



### [The 77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly Takes Place in New York](#)

From Tuesday of this week until next Monday, well over 100 delegates from around the world are meeting at UN headquarters in New York City for the 77th session of the United Nations General Assembly. This year's assembly is expected to be a solemn and focused one considering the depth of crisis in which much of the world finds itself. The issue expected to take center stage is unsurprisingly the war in Ukraine. Thus far, this has certainly been the case. Before general debate even began Tuesday morning, conversation got heated last week regarding whether Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy should be allowed to give a speech via video call. Opponents of the notion rejected it based on the premise that it was a biased decision and courtesy that had not and would not be extended to other countries. Accordingly, Belarus proposed an amendment that struck the language concerning the war in Ukraine from the motion and added language that would allow other countries to take the same action in the future. The amendment was thrown out and the motion passed overwhelmingly, 101-7. As such, President Zelenskyy gave his address to the general assembly on Wednesday. The firmly-worded speech accused neutral nations of taking the side of Russia, in addition to calling for Russia to be economically and physically (via visa restrictions) cut off from the rest of the world. Zelenskyy also suggested the formation of a tribunal regarding Russia. The Ukraine-Russia conflict has remained a major talking point in the speeches of almost all world leaders. In his address Wednesday afternoon, U.S. President Biden spent most of his time on the invasion, again reaffirming the United States' staunch support of Ukraine. In addition to the violence that the war has imposed upon the world, it has also caused dramatic, worldwide food shortages. Certain countries that make up the Horn of Africa, for example, that heavily rely on Ukraine and Russia for food, have been left with nothing, and on top of that, the conflict has diverted almost all relief funds from international actors towards the war effort and away from other places that need it. Representatives from several regions – including Asia, Africa, and Latin America – have expressed discontent that their countries' issues are being pushed aside solely in favor of the plight of Ukraine.

In his opening remarks, Secretary General António Guterres spoke passionately about climate change and the deteriorating state of human rights across the globe. Other speakers spoke on these same matters at length, indicating that they will also play an important role at this year's conference.

Though not as popular, there were also a wide variety of other issues brought up Tuesday morning. Senegalese President Macky Sall, for instance, called for the UN to do more to combat terrorism in Africa so that Africans may actually benefit from their relationship with the UN. On Wednesday, Côte D'Ivoire President Alassane Ouattara reiterated the importance of the fight against terrorism in Africa.

In addition to what has already been said, it is also expected that the issues of Iran and Afghanistan will find their fair share of the spotlight over the course of this week. Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi is in attendance and also spoke during yesterday's action-packed session. Raisi stressed that he is serious about nuclear negotiations, but wary that the United States is an untrustworthy entity. On a separate note, he weighed in on the Ukraine-Russia deliberations by citing what he viewed as a hypocritical view of the invasion shared by most countries. In his mind, much of the Middle East, including Iran, has been similarly invaded by entities such as the United States with no cause. Raisi has a long track record of human rights violations, as does Iran as a whole, where a young woman was beaten to death last week for supposedly violating laws about head coverings. Secretary General Guterres has said that he intends to speak with Raisi about both this and the ubiquitous nuclear deal negotiations.



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As for Afghanistan, none of its leaders will be in attendance, as they are Taliban members with international travel bans. However, the government there has been looking to become a greater part of the international scene, which is, of course, concerning. Just last week, the U.S. pledged \$3.5 billion to the Afghani people, with the intent of somehow keeping the money away from the Taliban. Naheed Farid, a former member of the Afghani government, said in an interview that the situation for women and girls is hitting an all-time low, and has petitioned the international community to come to their aid.

Surely more topics of discussion will come to the forefront as the talks progress, but one can be sure that the overarching theme of this year's session will be international cooperation and the rebuilding of important connections following a three-year in-person hiatus caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the words of Guterres, "our world is in peril – and paralyzed." The UN General Assembly's 77th session will work to address that.