

France in the United States

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Speech by M. Emmanuel Macron, President of the Republic (New York, September 25, 2024)

(Check against delivery)
President of the General Assembly,
Heads of State and government,
Ministers,
Ambassadors,

I am speaking here on behalf of a country that will never forget what nations are capable of when they are united: freedom. This year, France has paid tribute to the peoples of the Americas, Europe, Africa, Asia and Oceania who helped it free itself of the grip of the Nazis 80 years ago. Progress and peace.

Liberated, France and these peoples founded a community of free and sovereign States, capable to commit to one another and agree on the fundamentals.

Hope, like the hope saw recently during the Olympic and Paralympic Games that France hosted this summer in a setting of beauty, enthusiasm and concord between peoples.

Yet despite this euphoria, the Olympic truce, called for unanimously here, went unheeded. Yet the dangers of ineffectual words and powerless diplomacy are clear to see before us every day. Our organization is no doubt facing the greatest convergence of crises it has ever seen in the eight decades since its creation. The sense of a loss of control is growing in the context of wars, climate change, growing inequalities and injustice, and every day, humankind seems more and more fragmented at a time when the circumstances demand joint, strong and effective responses.

To restore to these two words, United Nations, their power of hope, we must come together, as we did before, on fundamentals. And that is what I wanted to say a few words about.

Firstly, and above all, we need to restore the terms of trust and respect between peoples, and I have seen them peter out in our debates. That means showing equal attention to those who are suffering.

I mentioned that here two years ago, rejecting the possibility of a double standard. A life is a life. The protection of civilians is a peremptory norm, and it must remain our north star as we mark the 75th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions this year. We must not allow the idea to creep in – even for a single moment – that those who have died in Ukraine are of concern to the Global North, while those who have died in Gaza are of concern to the Global South, and that those who have died because of conflicts in Sudan, the Great Lakes region or Myanmar are of concern to those – all too few – who are offended by their deaths.

Regaining control and restoring this trust therefore requires us to pursue peace everywhere, accepting no differences when the dignity of human life is at stake, accepting no differences when territorial integrity and the sovereignty of States are at stake. These conflicts are calling into question our very ability to ensure respect for the UN Charter. And when I see that some would offer peace on the condition of surrender, I am shocked that such an idea could even be voiced.

I want to reiterate here how essential the protection of civilians and of all humanitarian personnel, of all those who work to further our common values, is in each of these conflicts.

Next, we need to jointly address the major challenges of the two wars in Europe and the Middle East. Russia is waging a war of territorial conquest in Ukraine, violating the most fundamental principles of international relations. It is guilty of serious violations of law, ethics, and even honour. Nothing in what it is doing is in the common interest of nations, or of the particular responsibilities it holds in this organization. The fate of Ukraine will be decisive for peace and security in Europe and across the world. For who will continue to feel protected from their strongest, most violent, most rapacious neighbours, if we let Russia win as if it were a mere trifle? Nobody.

So it is truly in our common interest, the common interest of nations, to make sure that Ukraine's legitimate rights are restored as quickly as possible, and that a just and lasting peace is built. France will continue to do everything in its power to help Ukraine stand strong, escape danger and gain justice. France will continue to provide it with crucial equipment for its defence and, with its closest partners and allies, France will support the remarkable resistance of the Ukrainian people and commit to it winning lasting security. We must seek peace. France will join forces with all sincere partners to build a robust peace for Ukraine and for Europe.

I know that for many of you, what matters most is however elsewhere, in the terribly long list of forgotten wars, unjust victories and resolutions either poorly negotiated or sometimes never implemented. I have forgotten none, even if I cannot cite them all here. President Tshisekedi went just before me at this podium a moment ago. The situation in the Great Lakes region – which I will discuss with him and with President Kagame in a few days – is of concern to us. And France stands determinedly with Armenia, Prime Minister, in the face of

pressure from Azerbaijan and certain territories. The international community must be there to ensure the peace negotiations are fruitful and that internationally recognized borders are preserved.

But I know that for many of you, what matters most, above and beyond these wars, is also, and matters for us too, the situation in Gaza, where the fate of the Palestinian people, which looms over all our debates, is at stake.

On a subject as complex as this, I want to very clearly restate the position that France has held since day one. We strongly condemn the terrible, unprecedented terrorist attack against Israel that Hamas decided and carried out on 7 October. Terrorism is unacceptable, regardless of the causes, and we mourn the victims of the Hamas attacks on 7 October, which included 48 French citizens. I would like to express my thoughts of compassion and friendship to all the families living with the grief of losing children, parents or friends on 7 October. We also call, again, solemnly, for the release of the hostages. Several French citizens remain among them. And I would like to commend the efforts of the United States of America, Egypt and Qatar to obtain their release. That remains a priority for all of us.

In the face of this terrorist attack, Israel has the legitimate right to protect its citizens and to make sure that Hamas no longer has the means to attack it again. None of us would have suffered the attacks on 7 October without acting accordingly. That said, Israel's war in Gaza has gone on for too long. The tens of thousands of Palestinian civilian casualties cannot be justified or explained away. Too many innocent people have died and we mourn them as well. Those deaths, too, are an outrage for humanity and a dangerous source of hatred and resentment that threatens, and will continue to threaten, the security of everyone in the future, including Israel.

This war must therefore end and a ceasefire must be achieved as quickly as possible, along with the release of the hostages and a massive flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza. This has been our position since October 2023, as, with many of you who are here, we have pushed resolutions, and as we held the first Humanitarian Conference for Gaza in Paris in November. Today, this is a matter of political will, given the destruction of the military capabilities of Hamas. It is absolutely crucial for a new phase to begin in Gaza, for the weapons to fall silent, for humanitarian workers to return, and for civilian populations to be protected. France will take part in any plan that saves lives and ensures everyone's security. The deployment of an international mission must open the way for the implementation of the two-State solution. It is up to the UN Security Council to rule in this respect and steps also need to be taken without further delay to preserve the link between Gaza and the West Bank, to restore the functions of the Palestinian Authority and to enable the reconstruction of the territory – simply to make life possible there again.

France will work to ensure that everything possible is done to ensure that the Palestinians finally have their own State, existing side by side with Israel. The conditions for a just and lasting peace are well known. What's left is to create a pathway for it, one that must be as short as possible. France will therefore act in accordance with its commitment to the two-State solution and will revive its efforts to make that happen at last for the benefit of both peoples so that they can fulfil their legitimate aspirations – to bring about a Palestinian State, to provide Israel with all the necessary security guarantees, to ensure the mutual

recognitions and security guarantees for everyone in the region. In the coming weeks, we will work on this with the Israelis and Palestinians, and with all our regional and international partners.

In the immediate term, as we speak, the primary risk is escalation. My fraternal thoughts go out to Lebanon and its people. Hezbollah has for too long been taking the intolerable risk of dragging Lebanon into war. Israel, meanwhile, cannot extend its operations in Lebanon without consequences. France calls on all parties to respect their obligations along the Blue Line. We will therefore act to foster the emergence of an essential diplomatic path to spare civil populations and avert a regional explosion. There must not be and cannot be a war in Lebanon.

That is why we are forcefully calling on Israel to cease escalation in Lebanon and on Hezbollah to cease firing at Israel. We are forcefully calling on all those who provide them with the means to continue to cease doing so. We called for a meeting of the Security Council today for this purpose, which I welcome. And France's Minister will travel to Lebanon later this week.

This same unity needs to be shown when addressing the major regional challenges and global challenges we face. For above and beyond the conflicts we are seeing and that I just mentioned, we need to continue, together, to ensure respect for everyone's sovereignty and to build regional and international solutions to challenges. That is the meaning of the relationship we want with Africa, a new partnership, and that is what we have been working to do for the last two years. France has done a lot for the African continent in recent years, and a lot in recent decades, and particularly in the Sahel region, where the French armed forces have successfully fought terrorism alongside their regional and international partners.

Nevertheless, military coups in the region have led us to draw legitimate conclusions. But Europe and Africa face a shared destiny that will require a wide-ranging partnership. A partnership of peace and security that will involve renewed terms – more training, equipment, and mutual respect. A partnership founded also on the economy, energy, sport, culture and our collective memory.

With Benin, Senegal, Cameroon, Algeria, Morocco and many other countries, we have patiently worked on building that partnership in recent years and will continue to work to implement it. That is the same philosophy that, over the last six years, prompted us to create an unprecedented partnership with the Indo-Pacific region, where France aims to contribute to upholding international law, without which there can be no prosperity.

In this region, which has experienced exceptional growth in recent decades, some have been tempted to flout the rules or even impose their will by force. France proposes an alternative – not standing in for anyone, but so that States in the region can again choose their partners, project by project.

The French territories in the Indo-Pacific possess unique expertise in fighting climate change, protecting biodiversity, developing clean energy and combating transnational threats. In this area, our aim is to step up our cooperation with everyone in the region, in their environment. Indeed, the goal of this partnership-based approach is to build new balances, rejecting the fragmentation of the world and the old rulebook in favour of striving, with mutual respect, to build pathways to stability and peace.

Looking beyond, the challenge that we face – impacted by the conflicts that I just mentioned – is the risk of losing track of our multilateral agenda, losing the effectiveness to which we are committed. And after experiencing the pandemic, which so forcefully reminded us of the importance of some of these shared challenges, the risk of forgetting that we need to stay on that track. I sincerely believe that effective multilateralism has never been needed more and must produce results in terms of development and the fight against inequalities in education, health, the climate and biodiversity, and technology. In all of these areas, we must be united. And we also here need to do all we can to avoid division between the Global North and the Global South. This was the exact philosophy that we developed under the Paris Pact for Peoples and the Planet, which has now been joined by over 60 States.

First, we must ensure that we never push States to choose between their different goals. Why should States of the Global North lecture States of the Global South by telling them to protect the climate and, as a result, turn down economic opportunities? This means they would have to do what certain States in the North failed to do 20, 30 or 40 years ago; it is unacceptable, untenable. We therefore need to create an agenda that enables everyone to simultaneously progress in the fight against inequalities and in economic development for education, the climate and biodiversity, and global health.

Solutions should then be brought about and based on proposals made by the States themselves. That is, for example, what we have begun to build with our partnerships for just energy transitions. It is about not offering a one-size-fits-all solution for everyone, telling everyone else what to do from our capital cities, inspecting countries and asking them all to follow the same formula. Each country has its own path to follow – that is the key to sovereignty.

Secondly, a public financial shock and additional private leverage are required. That is what enabled us, three years ago, to work on expanding IMF special drawing rights and effectively reallocate almost \$100 billion's worth to the countries that need it most, particularly in Africa; a silent but essential revolution.

That is also why, on the basis of this Pact – we were just with a number of its members – and under the effective authority of President Macky Sall and with the support of the United Nations, the OECD and the organizations concerned, we want to pursue this series of reforms and radically reform multilateral banks and our financial institutions.

We launched this joint financing objective, bringing together development banks from all over the world, including those with differing agendas. We must work on this joint financing agenda in order to achieve the objectives that I just mentioned. And together we must, hopefully in the months to come, extensively reform the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund – firstly by renewing their members, as these institutions were created at a time when many of your countries had not yet achieved independence.

We need to renew the structure of this capital in order to enhance its strength. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were designed, planned and calibrated at a time of different challenges, when the world economy had not reached its current size, not to mention the population. We must remove ridiculous taboos and face the issues; for example, the obstacles sometimes implemented by the biggest players to prevent other

countries from paying in, for fear of diluting their power. We need to give these institutions the ability to act and finance the projects that the countries of the Global South need. This reform is crucial to our collective credibility.

I speak now to the richest States and those around the table alongside France. If you choose not to carry out this reform, you will see an alternative order emerge in the years to come. Others will rise, and they will not share your agenda. If you choose not to carry out this reform, you will be vilified and, perhaps rightly, accused of cynicism.

Reforming multilateral financing is essential to overcoming these challenges. We also need to pursue our agenda for the climate and biodiversity. Future COPs are important events and France will play its full part, particularly by organizing a key United Nations meeting on oceans with Costa Rica.

In June 2025, Nice is hosting the United Nations Ocean Conference, where we will continue our work. With this in mind, I hope that many of you will ratify the achievements of recent months – particularly the crucial High Seas Treaty. We are also continuing to make progress on the essential topic of water, with the new One Water Summit that we are holding with Kazakhstan and Saudi Arabia. I will not list all of the necessary and vital issues that we face here.

But I do want to reiterate to what extent artificial intelligence demands that all our States here, within this forum, work together. We need to foster innovation. We need to ensure that the innovation unlocked by artificial intelligence can be accessed by all the countries and peoples of the planet, and that it does not fuel new gaps and inequalities. But we need all of this to develop in an ethical and democratic context designed by the planet's peoples.

We cannot let a few – particularly from the private sector, currently on the cutting-edge of these innovations – make decisions for all of us and our peoples, choosing their future. That is why France is holding the upcoming AI Action Summit in February 2025.

But the aim is, as you know, to build a common framework. I commend the work carried out and coordinated by the Secretary-General, as well as the work on the Global Digital Compact, which was created with top experts and fully espouses the philosophy that we have adopted. Ladies and gentlemen, to conclude – and with the awareness that I have forgotten to mention so many difficult situations, from Venezuela to the heart of Africa, not to mention tensions in Oceania – I would like to speak to you about our institutions.

I have been hearing a lot of voices being raised to say that, ultimately, the United Nations needs to be done away with – it no longer serves a purpose, it can no longer settle conflicts.

Here, let's be impatient, but in a constructive way. Let's be impatient – I am too, like you, because we cannot resign ourselves to not managing to resolve these issues. But let's be clear, those responsible are here. As long as our Security Council keeps getting blocked on all sides due to everyone's different interests, we will struggle to move forward.

Is there a better system? I don't think so. So let's simply make these United Nations more effective, first by making them more representative, perhaps. That is why France is in favour of expanding the Security Council.

Germany, Japan, India and Brazil should be permanent members, as should two countries chosen by Africa to represent the continent. New elected members should be admitted to the heart of the Council.

But merely reforming the Council's composition will not be enough to restore its effectiveness. I therefore hope that this reform will also enable the Council to change its working methods, limit the power of veto when mass crimes have taken place, and focus on the operational decisions needed to uphold international peace and security. That is what we need to have the courage and daring to do, driving forward with the current permanent members.

Almost 25 years after the Millennium Summit, the moment has come to regain effectiveness in order to better take action in the field, with States and civil society alike. And, looking beyond the United Nations, we must enter a new era at each of our multilateral institutions, as I just mentioned.

Ladies and gentlemen, those were the few words I wanted to share with you here today. At a serious time for our international order, when so many conflicts seem to linger on, I want to say that France will continue to promote this demanding way forward, loyal to its values, refusing any current simplifications and continuing to fight for the simple principles that we have always followed: human dignity and respect for the principles of the UN Charter. A way forward that, looking beyond conflicts and current challenges, aims to continue building a fairer and more effective international order with you. That is our singular voice that we will always make heard, speaking up alongside our friends and allies. But we are also free to sometimes say no, occasionally refusing the cynicism of the day or the foregone conclusions that turn out to be anything but.

Thank you for your attention./.

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