

United Nations: A Symbol of Universality *

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Oct. 24 is the **United Nations Day** since 1945 when the **Charter of the United Nations**, the birth certificate of the world organization, entered into force. This year, the day is celebrated under **unprecedented circumstances**.

The COVID-19 pandemic is extending around the globe, affecting every continent and state, people, all areas of life and professional activities. Multilateral diplomacy under the auspices of the UN system is functioning mostly online. **UN Secretary-General António Guterres** in his message on the UN Day said: *"We face colossal challenges. With global solidarity and cooperation, we can overcome them. That's what the United Nations is all about."*

During these exceptional times the fundamental question to be asked by the 193 member states of the world organization is: **What next?** A multitude of answers have been advanced during the 75th general debate of the UN General Assembly last month. A common note of all answers was the conviction that an **effective global response can only come from all UN members working together**. We will evoke in these pages some selected answers from the UN general debate for their obvious relevance and their future-oriented substance. We will respect the original terminology used in the national statements delivered online by a number of world leaders.

Indonesia, the biggest member of ASEAN, asserted last month that the UN should continue to improve itself through reforms, revitalization and efficiency and to prove that multilateralism delivers, especially during the time of crisis. The UN is not a mere building in the city of New York. It represents an ideal and shared commitment of all nations to realize world peace and prosperity for future generations. **Multilateralism is the only way that could guarantee equality.**

In **Thailand's** opinion, the UN has symbolized solidarity and cooperation and has inspired the world's humanity to trust in the unity of purpose of its member states in building peace and well-being for all people on earth. Every country must renew its trust in international cooperation, which must remain steadfast and not be shaken by nationalist sentiments or anti-globalization tendencies. Instead, it should **motivate all countries to unite as one to overcome the COVID-19 together.**

In **India's** view, a country with 1.3 billion people, in an objective assessment of the UN performance over the last 75 years, *"we see several stellar achievements. But at the same time, there are also several instances that point to the need for a serious introspection of the UN work. One could say that we have successfully avoided a third*

World War. But we cannot deny that there have been several wars, and many more civil wars." In the same Indian statement it was reminded: *"Over the last 8 to 9 months, the whole world has been battling the pandemic of the COVID-19. Where is the UN in this joint fight against the pandemic? Where is its effective response?"* It should be recalled that in the mid-1950s, **Jawaharlal Nehru**, then Prime Minister of India, advanced a future-oriented doctrine of world security. He held that employing diplomacy in accord with the **"Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence"**, governments could establish *"areas of peace"* and achieve *"collective peace"*.

For a realistic answer we will quote **Angelo Baracca**, university professor and nuclear physics scientist from Italy. In an article entitled *"The Precipitous Barbarization of Our Times"* he noticed that war became the means to conquer and/or control the strategic areas of the Planet. Such a practice is *"violating international law and ethics. International organizations are abdicating their basic role."* His conclusion is a prophetic one: *"The barbarization of international relations must be absolutely stopped, before it becomes too late. This new century must develop and adopt a new renaissance, based on justice and civil growth, the freeing from the dominance of pure economic interests and profit, and the overcoming of wild liberalism."*

What could be the UN role in this complex and responsible process as an **institutional antidote to barbarization**, a concept already used in diplomatic vocabulary? Many academics and diplomats deem the **UN is fading into irrelevance**.

Sensitive to this reality, Finland observed that *"precisely when the demand for global solutions is rising, our ability to provide them is weakening. Multilateralism suffers from inward-looking nationalism and great-power competition alike. The institutions we have built together over decades are under growing pressure. International agreements, norms and principles are increasingly challenged and interpreted in ways which weaken both their potential and their legitimacy"*.

Many countries declared that at 75 years of age, the **Charter of the United Nations**, a treaty in force, remains a **remarkable blueprint for a peaceful world**. But an imperative condition has to be materialized. In accordance with Article 2 of the UN Charter, *"All Members, in order to ensure to all of them the rights and benefits resulting from membership, shall fulfill in good faith the obligations assumed by them."*

In its essence, this is an institutional expression of the fundamental principle *Pacta sunt servanda*, or agreements must be kept. However, the fulfillment of that condition is itself dependent on global solidarity as a universal value proclaimed by the UN on Sept. 8, 2000 in the **UN Millennium Declaration** and frequently recalled during the current times of global vulnerabilities, perplexities and discontinuities. UN started its existence with 51 founding members and with its current composition of 193 members has reached its **quantitative universality**.

As a center of human family, it has to demonstrate genuine diplomatic maturity in giving tangibility to global solidarity. Thus, a giant step could be realized toward an authentic qualitative universality which still **remains an ideal on the waiting list**. Finally, all UN member states must be committed to the *"Declaration on the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the UN"*. Adopted by consensus on Sept. 21, a programmatic document

which states *inter alia* that “The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us in the most powerful way that we are closely interconnected and only as strong as our weakest link. Only by working together and in solidarity can we end the pandemic and effectively tackle its consequences. Only together can we build resilience against future pandemics and other global challenges. **Multilateralism is not an option but a necessity** as we build back better for a more equal, more resilient and more sustainable world. The United Nations must be at the center of our efforts”.

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