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# At UN, Biden pledges

## At UN, Biden pledges new era of ‘relentless diplomacy’ to tackle global challenges

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*UN Photo/Cia Pak*

*President Joseph R. Biden Jr. of the United States of America addresses the general debate of the UN General Assembly's 76th session.*

In his inaugural address to the annual gathering of world leaders at the UN, United States President Joseph Biden on Tuesday called for a new era of global unity against the compounding crises of COVID-19, climate change and insecurity.

“Simply put, we stand...at an inflection point in history”, he said. “We must work together as never before”.

Mr. Biden assured leaders attending the UN General Assembly that the US intends to partner with allies to “help lead the world toward a more peaceful, prosperous future for all people”.

Noting that Governments must continue to work together to build on international law to “deliver equitable prosperity, peace and security for everyone”, he described the endeavour as being “as vital and important today as it was 76 years ago”.

### Ambition matters

President Biden defended his decision to withdraw US troops from Afghanistan, driving home a message that this has opened a new chapter of intensive American diplomacy.

The use of force should be “our tool of last resort, not our first”, he said, arguing in favour of recalibrating priorities away from two decades of wars toward newly emerging threats.

He underscored that the world must choose between democracy and autocracy, indicating the stark difference since the Taliban again took control of Kabul and reversed 20 years of democratic gains.

‘Dose of hope’

“Today, **many of our greatest concerns cannot be solved or even addressed by the force of arms**”, he stated, reminding that “bombs and bullets cannot defend against [COVID-19](#) or its future variants”.

Lamenting some 4.5 million COVID-related deaths worldwide, the President referred to each as “an individual heartbreak” and upheld the need to “act now to get shots in arms as fast as possible and expand access to oxygen, tests, treatments to save lives around the world.”

He noted that US planes carrying vaccines have landed in more than 100 countries, offering a “dose of hope”, and said that he would be announcing additional vaccine commitments soon.

Mr. Biden also called for a new global health mechanism to “finance global health security” and a global health threat council to stay ahead of emerging pandemics.

Further, he said that at a time when nearly one in three people globally do not have access to adequate food — adequate food, just last year — the US is committing to rallying partners to address immediate malnutrition and to ensure that the world could be fed sustainably feed for decades to come.

“To that end, the **United States is making a \$10 billion commitment to end hunger and invest in food systems** at home and abroad,” President Biden announced.

Back in the international fold

Without criticizing his predecessor, the President stressed that the Biden Administration

has shifted away from an ‘America first’ style of diplomacy towards one of multilateralism.

“**We’re back at the table in international forums**, especially the United Nations, to focus attention and to spur global action on shared challenges”, he said, pointing to the US’s reengagement with the UN World Health Organization ([WHO](#)); participation in the [COVAX](#) vaccine initiative “to deliver life-saving vaccines around the world”; re-joining the Paris climate agreement; and preparing to run for a seat on the [Human Rights Council](#) next year.

Zeroing-in on the “borderless” climate crisis, Mr. Biden said that **all nations need to bring “their highest possible ambitions” to the UN climate conference ([COP26](#))** in November.

He also elaborated on a new US goal under the [Paris Agreement](#) to reduce greenhouse gases to 50 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030 and talked about investments under discussion with Congress, including for “green infrastructure and electric vehicles”.

Relentless diplomacy

The US President said that the world faced a choice between the democratic values espoused by the West and the disregard for them by authoritarian Governments.

He upheld that the US was moving into a “new era of relentless diplomacy” as it tackles emerging technological threats and the expansion of autocratic nations.

While vowing not to pursue “a new Cold War, or a world divided into rigid blocks”, Mr. Biden maintained that the US would oppose attempts by “stronger countries to dominate weaker ones”.

The United States will “lead with our values and our strength to stand up for our allies and our friends”, he said.

And as the US seeks to rally the world to action, Mr. Biden assured, “**we will lead not just with the example of our power, but God willing, the power of our example**”.