



General Assembly

Seventy-eighth session

81st plenary meeting
Tuesday, 7 May 2024, 11 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Francis (Trinidad and Tobago)

The meeting was called to order at 11.10 a.m.

Address by Mr. Sergio Mattarella, President of the Republic of Italy

Statement by the President

The President: As announced in my letter dated 12 April 2024, today's meeting is convened to hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Sergio Mattarella, President of the Republic of Italy.

I am pleased to convene today's plenary meeting at the request of the Permanent Mission of Italy to hear a special address by His Excellency President Mattarella, whose dedication to multilateralism is exemplary and must remind us of the values we all strive to uphold. I sincerely thank the Mission of Italy for this initiative and warmly welcome to the United Nations His Excellency President Mattarella. I look forward to hearing his invaluable reflections.

I also welcome the Secretary-General and thank him for his unwavering advocacy for a strengthened and networked multilateral system, which, as he has aptly noted, is not a choice, but rather a necessity.

I assumed the presidency of the General Assembly last September with a commitment to rebuilding trust and reigniting global solidarity towards peace, prosperity, progress and sustainability for all (see A/77/PV.100). This commitment was grounded on the foundational tenets of the Organization, espoused in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The vision for my presidency is also anchored

on inclusive diplomacy and dialogue as cornerstones of stronger international cooperation among equally sovereign States, values that have guided this venerable institution for nearly 80 years. Indeed, the international system established after the Second World War has over the years succeeded in preventing major military conflicts and, importantly, averted a nuclear catastrophe among the great Powers.

Yet, despite our rich legacy of successes, the vision of a seamlessly functioning multilateral system has yet to be fully achieved. Today our multilateral system is beleaguered by a myriad of interconnected challenges — among them, intractable conflicts, wars and terrorism — posing a real dilemma for our collective efforts to secure sustained global peace and security.

The ongoing aggression against Ukraine, the calamity and humanitarian catastrophe in the Gaza Strip, the gang mayhem in Haiti and the internal strife and human rights violations in the Sudan, inter alia, must compel all of us to use occasions such as this one to candidly reflect on the efficacy of our institutions — let alone their future sustainability — amid growing public scrutiny. The escalating geopolitical tensions and the prevailing dynamics point not only to the deepened mistrust among Member States, but also to a significantly waned solidarity among nations, undermining the cohesion needed to uphold the United Nations Charter and international law, which is the backbone of our multilateral system. Today more than ever, we need a robust United Nations-led multilateral system that is capable of confronting global challenges from climate

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room AB-0928 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).



change and poverty eradication to preventing human rights abuses and arms proliferation.

Let me conclude by underscoring that for us to achieve our goals, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, effective and inclusive international cooperation is imperative. Looking forward, the Summit of the Future in September 2024 offers us another unique opportunity to reinvigorate our multilateral system and make it not just another gathering, but a beacon that calls for reimagining our collective future for decades to come. The Summit is our chance to address the crises of multilateralism by modernizing our outdated international institutions' architecture and its global governance.

As intergovernmental negotiations on the Pact of the Future progress, I take this opportunity to urge all Member States to engage in a spirit of compromise and constructive dialogue as we strive to redefine multilateral cooperation in an increasingly multipolar twenty-first century. Reform is crucial to restoring the credibility and legitimacy of our multilateral system and will require, at the very least, a renewed commitment to the foundational principles of the United Nations Charter by the Member States themselves, working together with relevant stakeholders. In unity and solidarity, let us work much harder to reinvigorate our multilateral system for a better future for all.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres.

The Secretary-General (*spoke in Italian*): I am happy to join President Francis in welcoming the President of Italy, Mr. Sergio Mattarella. The Republic of Italy has long been a champion of the United Nations and international cooperation. Throughout its rich history, Italy has played a pivotal role in facilitating dialogue, fostering understanding and forging collaboration among peoples and nations. Its position at the heart of the Mediterranean has allowed it to serve as a cultural, economic and diplomatic crossroads between North and South.

(*spoke in English*)

At the United Nations, Italy has consistently demonstrated its leadership in defending peace, human rights and sustainable development, hosting many United Nations bodies and deploying its forces in peacekeeping missions. Today those shared values are under threat. As our human family faces growing

conflict, a climate crisis, expanding inequalities and disruptive technologies, one thing is clear: we are not prepared.

The Security Council is often paralysed by geopolitical divisions. The global financial architecture is outdated, dysfunctional and unjust. These institutions were created nearly 80 years ago, at a time when many Members of the General Assembly were under colonial rule. They do not represent today's world, and they cannot deal with today's new and emerging threats.

We must come together to urgently reshape and strengthen our multilateral institutions. That means changing the composition and working methods of the Security Council to make it more inclusive and effective. It also means strengthening and reforming an outdated, dysfunctional and unfair international financial architecture that has failed in its mission to provide a global safety net for developing countries, in particular those drowning in debt.

The Summit of the Future in September represents a unique opportunity to update these institutions for the twenty-first century. On peace and security, the Summit must build on the New Agenda for Peace to boost our collective security systems, ensure better representation and put prevention at the centre of our efforts. On sustainable development, we must make significant progress on a more inclusive global financial architecture that provides far more affordable long-term financing to countries in need, and which works for all. Further, we must bring the plan to stimulate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) — the SDG Stimulus — to life by mobilizing at least \$500 billion a year in financing for developing countries. On emerging technologies, the Global Digital Compact must provide solutions to close the digital divide and develop effective human-rights-based governance of artificial intelligence (AI).

Italy has consistently supported our reform efforts, advocating for a more inclusive, transparent and effective United Nations. As discussions ahead of the Summit enter a key phase, Italy's voice is more necessary than ever to bridge divides, build trust and find solutions. Italy's priorities as the President of the Group of Seven — defence of the rules-based international system, dialogue with the global South and human-centred AI governance — echo this vision. The Group of Seven has a special responsibility to be at the forefront of reform efforts to build a more equitable and

effective multilateralism. I count on Italy's leadership of the Group of Seven during this vital year to help steer developed countries into embracing these reforms.

The presence of President Sergio Mattarella in this Hall today is a testament to the enduring friendship between Italy and the United Nations. I thank him for his leadership and for his unwavering dedication to a more peaceful, prosperous and sustainable future for all.

The President: I thank the Secretary General for his statement.

The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Italy.

Mr. Sergio Mattarella, President of the Republic of Italy, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Sergio Mattarella, President of the Republic of Italy, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mattarella (*spoke in Italian; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): I greatly appreciate the opportunity to address the General Assembly in this Hall, a symbolic place where the wills of peoples meet, just over a year before the eightieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations and the seventieth anniversary of Italy's entry as a State Member.

The aspiration of the fledgling Italian Republic to join the United Nations reflected our vocation for multilateralism, and I am pleased to be able to affirm today, before the Assembly, Italy's determination to collaborate in the creation of a more just, safe and sustainable world, in which every people and every person can obtain full recognition of their rights. In 1955, Italy, free from the debris of the fascist regime and risen as a republic from the tragedy of the Second World War, was finally welcomed into the United Nations — 10 years after its creation — following a long and complex journey. From Rome's perspective, Italy's application for membership could not have had any other outcome because the fundamental principles of the 1948 Constitution of the Italian Republic correspond in many ways to those that inspire the Charter of the United Nations and demonstrate shared objectives.

With the firm resolve not to repeat the mistakes of the past, the Constituent Assembly of Italy had in fact expressly inserted norms that allow limitations of sovereignty

“on conditions of equality with other States required for a world order that ensures peace and justice among Nations and promoting and encouraging international organizations furthering such ends”.

The goal of multilateralism has been the fundamental pillar of our foreign policy, and we proudly host United Nations offices and facilities on our territory, from Turin to Rome, from Florence to Trieste, to Brindisi.

The Italian Republic's sensitivity to peace for the promotion of human dignity and universal values is expressed in its constant action in support of dialogue and post-conflict stabilization processes, for the rights of young people and women, especially in situations of more serious discrimination. In this regard, I cannot help but mention the plight of Afghan and Iranian women and our support in the campaign for the abolition of the death penalty. No less significant is the contribution in terms of finances and human resources to United Nations programmes.

Italy also contributes civilian and military contingents to development programmes and peacekeeping operations in various parts of the world, often in complex and sensitive situations, starting with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, on the border between Lebanon and Israel, which has involved risk-taking and, sadly, occasionally, the loss of life. Numerous are the Italian military and civilian casualties in countries tormented by internal conflicts in the Middle East and Africa in the search for peace — starting with the 13 airmen on a United Nations mission massacred near Kindu, in the Congo, in 1961, and I wish to honour their memory in this Hall today.

The multilateralism that inspires the Italian role in the world naturally finds expression in other contexts as well, from the European Union, of which we were among the founding countries, to transatlantic relations, within self-defence organizations, in the Group of Seven and the Group of 20 and other international bodies. In all these forums, Italy works in favour of dialogue. Its geographical location at the centre of the Mediterranean, its history and its culture

make it a natural bridge between peoples, countries and civilizations.

The global challenges we all face require a collective and orderly response from the international community. In this respect, the United Nations is the universal, inclusive and legitimate institution-platform for addressing these challenges.

We hear criticisms, legitimate and sometimes not unfounded, about the functioning of the United Nations. We would all like more from the United Nations system, but we are often not willing, in turn, to give more, entrusting it with tasks, responsibilities and means capable of enhancing the effectiveness of its action, without being subjected to the game of reciprocal vetoes that threatens to paralyse its vitality.

In human history, an enterprise like that of the United Nations arises to overcome the zero-sum game that used to characterize relations among nations based on the rule that for someone to win someone else had to lose. The goal has become for all of us to win together. The United Nations was born out of the pressure of dramatic historical events that, by having caused death and immense destruction, prompted governments and nations to ask themselves how to prevent international conferences that followed various conflicts from simply becoming a way to regulate power relations — often precursor symptoms of the next war — and not exercises for building the future. The United Nations was born to replace the logic of oppression with the logic of cooperation through mutual respect.

The Charter of the United Nations, which resulted from the San Francisco Conference, established with great foresight fundamental principles: respect for national sovereignty, the right of peoples to self-determination, the obligation to resolve international disputes by peaceful means, and respect for human rights and the dignity of persons, without distinction as to ethnicity, religion or social origin. The Charter, together with the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights, is the foundation of coexistence among peoples. A requirement reflected in its primary objective is the maintenance of peace.

Old-fashioned nationalist inclinations, neoimperialist if not neocolonialist impulses, and competition between Powers instead of cooperation, are setting the stage anew for a polarization of the international system that is harmful to freedom and equality in relations between States and peoples and

puts peace at risk. It is more important than ever, then, to strengthen multilateral institutions, starting with the United Nations.

The aggression launched by the Russian Federation against Ukraine contradicts the founding rationale of the United Nations and is even more serious since it comes from one of the countries on which the greatest responsibilities in the international community fall as a permanent member of the Security Council. The defence of the independence of Ukraine, a founding country of the United Nations, has caused Italy to commit, together with many other international partners, to affirming international law and the principle that solidarity should be offered to nations attacked by acts of arrogance that intend to replace law with military force. That is what is required by Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, which provides for the right to self-defence. No State — however powerful, however equipped with a threatening nuclear arsenal — can consider violating the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of another country with impunity.

Russia has taken on the great historic responsibility of having brought war back to the heart of the European continent. Moreover, the Russian invasion of Ukraine is not merely a regional conflict, if only because its protagonist is a Power that aspires to the exercise of global influence and to playing a global role, which derive from the inescapable responsibility of, as mentioned, a permanent member of the Security Council, which no one intends to ignore. Each of its acts has a multiplying effect.

The United Nations has long gone through difficult operational times, paralysed as it was by conflicting forces during the Cold War. The fall of the Iron Curtain opened up new perspectives, fostered in part by the conciliatory dialogue leading to the Helsinki Accords of 1975, which culminated in the establishment of an organization for the security and cooperation on the European continent, whose effectiveness was unfortunately invested in by few. Now Moscow claims to turn back the hands on the clock of history and has started a new arms race.

The effects of the crisis in Europe are reflected, at the global level, in the slowdown of the agenda of commitments to safeguard the planet, in the field of energy, and even more critically, on the issue of food resources. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the other agencies at the

United Nations agri-food hub in Rome have helped to make giant strides against world hunger over the past decade — achievements that are being refuted by the risks of a food crisis arising from the conflict in Ukraine, which threatens to jeopardize the lives of millions of people in other regions of the world, starting with some parts of Africa. Nearly 300 million people face risks of food shortages.

In just a few months, the peace dividend that had allowed resources to be diverted from spending on armaments to development has been dissipated following renewed bloc confrontation. Last year global spending on arms reached \$2.4 trillion, up approximately 7 per cent from the previous year and the highest level in 15 years. These resources could have been useful in alleviating humanitarian crises that have affected more than 100 million human beings, in fostering economic and social growth, in countering the effects of climate change and global health threats, and in promoting the moral and intellectual development of the younger generations. However, owing to the revival of expansionist aims of some States, these resources have been allocated to the purchase of destructive means.

Peace is in the interest of all peoples, everywhere. Together with other international partners, Italy is firmly committed to finding a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict in Ukraine, but not just any solution, especially one that rewards the aggressor and humiliates the aggressed, creating a precedent of great danger for all. It is not a question of finding a compromise. Peace, to be just and lasting, must be founded on the high and inalienable principles of international law and the United Nations Charter.

The Charter must also be the source of inspiration for addressing the increasingly troubling winds of war blowing across the Middle East. The tensions and clashes of recent weeks call for increased efforts by the international community to achieve de-escalation. It is one of the goals that the Italian Republic set for itself when it assumed the presidency of the Group of Seven. It is necessary to stop the action/reaction chain and to allow a process to begin that will put an end to the massacres and finally lead to a stable peace. The solution necessarily passes through the shared goal of full and mutual recognition of the two States of Israel and Palestine, with the definitive recognition of Israel and its security by the States of the region.

In the short term, we must respond to the moral imperative of providing assistance to alleviate the immense suffering of the civilian population of Gaza. A further deterioration of the situation must also be avoided. I join the Secretary-General in calling for military operations in Rafah to be averted, given the dramatic consequences they could have on Palestinian civilians. We must also consider the essential function carried out by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and consequently the importance of continuing to finance it.

The ceasefire called for by the Security Council in resolution 2728 (2024), unconditional humanitarian access to the population of Gaza, the release of the hostages kidnapped during the inhuman attack of 7 October, which, it should be emphasized, represents the trigger for what happened subsequently, and the immediate cessation of all activities supporting terrorist organizations remain the cornerstones on which to continue to vigorously build a common diplomatic action. The harshest and most challenging conflict cannot allow the norms of humanitarian law enshrined in the 1949 Geneva Conventions for the protection of civilian populations to be violated.

With courage and equal determination, it is necessary to respond to the other, unfortunately numerous crises in the region, in particular those in Syria and Yemen. Ensuring the freedom and safety of navigation in the Red Sea is part of the elements characterizing the rationale for international coexistence. The militarization of such areas as the oceans, the Arctic and Antarctic regions, and outer space must be firmly combated: these are domains that concern all of humankind.

The two conflicts — Ukraine and Gaza — have also brought to the fore the sinister recurrence of the threat of nuclear weapons, as if the history of the twentieth century had not already made their tragic consequences obvious. The contractual framework for the control of nuclear arsenals, so laboriously articulated in recent decades, is the common heritage of all States. Violating it, even with simple threats, means putting at risk the destinies of all peoples, including those whose governments threaten to use nuclear weapons. This is a responsibility that the international community cannot ignore without consequences.

This picture raises an inevitable further question. The attempt to bend the United Nations to individual

unscrupulous interests — the main objective of the Charter itself constantly being put in doubt — cannot call into question its universality and its founding purposes. Italy therefore chooses to support the action of the United Nations as the fulcrum of the global governance architecture that alone can prevent further tragedies for humankind.

Increasingly, even as a dispute between East and West reopens, we hear the opposition between the global North and South being invoked as a renewed element of international competition, which some would like instrumentally to interpret as a conflict between the West and the rest of the world. The profound economic and social inequalities in place are cited as a theme, one which took its first important step on the road to the affirmation of principles of international justice with the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States, adopted by the General Assembly in 1974 (resolution 3281 (XXIX)).

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, together with its goals, is not a bureaucratic exercise for dreamers, but corresponds to the vocation of the United Nations to achieve global progress. If we were to measure the results of the prevailing form of multilateralism in terms of economics, we would note that since 1950 the average annual per capita income of the world's population has increased fourfold, which is a success of great importance, considering that the latter — the population — has almost tripled in the same period. It is even more remarkable when we consider that the percentage of the population living on less than \$2 a day has decreased from 75 per cent to 10 per cent in the same stretch of time.

The sometimes-artificial representation of reality contrasts with experiences of ongoing collaboration between North and South, and with partnerships between countries from every region of the world that provide examples of the effectiveness and success of the United Nations. Undoubtedly, however, on the path towards reaching the Sustainable Development Goals, it is the States living under the best conditions that must make the greatest effort, keeping in mind that challenges such as climate change and food insecurity call for and require different levels of responsibility for the Goals to be achieved.

Italy is strongly committed in this area, proof of which can be seen in yesterday's conference at United Nations Headquarters on the state of implementation

of Sustainable Development Goal 16, one of the most complex and crucial of the 2030 Agenda. A real adjustment of the international financial system, which was designed many decades ago, when the conditions of the international community were very different, also appears necessary.

The difficulties of countries in crisis and the growth of countries on continents such as Africa are top priorities, with a view to their developing their immense potential. I have been fortunate to personally witness the great potential of a continent that is not only the cradle of humankind, but also largely represents the future, thanks in particular to the creativity and dynamism of its younger generations and the great opportunities that its future presents.

Italy regards with deep interest the promotion of an equitable, wide-ranging and detailed partnership with African countries, aware that the development of the African continent is a common interest to the European continent and crucial to successfully addressing the many challenges of the present. Italy therefore intends to continue working with African partners, the African Union and other regional organizations to promote the development of countries so close to us geographically.

This was demonstrated most recently by the holding of the Italy-Africa Summit in Rome in January 2024 and the launch of the Mattei Plan for Africa for the sustainable development of the continent. The answer to the many conflicts still occurring on the African continent depends on this capacity for renewed dialogue and cooperation and on African partners assuming full responsibility for the management of peace processes and the repair of local political and socioeconomic fabrics.

That is also the meaning of the support Italy wanted to ensure for Security Council resolution 2719 (2023), which is a first and partial application of the proposals set forth in the Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace, which Italy wholeheartedly endorses for its innovative spirit based on lessons learned in the recent past in terms of conflict resolution, for the fundamental role it assigns to prevention initiatives and for the authentically integral and inclusive approach in creating all the necessary conditions for supporting and strengthening peace processes.

Africa and the Middle East are not the only regions — others include the Americas and Asia, even Europe — to be affected by a growing number of

humanitarian emergencies, whether they are triggered by conflict and burdened by climate crises, as in the case of small islands, particularly those in the Pacific, or made more acute by local contexts marked by fragility. The international community, and Italy with it, has spared no efforts in identifying the resources needed to handle emerging needs. The United Nations response system has proven itself able to organize the intervention plans that are necessary, and the Organization is often the only actor capable of operating in the most difficult of contexts.

Nevertheless, the gap between needs and available resources continues to be enormous. The United Nations, if adequately supported by its members, represents the only platform capable of addressing the challenges that threaten peace, security and development. I would like to emphasize the imperative of properly supporting the United Nations because it depends on the political will and contributions of its Member States.

Any possibility of relaunching its action and methods of operation can therefore start only from the individual determinations of the 193 States Members to increase their commitments. Yet to confirm the Organization's success, the number I have just mentioned would be enough: 193 members. But there were 51 that brought it initially to life.

My presence today in this Hall of the General Assembly, which is called upon to set the international agenda, is intended to reaffirm Italy's strong desire to continue to support the United Nations in its commitment to renew itself and respond to the new challenges of the present. The great transnational challenges we face, the multiplication of regional conflicts likely to spread, far from calling into question the role of the United Nations, highlight its indispensable and crucial character in service to humankind. We need an increasingly representative and effective United Nations. Every opposing or different path, every absence, leads to the worsening of the prospects for the human condition.

We recognize that the United Nations reflects the diverse aspirations and complexities of its members. If anything, this confirms the founding reasons and pushes towards renewal. For many years there has been discussion about reforming the United Nations system in order to keep it up to date and respond to the evolving international situation and the dynamics of political, social and economic development across various countries and regions. In this regard, I would

like to express my gratitude for the work carried out by the Secretary-General in promoting a renewal of the agenda and the reform of the system.

Italy fully supports the proposals put forward both at the level of the organization, management and working methods of the United Nations and in relation to broader plans for intervention in the sectors of development, peace and security, as identified in the various components of "Our Common Agenda" — an agenda that was drawn up at the specific request of the membership to ensure that the United Nations is more efficient, accountable and results-oriented.

With a view to reforming the United Nations and more generally the system of international relations, the imminent Summit of the Future represents an inescapable opportunity for the success of the global multilateral architecture. As a theatre of diplomacy, the United Nations cannot be reduced to the task of addressing and resolving power relations between States; rather, it is called upon to deal with the fate of humankind and show how to solve its problems. The attention with which the majority of the States Members of the United Nations is looking towards the September summit and the Pact for the Future is no doubt justified by what is at stake.

It is often in moments of greatest crisis that we find the strength and courage to reach agreements that favour the common good. The reform of global governance, which will be summarized in the Pact for the Future, must first of all ensure an inclusive process for all actors on the international scene, at the level of both individual countries and regional groups, which, as in the case of the Group of African States, the small island developing States and the Group of Arab States, are bearers of common and legitimate interests.

An inclusive process will not leave out other actors, in particular representatives of civil society, who look to the United Nations and who are often at the forefront of contributing to the sustainable development of the planet. It is precisely the goal of inclusiveness that provides the basis for the Uniting for Consensus proposal of Italy and other countries on the reform of and for better representation in the Security Council, aimed first of all at giving space to underrepresented regions, such as Africa, Asia and Latin America, in order to remedy a historical injustice that is evident to all.

The institutions of the United Nations were modelled on the relationships that emerged from the Second World War, based on war. It is time to reshape these institutions on the basis of peace, taking into account the positive initiatives of continental cooperation that have grown in recent decades, for example, the African Union and the European Union, and those under way in other regions of the world. A Security Council reformed in this manner would be able to reconcile the increase in the number of members and fair regional representation with the need to preserve and possibly improve its decision-making capacity, which has been severely compromised by the ongoing political polarization and the repeated, too often instrumental, use of the veto by permanent members.

Italy will continue to provide its active and positive contribution to the drafting of the Pact for the Future, so that a shared vision of the tools and actions needed to jointly address the global challenges of the twenty-first century together can be reached.

In conclusion, I would like to quote the words of a Secretary-General of the United Nations whose memory

we cherish. On the eve of this millennium, Kofi Annan recalled how global challenges have one element in common: they do not respect borders, and even the strongest State is powerless against them. Those considerations led him to affirm that, today, “more than ever before in human history, we share a common destiny”. We can only master this destiny by facing it together. That is why we have the United Nations.

Those are words of great wisdom, which, after two decades, appear to be even more essential, urging us towards a fruitful commitment to strengthening the United Nations and its rules, with a view to promoting them and making them effective.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank His Excellency the President of the Republic of Italy for his address.

Mr. Sergio Mattarella, President of the Republic of Italy, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The meeting rose at noon.