

Secretary-General's remarks at the 3rd Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation

Your Excellency President Xi Jinping,

Congratulations, and thank you very much for your kind invitation and for your steadfast commitment to multilateralism, to international cooperation and to the United Nations.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

This third Belt and Road Forum recognizes a central truth.

Without infrastructure –including “info-structure”– there can be no development.

And without development support, many developing countries will be starved of the infrastructure they desperately need.

Infrastructure is the foundation of everyday life for people and economies.

From drinking water and basic sanitation, to electricity, connectivity and internet access. From public services like schools and hospitals, to modern roads, bridges, tunnels, harbours and railways that keep people and goods moving.

And yet, billions in the developing world lack access to these basic systems.

That is why this meeting and the Belt and Road are so important.

This infrastructure crisis comes as people are facing a cauldron of challenges across our efforts to advance peace, sustainable development and human rights.

This includes soaring costs of living, rising inequalities and the existential threat of climate breakdown.

Meanwhile, progress on the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement is slipping into reverse.

We must find and fund ways to generate economic growth, create decent jobs, transform energy systems, and advance sustainable solutions for the 21st century.

Infrastructure is a crucial pathway.

We can and must turn the infrastructure emergency into the infrastructure opportunity.

Now, the Belt and Road demonstrates that we have a historic opportunity to build modern, green cities, communities and transportation and power systems that place resilience and sustainability at the heart.

That deliver services and decent jobs for people in a sustainable manner.

And I see the Belt and Road Initiative's potential to make valuable contributions in two key areas of action.

First — by advancing economic sustainability in developing countries.

Let us look at the context they face.

Many developing countries are confronting dramatic financial challenges, drowning in debt and without fiscal space to implement the sustainable development goals.

It is time to make the global financial architecture truly global and fit for the 21st century.

At last month's SDG Summit, world leaders endorsed a commitment to reforming the global financial architecture to make it reflect the world economy of today, not the one of 1945.

Leaders also agreed that we can take actions right now to promote effective debt relief mechanisms — including by ensuring that countries are not locked into unsustainable debt — and channelling emergency financial support towards those countries that need it most.

And leaders also supported an SDG Stimulus of \$500 billion per year. Now, in this context, a dramatic context for the developing countries, the relevance of the Belt and Road Initiative is undeniable. It has included nearly \$1 trillion in cumulative investments across more than 3,000 projects around the world.

I underline the importance of the decision of President Xi Jinping to align the Global Development Initiative with the Sustainable Development Goals.

The second key area for action is by advancing environmental sustainability.

The Belt and Road Initiative recognizes that infrastructure for infrastructure's sake is not enough.

The Belt and Road is an important instrument to make key investments a reality, driven by clear domestic demand, and in line with international best practices.

Investments that enable resilience and adaptation across national and local planning.

Investments that can help keep our 1.5 degree global warming limit within reach.

And investments that don't leave countries with stranded assets and the polluted dead ends of the past.

I recognize the efforts of the Green Silk Road initiative to anchor investments in sustainable solutions – an area in which the UN is poised to support.

Our Climate Solidarity Pact calls on big emitters to make extra efforts to cut emissions, and support emerging economies to do the same.

And the Acceleration Agenda I have proposed urges governments to hit fast-forward on their energy transition.

We need developed countries reaching net zero as close as possible to 2040, and emerging economies as close as possible to 2050, according to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in light of different national circumstances.

But developing countries will need massive support for a fair, equitable and just energy transition towards renewables while providing affordable electricity to all.

Belt and Road investments can help drive this progress, and support developing economies as they make the shift from planet-killing energy sources towards clean, renewable energy.

We all agree that development cannot come at the expense of the air we breathe, the water we drink, or the biodiversity that defines our planet's health.

Yesterday's show, showing harmony between humankind and nature was an reminder to us all.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Together, with the contributions of the Belt and Road Initiative, we can turn the infrastructure emergency into an infrastructure opportunity, supercharge the implementation of the sustainable development goals, and deliver hope and progress for billions of people and the planet we share.

Mr. President,

With your permission and facing this august assembly, I feel, as Secretary-General of the United Nations, the obligation to say a few words about the catastrophe unfolding in the Middle East.

The region is on the precipice.

Immediately before departing for Beijing, I made two urgent humanitarian appeals:

To Hamas, for the immediate and unconditional release of the hostages.

To Israel, to immediately allow unrestricted access of humanitarian aid to respond to the most basic needs of the people of Gaza - the overwhelming majority of whom are women and children.

I am fully aware of the deep grievances of the Palestinian people after 56 years of occupation. But, as serious as these grievances are, they cannot justify the acts of terror against civilians committed by Hamas on October 7 that I immediately condemned.

But those attacks cannot justify the collective punishment of the Palestinian people.

Each of my two humanitarian appeals have a value in themselves.

They are not bargaining chips. They are simply the right thing to do.

And I am horrified by the hundreds of people killed at Al Ahli hospital this same day, in Gaza, by a strike that I strongly condemned earlier today.

I call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire to provide sufficient time and space to help realize my two appeals and to ease the epic human suffering we are witnessing.

Too many lives - and the fate of the entire region - hang in the balance.

May the spirit of this meeting help those that need to find peace.

Thank you.