

20.9.2022

Mr President, Secretary-General, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to start by congratulating Mr. Csaba Kőrösi for his election as the President of the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly. I also want to thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his determined and skillful leadership of the United Nations. You can both count on Finland's steadfast support for your important work during these exceptional times.

As the topic of this session states, the challenges we are facing are interlocking. Russia is waging a brutal war in Ukraine. The ripple effects of that war are already far-reaching and severe. They are compounding the pre-existing problems faced by the international community.

A triple crisis of energy, food security and finance is weighing especially heavily on vulnerable countries. Countries that are already suffering the most from the climate crisis and the covid-19 pandemic.

This truly is a watershed moment. As we gather here, we have an important opportunity to engage in dialogue and to find solutions. To understand the concerns of those most in need.

As difficult as it may seem, now is the time to show global solidarity and strengthen multilateral cooperation. The international community can and should emerge stronger from these crises.

Mr. President,

Russia's cruel and unprovoked war on Ukraine has now been raging for seven months. It has brought immense sorrow and destruction to the sovereign lands of Ukraine. Russia's use of force is in blatant violation of the Charter of the United Nations. It is an act of aggression, as determined by this very Assembly.

Ukraine is exercising its inherent right to self-defence. And judging by the recent reports from the battlefields, it is doing that with admirable courage, strength and efficiency.

We, the international community, members of this General Assembly, might not always see eye to eye. We have our differing views. But it is our common obligation to uphold the international rules-based order. We can't accept, condone or normalize grave violations of international law and human rights. A world where impunity prevails is unjust, unstable and dangerous. For all of us.

There was a global food crisis even before the Russian invasion to Ukraine. More than 800 million people in the world were chronically hungry. The war further worsens this calamity.

I would like to commend the UN Secretary-General and the President of Türkiye for their tireless efforts to reach an agreement to secure Ukrainian grain transports. If implemented as foreseen, it will have a major impact on the lives of tens of millions of people in need.

In order to respond to the wider challenges of global food security, we need collective action. The goal must be sustainable, inclusive and fair food systems. We also have to accelerate the implementation of other Sustainable Development Goals. We can't afford to leave anyone behind.

Last year in this hall, I noted that it is not an exaggeration to say that we are facing a global climate emergency. This summer has proven it: we have seen extreme drought and heat waves across the globe. From the Horn of Africa to Europe, from China to the US. The magnitude of the catastrophe caused by the floods in Pakistan is not yet fully visible but the destruction is already tremendous.

These are not isolated or local events. They are, once again, a reminder that climate change is an existential threat to the human kind. We are on the verge of very dangerous tipping points.

This calls for urgent action on two fronts. First, we must change our course before it is too late. Second, we need to help those urgently suffering and support those with fewer resources to deal with this threat.

Besides mitigating climate change, we must adapt to it. In particular, we must honor the commitment of doubling adaptation finance made at the COP26 in Glasgow.

And I want to underline this: Fighting climate change and taking care of the economy are not contradicting each other. Green transition has a tremendous potential to create jobs, innovations and economic growth. But it has to be done fairly.

The alarming loss of the variety of life on our planet should also be a cause for grave concern to all of us. We are on the brink of mass extinction, or perhaps already there. Again, we need to change course. Urgently.

We humans can only thrive and survive if we learn to co-exist with all the other species. We need to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030. To this end, the COP15 in Montreal in December will be essential.

Mr. President,

defending human dignity is a fundamental task of the UN. It is up to us – the Member States – to live up to this task. Despite our failures, we have also accomplishments to build on. The UN Human Rights Council has shown determination. It has worked to ensure accountability for the horrendous acts against civilians in Ukraine and Syria. It has raised its voice in support of women and girls in Afghanistan.

I want to thank those who supported Finland's membership of the Human Rights Council. As a member, Finland acts to bring justice to the victims of human rights violations. Finland remains a staunch supporter of the work of the International Criminal Court in investigating all grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

The number of conflicts in the world is the highest since the Second World War. One quarter of humanity lives in conflict-affected countries. We must not ignore or forget Afghanistan, Myanmar, Syria, Yemen and other countries where human rights or the conditions for living a decent life are under threat.

Increasing geopolitical tensions as well as the impacts of climate change and the pandemic are making conflicts more complex and prolonged. Ordinary people bear the brunt. For the first time in its history, the UNDP's Human Development Index has declined for two consecutive years. We simply can't let this continue.

In this turbulent world, those who stoke the flames of conflict bear a special responsibility. But we all must ask ourselves: Have we done all we can to avert violence? Have we done what we can to make a positive change?

Difficult times call for more diplomacy, not less. We must build and strengthen peace and prevent conflict wherever possible. That is the very core of the United Nations.

We also have to be able to respond to emerging risks to peace and security. Move from hindsight to foresight. The Secretary General's report Our Common Agenda provides us a blueprint for more effective multilateralism – paving a way to solutions to current and future global problems, strengthening peace. It really is our common agenda, and Finland wholeheartedly supports its implementation.

In the current security environment the international arms control architecture is increasingly challenged. On the one hand, political tensions erode the functioning of the existing architecture. On the other hand, new technologies create new risks. But we can't let arms control fail. On the contrary: it needs to be strengthened.

For decades arms control has provided stability and predictability into great power relationships and international relations. To quote Dag Hammarskjöld: "disarmament is never the result only of the political situation; it is also partly instrumental in creating the political situation."

The two biggest nuclear weapon states have a unique responsibility to advance nuclear arms control and disarmament. The others need to follow suit. It is in the interest of all of us that progress in nuclear arms control and disarmament continues beyond the New START Treaty. We call on the United States and the Russian Federation to continue their dialogue on strategic stability with a view of achieving further cuts in their nuclear arsenals.

Mr. President,

the interlocking global challenges demonstrate that more than ever we need a renewed commitment on multilateralism, with the United Nations at its core.

We must not become indifferent or apathetic in the face of these multiple crises. We must not get used to violations of international law and human rights. Not close our eyes to the growing needs of the vulnerable. Not sleepwalk into a climate and biodiversity catastrophe. Nor should we lose sight of hope: There is still time to act.