

Parliamentarians directly called to take action on global issues by UN chief

Addressing parliament elected officials from around the world gathered at United Nations Headquarters in New York on Thursday for an annual hearing, UN chief António Guterres called for their support on legislation and financing of global solutions to global problems, such as climate change, uncoordinated migration and the dangers of some new technologies.

“As a former parliamentarian, I have felt the heavy responsibility of representing people and trying to advance their aspirations,” said [UN Secretary-General Guterres](#), who was elected to the Portuguese Parliament seven times, and served as Prime Minister for the country for over six years.

“[Parliaments can be bastions of democracy](#), and crucial links between the national and the global. Through legislation and spending decisions, parliamentarians can contribute significantly to the [Sustainable Development Goals](#), (SDGs)” he told members of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the 130-year-old an organization that works in partnership with the UN to enhance accountability and ensure parliamentarians are involved in global decisions.

The Secretary-General, who was elected to parliament at 26, lamented that “parliaments are still largely a sphere dominated by older men,” noting that “the world needs more women parliamentarians, and more young parliamentarians”.

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UN chief Guterres

The paradoxes and challenges of our time

He went on to highlight the main paradoxes the world faces today, namely: the fact that issues are more and more connected but that responses remain fragmented; a growing but slowing economy; the advances enabled by globalization and technological progress, which are also responsible for increased inequality.

“People, sectors and regions are being left behind – creating a sense of frustration,” he noted. “This in turn has been a factor in reducing trust in governments, in political establishments, and in international organizations.”

“It is our duty in parliaments and in the UN to re-establish trust,” Mr. Guterres stated, delivering his remarks alongside UN General Assembly

President, Maria Fernanda Espinosa.

Warning against the dangers of multipolarity, which he described as “a factor of equilibrium”, but “not a guarantee of peace and security”, he said the world needs a “networked” and “inclusive multilateralism”.

“I am deeply convinced that there is no other way to deal with global challenges than with global responses, organized in a multilateral way,” he explained, saying this should include close cooperation with and among inter-governmental institutions such as the World Bank, the African Union, the Arab League and others, but also with the business community, civil society, academia, and parliaments.

‘Tests’ of cooperation

Mr. Guterres listed some current and growing major “tests” for international cooperation: climate change, migration, growing populism and nationalism, and emerging new technologies often described as the “Fourth Industrial Revolution”.

“It’s time to show people that multilateralism can deliver,” he stated, highlighting the need to understand “why large sectors of the population in different parts of the world today feel abandoned”.

Citing the many recent “good news” that prove the benefits of multilateralism and the UN – such as the recent peace deals in the [Central African Republic](#) and [Yemen](#), the massive amounts of humanitarian aid delivered in 2018, UN reform, and recent global agreements on [climate action](#) and [migration](#) – he appealed to the parliamentarians in the room: “We need to show that politics is a noble undertaking and not merely the pursuit of power. And we need to demonstrate that our ideas, policies and programs aim at solving their problems.”

Increasing collective ambition for 2019

With the aim of achieving “even more in 2019,” the UN Secretary-General said he will be convening a Climate Summit in September “to mobilize action, partnerships, financing and, above all, ambition”.

Regarding new technologies, the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation is expected to report in the months ahead on how best to harness the benefits of new technologies and artificial intelligence while safeguarding against the risks.

In meeting the Sustainable Development Goals, safe and orderly migration, and women empowerment, he highlighted the “critical role” played by parliaments in defining good governance, ensuring oversight, building partnerships and allocating funding.

As a strategy and global plan of action is in the works for the prevention of genocides, the UN is also continuing to work to “prevent, mediate and resolve conflicts” and “tackle the rise of hate speech, xenophobia and the poisonous

views that are penetrating political debates”.

“In all of these endeavours, I ask for your support, as the legislative branches of your governments, as political leaders in your countries, and as partners in advancing these common global goals,” concluded Mr. Guterres.