

**National Statement by Taoiseach, Micheál Martin, T.D.,
to the 80th Session of the United Nations General
Assembly**

26th September 2025

President of the General Assembly,
distinguished Heads of State and Government,
Secretary General, Excellencies, Friends.

It is important to remember what brings us
together every year.

Eighty years ago, the world was emerging
from the most savage conflict in our history.

80 million people lay dead.

A deliberate, industrial-scale genocide, aimed at obliterating Europe's Jewish population, saw six million people murdered – a monstrous crime that remains unsurpassed in human history.

People were targeted for death because of their ethnic identity, their sexual orientation, their disability.

Cities were laid waste, throttled by siege, fire-bombed into oblivion, or pulverised by the first and only use of atomic weapons in war.

Humanity had descended into the abyss.

This United Nations was the phoenix that rose from that darkness, the highest expression of our commitment to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security.

It was the best attempt by those who had seen the worst of humanity to offer a different path to future generations.

Dag Hammarskjöld, UN Secretary General in the 1950s, captured the reality of that vision best when he stated:

“The United Nations was not created to take mankind to heaven, but to save humanity from hell.”

Since Ireland joined in 1955, the United Nations has been the cornerstone of our foreign policy.

There is no Member State more committed to its ideals.

There is no Member State more determined to ensure it succeeds in its mission.

Like all small Member States, we depend on the UN Charter and the protections of international law for our security and well-being.

At a time when the world risks slipping back into an order in which *might is right*, and some voices count more than others, it is up to us as Leaders to reassert and to insist on the primacy of international cooperation.

Human Rights

Madam President

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “*the recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.*”

I am deeply concerned by the constant pushback on human rights norms that has accelerated in recent years.

Against women's rights and gender equality,
against LGBTQ+ rights.

I call out the brutal Taliban for their denial of
the most fundamental rights of Afghanistan's
women and girls.

Ireland continues to work tirelessly to oppose
all attempts to dilute existing international
commitments and human rights standards.

We reaffirm our commitment to honour and
comply with the universal nature and the
individuality of human rights.

To demonstrate that commitment we will run for a seat on the Human Rights Council from 2027 to 2029.

Conflict and Peacekeeping

President,

Conflict is always and everywhere a sign of human failure.

Conflict destroys lives.

It devastates economic development.

It leaves scars and divisions that take generations to heal.

We in Ireland know that from experience.

On Friday of last week, the Irish and British Governments agreed a new framework for addressing the legacy of the conflict in Northern Ireland.

The Good Friday Agreement would not have been possible without the support and engagement of the international community.

We are ready to offer the same to others.

The Irish people are enormously proud of our 67 years of continuous UN peacekeeping, especially our engagement with UNIFIL and close connection to Lebanon.

We remember the members of our Defence Forces who paid the ultimate price.

Continued support for UNIFIL will be essential over the next 15 months to support the efforts of the Lebanese authorities given the complexity and scale of challenges in the region.

Sudan

Madam President

In Sudan, a grave humanitarian catastrophe is unfolding.

It is more than two years since war broke out and it has unleashed the most unimaginable human suffering on the civilian population.

More than 150,000 people are already dead.

12 million people displaced.

Vicious sexual violence against women and children.

Famine declared throughout the country.

The world has failed Sudan.

To our collective shame, we have not given this most destructive of wars the same focus and attention as conflict in other parts of the world.

But a child in Sudan has the same value, the same right to life and a peaceful childhood, as a child born anywhere else in the world.

The conflict in Sudan is a human catastrophe that risks wider stability in the region.

It must be stopped.

Ireland fully supports the work of the Secretary General's Personal Envoy for Sudan, Madam Ramtane LamaMadama, to achieve a negotiated ceasefire, an immediate humanitarian response and a durable peace.

The perpetrators of war crimes in Sudan must be held to account.

The jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court should be extended to all of Sudan.

Ukraine

Eighty years ago, Europe had more reason than most to say ‘never again’.

Yet today brutal and bloody war has returned to European soil.

In February 2022, Russia - a founding member of United Nations and a permanent member of its Security Council - launched a full-scale, illegal invasion of Ukraine, in defiance of international law, in defiance of the UN Charter.

It has prosecuted the war with a wilful and reckless indifference to its human consequences.

Tens of thousands of Ukrainians have been killed and maimed.

Millions have been forced to flee their homeland.

Millions more internally displaced.

Russia has deliberately and cynically targeted civilians and civilian infrastructure.

It has caused immense environmental devastation.

Cities such as Mariupol, Kharkiv and Bakhmut have been bombed to rubble.

Prisoners have been mistreated.

Children abducted.

President Putin has thumbed his nose at every attempt to bring about a ceasefire and negotiations, including those led by President Trump.

There are no signs whatsoever that he is ready for peace.

He has refused to meet President Zelenskyy.

He has again intensified Russia's attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure in Ukraine.

He has sought to test the resolve of Ukraine's neighbours, sending drones into Polish and Romanian airspace.

He should know that it will not work.

He should appreciate how strong the people of Ukraine are, and how unbreakable their resolve to defend their country and its independence.

Those of us proud to be part of the Coalition of the Willing in support of Ukraine will stand with them, shoulder-to-shoulder, for as long as it takes.

If Russia chooses not to come to the table, the world must increase economic and political pressure on it until it does.

With our EU and international partners, we will strengthen and tighten our sanctions.

We will also work to increase support for Ukraine.

We will put in place the security guarantees that Ukraine needs to underpin any future peace agreement.

Ireland strongly believes that Ukraine is part of the European family and that its future lies within the European Union.

We will continue to work with our EU partners to ensure its journey towards membership advances as quickly as possible.

Middle East

President,

I come now to Gaza, a catastrophe of the most monumental and consequential kind.

It is not possible to describe the scale of the physical and psychological suffering endured by the Palestinian people for two long and brutal years.

Ireland stands in full solidarity with them.

We acknowledge those who have worked in the most unimaginably difficult circumstances to preserve and sustain life, to treat the injured, to prevent the displacement and destruction of a people and their rich and irreplaceable cultural heritage.

At the heart of this vital effort have been UN agencies and workers, most especially UNWRA.

We remember those among them who have lost their lives.

We pay tribute to the extraordinary bravery of the medics.

We honour the journalists who have worked tirelessly and without regard to their own safety to ensure that nobody can ever say ‘we did not know’.

What is happening in Gaza cannot be justified or defended.

It is an affront to human dignity and decency.

It is an abandonment of all norms, all international rules and law.

We are witnessing hunger being used as an instrument of war.

Babies starving to death while aid rots at the border.

People shot while desperately seeking food for their families.

The deliberate targeting and destruction of schools, hospitals, mosques, cultural institutions.

The killing of doctors, aid workers,
journalists.

Dislocation and displacement, over and over.

We are all witnesses to the immense wrath of
one of the world's most modern and best-
equipped armies brought to bear on a trapped
and defenceless civilian population.

Last week the Independent International
Commission on the Occupied Territories
called it out for what it is.

Having examined carefully Israel's conduct of the war since 2023, as well as the actions and statements of senior Israeli military and political figures, it concluded that Israel is responsible for the commission of genocide in Gaza.

Genocide. The gravest of crimes in international law.

All signatories of the Convention on Genocide are obliged to act to prevent and to punish it.

We cannot say we were not aware.

In January of last year, the ICJ put all states on notice of the plausibility of the State of Israel committing genocide in its military operations in Gaza.

And the Court has been clear, where States Parties are able to contribute to the prevention of genocide they are obliged to “*employ all means reasonably available to them so as to prevent genocide as far as possible*”.

As Navi Pillar, chair of the Independent Commission said last week, “*the prevention of genocide is not a matter of discretion of states. It is a legal and moral obligation, and it admits no delay*”.

All members of this United Nations must reflect on what more they can do.

I especially call on those who have influence to use it urgently to maximum effect.

I call on those who have provided – and who continue to provide – Israel with the means necessary to prosecute its war to reflect carefully on the implications of their actions and the consequences for the Palestinian people.

There cannot be business as usual in the face of genocide.

As Navi Pillar has made clear, to do nothing is not neutrality, it is complicity.

Ireland has intervened in the South African case at the ICJ.

We have recognised the State of Palestine.

We are legislating against the import of goods from the Occupied Territories.

We will act to prevent those members of the Government of Israel who have been instrumental in fomenting the unfolding disaster in Gaza from entering our country.

We will continue to work with like-minded partners across the world to bring this human catastrophe to an end.

There must be an immediate ceasefire, the release of all remaining hostages, and unimpeded access for humanitarian aid and workers to Gaza.

Those responsible for war crimes must be held accountable – there can be no impunity.

We also need to hold to account those responsible for the attack on Israel of 7 October 2023– that too was a monstrous war crime.

I appreciate the profound and continuing impact the trauma has had on people in Israel.

Hamas, not the Palestinian people, were responsible. Hamas must answer for its crimes.

Hamas can have no role in the future governance in Palestine.

But no crime, however heinous, can justify genocide.

We also need to recognise the crimes being perpetrated in the West Bank.

The scale and pace of appropriation of Palestinian land by illegal Israeli settlers.

The open backing this receives from the Israeli Government.

The harassment, imprisonment and abuse of the Palestinian population.

The withholding of tax revenues from the Palestinian Authority.

It must not be allowed to continue.

In its Advisory Opinion published in July 2024, the ICJ was clear that all States are under an obligation not to recognise as legal the situation arising from the unlawful presence of the State of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and not to render aid or assistance in maintaining the Palestinian Territory.

The world knows that what drives this illegal activity is a determination to render the possibility of a two-state solution impossible.

It must not succeed.

A two-state solution remains the only prospect for a peaceful future in which the people of Israel and the people of Palestine can live in peace and security, side-by-side.

I welcome the decision to recognise the State of Palestine taken by France, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and others.

I commend France and Saudi Arabia for the leadership they are providing in working towards a political process that can deliver a just lasting peace and security in the region.

They have my full support.

Conclusion

President,

As it marks its 80th anniversary, the United Nations has never been more necessary.

Today's challenges are ever more complex, and ever more interconnected.

They cannot be solved by any country or region acting alone.

The threat to the future of our planet and the wonder of its biodiversity.

The need for development, leaving nobody behind.

The health and well-being of our people.

The protection of our shared cultural heritage, in all its magnificent diversity.

The stability of our economies and our ability to trade fairly.

The immense opportunity of the digital revolution, but also the potential consequences for our shared humanity.

The UN is not perfect, and it needs to reform to reflect a very different world – I pay warm tribute to the role that Antonio Guterres has played as Secretary General during his term in office in that regard.

The UN continues to represent the best of humanity.

If it falters it is not because it is no longer relevant, it is because we, as Leaders, have let it down.

Let this be remembered as a time when we reaffirmed our commitment to multilateralism, to the rule of law, to a reformed United Nations fit for purpose and for the future.

As we did in the Charter, let us seek to save this and future generations from war.

Let us reaffirm our faith in fundamental human rights, the dignity and worth of each human person.

Let us work to establish conditions in which justice and respect for international law can be maintained.

And, as we pledged in the Charter, let us never cease to promote social progress and better standards of life for all, in ever larger freedom.

Thank you.

ENDS.