



# General Assembly

Seventy-seventh session

**100**<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting  
Tuesday, 5 September 2023, 10 a.m.  
New York

Official Records

*President:* Mr. Kőrösi ..... (Hungary)

*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

## Statement by the Deputy Secretary-General

**The President:** In accordance with rule 70 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, I now give the floor to the Deputy Secretary-General, Her Excellency Ms. Amina Mohammed.

**The Deputy Secretary-General:** The past year was another challenging one for the human family, from conflicts and rising geopolitical mistrust, to heatwaves, fires and melting sea ice caused by climate chaos, to rising poverty, inequality, discrimination and injustice. Throughout it all, the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly has kept diplomacy, dialogue and debate alive and worked towards real solutions for people and planet alike.

At every step, the Assembly benefited from the stewardship of the President of the seventy-seventh session — His Excellency Mr. Csaba Kőrösi of Hungary — who presided over this session with consummate skill and stewardship. His leadership has exemplified his commitment to solutions through solidarity, sustainability and science, including his advocacy of science-based validation of sustainability investments, particularly as it pertains to the environmental crisis that is engulfing our world. His work was critical to ensuring a well-coordinated and ambitious United Nations Water Conference, including the subsequent negotiations among Member States on resolution 77/334 to maintain the momentum on the issue going forward.

We also appreciate the tireless work the President has been carrying out ahead of the Sustainable Development Goals Summit, to be held in two weeks' time — a critical event at which global leaders must commit to rescuing the Sustainable Development Goals, our road map to a better future for humankind. And we deeply appreciate his support on advancing *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982). That includes ensuring vibrant Member State discussions around the Summit of the Future, the global digital compact and the declaration on future generations. Throughout, we were all enriched by his deep knowledge of the role and function of the United Nations.

On behalf of the entire United Nations family, Mr. President, thank you for your efforts over the past year. We look forward to collaborating with your successor — His Excellency Mr. Dennis Francis of Trinidad and Tobago — to carry that work forward in the coming session.

The United Nations was designed specifically for moments of challenge like the ones before us. Let us all commit to using the Assembly as a proving ground for multilateralism, to build trust, cohesion and solidarity among nations, and to ensure that we shape solutions that will benefit people and communities around the world.

**The President:** I thank the Deputy Secretary-General for her statement.

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## Statement by the President

**The President:** I am proud to stand before members for the last meeting of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session. I want to leave members with five main thoughts.

The first is that, despite geopolitical rivalries, our survival depends on our cooperation. We have ample scientific evidence that we are well into the Anthropocene epoch — an age marked by humans' decisive impact on the planet. At the beginning of my term, I invited members to view our work through the lenses of crisis management and the sustainability transformation. Such an approach could allow us to counter the global crises of our own making.

Geopolitical rivalries are part of reality. But let us not forget: they block many prospects for necessary solutions and urgent cooperation. Shifting our focus away from sustainability transformation, geopolitical or ideological competition usually pursues more narrow, often short-term, interests. Yet, at the Water Conference in March, members demonstrated that it is possible to overcome long-standing divides. We have already shown that we can re-establish trust and build on our areas of common ground.

That brings me to my second message, that we are in a race against time. From climate change and biodiversity loss to education and gender equality, our chance to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 is slipping away. Let us put money where our promises are, for the benefit of each and every Member State. Are we ready to translate the necessary actions for sustainability transformation into key budgeting priorities, back at home and in international organizations? Supporting sustainable development with appropriate regulations, financing, capacity-building and verification is one of our most urgent tasks. What is immediately needed now is implementation of what we promised to deliver to our 8 billion shareholders.

We are starting to value what counts. And we are beginning to understand that we should go beyond gross domestic product to understand the real impacts and full cost of our actions, including all positive and negative side effects, intended and unintended ones alike. And it means we are starting to place our trust in science and data. The next eight to 10 years will be crucial for our shared perspectives. And let us make it

clear — multilateralism is our only option to tackle the many crises of the world.

My third message is that we are all responsible for our actions and inactions. Our responsibilities must always be regarded as just as important as our rights. The three pillars of the United Nations are peace and security, development and human rights. The public sees those as our responsibilities. Have we lived up to them? Can we look at the conflicts around the world and say we are upholding the Charter of the United Nations? The war in Ukraine, along with the other 51 armed conflicts, must end, in line with the United Nations Charter and international law.

Today I reiterate my call on all members to end nuclear proliferation and nuclear armament. The United Nations Charter empowers the General Assembly to consider principles governing disarmament and arms control. I encourage the Assembly to reflect on that point.

In December 75 years will have passed since the General Assembly proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Is that anniversary not a reminder that the security of our future will depend on how we embrace our responsibilities? Just a year ago, the General Assembly adopted a historic resolution (resolution 76/300) declaring access to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a universal human right. But it should be made clear who is responsible for the implementation.

In recent months, members agreed to seek the opinion of the International Court of Justice on countries' obligations to address climate change. We are only starting to understand and unpack what rights and responsibilities will mean in the next stage of our Anthropocene epoch. Increasingly, it is our young people who remind us when we fail to act. They will hold us accountable for our inaction.

My fourth message is that only integrated solutions are future-proof. They are forward-looking and able to absorb upcoming shocks. The multilateral system demands cooperation on a global scale — between countries and regions, but also across disciplines and fields, with a well-developed methodology that brings together data and trends from those fields. From addressing climate change and cybercrime to respecting human rights online and the use of artificial intelligence, we must unite around a holistic approach. Outside the Assembly Hall, people see one

United Nations and expect us to act together to support meaningful change in their lives. Our focus this session has been on finding integrated solutions that have concrete impact for member States' citizens. We know that stand-alone processes will deliver only stand-alone results. Integrated solutions, again, mean data, verification and funding.

Beyond the upcoming SDG Summit, it will be up to the Member States to bring the sustainability transformation to life. For the survival of humankind, are they willing to finance it — in each and every country, by reprioritizing spending and strengthening international cooperation on sustainability? Will members do more to verify what they are implementing? Can they break out of artificial silos in favour of comprehensive solutions? If so, the time to redefine our priorities and actions is now. I encourage members of the Assembly to keep the focus on integrated solutions if they want to have the best results for their resources, and if they want to change reality.

My fifth message is that we must urgently reform the United Nations in ways that correspond to the challenges of our day. The world's first passenger jet aircraft carried 36 passengers in 1952. That was a breakthrough in technological development. But that does not mean that we can use it today to take us to Mars. Times are evolving, and the Organization must evolve with them. We must reform how the General Assembly functions. The same is true for the Security Council. I acknowledge that the Charter does not make the task easy. But even then, until we change it, our task is to apply it. That means avoiding its selective application on conflict management, mass atrocities, genocide and other war crimes. If we fail to do so, the Security Council will be more of a problem than a solution to our world's instability.

As they say, the pessimist complains about the wind, the optimist expects it to change and the realist adjusts the sails. Let us adjust our own sails here in the General Assembly. These questions speak to the need for integration and reform throughout the United Nations to repair trust within, and in, the Organization and to preserve its relevance. Let us admit that a policymaking body with more than 180 priorities has no strategic direction. Inherited and repetitive debates occupy too much of our time. Yes, they are important, but should they prevent us from seeking game changers for our current and new situations on the horizon? We cannot miss the forest for the trees. Reinforcing old

positions of ancient debates invariably means that we will lose sight of current challenges. Who will suffer the most? There is not no doubt that it will be most vulnerable countries and communities. I bid members to keep that in mind that when they sacrifice collaboration and try turning it into a zero-sum game. We cannot expect different results through rigid reiterations of positions, as long-standing as they may be, by holding on to agreed language.

Let me wrap up. There will always be political rivalries. That does not mean that we have to fall into the zero-sum trap, in which one country's every gain is another country's loss. Smart decision-making, starting with consensus on key resolutions here in the General Assembly Hall, is the push needed for many actors in the world to embrace overcoming upcoming challenges. We must set the tone and create a more effective sustainable transformation that is mutually beneficial for all of us. That must be done now because we are racing against time. There is no plan B — no planet B — as we often hear. Global financing is not yet working to help us with climate change, or to protect the most vulnerable, which is why we have to act with urgency to protect our joint survival. Our action and inaction invoke the issue of responsibility to the planet and each other. That is accountability. When international law or the Charter is violated and we do nothing, we are hiding from our common responsibility, we are all eroding our multilateral system and we are deceiving the people whom we represent. That omission brings into question our relevance and purpose. That is why this great Organization needs to reform in line with the challenges of today and tomorrow. We need to be agile.

How do we organize the reform? Among other things, through science. That is my core message to members today, as it has been since I stood in this same Hall one year ago (see A/77/PV.1). Science is one of the most important shapers of our understanding of reality upon which basic decisions should be made. Science is not omnipotent, but it provides objective evidence and proven knowledge. It is the tool to help us leverage our cooperation and guide our decision-making. It is not against anyone's national or cultural heritage. It is the way for us to reflect the heritage in our decisions. We have let science in during this session. Let us not push it out during the next ones.

Let me take a moment now to express my thanks to Member States. I want to remind them that the

outcomes of their negotiations, meetings and informal and thematic events are our solutions to the world's problems. The General Assembly resolutions are their shared blueprint and joint legacy. This term, I appointed 30 co-facilitators and co-Chairs for different negotiation processes. On behalf of all members of the Assembly, I thank them and their teams for their dedication and determination throughout the past year. I thank everyone for the cooperation. Let me express my deep gratitude to the Vice-Presidents of the Assembly and the Chairs of the Main Committees. I am grateful to the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General for their trust and frank and impact-oriented cooperation. I also thank the colleagues at the Secretariat, especially at the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, whose guidance and support have been most helpful. Special thanks should go to the members of my Gender Advisory Board. I also want to thank my team. If members like what my Office has done this term, the support they received, the guidance and the creativity, it is because I have had a very good team, and two thirds of it was made up of women, many of them mothers. We even saw the birth of three babies during the session — a reminder of to whom we are leaving this world and the greatest symbol of hope.

I wish my successor, President-elect Ambassador Dennis Francis, a very productive presidency, and I wish all members success and decisions that all of them will be proud of. God bless everyone, and God bless the United Nations.

We are now coming to the end of the seventy-seventh regular session of the General Assembly. May I invite representatives to stand and observe one minute of silent prayer or meditation.

*The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silent prayer or meditation.*

**The President:** I now invite His Excellency Mr. Dennis Francis, President-elect of the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session, to take an oath of office in accordance with resolution 70/305, of 13 September 2016.

**Mr. Francis:** I, Dennis Francis, solemnly declare that I shall truthfully perform my duties and exercise the functions entrusted to me as President of the General Assembly of the United Nations in all loyalty, discretion and conscience, and that I shall discharge these functions and regulate my conduct with the interest of the United Nations only in view and in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the code of ethics for the President of the General Assembly, without seeking or accepting any instruction in regard to the performance of my duties from any Government or other source external to the Organization.

**The President:** I thank His Excellency Mr. Dennis Francis, President-elect of the seventy-eighth session, for taking the oath of office.

#### **Closure of the seventy-seventh session**

**The President:** I would like to invite the President-elect of the seventy-eighth session, His Excellency Mr. Dennis Francis, to meet me at the side of the rostrum for the handing over of the gavel.

I declare closed the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly.

*The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.*