

Secretary- General's press conference at the opening of the 75th Session of the General Assembly

Ladies and Gentlemen of the media. Welcome.

It is good to be with you, here in presence, but also to be able to contact so many of you through our technical, virtual, mechanisms.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a crisis unlike any in our lifetimes, and so this year's General Assembly session will be unlike any other, too.

We have a full programme and the stakes could not be higher.

Our world is nearing the grimmest of milestones: 1 million lives lost to the virus.

Meanwhile, the outbreak remains out of control.

Today, we are issuing a report documenting what the United Nations has done since the beginning of the crisis – and what the world still must do.

The virus is the number one global security threat in our world today.

That is why, in March, I called for a global ceasefire. My appeal resonated with member states, civil society and a number of armed groups across the world.

And today, from Afghanistan to Sudan, we see hopeful new steps toward peace.

In Syria, Libya, Ukraine and elsewhere, ceasefires or standstills in the fighting can create space for diplomacy.

In Yemen, we are pressing for a ceasefire, confidence building measures and resumption of the political process.

But across these and other crises, spoilers are active; distrust is deep.

We must persevere.

In my speech to the General Assembly on Tuesday, I will make a strong appeal to the international community to mobilize all efforts for the global ceasefire to become a reality by the end of the year.

We must seize every opening in the weeks ahead and make a new collective push for peace.

This is also the moment when the international community needs to come together to defeat the virus.

Many pin their hopes on a vaccine – but let's be clear: there is no panacea in a pandemic.

A vaccine alone cannot solve this crisis; certainly not in the near term.

We need to massively expand new and existing tools that can respond to new cases and provide vital treatment to suppress transmission and save lives, especially over the next 12 months.

But starting now, a vaccine must be seen as a global public good, because COVID-19 respects no borders.

We need a vaccine to be affordable and available to all – a people's vaccine.

That means a quantum leap in funding for the ACT-Accelerator and its COVAX Facility.

For any vaccine to work, people across the globe need to be willing to take it.

But with the spread of the virus, we are also seeing a proliferation of misinformation about a future vaccine.

This is fueling vaccine hesitancy and igniting wild conspiracy theories.

Mistrust in vaccines is on the rise around the world.

We have seen alarming reports of large segments of the population in some countries indicating their reluctance or even refusal to take a future COVID-19 vaccine.

In the face of this lethal disease, we must do our utmost to halt deadly misinformation.

We must also do far more to address the global fragilities that the virus has exposed.

Even before the pandemic, the world was veering far off course in efforts to eradicate poverty, achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and we were losing the battle against climate change.

Greenhouse gas concentrations reached new record highs in 2020.

The Northern Hemisphere has just experienced its hottest summer on record.

The world is burning, and recovery is our chance to get on track and tame the flames.

Recovery must be aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

Recovery must be green. Subsidizing fossil fuels and bailing out polluting industries means locking in bad patterns for decades to come.

Recovery must advance gender equality.

And recovery requires effective multilateralism.

On Monday, Member States will adopt a declaration marking the 75th anniversary of the United Nations and committing to a reinvigorated multilateralism.

They will also invite me to report on our common agenda for the future. This will be an important process of reflection and I will report back with analysis and recommendations.

Already, across this anniversary year, we have engaged in a global conversation – with surveys, polls, gatherings in person and now online. We placed special emphasis on the voices of young people.

And the results are striking.

People are thinking big – about transforming the global economy, accelerating the transition to zero carbon, ensuring universal health coverage, ending racial injustice and ensuring that decision-making is more open and inclusive.

And people are also expressing an intense yearning for international cooperation and global solidarity – and rejecting go-it-alone nationalist approaches and divisive populist appeals.

Now is the time to respond to these aspirations and to realize these aims.

In this 75th anniversary year, we face our own 1945 moment.

We must meet that moment.

We must show unity like never before to overcome today's emergency, get the world moving and working and prospering again, and uphold the vision of the Charter.

Thank you, and of course I am at your disposal to answer a few questions.