In places such as Yemen, Libya and Syria, where we must overcome stalemates and push for peace.

In Israel and Palestine, where we urge leaders to resume a meaningful dialogue, recognizing the two-State solution as the only pathway to a just and comprehensive peace.

In Haiti and so many other places left behind, where we stand in solidarity through every step out of crisis.

Excellencies,

We are also seeing an explosion in seizures of power by force.

Military coups are back.

The lack of unity among the international community does not help.

Geopolitical divisions are undermining international cooperation and limiting the capacity of the Security Council to take the necessary decisions.

A sense of impunity is taking hold.

At the same time, it will be impossible to address dramatic economic and development challenges while the world's two largest economies are at odds with each other.

Yet I fear our world is creeping towards two different sets of economic, trade, financial, and technology rules, two divergent approaches in the development of artificial intelligence — and ultimately two different military and geo-political strategies.

This is a recipe for trouble. It would be far less predictable than the Cold War.

To restore trust and inspire hope, we need cooperation. We need dialogue. We need understanding.

We need to invest in prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. We need progress on nuclear disarmament and in our shared efforts to counter terrorism.

We need actions anchored in respect for human rights. And we need a new comprehensive Agenda for Peace.

Excellencies,

Second, we must bridge the climate divide. This requires bridging trust between North and South.

It starts by doing all we can now to create the conditions for success in Glasgow.

We need more ambition from all countries in three key areas — mitigation, finance and adaptation.

More ambition on mitigation — means countries committing to carbon neutrality by mid-century — and to concrete 2030 emissions reductions targets that will get us there, backed up with credible actions now.

More ambition on finance — means developing nations finally seeing the promised \$100 billion dollars a year for climate action, fully mobilizing the resources of both international financial institutions and the private sector.

More ambition on adaptation — means developed countries living up to their promise of credible support to developing countries to build resilience to save lives and livelihoods.

This means 50 per cent of all climate finance provided by developed countries and multilateral development banks should be dedicated to adaptation.

The African Development Bank set the bar in 2019 by allocating half of its climate finance to adaptation.

Some donor countries have followed their lead. All must do so.

My message to every Member State is this: Don't wait for others to make the first move. Do your part.

Around the world, we see civil society — led by young people — fully mobilized to tackle the climate crisis.

The private sector is increasingly stepping up.

Governments must also summon the full force of their fiscal policymaking powers to make the shift to green economies.

By taxing carbon and pollution instead of people's income to more easily make the switch to sustainable green jobs.

By ending subsidies to fossil fuels and freeing up resources to invest back into health care, education, renewable energy, sustainable food systems, and social protections for their people.

By committing to no new coal plants. If all planned coal power plants become operational, we will not only be clearly above 1.5 degrees — we will be well above 2 degrees.

The Paris targets will go up in smoke.

This is a planetary emergency.

We need coalitions of solidarity — between countries that still depend heavily on coal, and countries that have the financial and technical resources to support their transition.

We have the opportunity and obligation to act.

Excellencies,

Third, we must bridge the gap between rich and poor, within and among countries.

That starts by ending the pandemic for everyone, everywhere.

We urgently need a global vaccination plan to at least double vaccine production and ensure that vaccines reach seventy percent of the world's population in the first half of 2022.

This plan could be implemented by an emergency Task Force made up of present and potential vaccine producers, the World Health Organization, ACT-Accelerator partners, and international financial institutions, working with pharmaceutical companies.

We have no time to lose.

A lopsided recovery is deepening inequalities.

Richer countries could reach pre-pandemic growth rates by the end of this year while the impacts may last for years in low-income countries.

Is it any wonder?

Advanced economies are investing nearly 28 per cent of their Gross Domestic Product into economic recovery.

For middle-income countries, that number falls to 6.5 per cent.

And it plummets to 1.8 per cent for the least developed countries — a tiny percentage of a much smaller amount.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the International Monetary Fund projects that cumulative economic growth per capita over the next five years will be 75 percent less than the rest of the world.

Many countries need an urgent injection of liquidity.

I welcome the issuance of \$650 billion in Special Drawing Rights by the International Monetary Fund.

But these SDRs are largely going to the countries that need them least.

Advanced economies should reallocate their surplus SDRs to countries in need.

SDRs are not a silver bullet.

But they provide space for sustainable recovery and growth.

I renew my call for a reformed, and more equitable international debt architecture.

The Debt Service Suspension Initiative must be extended to 2022 and should be available to all highly indebted vulnerable and middle-income countries that request it.

This would be solidarity in action.

Countries shouldn't have to choose between servicing debt and serving people.

With effective international solidarity, it would be possible at the national level to forge a new social contract that includes universal health coverage and income protection, housing and decent work, quality education for all, and an end to discrimination and violence against women and girls.

I call on countries to reform their tax systems and finally end tax evasion, money laundering and illicit financial flows.

And as we look ahead, we need a better system of prevention and preparedness for all major global risks.

We must support the recommendations of the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response.

I have put forward a number of other proposals in Our Common Agenda — including an emergency platform and a Futures Lab.

Mesdames et Messieurs les
représentants,

**Quatrièmement, nous devons
combler le fossé entre les genres.**

Le COVID-19 a mis à nu et exacerbé
la plus vieille injustice du monde : le
déséquilibre de pouvoir entre les
hommes et les femmes.

Lorsque la pandémie a frappé, les
femmes représentaient la majorité
des travailleurs de première ligne.

Elles ont été les premières à perdre leur emploi et les premières à mettre leurs carrières en suspens pour s'occuper de leurs proches.

Les fermetures d'écoles ont touché les filles de manière disproportionnée, freinant leurs parcours et augmentant les risques d'abus, de violence et de mariage d'enfants.

Comblar le fossé entre les femmes et les hommes n'est pas seulement une question de justice pour les femmes et les filles.

Cela change la donne pour l'humanité tout entière.

Les sociétés plus égalitaires sont aussi plus stables et plus pacifiques. Elles ont de meilleurs systèmes de santé et des économies plus dynamiques.

L'égalité des femmes est essentiellement une question de pouvoir. Si nous voulons résoudre les problèmes les plus difficiles de notre époque, nous devons de toute urgence transformer notre monde dominé par les hommes et changer l'équilibre du pouvoir.

Cela requiert plus de femmes dirigeantes dans les parlements, les cabinets ministériels et les conseils d'administration. Cela exige que les femmes soient pleinement représentées et puissent apporter leur pleine contribution partout.

J'exhorte les gouvernements, les entreprises et les autres organisations à prendre des mesures audacieuses, y compris des critères de référence et des quotas, pour établir la parité hommes-femmes à tous les niveaux de la hiérarchie.

A l'Organisation des Nations Unies, nous avons atteint cela au sein de l'équipe dirigeante et parmi les responsables de bureaux de pays. Nous continuerons jusqu'à ce que nous parvenions à la parité à tous les niveaux.

Dans le même temps, nous devons nous opposer aux lois régressives qui institutionnalisent la discrimination de genre. Les droits des femmes sont des droits humains.

Les plans de relance économique devraient accorder une place centrale aux femmes, notamment par des investissements à grande échelle dans l'économie des soins.

Et nous devons adopter un plan d'urgence pour lutter contre la violence de genre dans chaque pays.

Pour atteindre les Objectifs de développement durable et bâtir un monde meilleur, nous pouvons et nous devons combler le fossé entre les femmes et les hommes.

Mesdames et Messieurs les
représentants,

**Cinquièmement, pour redonner
confiance et raviver l'espoir, nous
devons réduire la fracture
numérique.**

La moitié de l'humanité n'a pas
accès à Internet. Nous devons faire
en sorte que tout le monde soit
connecté d'ici à 2030.

Telle est la vision de mon Plan d'action de coopération numérique : saisir les promesses du numérique tout en se prémunissant contre ses dangers.

L'un des plus grands périls auxquels nous sommes confrontés, c'est le pouvoir croissant des plateformes numériques et l'utilisation des données à des fins néfastes.

Une vaste bibliothèque d'informations est en train d'être constituée sur chacun d'entre nous. Et nous n'y avons même pas accès.

Nous ne savons pas comment ces informations ont été recueillies, par qui, ni dans quels buts.

Mais nous savons que nos données sont utilisées à des fins commerciales, pour augmenter encore les profits.

Nos comportements et habitudes deviennent des produits qui sont vendus comme des contrats à terme.

Nos données sont également utilisées pour influencer nos perceptions et nos opinions.

Les gouvernements – et d’autres entités – peuvent les exploiter pour contrôler ou manipuler le comportement des citoyens, bafouant ainsi les droits humains des individus ou groupes et sapant la démocratie.

Ce n’est pas de la science-fiction.
C’est notre réalité.

Et cela exige un débat sérieux.

Il en va de même pour d’autres dangers de l’ère numérique.

Je suis par exemple certain que toute future confrontation majeure – et j’espère évidemment qu’une telle confrontation n’aura jamais lieu – commencera par une cyberattaque massive.

Quels cadres juridiques nous permettraient de faire face à une telle situation ?

Aujourd’hui, des armes autonomes peuvent prendre pour cible des personnes et les tuer sans intervention humaine. De telles armes devraient être interdites.

Mais il n'y a pas de consensus sur la manière de réglementer ces technologies.

Afin de rétablir la confiance et raviver l'espoir, nous devons placer les droits humains au cœur de nos efforts pour que l'avenir numérique de tous soit sûr, équitable et ouvert.

Excelencias,

En sexto lugar, y por último, tenemos que salvar la brecha entre generaciones.

Los jóvenes heredarán las consecuencias de nuestras decisiones, buenas y malas.

Al mismo tiempo, se espera que nazcan 10.900 millones de personas antes de que termine el siglo.

Necesitamos sus talentos, ideas y energías.

Nuestra Agenda Común propone la celebración, el año que viene, de una Cumbre para la Transformación de la Educación con el fin de abordar la crisis del aprendizaje y ampliar las oportunidades al alcance de los 1.800 millones de jóvenes de hoy.

Los jóvenes necesitan algo más que apoyo.

Necesitan tener un asiento en la mesa.

Por ello, nombraré un Enviado Especial para las Generaciones Futuras y crearé la Oficina de la Juventud de las Naciones Unidas.

Y las contribuciones de los jóvenes serán fundamentales en la Cumbre del Futuro, tal y como queda recogido en Nuestra Agenda Común.

La juventud necesita una visión de esperanza para el futuro.

Una investigación realizada recientemente en diez países ha demostrado que la mayoría de los jóvenes sufre altos niveles de ansiedad y angustia por el estado de nuestro planeta.

Un 60% de sus futuros votantes se sienten traicionados por sus gobiernos.

Debemos demostrar a los niños y niñas, a los y las jóvenes, que, a pesar de la gravedad de la situación, el mundo tiene un plan – y que los gobiernos están comprometidos con su aplicación.

Tenemos que actuar ahora para superar las Grandes Divisiones y salvar a la humanidad y al planeta.

Excellencies,

With real engagement, we can live up to the promise of a better, more peaceful world.

That is the driving force of our
Common Agenda.

The best way to advance the
interests of one's own citizens is by
advancing the interests of our
common future.

Interdependence is the logic of the
21st century.

And it is the lodestar of the United
Nations.

This is our time.

A moment for transformation.

An era to re-ignite multilateralism.

An age of possibilities.

Let us restore trust. Let us inspire hope.

And let us start right now.

Thank you.