

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

Mr. Secretary-General,

Distinguished Heads of State and Government,

Excellencies,

Friends,

The world needs solutions through solidarity, sustainability and science.

Solutions because we have drafted many treaties, set excellent goals, yet have taken too little action.

We need solidarity because inequalities have reached record heights.

We need sustainability because we owe it to our children to leave behind a liveable world.

We need science because it offers us neutral evidence for our actions.

My sincere gratitude goes to all Member States, especially to Hungary and the Eastern European Group, for giving me the mandate to turn this motto into reality.

Excellencies,

We gather today at the most consequential moment of the last four decades.

Des chaleurs extrêmes aux inondations dévastatrices - le changement climatique est ébranlent nos communautés.

Notre consommation et nos méthodes de production lacèrent notre planète - de ses sols à ces cieux.

Nous vivons dans un état de crise humanitaire permanent.

(Translation from French: Climate change has left us reeling under heatwaves, floods, and droughts. Unsustainable consumption and production have left scars across our environment, from our skies to our seas. We live, it seems, in a permanent state of humanitarian emergency.)

أكثر من ثلاثمائة مليون شخص في حاجة ماسة للمساعدات الإنسانية والحماية وذلك بزيادة قدرها عشرة في المائة منذ يناير.

كما وصلت أزمة الجوع العالمية إلى مستويات تنذر بالخطر بسبب تغير المناخ والنزاعات وجائحة كوفيد تسعة عشر
وفي الأشهر الستة الماضية، دفع تضخم أسعار الغذاء والطاقة بسبعين مليون شخص على الأقل إلى الفقر.

(Translation from Arabic: Over 300 million people are in urgent need of humanitarian aid and protection – a 10 percent rise since January. Driven by climate change, COVID-19 and conflict, global hunger has reached alarming levels. In the last six months, food and energy inflation have pushed at least 70 million people into poverty.)

Инфляция, тем временем, находится на самом высоком за сорок лет уровне.

Четверть всего населения Земли проживает в районах, охваченных конфликтами, боевыми действиями и политической нестабильностью.

Редко когда насилие по всему миру бывало столь жестоким.

(Translation from Russian: Meanwhile, inflation is at 40-year highs. One quarter of humanity lives in conflict areas, caught amid fighting and political instability. The violence across the world has rarely been so fierce.)

Who would have imagined that war would return to Europe? That the nuclear threat would be back in political discourse to settle a dispute with a neighbor?

It has been 203 days since the General Assembly adopted a resolution condemning the military aggression against Ukraine. Unfortunately, the bloodshed and the suffering have not stopped yet.

In that time, the United Nations and its partners have offered food and shelter to millions of refugees from that country.

A landmark agreement on commercial grain exports from the world's breadbasket offers hope. Diplomacy is at work to release fertilizers so that the shortages we see today do not become the famines of next year.

UN nuclear inspectors are at one of Europe's key nuclear sites, preventing a possible catastrophe.

Excellencies,

The theme of our 77th General Debate is “A watershed moment: transformative solutions to interlocking challenges”.

I stand in solidarity with the people of Pakistan, where devastating floods washed away hundreds of villages.

You have seen the heart-wrenching scenes of devastation: this can be a window into our future.

However, in tackling climate change, we have the solutions.

These are rooted in the advancements we have made in science cooperation and climate diplomacy.

But we have to want to put them in practice.

The International Panel on Climate Change has proven an invaluable tool for supporting political decisions to combat climate change and to adapt to its consequences.

We should consider replicating its success in the areas of water, energy, food and biodiversity.

This would give us a universally accepted, scientific foundation for action.

Once this high-level week is over, I plan to launch a series of consultations with the scientific community, asking them to help us.

Bringing knowledge from microscopes to microphones.

The 77th session of our General Assembly will be key to preparing the SDG Summit in 2023, and the Summit of the Future in 2024.

Next year, we will assess SDG 6 at the UN Water Conference – the first since 1977.

This call could not be more urgent. Water is set to be the next major driver of conflict worldwide.

The problem of water is threefold. Too much. Not enough. Not safe.

We have the chance to make a difference in the lives of 2.1 billion people who lack access to clean water.

Let us cooperate to make the Water Action Agenda as transformational, practical, and actionable as possible.

During the session, we will also assess the Sendai Framework and come to conclusions to improve resilience against disasters.

It is vital that these opportunities lead to substantive outcomes.

The building blocks for transformation are at our disposal. The 2030 Agenda, the Sendai Framework, the Paris Agreement, the Addis Ababa Program of Action and Our Common Agenda all point in the same direction.

They describe the world we want and offer us the avenues to get there.

I am encouraged that the Secretary-General's proposals and the important initiatives by Member States mutually support each other.

The challenges are great. And they are interconnected. But they are not insurmountable.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Without universal respect for the rule of law, it is all too easy to rapidly slide into treacherous territory.

As we all know, in time of crisis, human rights are the first to be compromised.

When human rights come under threat, it is our smoke signal, our call to action.

It would be remiss to speak of human rights without addressing a fundamental issue, found to be lacking in most societies around the world. That is women's rights.

It is simply unacceptable that every third woman experiences violence in her lifetime.

As we speak, half of humanity is all too often excluded from decision-making and leadership.

But, we need every man and woman to live their lives to their fullest potential.

It is only by ensuring the inclusion of all, valuing the knowledge of all, that we will find solutions to the challenges we face.

This afternoon's UNGA Platform of Women Leaders, organised in collaboration with UN Women, may be an answer to this call.

Women Heads of State and Government will offer their solutions to society's complex problems.

Data shows that crisis response is more effective when women take the lead.

I encourage you to engage substantively with this issue: it has to do with equity and equality – but above all, human dignity.

Excellencies,

In all these issues, in all our endeavors, I look forward to working closely with the Secretary-General, the Security Council, ECOSOC, and other key relevant institutions at the UN.

I stand ready to support Member States to identify transformative, impact-oriented, systemic, and sustainable solutions.

I promise to cooperate with all stakeholders – civil society, young people, women, and the scientific community, to name but a few.

UN Agencies, Funds, and Programmes are critical to bringing our efforts out of this Hall and into our communities.

To deliver on the agenda requested by Member States, I count on your constructive engagement, cooperation, and mutual respect to each other.

I emphasize that the revitalization of both the United Nations and the General Assembly must continue.

Our ability to competently improve our Organization will determine its relevance in the eyes of people around the world.

I want to advance negotiations on Security Council reform: it is high time that the Council represents the world's population more equally, and that it reflects 21st century realities.

This is a matter of credibility for our entire Organization and our multilateral order.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Crisis management and transformation will require our consistent efforts way beyond one session of the General Assembly.

In that spirit, let me finish with some timeless words of wisdom about chances and the risk of letting them pass us by:

“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.

I thank you.