

Prime Minister Liz Truss's speech to the UN General Assembly 21 September 2022

Mr President, your excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

At the time of its foundation, the United Nations was a beacon of promise.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, this building symbolised the end of aggression.

For many decades the UN has helped to deliver stability and security in much of the world.

It has provided a place for nations to work together on shared challenges.

And it has promoted the principles of sovereignty and self-determination even through the Cold War and its aftermath.

But today those principles, that have defined our lives since the dark days of the 1940s, are fracturing.

For the first time in the history of this assembly we are meeting during a large-scale war of aggression in Europe.

And authoritarian states are undermining stability and security around the world.

Geopolitics is entering a new era – one that requires those who believe in the founding principles of the United Nations to stand up and be counted.

In the United Kingdom we are entering a new era too.

I join you here just two days after Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II was laid to rest.

We deeply mourn her passing and we pay tribute to her service.

She was the rock on which modern Britain was built.

And she symbolised the post-war values on which this organisation was founded.

Our constitutional monarchy, underpinned by a democratic society, has delivered stability and progress.

Her Late Majesty transcended difference and healed division. We saw this in her visits to post-apartheid South Africa and the Republic of Ireland.

When she addressed this General Assembly 65 years ago she warned that it was vital not only to have strong ideals but also to have the political will to deliver on them.

Now we must show that will.

We must fight to defend those ideals.

And we must deliver on them for all our people.

And as we say farewell to our Late Queen, the UK opens a new chapter – a new Carolean age – under His Majesty King Charles III.

We want this era to be one of hope and progress...

One in which we defend the values of individual liberty, self-determination and equality before the law...

One in which we ensure that freedom and democracy prevail for all people...

And one in which we deliver on the commitments that Her Late Majesty the Queen made here 65 years ago.

This is about what we do in the United Kingdom and what we do as member states of the UN.

So today I will set out what steps we are taking at home in the UK and our proposed blueprint for the new era we are now in – the new partnerships and new instruments we need to collectively adopt.

Our commitment to hope and progress must begin at home – in the lives of each and every citizen that we serve.

Our strength as a nation comes from the strong foundations of freedom and democracy.

Democracy gives people the right to choose their own path. And it evolves to reflect the aspirations of citizens.

It unleashes enterprise, ideas, and opportunity. And it protects the freedoms that are at the very core of our humanity.

By contrast, autocracies sow the seeds of their own demise by suppressing their citizens.

They are fundamentally rigid and unable to adapt. Any short-term gains are eroded in the long term because these societies stifle the aspiration and creativity which are vital to long-term growth.

A country where Artificial Intelligence acts as judge and jury, where there are no human rights and no fundamental freedoms, is not the kind of place anyone truly wants to live.

It is not the kind of world we want to build.

But we cannot simply assume there will be a democratic future.

There is a real struggle going on between different forms of society – between democracies and autocracies. Unless democratic societies

deliver on the economy and security our citizens expect, we will fall behind.

We need to keep improving and renewing what we do for the new era, demonstrating that democracy delivers.

As Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, I am determined that we will deliver the progress that people expect.

I will lead a new Britain for a new era.

Firstly, this begins with growth and building a British economy that rewards enterprise and attracts investment.

Our long-term aim is to get our economy growing at an average of 2.5%.

We need this growth to deliver investment around our country, to deliver the jobs and high wages that people expect, and to deliver public services like the National Health Service.

We want people to keep more of the money they earn, so they can have more control over their lives and can contribute to the future.

Secondly, it means securing affordable and reliable supplies of energy.

We are cutting off the toxic power and pipelines from authoritarian regimes and strengthening our energy resilience.

We will ensure we cannot be coerced or harmed by the reckless actions of rogue actors abroad.

We will transition to a future based on renewable and nuclear energy while ensuring that the gas used during that transition is from reliable sources including our own North Sea production.

We will be a net energy exporter by 2040.

Thirdly, we are safeguarding the security of our economy – the supply chains, the critical minerals, the food, and the technology that drives growth and protects the health and lives of our people.

We won't be strategically dependent on those who seek to weaponise the global economy.

Instead, we are reforming our economy to get Britain moving – and we want to work with our allies so we can all move forward together.

The free world needs this economic strength and resilience to push back against authoritarian aggression and win this new era of strategic competition.

We must do this together.

So we are building new partnerships around the world.

We are fortifying our deep security alliances in Europe and beyond through NATO and the Joint Expeditionary Force.

We are deepening our links with fellow democracies like India, Israel, Indonesia and South Africa.

We are building new security ties with our friends in the Indo-Pacific and the Gulf.

We have shown leadership on free and fair trade, striking trade agreements with Australia, New Zealand, Japan and many others, and we are in the process of acceding to the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Rather than exerting influence through debt, aggression, and taking control of critical infrastructure and minerals, we are building strategic ties based on mutual benefit and trust.

And we are deepening partnerships like the G7 and the Commonwealth.

We must also collectively extend a hand of friendship to those parts of the world that have too often been left behind and left vulnerable to global challenges...

Whether it's the Pacific or Caribbean Island states dealing with the impact of climate change, or the Western Balkans dealing with persistent threats to their stability.

The UK is providing funding, using the might of the City of London and our security capabilities to provide better alternatives to those offered by malign regimes.

The resolute international response to Ukraine has shown how we can deliver decisive collective action.

The response has been built on partnerships and alliances and also on being prepared to use new instruments – unprecedented sanctions, diplomatic action, and rapid military support.

There has been a strength of collective purpose – we have met many times, spoken many times on the phone, we have made things happen.

Now we must use these instruments in a more systematic way to push back on the economic aggression of authoritarian regimes.

The G7 and our like-minded partners should act as an economic NATO, collectively defending our prosperity.

If the economy of a partner is being targeted by an aggressive regime we should act to support them. All for one and one for all.

Through the G7's \$600 billion Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment we are providing an honest, reliable alternative on infrastructure investment around the world, free from debt with strings attached.

And we must go further to friendshore our supply chains and end strategic dependence.

This is how we will build collective security, strengthen our resilience and safeguard freedom and democracy.

But we cannot let up on dealing with the crisis we face today.

No-one is threatening Russia.

Yet we meet here this evening...

In Ukraine, barbarous weapons are being used to kill and maim people,
Rape is being used as an instrument of war,
Families are being torn apart.

And this morning we have seen Putin trying to justify his catastrophic failures.

He is doubling down by sending even more reservists to a terrible fate.

He is desperately trying to claim the mantle of democracy for a regime without human rights or freedoms.

And he is making yet more bogus claims and sabre-rattling threats.

This will not work. The international alliance is strong and Ukraine is strong.

The contrast between Russia's conduct and Ukraine's brave, dignified First Lady, Olena Zelenska, who is here at the UN today, could not be more stark.

The Ukrainians are not just defending their own country – they are defending our values and the security of the whole world.

That's why we must act.

That's why the UK will spend 3% of GDP on defence by 2030, maintaining our position as the leading security actor in Europe.

And that's why – at this crucial moment in the conflict – I pledge that we will sustain or increase our military support to Ukraine, for as long as it takes.

New UK weapons are arriving in Ukraine as I speak – including more MLRS rockets.

We will not rest until Ukraine prevails.

In all of these areas, on all of these fronts, the time to act is now.

This is a decisive moment in our history, in the history of this organisation, and in the history of freedom.

The story of 2022 could have been that of an authoritarian state rolling its tanks over the border of a peaceful neighbour and subjugating its people.

Instead, it is the story of freedom fighting back.

In the face of rising aggression we have shown we have the power to act and the resolve to see it through.

But this cannot be a one-off.

This must be a new era in which we commit to ourselves, our citizens, and this institution that we will do whatever it takes – whatever it takes to deliver for our people and defend our values.

As we mourn our Late Queen and remember her call to this Assembly, we must devote ourselves to this task.

Britain's commitment to this is total.

We will be a dynamic, reliable and trustworthy partner.

Together with our friends and allies around the world, we will continue to champion freedom, sovereignty and democracy.

And together we can define this new era as one of hope and progress.

Thank you.