



# General Assembly

Seventy-sixth session

**1**<sup>st</sup> plenary meeting  
Tuesday, 14 September 2021, 3.50 p.m.  
New York

Official Records

*President:* Mr. Shahid ..... (Maldives)

*The meeting was called to order at 3.50 p.m.*

## Item 1 of the provisional agenda

### Opening of the session by the President of the General Assembly

**The President:** It is my great pleasure and honour to declare open the seventy-sixth regular session of the General Assembly and call to order its first plenary meeting.

## Item 2 of the provisional agenda

### Minute of silent prayer or meditation

**The President:** In accordance with rule 62 of the rules of procedure, I invite representatives to stand and observe one minute of silent prayer or meditation.

*The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silent prayer or meditation.*

### Statement by the President

**The President** (*spoke in Dhivehi; translation provided by the Secretariat*): I stand in this Hall today, after taking oath of office as President of the United Nations General Assembly, humbled by the trust and the responsibilities that have been entrusted to me. I am also thankful for the honour that has been bestowed on my beloved country, the Republic of Maldives. The red, green and white flag of the Maldives is flying at the highest peak today. Because of the brave sacrifices of the national heroes who have preceded us and the sacrifice of our courageous citizens today, the Maldives

is at the pinnacle of international diplomacy. My first responsibility at this time is to thank Almighty Allah for bestowing this honour on the Maldives.

Today, we are witnessing the advances the Maldives is making internationally, under the leadership of President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih. This is proof that the world has accepted President Solih's foreign policy, and it is proof of the close relationship the Maldives enjoys with the international community today. The seeds that we, Maldivians, have sowed so diligently are growing into bountiful fields.

(*spoke in English*)

I commend President Bozkır for his stewardship during the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly. Navigating the workings of the General Assembly during a pandemic was no easy task. I know I speak on behalf of the members of this august body when I express appreciation and gratitude for his fortitude and determination. His championing of in-person diplomacy and for a re-opened United Nations General Assembly is testament to his commitment to multilateralism. I wish him all the best and the best of luck in his future endeavours.

I look forward to working closely with Secretary-General Guterres as he begins his second term. I am aware of his priorities: restoring trust and inspiring hope. The underlying thread in his approach to solving global issues is prevention in all its aspects — from conflict, climate change and pandemics to poverty and inequality. Whether it is prioritizing gender parity within the United Nations or launching a global

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conversation on building a better future for all or improving the United Nations response to current and future challenges, he will find in me a willing partner.

To say that it has been a challenging 18 months would be an understatement. Millions have perished, hundreds of millions have been ill, and billions have suffered. But I want to avoid listing statistics. We did not experience this pandemic in numbers. We experienced it on a personal level: We lost loved ones. Lockdowns restricted our personal freedom. We were distanced from our family and friends. Hospitals were overwhelmed. Frontline workers were exhausted and at risk. So many lost jobs, suffered and continue to suffer economic hardship. And each of us lived with constant fear for ourselves and our loved ones.

Every one of us experienced the pandemic differently. But some elements have been near-universal: anxiety, insecurity, grief and hopelessness. And it is not just a question of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Every day we hear more and more news that ignites our collective anxiety: climate change, disasters, conflict and instability. These issues dominate the airwaves. The narrative must change. And we must be the initiators of this change.

People look to their leaders and elected officials for guidance, for assurance, for signs that things will get better, that tomorrow will indeed be better. The General Assembly must play a part in this. The peoples of the world may not know the specifics or the details of resolutions and decisions we adopt in this Hall, but they know what we stand for. The very mention of the United Nations conjures up images of world leaders standing before the world, standing against this green marble backdrop. To billions of people, the United Nations represents an ideal or an aspiration. It represents a promise of a better future.

While the pandemic unleashed an unprecedented crisis, we have witnessed incredible acts of kindness and compassion, acts that reaffirmed our common humanity and collective strength as nations united. Let us draw upon that collective humanity now.

I have embraced hope as the theme of my presidency. I am not naïve, nor do I say this just to use nice-sounding words. I say this because I believe that this is what this moment in time calls for. Hope is never overrated or cliché — those are the words of cynics. Hope is what drives us not to give up, even when the odds seem high.

We place our hope in humankind, because at the end of the day, that is all there is.

We are 7 billion people on this planet. All we have is our common humanity. All we have is hope that we can find in ourselves the courage and the motivation to push forward. This is the narrative we must tell. We must stand before our 7 billion constituents and demonstrate to them that we are aware of their plight and their anxiety, that we are listening, that we are willing to work together to overcome those problems, that the United Nations is as relevant to today's crisis as it was 76 years ago, in the aftermath of the Second World War.

I promised members five rays of hope. On recovering from COVID-19, vaccinating the world is my top focus. We simply must close the gap to vaccine access. With this in mind, I will be holding a high-level thematic debate on vaccine equity with leading experts and world leaders. As members are all aware, our host country has made vaccines universally available to the whole United Nations family, including staff and delegation members. I am glad to announce that the city of New York will also be offering vaccination and testing resources for all the attendees of the high-level week. I urge everyone to be an example to the world and do our part in following local requirements.

On my second ray of hope — rebuilding sustainably from the pandemic — I will work with the Economic and Social Council, the United Nations system and international financial institutions to help ensure that the socioeconomic recovery is forward-thinking and that it is bluer, greener and more resilient. Discussions on joint efforts are already under way. Targeted interventions for countries in special situations will be a necessity. The fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, to be held in Doha in January 2022, will be an avenue towards this objective. The ongoing discussions on the multidimensional vulnerability index will be another. And as promised, in the next few days, I will also announce the reconstituted advisory board for the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.

On responding to the needs of the planet, during this “super-session for nature”, I will convene a high-level climate change event in October, prior to the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate

Change. The goal is to galvanize our collective ambition and push for concrete actions that deliver change. And towards the end of the seventy-sixth session, I will hold a high-level thematic debate on the efforts needed to address the interlocking challenges facing our environment.

Such an appreciation of the interconnected world we live in is important. Respecting the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family will lie at the heart of every process that we as States Members of the United Nations embark on during this seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly.

On gender issues, I intend to reconstitute the Advisory Group on Gender Equality. I also would like to repeat my earlier pledge: that I will only participate on those panels that are gender balanced. I have also made training courses on gender equality and on the prevention of sexual harassment mandatory for all of my staff. I call on each member that has not already done so to undertake similar initiatives and become gender champions in their own right. Please join me in this endeavour.

Youth participation in decision-making is also an important priority for me. Members are already aware of my decision to launch the President of the General Assembly Youth Fellowship Programme, which will be a signature initiative to empower youth. By offering opportunities to young diplomats and civil servants from underrepresented countries, we will strengthen the global multilateral system and open doors for youth. I thank Member States that have already contributed towards this Fellowship. I invite all other Member States to also invest in the future of multilateralism.

And, finally, on United Nations reform and revitalization, we must once again make the United Nations a forum for all — a forum of “We the Peoples”. To achieve this, I will work on enhancing the participation of civil society organizations. I will engage regularly with civil society and youth through town halls and engagements with both civil society organizations and young people.

I promised an Office that is gender balanced, multinational and geographically diverse. I am proud to announce that my team, including my senior Cabinet, is gender balanced. The median age of my Office is 40 — just a tiny bit younger than me. My office includes

representation from over 30 countries, representing all five regional groups.

Yes, it has been a tragic and challenging year. But this is a new session. We can fall back on the comfort and predictability of systems and procedures of the United Nations machinery that fills our days, or we can choose to push forward and turn the page. We can choose to write a new chapter. Let us choose the latter. Let us dare to dream, and let us dare to hope and embrace the presidency of hope.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres.

**The Secretary-General:** It is a pleasure to join everyone again for the opening of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly.

Let me start by warmly congratulating His Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid of the Maldives on his election. His long-standing diplomatic experience, including as Minister for Foreign Affairs, will serve him well in his new role. And coming from the Maldives, he brings a fresh perspective on the unique experience of small island States. I look forward to working in close collaboration with President Shahid to serve and support countries during this extraordinary moment in time and to live up to the great promise and potential of the multilateral system and the United Nations. He can count on the full support and partnership of the United Nations family as he carries out the important work of the General Assembly.

*(spoke in French)*

This spirit of partnership, of uniting for a common cause, is at the very heart of our Organization’s work, and that spirit is more important than ever. We are meeting at a time of great challenge and division, of conflict and climate change, of rising poverty, exclusion and inequality, and of a pandemic that continues to threaten lives, livelihoods and futures.

These problems are compounded by the divisions that fracture our world, by the gaps between rich and poor; between those who take for granted basic services — nutrition, running water, access to health care — and those for whom these essential services are a distant dream; between those who have access to a classroom and the skills to build a better future and those who are denied that opportunity because of poverty or gender; and between those who can benefit

from a life-saving vaccine against the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and those who cannot.

*(spoke in English)*

These challenges and divisions are not a force of nature. They are human-made — by economic systems stacked against the poorest and most vulnerable, by unchecked greed that is destroying our planet, by the lingering scars of colonialism that have never fully healed, and by thirst for political and ideological dominance that fuels social unrest, mistrust, terrorism and armed conflicts. But these challenges and divisions can also be corrected, if we come together, now, as a human family, if we unite behind our work here in this Hall and gather around the spirit of multilateralism that brings it to life, and if we get serious about translating rhetoric into results for the most vulnerable.

Because, as COVID-19 and climate change are proving every day, challenges and threats are borderless. They affect us all. Before the pandemic struck, the world was off-track in terms of meeting many of the Sustainable Development Goals. COVID-19 has placed our goals even further out of reach.

We must accelerate. We need to speed up our response to COVID-19, with vaccines, treatment and equipment for all — not only those with the most. We need to invest in all of the systems that support human development — health care, nutrition, water, education and protection — and full equality for girls and women. We need countries to commit to living up to bold climate targets at the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in Glasgow. The war on our planet must end.

The wars on each other need to end too. It is time to focus on fighting humankind's common enemy: the pandemic. The members of the General Assembly must speak with one voice: we need peace now.

Throughout this work, we need to recommit to the values that have animated the United Nations from day one: human rights, supporting the most vulnerable, peace through dialogue, and solidarity in the face of challenges that threaten us all. We are in this Hall today — all of us — because we believe in these values and because we believe a better world is possible.

Over the next year, every day, let us keep this better world in view. Let us live and breathe our values in the General Assembly and across our work. And let us

prove — not through our words, but through our actions and collaboration — that multilateralism is the only pathway to a better future for all.

The entire Secretariat is at President Shahid's disposal. We look forward to working closely with him, and the General Assembly, during the seventy-sixth session.

**The President:** I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

### **Item 142 of the provisional agenda**

#### **Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations**

##### **Letter from the Secretary-General (A/76/318)**

**The President:** I should like, in keeping with established practice, to invite the attention of the General Assembly to document A/76/318, which contains a letter from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly, in which he informs the Assembly that three Member States are in arrears in the payment of their financial contributions to the United Nations within the terms of Article 19 of the Charter. I would like to remind delegations that, under Article 19 of the Charter,

“A Member of the United Nations which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions to the Organization shall have no vote in the General Assembly if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of the contributions due from it for the preceding two full years. The General Assembly may, nevertheless, permit such a Member to vote if it is satisfied that the failure to pay is due to conditions beyond the control of the Member.”

May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of the information contained in document A/76/318?

*It was so decided.*

### **Item 3 of the provisional agenda**

#### **Credentials of representatives to the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly**

##### **(a) Appointment of the members of the Credentials Committee**

**The President:** Rule 28 of the rules of procedure provides that the General Assembly at the beginning

of each session shall appoint, on the proposal of the President, a Credentials Committee consisting of nine members.

Accordingly, it is proposed that, for the seventy-sixth session, the Credentials Committee should consist of the following Member States: the Bahamas, Bhutan, Chile, China, Namibia, the Russian Federation, Sierra Leone, Sweden and the United States of America.

May I take it that the States that I have just mentioned are hereby appointed members of the Credentials Committee?

*It was so decided.*

**The President:** Delegations are reminded that credentials should be submitted to the Office of Legal Affairs. Additional details are available in the informational note contained in document A/INF/76/4/Rev.1.

#### **Items 7 and 141 of the provisional agenda**

#### **Organization of work of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly**

##### **Pattern of conferences**

##### **Letter from the Chair of the Committee on Conferences (A/76/316)**

**The President:** The Assembly will now turn its attention to document A/76/316 containing a letter dated 7 September 2021 from the Chair of the Committee on

Conferences addressed to the President of the General Assembly. Members are aware that, pursuant to section 1, paragraph 7 of Assembly resolution 40/243 of 18 December 1985, no subsidiary organ of the General Assembly should be permitted to meet at United Nations Headquarters during the main part of a regular session of the Assembly, unless explicitly authorized by the Assembly.

In this regard, authorization is sought for the following organs or entities: the Open-ended working group on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies (2021-2025); the Independent Audit Advisory Committee; the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People; the Committee on Relations with the Host Country; and the States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to authorize those organs or entities to meet during the main part of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly, on the strict understanding that all such meetings would be allocated conference services on an "if available" basis, from within existing resources, in such a way as to ensure that the work of the General Assembly and its Main Committees is not impeded?

*It was so decided.*

*The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.*