

GA: Norway's Statement in the General Debate of the 80th General Assembly

Statement delivered by Minister of Foreign Affairs Espen Barth Eide

25. Sep 2025

President, Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

80 years ago, against the backdrop of the Second World War, world leaders gathered in San Francisco to sign the UN Charter – to “*save succeeding generations from the scourge of war*”.

This once in a generation moment brought the idea of the United Nations to life.

Let us imagine for a moment that we are there, in San Francisco, in 1945, as the UN Charter was negotiated.

Participants who were at my age, would have experienced the First World War, the short-lived roaring twenties, the great depression of the 1930s, fierce trade wars, the rise of facism and nazism, the Second World War, the Holocaust, and the nuclear bomb - and all of that in their own, adult life.

If events like these constitute your life experience, you do not believe that the world is a rose garden.

Those who shaped the United Nations were not guided by naive idealism. Quite on the contrary.

This was a deep, realist recognition that mankind simply could not continue as before.

Centuries of great power rivalry, competing spheres of interests and imperialism had not forged peaceful coexistence.

The founders, however, were indeed *visionaries*, as they believed that a better world was possible.

Our founders realised that the world needed shared norms and principles - in order to avoid yet another world war.

They were adamant not to repeat the debacle of the inter-war years.

This noble insight shaped the United Nations Charter.

Simply put, the Charter rests on three sets of principles:

Peace and security should be achieved through recognising the sovereign equality of states, the prohibition of the use of force, and through peaceful settlement of disputes.

Economic and social development should be ensured through close international cooperation, and through finding common solutions to common problems.

The dignity and worth of all human beings should be established through mutual commitment to universal human rights.

Our United Nations, imperfect as it is, has since provided an unrivalled global arena for seeking common solutions to common challenges.

There is little doubt that the world would have been a more brutal and less prosperous place without the UN.

Since 1945, inter-state wars have been fewer and further between.

Former colonies gained independence and became sovereign states of their own.

Hundreds of millions have been brought out of poverty.

President,

However, At 80, we find our United Nations in crisis.

The crisis is both political and financial.

Political, because core principles of the charter are under threat.

The world is more divided, more dangerous, and more unpredictable than it has been for decades.

Respect for international law is eroding. Gross violations go unchecked.

This, in turn, weakens the trust in our institutions. It is a vicious cycle.

The crisis is also financial, because several Member States are significantly reducing their economic contributions. This, in turn, makes it difficult to accomplish the core mission of our United Nations.

President,

Savage wars are raging in several corners of our world.

In Sudan, civilians are facing the largest displacement and hunger crisis in the world. The war in Sudan has been raging for almost 900 days. This is but one of the many horrific wars that receives way too little attention in the power centres of the world. Even in this organisation.

In Ukraine, Russia has violated the most fundamental principles of international law.

There is simply no other way of seeing it: Russia's invasion of the sovereign state of Ukraine is a blatant violation of Article 2-4 of the Charter.

Ukraine is in its full right to defend itself as affirmed by Article 51. Norway, and so many other states, stands firmly with Ukraine's fight for freedom and independence. We do so in solidarity with the brave Ukrainian people. But we also do so to uphold the respect for international law - an interest shared by *all* states, large and small.

In Palestine, Israel is in clear violation of international law.

Life in Gaza is a living hell. For almost two years, we have witnessed extreme levels of death, starvation, forced displacement and massive suffering. The fact that these atrocities continue is a disgrace for all humanity. In the West Bank, the illegal occupation, settlements and settler violence continues unchecked. The Palestinian authorities are under massive stress - its finances strained, and its capacity to operate is severely restricted.

The war must end - now.

Massive humanitarian aid must reach those in need - now.

The remaining hostages must be released - now.

And the illegal occupation must end - now.

But, colleagues, there is an alternative to this never-ending cycle of violence.

We have made important steps just these past few days.

At the Conference on Palestine in this hall on Monday, Member States further developed the roadmap to a settlement to the deeper conflict between Israel and Palestine. By now, 159 Member States have recognised the State of Palestine - as a contribution to the realisation of the two-state solution.

However, the recognition of Palestine is only one of elements needed to reach a two-state solution. There are many pieces of this puzzle. Palestinian governance and economy must be strengthened. Hamas must be demobilised. We need security guarantees to both Israel and Palestine. And key Arab states aim to normalise their relations with Israel as part of a broader agreement.

In order to put together these pieces of the puzzle, The Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution was launched in New York last year. It continues to gather support for a comprehensive settlement.

It is our firm conviction that both Israel and Palestine have the right to live in peace and security, side by side in two states.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

A world order based on international law is not a luxury. It is a necessity.

When we condemn Russia's blatant violations of international law in Ukraine, we must also speak out, just as clearly, against Israel's violations of the same rules in Palestine. International law cannot be applied with double standards.

It must be upheld universally - regardless of who commits the violations, and regardless of where they take place. This is not optional. It is fundamental.

We must also defend the institutions that safeguard accountability: the International Court of Justice, and the International Criminal Court.

Just as important as the sacrosanct integrity of borders and the sovereign equality of states, is our mutual commitment to human rights.

The UN Charter commits us to respect and promote these fundamental freedoms for all - without distinction to race, gender, language, or religion. Human rights are universal. They are our best hope for a world that rejects injustice, inequality, violence and brutality

A more equal world where women and girls participate on equal footing with men and boys is a more peaceful and prosperous world. .

President,

In these times of crisis, the United Nations must reposition itself to meet a new political and financial reality. The UN80 initiative gives us a unique chance to turn this crisis into an opportunity, and to build a United Nations that is not only stronger, but also smarter.

As a country with an unwavering commitment to the United Nations, I can say this with conviction: it is time for some **"tough love"**.

We want a UN that is stronger, yet leaner.

A UN that is more efficient.

A UN with structures optimised to deliver real impact where it matters most - on the ground, with the people we serve.

We need a UN with sharper prioritisation of resources, clearer mandates, and a UN that works smarter, not just harder.

This is also a moment for self-reflection, for all of us, as Member States - and for our United Nations. As member states, we have contributed to a proliferation of mandates - long, complicated, overlapping, and burdened with endless reporting requirements. Norway is not exempt; we, too, are guilty as sin.

The time has come to change this. We need bold and ambitious reform. We must stand firmly behind the Secretary General to drive this forward.

We need a UN that can continue to uphold the rules and principles that have underpinned our international order for the past 80 years.

And we need a UN80 process with a roadmap for the next Secretary General. When she assumes office - in 15 months - she must be able to head a reformed UN, fit for the next 80 years.

President,

We need a global convention on tax cooperation.

States have the primary responsibility to provide essential services to their people. But then we must enable states to fulfill this duty. The capacity to tax both citizens and companies is paramount. It is the backbone of public service delivery, the engine of resource redistribution, and the cornerstone of sustainable development.

We know what works. Now, we must ensure it works for all.

Colleagues, let there be no doubt whatsoever. The climate crisis is real. It is here.

It is man-made. And it is affecting the lives of millions of people around the world. As an Arctic nation, we experience some of the fastest paces of climate change anywhere on the planet - and we feel its impacts our everyday life.

The science is irrefutable. Observed warming is outpacing predictions. Curbing global warming and making peace with nature is the greatest collective challenge of mankind.

We have no time to lose.

Yet, over the past decade, the world has achieved significant progress in this area. At COP28 in Dubai, nations united around the goal of phasing out fossil fuels in a just, orderly, and equitable manner.

Today, countries, regional organisations, companies and investors are beginning to recognise a fundamental truth: embracing the technologies of the future - low on carbon, high on circularity and responsible resource management - is not an obstacle to growth. It is an opportunity for growth, innovation and a sustainable future.

Now, we must build on this momentum. COP 30 in Belem presents a crucial opportunity to reconnect the climate, biodiversity and pollution agendas into a coherent, integrated approach.

President,

As we mark the 80th anniversary of our United Nations, let us protect the foundations for peace, human rights and development.

The norms and principles are not the problem. They are just as relevant for the world today as they were back then.

What *does* deserve scrutiny is the system we have established to protect and enforce these norms and principles. That is what UN 80 is all about.

Let us make sure these principles apply - for all people - everywhere - all the time.

So that in another 80 years - future generations do not have to build a new version from the ashes of another devastating world war.

It is up to **us** to find the answers that fit the 21st century.

But when it comes to the core purpose, we should take the cue from our founders:

We are - indeed - ***better together***.

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