



25 September 2013 – As the General Assembly's annual General Debate picks up again today, political leaders and senior Government officials gathered at United Nations Headquarters in New York will continue discussions on shaping the world's next development agenda, which will aim to protect the planet and promote equity, justice and prosperity for all people.

However, the crisis in Syria and Iran's nuclear programme were also high on the agenda of world leaders addressing the General Debate yesterday. Iran's new President, [Hassan Rouhani](#), foreswore the production of nuclear weapons, reasserted his country's right to peaceful nuclear enrichment and proposed immediate "time-bound" talks to resolve the issue.

Speaking hours after United States President Barack Obama told the same gathering that he was directing US Secretary of State John Kerry to pursue a diplomatic course with Iran on the

matter, Mr. Rohani said: "I listened carefully to the statement made by President Obama today at the General Assembly. Commensurate with the political will of the leadership in the United States and hoping that they will refrain from following the short-sighted interest of warmongering pressure groups, we can arrive at a framework to manage our differences," Mr. Rouhani said.

French President [François Hollande](#) called for a strong UN resolution on the use of chemical weapons in Syria, including guarantees that the Security Council can take up the issue at any time and act under Chapter VII of the UN Charter in case of Syrian non-compliance with its commitments . He also demanded "that those who committed these crimes must be brought to justice."

Brazil traditionally kicks off the General Debate ahead of the host country, the United States. President [Dilma Rousseff](#) urged the United Nations to play a leading role in protecting Internet users from illegal interception of communications and data, and decried recent allegations of electronic information spying as "serious violations of human rights".

Swedish Prime Minister [Fredrik Reinfeldt](#) addressed the Post-2015 Global Development Agenda and insisted that gender equality, democracy and free trade are vital for human and economic development.

"These areas have the capacity to influence developments in many other areas at the same time," he said. "Educating girls and women leads directly to an increase in a country's economic output," he stressed. "Educated mothers place higher value on schooling their own children. Closing the gap between male and female employment rates increases a country's GDP (gross domestic product) substantially."

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