



CUTS International *Global Affairs*

News Wrap #95, September 2025- Second Fortnightly

When Words Ring Hollow: The UN at 80 and the Crisis of Multilateralism

The United Nations turned 80 this year. Eight decades of peacekeeping mandates, climate summits, and solemn declarations. Yet at UNGA's high-level week, the verdict was decidedly mixed: admiration for the ideal, frustration with the reality.

President Trump spent nearly an hour lecturing world leaders, questioning whether the UN should even exist, calling it a producer of "empty words". Ukrainian President Zelensky was equally scathing about the body's inaction as his country bleeds into its fourth year of war. The Middle East burns on, Ukraine grinds forward, and the UN issues statements about statements.

But let us not be too quick to write the obituary. As Ruchira Kamboj, India's former Permanent Representative, reminds us: the UN reflects the world it serves—messy, contradictory, and deeply political. Its 80th birthday is less about the institution's failures than about what we, its member states, have made of it. U Thant navigated the Cuban Missile Crisis and championed decolonisation when the odds were impossible. His legacy, newly examined through declassified archives, offers a roadmap for principled multilateralism—if anyone cares to follow it.

Meanwhile, the geopolitical tectonic plates continue their grinding shift. Palestinian statehood dominated Day 1 of UNGA, with France, the UK, Canada, Australia, and Portugal moving to recognise Palestine. Israel's strike on Qatar two weeks prior catalysed the Saudi-Pakistani mutual defence pact—a genuine game changer in Middle Eastern power dynamics.

Syria's Al-Shara spoke of transformation "from an exporter of crisis to an opportunity for peace" after December's overthrow of the Assad dynasty. The E3—France, Germany, and the UK reimposed snapback sanctions on Iran for breaching the 2015 nuclear deal. And China's Xi Jinping, responding directly to Trump's anti-renewable rhetoric, reaffirmed Beijing's climate targets: peak emissions by 2030, net zero by 2060. Ambitious? Perhaps. Achievable? The jury is still out.

Beneath these headline dramas, a quieter but equally significant pattern emerges: Gen Z uprisings. From Kenya to Togo, Nepal to Indonesia and Bangladesh, young people are torching parliaments and confronting armies. Different triggers, same rage: a generation refusing to inherit a broken world from leaders who cannot or will not fix it.

Amid these global turbulence, bilateral and regional cooperation offers glimmers of constructive engagement. CUTS International, in partnership with the Ministry of Defence, India, will organise

an India–Australia Defence Industry Business Roundtable in Sydney on October 10th, chaired by the Hon' Defence Minister of India—a tangible step in Indo–Pacific strategic alignment.

Similarly, CUTS International with Chintan Research Foundation is convening a roundtable in New Delhi on October 15th to shape India's strategic vision ahead of its 2026 BRICS Presidency, focusing on South–South cooperation as the expanded grouping seeks to redefine global economic governance.

The choice before us is stark. Do we reform multilateral institutions to reflect 21st-century realities, or do we watch them crumble into irrelevance as unilateral actions and regional pacts fill the void? Can the UN at 80 find the courage U Thant once embodied, or will it remain a theatre for speeches while the world burns?

The answer may lie not in New York conference rooms but in the streets of Kathmandu, Kenya, and Jakarta—where a generation is demanding that "empty words" give way to genuine action.

Purushendra Singh
Editor

***P.S.:** As ASEAN leaders gather in Malaysia on October 27–28 for their summit, the question looms: Can Southeast Asia chart an independent course, or will the region remain a chessboard for others' ambitions? With the South China Sea still simmering and economic integration stalling, this summit will test whether ASEAN's centrality is principle or pretence.*

Message for our Readers

This is the 96th edition of the fortnightly news wrap from the Centre, which carries select published news or comments on a relevant issue. There are equally important issues that may have been overlooked to keep the news wrap short and swiftly readable.

This newsletter contains copyrighted material whose use has not been specifically authorised by the copyright owners. Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS) is making these articles available in our efforts to advance understanding of bilateral trade and economic issues. We believe that this constitutes a 'fair use' of the copyrighted material as provided for in Article 10 of the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works (Paris Text 1971) and Section 107 of the U.S. Copyright Law. If anybody wishes to use materials from this publication for purposes that go beyond 'fair use', s/he must obtain permission from the copyright owner. CUTS will not draw any profit from this publication, since it is solely for informative and educational purposes.

Readers are encouraged to send their views and suggestions to: cutsglobal@cuts.org



U.S. to impose 100% tariff on movies made outside the country

President Trump announced a 100% tariff on all foreign-made movies, aiming to protect the U.S. film industry. The move sparked confusion among studios and legal experts, raising concerns over enforcement, global co-productions, and potential impact on international box-office revenues.



- [LG Electronics to sell 15% stake in Indian unit under IPO process](#) | The Economic Times
 - [China urges Japan to stop putting Chinese firms on export control list](#) | Korea JoongAng Daily
 - [US tariffs threaten \\$3.1 bn Singapore pharma exports, trade talks continue](#) | Business Standard
 - [Germany approves new arms deliveries to Israel despite partial export freeze](#) | Türkiye Today
-

Strategic Issues



Pentagon review reportedly confirms Aukus submarines pact is safe

A Pentagon review reportedly confirms the \$368bn Aukus submarine deal remains intact, with the US set to sell three nuclear-powered submarines to Australia from 2032. Australian leaders express confidence, despite ongoing scrutiny under Trump's "America-first" agenda



- [Completion of UN Sanctions Snapback on Iran](#) | U.S Department of State
- [Ex-Pakistan army officer alleges state orchestrated APS Peshawar attack and other domestic terror operations: Report](#) | MSN
- [A sentinel of the skies: After 62 years in service, IAF bids farewell to MiG-21; iconic fighter jet takes final bow](#) | The Times of India
- [Israel tells Palestinians to leave Gaza City and says anyone staying will be considered militants](#) | PBS

Energy and Climate



India just tabled a major challenge to the world's biggest economies at the WTO

India has challenged the U.S., EU, and others at the WTO over their green subsidies, arguing they distort global trade and disadvantage developing nations. India seeks fair rules that ensure climate action without harming equitable economic growth.



- [Solar power offers a ray of hope in the Middle East's least electrified country](#) | Arab News
- [China leads nations with new climate plans, defying U.S. climate denial](#) | NBC News
- [Namibia deploys army to fight wildfire burning third of Etosha game reserve](#) | The Guardian
- [The Amazon's Trees Might Be More Resilient to Climate Change Than We Thought](#) | Smithsonian Magazine

Geo-Politics



Reform or Perish: United Nations at an existential crossroads

The United Nations faces an existential crisis, pressured by BRICS and the OIC to reform its outdated structure, funding, and representation. Without changes to the Security Council, budget system, and agency efficiency, the UN risks losing global relevance

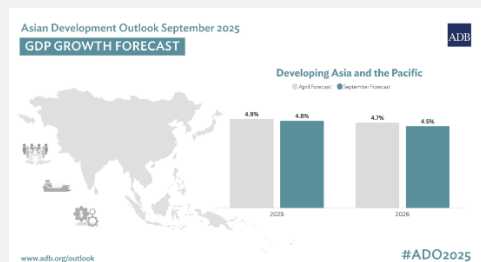


- [Trump's 20-point Gaza peace plan in full](#) | BBC
- [Japan Sri Lanka Summit Boosts Ties with 3 Key Pacts](#) | South Asian Desk
- [From weapons to military training: Tracking French support for Ukraine](#) | France24
- [Britain, Canada and Australia formally recognise a Palestinian state, deepening Israel's isolation](#) | CNN



Developing Asia and the Pacific's Growth to Dip Amid New Global Trade Environment

The ADB has revised its growth forecast for developing Asia and the Pacific downward to 4.7% for 2024, citing a weaker global trade environment and sluggish demand from major economies like China. This marks a slight dip from the previous projection of 4.8%.



- [COAS behaving like store manager': Pakistan senator blasts Munir's rare earth pitch to Trump](#) | MSN
- [UAE sovereign wealth fund underscores China's commitment](#) | Nikkie Asia
- [Resilient World Economy Set for Tariff Hit in 2026, OECD Says](#) | Bloomberg
- [Accelerating Investment: Challenges and Policies](#) | World Bank Report



‘Children are bound to die’: Corruption, aid cuts and violence fuel a hunger crisis in South Sudan

South Sudan is facing a severe hunger crisis, with over half its population—about 7 million people—experiencing acute food insecurity. The crisis is driven by ongoing violence, displacement, climate shocks, and deep-rooted corruption that hampers aid delivery and government response.



- [Starving children screaming for food as US aid cuts unleash devastation and death across Myanmar](#) | AP News

CUTS EVENT