

74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

Agenda Item – 110

Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization

INDIA STATEMENT

by

Ambassador K. Nagaraj Naidu
Deputy Permanent Representative

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I thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his comprehensive report on the work of the Organization (A/74/1), and for his briefing today on his priorities for 2020. We are also grateful to the President of the General Assembly for his innovation of introducing an **interactive question and answer format** in this session, thus moving this debate beyond an annual ritual to a real opportunity for reflection and exchange of views.

The Secretary General's report presents us with a sobering account of a complex global landscape in constant flux, and highlights the unfinished agenda of development and reform.

We welcome the Secretary General's **initiatives to modernize and reform** the Secretariat, and to make the United Nations "fit for purpose", including streamlining the peace and security architecture, achieving gender parity, and addressing the financial sustainability of the organization. India will continue to support the Secretary-General in the implementation of these initiatives, including through voluntary contributions, as appropriate.

Mr President,

We have heard today about the **common threats** we face: proliferation of armed conflict, terrorism and destructive extremist ideologies, the existential menace of environmental degradation, endemic poverty, virulent pandemics, mass human displacement, and the yet-unknown implications of unbridled technological change.

Wars, violence and persecution have uprooted nearly 71 million people in 2018. Nearly 142 million people needed humanitarian assistance in 2019. Climate change-related disasters affect an average of 350 million people each year. More than 731 million people still live in extreme poverty.

We all acknowledge that we operate in a world that is more interconnected and interdependent. Yet today, the **spirit of global partnership is showing clear signs of strain** battered by a steadily rising tide of protectionism and unilateralism.

We share the Secretary General's conviction that a vibrant, credible, and effective United Nations is a critical bulwark against the pressures being faced by the global order.

The agreement on a work programme to implement the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change; the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration; and the report of the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation are examples of some of the modest gains made through multilateral efforts.

We also welcome the efforts to strengthen the UN's partnership with **troop and police contributing countries** through the Action for Peacekeeping initiative. As one of the leading contributors of troops, we appreciate the prioritizing of efforts to increase the number of female uniformed personnel, as well as promoting women's meaningful inclusion in peace processes.

We honor the **service of those peacekeepers and humanitarian workers** who gave their lives in the past year serving the United Nations, trying to better the lives of others.

The report shows that some tentative **winds of hope** have begun to flow - against the expectations of many, **electoral processes** unfolded in Madagascar, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and most recently, in Afghanistan, leading to hope for stability and renewal in these regions. Political dialogue in Sudan and the peace process in the Central African Republic have also brought some promise.

Yet Mr. President, despite these pockets of hope, fires continue to blaze on our horizon, demanding from us *collaboration not competition, innovation not inertia*.

Our inability to seriously address **terrorism** – the most dangerous of scourges faced by States and societies since World War II – casts doubt on the relevance of this Organization to the very people whom the Charter obliges us to protect.

The UN is yet to agree on a common definition, let alone craft a coherent and well-coordinated policy to tackle terrorism and dismantle its enabling networks. We have failed ourselves by continuing to procrastinate on concluding the **Comprehensive Convention against International Terrorism**.

Mr. President,

Just like a fish takes to water, one delegation has again taken to hate speech. Every time this delegation speaks, it spews venom and false narratives of monumental proportions. Instead of putting an end to the bellicose and vitriolic diatribe and taking steps to restore normal ties, the delegation indulges in confabulations and obfuscates the international community from the truth. It's extremely surprising that a country that has completely decimated its minority population talks about protecting minorities. For a nation that Pakistan's practice of using false pretenses to distract from addressing the malaise that afflicts it has run its course. Pakistan needs to reflect that there are no takers for its false rhetoric and should get down to the normal business of diplomacy.

Mr. President,

In an increasingly contested world, the credibility of the United Nations will hinge on its ability to **navigate the faultiness**, and shape the **rules of the game** for a secure and prosperous future. This requires continuous attention and active engagement, not just a one-time push forced by the latest 'crisis of the day'.

From the oceans to outer-space and cyber-space, our **global commons** require ethical and normative principles to guide their equitable, responsible and sustainable use.

What holds the UN back from truly invigorating action on issues of pressing global concern? The answer lies in something that unfortunately does not find mention in the report.

The effectiveness, relevance and longevity of any institution lies in its dynamic character, and its **ability to adapt itself** to the changing times. As long as the key organs of this Organization remain **anchored in a governance architecture that is frozen in a bygone era**, the crisis of legitimacy and performance will persist.

Four decades have gone by since the inscription of the item on **reform of the Security Council** on the Agenda of the General Assembly. As we mark the 75th anniversary of the UN, let us strive to ensure that this milestone year is the one that finally delivers some concrete progress towards a Council that reflects the realities of the contemporary world.

At the very start of the 74th session of the General Assembly, the Secretary General had called on us to restore trust, rebuild hope, and move ahead together. These words find echo in those of Martin Luther King Jr., who we all remembered earlier this week. He taught us that *“we must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.”*

As we look forward to another year of work, we **cannot rest on our laurels** in terms of what still needs to be done. We owe this to the millions around the world who continue to look to the United Nations for succor and hope.
