



## Statement by Edgars Rinkēvičs, President of the Republic of Latvia, at the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly

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[Foreign policy](#)

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Mister President,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

I wish to congratulate His Excellency, Philemon Yang of Cameroon, on assuming the post of President of the General Assembly. I assure you of Latvia's full cooperation along the way.

This year's debate is of utmost importance. It focuses on today's interlinked global challenges. It emphasizes the need for a comprehensive approach that is firmly rooted in the United Nations Charter.

Allow me to highlight a few points.

The future of the multilateral system and rules-based order is in all our hands.

We shall not allow selective application or disregard of global norms. The alternative is a terrifying world where force prevails, and law perishes.

It is already the third year of Russia's unprovoked full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine. Russia is still testing the global community's resilience and commitment to the rules-based order.

This war gravely affects the stability of the region and beyond. It has far-reaching consequences for the principles that uphold sovereignty, territorial integrity and international law.

We must ensure that the global order remains resilient in the face of aggression. Especially, when the aggressor is a nuclear-weapon state and a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

Russia tries to tear down what has been built by all of us. Russia tries to rearrange the international system that only benefits aggressors.

Having endured fifty years of Soviet occupation, Latvia deeply understands the value of freedom and independence. As do many other countries represented in this room. Latvia stands by Ukraine.

We continue to call for an immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all Russian troops and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine. There can be no compromise regarding Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Russia's unprovoked attack has widespread consequences beyond Ukraine's borders. It impacts global food security, nuclear safety, and humanitarian situation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Access to food is a human right. Hunger must never be used as a political tool. Latvia stands in solidarity with countries most affected by food crisis.

Latvia has supported grain initiatives and released fertilizer cargos. We implement partnerships for safe and responsible food production in Africa and Central Asia.

Children rights are human rights. Forcible deportations and illegal adoptions of Ukrainian children to Russia are of serious concern. We call on the United Nations to take a more active stand on this. We will contribute to the return of Ukrainian children and their recovery to the best of our ability.

Right to life, liberty and security is a human right. Russia continues to deliberately target civilian and critical infrastructure. Its brutal attacks are supported by Belarus, Iran and North Korea. In response, we are determined to help Ukraine in its fight and to rebuild what has been brutally destroyed.

I call on all members of the United Nations to support and join the Communiqué adopted at the Peace Summit in Switzerland. To start building a peace process based on the United Nations Charter principles.

Russia must bear full legal and financial responsibility for its aggression. We must spare no effort to ensure comprehensive accountability for all crimes committed by Russia in Ukraine.

It is crucial to support and strengthen institutions that investigate and prosecute these crimes, provide justice for victims, and uphold the rule of law.

Establishment of a Special Tribunal that would be able to prosecute the main perpetrators of the crime of aggression would ensure full accountability. I encourage other countries to support this proposal.

Distinguished Delegates,

Our attention remains focused on the crisis in the Middle East.

Tragically, innocent civilians, including countless children, bear the brunt of this crisis. It is imperative for the international community, the United Nations, to support efforts that ensure the protection of all civilians and work towards a durable resolution.

Latvia together with other European Union Member states has called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, the unconditional release of all hostages and the provision of humanitarian access at scale.

It is crucial to prevent the deepening of the crisis and avoid regional spill-over. We remain hopeful that progress towards ending hostilities can soon be achieved.

We condemn all terrorist attacks against Israel. We recognize Israel's legitimate right to self-defense. But it must be exercised in line with international law and particularly – international humanitarian law. The law that has been put in place to protect all civilians.

We must also focus on revitalizing the political process. To break the cycle of violence. To strive for a just and lasting peace. Peace that addresses the legitimate aspirations and security concerns of both Israelis and Palestinians.

The ongoing escalation reinforces the necessity of pursuing a two-state solution in accordance with international parameters.

Mister President,

The United Nations is a place where no country's voice can be dimmed by more resourceful powers. The United Nations commitment to principles of peace and security, justice and human rights empowers us to address challenges that otherwise cannot be tackled alone.

Acting in solidarity for sustainable and inclusive development is more acute than ever before. The Summit of the Future has demonstrated our renewed commitment to Sustainable Development Goals. It accelerates the efforts to eradicate poverty, reduce inequalities and ensure environmental sustainability.

The right path towards progress and achieving Sustainable Development Goals is to advance in innovation, science-based and environmentally friendly economy. To enhance the quality of education and strengthen governance. To engage with women, youth and non-governmental sector on these matters.

Latvia has already progressed towards achieving 63% of the set targets. We are also helping those most in need. Latvia's development cooperation policy has become more global and more tangible, increasing year by year.

There can be no sustainable development without peace and consistent global action on climate change. The ongoing conflicts and crises around the world aggravate the effects of climate change. We strongly believe that the United Nations Security Council must address climate change as an existing risk for global peace and security.

Small island developing states are at the forefront of global environmental crises. Latvia welcomes the recent Advisory Opinion of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. We closely follow the International Law Commission's deliberations aimed at clarifying the impact of sea level rise on statehood.

Latvia has meaningful experience in building resilience against disinformation and promoting media literacy. We support an online environment that is free and open, but also safe and secure. The rising capabilities of artificial intelligence provide a lot of opportunities for growth and development. However, misuse of these capabilities is a concern.

Latvia also remains increasingly engaged in peacebuilding and prevention. Both in words and in deeds. That includes continuous voluntary financial support and participation in United Nations peacekeeping missions, as well as support to Women, Peace and Security agenda.

Distinguished Delegates,

The United Nations is not without its flaws. Its potential to prevent aggression or resolve conflicts has frequently been questioned. We must acknowledge the shortcomings and effectively address them.

Latvia strongly supports revitalization of the United Nations system and reform of the United Nations Security Council.

The number of permanent members of the Security Council must be expanded. To make it more effective, inclusive and accountable. To elevate the voice of underrepresented regions.

It is high time for Africa to have permanent presence at the Security Council table. Africa has been neglected for far too long. That has to change.

Also, the Small Island Developing States deserve a non-permanent seat. Their voice must be heard. Especially given the existential threats they are facing.

The decision-making process should be revisited as well. No single state should have veto power in the United Nations Security Council. Especially when it comes to conflicts the permanent members are involved themselves. This is the way to ensure that the permanent members of the Security Council uphold their responsibility to protect peace and security.

Dear Friends,

The United Nations once used to be a beacon of hope for the people. Not anymore. We must change that. We must rebuild trust and common values. And we can do this by working together.

Latvia is fully prepared to shoulder its part of the responsibility. For the first time, Latvia is running for a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council at the 2025 elections. We stand ready to reenergize this international body.

Thank you.



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