

High-level meeting to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the UN

Statement by H.E. the President of Cyprus

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New York, 21 September 2020

On its 75th anniversary, the United Nations continues to be indispensable, remaining the cornerstone of international cooperation for collective security, the peaceful settlement of disputes and the protection of universal human rights.

The *raison d'être* of the United Nations is as pertinent as ever: Saving humanity from the scourge of war.

But this can only be materialized if we uphold both the prohibition of the threat or use of force and the system of collective security created to suppress acts of aggression, in full respect to the principle of sovereign equality of all states.

This is the most fundamental tenet of the UN's existence, as well as the measure of its relevance and effectiveness.

At the same time, the UN is inextricably linked to the plight and aspiration of all our citizens for a better and just World.

This is also the spirit of the ambitious Political Declaration we adopted today.

But words matter only to the extent that they are matched by action.

We would have expected by now to have a more equal and more humane world, without armed conflicts, violation of the sovereignty and the exercise of sovereign rights of nations, forced migration, inequality, destruction of cultural heritage or proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

To this end, today's occasion provides us with an opportunity for reflection and self-criticism and we should not shy away from acknowledging our shortcomings, as this is the only way to address them.

From our perspective, we would single out two of the biggest challenges we face:

We finally need to adhere to the founding principles of the Charter which is to come closer to interstate conduct that is rules-based, rather than power-based. This is the only way to achieve genuine accountability and eliminate double standards.

Small states continue to be at the mercy of powerful ones, which face no consequences for wrongful and illegal acts, despite the rules elaborated by the international community.

My own country, Cyprus, still suffering from the consequences of the illegal Turkish invasion of 1974, now suffers a new Turkish invasion within its territorial waters, whilst facing threats for the opening of the fenced city of Varosha, in violation of the relevant Security Council Resolutions.

We do count and rely on the UN Secretary – General and all UN members for the protection of our independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, in line with international law, including the Charter and relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

The second challenge is the existential threat of climate change. Some of our countries may become uninhabitable in the near future, despite their limited contribution to the phenomenon.

There can be no opt-outs from collective, decisive, and immediate action.

Our message to the world today, but also our promise to one another, should be that the United Nations has proven vital and irreplaceable, but there is no room for complacency, as new threats keep emerging before we have dealt with the old ones.

A strong, resilient and reformed United Nations is the best investment we can make for us and for future generations.

Thank you.