



Heard at the 76th Session of the UN General Assembly High-level meetings

Against the backdrop of COVID-19's ongoing impact on economies and societies worldwide, the United Nations is bringing the lens of COVID-19 recovery to its High level meetings. September saw the launch of the UN Secretary-General's 'Our Common Agenda on 12 September', the opening of the UN General Debate on 14 September and a series of High-level meetings ranging from sustainable development to nuclear disarmament.

'Our Common Agenda', called for by Member States in the [UN75 Declaration](#), presents the Secretary-General's vision for his second term. It identifies 12 priority areas for renewed multilateralism: equitable pandemic recovery, climate, peace, international law, women and girls, trust, digital cooperation, UN reform, sustainable financing, partnerships, youth, and preparation for future crises. Taking into consideration input from Member States and other stakeholders, the report provides a roadmap to respond to current and future global challenges and emphasizes that the time for action is running out.

The UN General Assembly General Debate held both hybrid and in-person events on the theme of 'Building Resilience Through Hope', with statements highlighting government priorities for the year ahead. On 20 September, the Secretary-General convened the second annual SDG Moment for the Decade of Action, underlining the need for equitable and inclusive recovery efforts and identifying action needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As the world charts recovery from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, inequitable recovery rates continue to risk the achievement by 2030 of the SDGs.

Following is a selection of statements, commitments and declarations made by Member States and UN leadership on several priority issues including COVID-19 recovery, financing and debt, UN reform, and the climate crisis. For statements on public-private partnerships and the push for "networked multilateralism", see [GPW UN Monitor #28](#).

COVID-19, Vaccines and COVAX

- "First, we need to end this pandemic. Our response has been too slow and too unequal. I call on all to mobilize the global vaccination plan that doubles vaccine production to reach 70 percent of the world's population by the middle of next year." - *António Guterres, UN Secretary-General at the SDG Moment*
- "It is an indictment on humanity that more than 82 percent of the world's vaccine doses have been acquired by wealthy countries, while less than 1 percent has gone to low-income countries. Unless we address this as a matter of urgency, the pandemic will last much longer and new mutations of the virus will spread and emerge." - *President Ramaphosa, South Africa at the GA General Debate*

- “I have stressed on many occasions the need to make vaccines a global public good and ensure vaccine accessibility and affordability in developing countries. Of pressing priority is to ensure the fair and equitable distribution of vaccines globally. China will strive to provide a total of two billion doses of vaccines to the world by the end of this year. In addition to donating 100 million US dollars to COVAX, China will donate 100 million doses of vaccines to other developing countries in the course of this year.” - *President Xi Jinping, **People’s Republic of China** at the GA General Debate*
- “To fight this pandemic, we need a collective act of science and political will. We need to act now to get shots in arms as fast as possible and to expand access to oxygen, tests, treatments to save lives around the world.” – *President Biden, **USA** at the General Debate*
- “[T]o defeat the pandemic, we must ensure that vaccines are accessible to everyone in the world. Switzerland is committed to ensuring fair and affordable access to vaccines, treatments and diagnostics. Our country contributes to the Vaccine Alliance and supports the COVAX AMC initiative for low and middle-income countries with 155 million US dollars (CHF 145 million).” - *President Parmelin, **Switzerland** at the GA General Debate*
- “Costa Rica advocates for the COVID-19 vaccines to be available to all the world population as a global public good. The COVAX promise must be fulfilled and developed countries can make it happen.” - *President Quesada, **Costa Rica** at the GA General Debate*
- “COVID-19 will persist as long as it is not defeated everywhere. The key is vaccines! Vaccinating the world as soon as possible is the way we overcome. Vaccine equity is of paramount importance in this regard.”-*President Solih, **Maldives** at the GA General Debate*
- “When we take stock of global vaccine distribution, the picture is at best mixed. Too many people are still waiting for the life-saving vaccine, and this is why the distribution of vaccines must not be an instrument for countries to showcase themselves or grant tactical favours.” - *President Steinmeier, **Germany** at the GA General Debate*
- “There is a man-made drought of vaccines ravaging poor countries. Rich countries hoard life-saving vaccines, while poor nations wait for trickles. They now talk of booster shots, while developing countries consider half-doses just to get by. The plain fact is – this pandemic will not end unless the virus is defeated everywhere. Vaccines are key to achieving this.” - *President Duterte, **Philippines** at the GA General Debate*
- “We agree that we need to strengthen the global health architecture. The COVID-19 pandemic, which we are still battling at the global level, has made this obvious, especially for developing countries.” - *Ambassador Fatima, **Bangladesh** at the Common Agenda Launch*

Financing, debt, and measuring growth

- “We should care about the special needs for developing countries. We may employ such means as debt suspension and development aid to help developing countries, particularly vulnerable ones facing exceptional difficulties, with emphasis on addressing unbalanced and inadequate development among and within countries...China has

pledged an additional three billion US dollars of international assistance in the next three years to support developing countries in responding to COVID-19 and promoting economic and social recovery.” - *President Xi Jinping, People’s Republic of China at the GA General Debate*

- “The cooperation at the G7 and G20 to issue new Special Drawing Rights is another positive example. A further voluntary reallocation of new SDRs to countries that need them most, will help create the fiscal space required for a faster and more equitable recovery from the pandemic”. - *President Kagame, Rwanda at the GA General Debate*
- “[T]he G20 Debt Standstill Initiative is a welcome response to the fiscal and liquidity challenges faced by least developed economies. The agreement on the allocation of 650 billion US dollars in Special Drawing Rights is significant, but it is insufficient to meet the extent of the need. South Africa therefore reiterates its call for 25 percent of the total allocation, amounting to around 165 billion US dollars, to be made available to the African continent.” - *President Ramaphosa, South Africa at the GA General Debate*
- “Of the 20 percent of climate financing provided on adaption, only 2 percent of that support went to SIDS countries. Further, of that 2 percent, at least half of those funds were not in the form of grants, but in the form of loans. We urge the UN to address this inequity and reduce the artificial barriers to allowing small countries to access climate finance.” - *President Whipples, Palau at the GA General Debate*
- “Costa Rica has proposed the creation of the Fund to Alleviate the COVID-19 Economy (FACE). This is an extraordinary support fund of nearly half a trillion US dollars, funded by 0.7 percent of the Gross Domestic Product of the largest and most robust economies in the world - those representing 80 percent of world GDP -, to be intermediated by multilateral development banks, as concessional loans to developing countries.” - *President Quesada, Republic of Costa Rica at the GA General Debate*
- “There’s a pressing need to bridge the SDG financing gap, especially for developing countries, where the human development deficit is indeed greatest... the resources to finance the SDGs are certainly available. The question raised is whether the rich countries of the world are thus prepared to accept the new paradigm of the SDGs and play their part or not.” - *President Akufo-Addo, Ghana at the SDG Moment*
- “We call on international financial institutions, the World Bank, the private sector, and the international banking sector... to promote measures to prevent our countries [MICs] incurring unsustainable levels of debt and to manage to direct their scarce resources to the socioeconomic recovery to the crisis.” - *Secretary of Foreign Affairs Cassaubon, Mexico at the GA General Debate*

UN Reform

- “Affirming the role of the United Nations, but struggling with reforms and denying resources implies, in practice, weakening multilateralism and fostering crisis situations, with negative effects for everyone.” - *President Sousa, Portugal at the GA General Debate*
- “South Africa reiterates its call for urgent reform and a move to text-based negotiations through which an agreement can ultimately be reached. We must address the under-representation of the African continent in the UN system, and ensure that the voice of

the African continent wherein 1.3 billion people reside and also of the Global South in general, is strengthened in the multilateral system.” - *President Ramaphosa, **South Africa** at the GA General Debate*

- “Let us continue to defend rules-based multilateralism. Switzerland is committed to an effective and efficient United Nations and supports reforms aimed at improving conflict prevention, strengthening the UN development system and modernizing management methods.” - *President Parmelin, **Switzerland** at the GA General Debate*
- “If the UN wants to remain relevant, it will need to improve its effectiveness and enhance its reliability... institutions of global governance have damaged the credibility they had built, which was the result of decades of hard work. It is essential that we constantly strengthen the UN in order to safeguard global order....” - *Prime Minister Modi, **India** at the GA General Debate*
- “[T]he UN can be revitalized through the reform of its own governance structures which must reflect the changing world we live in today....to revitalize the UN and the impact of its activities across the world, we must seek to strengthen public-private partnerships to overcome the financing challenge.” - *President Farmajo, **Somalia** at the GA General Debate*
- “We support a reform of the UN Security Council, in which we seek a permanent seat.” - *President Bolsonaro, **Brazil** at the GA General Debate*
- “In order to meet the challenges of the modern age, the UN and its Security Council must show willingness to change and implement long overdue reforms.... The reform should ensure more equitable representation from African, Latin American and Eastern European countries.” - *President Levits, **Latvia** at the GA General Debate*
- “[A] reform that increases only nonpermanent seats with long term mandates and with possibilities for immediate reflection is viable and would represent a substantial change to the functioning of the body to which we entrust the maintenance of international peace and security. Mexico has proposed... that the right to veto of the five permanent members be regulated. More than one hundred states support us in this initiative.” - *Secretary of Foreign Affairs Cassaubon, **Mexico** at the GA General Debate*

Many of these issues, particularly regarding financing were taken up again at the COP26 in Glasgow, just concluded and will be taken up again at the LDC Forum in Doha, as well as at Financing for Development, the HLPF on 2030 Agenda, and more.

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