

The General Assembly of the United Nations (UNGA)



What is the United Nations General Assembly?

The United Nations General Assembly is the main deliberative body of the UN. It is one of six organs of the UN, and makes decisions on important questions concerning peace and security.

The UNGA was established in 1945 under the Charter of the United Nations, and comprises all 193 members of the UN.

The UNGA is also made up of various boards, commissions, committees, councils, panels and working groups. The subject of these sub-bodies focuses on both the running of the General Assembly and discussion of priorities and issues.

Who is the President of the General Assembly?

Ahead of each session of the GA, a new President is elected. The President of the 73rd General Assembly is María Fernanda Espinosa, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ecuador. Out of 73 Presidents, she's only the fourth woman and the first Latin American woman ever to hold the office. Learn more about the women who have held that position with [UN News's photo story](#).

What is the General Debate?

Every year the representatives from each member state - often the head of state - take turns to address the assembly in a General Debate lasting five days.

Each speech is allotted 15 minutes, although they can overrun. The longest speech in UN General Assembly history was made by Cuba's then-Prime Minister, Fidel Castro lasting for more than four hours.

In 2006, Venezuela's President, Hugo Chavez, labelled the then-US President, George W. Bush as "the devil," saying the podium still "smells of sulphur" from Mr. Bush's speech the day before.

In 2009, Libya's Muammar Qaddafi, reading from a sheet of handwritten notes, exceeded his allotted time by 85 minutes, speaking for more than an hour and a half, in a furious rant against the Security Council.

According to Guinness World Records, the longest statement made at the UN (not the General Assembly) was given by V.K. Krishna Menon of India. His statement to the Security Council was given during three meetings on 23 and 24 January 1957. According to the times listed on the meeting records, the meetings lasted more than 8 hours.

What was the theme of the UN General Assembly General Debate 2018?

Each year the General debate is given a theme for discussion. The 2018 theme was "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies." It was announced by this year's president as a part of her key aims.

Who speaks first at the General Debate?

The general debate, is not *actually* a debate. Member States take turns delivering speeches and are given a right of reply when required. Since the early years of the GA, the first country to speak has been Brazil because, according to the UN Protocol and Liaison Services, no one seemed to want to be the first to speak, and Brazil went first on several occasions, which then became a tradition.

The second spot goes to the host country (the US), and then the order of speakers follows a complex algorithm reflecting level of representation, geographical balance, the order in which the request to speak was recorded, and other considerations.

When does the UNGA meet?

The UNGA meets from September to December each year, and then from January to August as required. Although there is great fanfare around the big gathering of nations each September, the discussions that begin at the main general assembly continue throughout [the year within six committees](#). The UNGA allocates items to the committees by subject, from disarmament to climate change and everything in between. Once the committees have met, smaller working groups are formed to hammer out details.

Where is the UNGA?

The UNGA takes place in the UN's permanent headquarters in New York, where it has been held since October 1952.