

**Statement delivered by H.E. President of the Republic of Chile,
Sebastián Piñera Echeñique, at the 73rd session of the United Nations
General Assembly**

New York, September 27, 2018

Ms. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Heads of State and Government,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

INTRODUCTION: CHALLENGES AND GOALS OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Twenty years ago in this same Hall, Kofi Annan defined the three great challenges facing the international community:

FIRST: The challenge of security. Replacing the Cold War world order by a new order governed by peace and freedom.

SECOND: The challenge of development. Ensuring that globalization benefits everyone and leaves no one behind.

THIRD: The challenge of human rights and the rule of law. Protecting the dignity of all without distinction as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political opinion, sexual orientation or any other factor.

Two decades have now elapsed and the challenges bequeathed to us by Kofi Annan – **security, development, human rights and the rule of law** – are more important than ever in the nucleus of our world order.

However, **today** these challenges look different and take on new forms. We are no longer divided by the mistrust, fear and prejudice left by walls and iron curtains but are united in respect for human dignity and freedoms, and connected by the bridges formed by the knowledge-based and information-based society. We are living at a time of huge global transformations, creating major new dangers as well as amazing new opportunities.

Many people believed that the end of the Cold War also meant the end of history. That we had at last found our way and were approaching an era of peace, freedom and prosperity. However, based on western democracy and the social market economy, the emerging world order gave rise to new tensions in many parts of the world and States are no longer the only players on the international stage.

SECURITY

We have not yet been able to deal with serious threats to international peace and security: terrorism, drug trafficking, armed conflicts, transnational organized crime, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and illicit trafficking in weapons and persons.

[migration]

The problem is not circumscribed and transcends the existing international order. But we are **all** called upon to deal with the biggest challenge resulting from the threats to international peace and security: **large-scale migration**.

This is a big challenge for the **entire** international community. Terrorism, wars, hunger and totalitarian regimes have caused the largest cross-border displacement of people in the history of mankind.

The figures are impressive and eloquent. There are currently almost **258 million** migrants throughout the world. Each month, **1,332,000** people facing persecution leave their country.

Chile has experienced this unparalleled phenomenon, which has placed an unprecedented burden on our borders. Between 2014 and 2017, the number of immigrants grew from 416 million to 966 million, representing an increase of **232 percent**.

Faced with this situation, Chile's international commitment is clear: adoption of a migration policy that is **safe, orderly and regular**. This reflects the spirit both of the New York Declaration and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration –two negotiation processes in which Chile participated actively.

We want to receive and welcome migrants who enter Chile in a regular manner and obey our laws, integrate into our society, contribute to Chile's development and embark on a path towards a better life.

We are equally determined to bar entry into our country of persons who do not obey our laws, enter irregularly, commit crimes or have serious criminal records in their countries of origin; drug traffickers and persons involved in organized crime or terrorism. Guaranteeing the safety of its citizens is a crucial responsibility of any Government.

Our migration policy seeks to strike a balance between the sovereign right of the State to regulate the manner in which foreigners enter and remain in our country

and respect for and guarantees of the fundamental rights and duties of migrants, putting a stop to irregular immigration and halting criminal activities at our borders.

DEVELOPMENT

The second great challenge is development. Six months ago, when I embarked on my second term as President, we pledged to undertake a great mission: to transform Chile into a developed country, without poverty, with greater justice and equality of opportunity, by the end of the next decade.

Genuine development is much more than economic growth. In order for us to achieve our goal, development must be **comprehensive, inclusive and sustainable**.

- Comprehensive: because development must encompass all aspects of our life.
- Inclusive: because development must reach all citizens and encompass the entire country.
- And sustainable: and take care of our environment and our wonderful nature.

This is the genuine development that we need for all peoples and that we ratified through the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda, under the auspices of the United Nations.

[multilateralism]

For this reason, the defense and strengthening of multilateralism -to which many have alluded this week- transcend initiatives such as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CP-TPP), the Pacific Alliance or the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation. The economic dimension is of course very important: we need to promote a rules-based international system that is predictable and has mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of disputes.

But we must also concern ourselves with creating a life and an international community built on the base of principles and values: protection of human dignity, full respect for human rights, gender equality, measures to combat climate change and to deal with new threats such as those concerning cybersecurity.

[women]

This comprehensive, inclusive and sustainable development, oblige us to implement measures to fully achieve gender equality, dignity and opportunities among women and men, as well as Zero Tolerance against violence or discrimination against

The real development of our countries can be measured by the way we treat our most vulnerable members: children, women, older persons, and those who need it most.

[threats to humanity]

Today the planet faces major threats and challenges: deterioration of the environment, global warming, desertification, destruction of the ozone layer, depletion of natural resources, loss of biodiversity, pollution of the air, water, soil, etc.

Some time ago, we saw headlines in prestigious newspapers and magazines, reading “Save planet Earth!”. However, what actually is at risk is not the planet, which has existed for more than 4 thousand years, but the survival of humans on Earth. During his long existence, Planet Earth has survived warming, glaciation, flooding and earthquakes. Over the last 40 years, man has done more harm to the health of the planet than in the entire prior history of mankind. We must remember that 99 out of every 100 species that once existed have disappeared and we do not want human beings to be added to this list of extinctions.

Ladies and gentlemen: Our generation’s response to this great challenge will be judged by our children, by our grandchildren and by history. The threat of climate change will define the shape of this century and of centuries to come and requires a vast multilateral effort. It is a serious, urgent and growing threat that we can no longer ignore or minimize.

Our generation has a double condition: it is the first one that has suffered the damaging effects of climate change, and at the same time, it is the last one that can confront them to success.

No nation is immune to this threat but Chile is especially vulnerable. My country is a veritable observatory and natural laboratory. It has diverse land, maritime, coastal, glacial, river, lake, coastal, wetland and island ecosystems that are unique in the world. They contain a total of over 30,000 species of plants, animals, fungi and bacteria.

In addition, because of its geographical location, Chile has unique natural barriers: the Andes range, the Pacific Ocean, the Atacama desert and Antarctica. There are species that are found only in Chile. For example, on Robinson Crusoe Island in the Juan Fernández Archipelago, 87.5 percent of the fish species are endemic. This is the highest percentage in the world.

However, our greatest advantage is also our disadvantage. This natural observatory is very exposed to climate change and global warming. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change lists **nine vulnerability factors, of which seven apply to Chile**: (1) low-lying coastal areas; (2) arid and semi-arid areas; (3) forested areas; (4) areas prone to natural disasters; (5) areas liable to drought and desertification; (6) urban areas with atmospheric pollution problems; and (7) mountainous ecosystems.

This reality pushes us to seek solutions in order to survive global warming, flooding, drought and earthquakes.

As President of Chile, I am committed to development that is sustainable and respectful of nature and of the environment. The threat, which was once distant, is now upon us and we can see the lethal impact that these changes may have on present and future generations. The time has come to react and take the bull by the horns, to change history and ensure the future.

What have we done in Chile?

FIRST: We are convinced that the creation of protected areas is crucial to biodiversity conservation. Chile has been a regional and world leader in the formation of protected areas, ever since the creation in 1907 of the first protected area in Chile, the Malleco National Reserve. Today there are 180 protected areas in Chile (40 marine areas and 140 land areas) covering over 10 million hectares.

SECOND: We are firmly committed to the conservation of the oceans, their biodiversity and the sustainable use of their resources. We have already protected over 13 percent of our Exclusive Economic Zone and shall soon cover over 40 percent. Chile has the largest marine protected area in Latin America on the marvelous Easter Island or Rapa Nui.

THIRD: We have an Energy Route designed to achieve a clean, safe, cost-effective and diversified matrix that strongly promotes decarbonization. In addition, we are pursuing an electromobility policy to increase, the number of electric vehicles on the roads in Chile.

FOURTH: We realize the seriousness of the threat posed by plastic for our planet and understand how important it is for us all to be aware of this and for governments to act in time to avert the current path we are on, in which by 2050 there will be almost 12,000 million tons of plastic waste in nature and more plastic bags than there are fish in the oceans. I am proud that the first legislation to be adopted during this term in office has banned the use of plastic bags in shops. Chile is the first country in Latin America and the Caribbean to restrict the free distribution of any kind of single-use plastic bag in shops and this ban has taken effect almost immediately.

A plastic bag takes seconds to produce, is used for 30 minutes in the transition from the grocery store to the home, and needs 400 years to biodegrade. In other words, for a few minutes of use, nature suffers the harmful effect of a plastic bag for over 400 years.

We must abandon the idea that economic growth and protection of the environment are incompatible. Our lodestar must be sustainable development. **We want to abandon the throwaway culture and embrace the recyclable culture.**

Pollution has struck very close to home: one month ago, two communes in Chile (Puchuncaví and Quinteros, in an area that has long been saturated with pollution) experienced a serious episode of environmental pollution. Over 400 people were affected, with bronchopulmonary problems, ocular irritation and paralysis or numbness of their extremities.

In view of the seriousness of the situation, I immediately went to the area to meet with the people affected. I could see and feel with my own eyes and senses the dramatic effects of this environmental disaster. On that day, I made a promise to all Chilean men and women, which I repeat today: we will change the story of both places and of many others in Chile. To this end, we are already implementing a plan to resolve the situation and to protect health and the environment, by direct and ongoing monitoring of water, air and soil quality, and through permanent and established extraordinary laws to reduce emissions of polluting companies. We are working on a plan to decontaminate that and other areas that we will present in the coming weeks, and that means a more definitive way out, to end with the so-called "sacrifice zones" in our country.

This is a challenge that must involve all players in society. In order to efficiently channel this collective and multisectoral effort, last July we announced the Framework Law on Climate Change. The goal is clear: reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by 20% by 2030 with respect to the base year. In order to do so, we must incorporate the climate change perspective in all government policies, plans and instruments. For example, in the national system of investments, the system of public expenditure and in the evaluation of environmental impact.

In addition, we have included environmental provisions in all our trade agreements, both bilateral and multilateral. One example is the CP-TPP, which includes 11 countries on both sides of the Pacific Ocean, and the process of incorporation of Associated States in the Pacific Alliance.

I am sure that these developments will significantly reduce our carbon emissions while strengthening our economy. Jobs will be created and we shall prove that there does not have to be a conflict between caring for the environment and economic growth. Far from being incompatible, the two are essentially complementary and one cannot survive without the other.

This is a big challenge and a very ambitious one. In this, we have two important allies:

The first is technology. Today we have the innovation and scientific imagination to combat climate change. In order to do so, we must urge our technology and science entrepreneurs to join in this combat and not repeat the errors of the past.

The second is the multilateral system, which invites us to act in a coordinated manner. This is precisely the point of the Sustainable Development Goals. However, in order for the system to be effective, we must eliminate the bureaucracy that is slowing down the work of the United Nations. We must have more delivery, more

accountability and closer coordination: we must focus more on results and less on process.

As a great United States President remarked: “We’re the first generation to feel the impact of climate change. We’re the last generation that can do something about it.”

HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE RULE OF LAW

Finally, we come to the third challenge: respect for human rights, freedom, democracy and the rule of law.

The last time that I stood at this podium was five years ago. On that occasion, I shared with the General Assembly the lessons that Chileans had learned 40 years after the military coup. Lessons about the collapse of democracy and about the transition to back to democracy. The first and most important lesson is that there are moral and legal norms that should be respected by everyone: combatants and non-combatants, civilians and soldiers, leaders and subordinates. Torture, crimes against humanity, terrorism, political assassination and forced disappearance of persons can never be justified in any context or circumstance.

Freedom, democracy, peace and civic amity are much more fragile than we think, which means that we must never take them for granted. They need to be valued, taught and protected. It is like breathing. When we have air, we do not miss it and do not defend it sufficiently. When we lack air, it is difficult to get it back.

In a few days’ time, it will be 30 years since the referendum of 5 October that opened the way to recovery of democracy in Chile. I should like to take this opportunity to speak about the two major transitions that our generation experienced. The first was the transition from an authoritarian government to a democratic government, which we achieved in an intelligent and exemplary manner. Normally such transitions take place amid political crisis, economic chaos and social violence but none of this happened in Chile. **However, this transition is now history.**

The new transition, ours, which is currently underway, is to transform Chile into a developed country, without poverty, with greater justice and equal opportunities, in which we can all develop our talents and life projects, and have a fuller and happier life. And this transition, we must also do it in an intelligent and exemplary way.

Although this second transition is already under way in Chile, there are other countries in our region that unfortunately have not yet been able to move towards a society where there is freedom, democracy, full respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Today I want this General Assembly to hear the voice of the Venezuelan people, whom President Maduro has left voiceless. Venezuela is a brother country, which was a democracy for over 40 years, which brought progress to Venezuelans and which opened its frontiers so that Latin Americans could go there to find work and the opportunities not available in their own lands.

Today Venezuela is governed by an authoritarian and undemocratic regime, a dictatorship, afflicted by a moral, political, economic, social and humanitarian crisis:

MORAL: Because basic values such as human rights are not respected.

POLITICAL: Because there is no democracy or rule of law. There is no separation of powers, no due process and no freedom of expression and there are hundreds of political prisoners.

ECONOMIC: In the 1990s, Venezuela was the richest country in Latin America but today its per capita income is half of what it was then.

SOCIAL AND HUMANITARIAN: Venezuelans are living a tragedy, fleeing from their tiny and precarious conditions of existence. Many Venezuelans are dying, literally, for lack of food and medicine, and President Maduro denies this situation and closes the doors to all humanitarian aid. In the last four years more than 2 million Venezuelans have had to leave their country, because there are no minimum subsistence conditions.

But Venezuela is not the only one. In Nicaragua, more than 400 people have died under the violence under the government of President Ortega. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, which has reported assassinations, extrajudicial executions, ill-treatment, torture and arbitrary detentions, was expelled from Nicaragua a month ago. In Cuba, there have for over 60 years been no freedoms or democracy or respect for human rights. There are arbitrary detentions and, as in Nicaragua, censorship of the right to freedom of expression, which is guaranteed under article 19, paragraph 2, of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

When brother countries lose their freedoms, democracy and respect for human rights, should we should ask ourselves what we can do? As brother countries, as members of the international community and of the United Nations we must:

Firstly, stick together. We must support the affected population, in order to ensure that people do not die of hunger or for lack of medicines. It is urgent and necessary once and for all to open all humanitarian channels.

Secondly, Chile will not recognize the new government of President Maduro as of 10 January 2019, because the election lacks any legitimacy and does not meet any of the minimum necessary requirements to be considered free, democratic and transparent election, in accordance with international standards.

Thirdly, to help Venezuelans with all the instruments of international law to recover their liberties, democracy and respect for human rights.

I would like to end these words with one on the current state and the reforms and modernizations that many countries think United Nations urgently require.

The United Nations, which has contributed on countless occasions to the maintenance of international peace and security, as the cornerstone of multilateralism, today sees this competence very limited. We have lost the ability to prevent a crisis and strengthen the institutions of the Member States, with the aim of generating true democratic resilience, capable of surviving a break like the one experienced by some countries in our region. The United Nations Organization must modernize - like the Member States - to act more quickly and more efficiently. Undoubtedly, this is the way to reduce human suffering.

On the other hand, the structure of the United Nations, and especially of its Security Council, which is the legacy of the victors of the Second World War that ended more than 70 years ago, does not respond to the needs and challenges of the current times. In fact, any of the permanent members of that security council, or threaten to exercise their right to veto, more based on their own interests, or those of their allies, than on their duty to persevere peace and security in all corners of our planet. This behavior reduces the effectiveness of an organization that concentrates so much power and has many responsibilities, such as the Security Council of the United Nations.

In addition, the composition of the Security Council does not reflect the representativeness that we should have continents such as Africa or Latin America, or countries such as Germany, India and Japan.

Before concluding, I should like to emphasize how important it is not only for development to be sustainable but also for peace to be sustainable.

It is precisely at times like these, where the values we share as an international community should guide and illuminate our actions. The peoples must not only be united by the free market and free trade. It is the preservation of peace and security that led to the formation of this Organization based on the values of freedom, respect for human rights, the peaceful settlement of disputes, tolerance, solidarity, and peace.

Only by reviving these values, the United Nations will be able to fulfill its responsibilities and the challenges of this new world in which we live today, together with formidable threats such as terrorism, global warming and massive migrations. We also have magnificent opportunities generated by the freedom, imagination, creativity without limits of men and women free of this world.

Thank you.