

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

ARTICLE FOR "DIPLOMATIC SERVICE AND PRACTICE" ISSUED BY THE
DIPLOMATIC ACADEMY OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION

We are living in a world of disquiet. People everywhere face the COVID-19 pandemic – a health crisis, economic disaster and human rights emergency rolled into one unprecedented challenge. We also confront a planetary emergency – accelerating climate change, growing pollution and collapsing biodiversity – that threatens the environment on which everyone's future depends. And we see protracted conflicts, pervasive gender discrimination and an alarming spread of hatred.

In these trying times, global cooperation is more important than ever as we strive to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals – the world's agreed blueprint for building a better future for all. As a founding member of the United Nations and a permanent member of the Security Council, the Russian Federation has always been a champion of the work of the Organization and of multilateralism. In today's complex and challenging international landscape, Russia will continue to have a critical role to play.

The COVID-19 pandemic

With the rollout of vaccines, there is some light at the end of the tunnel. I thank the Russian Federation for its research and development efforts, and its generous offer of vaccines for United Nations personnel.

Our immediate focus must be to ensure that everyone, everywhere, can be vaccinated as soon as possible. COVAX – the global vaccine equity mechanism – has started delivering vaccines, including to some of the

lowest-income countries. But many low-income countries have yet to receive a single dose. COVID-19 vaccines must be seen as a global public good. The world needs to unite to produce and distribute sufficient vaccines for all, which means at least doubling manufacturing capacity around the world.

The United Nations is also combatting the parallel plague of COVID-related misinformation, and calling for debt relief where needed, so that the world's most vulnerable countries have the liquidity and fiscal space needed to address the crisis. And we are pressing for a recovery that addresses the inequalities and fragilities that the pandemic has so starkly put on display, which feed global instability, discontent and social unrest. Recovery is our chance to re-engineer our future.

The threat of climate disruption.

The climate crisis is poised to reverse development gains, exacerbating poverty and conflict in all regions. We cannot let that happen. We need to make peace with nature and promote more ambitious climate action. That means an equal emphasis on reducing greenhouse emissions and promoting adaptation and resilience.

Today, vast sums are being mobilized to revitalize economies in the face of the pandemic. Those investments can place the world on a more sustainable path by advancing a just transition to renewable energy, creating green jobs and promoting green infrastructure.

There is growing momentum for net zero emissions, as many decision-makers from the public and private sectors have stepped up to make this pledge. Countries representing 73 per cent per cent of emissions have committed to net zero emissions by the middle of the century. But we



need all countries, all cities and all companies to do more to close the mitigation gap. I am pushing for the coalition to cover at least 90 per cent of emissions by the time of the next UN climate conference, COP26, in November.

G20 countries and main emitters must lead the way. I am calling on them to present more ambitious national climate plans in the next few months, with credible emissions cuts aligned with the Paris Agreement and the 1.5-degree objective. We need Nationally Determined Contributions with 2030 targets aligned to the 2050 net zero commitments, and we need to see the policies that will enable them both.

Phasing out coal is the single most important step we can take. Coal once brought cheap electricity to regions and vital jobs to communities. But coal's economic viability is declining. In virtually all markets, it is now cheaper to build new renewable energy capacity than new coal plants or to keep coal plants running.

I am calling on all governments, private companies and local authorities to take three steps: cancel all global coal projects in the pipeline; end international financing of coal plants; and define a coal phase-out trajectory while ensuring a just transition. Most studies estimate that despite inevitable job losses at the local level, the transition from coal to renewable energy will result in the net creation of millions of jobs by 2030.

We must also achieve a breakthrough on adaptation and resilience. Yet the adaptation financing gap remains huge. Donors and multilateral development banks should increase the share of adaptation finance from 20 per cent to at least 50 per cent by 2024. Adaptation cannot be the neglected half of the climate equation. Developed countries must meet all



finance commitments — including their pledge to mobilize \$100 billion annually for climate action in developing countries.

I welcome the Russian Federation's commitment to multilateral efforts on the climate crisis, as set out by President Putin at the Leaders Summit on Climate last April. We look to Russia to play its full part in the shift to green, sustainable energy, while recognizing the difficulties created by the present structure of the Russian economy, and its energy mix.

Conflict and the peace continuum.

As Yuri Gagarin famously said during his orbital flight: "Looking at the Earth from afar, you realize it is too small for conflict and just big enough for cooperation".

I welcome Russia's constructive engagement on nuclear disarmament. Nuclear weapons remain an existential threat to all.

But we must also be aware that conflicts around the world are becoming increasingly complex and protracted, and frequently associated with the spread of terrorism and violent extremism. A number of countries are in a vicious cycle in which conflict breeds poverty and fragility, which in turn decreases the resilience of these societies and the prospects for peace.

International conflict management mechanisms are stretched to the breaking point. Geostrategic divides and dysfunctional power relations are making conflict resolution more difficult. There is a widening disconnect between governments and their people, and declining public trust in institutions. And we see rising threats to democracy and growing anger at political establishments and elites.



In these volatile times, it has never been more urgent to get at the roots of these divisions and ills. I continue to pursue all possible diplomatic openings for political solutions to conflict. United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts continue to promote stability and help countries that are emerging from conflict avoid lapsing back into hostilities.

But if we are to help countries break out of these cycles over the longer term, we will need to put prevention at the forefront. We need to improve our ability to anticipate, prevent and prepare for major risks. States should uphold the Charter of the United Nations and abide by international law. They also need to invest in social cohesion, guarantee meaningful participation in decision-making, build transparent institutions, strengthen accountability, protect civic space, promote access to justice and uphold human rights and the rule of law. My Call to Action for Human Rights points the way on many of these key dimensions of prevention and peace.

Gender equality

One of the most pressing issues for human rights, and for sustainable development as a whole, is gender equality and the rights of women and girls.

COVID-19 has brought to light what is too often invisible: women are the essential workers keeping people and communities alive. Yet women have suffered higher job losses and been pushed into poverty at higher numbers. The pandemic has also sparked a parallel epidemic of gender-based violence, from violence in the home and online, to increased child marriage and sexual exploitation.



At the same time, the COVID-19 response has highlighted the power of women's leadership. Women leaders have kept prevalence rates lower, and countries on track for recovery. Indeed, there is a long and growing list of the transformative impacts of women's equal participation: larger investment in social protection; more transparent governance; more durable peace processes.

Gender equality is essentially a question of power -- and power remains predominantly in the hands of men. In many places, the very idea of gender equality has come under attack. As we recover from the pandemic, we must focus on five critical steps:

First, protect women's equal rights and repeal all discriminatory laws.

Second, ensure women's equal representation – from company boards to parliaments and beyond -- through special measures and quotas.

Third, advance women's economic inclusion through equal pay, job protection, targeted credit and investments in the care economy and social protection.

Fourth, immediately enact emergency response plans to address violence against women and girls.

Fifth, give space to the intergenerational transition that is under way and to the young people who are advocating for a more just, inclusive and equal world.

Women's equal leadership and representation is the game changer we need. It is time to change entrenched structures and models.

Cyberspace

During the pandemic, digital technologies have kept societies functioning and people connected. But the pandemic has also highlighted a



yawning gap in access to these tools. The world entered the digital age decades ago, but a core challenge remains: ensuring that people everywhere have affordable, meaningful and safe access to the Internet by 2030.

We need to strengthen cybersecurity and address the digital spread of hatred, exploitation and disinformation. This is especially urgent given the transnational nature of neo-Nazi and white supremacy movements.

And we need to come to terms with the use of our data. Much of the information gathered about us is used to positive ends. But we still don't know fully how this information is being collected, by whom or for what purposes. That data is being used commercially — for advertising, for marketing and for beefing up corporate bottom lines. It is being used to manipulate our perceptions, and shape our behaviour, without our ever realizing it. Governments can also exploit that data to control the behaviour of their own citizens, limit political participation and harass community activists, journalists and human rights defenders, thus violating the human rights of individuals or groups. There is naturally a growing demand for all of us to have a greater say about how data that concern us is used.

The importance of how we manage data will only grow with the rapid spread of Artificial Intelligence. AI has opened powerful possibilities. But biased data can lead to dangerous biases in applications. I continue to call for a ban on lethal autonomous weapons. Human beings must remain in control, and all human rights must be fully respected in the digital sphere.

Last year I launched a roadmap for digital cooperation – and the United Nations will continue to serve as a platform where stakeholders can come together to strengthen global governance in a domain where it is largely missing.



Cooperation

Looking forward, UN Member States, in their declaration on the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, called for a reinvigorated multilateralism and invited me to recommend ways to better pursue our common agenda. We have embarked on a process of deep reflection, and I will report in September. But already we know that it is not enough to proclaim the virtues of multilateralism; we must continue to show its added value.

We need a networked multilateralism, strengthening coordination among all global multilateral and regional organizations, including the international financial institutions and development banks.

And we need an inclusive multilateralism, based on deep interaction with civil society, cities, companies, local and regional authorities, academic institutions, philanthropic organizations and others. Governments cannot do it alone – and they are far from the only powers in today's world.

If we can do this, we will also build a multilateralism that is more effective, more trusted and more likely to advance the common good. The pandemic, in affecting all the world's people at the same time, has highlighted our essential interconnectedness. My hope is that this sense of shared vulnerability can translate into common purpose as we shape a healthier, more peaceful, inclusive, sustainable and equitable future on our one and only planet.

