

President

Allow me at the beginning of my statement to offer Ireland's sympathy to all those in Mexico affected by the devastating earthquake earlier this week and to commend those who have been engaged in the heroic rescue operations. I also want to extend condolences to the representatives of people in the Caribbean who are facing extraordinarily difficulties following the recent hurricanes.

President

This is no time for business as usual. The international community is facing unprecedented challenges.

I'm here because I think this Organisation matters. This is an Organisation that now faces daily challenges to its political and management missions. We need to move from debate to action.

My country, Ireland, has kept faith with the UN since we joined as a young Republic which had fought hard for its independence and saw being a member of the UN as fundamental to its future and its people's future peace and security. We still do over 60 years later.

Our faith has not been misplaced. It is as strong today as ever in the past. But we certainly have something to say about the future of the Organisation and the role we believe it must play in reducing suffering across the globe, and securing our shared peace, security and prosperity. The UN matters to us.

Today I will focus on where we see we can make a difference as the UN, and where Ireland makes a difference in the UN.

Given our history as a small country, with its own troubled past, we see very clearly the advantages of a rules-based order in international affairs. Even more than that, it is precisely because Ireland is small, outward looking and heavily dependent on external trade for our well-being that we pursue an active foreign policy.

As Ireland's experience in the European Union has shown us, we are stronger acting collectively than we are acting alone. Partnership and cooperation has brought peace and prosperity to Europe. In fact, for Ireland, our membership of the European Union, working with other European Union Member States has strengthened our independence and self-confidence rather than diminished it.

The case for international cooperation and multilateralism is compelling. By working together we lay foundations of trust, we align our perspectives more closely, we accept our differences more willingly and we build habits of cooperation that better allow us to address the common threats and opportunities we face.

The alternatives of unilateralism, transactional diplomacy, protectionism and confrontation are not, in fact, viable. Their short-term populist appeal obscures their long-term cost.

We are living in an era where local and global challenges are intersecting with increasing frequency and force. Today's problems do not carry passports or recognise international borders. There are no unilateral solutions to these problems.

Local and regional issues - climate change, migration, armed conflict and hunger – often become global issues, including in corners of the world that are far from the origin of the problems. We cannot ignore them.

The enormous scale of the challenges facing the world might lead some to question whether multilateralism and the UN are up to the task. My response is that they can be and that they must be.

When properly mobilised, when we pull together and move from debating to actually getting things done, we can move mountains. The UN delivers extraordinary results such as the Paris Climate Agreement. The UN has led the global effort to eradicate Smallpox; end Apartheid; promote Arms Control; save the lives of millions of children through UNICEF; and protect our cultural heritage through UNESCO. We owe much to the UN.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a stand-out recent achievement. The Sustainable Development Goals have the power and potential to transform our world, addressing the root causes of poverty, inequality and instability. However, their potential can only be realised through a strong and confident multilateral system which empowers Member States to reach the ambitious but necessary targets we have set ourselves.

Having played an important role in facilitating agreement on the SDGs in 2015, Ireland is committed to their implementation, domestically and through our foreign policy.

Failure is not an option. The UN is the fulcrum upon which we can leverage the change required. But the walls dividing the three pillars of the UN – development, human rights and peace and security- have in the past impeded our efforts to accelerate sustainable development. The SDGs represent a fundamental breakthrough, recognising the many aspects of sustainable development that straddle the pillars. As we move forward on implementation we must break down the organisation's institutional silos that hinder progress.

President

Since we gathered here a year ago we appointed António Guterres as Secretary-General. Ireland believes he has the skills, the experience and the compassion to do this very tough job. The difficult international environment demands more than ever brave and principled leadership. We welcome the clear direction the Secretary-General is providing and the steps he is taking to reform the organisation.

And, while we, the Member States, have expressed confidence that the Secretary-General has the abilities to lead the UN forward at a time when the world is crying out for better multilateral engagement, we must allow him to lead. It is very tempting for the Member States to micro-manage the work of the Secretariat. But such an approach will likely impede, not enhance, reform.

But, it is not enough that only the UN's internal mechanisms meet twenty-first century standards. The UN's political bodies must also better reflect today's world. Nowhere is this more evident than with regard to the composition of the Security Council. The Security Council does not reflect the world that has evolved since the UN was established in 1945. Quite plainly, we would be hard pressed to find any entity – in the public or private sectors – that remains so untouched by the changes and realities in the world around it.

Vast areas of our world are either insufficiently represented or not represented at all. The need to increase the size of the Council is clear to see. Ireland sees the obvious need for much stronger African representation on the Council so that there can be a greater African say in Council decisions affecting their continent. We would also favour consideration of a designated seat for Small Island Developing States.

And let's be clear. While the use or threat of the veto remains in place, the work of the Council is impeded and the UN can be paralysed in its response to the gravest crises facing the international community. The failure of the Security Council to take action to prevent mass atrocity crimes – most recently with regard to Syria, but also on other occasions – betrays victims and weakens the credibility of the UN. The case for reform is thus not an academic or institutional question. It is a deeper question of legitimacy and effectiveness.

President

Ireland's commitment to the UN and to the multilateral system based on rule of law is as strong today as it has ever been. Although geographically a small island on the periphery of Europe, our people and our outlook are global, influenced by connecting with people and events around the world.

No part of our contribution to the UN resonates more with the Irish people than our UN peacekeepers. The thousands of men and women who have served under blue helmets represent Ireland, our people and our values. Since 1958, when Irish troops first began serving the UN, not a day has passed without Irish participation in the UN's peace support operations. We believe we make a difference.

Ireland's peacekeepers have been natural soldier-diplomats in trouble spots across the globe, particularly in Africa and the Middle East, doing the UN's work day by day and deed by deed. Today, with almost 550 troops in the field, Ireland is the highest per capita European Union contributor of troops to UN peacekeeping with deployments to six UN missions across the Middle East and Africa. We are making a substantial contribution to UNIFIL in particular, where, as always, our peacekeepers act with impartiality and integrity, and provide the leadership required in a difficult environment.

I am pleased to note that Ireland is committed to doubling the number of women in our Defence Forces, with the aim also of increasing female participation in peacekeeping. As the Secretary General said at the Security Council this week, and as we know from the Women Peace and Security agenda, increased female participation leads to better decision making, improved situational awareness, a better focus on protection of civilians, and enhanced reporting of and accountability for sexual exploitation and abuse.

We all know that conflict prevention has the potential to save lives and to protect hard-won development gains – and that it comes at a lower financial cost than peacekeeping operations and post-conflict peacebuilding. We strongly support the Secretary-General's efforts to re-orient the international community's thinking toward crisis and conflict prevention. Flowing from our painstaking conflict resolution efforts on the island of Ireland, we seek to share our national experience in our work on conflict prevention, mediation and state-building.

The huge growth in UN peacekeeping operations in the past decade tells us that, sadly, the scope for conflict prevention is broad. Of course, conflict prevention involves policy planning and engagement on the ground, all of which requires funding. We have very recently seen some reductions in peacekeeping operations and their associated costs. We might reasonably ask if a small part of these savings could be used to provide stable funding for the UN's conflict prevention work.

As the first State to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1968 we have a deep commitment to its full implementation. Earlier this week I was very pleased to sign the recently approved Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons which was supported by 122 members of this Assembly. Ireland is proud to have played a leadership role together with Austria, Brazil, Mexico, Nigeria, and South Africa, in bringing forward the UN Resolution convening the Diplomatic Conference that negotiated this ground-breaking treaty.

The case for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons has never been stronger as the volatile situation in the Korean Peninsula makes clear. I unreservedly condemn the recent series of missile and nuclear weapons testing by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. These developments highlight the urgent need for the swift and immediate entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

President

The scale and severity of humanitarian crises is one of the greatest challenges facing the international community. Ireland is committed to providing humanitarian assistance and contributing to international efforts to ease the plight of civilians caught in conflicts in South Sudan, Syria, Yemen and Iraq to name but a few. As these large-scale crises dominate the headlines, Ireland is conscious of the many 'forgotten' and underfunded crises and the need to maintain a focus on ensuring that human suffering, wherever in the world it occurs, is not ignored.

The vast majority of displaced people are being sheltered in communities already experiencing high levels of vulnerability and poverty, placing a huge strain on already limited resources. As such, Ireland is supporting both refugees and vulnerable host communities, on the basis of need. I particularly want to acknowledge the generosity of many States – such as Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda - which are hosting very large numbers of people displaced by conflicts in neighbouring countries.

Ireland is proud of its strong and targeted contribution to eradicating global hunger, reducing extreme poverty, addressing conflict and instability and responding to humanitarian crises where they occur.

For Ireland, strong partnerships, especially with Least Developed Countries, will remain at the core of our approach as we together work for a peaceful and prosperous future. We will also work closely with the UN system. We applaud the Secretary General's efforts to enhance coherence, effectiveness and accountability, and the delivery of results where it matters most – on the ground.

The UN Charter does not begin “We the Member States”, but rather “We the Peoples”. Our policies and actions must reflect this, the inherent equality of humanity at the core of our multilateral system. In practice this means listening to and heeding the voices of women, the voices of young people, the voices of the marginalised. The Women Peace and Security agenda has had a hugely positive impact globally with the realisation that we can create more durable and sustainable peace by working to ensure that women play their rightful role in conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts. Ireland will play our part, including as chair of the Commission on the Status of Women during the next two years.

A similar strategic approach must also be taken in engaging youth, in all our countries. Young people must have a role in shaping a future that they will ultimately inherit.

We have a phrase in Irish, “*mol an óige agus tiocfaidh sí*” which, broadly translated, states “praise the youth and they will come”. I can't think of any continent where this is more relevant today than in Africa. Young people are key to achieving the SDGs and we must find ways to encourage their active participation in shaping the solutions to current challenges. It's their future and we have to involve them in shaping it.

There are very positive signs. The vitality of entrepreneurship and the creative use of technology. Infrastructure development and the potential of renewable energy. Increasing

access to good education. Improvements in agricultural yields and adding value to commodities. Better prospects for women and girls in political and economic life.

There are also difficult obstacles to be overcome. But as the Sustainable Development Goals remind us, we live in an interconnected world, each challenge affecting the other. African countries are particularly affected by global challenges, such as climate change, conflict and food insecurity, which can only be addressed in their African contexts in a spirit of effective global partnership. Such partnership requires understanding local perspectives anchored in local experience, in particular on how to tackle root causes.

I want Ireland to play a leading role in Europe in helping to build better and more effective partnerships with Africa, rooted in shared interests and values, sustained over the medium to long term. We need a new political architecture for relations between the European Union and Africa; one that matches the urgency of the shared challenges we face.

The Middle East is part of Europe's close neighbourhood, and its challenges resonate deeply with people in Ireland.

The conflicts in Syria and Yemen have caused untold suffering. Ireland has responded generously to these crises with almost €100 million in humanitarian aid but what the people of Syria and Yemen need most now is peace, to enable them to rebuild their lives. I urge all sides to the two conflicts to work for an end to violence, to engage in the search for peaceful political solutions under UN auspices and for accountability for crimes committed.

Ireland is committed to constructive and principled diplomatic action on the Middle East Peace Process. Next year it will be 25 years since the Oslo Accords were signed. We cannot let ourselves become complacent about the status quo, or let efforts to achieve peace stagnate. This situation is weighing heavily on both communities. Palestinians need an end to occupation, and Israelis need security. Continued construction of settlements undermines the prospects for both. I wish the US efforts every success as they seek to build momentum for peace. Ireland is prepared to give all the support we can to achieving a Two State Solution, which we remain

convinced is the only way to ensure security and prosperity for both peoples, Israeli and Palestinian. The time to act on this is now. We cannot become cynical or jaded. We owe it to all Palestinians and Israelis to continue to bring energy and resolve to help them to finally deliver peace and a Two State solution.

In relation to Myanmar Ireland strongly condemns the violence in Rakhine State which has driven hundreds of thousands from their homes into neighbouring Bangladesh. Here at the General Assembly we have to insist on the suspension of military activity; an end to violence; be upholding of the rule of law and the recognition of the right of return of all those who have had to leave the country.

President

Ireland sees itself as a natural child of the UN. We are small. We are an island which has experienced colonisation and conflict. Here at the UN, we listen to others – especially if we hold a different view on an issue or policy. We are convinced that in today’s globalised world we must live in each other’s shelter not shadow.

Ireland’s contribution to the UN in the fields of sustainable development, humanitarian assistance, disarmament, human rights and the rule of law has been steadfast. UN membership has been, and will continue to be, at the very heart of Irish foreign policy.

Ireland is proud to be a candidate for a seat on the UN Security Council at the elections to be held in 2020. We have presented our candidature because we believe deeply that we should step forward and play our part in support of multilateralism at this time of significant global instability and realignment of geopolitical influence. We have something to say and we will listen to you when you speak. We will be courageous on behalf of the UN and our fellow peoples. With Ireland, you know what you get – a small State with big thinking, a country that listens, and a strong independent voice that promotes the values that inspire this organisation.

Thank you.