



2022 UN General Assembly High-level Debate: perspectives from the Global South

The GPW Team

In September 2022, heads of state and government spoke at the UN Headquarters on the theme “A watershed moment: transformative solutions to interlocking challenges”.

Secretary-General António Guterres’s message was clear: “Our world is in peril and paralyzed”. He launched the High-level General Debate bluntly: “Our world is in big trouble. Divides are growing deeper. Inequalities are growing wider. Challenges are spreading farther.” He urged, “We need action across the board.”

“Let’s have no illusions. We are in rough seas. A winter of global discontent is on the horizon. A cost-of-living crisis is raging. Trust is crumbling. Inequalities are exploding. Our planet is burning. People are hurting – with the most vulnerable suffering the most. The United Nations Charter and the ideals it represents are in jeopardy. We have a duty to act.”

These concerns reverberated throughout the high-level session. This briefing contains a sampling from countries of the Global South.

(All statements can be viewed at the official [UNGA 77 General Debate archive](#) or this [playlist](#). Most written statements are also available on the official archive.)

Growing inequalities highlight the unjust system

Prime Minister Mia Mottley of **Barbados**: “We live in a world... where the disparity in income is too great. And we live in a world where some are even benefitting from the crises disproportionately and egregiously. We must ask ourselves therefore whether the time has not come for a review of the settlement of the Bretton Woods institutions that no longer serve the purpose in the 21st century that they served when they were catering to a quarter of the nation states that are now members of this institution.”

President Alberto Fernández of **Argentina**: “Is it right that the fortune of only 10 men is greater than the income of 40 percent of the global population? Is it ethical that the pandemic claimed four times more lives in the poorest nations than in the rich ones? Not speaking out against this model of accumulation that places income in the hands of the few while millions remain plunged in poverty may make us complicit in simply strengthening this inequality. We have arrived in time to halt several of the threats facing humankind, the injustices that we are nothing will only worsen if extreme positions are allowed to take root. If wars continue over time allowing hunger to take root and if persistent inflation persistently corrodes the income of the weakest among us. We must work together and strengthen cooperation-based multilateralism.”

President Gustavo Petro of **Colombia**: “For power relations in the world, the jungle and its inhabitants are those responsible for the plague that afflicts them. ...The relations of power are plagued by the addiction to money, to perpetrate themselves, an addiction to oil, to cocaine and harder drugs that can serve to anesthetize them. There is nothing more hypocritical than the discourse of saving the jungle.

“...Climate disaster will kill hundreds of millions of people [and] it is not produced by the planet it is produced by capital. The cause of climate disaster is capital. The logic of relating ourselves to consume more and more to produce more and more and for some to earn more and more money produces a climate disaster.”

Prime Minister John Briceño of **Belize**: “Our current systems and institutions, conceived for World War II recovery, are straining under the weight of today’s crises. In truth, they are broken and stand impotent in the face of the 3Cs - COVID, climate, and conflict... We urgently need a new global financial architecture that has the willingness and capacity to identify systemic threats, like debt, climate risk, and devise tools that are commensurable to the challenge. It should be dedicated to achieving the SDGs, Net Zero emissions and to build resilience... We call on IFIs, MDBs to use the MVI ([Multidimensional Vulnerability Index](#))”.

This was echoed by Prime Minister Terrance Drew of **Saint Kitts and Nevis**: “This situation cries out for the multilateral system to urgently put in place a multidimensional vulnerability index, which takes into consideration the peculiar characteristics and climate vulnerabilities of small island developing states such as mine. All countries are environmentally vulnerable; all are socially and economically exposed to exogenous shock, but in the climate-challenged, tourism-dependent countries in the Caribbean Sea, during several consecutive months of every year, run the real risk of a wipe out event.”

President Wavel Ramkalawan of **Seychelles**: “We cannot continue to rely on temporary solutions to address the systemic faults within the existing development cooperation mechanisms. If this is to be a watershed moment, we must put into practice real solutions that focus on addressing vulnerabilities and building resilience to ensure socio-economic sustainability.”

Does Debt Crisis require new financial architecture?

“We need a reformed financial architecture that benefits developing countries, providing critical financing and debt relief,” urged the Secretary-General in his address at the opening of SDG Moment during the high-level week. “This is the only sustainable pathway to address the obscene inequalities that exist in every country, while ensuring that the world doesn’t slide into a recession.” With only eight more years to the end of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, he reiterated the urgency for commitments and measure for successful SDG implementation.

Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob of **Malaysia**: “In an international financial and monetary structure that is still dominated by a few major powers, as well as during the world economic recovery, domestic monetary decisions have to be adjusted by considering the reality and needs of developing countries. In this connection, Malaysia urges the UN Member States to establish an International Monetary Cooperation Mechanism to build a more effective and just system that is able to balance the needs of global development.”

Prime Minister John Briceño of **Belize**: “The current tentative, reactionary and piecemeal approach to addressing the debt problem has proven hopelessly ineffective. We must break the pernicious cycle between debt and climate and disaster risk. IFIs must incorporate climate risk into debt sustainability tools.”

President Mohamed Irfaan Ali of **Guyana**: “...there must be an immediate re-examination of the financing gap and the debt portfolio of developing countries to open fiscal space and create an opportunity for recovery and bridging the gap.”

Prime Minister Mia Mottley of **Barbados** asked the IMF to consider delinking the resilience and sustainability trust which will require “more countries seeding that fund with capital and more countries agreeing perhaps to allow their Special Drawing Rights to be used there, just as we ask them to allow those Special Drawing Rights to be used to allow multilateral development banks to significantly increase the money available,” particularly now as we face “a debt crisis where more than 45 countries” are in debt because of increased borrowing costs caused by inflation.

Prime Minister John Briceño of **Belize**: “The IMF is largely devoid of ways to quantify consequential climate impacts on public debt and countries’ capacity to pay. The IFI’s obstinate focus on primary balances and debt to GDP ratios ignores the empirical evidence that nature is in revolt. Incredibly, a recent analysis revealed that of the 80 IMF-funded Country Programmes around the world, climate was central to the country assessment in only a single case – Samoa... I ask, how much longer will this new ‘climate colonialism’ punish the victims and spare the victimizers?”

President Akufo-Addo of **Ghana**: “The spillover from central banks raising interest rates to combat inflation has been severe beyond borders, as global investors pull money out of developing economies to invest in bonds in the developed world. This has led to depreciating currencies and increased borrowing costs; meaning we need to raise and spend more of our own currencies to service our foreign debts in US dollars....

“It has become clear, if ever there was any doubt, that the international financial structure is skewed significantly against developing and emerging economies like Ghana. The avenues that are opened to powerful nations to enable them take measures that would ease pressures on their economies are closed to small nations. To make matters worse, credit rating agencies have been quick to downgrade economies in Africa, making it harder to service our debts. The tag of Africa as an investment risk is little more than, in substance, a self-fulfilling prophecy created by the prejudice of the international money market, which denies us access to cheaper borrowing, pushing us deeper into debts.”

Climate and food crisis go to issue of power imbalances

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif of **Pakistan**: “Pakistan has never seen a starker and more devastating example of the impact of global warming,” he said, referring to the 40 days flooding that has pushed a third of the country under water. Pakistan is one of the 10 most climate-vulnerable countries that emit less than 1 percent of the greenhouse gases that are burning the planet. “What happened in Pakistan will not stay in Pakistan,” he stated, warning that unless world leaders act now “there will be no earth to fight wars over”.

President William Ruto of **Kenya**: “The world is facing the consequences of climate change. In Kenya, 1.3 million residents have become food insecure. Lowered agricultural output, water scarcity and starvation are looming.” In the lead-up to the COP, he urged member states to not waste time to demonstrate political will to cooperate and share technologies — to jointly usher in a “new paradigm in multilateralism”.

Deputy Prime Minister Don Pramudwinal of **Thailand** highlighted the need to strengthen multilateral action to address the global food crisis: “It is vital to keep our global supply chains open for seamless cross-border flows of food, fertilizers, and essential goods.”

President Gabriel Boric of **Chile**: “Our country, as many of yours, many of the Global South, is responsible for a minimum of GHG emissions - in our case it's only 0.24 percent, while the largest economies of the G20... produce 80 percent of GHG emissions. This inequality...is an inherent threat to democracy because it breaks society apart, it destroys social cohesion and therefore hampers understanding and building a freer, more fair future together...I invite you to plan ahead in the search for greater social justice, to better distribute wealth and power.”

Prime Minister John Briceño of **Belize**: “Belize is ranked 8th out of 183 on the Global Climate Risk Index. We are but one hurricane away from catastrophe. Yet financing needed for climate adaptation remains woefully inadequate; only about a quarter of all climate finance goes to adaptation.”

President Gustavo Petro of **Colombia**: “I call on you to save the Amazon jungle with the resources that can be devoted to life throughout the world. If you do not have the ability to finance the fund to revitalize the jungle, if it is more important to devote money to weapons than to life, then let *us* reduce external debt to release our own state budgets, so we can carry out the task of saving humanity and life on the planet.”

Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob of **Malaysia** stated that climate is a universal problem which affects all: “Developed countries must fulfil their annual commitments to provide US \$100 billion unconditionally.” He then called for developing countries to have “new, fair, inclusive and affordable technology which facilitates their greener and more sustainable socioeconomic development.”

Minister for Foreign Affairs Robert Dussey of **Togo**: “We ardently hope that the next COP 27, to be held 7-18 November 2022 in Egypt, will help to genuinely place back at the heart of international priorities the preservation of the environment, by incentivizing stakeholders to honour their financing pledges, which are necessary to tackle global warming and climate change.”

Prime Minister Adriano Afonso Maleiane of **Mozambique**: “Climate change places Mozambique under permanent surveillance. In recent times, our country has been cyclically and intensively affected by depressions, tropical cyclones, rains and strong winds, floods and droughts that have caused loss of human lives, displacement of persons, extensive damage to infrastructure and socio-economic activities... between 2019 and 2022, Mozambique was hit by cyclones Idai, Kenneth, Guambe, Chalane, Ana and Gombe.” He added that, in response, Mozambique joined countries of the southern region of Africa and cooperation partners to set up in Nacala-Porto the Center for Humanitarian and Emergency Operations of the Southern African Development Community.

President Mohamed Irfaan Ali of **Guyana**: “According to the World Bank and Global Trade Alert, between January – June 2022, 135 policy measures were announced or implemented that affected trade in food and fertilizer... During the same period, 34 nations imposed restrictive export measures on food and fertilizers.” He asked, “Whether globalization is only applicable under normal conditions or whether it is opportunistic in its application and when a crisis arises, we lock ourselves in and forget about multilateralism and globalization.”

Minister of Foreign Affairs Sameh Shoukry of **Egypt**: “Unfortunately, in Africa alone, one in every five [people] are at risk of hunger and the continent remains a net food importer at an annual cost of US\$43 billion. In this vein, we reiterate the need to address this crisis through an integrated strategy that tackles its root causes,” by addressing, among others, “sustainable farming and food systems and meet the urgent needs of food importing developing countries” and “support[ing] the developing countries and the LDCs in their efforts to confront the devastating impact of climate change [as they] are the most deserving of such support, based on the principles of equity and Common but Differentiated Responsibilities.”

President Akufo-Addo of **Ghana**: “Every bullet, every bomb, every shell that hits a target in Ukraine, hits our pockets and our economies in Africa.” As global inflation soars, “Ghana is experiencing the highest rate for 21 years, with high food prices hurting the poor, especially in urban areas the most. It has become clear, if ever there was any doubt, that the international financial structure is skewed significantly against developing and emerging economies....”

Foreign Minister Retno Lestari Priansar Marsudi of **Indonesia**: “We cannot let global recovery fall at the mercy of geopolitics.” Calling the upcoming G20 Summit in her country a “catalyst for recovery”, she urged countries to address food and energy crises to avoid a fertilizer crisis that would affect billions of people, particularly in developing countries.

President David Kabua of **Marshall Islands**: “We value the United Nations as our primary international stage. But if the world does not adequately respond to the island nations and as seas rise, then this is really no United Nations at all.”

Loss and damage: a forgotten climate commitment?

At the opening of the General Debate, the Secretary-General urged governments and multilateral agencies to make climate action a priority, including holding fossil fuel companies to account. He called on developed economies “to tax the windfall profits of fossil fuel companies. Those funds should be re-directed in two ways: to countries suffering loss and damage caused by the climate crisis; and to people struggling with rising food and energy prices.”

Prime Minister Mia Mottley of **Barbados**: “The developing world and in particular, the Small Island Developing States, came to Paris and agreed for a global compact. One of the key aspects that allowed us to do so was the promise of Loss and Damage. Today, the people of Guadalupe and Puerto Rico, yesterday Turks and Caicos ...face disruption by Hurricane Fiona. Today, I received news about difficulties for the natural gas supply in my own country, and I suspect others in this part of the world...

“When we match this with the reality that we have not planned in granular form, how we will have the capacity to meet the commitments that we have made for Net Zero... then I see trouble ahead of us and we must pause and get it right. Our small states are making commitments that the world wants to hear, but when those commitments are undermined by the inability to supply the electric cars or the batteries necessary to sustain renewable energy, then we know we have a problem.”

She explained that the impact of climate change on access to natural gas makes clear why Emerging Market Countries in the Caribbean and in Africa “have determined that we cannot abandon access to our own natural gas resources until we are assured that we have the capacity to sustain our populations. This is where the rubber meets the ground and I ask us today to recognize that those commitments on Loss and Damage and that granular detail that matches commitment to capacity are absolutely critical if we are to make serious progress in saving our world.”

Prime Minister John Briceño of **Belize**: “Public sector expenditure on climate-caused “loss and damage cannot continue to be classified according to fiscal orthodoxy.” At the COP in Glasgow, he added: “Rather than delivering a Loss and Damage Facility to help our countries deal with the losses and damages caused by climate change, we left with *más palabras!*”

Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama of **Fiji**: “Only come to [the COP in] Sharm El-Sheikh if you are ready to agree to a loss and damage mechanism... in the order of US\$750 billion, with at least 10 percent of climate finance destined for small island states. ...This is our story... a story of David against Goliath. A

small state facing nations, corporations, and interests far bigger than we are. ...This is not the time for words, this is the time for will and a time for courage.”

President Wavel Ramkalawan of **Seychelles**: “We are at the cusp of an ecological collapse... We need bold actions not unfulfilled promises and pledges... We must also confront the gross injustice of having citizens of states least responsible for the unravelling climate-induced disaster pay for the loss and damage caused by others.”

Global governance – highlights unequal positioning of Africa

Minister for Foreign Affairs Robert Dussey of **Togo** set out the unjust the power relationship: “Africa in the eyes of certain powers is only of interest when they are finding themselves in difficulty... Today, Africa no longer holds the place that it deserves on the international stage. Noting that when the UN was created in 1945, with the exception of Liberia and Ethiopia, the countries of Africa were not yet independent: “After 77 years, it is the same International System, unfortunately, which persists, owing to the will of the five permanent members of the Security Council...”

Pointing to the consensus among 54 African States regarding the need to secure two permanent seats on the Security Council, he said that “the reluctance of certain members of the P5... to see Africa occupy this place stands in stark relief. ...The great powers wish to boil Africa down to a purely instrumental entity for the service of their causes and they clearly do not wish to see Africa play an important role, a key role in the world... They look towards Africa with agendas that are dictated by their own interests...”

“In the concert of nations, there is a need for Africa to be heard, for dialogue to have a purpose. The inability to listen perverts the purpose of dialogue, morphing it into a juxtaposition of monologues partial reasonings, at times in the guise of pseudo-multilateralism whose danger resides in the distortion of the relationship. And yet in today's world it is only by pooling our intelligence that we can reach agreement on the goals to be achieved together.”

President Macky Sall of **Senegal**: “I have come to say that Africa has suffered enough of the burden of history; that it does not want to be the breeding ground of a new cold war, but rather a pole of stability and opportunity open to all its partners, on a mutually beneficial basis.”

Prime Minister Mia Mottley of **Barbados** stated that the G7 and G20, “as the informal subcommittee of governance of this world” must recognize that we can no longer “call year after year after year for the inclusion of the people of Africa and African descent to be included in the G7 and G20. For how can a world have at its core a subcommittee that excludes more than 1.4, 1.5 billion people of the world and expect it to reflect fairness and transparency in its decision-making?”

This goes beyond fairness, she added, saying that those countries “must understand that if we are to move from possibilities to realities, we must embrace a transparent framework that allows our people, who are losing faith in their institutions and in the governance of this world, to understand that fairness means ...the ability for all to have a voice, and that we can't only speak to it within the corridors of democracy within the nation state, but it will only mean something when it also is reflected in our international community.”

Security imperatives require Security Council reform: from cooperation to ending the veto

Then President Paul-Henri Damiba of **Burkina Faso**: “No precautions or prevention measures will prevent terrorism from crossing the Atlantic if Sahel is abandoned.”

Minister for Foreign Affairs Robert Dussey of **Togo**: “The deterioration of the security situation [in Sahel] should be of concern to all of us, first and foremost to the United Nations. That having been said, there's an important need to fully revitalize our organization and to spare no effort to achieve reform of the **Security Council**.”

President Macky Sall of **Senegal**: “It is time to heed Africa’s just and legitimate demand for Security Council reform, as reflected in the Ezulwini consensus. In the same vein, I reaffirm our request for the African Union to be granted a seat in the G20 so that Africa can finally be represented where decisions that affect 1 billion 400 million Africans are being taken.”

Permanent Representative to the UN Maria De Jesus Ferreira of **Angola**: “Negotiations for reforming the UN Security Council still have not produced the results that the overwhelming majority of Member States expects... The Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration represent a viable option to restore the rights and legitimate aspirations of the African continent and to correct the historical injustices that the region is experiencing with its absence from the decision-making center of one of the main statutory bodies in matters of international peace and security created by the UN Charter.”

Minister for External Affairs Subrahmanyam Jaishankar of **India**: “As we begin the G-20 presidency this December, we are sensitive to the challenges faced by developing countries. India will work with other G-20 members to address serious issues of debt, economic growth, food and energy security and particularly environment. The reform of governance of multilateral financial institutions will continue to be one of our core priorities... The call for reformed multilateralism – with reforms of the Security Council at its core – enjoys considerable support among UN members.” While India is completing its tenure this year, it seeks to ensure that the injustice faced by the Global South is addressed through such a process. Serious negotiations “must not be blocked by procedural tactics. Naysayers cannot hold the intergovernmental negotiations process hostage in perpetuity.”

Prime Minister Mia Mottley of **Barbados**: “Earlier this week, President Biden spoke of the need to reform the Security Council. We call an echo for that, but we go further, because we believe that a Security Council that retains the power of veto in the hands of a few will still lead us to war as we have seen this year. Therefore, the reform simply must not be in its composition but also in the removal of that veto.”

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