

President, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Our United Nations was born as the Second World War ended.

Shattered by the experiences of two devastating wars, with their unspeakable atrocities, wise people came together to write the United Nations Charter and to establish the United Nations organisation.

The Charter codifies the key principles of international law, including the prohibition of the use of force, but in self defence or upon the authority of the Security Council.

Effectively, wars of aggression were outlawed, whereas the inherent right to self defence was reconfirmed.

In the Charter, and flowing from it in the years to come, we also established the other key principles that codify international humanitarian law as well as international human rights law.

This is the quintessential set of principles that shall govern international relations.

However, our Secretary-General was perfectly right when he pointed out that if violations and abuse is allowed to continue with impunity, the very foundations of the UN Charter is under threat.

And indeed, they are under threat.

President,

For the first time in 79 years we have a major, inter-state war in Europe.

In its war of aggression against Ukraine, Russia is in blatant violation of the very essence of the Charter. It violates the principle of sovereignty, inalienability of borders, and the prohibition of use of force against the territorial integrity and political independence of another Member State. These principles safeguard the equality of all states, large and small, always and everywhere and are fundamental for member states' security.

Norway stands by Ukraine. Like so many friends of a free and independent Ukraine, we contribute significant military and civilian assistance and we are determined to do so as long as it takes. We want Ukraine to prevail.

We want peace in Ukraine. But, it must be a *just* peace, in line with the key principles of the UN Charter. An unjust peace would imply that we, once again, are living in a world where might makes right and where borders can be changed by force.

We must all reject such an outcome. It would set a terrible precedent.

My fellow delegates,

Even wars have rules. International humanitarian law, as embodied in the Geneva Conventions, lays out the key principles of distinction and proportionality. Warring parties are obliged to follow these rules irrespective of whether the war itself is legal.

Every member of this Assembly is bound by the Geneva conventions. They are as much a part of our common commitment to a rules-based order as the Charter itself. The principles under international humanitarian law are obligatory. Not optional.

For the rules to work we have to be consistent in their application. We must treat similar cases similarly, irrespective of the context.

We must speak out if our adversaries violate these rules.

It is equally important that we speak out if our traditional friends violate them.

In fact, it is in the latter case that we demonstrate that we do see the rules as universal.

President,

Almost a year has passed since Hamas's heinous terror attack on Israel on October 7. Its effect on Israeli society can hardly be overestimated. We condemn these horrific acts in the strongest possible terms. The hostages that are still in Hamas' captivity must be released, immediately, and without conditions.

There is no doubt in our mind that Israel, like any other state, has a right to defend itself against terrorism.

At the same time, Israel, like any other state, is bound by international humanitarian law.

President,

The immense suffering inflicted on the Palestinian population in Gaza is beyond comparison. Much of Gaza has been turned into rubble. At least 41000 people have been killed, and many more are injured and maimed for life. I echo the Secretary General when he says that nothing can justify such collective punishment.

Norway was among the very first Western countries to call for a ceasefire in Gaza. We have condemned the violations of international humanitarian law. We have expressed great concern about the severe limitations on humanitarian access, and the shocking number of UN staff, aid workers, and journalists killed.

We stood on UNRWAs side when it was subjected to smear and defamation. While so many countries suspended their funding, we increased ours and we reached out to co-donors to encourage them to return. I am pleased to see that almost all donors are now back.

President,

The Middle East is going through one of its darkest hours.

In the West Bank, illegal Israeli settlements are expanding at an alarming pace. Settler violence is rampant.

As we have gathered at the UN this very week, Lebanon has seen its deadliest days in decades. We are at the brink of a major regional war. Even neighbouring countries that long ago entered into peace agreements with Israel, are under immense pressure. The situation is worsening by the hour.

And make no mistake: the conflicts in the region are deeply intertwined.

Yesterday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressed this assembly. His core message was that we all have to choose - either we are with Israel, or we are with Iran and its proxies. He also stated that there could only be peace once Hezbollah and Hamas were totally defeated.

President,

We have seen this film before. I didn't like the ending.

22 years ago, in response to the terrorist attacks on this very city, another leader stated that we were either with him, or with the terrorists.

This division into a simplistic notion of black and white, leaving no space for nuance and complexity, let alone impartiality, and with an excessive trust in military force alone, is utterly dangerous.

And indeed - it did not end well. We need to learn from past mistakes.

However, President, in every crisis lies an opportunity.

I remain convinced that there is no credible alternative for lasting peace other than a two-state solution.

While ceasefires in Gaza and Lebanon are most urgently needed, ending hostilities must not be confused with lasting solutions. Serious thinking is required, here and now, to prepare for the day after.

Two days ago, almost a hundred Member states took part in a meeting called by Saudi Arabia, the EU and Norway, launching a Global Alliance to implement the two state solution. Three decades after the Oslo Accords, more and more states are realising that endlessly waiting for the right moment to negotiate will not work.

I call on those states that have not yet done so, to recognise the State of Palestine and to allow it to become a full member of this organisation. We call on everyone who can, to help to build Palestine's institutions, and on regional actors to help embed a political settlement in a broader regional framework.

President,

We are witnessing, from the front row, the shortcomings of the institutions that we established in 1945.

The adoption of the Pact for the Future is a major success for this United Nations.

With this, we have resolved to update our institutions and our practices, across the three pillars of peace and security, development, and human rights. We also opened our conversation about the critically important issue of how to make artificial intelligence a force for good.

President,

Norway supports a reform of the Security Council that makes it both more representative and more efficient. Both permanent and elected seats should be added, and the historical injustice to Africa mended. The use of the veto should be limited, rather than expanded.

When the UN Charter was drafted, Norway was an early proponent of the principle that “no state should vote in its own case”.

And indeed, this principle is enshrined in Article 27, 3 of the Charter.

This principle is, however, repeatedly ignored by the Security Council.

But again: this principle is an obligation. It is not an option.

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To make our development efforts more efficient, we need to reform the international financial architecture.

And in order to enhance the ability of states to provide essential services to their populations, it must be possible for them to tax their citizens and their companies. Norway will continue to be a driving force for international tax cooperation, including by supporting a UN framework convention.

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Central to the Pact of the Future are robust commitments to gender equality and women's rights. Inclusion must be at the forefront, not because it's the right thing to do, but because it's the smart thing to do. We need equitable societies. We must build more effective and accountable institutions, including this very organisation.

President,

The triple planetary crisis is mankind's most daunting challenge. To save our planet, we must adapt our economies. The future must be renewable, circular and nature friendly.

There *is* good news, President.

Despite increasing political divides, the last few years have seen that multilateralism can deliver when it comes to the relationship between us – as mankind - and our physical environment. In Dubai, we agreed to transition away from fossil fuels, in a just, orderly and equitable manner. In Montreal, we agreed to reset our partnership with nature. In Nairobi, we launched a negotiation process towards a treaty to end plastic pollution. And here in New York, we agreed to take better care of our common oceans.

What is true for all these agreements and the Pact for the Future alike, is that the real verdict lies in our ability to implement them. We must act. Now.

President,

As we approach the 80th anniversary of the United Nations, we must step up our efforts to develop the organisation so as to make it more transparent, inclusive and representative of the world we live in today.

Norway fully supports the integrity and independence of the Secretary-General and his reform agenda. Reform will not be achieved through micromanagement. We, the Member States, must provide the Secretary-General with input and guidance. But we must also show trust and allocate resources to enable him to lead.

When a new Secretary-General shall be elected, we must ensure that she has the tools she needs to help us strategically deliver the noble goals we have agreed upon.

Thank you for your attention.