



UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres opened the first day of the general debate of the 73rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly with a warning that trust in political establishments was at breaking point and urged world leaders to renew commitment to multilateral action to resolve global problems.

“Universal values are being eroded. Democratic principles are under siege. The rule of law is being undermined,” Guterres told leaders gathered at United Nations Headquarters in New York. “Multilateralism is under fire precisely when we need it most,” Guterres added.

The Secretary-General warned that populism was on the rise, cooperation was becoming more difficult and that the risks of confrontation could increase.

“Together, as guardians of the common good, we also have a duty to promote and support a reformed and strengthened multilateral system,” Guterres said. “We need renewed commitment to a rules-based order, with the United Nations at its centre and with the different institutions and treaties that bring the (UN) Charter to life.

The Secretary-General outlined a series of risks faced by the planet, including the ``existential threat of climate change; technological advances that may disrupt labour markets; the prospect of weapons that can attack targets on their own, among others.

Guterres was able to point to some positive global developments, including the peace agreement between Ethiopia and Eritrea, steps taken by Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to resolve their differences as well as the approval of compacts on refugees and migrants.

However, the Secretary-General insisted that world leaders needed to take steps to restore broken trust, to ensure solidarity, uphold dignity for all people and to ``reinvigorate our multilateral project.”

In the coming days, scores of world leaders will take the floor during the general debate which runs through October 1st under the theme: *Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies.*