



MINISTRY FOR EUROPE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr Jean-Yves Le Drian,

Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs

UN General Assembly:

Meeting of the United Nations Security Council

*“Maintenance of international peace and security: Global governance
post-COVID-19”*

VTC, 24 September 2020

- Check against delivery -

President of the Security Council, dear Mahamadou Issoufou,
Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Heads of State,
Chairperson of the African Union Commission, dear Moussa Faki,
Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

The rule of the world we live in is **interdependence**. Every day, the **pandemic crisis** we have been plunged into for the last six months is a brutal reminder of that.

Whether we like it or not, **the health of our citizens, the vitality of our economies and the balance of our societies are now closely linked**. And we need to **draw all the consequences of that**, making **the only reasonable choice** in all fields. **That is to say, the choice of collective action and international cooperation**.

Faced with this crisis which is far more than just a public health crisis, **we must stand united**. And **this Council must play its full role** in the service of international stability.

This is the reason why, dear Mahamadou, I would like to particularly welcome your initiative to focus the work of this Council today on the lessons we must draw from this crisis in terms of governance.

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1) Our role is firstly to stop the current circumstances being used to cross further lines in the brutalization of the world.

That is the goal of **the daily action of the men and women involved in our peacekeeping operations**, it is also the goal of the work of **humanitarian and medical personnel** who are deployed, all too often risking their lives, to conflict theatres to **come to the assistance of vulnerable populations**.

And it is the goal of the **appeal** you launched **for a ceasefire**, Secretary-General, on 23 March, and **Resolution 2532**, which we were proud to sponsor along with Tunisia and which this Council adopted unanimously on 1 July. These initiatives were, and remain, necessary: **they must have effects**.

While addressing health emergencies, **we must not lose sight of the *other* crises, the security crises each of which, from the Sahel to the Levant and in many other world regions, is a threat to us all**. Here too, **logics of division must give way to well-understood solidarity**, that of acknowledgement that we have **a common interest in international security and stability**.

You can count on France to continue driving this requirement and play its full part in the collective effort. From 2021, **we will increase our contribution to the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) four-fold**.

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2) Our role in this period of immense upheaval is also to **ensure respect for fundamental rights and protective rules which this organization was born to protect 75 years ago.**

For multilateralism is not just a method, or an empty abstraction.

Multilateralism has substance.

- It is the affirmation, *in the relations between our nations*, of the **primacy of rules over force.**
- And it is, *within each of our countries*, the promotion of its corollary: **the universality of human rights.**

Yes, **these rights are *universal rights***: we drafted and proclaimed them *together*, and it is *together* that we must reaffirm them today. There is no place, in this matter, for any form of **relativism**. And **in no case can the exceptional situation we are seeing today justify backsliding on the slightest of these major achievements.** These are, moreover, **international commitments**, and even for this reason alone, they must be honoured.

a) To put this in very tangible terms: **the measures taken for the emergency cannot continue *over the long term***, to the detriment of the **most basic freedoms**, such as the freedom of demonstration, the freedom of movement, and the freedom to inform and to be informed.

The defence of the *freedom to inform and to be informed* also, today, means **fighting against the scourge of “infodemics” and for the reliability of**

information. That is, as you know, one of the areas on which the **Alliance for Multilateralism** is working.

b) Nor must the pandemic crisis serve as a pretext to undermine, in any way, **the battle fought for decades by the women's movement in favour of gender equality.** We know that, *on all continents, without exception*, the greatest vigilance is required, particularly when it comes to **sexual and reproductive rights.** I hope many of us will be at the **Generation Equality Forum** next summer to recall that.

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3) Lastly, our role, in order to preserve international peace and security, is to **build collective responses to global challenges that threaten the stability of our world.**

a) First and foremost, of course, I have in mind the challenges of **global public health.**

➤ Because **COVID-19 is not a thing of the past**, our mobilization in support of the **ACT-A initiative** must continue.

- To develop **diagnostics, treatments and the vaccine we need to curb the epidemic**, as quickly as possible.
- And, equally essentially, **so that everyone, wherever they are in the world, has access to these *new common goods*.** For that is what is needed, ultimately.

➤ *At the same time* we also need to **prepare for the eventuality of further public health crises.**

- By **consolidating the multilateral health architecture**, built around the **WHO**, and considering **additional instruments**,

such as the **High Council for Human and Animal Health** we propose to create, **in order to improve our collective alert and response capacity.**

- By **strengthening our own health systems** to guarantee the *effective* implementation of the **International Health Regulations.**
- And by **supporting the efforts of the most fragile States.**

b) I also have in mind the **environmental challenges** which, given their complex implications, are in reality always *also* challenges for our health and our security.

To guide us, **we have two compasses: the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement.** To drive forward our work, we have some very important international events ahead: **the Kunming COP15 on biodiversity and the Glasgow COP26 on the climate.** It is up to us to make **sustainable development** the watchword of the recovery.

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So the responsibilities we have are immense.

Another responsibility is also crucial: **restoring the full effectiveness of this Council, the Security Council, which remains the cornerstone of our security and of international stability.**

- That is why we need to **work to enhance the representativeness of this forum**, including to recognize a fairer role for Africa within it.
- And it is why we need to **fight, together, to restore our capacity for collective action**, which is currently undermined by **attitudes of systematic obstruction.** I call upon the countries that have not yet

done so to **join the initiative we launched with Mexico to regulate the veto right**, in the event of mass atrocities.

My dear colleagues, for to resist the **“panic of the world”** [*l'affolement du monde, Thomas Gomart*], what we need, no doubt more than ever before, is **strong multilateralism. That is what France has committed to and it is what it is asking the Security Council to commit to collectively.**

Thank you.