

PGA speech addressing the 6th committee
Friday, 13 October 2023, 10:00 am, Trusteeship Council Chamber

Your Excellency, Ambassador Suriya Chindawongse, Permanent Representative of Thailand,

Members of the Bureau,

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

I extend my sincere congratulations to you, Chair, and to the other Bureau Members on your deserved election to steer the work of the Sixth Committee during the 78th Session.

As I join you today, I want to underscore that our joint mission is of extraordinary importance as it constitutes the very essence of the United Nations in the pursuit of peace, justice and the rule of law.

The work of the Sixth Committee is central to upholding these principles as we strive to ensure that the international legal framework remains **robust and adaptable** to the evolving needs of our temporarily beleaguered multilateral system.

In view of the unprecedented daunting challenges before us – from the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic; the deepening climate crisis to the vicious cycle of conflicts around the world – the work of the Sixth Committee, in producing stability, clarity and predictability, is more critical than ever.

But the sad situation in the Middle East, Africa and elsewhere including in Haiti, does serve as a reminder to all of us that we cannot simply continue to take peace for granted – but rather, we need to invest more to achieve and indeed, sustain it.

I am nevertheless convinced that, while today’s challenges are greater, so too is our collective capacity to surmount them, and to bring about transformational change that meaningfully benefits sustainable development.

Peace and justice must be attained comprehensively, everywhere and for everyone.

Our collective aim to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war – as espoused in the UN Charter – remains our most urgent and pressing ideal to achieve and thus must remain the centerpiece of our work.

Likewise, the myriad of challenges emerging from risk and loss due to the devastating impacts of **climate change** must also remain a “core” focus of our efforts.

The Sixth Committee’s deliberations on the **Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters** and other related issues are therefore particularly important in this context.

Inevitably connected to this reality is the real existential threat posed by **sea-level rise** – an issue that imperils several of the membership and is a key priority during my Presidency.

The 2023 synthesis report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) **unequivocally** demonstrates that inconsiderate human activity has significantly over-heated the atmosphere, oceans and land.

Global mean sea level increased to **3.7 mm per year** between 2006 and 2018, compared to the much lower levels in the decades before.

While the International Law Commission is still considering the topic of sea-level rise, it is incumbent upon the Sixth Committee to also continue discussions on the legal implications of this phenomenon.

It is not hyperbole to say that sea-level rise poses a serious existential threat to many Member States.

This is especially true for the SIDS, where fertile lands are being destroyed, millions of people are being forced to migrate or relocate, and imperative questions are emerging about the future of their statehood.

We therefore owe it to all those affected communities to ensure **predictability, sustainability, and security** amidst the climate crisis.

We must ensure that the General Assembly and its Main Committees – including the Sixth Committee – create adequate space to ponder over and address these vexing challenges, including the implications for international law.

With a view to giving impetus to this crucial dialogue, I will also convene an **informal plenary meeting on 3 November** featuring Member States and independent experts.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

Across the Sixth Committee's broad work programme – spanning criminal accountability over crimes against humanity to measures to eliminate international terrorism – I implore Member States to uphold the values and principles of UN Charter; and to ensure the full respect for international law at every step and throughout your deliberations.

The scourge of terrorism continues to spread across the world, and it must be countered – in all its forms and manifestations – domestically and through cross-border coordination.

I therefore urge the Committee to help to establish the conditions under which justice and respect for international obligations, arising from

treaties and other sources of international law are maintained and honoured.

It behooves us to agree clear and practical rules.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

In each of my statements to the main committees, of which this is the sixth and final, I have raised the issue of programme planning. As you would recall, this year the Committee for Programme and Coordination was not able to agree on 10 programmes, which were subsequently referred to the Main Committees. I understand that this has been dealt with by the Committee already, and a letter from the chair has already been conveyed to the Chair of the Fifth Committee.

In this regard, the Sixth Committee's habit of seeking consensus-based solutions – even in difficult times – is admirable. I urge all delegations to engage in that spirit of consensus-building throughout the Session.

As an anchor of our multilateral system, consensus is especially important as it reflects the principle of sovereign equality of States wherein all perspectives – including the voices of the most countries in vulnerable situations – are heard and accommodated to the extent possible.

Your hard work and unwavering commitment to the cause of justice and peace will go a long way towards attaining **prosperity, progress, and sustainability** for all.

I wish you a productive and successful session.

I thank you.