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Seventy-third United Nations General Assembly - Speech by President of the Republic Emmanuel Macron

Mr President of the United Nations General Assembly,

Mr Secretary-General,

Heads of state and government,

Ladies and gentlemen,

UN ROLE

All of us here have inherited a tremendous hope, that of saving future generations from the scourge of war, of building a world order based on law and on keeping promises, of helping humanity move forward towards economic, social and moral progress, with freedom that is increasingly guaranteed.

And we have made progress: human rights have spread, trade and prosperity have expanded, poverty has been reduced. This is what we have achieved over the last few decades.

However, we must examine the period we are going through with a clear head. We are currently experiencing a deep crisis of the Westphalian liberal world order that we have known. Firstly, because it has failed in part to regulate itself. Its economic, financial, environmental and climate-related failings have not yet been satisfactorily resolved.

Secondly, because our collective capacity to respond to crises is still all too often hampered by divisions in the Security Council. Our organization is too often limited to deploring violations of the rights that it had sworn to guarantee. Seventy years after the adoption of the Declaration of Human Rights by this Assembly in Paris, cultural, historical, and religious relativism is now calling into question the foundations of their universality.

Born out of hope, the UN may become, like the League of Nations that preceded it, a symbol of powerlessness. And there is no need to look for those responsible for this disintegration; they are here, in this Assembly. They are speaking today. It's we, the leaders, who are responsible.

Based on this observation, we essentially have three main paths forward. The first involves seeing this as a moment, an interlude in history before things return to normal. I do not believe this. I do not believe this because we are currently experiencing a crisis of the effectiveness and principles of our contemporary world order which will not be able to get back on track or return to how it functioned before. The period we are going through is not an interlude: it reflects our own past deficiencies.

The second path forward would be based on the law of the strongest, the temptation for everyone to follow their own laws. What I am saying is that the path of unilateralism leads us directly to withdrawal and conflict, to widespread confrontation between everyone, to the detriment of all - even, eventually, of those who believe they are the strongest. We have a joint responsibility for peace; it cannot be delegated, cannot be refused, cannot be pre-empted. The law of the strongest does not protect any group of people against any kind of threat, whether chemical or nuclear.

IRAN

What will make it possible to truly resolve the situation in Iran and what has already started to help stabilize it? The law of the strongest, pressure from a single stakeholder? No! We know that Iran was on the path towards military nuclear capability, but what stopped it? The agreement brokered in Vienna in 2015. As I said a year ago, we should not exacerbate regional tensions, but rather propose a broader agenda that will make it possible to address all nuclear, ballistic and regional concerns caused by Iranian policies, through dialogue and multilateralism. Without being naïve or complacent, but without any posturing, which will certainly be pointless

in the end.

TRADE

What will resolve the problem of trade imbalances and all of their consequences on our societies? Common rules adapted to today's reality that will make it possible to establish the conditions for equal and fair competition, and not, under any circumstances, the bilateral treatment of all our trade disputes or a new form of protectionism.

MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

What will make it possible to resolve the crisis between Israel and Palestine? Not unilateral initiatives, or ignoring the legitimate rights of the Palestinians to achieve sustainable peace, or underestimating the legitimate right of the Israelis to their security. There is no other credible alternative to the solution of two states living side by side in peace and security, with Jerusalem as their capital. Israel knows that France is a true friend and it is in the name of this friendship that I call on it to swiftly put an end to the fait accompli policy which threatens the very possibility of achieving a peace deal. To continue along this path would be a mistake.

"NEW WORLD BALANCE"

On this issue, I am ready, and we must be ready, to abandon the dogmas, the long-standing positions, to take new initiatives, provided that this leads to positive changes on the ground. The law of the strongest will only serve to increase frustrations and violence.

As you will have understood, in the face of the current imbalances, I do not believe in the law of the strongest even if it were disguised as some form of legitimacy, when in reality it has lost any kind of legality.

I believe in a third way forward for us, undoubtedly the most difficult, undoubtedly the most challenging, requiring us to forge together a new model, to find together a new world balance. Because after a form of superpower model, we have been experiencing for several years now a new form of global instability, marked by the return of multiple powers.

The new equilibrium that we must create must be based on new forms of regional and international cooperation and will, I believe, be based on three principles: firstly, respect for sovereignty, which is at the very foundation of our charter; secondly, the strengthening of our regional cooperation; and thirdly, the provision of more robust international guarantees. And it is through this method, based on these three principles, that we must ensure we can resolve the current crisis situations.

SYRIA

Therefore, in Syria, we are continuing the fight against Islamist terrorism. The military engagement of certain countries has allowed the regime to re-establish itself, resulting in crimes for which the perpetrators will one day be held accountable. The Syrian people have tragically paid the price, and there can be no victors in a Syria in ruins. What we have to do now is restore peace under UN auspices. It is not up to us to decide for the Syrian people, but to develop the ways and means to implement this method that I have just described and therefore to develop a solution that is backed, not just by the guarantor states in the Astana process, but by other states in the region and the international community through the Small Group, under the coordination of the United Nations and the special representative of the Secretary-General, in order to resolve the humanitarian crisis on the one hand and, on the other hand, to build an inclusive, lasting political solution through constitutional reform and the holding of free elections.

This is what truly respecting Syrian sovereignty means! It does not mean deciding on behalf of the Syrian people who should be their leader or agreeing to cover up all of the crimes by allowing this leader to remain until the end of time, on the basis that we no longer have any principles, or, basically, any rights.

LIBYA

And again in Libya, this new method should make it possible to bring about a lasting solution. The current status quo enables the militias, the traffickers to gain ground, destabilizing the entire region. We will not give the Libyan people the means to resolve the situation if we remain divided, if Libya becomes the battleground, as it still too often is, for confrontation between foreign influences.

In Paris, the Libyans pledged to swiftly hold elections, which will make it possible to reunify state institutions. These commitments must be fulfilled under the auspices of the United Nations, with close cooperation from the African Union.

Yesterday an important step was taken, one that I would like to applaud. It is in the Libyan people's interest and in that of their neighbours, the Europeans and the international community, which must unite around these goals in order to move forward.

SAHEL

All together we are strong in the face of terrorism when states can count on their own forces to guarantee their security, and also when that security is based on regional and international solutions, according to the principle I have just elucidated.

That is the decision taken by the Sahel nations, which are working together within the G5 Force. That is the point of the process launched by the African Union to better shoulder its responsibilities through African peace operations. That is the point of the initiatives being taken in the Lake Chad region, which are also being shepherded by Nigeria, Chad and Cameroon and supported by the African Union.

That is why we must support this African Union initiative and push for better coordination between the African Union and the United Nations. I hope that by the end of the year a resolution can be adopted to that effect.

We are strong in the face of terrorism when together we assume our responsibilities for combating all its methods of financing; when – as we are doing in the Sahel Alliance – we are capable of working together to foster development, agriculture and education, to eradicate the roots of the despair that has allowed terrorists to capture people's souls.

\$7.5 billion has now been allocated to 500 projects that were jointly defined with all the relevant nations and the partners in the Sahel Alliance. It is these initial results that we must consolidate.

You can see that in each of these crises, the answer was not to leave states on their own, nor to take their place or to tell them from here what the law or solution is, but rather to conscientiously articulate the principle of the sovereignty of peoples, of regional cooperation and of a true commitment by the international community. It is around this triangle that contemporary solutions are built.

Only collective action makes it possible to preserve the sovereignty and equality of the people who have given us a mandate. It is this same imperative we must champion in the face of the demographic, climate and digital challenges awaiting us, which none of us can confront alone.

MIGRATION

Faced with the great challenge of migration, I do not believe in talk of unconditional openness – it only produces worry and heightens intolerance. Nor do I believe the lies of those who claim, for example, that in Europe and elsewhere they will be stronger if they take shelter behind closed borders. That is not true.

The only effective way to manage the migratory flows affecting all of our continents in an orderly, controlled fashion is to create the conditions for a type of international mobility that is freely chosen, not imposed; to work together, whether we are countries of origin, of transit or of destination, to tackle the deep causes of such migration, especially when it is imposed; to dismantle networks of traffickers, which are the worst scourge in this situation; and to protect our borders in a respectful way while ensuring compliance with international law, and in particular the unconditional protection of those who have the right to asylum. That is what we decided to do together in the UN compact that will be adopted in Marrakesh this December, and which I support.

CLIMATE/DIGITAL WORLD

When it comes to climate disruption, there are no free-riders or easy solutions either. Even those who dispute the reality suffer the consequences like everybody else. Extreme weather is now a daily occurrence. Those who undermine collective action are only exposing themselves to a greater degree.

When it comes to the great digital transformation, here too it is our duty to stand together to establish contemporary rules that will make it possible to reconcile the development of artificial intelligence with our ethical rules, to guide the digital transformation of our societies.

MULTILATERALISM

You see, my dear friends, I believe deeply in the sovereignty of peoples, which today is strong and present, and demanded by all of our people on the international stage. But at the same time I believe in a strengthened cooperation taking multiple forms and in the renewed legitimacy of international engagement in this context. The great battle of our forerunners was the fight for peace, which is still incumbent upon us. We will only win

that battle in the 21st century by restoring a strong multilateral system capable of resolving conflicts in a pragmatic manner, but also and more broadly by tackling the causes of these disturbances.

To be honest, I don't believe in one great globalized people. Not at all – it is utopian, there is no such thing. But I do believe in universal values, and on this point we must not back down, it is not the same thing! I believe in the non-negotiable defence of our values, human rights, the dignity of individuals, gender equality. I believe in our ability to establish equilibriums that are respectful of people and cultures, with no haggling about their universality – they are the reality! And in no way will I yield the principle of the sovereignty of peoples to nationalists or to those in the international community who advocate retreating inwards, who want to use the sovereignty of peoples to attack the universality of our values - their strength is what keeps us all here in this room!

INEQUALITIES

All of us here, even those who make a point of criticizing it, benefit from the structuring of the international order that went hand in hand with globalization. Now we must tackle the deep causes of our imbalances, we must look together at the weaknesses of our international order and – beyond the crises I've just mentioned – look at the deep inequalities that have set in.

For me, this is the crux of our problem today: what is rekindling nationalism and doubts about our Assembly? What is generating crises everywhere? It is these deep inequalities that we have been unable to resolve.

Ten years ago, when the financial crisis broke out, we took emergency measures but we did not solve the deepest problem, we did not curb the trend towards the hyper-concentration of wealth on our planet and we did not really provide an answer to all those who were left behind by globalization. All those who were marginalized and frustrated by the humiliations they had suffered harboured a despair whose price we are collectively paying today.

We owe all these fellow citizens an answer. We owe an answer, my friends, to the 265 million children, more than half of whom live in sub-Saharan Africa, who have no access to schooling; to the girls who enjoy fair access to education in less than 40 percent of all countries.

We owe an answer to the 700 million children who live in the regions most exposed to the effects of climate change, who are the victims of floods, drought, rising waters, diminishing resources.

We owe an answer to the 200 million women who don't have access to contraception, to the billion-plus who are not protected by the law if they suffer violence in their home. To all the women whose pay gap with men averages 23% worldwide and up to 40% in rural areas. We owe an answer to the 783 million people who live below the poverty line, who suffer from hunger or chronic malnutrition, to those who don't have access to basic care.

We owe an answer when it comes to the aspirations of the largest number of young people in history, our young people, i.e. nearly two billion people between 10 and 24 years old today, 90% of whom live in developing countries.

We owe an answer to all those who look to us because their fate depends on what we can or can't do here together, in this Assembly. And those people who forget that we owe them all an answer are wrong because they're preparing for crises tomorrow, the day after, because they'll leave their successors, because we'll leave our children in a much worse situation than the one we're in right now.

2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

We have made progress on reducing inequalities between our countries, and we have given ourselves the framework for this with the 2030 Agenda for [Sustainable] Development; but the battle is not behind us, it is far from over. Per capita wealth is 50 times greater in OECD countries than it is in low-income countries. Do we believe we can build stability, balance, over the long term, in such a situation? No, we must act!

That's why – as I announced here last year – I decided to increase France's official development assistance by €1 billion from 2019. Our humanitarian funding will go up by 40%.

FRENCH G7 PRESIDENCY

But this is also why the fight against inequalities will be the priority of France's G7 summit presidency in 2019. Indeed, after Canada – whose leadership I want to pay tribute to here –, France will hold the next presidency of the G7, whose format I would like to thoroughly revise to involve more effectively several other powers, and

work at new forms of coordination.

It's at the United Nations first that I want to say this inequalities agenda will be central to the next G7. I am also pledging to you to report back on the results of the Biarritz G7 next September, because the time when a club of rich countries could alone define the world's inequalities is long gone, because the fate of every country belonging to it is inseparable from that of every member of this Assembly.

Yes, we must tackle present-day inequalities today because they're at the root of the evil I was denouncing at the beginning of my speech. We must tackle inequalities of destiny. It's a moral aberration as much as a reality which is untenable. It is unacceptable not to enjoy the same opportunities depending on the country you are born in, not to be able to go to school in some countries because you are a woman, not to have access to basic care.

EDUCATION

We've honoured the pledge the President of Senegal and I made right here last year; the Global Partnership for Education's Financing Conference in Dakar in February raised \$2.5 billion to improve access to education in the world. It's a historic sum. France increased its contribution tenfold. The active efforts the G7 has already begun to make under Canada's presidency will have to allow further progress.

We are at a watershed on this issue, during which we'll be able to grasp the full extent of the challenge facing us, or not. Six hundred and twenty million more children in the world will need to be provided with schooling between now and 2030, including 444 million Africans. Are we going to give ourselves the resources for this? Are we going to give them all the resources for a solid grounding, enabling them to take control of their lives, fraternal lives in tomorrow's world? If we don't, what kind of world are we setting up for ourselves?

This is why I have committed France to this battle to such an extent, it's why I place so much emphasis on teacher training, vocational education and educational equality between boys and girls. This is why I call on you all to become part of this global drive for education. Education and health won't just be the pillars of our societies in the 21st century; they will be the basic components of our economies too.

GENDER

We must also fight vigorously against gender-linked inequalities. I have made gender parity in France the great cause of my five-year term, and I issue an appeal here to make this a great global cause with you. Women and girls are the first to be affected by poverty, conflict, the consequences of global warming; they are the first victims of sexist and sexual violence, which too often prevents them from moving around freely, working or choosing what happens to their bodies.

Our responsibility in the 21st century is to end these kinds of violence, from harassment on the street to femicide. It's time our world stopped making women victims and at last gave them their rightful place – the one where they are leaders too! We must guarantee them access everywhere to education, healthcare, jobs, and to taking economic and political decisions, and fight every kind of violence they are subjected to.

So France will propose to governments wishing to move forward with us the creation of a coalition for adopting new laws for gender equality. Fifty percent of our development aid will be devoted to projects to reduce gender inequalities.

HEALTH

We must also relaunch efforts to fight health inequalities at the international level. We are hosting the Replenishment Conference of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in Lyon in 2019. We will retake the initiative on the fight against fake drugs and step up our action to tackle major pandemics. I call on everyone here to mobilize.

CLIMATE

Finally, we must fight – with a passionate sense of urgency – against environmental inequalities. It is unacceptable for 45% of greenhouse gas emissions to be produced by 10% of the planet's richest inhabitants. It is inefficient – as is the case with solar power – for countries with the largest potential and greatest needs to be those with the least access to the appropriate technology.

It is indefensible that 100 million more people will be doomed to extreme poverty by 2030 if we don't succeed in honouring our commitments to fight global warming. Here too, it is a battle which must bring us together.

Some countries here are suffering more than others and we owe them solidarity. But we will all have to provide an explanation to our peoples and our own children for this growing number of disasters.

PARIS CLIMATE AGREEMENT

The heralded breakdown of the Paris Agreement has been averted, because we've managed to remain united, despite the American decision to withdraw from it. This strength must continue to carry us along and dispel all fatalistic approaches.

We're told that solutions exist but that funding isn't up to the mark. Then let's go and find it; let's innovate. That is what we did in Paris on 12 December last year, with many of you, at the One Planet Summit, with concrete commitments and initial results. It is what we did at the beginning of the year in Delhi with the International Solar Alliance. It is what we'll do again in New York tomorrow, with the second One Planet Summit.

We're told that it is already too late, that we won't meet the targets. Then let's speed up, let's adopt together the Paris Agreement's rules of implementation at COP24 in December. Let's implement the protocol against HFC gases, which could enable us to reduce the planet's average temperature by 1°C by 2050. Let's set ourselves the goal of concluding in 2020 a plan for an ambitious global pact for the environment, and making the Beijing COP on biodiversity and the IUCN World Conservation Congress in France in 2020 decisive steps.

Let's commit ourselves clearly and let's all be equally clear, concrete and coherent. It is an emergency. So let's comply with the commitments we've made. Let's sign no more trade agreements with powers that don't respect the Paris Agreement. Let's ensure our trade commitments include our environmental and social obligations. Let's mobilize sovereign funds which finance this low-carbon policy strategy more heavily.

France will continue to exercise global leadership in this battle, along with everyone who so wishes. We will work at the G7 to ensure that the commitments made at COP21 are revised upwards, and if one of the members doesn't want to move forward, we will move forward even so, going to seek new coalitions, new formats, because the G7's remit is to remain a united group of countries committed to democracy. But today it must also help create new coalitions enabling the global collective system to be furthered and rebuilt.

So let's build new forms of cooperation so as to move forward and take decisions on these fundamental issues.

INEQUALITIES

Only together can we effectively combat all these inequalities, which have each fractured our societies. Mistrust in our societies and the temptation of self-absorption are fuelled by this. They are fuelled by all these inequalities we have allowed to emerge and by our collective inability to address them effectively.

But none of us, acting alone, can effectively combat these inequalities I've just denounced. Otherwise there would ultimately be only two solutions. The first would be to always choose the lowest common denominator and follow the standards we know; this is what we have done for decades. There is a trade war, so let's reduce workers' rights, let's reduce taxes even more, let's fuel inequalities in order to try to tackle our trade difficulties. What does this lead to? To deeper inequalities in our societies and to this fracture we are currently experiencing.

The other response would be to say it is the rules that don't work. So let's withdraw into ourselves. Isolationism, protectionism. But this leads to only one thing: an increase in tensions. In no way does it address deep inequalities.

I propose, on the contrary, that we establish a collective mechanism for working together on what we're doing, in each of our countries, to reduce inequalities.

To assess our actions but also make them more consistent and spread good practice. So I propose that the international institutions – the United Nations but also, of course, the OECD – support us in establishing this mechanism, for which the G7 will have to be the driving force.

WTO REFORM

In order to defeat inequalities, we must change our approach and its scale. First of all, revise both our trading and social rules; rather than pursuing protectionism, we must all work together to radically revise the WTO rules. We must restore the WTO's ability to resolve conflicts, enact rules to deal with unfair trade practices, non-respect for intellectual property and forced technology transfers, which no longer allow for a fair fight.

This year, the G20 in Argentina must give us a credible road map for radically reforming the WTO.

This is also what we'll have to do at social level, next year, during the centenary of the International Labour Organization.

Secondly, we'll also have to develop the practical details of our action, bring into our field of collective action the major absentees from this hall and from our General Assembly, the major non-state actors who help change the world but who don't play a sufficient role in reducing the inequalities these transformations bring about. I'm referring to the major digital players, in terms of both taxation and responsibility in the battle against the manipulation of information.

On all our major challenges, our collective action must also work differently and include dialogue with these new private players and these Internet giants.

AFRICA

Thirdly, we must give Africa its full role, to ensure its role is central to the recomposition of the international system. It is not just on that continent that we will collectively win or lose our great battle against inequalities. It is with that continent.

Because it is indeed today in Africa that we find the most fervent champions of multilateralism and regional integration, because our African partners have clearly understood that together we will be in a position to tackle our common challenges. And the French G7 presidency will also set to work on this new alliance with Africa.

As you see, I believe very strongly that in the face of these rifts, these challenges in the contemporary world order, we can build a new language of action and we must, at the same time, attack the underlying causes that contemporary inequalities represent.

And it's the responsibility of France and all its European partners, the European Union, to be at the forefront of this battle, to build this new contemporary humanism which must not yield an inch to temptations of self-absorption or to naivety, and at the same time build, as mediating powers, these new rules of the international order.

MULTILATERALISM

Ladies and gentlemen, at a time when our collective system is breaking down, I must say we have never needed it so much.

We will therefore support the agencies working for a project of peace and humanity: UNESCO – the very conscience of the United Nations –, the Human Rights Council, the International Criminal Court, and UNRWA, for which we will increase our contribution because, let me remind you here, it is simply about enabling hundreds of thousands of children to go to school. Nothing more, nothing less.

We will support the enlargement of the Security Council in its two categories of members so that its composition reflects contemporary balances and it is strengthened as a place of consultation and not obstruction.

We will ensure that by the end of the year at this General Assembly, two-thirds of its members can support the suspension of the right of veto in the event of mass atrocities.

We will defend international humanitarian law by supporting staff who take every risk to help civilians on the ground, by negotiating, one by one, humanitarian access in every theatre.

On the 70th anniversary of the 1948 Declaration, we will recall that human rights are not a cultural phenomenon, revocable values or options, but a body of law sanctified by international treaties to which the members of this Assembly freely consented. We will recall that their universality is not contrary to the sovereignty of peoples but that it is the only possible condition for protecting and exercising their rights.

France will be there to ensure the world does not forget that the thunder of nationalism always leads to the abyss, that democracies are weak if they lack courage in defending their principles, and that accumulated resentment, combined with a fragile international system, can lead twice in the space of a human life to a global unleashing of violence. I am talking here from our own experience.

In a few weeks' time, on 11 November 1918, the Paris Peace Forum will provide an opportunity for a surge in intelligence and courage in order to regain what keeps us here together. It must provide an opportunity, united

by the tragedies of the 20th century, to renew and revitalize our solemn promise to protect future generations from the scourge of war. I want us and our counterparts together to shoulder new responsibilities, in order to mark out a path at the Forum for specific actions to promote peace.

I know, my dear friends, that many people may be tired of multilateralism. I know that in a world where information clashes, where we have entered a world of showbiz, in a sense, freed of inhibitions, and where saying the worst things means being fashionable, making the news, that denouncing consequences whose causes one has cherished can be a crowd-pleaser; I know that championing cooperation and multilateralism may no longer be fashionable.

Then let's not be in fashion any more, because we owe it to those who have enabled us to sit here, because never forget that the genocides that led to your being here today were fuelled by the language we are growing accustomed to, because they were fuelled by the demagoguery we applaud, because we are currently seeing this international law and all forms of cooperation crumbling, as if it were business as usual – out of fear, out of complicity, because it looks good!

No, I can't agree to that, because I come from a country which promoted the declarations that brought us here, because I come from a country which stands up, which has made a lot of mistakes and done a lot of bad things but has, throughout its history and international history, had something universal about it! It is today, it is now!

So do not grow accustomed, let us not accept all these forms of unilateralism! I can't get used to these pages being torn every day, these betrayals of our history!

So I say to you very clearly: the century which has begun is watching us, and our children are waiting for us! Let's resolve the crises! Let's work together to combat all these inequalities, but let's do so in a human way and with the stringency of our principles, our history, passionately driven by our universalism!

In any case, this will be my commitment to you, and I am counting on you for it.