

International Law Day (26 October 2020)

“The UN@75: International Law and the Future we want”

The United Nations, International Law and Climate Change: Looking back/Moving forward

Patrícia Galvão Teles

Professor of International Law, Autonomous University of Lisbon

Excellencies

Distinguished delegates

Ladies and gentlemen

It is with great honour that I have accepted the invitation to participate in this virtual event devoted to commemorating 75 years of the United Nations.

My intervention shall focus one of the key priorities identified in the global UN75 survey: climate change. It will highlight also certain areas where two priorities – climate change and human rights - intersect.

Before starting, allow me to clarify that I will not attempt to deal with the specifics of the climate change legal regime. I propose, instead, to take a macro approach to see how the UN and international law have been able to address climate change – which has been termed the defining challenge of our times - and how it will have to continue to evolve within the international community.

Since its foundation 75 years ago, the Organization has lived unceasingly. Looking back, its achievements and impact are remarkable.

Not only the UN has endured longer than any other international organization, but it has also created many specialized agencies.

Mr. Chairperson,

This has certainly been the case with regard to the legal regime

International law is a powerful vehicle for change and the UN has been a catalyst for that change as a global legal forum. Human rights and self-determination are important testimonies of that. And so is now climate change.

When the UN was created in 1945, climate change was

Charter. The path towards transformative change is not an easy one, but the alternative is worse; much worse."

Mr. Chairperson,

Without question, international law will have to continue to be better implemented and

Mr. Chairperson,

The global consultation launched in 2020 to mark the 75th anniversary, represents the most ambitious effort to date to understand expectations of international cooperation and of the UN. The answers from over a million people from all countries provide unique insights into what the public wants at this challenging time for the world.

Key findings show that:

- Across regions, ages and social groups, respondents were broadly united in their priorities for the future.

- Looking to that