

Excellencies,

Heads of State and Government,

Your Excellency António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations,

Honourable Ministers,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

I extend a heartfelt welcome to the delegations from Member States, Observers, and our esteemed guests.

It is my profound honour and privilege to welcome you to this august hall for the General Debate of the seventy-ninth session of the General Assembly.

Before I proceed, I would like to recognize the presence here today of 9 of my predecessors, past Presidents of the General Assembly. Although barely two weeks into the job, I can already appreciate the challenges they navigated through.

The General Debate remains one of the world's most inclusive, representative, and authoritative platforms for global reflection and collective action.

This year, the urgency of our task cannot be overstated.

We are falling behind in our pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals. I am informed that with just five years to go, less than 18% of the goals have been achieved!

Also, the climate crisis is no longer a distant threat—it is here, now, ravaging ecosystems and dismantling the livelihoods of entire communities.

Conflicts rage, from the Middle East to Ukraine, from Haiti to South Sudan, leaving in their wake death, destruction, and immense suffering. I call for an immediate ceasefire in all these conflict settings.

For almost a year now, the people of Gaza and Israel have been caught in a spiraling cycle of conflict and retribution.

I take this opportunity to call for:

- an immediate ceasefire for the Hamas-Israel war,
- the unconditional release of all hostages, and

- For all parties to abide by international law, including international humanitarian law, and work towards a just and lasting solution grounded in the United Nations Charter, relevant resolutions, and international law, ensuring dignity for both Palestinians and Israelis.

Indeed, only a two-state solution can end the cycle of violence and instability, ensuring peace, security, and dignity for both Palestinians and Israelis.

(PAUSE)

Excellencies,

We should be coming together for peace and the well-being of our citizens. We should not divert essential resources into military stockpiles, fueling an arms race never before seen since the Cold War era.

Nuclear weapons continue to be a threat to humanity and to our planet. A nuclear war must never be fought. Conditions for their use or accidental explosion must always be avoided. We call for urgent measures for the abolition of these tools of the annihilation of the human race and our environment.

Old hatreds, rooted in prejudice and ignorance, persist, and new divisions arise where none should exist.

In the recent past mistrust among states has grown steadily, complicating prospects for peaceful settlement of inter-state disputes. It is time to invest more in building trust and practicing dialogue. Constant dialogue is a powerful weapon all governments have in their hands.

Trust and dialogue are integral parts of our human dignity and pre-condition for lasting peace and security.

Excellencies,

Gender equality remains a distant goal, as many women and girls around the world continue to be denied their basic rights, justice, and opportunities.

Globally, we witness a troubling regression in the protection of human rights and human dignity.

Millions remain trapped in poverty, their lives restricted by forces beyond their control. Forced labour and modern slavery extending even to young boys and girls of school age are an insult to human dignity. They must be combated in every society at all times.

Excellencies,

There is an urgent need to reform the international financial system, as too many countries remain burdened by crippling debt, forced to choose between servicing loans and improving the lives of their citizens.

Meanwhile, the digital divide continues to widen, cutting off entire populations from the tools needed to succeed in the 21st century.

Excellencies,

We are not mere spectators to these crises, nor are we powerless to act.

Within this hall are the leaders and representatives of the world's nations—the very people with the authority and responsibility to shape the course of our shared future.

At our disposal is one of the most powerful tools for positive change: international cooperation grounded in the undeniable truth that even the most powerful nations can not solve these complex, borderless challenges alone.

This truth was reaffirmed through our efforts at the Summit of the Future and the consensus adoption of the Pact for the Future.

The Pact for the Future charts a path forward, reinvigorating our multilateral institutions with renewed energy, focus, and clarity to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world.

Let us build on this momentum.

(PAUSE)

Excellencies,

A better world begins with unlocking the potential of we the peoples of the world. Freedom and good governance ensure that no one—no individual, no community—is left behind.

In this endeavor, we must never overlook the challenges faced by the Small Island Developing States, the Landlocked Developing States, the Least Developing Countries and the Small States. It is incumbent on the United Nations to do more than just express solidarity.

Specific programmes responding to the unique situations in which these groups of States find themselves must be envisaged. This will be a priority for my presidency.

Africa is one of the priorities of the United Nations. We must support Africa.

The African Union's Agenda 2063 presents a bold and transformative vision for the continent.

Africa currently has the youngest population in the world. And by 2063, one in four people will be African. The generation of resources for the wellbeing of these people has been much slower than the population growth.

We must not let Africa's potential go unrealized.

In fact, to truly unlock Africa's vast potential, we must actively cultivate global partnerships that align with the continent's aspirations and drive its success.

In this endeavor, I look forward to working with all Member States of the United Nations this year on keeping Africa at the heart of the agenda.

Excellencies,

In this 79th session, I also want to prioritize multilingualism as a recognition of our world's cultural and linguistic richness. We understand that the multitude of languages, cultures, and perspectives should not be viewed as a source of division but as a wellspring of strength.

Excellencies,

We anticipate a very successful High-level week.

In addition to the recently concluded Summit of the Future and this ongoing General Debate, several critical high-level events are expected to take place.

These will include:

- The High-Level Event on Antimicrobial Resistance;
- The High-Level Meeting on Addressing the Existential Threats posed by Sea Level Rise;
- and the High-Level Plenary Meeting to commemorate and promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

Throughout the 79th session, we will address the urgent issues of our time.

While we may not agree on every issue, we all share the same fundamental goal: to build a better world, for everyone, everywhere.

Here today are representatives from 193 Member States—each embodying our collective aspirations, each guided by a shared vision.

The path ahead is difficult, fraught with obstacles that may at times seem insurmountable.

But they are not impassable.

We have the tools, the knowledge, and the collective will to overcome these challenges if we act together, with courage and conviction.

Thank you.

