

2022 Speech - France



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| Speech | It is an honour for me to speak before the Assembly on behalf of France. At this point in time, I am thinking of those who have fought in my country and everywhere in the world for France to be free. I am also thinking of those for whom, in the past, the fate of Europe was a matter of concern, whether they came from Africa, Asia, Oceania or America, because a part of their freedom and the future of the world was at stake. I am thinking of those who wrote our Charter and built the walls of the Organization to avert the worst, which occurred twice in the twentieth century, bringing untold sorrow to all of humankind. |

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or lasting centre of power than that where the nations come together to make decisions sovereignly. It tells us that the universality of our Organization serves no hegemony or geopolitical oligarchy. Yet, this legacy, our Organization, along with our choices as nations, are today facing a choice.

We have one simple choice to make today, and that is the choice between war and peace. On 24 February, Russia, a permanent member of the Security Council, fractured our collective security with an act of aggression, invasion and annexation. It deliberately violated the Charter of the United Nations and the principle of the sovereign equality of States. On 16 March, the International Court of Justice stated that Russia's aggression was illegal and demanded that Russia withdraw. Russia decided, with that action, to pave the way for other wars of annexation, today in Europe, but perhaps tomorrow in Asia, Africa or Latin America.

We may say whatever we like today. I have heard a number of discussions and a number of statements. However, I am certain of one thing. Right now, as I speak, there are Russian troops in Ukraine and, to my knowledge, there are no Ukrainian troops in Russia. That is an irrefutable fact that we must all accept. The longer this war lasts, the more it threatens peace in Europe and peace in the world. It will lead us towards broader, enduring conflict, where everyone's sovereignty and security will be determined solely by power struggles, the size of armies, the solidity of alliances and the intentions of armed groups and militias, and where those who see themselves as strong seek to subjugate those they consider to be weak, using all possible means.

What we have been witnessing since 24 February is a return to the age of imperialism and colonies. France refuses to accept that and will determinedly seek peace. In that regard, our position is clear, and it is in supporting this position that I have pursued dialogue with Russia – even before war broke out – throughout these past months. And I will continue to do so because that is how we will seek peace together. We are seeking peace through initiatives undertaken in the years and months prior to the conflict in order to avert it. We have been seeking peace since 24 February through the humanitarian, economic and military support that we

have provided the Ukrainian people to exercise their legitimate right to self-defence and safeguard their freedom. We have been seeking peace

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committed by Russia on Ukrainian soil, and through our rejection of impunity. The international justice system should establish the crimes and try the perpetrators. We are seeking peace, lastly, through our will to curb the geographic spread and intensity of the war. It is up to us in that regard to support the efforts of the International Atomic Energy Agency to prevent the war's consequences for nuclear safety and security, as we will do in the future alongside Ukrainians whose sovereignty over their plants is not up for discussion. We managed to have an Agency mission visit the plant and draw up a report independently. Let us work together to prevent the risk of an accident that would have devastating consequences.

All of us here today know that peace can be restored only with an agreement that complies with international law. Negotiations will be possible only if, sovereignly, Ukraine wants them and Russia agrees to them in good faith. We all know too that negotiations will be successful only if Ukraine's sovereignty is respected, its territory liberated and its security protected. Russia now needs to understand that it cannot impose its will through military means, even by cynically accompanying them with sham referendums in the territories that have been bombarded and now occupied. It is up to the members of the Security Council to state that loud and clear, and to the members of the Assembly to support us on this path to peace.

From this rostrum, I call on the States Members of the United Nations to take action to persuade Russia to renounce its choice of war, assess the cost for itself and all of us and end its aggression. It is not a question of taking sides between the East or the West or between the North or South. We are talking about the responsibility of all those who are committed to respect for the Charter and to our most precious good — peace — because beyond war, there is a risk of global division due to the direct and indirect consequences of the conflict.

I know that many here in the Assembly are harbouring a sense of injustice with regard to the dire energy, food and economic consequences of Russia's war. I also know that some countries represented here have remained neutral with regard to this war. I want to say to tell them as clearly as possible today that those who wish to take up the cause of the non-aligned by refusing to express themselves clearly are mistaken and bear a historic responsibility. The cause of the non-aligned used to be a cause for peace. The cause of the non-aligned used to be on behalf of the

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today, in spite of themselves — or secretly with a degree of complicity — further the cause of a new imperialism, of a modern cynicism that breaks up our international order, without which peace is not possible.

Russia is working to implant the idea today of a double standard, but the war in Ukraine should not be a conflict that leaves anyone feeling indifferent. It is close to Europeans who have chosen to support Ukraine without entering into war with Russia. It feels farther away for many States represented here, but we have all felt the direct consequences of it and we all have a role to play to end this war because we are all paying its price. Because of its very foundations, this war launched by Russia flouts the principles at the heart of our Organization. It flouts the principles of the only international order possible, the only order that can guarantee peace — respect for national sovereignty and the inviolability of borders.

In that regard, let us not conflate causes and consequences. Who here can defend the idea that the invasion of Ukraine does not warrant punishment? Who here could consider that, on the day on which something similar is done to them by a more powerful neighbour, the silence of the region and the world would be the best response? Who can support that? Who can believe that it would suffice for Russia to win this war so that we could move on to something else? Nobody. Contemporary imperialism is not European or Western. It takes the form of a territorial invasion backed by a globalized hybrid war that uses energy prices, food security, nuclear safety, access to information and movements of people as weapons to divide and destroy. That is how this war is undermining the sovereignty of us all.

France will therefore stand with the free peoples of the United Nations to address the consequences of the conflict and all the inequalities that it is exacerbating by challenging bloc geopolitics and exclusive alliances because, beyond the direct consequences of the war, the risk we are now facing is that of a new partitioning of the world. Some would have us believe that there is the

West on one side that will defend outmoded values to serve its interests, and that on the other side there is the rest of the world that has suffered so much and seeks to cooperate by supporting the war or by looking the other way. I object to that division for at least two reasons.

The first is a question of principle, as I mentioned earlier. Our Organization

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Our Organization has universal values and the division in the face of the war in Ukraine is simple. Are members for or against the law of the strongest, non-respect for the territorial integrity of countries and national sovereignty? Are members for or against impunity? I cannot imagine any international order or lasting peace that is not based on respect for peoples and the principle of responsibility. Therefore, yes, our values are universal and that is why they can never serve a Power that violates these principles. And when we have taken liberties with these same values in recent years, we have been wrong to do so, but that cannot under any circumstances justify trampling on what we collectively built after the Second World War.

I hear Russia say that it is ready to work on new cooperation and a new international order, without hegemony. That is great, but on what principles is that new order based? Invading a neighbour? Not respecting borders of those I do not like? What is that order? Who is hegemonic today if not Russia? What is being proposed to us? What is being sold to us? What dream is being sold on the good faith of some of us here today? Nothing that lasts for long. Let us not give into the cynicism that is breaking up the order that we have built and that alone has enabled us to maintain international stability. These values – respect for national sovereignty, the integrity of borders – are our values. I reiterate that we were wrong every time we took liberties with them, but they are the values that we built after the Second World War, after colonialism. Let us refuse to have history falter under the pretext that today it is other geographic regions that are affected. Let us not give in.

The second reason I object to this attempt to partition the world is pragmatic. Behind the emerging divisions, there is an attempt to partition the world in a way that ramps up tension between the United States and China. I believe this is a disastrous mistake for us all because it would not be a new Cold War. Several powers of disorder and imbalance are taking advantage of this period to multiply regional conflicts, return to the path of nuclear proliferation and reduce collective security. I therefore believe that we must do everything we can to ensure that this new division does not happen because our challenges are growing in number and urgency and require new cooperation.

Let us look at Pakistan. A third of the country has been flooded. There are more than 1,400 dead, 1,300 injured and millions of people in emergency

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Half of humankind now lives in a climate danger zone. Our ecosystems are reaching the point of no return. Let us look at Somalia, Yemen, South Sudan and Afghanistan. Famine is returning. The food crisis is affecting everywhere, and the most vulnerable are hardest hit. Around the world, 345 million people, including 153 million children, are experiencing acute hunger. There are currently 55 civil wars being waged on our planet. There are 100 million displaced persons. While between 1990 and 2015, 137,000 people escaped extreme poverty every day, by 2030 some 345 million in conflict-affected countries could slip back into it.

The most vulnerable people are always the hardest hit by crises, climate disruption, pandemics and rising food prices. These threats are all still present, while in addition terrorism, among other areas, is affecting the Sahel and the Middle East. There is nuclear proliferation in Iran and North Korea, which we have not managed to curb. These are the emergencies facing us. As time is short, the description I have just given is not exhaustive, but these emergencies are each either the result of deep-rooted flaws in our international system, which was able to reap the benefits of globalization but failed to contain its divisions, threats and imbalances, or the result of divisions among us.

Our shared responsibility is to work to help the most vulnerable, those most affected by all these challenges. As Mr. Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, rightly said, now is not the time for war. Nor is it time for revenge on the West, or for Western opposition to the rest of the world. It is time for sovereign, equal countries to work together on today's challenges. That is why we must urgently create a new contract between North and South, an effective, respectful contract on food, climate and biodiversity, and education. The time for bloc thinking has passed. It is now time to build specific action coalitions and reconcile legitimate interests and the common good.

To address the global food crisis, France has doubled its contributions to the World Food Programme. Along with the European Union, we established solidarity corridors that enabled the export by land of more than 10 million tons of grain since spring. The agreement brokered on 22 July complemented those efforts, thanks to the work of the Secretary-General, which led to the export of 2.4 million tons of grain through the Black Sea, a process that is ongoing.

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without political conditions, and to invest in agriculture in countries that would like to be self-sufficient. I would also like to announce that France will fund the export of Ukrainian wheat to Somalia, in partnership with the World Food Programme. We will do so with solidarity, efficiency and the required full transparency.

Tomorrow we will meet with the African Union, United Nations agencies, the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the European Commission to develop a mechanism that can ensure access to fertilizer for Africa, in support of the Secretary-General's initiatives in that regard.

With regard to climate and biodiversity, in a few weeks we will meet in Egypt for the twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Let us be clear here about what a just transition means. Our first collective fight is to eliminate coal. The crisis must not make us lose sight of that goal. Otherwise, we will exceed the predictions of a 2°C global temperature increase. I am prepared to invest in funding coalitions, as we did with South Africa a few months ago. We must continue along that path. However, China and the large emerging Powers must make a clear decision at COP. It is crucial.

Together with the large emerging Powers, we must build coalitions with State actors and our international financial institutions to develop comprehensive energy production solutions and effect changes to industrial production models, which alone can bring about that transition.

The Group of Seven must lead by example. The richest countries must accelerate their carbon neutrality programmes and must also make the effort to show restraint and share green technologies. Members know that they can count on the European Union in that area.

I also believe that we must acknowledge that it is challenging for the poorest countries to take simultaneous steps to fight poverty and accelerate the transition. We cannot ask the same of both sub-Saharan Africa, where 100 million people remain without access to electricity, and the largest emitters. That is why the richest countries must strengthen their financial and technological solidarity with the poorest countries on climate issues. We must provide funding and solutions and accelerate that agenda, as we were able to do during the pandemic, and we must do in a

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Costa Rica, France will host the 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference. Let us make it the COP21 for oceans.

With regard to health, we must learn from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. We must recognize that health systems and personnel are our first line of defence in the most vulnerable countries. I will underscore that crucial point during the seventh Replenishment Conference of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, to which France remains one of the principal contributors. We must also ensure that the World Health Organization establishes early-warning systems to prevent the spread of other viruses. We must address human and animal health together. That is the key objective of the One Health Initiative, led by France, in coordination with several other countries.

As with the Global Partnership for Education, we must continue our efforts so that children can attend school after the pandemic prevented them from doing so. It means addressing the root of the problem, combating all inequalities and working towards our common future.

As members can see, more cooperation and partnerships among stakeholders in the North and the South must be developed in all areas. Greater commitment is needed from our major institutions. All of that is the opposite of division. Who was there during the pandemic? Who proposed funding for the climate transition? It is not those who now propose a new international order but had no vaccines that worked. It is not those who did not show solidarity and contributed nothing to help mitigate climate issues. Those are the challenges that affect us all. We must demonstrate greater solidarity and engage in more cooperation, but

under no circumstances should we yield to siren calls that lead nowhere.

To that end, we must also be clear about the situation in the poorest countries and the middle-income countries – whether in Africa, South America, Asia or the Pacific. The pandemic has increased inequalities. The war and its consequences have increased the number of challenges for several countries. The Group of 20 (G-20) must therefore absolutely adhere to last year's goal to mobilize \$100 billion from special drawing rights, but we must do more, above all with respect to the IMF's special drawing rights allocations.

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by a Parliament or being prevented by some rule. That cannot happen. It will be too late. We must do more because the challenges are even greater. We must increase our special drawing rights allocation to 30 per cent for the most vulnerable African countries and the poorest countries in the world. Along with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, we must recommit our mechanisms, which are no longer adapted to the current context.

The rules in use today are those from the 1980s. The situation in our post-COVID-19 world – increased climate deregulation, the loss of biodiversity, imbalances created by the war – call for greater solidarity. We need a new financial compact with the South. That is where we must act. That is what should bring us together, not to fight a common enemy or to refute false narratives or historical revisionism, but to protect the planet on which we all live and for equal opportunities for all.

The fight is our fight. It brings us all together. We simply need to make a little more effort to adhere to our agreements and respect one another. This is the true fight. If we are not able to fight together, it will be the cause of all division and conflicts in the future.

I invite all those who wish to build that new compact with us to the Paris Peace Forum, which will be held on 11 November, ahead of the G-20 meeting to be held in Bali. I invite them to move forward with us without relinquishing our common values and guiding principles. We must focus on essential matters and not give in to the world's divisions or increased threats to peace. We must not allow the number of crises, including those that cannot be resolved, to increase.

We cannot allow the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Those are all risks that we will not be able to manage in the future without involving the major Powers most directly concerned. It is precisely that effort to involve the major regional Powers that must be made in the Middle East, via a follow-up to the 2021 Baghdad conference, in order to ensure stability in Iraq, Lebanon and the entire region.

The five permanent members of the Security Council are no longer the only ones with something to say, and if they have something to say it is clear. That can work only if we are able to work more broadly to achieve the international consensus that is so necessary for peace. That is why I hope

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remains able to fully play its role by restricting the use of the right to the veto in cases of mass atrocities.

Together, we must build peace and contemporary international order to achieve the goals of the Charter of the United Nations. On that path, the United Nations can count fully on France. On that path, each country represented here can count on France.

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