
Biden at the UN: “A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought”

(from New York) The war in Ukraine remains the focal point of keynote speeches delivered by Heads of State and Government at the 77th UN General Assembly. US President Joe Biden likewise devoted the opening part of his speech to the “brutal, needless war, a war chosen by one man, to be very blunt.” The President made no concessions in his condemnation of Russia, which “shamelessly violated the core tenets of the United Nations Charter”: “a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council invaded its neighbour, attempted to erase a sovereign state from the map.” The “sham referenda to try to annex parts of Ukraine,” is likewise defined a “violation of the UN Charter”, while military reservists are being called to join the fight. “Putin claims he had to act because Russia was threatened. But no one threatened Russia, and no one other than Russia sought conflict”, Biden said addressing the leaders of world countries. “Like you”, he said, “the United States wants this war to end on just terms, on terms we all signed up for: that you cannot seize a nation’s territory by force,” and called on world Countries to be determined, “clear, firm, and unwavering” in the support to Ukraine. The UN reform was also a key theme of Biden’s speech. “The time has come for this institution to become more inclusive so that it can better respond to the needs of today’s world”, said the US President, illustrating his proposal, namely, to increase the number of both permanent and non-permanent representatives of the Council, and include permanent seats for countries in Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. With regard to the power of veto, he said that all countries in the Council, “including the United States, should consistently uphold and defend the U.N. Charter and refrain — refrain from the use of the veto, except in rare, extraordinary situations, to ensure that the Council remains credible and effective.” **The food and climate crises** are issues that the US is continuing to tackle with substantial investments at home and abroad. President Biden said the climate agenda embraced by the US, is a “bold” one because it acknowledges the fact that “the human cost of climate change” spares no one. “Climate diplomacy is not a favour to the United States or any other nation, and walking away hurts the entire world”, Biden remarked. On the subject of food insecurity and hunger, the president announced an additional \$2.9 billion in U.S. support for humanitarian assistance. Once again Biden did not refrain from a harsh condemnation of the Russian president’s actions. “Russia is pumping out lies, trying to pin the blame for the crisis — the food crisis — onto sanctions”, Biden said. He remarked: “Let me be perfectly clear about something: Our sanctions explicitly allow — explicitly allow Russia the ability to export food and fertilizer. No limitation. It’s Russia’s war that is worsening food insecurity, and only Russia can end it.” **China and nuclear war** are the other two hot issues that Biden addressed in his speech. “We do not seek conflict. We do not seek a Cold War. We do not ask any nation to choose between the United States or any other partner”, Biden said with regard to the competition with Beijing, but voiced concern about “an unprecedented, concerning nuclear buildup without any transparency.” “A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought”, said the US President, highlighting Russia’s continuous “disturbing trends” and “irresponsible threats” aimed at conquering Ukrainian territory. Following an overview of the world’s hot spots, from Iran to the Israeli-Palestinian situation, Biden concluded his speech on an optimistic note and described the UN as “an act of dauntless hope”, that came into being while the ashes of the world war were still smouldering and the horrors of the Holocaust very much alive. Remembering the founders of the UN, the US president reiterated that “they had every right to believe only the worst of humanity. Instead, they reached for what was best in all of us, and they strove to build something better: enduring peace; comity among nations; equal rights for every member of the human family; cooperation for the advancement of all humankind.” Biden wishes this for the world’s countries, but he knows that his country will be the first testing ground, and the upcoming Midterm elections will decide the future of his agenda.

