

Remarks by Csaba Kőrösi, President of the 77th session of the General Assembly
Closing remarks to the UNGA General Debate
26 September 2022
[As delivered]

Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

For nearly a week, you, the delegations of the Member States, have taken us back home with you. Describing the priorities and the challenges that you face, and the impact that they have on people in your countries.

The sheer number of you who took part in this debate points to the importance that the General Debate holds in international affairs.

This year, we heard from 190 speakers, including 76 Heads of State, 50 Heads of Government, 4 Vice-Presidents, 5 Deputy Prime Ministers, 48 Ministers and 7 Heads of Delegations.

Of the speakers, 23 were women, a figure that represents around 10 per cent of leaders who participated this year.

But though their numbers are small, women leaders “pack a punch”, to quote former New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark, who moderated this year’s first General Assembly Platform of Women Leaders.

An event that was one of my favorites this week, with a refreshingly open discussion.

I will not try to boil down the 190 statements we heard into a few phrases.

It would not capture the nuances.

Nor could I replicate the passion and pride that your leaders brought to this General Assembly Hall.

But there are some commonalities.

The **first** shift I sensed is the growing awareness that humanity has entered a new era.

Facing complex challenges and multi-layer crises, we reached a time of paradigm shift. Because the movements, the adjustments that we see around us cannot be called mere modifications any longer: they are significant transformations in the making.

We have not even got a name for the new epoch yet, we cannot scientifically describe it yet, but we *feel* that it has arrived.

The basic conditions of our global cooperation have changed. We live now in a different world.

A world of new challenges, changing priorities, changing roles, and changing ways.

Fresh pages of history are being written, with new divisions and new alliances, new grievances, and new successes on them.

The **second** message I heard reverberating through the Hall is that the war in Ukraine should end.

You also pointed out that its effect is being felt around the world.

You described the pain of shortages. Inflation. The impact of refugees, as far as South America and Africa.

Concerns about the safety of nuclear plants, and fears of a nuclear attack.

You also highlighted the dangers of misinformation and propaganda.

Yet, be it the largest and the most acute, the war in Ukraine is one of nearly 30 armed conflicts worldwide. And *none* of them is improving.

The **third** message is that climate change is gradually destroying us.

We heard about countries simultaneously experiencing droughts and flooding.

We spoke about unsustainable patterns of production and consumption. Eating up the fish and filling our waters with plastics, even as waves of rising seas drown shorelines.

We heard calls to achieve global net-zero and appeals to assist the countries most affected by climate change, not of their own making. We heard clearly the calls for climate justice and honoring commitments.

Yet, some of us still seem not convinced that growing our economies can be balanced with limiting emissions and preserving biodiversity.

Fourth, this week we also heard calls for improving the state of human rights and meeting the needs of those most vulnerable to exploitation.

There is a cost to speaking out about human rights violations.

But the freedom of speaking out is strongly supported.

We heard echoes of this in the high-level event on minorities marking 30 years since an historic Declaration on the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. Diversity is a strength, not a liability – you affirmed.

The **fifth** key issue, for which there is strong support, is the need to modernize the United Nations, revitalize the General Assembly and reform the Security Council.

This is in line with my own conviction that the GA should be ready to respond better to the interlocking crises and that the Security Council must reflect the realities of *this* century.

We have spent the past six days analyzing the crises that surround us.

My friends, we are all in agreement on the main challenges.

We want a peaceful post-COVID world with increased trust, where we can work together to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

I believe that my vision statement for solutions through solidarity, sustainability and science may help us.

I heard your support offered to this work and I thank you for that.

To make progress, during the whole session ahead of us, we need to build on what unites us. We also may wish to seek ways of how to focus on the most burning challenges and frame them in terms of crisis management and transformation.

In order to deepen solidarity, we must build trust.

Following this week, I plan to launch a series of consultations with many actors, including the scientific community.

The aim is to strengthen universally accepted and owned foundation for action.

We are also looking ahead to further preparations for the UN Water Conference, the Sendai Midterm review and the SDG Summit.

I hope to meet with your delegations throughout this session, to continue hearing your ideas and your concrete proposals how to meet the many challenges this Assembly faces.

When I addressed you a week ago, I said that things get better when we make them better. Things go wrong when we fail to seize the opportunities before us.

Our opportunity is here and now. Let us act.

Before I conclude, I want to express my thanks to everyone who made the High-Level Week a success.

I am grateful to our host country – the United States – as well as the City of New York, the New York Police Department, and all the other Departments of the City of New York, for their seamless logistical and security support over the past few weeks.

I thank you, New Yorkers. I hope that you see this year's traffic jams as a sign that after years of the pandemic, the nations of the world are eager to come together again and address the most burning issues – together.

I want to express my deepest appreciations to our colleagues in the UN Secretariat. The Department of General Assembly and Conference Management; the Department of Operational Support; the Department of Safety and Security; and the Department of Global Communications.

To the army of protocol officers, interpreters, conference staff, technicians and security guards who are essential to the smooth conduct of the General Debate. And to my own team. It was a baptism of fire, and I am very proud of you. Thank you.

I also want to express my gratitude to the General Assembly Vice-Presidents, for their dedication, time and efficiency.

And thanks to all of you for the kind understanding and support.