

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**VIDEO MESSAGE TO THE THEOPHANO FOUNDATION**

**Thessaloniki, 9 November 2023**

Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the women and men of the United Nations, it is an honour to accept the Empress Theophano Prize.

I profoundly thank you for this recognition of United Nations staff working around the clock and around the world.

Many are in remote and dangerous locations risking their lives.

All are dedicated to serving humanity to promote peace, advance sustainable development, protect the most vulnerable, uphold human rights, and build bridges of understanding.

Dear Friends.

Our world is facing great trials and tests.

War has returned to the European continent with the Russian invasion of Ukraine. And all around the globe, old tensions fester while new risks emerge.

Democracy is under threat and authoritarianism is on the march.

Inequalities are widening, tensions are rising, and our planet is burning.

The Sustainable Development Goals – our blueprint for peace and prosperity on a healthy planet – are slipping from reach.

No country can meet these challenges alone.

We need greater unity and cooperation, rooted in mutual respect and solidarity.

And we need political will and leadership.

Yet through the dark clouds, I see rays of hope.

I see hope in the young people around the world working every day for a better tomorrow.

In the women and girls leading and fighting for those still being denied their basic human rights.

And I see hope in the humanitarian heroes rushing to deliver lifesaving aid whenever and wherever disaster or conflict strikes.

The United Nations stands with them all.

Dear friends,

The only path forward is the path we walk together as one human family. Rich in diversity, equal in dignity and rights, united in solidarity.

Together, we can build an alliance of peace that spans the global and the local to meet the tests of our time.

This spirit of forging unity across geographies and cultures is the legacy of Empress Theophano – and it remains the guiding goal of the United Nations.

To bridge divides, repair relations, and rebuild trust.

To expand opportunities and leave no one behind.

And to renew our commitment to cooperation and nurture the courage to compromise.

At this time of division and strife, this award will inspire us to keep striving towards a more just, sustainable, and peaceful future for all.

Thank you again for this recognition. Sas efcharistó.

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