

Conflict prevention, migration and terrorism key concerns for EU and member countries at UN

20 September 2017 – On the second day of the United Nations General Assembly's high-level debate, Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, underscored that the UN must rise to address many global challenges, including forced displacement and terrorism.

Mr. Tusk said the European Union (EU) continues to receive people in need of protection. He echoed his appeal to the international community to take responsibility for refugee protection and irregular migration, underscoring the EU's support of the UN process to develop Global Compacts on Refugees and on Regular, Safe and Orderly Migration.

"Your engagement is needed right now, both in terms of money for humanitarian assistance, and more resettlement for those displaced by conflicts in Syria, Yemen, Myanmar, and especially across Africa," he told the Assembly.

In connection with the refugee crisis, Mr. Tusk urged a "crackdown on human smugglers that exploit vulnerable people and violate sovereign borders," and welcomed the International Criminal Court investigation on smugglers in Libya for crimes against humanity.

Against the backdrop of repeated terrorist attacks, he stressed the need for the constant strengthening of the global fight against that scourge and violent extremism, including doing more on counter-radicalization. He reiterated his plea to the world's Muslim leaders to stand strong against Islamist extremism as a real support in fighting terrorism. "In short," the President said "we must be more determined than they are."

[Full statement available here](#)



Sauli Niinistö, President of Finland, addresses the general debate of the General Assembly's seventy-second session. UN Photo/Cia Pak

In his address, the President of Finland called the Secretary-General's determination to reform the UN "laudable," spotlighting that transparency, accountability, efficiency and gender balance "should be the guiding principles of the UN system."

Sauli Niinistö also welcomed the Secretary-General's focus on conflict prevention, advocating for the marginalized to be given a voice in peace processes. "Women, children and adolescents often pay the highest price in conflicts but they can also help to pave a way out of the crisis," he told the Assembly, while pointing to Finland's contribution in establishing a

Nordic network of women mediators who provide inclusive and meaningful participation in all phases of peace processes.

Pledging his support for UN peacekeeping reform, he drew attention to Finland's increased participation in UN police missions – now through seven UN operations, including a specialized team on sexual and gender based violence in South Sudan. "It is my strong view that no UN peacekeeper nor any other UN personnel should be associated with misconduct of any shape or form. In particular, there must be 'zero tolerance' with regard to sexual exploitation and abuse," he stressed.

Turning to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mr. Niinisto called that country's nuclear weapons programme "a threat to global peace and stability," that must be stopped. While stressing the importance of the continued unity of the Security Council, he underscored: "Such behaviour cannot be tolerated by the international community."

Before leaving the podium, Mr. Niinisto expressed his strong belief that global challenges and threats be addressed together by the world community. "Peace and security, human rights and development belong to all of us. Only together can we make this world a better place," he concluded.

[Full statement available here](#)



Rumen Radev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria, addresses the general debate of the General Assembly's seventy-second session. UN Photo/Cia Pak

Also taking the podium, President Rumen Radev of Bulgaria spoke in depth about international peace and its links to the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), telling the Assembly that the UN peace and security architecture, together with the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, "have provided a solid foundation for achieving peace and prosperity."

Mr. Radev stressed that Bulgaria supports a surge in diplomacy for peace that places prevention as an overarching priority. "Prevention and mediation are essential means of reducing human suffering, including in addressing the root causes of forced displacements, bringing humanitarian, development and peace-building efforts together," he elaborated.

The President pointed out that armed conflicts in many parts of the world continued to undermine peace and human values, asserting that "protracted conflicts require a holistic UN response encompassing preventive diplomacy, mediation, peace-building and effective special political missions."

Calling climate change "one of the biggest challenges of our time," he noted that the phenomenon not only impedes the well-being of countries, but also poses security threats to many of them.

Mr. Radev wrapped up his address by drawing attention to the need for promoting equality, countering discrimination and ensuring respect for human

rights as keys to achieving lasting peace and sustainable development, saying “we believe that the protection of human rights should be placed at the centre of all action undertaken by the UN.”

[Full statement available here](#)



Mark Rutte, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, addresses the general debate of the General Assembly’s seventy-second session

For his part, Netherlands Prime Minister Mark Rutte pointed out that the problems confronting today’s world, such as climate change, migration, terrorism and cybercrime, are by definition international.

“No single country can tackle them in isolation. We need each other. [...] In this turbulent world, the importance of the UN is growing every day, he told the Assembly.

The Prime Minister said “cooperation is key” when it comes to preventing terrorism, and that the UN is the prime forum for international cooperation. As a good example of cooperation, he pointed to the Global Counterterrorism Forum, saying its work “is not high-profile – most of it goes on behind the scenes – but it saves many lives.”

Turning to conflict, Mr. Rutte flagged that not enough attention is being devoted to the early its early stages of development, saying “That has to change.” He pointed to the MINUSMA peacekeeping mission in Mali where the Netherlands is using intelligence to carry out long-range reconnaissance work in anticipation of conflict – instead of waiting for it to happen.

Conflict prevention ties in with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which he calls “the ultimate prevention agenda” as “they address the drivers and root causes of instability and conflict.”

“Investing in human dignity, eradicating poverty, fostering climate resilience and promoting economic and social progress will reduce the incidence of conflict, instability and despair. Development and lasting peace – all in one package,” Mr. Rutte maintained.

[Full statement available here](#)

UN offers up new strategy to advance peace, stability in Libya

20 September 2017 – [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today launched a

United Nations strategy to help bring about peace and stability in Libya and end a protracted crisis that has caused immense suffering and contributed to instability beyond the country's borders.

"It is my deep belief that there is an opportunity for a political solution in Libya," Mr. Guterres [said](#) at the high-level event held on the margins of the annual debate of the General Assembly, adding that everyone needs to come together to ensure that this opportunity translates itself into a reality.

Despite a nearly two-year-old Political Agreement, Libya remains fraught with numerous challenges, including insecurity, frustration, political dysfunction and economic despair.

"The Libyan people have suffered too much," stated the Secretary-General, voicing deep concern about the political, security, socio-economic and humanitarian situation in the North African nation.

"Looking ahead, it is crucial to fashion a Libyan-led and Libyan-owned political solution."

Mr. Guterres outlined the UN strategy, which has seven main priorities, beginning with reinvigorating an inclusive political process by building on recent positive developments.

The other priorities are: building credibility with the Libyan people; strengthening security arrangements and national security architecture; coordinating international engagement, including the efforts of Libya's neighbours, so that all are part of a single common agenda; improving socio-economic conditions and the provision of goods and services, for a true peace dividend to be felt by the people; supporting migrants and upholding long-standing international norms on migration; and securing predictable support for humanitarian assistance.

The Secretary-General added that his Special Representative for Libya, Ghassan Salamé, will strive to unify and consolidate the various initiatives, and to promote dialogue towards the formation of a unified national government and the immediate end of parallel institutions.



Secretary-General António Guterres addresses the High-level Event on Libya. Listening are Fayez Mustafa Serraj (left), President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord of Libya and Ghassan Salame (right), Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNSMIL. UN Photo/Mark Garten

Elaborating on next steps, Mr. Salamé [said](#) that the first stage must be to amend the Libyan Political Agreement, which in its current state is not adequate. Once the amendments have been adopted, the second stage is a National Conference that will open the door to "those ostracized, those self-marginalized, those players who have been reluctant to join the political process."

Following the conference, the House of Representatives would be expected to prioritize the legislation for a constitutional referendum, as well as presidential and parliamentary elections. In parallel, the Constitutional Drafting Assembly will review and refine its work, taking into consideration the observations and suggestions expressed during the National Conference.

Mr. Salamé, who heads the UN Support Mission in Libya ([UNSMIL](#)), noted that this political sequence must be underpinned by concrete progress in a number of areas, including preparation by the High National Election Commission for electoral events; dialogue with armed groups with the aim of integrating their members within the political process and civil life; an initiative to unify the national army; and continued and intensified local reconciliation efforts.

“This process, in all its stages, is indeed meant to prepare the proper conditions for free and fair elections, which will usher Libya into institutional and political normalcy,” said the Special Representative.

“There is much to be done, and this plan is certainly ambitious. However, if the Libyan people can come together in the spirit of compromise and together write a new common national narrative, this plan is achievable.”

[Palestinian leader, at General Assembly, calls on ‘duty-bound’ UN to end Israeli occupation](#)

20 September 2017 – From the podium of the United Nations General Assembly Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas today called on the world Organization to face up to its responsibilities to end Israel’s “relentless” occupation ensure the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

“The United Nations bears a legal, political, moral and humanitarian obligation to end this occupation and enable the Palestinian people to live in freedom and prosperity in their independent state of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, on the 4 June 1967 borders,” he said.

“We recognized the State of Israel on the 1967 borders, but Israel’s continuous refusal to recognize these borders has put into question the mutual recognition we signed in Oslo in 1993,” he added, referring to the accord providing for a two-state solution to the Middle East conflict with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace within secure borders.

He demanded that Israel commit to the borders of 1967 as basis for the two-state solution, urged those States that have not yet done so to recognize the State of Palestine, and called on the UN Security Council to approve full

membership of the State of Palestine to the UN.

"The path we have chosen as Palestinian and Arabs, and the path chosen by the world, is that of international law and international legitimacy," underscored Mr. Abbas.

"I address the Israeli people, across the spectrum of their society and tell them: We want to live in peace," he stated. "Do not listen to those who try to convince you that peace between us is not possible."

[Full statement available here](#)

Côte d'Ivoire is inspiring example of UN peacekeeping success, country's leader tells Assembly

20 September 2017 – The President of Côte d'Ivoire, Alassane Ouattara, today cited the success of United Nations peacekeeping operations in his West African country as an inspiration for the world Organization to increase its initiatives.

"The lessons of this peacekeeping operation, recognized as one of the rare successes of our world Organization in maintaining peace over the past several decades must inspire the United Nations further in initiatives in favour of peace," he told the 72nd annual General Assembly general debate on its second day.

The UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire ([UNOCI](#)), which in 2011 helped restore legitimacy and stability along with French forces after violence broke out in the wake of an electoral crisis, with up to 7,000 uniformed personnel in the country, completed its mandate in June.

Turning to the issue of terrorism, Mr. Ouattara said that despite some encouraging operations in the Middle East, the world is struggling to find a satisfactory response in Africa. "These successes will remain empty and the terrorist threat a constant worry if Africa continues to be the soft under-belly of world terrorism," he said.

He called for international support for the Security Council-endorsed G5 Sahel group, comprising Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad, which is slated to deploy its first joint force next month to combat terrorism and drugs, arms and human trafficking throughout Africa's sub-Saharan Sahel region.

[Full statement \(in French\) available here](#)

At UN, Azerbaijan urges respect for Security Council measures; cites support for cultural diversity

20 September 2017 – Addressing the General Assembly, the President of Azerbaijan, spoke about the country's successes in socio-economic development and support of cultural diversity and said that while Security Council resolutions calling for the withdrawal of Armenian troops from its territory have been ignored, Azerbaijan remains an "engaged" Member of the United Nations.

In his speech to the Assembly's annual general debate, Ilham Heyday Oglu Aliyev said Security Council resolutions must be respected and that "double standards" regarding their implementation, including by Armenia, are unacceptable. Against the backdrop of Armenia's continued occupation of its territories and violation of international law, Azerbaijan nevertheless remains committed to the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

"The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict should be resolved on the basis of international law and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council," the Azerbaijani leader said, adding that Azerbaijan's territorial "must be restored."

Despite this challenge, Azerbaijan is an engaged member of the UN, he said. All fundamental freedoms are being fully provided, including the freedom of speech, media freedom, freedom of assembly and religious freedom. "Azerbaijan is a centre of multiculturalism," with all religions and ethnic groups living in peace and harmony.

He stressed that Azerbaijan recognized multi-ethnicity as an asset and had hosted several interreligious dialogues in recent years, including one in partnership with the UN Alliance of Civilizations. Further, the main goal of the [Baku Process](#) is aimed at strengthening dialogue and partnership between the Muslim world and Europe, he added.

On the economic front, he said Azerbaijan's economy continues to grow exponentially, while unemployment is among the lowest levels in the world at five per cent. Poverty is also on the decline. The country is also highly ranked on the human development scale, and exports not only agricultural goods, but also intellectual products, while its "zero tolerance" towards corruption and bribery make it attractive to investors.