

Transfer of power essential to strengthen democracy, Sri Lankan President says at UN Assembly

19 September 2017 – Noting that history is marked with leaders who have sought to consolidate power within themselves, the President of Sri Lanka today underscored that as leaders come into power, they must yield it to build democratic institutions and safeguard democracies.

“I have established democracy in my country and have taken action to get rid of political groups which were moving toward autocracy,” stated President Maithripala Sirisena, noting that since being elected in 2015, he had transferred executive powers to his country’s Parliament.

In his address to the 72nd annual general debate at the United Nations General Assembly, President Sirisena further said that Sri Lanka had suffered a protracted conflict, lasting over 30 years and having devastating impact on the country’s economy.

Therefore, sustainable development must be a priority for Sri Lanka, he added, noting that it should also be a global priority.

Stressing the worsening impact of climate change around the world, he also said that the implementation of the [Paris Agreement](#) on climate change was essential for the future of humanity, and highlighted that Sri Lanka is focused on sustainable agriculture.

Concluding his remarks, he said that national reconciliation is important, particularly given the country’s diverse population and expressed that while certain elements expected fast results which he said would merely be “short-term solutions.”

Sri Lanka wants to create peace and unity and to promote brotherhood among its people through prosperity, he added, noting: “ours is a slow and steady pace.”

During our difficult times, ‘we knew we had friends,’ says Gambian President Barrow

19 September 2017 – Noting that the recent political crisis in Gambia had

been a lesson that his compatriots will not easily forget, the Adama Barrow, the country's President underscored that Gambians made an irreversible choice to close a "dark chapter" in their history and embarked on a national agenda of reform and transformation.

"During those difficult times, we knew we had friends, ones who came to our aid and who have since kept faith with us," the President said, thanking Economic Community of West African States ([ECOWAS](#)) for their timely and firm intervention to bring peace to his country.

"Thanks to your collective efforts, the Gambia is now on a solid path to peace and good governance, and ready to take over our traditional role among the champions of human rights and democracy," he added.

He also announced that the country was in the process of re-joining the Commonwealth as well as the International Criminal Court.

"Although the Gambia did not go through armed conflict [...] we were on the brink of political violence and armed conflict," he expressed, thanking the United Nations in West Africa, the UN Peace Building Commission and the Peace Building Support Office for the important support they rendered to the country.

Concluding his remarks, President Barrow noted that given the range of its functions, the UN would always require some level of reform of its management systems.

"As you embark on your proposed reforms, we stand ready to give you our full support in the interest of an effective and more relevant world body," he said, adding also the need for Security Council reform.

[Full statement available here](#)

Marking 25th anniversary of UN membership, Armenia pledges continued support

19 September 2017 – Taking the podium at the United Nations General Assembly today, the President of Armenia pledged support to the Secretary-General's priorities as the country marks the 25th anniversary of its succession to the UN.

President Serzh Sargsyan spoke extensively on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict – listing it as being among the various challenges that Armenia has "withstood with dignity" –recommittting the country to its peaceful resolution.

Mr. Sargsyan called the conflict a human rights issue, saying it can be resolved exclusively through one of the fundamental and inalienable human rights – “the people’s right to self-determination.”

Noting that next year the UN would mark the 70th anniversary of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the President said that Armenia would at that time table and invite all member States to support a new initiative towards the international recognition of the Armenian genocide.

Turning to the Middle East, he expressed great pain over the humanitarian situation in Syria that has caused the civilian population great suffering, including the country’s Armenian community.

“Within its means, Armenia strives to mitigate the suffering of the Syrian people by providing humanitarian assistance. We also express our willingness to engage into possible discussions on the peace-making efforts in Syria under the UN auspices and with an appropriate mandate,” he stated.

[Full statement available here](#)

At UN, Guatemalan President pledges government's full commitment to fight against corruption

19 September 2017 – Guatemalan President Jimmy Morales, addressing the United Nations General Assembly today, pledged the firmest intention to strengthen and support the International Commission against Impunity of Guatemala (CICIG), while stressing that no institution should interfere in the country’s administration of justice. The agreement between the UN and Guatemala that established the CICIG was the first of its kind in the world, he said. It was vital that it was complied with faithfully. Having started its work in 2007, its mandate had been extended five times, demonstrating a firm commitment to strengthen and support its work, he explained.

“Our Government is fully committed to the fight against corruption and impunity,” he said, stressing that it is for that reason that Guatemala has begun the process of revising the interpretation and application of the CICIG agreement.

So his Government hoped that with “objectivity and equanimity we can improve the commission’s role by ensuring due prosecution, presumption of innocence, and to avoid selective prosecution and the politicization of justice.

Institutional and international action on migration was an important issue

for Guatemala, President Morales continued, including partnership with Mexico, Honduras and the United States. Guatemala was counting on the efforts of Member States to negotiate an agreement on safe, regular and orderly migration. Turning to the situation of the so-called “dreamers” in the United States, he said Guatemala hoped that the American people’s sense of humanity would lead to the US Senate adopting legislation that would allow “dreamers” to enjoy legal status in that country.

UN must bolster role in coordinating Member States' efforts to tackle challenges, Tajik leader says

19 September 2017 – Addressing the general debate of the United Nations General Assembly today, Emomali Rahmon, the President of Tajikistan, called on the Organization to carry out its mission, coordinating the efforts of Member States to build resilience to the many challenges and threats peoples and countries face.

He stressed that rapid globalization had led to development as well as challenges that had sometimes jeopardized UN efforts to help people lead secure lives. Moreover, ‘tragic events’ undermined global commitments to bring about sustainable development, he said, citing terrorism, transnational organized crime and drug trafficking in that context.

Stressing that terrorist movements flourished in “hot spots” around the world, he said such horrors were not connected with Islamic teachings and did not know the tolerance of Islam. Confronting those threats required Member States to make monumental efforts and to refrain from double standards.

Peace, stability and cooperation were essential for resolving the situation with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, he said, noting that in Afghanistan, the growing activity of violent terrorist groups was a matter of serious concern. “It is high time to take strong, coordinated measures to tackle terrorism and drug trafficking,” he said, calling on the international community to help, just as his country was ready to do so.

Calling the adoption of the [2030 Agenda](#) a milestone for the international community to work together, he said Tajikistan had made great strides in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)). For the success of the Agenda as a whole, it would be necessary to help less developed countries, including landlocked nations, that lacked access to ports. They required more assistance and the UN, through the Economic and Social Council and specialized agencies, should play an important role.