

"The Greeks have understood that there is no way of avoiding the implementation of the agreements (of 13th July) without risking something worse"

Author: Georges Prévelakis



In an interview for the Foundation Georges Prevelakis comments on the results of the Greek general elections and the victory clinched by Alexis Tsipras. He also addresses the measures negotiated in exchange for a 3rd rescue plan and which the government will have to implement very quickly. He also mentions the immigration situation in Greece.

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Elections :

Alexis Tsipras (SYRIZA) wins the Greek general election



Outgoing Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras (SYRIZA) won the general election that took place in Greece on 20th September with 35.46% of the vote and 145 seats. He drew ahead of Evangelos Meimarakis (ND) who won 28.10% of the vote and 75 seats. Golden Dawn (XA), a far right party came third with 6.99% of the vote and 18 seats. PASOK followed this with 6.23% and 17 seats, the Communist Party (KKE) 5.55% and 15 seats, To Potami (The River) a centrist party 4.09% and 11 seats, the Independent Greeks (ANEL), a populist right-wing party and member of the outgoing government coalition 3.63% and 10 seats, the Centrist Union (EK) 3.49% and 9 seats. Turnout was very low at 56.14%. Alex Tsipras indicated that he was going to continue his coalition with ANEL. He will have to implement the reforms promised in exchange for the third rescue plan of 86 billion € negotiated at the end of July... [Read more](#)

Migration :

Meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Visegrad Group in Prague



On 21st September the Foreign Ministers of Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic met in Prague to review their point of view of the migratory crisis before the extraordinary European Council that is to take place on Wednesday. The Foreign Ministers of Luxembourg and Latvia also attended the meeting. Péter Szijjártó, the Hungarian Minister declared that obligatory quotas were not a solution to the migratory problem since this system would be impossible to implement. The countries of the Visegrad Group unanimously rejected the obligatory quota system. They said that the most important thing for the European Union was to recover control of its borders in Greece and the Schengen area... [Read more](#)

More than 500,000 migrants since the beginning of 2015



More than 500,000 migrants were detected on the EU's external borders from January to August this year in comparison to 280,000 in 2014 announced the European Agency Frontex on 15th September. Record figures were observed for five consecutive months including 156,000 who entered the EU in August said the agency, responsible for the Union's external borders. The Greek islands also registered record numbers in August with 88,000 ie 11 times the figure in the same month in 2014. Nearly three quarters of the people coming from Turkey were Syrians... [Read more](#)

213,200 asylum requests in the EU in the second quarter



The 28 EU Member States received 213,200 asylum requests between April and June 2015 i.e. a rise of 85% in comparison with the second quarter of 2014 announced Eurostat figures published on 18th September. Germany has recorded the highest number of new requests - 80,900 (38% of the EU total) ahead of Hungary (15%) and Austria (8%)... [Read more](#)

Appeal from intellectuals of Central Europe in support solidarity with the refugees



Nearly 100 intellectuals signed "An appeal from Central Europe" which calls on the authorities and the citizens of their countries to have greater understanding of the refugees. It shows their solidarity in the face of this "humanitarian catastrophe". Amongst the signatories are former Polish Presidents Bronislaw Komorowski and Aleksander Kwasniewski, former Hungarian Prime Ministers Gordon Bajnai and Lithuanian Andrius Kubilius and other representatives of the Baltic countries, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Croatia and Slovenia. They recalled their country was not responsible for the destabilisation and decline of the refugees' countries of origin but that Europe was built on a foundation of solidarity and as a result we had to stand by them... [Read more](#)

MEPs validate the relocation of an additional 120,000 asylum seekers



On 17th September MEPs supported an urgent proposal to relocate 120,000 asylum seekers from Italy (15,600), Greece (50,400) and Hungary (54,000) amongst the Member States of the EU. This number comes in addition to the initial figure of 40,000 asylum seekers, thereby bringing the total number of people to relocate to 160,000. They supported the Commission's proposal (without amending it) 370 votes in support, 134 against and 52 abstentions. They also approved a legislative resolution 372 votes in support, 124 against and 54 abstentions informing the Council that this approval is without prejudice to the position it will subsequently take on the proposal establishing a permanent crisis relocation mechanism... [Read more](#)

Germany sets up distribution centres for refugees



After a meeting with the 16 heads of regional government on 15th September, German Chancellor Angela Merkel declared that the Federal State was going to manage the distribution of refugees with the Länder. Moreover the Federal State is planning to create 40,000 places to accommodate refugees in initial reception centres. Angela Merkel will meet with the same heads of regional government on 24th September to decide the place, number and financing of these centres. This meeting is a priority for the city of Munich which has been overwhelmed by the influx of refugees and which is concerned about the organisation of the annual Oktoberfest which hosts some 6 million visitors yearly... [Read more](#)

Croatia partially closes its borders due to the inflow of refugees



Overwhelmed by the inflow of migrants the Croatian authorities closed seven of the eight cross points with Serbia on 17th September. According to the Croatian Home Affairs Ministry more than 11,000 refugees had entered Croatia via Serbia. After the total closure of the Serbo-Hungarian on 15th September Croatia has now become the new road to Europe. According to Croatian President Kolinda Grabar Kitarovic "to a certain degree matters are running out of control." The closure of the seven border posts between Serbia and Croatia is putting pressure on the EU whose heads of State and government are meeting on 23rd September to try and find a response to the migratory crisis... [Read more](#)

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Declaration by the French Prime Minister on the reception of refugees



During his speech to the National Assembly on 16th September French Prime Minister Manuel Valls announced that the French government had released 279 million euro devoted to the reception of refugees in 2016 and that 334 million euro were due to be spent for the same purpose in 2017. This money will notably allocated to initial reception, emergency accommodation, help to local communities and employing more personnel. Moreover 900 addition positions in the policeforce and in particular in the numbers of policemen on the borders are to be created. Manuel Valls also said that the government would not hesitate to reinstate border controls. He said that he wanted better cooperation in Europe asking immediately for the distribution via quotas be undertaken between European States... [Read more](#)

Hungary raises the barricades and builds a further fence on its Croatian border



Hungary has started to build a further barbed wire fence on its border with Croatia to protect itself from refugees aiming to travel to the EU, announced Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban on 18th September. "Work has started on a fence aiming towards the physical closure of the border (...) but this barrier did not prevent people from entering Hungary. The Serbo-Hungarian border was re-opened on 20th September... [Read more](#)

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Meeting of an extraordinary European Council on refugees



In a letter dated 18th September the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk invited the Member States to meet in an extraordinary Council on 23rd September. After an exchange of views with the President of the Parliament, Martin Schulz, the Member States will discuss their approach to the refugee crisis, help to be given to Member States on the borders, cooperation with the Western Balkans, with Turkey and the countries bordering Syria, budgetary assistance to the High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Food Programme, the implementation of conclusions on return and readmission, diplomatic work to achieve in response to the Syrian crisis... [Read more](#)

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Financial Crisis :

France's sovereign rating taken down to Aa2



On 18th September Moody's announced that it had taken down France's long term sovereign rating deeming that the country's growth prospects were due to remain low until the end of the decade. "The main driver of Moody's decision to downgrade France's government bond rating to Aa2 is the increasing clarity, in Moody's view, that French economic growth will remain low over the medium term, and the obstacle that this will pose for any material reversal in France's elevated debt burden in the foreseeable future..." [Read more](#)

Commission :

The Commission presents plan to help the long term unemployed back to work



On 17th September the Commission put guidelines forward to Member States to improve help given to return to work for the long term unemployed. More than 12 million people have been unemployed for over a year (ie double the 2007 figure), which represents around half of those unemployed. The proposals plan for the provision of an individual assessment and a professional integration agreement offering a concrete, personalised plan for a return to work. The proposals also advocate active

commitment by employers in partnerships with the public authorities... [Read more](#)

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The Commission has replaced the ISDS mechanism by the Investment Court System



On 16th September the European Commission approved the proposal for the new transparent litigation settlement system between investors and the States - the Investment Court System. This new system will replace the existing investor-to-state dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanism in all ongoing and future investment negotiations including in the EU/US discussions over the transatlantic trade and investment partnership (TTIP)... [Read more](#)

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Public consultation on citizenship



On 14th September during her inaugural speech at the "EU Citizenship and Justice" Conference in Luxembourg, European Commissioner Vera Jourova launched a public consultation in preparation for the 2016 European citizenship report. Citizens will be able to give their opinion on-line regarding common values, rights, democratic participation within the EU. During her speech the Commissioner also stressed the importance of freedom of movement in the Union... [Read more](#)

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Parliament :

The Commission's work programme in 2016: what the European Parliament wants



On 16th September MEPs adopted a non-legislative resolution, 408 votes in support, 182 against and 23 abstentions, on the Commission's 2016 work programme. They urge the Commission to show strong leadership and to have a clear political vision in order to rise to the challenges of energy supply, climate change, the transition to the digital economy, the creation of jobs, migration, the rule of democracy and fundamental law. The Commission will present and discuss its work programme 2016 with MEPs in Strasbourg on 29th October... [Read more](#)

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Council :

The Commission unveils financing of 500 million € in aid to farmers



On 15th September the Commissioner for Agriculture and Sustainable Development Phil Hogan presented the details of the 500 million € package of aid to farmers announced last week. The 28 Member States will receive total aid of 420 million € allocated fairly, in a targeted, effective manner in response to the problems experienced by the dairy and pork meat sector, "whilst providing the Member States with a maximum amount of flexibility in targeting this aid." Other measures such as new aid plan for private storage of dairy products and pork meat and the possibility of providing direct payments in advance have also been included... [Read more](#)

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"Environment" Council: joint goals for the COP21 conference



On 18th September the 28 Environment Ministers met in Brussels and agreed on their common goals in view of the Paris Conference COP21 on the climate. Amongst these goals we notably find a 40% reduction in greenhouse emissions by 2030 and 50% by 2050 in comparison with 1990 levels and carbon neutrality by 2100. They also approved the creation of a Market Stability Reserve (MSR) for the greenhouse gas emission trade system (EU ETS). Following this approval by the Council the decision was adopted on first reading. Market Stability Reserve will be established in 2018 and will be operational on January 1st 2019... [Read more](#)

The European Union extends sanctions against Russia



The Council has decided to extend the restrictive measures taken against Russia by 6 months in the wake of the latter's attack on Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence. The freezing of capital and travel bans affecting 149 people and 37 Russian entities were extended until 15th March 2016... [Read more](#)

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Diplomacy :

EU/South Korea Summit

On 15th September the 8th summit between the Republic of South



Korea and the EU took place in Seoul. Korea was represented by President Park Geun-hye and the EU by the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk and Cecilia Malmström, who represented the Commission. During the summit both sides agreed to complete the free-trade agreement adopted in 2011. They also agreed to step up political cooperation regarding climate change, the fight to counter terrorism, and relations with North Korea... [Read more](#)

Court of Justice :

The European Court of Justice's decision on "welfare tourism"



On 15th September the European Court of Justice declared that European countries could exclude citizens of other Member States from social benefits if the former remained out of work for too long. "The host Member of State can refuse to pay out any kind of benefit" if the citizen fail to find work after six months writes the Court in its press release. This decision is designed to prevent abuse. It aims to prevent people from turning to social tourism. The European Commission welcomed this decision qualifying it as a "major clarification.".. [Read more](#)

Germany :

No success without equality between men and women



As part of the G7 forum on 16th and 17th September German Chancellor Angela Merkel invited women from the economic and scientific areas, as well as from civil society to a discussion. She concluded that women must play an even greater role in politics, the economy and society. The German Chancellor added that society and the economy would not achieve success if gender equality was not achieved. The first issue in this dialogue addressed vocational training of women which is still the key to success and is a pre-condition for women's participation in the economy. Interviews also focused on involvement in political life and opportunities for women in the digital world... [Read more](#)

VW has to prepare for heavy financial sanctions in the USA



Accusing of having deliberately avoided US rules in force in terms of the fight to counter air pollution (revelation dated 18th September by the American Environment Protection Agency), German car manufacturer Volkswagen will have to face the consequences of an embarrassing scandal that will damage the image of the world's car sales leader. Martin Winkerhorn, president of the board called for the launch of an independent inquiry on 20th September. Suspected of cheating the German group has to prepare to pay a fine of 18 billion \$ and will have to recall 482,000 diesel models of Volkswagen and Audi equipped with a software that enables avoidance of emission tests of some types of atmospheric pollutants... [Read more](#)

Cyprus :

Nicos Anastasiades meets David Cameron



Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades met British Prime Minister, David Cameron on 18th September in London. They discussed the Cypriot issue, EU reform, bilateral relations and energy. Mr Anastasiades would like the British leader to put pressure on Turkey which seems to have toughened up its stance regarding the difficult problem of settling the Cypriot issue... [Read more](#)

France :

Meeting between François Hollande and Matteo Renzi



The French President met his Italian counterpart in Modena on 18th September notably to discuss the migratory crisis in Europe which is in danger of running out of all control. He asked the 28 EU countries to help Turkey so that refugees already living there can remain there, whilst they wait for an end to the crisis in Syria. He hopes that during the European Council on 23rd September three decisions might be taken. Apart from helping Turkey, the Europeans will have to decide on the creation of "hotspots" i.e. reception centres for the registration of asylum seekers and "respectfully" return back to their country of departure those who do not have any right to asylum. Europeans must also work with countries in which there are already established refugee centres "which

must receive a great deal more help" because "if the refugees leave the camps" it will be a movement that we shall no longer be able to control," he warned... [Read more](#)

Greece :

The Council backs a faster mobilisation of EU funds



On 16th September 2015 COREPER gave its support to a Commission proposal to aid Greece optimise the use it makes of the EU funds and to improve the availability of liquidities in order to stimulate growth and creation jobs." This proposal aims to remedy a lack of available public funds to finance vital investments in Greece by increasing liquidities by around €2 billion and to ensure that the European structural and investment funds produce the desired effect as quickly as possible... [Read more](#)

Luxembourg :

Luxembourg Prime Minister visits Italy and the Vatican



On 17th September Luxembourg Prime Minister Xavier Bettel and the President of the Italian Council Matteo Renzi met in Rome to exchange views over European current affairs. During a joint press conference Xavier Bettel expressed his support for Italy in the migratory crisis stressing that there was "no easy solution but one had to be found in which the causes of the crisis as well as the reception of the refugees could be taken on board in particular." The Luxembourg Prime Minister also met Pope Francis... [Read more](#)

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The Netherlands :

King's Speech 2015



On 15th September the King of the Netherlands addressed Parliament. He encouraged "a serene, confident vision of the future, but without taking things for granted" and to continue with measures to counter unemployment, notably tax reform. He announced a package of 210 million € designed to improve services in care homes and to facilitate a more personalised approach "to ageing with dignity", an increase in childcare benefits, the creation of additional places for small children, the extension of paternal leave, the creation of 4,000 teaching posts in higher education and the release of funds of up to 345 million € for the armed forces... [Read more](#)

Romania :

Romanian Prime Minister will face trial for corruption



Romanian Prime Minister Victor Ponta, under prosecution for corruption since July, is to face trial in the High Court of Justice, announced the Prosecutor's Office (DNA) which has completed its inquiry. 42 year-old Victor Ponta is the first head of the Romanian government to have to defend himself before a court whilst he is still in office. He is accused of 17 counts of forgery, of aiding tax fraud and money laundering," in incidents that date back to 2007-2011, whilst he was a lawyer. The head of the opposition Alina Gheorghiu deems that this situation "places Romania in a particularly difficult situation in terms of its relations with its international partners"... [Read more](#)

UK :

Anniversary of referendum on Scottish independence



On 18th September 2014 Scotland rejected independence by referendum. In her speech on the occasion of the anniversary of this event Nicola Sturgeon, head of the Scottish government spoke several times of renewed Scottish impetus towards independence as shown by the repeated successes of the SNP as well as the result of some polls, which in her opinion should lead to another referendum in Scotland's independence. Ms Sturgeon recalled that Scottish unemployment was well below the British average, with the elections in May 2016 in mind, which might see the SNP re-elected to head the Scottish government for a third term in office. British Prime Minister David Cameron said that he was totalled "committed" to devolution in support Holyrood - the Scottish parliament - but he has already ruled out the idea of holding another referendum on Scottish independence which would be contrary to the 2012 Edinburgh Agreement... [Read more](#)

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Brexit-opinion divided amongst SMEs



On 17th September the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) published its first opinion poll involving its members regarding the country remaining in the EU: 47 % would like to stay, 40.9 % would like to leave the EU and 10.7% remain undecided. This survey was published whilst two days earlier on 15th September the Trade Union Congress TUC, issued a "warning" to David Cameron's government that it should not take its support of remaining in the EU for granted, notably if it dismantles Europe's social aspects in its negotiations... [Read more](#)

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Sweden :

Presentation of 2016 budget



The Swedish government presented its draft budget 2016 on 21st September to the Riksdag. The key proposal in the budget is an improvement to housing in Sweden with 5.5 billion crowns being devoted to it. Finance Minister Magdalena Andersson indicated that "this was the biggest political investment ever in support of housing in Sweden". The second line of spending involves healthcare, followed by tax rebates for the retired... [Read more](#)

Ukraine :

Parliament approves the restructuring of the debt



On 17th September the Ukrainian Parliament backed three draft laws enabling an agreement to restructure the country's debt. This agreement will stave off the threat of a default payment as it plans for the cancellation of 20% of the debt, i.e. around 3.6 billion \$ and a four year extension of the delay in which to reimburse 11.5 billion \$. Kyiv must now reach agreement with Russia to whom it must pay 3 billion \$ in December. For the time being however Moscow is refusing any participation in the restructuring of the Ukrainian government debt... [Read more](#)

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The OSCE observes a rapid downturn in Human Rights since annexation



The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) believes in its report published on 17th September that the respect of Human Rights in Crimea has "worsened rapidly" since its annexation in March 2014 by Russia. According to Michael Georg Link, the director of the Human Rights department for the OSCE, "the fundamental freedom of association, expression and movement have all been restricted by the authorities in Crimea [...] via the implementation of restrictive Russian laws and by the sporadic targeting of individuals, the media and communities which want to express other points of view in a critical manner"... [Read more](#)

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OECD :

OECD Interim Economic Outlook



According to the interim economic outlook published by the OECD on 16th September 2015 "economic recovery is progressing in the developed countries, but stagnation in international trade and a downturn on the capital markets is a burden to growth prospects in most of the major emerging economies." As a consequence the organisation is advocating continued macro-economic policies that support demand on a world scale. Regarding China the vital issue at stake will be to guarantee balanced, long term growth whilst remedying elements of weakness in the financial system... [Read more](#)

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Eurostat :

EU and Euro zone international trade figures



According to first estimates by Eurostat the euro zone recorded an international goods trade surplus of 31.4 billion € with the rest of the world in July 2015 in comparison with 21.2 billion in July 2014. The EU recorded an international goods trade surplus of 12.9 billion € with the rest of the world over the same period in comparison with 1.2 billion in July 2014. Intra-euro zone and intra-EU trade progressed respectively to 147 billion € and 262.3 billion € in July 2015 ie +4% in both cases in comparison with July 2014... [Read more](#)

Inflation at 0.1% in the euro zone and 0% in the EU



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Employment up in the euro zone and the EU



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Culture :

Book Fair Göteborg



The 31st Göteborg Book Fair in Sweden will be taking place from 24th to 27th September 2015. This event is considered to be the biggest literary festival in Scandinavia with the participation of 780 authors and conference participants from 31 countries. This year the guest of honour is Hungary... [Read more](#)

Edvard Munch and Vincent van Gogh exhibition - Amsterdam



From 25th September 2015 to 17th January 2016 the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam is running a temporary exhibition on Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) and Edvard Munch (1863-1944). The aim is to present the many similarities between the work of the two artists and their artistic goals in this show that is being organised on the 125 anniversary of Vincent van Gogh's death... [Read more](#)

Villa Flora, les temps enchantés



The Marmottan Monet Museum is hosting the collection belonging to Hedy and Arthur Hahnloser-Bühler until 7th February 2016. The Swiss couple lived in the Villa Flora in Winterthur near Zürich. They collected many paintings over a 30 year time span, from 1906 to 1936. Visitors can see 80 works of art by Bonnard, Cézanne, Manet, Manguin, Matisse, Marquet, Renoir, Vallotton, Vuillard and Van Gogh... [Read more](#)

Botticelli, Italian Renaissance



From 24th September 2015 to 24th January 2016 the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin is showing 150 works including 50 originals by Sandro Botticelli (1445-1510), one of the greatest Italian painters of the Renaissance. On show also are interpretations and reproductions of the Florentine painter by artists such as Edgar Degas, Edward Burne-Jones, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, René Magritte, Andy Warhol, Cindy Sherman and Bill Viola... [Read more](#)

Re-opening of the Carracci Gallery in Rome



On 17th September the Carracci Gallery at the Farnese Palazzo in Rome re-opened its doors after 18 months of restoration work. After the delicate, respectful restoration of the frescoes the public can now admire this masterpiece, painted between 1597 and 1608 by Annibale Carracci with the help of his brother Agostino and his pupils, as no one has seen it since the 17th century. This first full restoration undertaken under the aegis of the French Embassy and the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism was made possible by the World Monuments Fund, the exclusive international sponsor of this operation... [Read more](#)

Edvard Munch exhibition at the Albertina

From 25th September 2015 to 24th January 2016 the Albertina Museum of Vienna is running an exhibition on Edvard Munch, one of the foremost



protagonists of modernism. The exhibition that is showing nearly 120 of the Norwegian's most famous works includes iconic canvasses such as The Scream, Madonna, The Kiss and Melancholy... [Read more](#)

Launch of exhibition "Take me (I'm yours)"



From 16th September to 8th November the exhibition "Take me (I'm yours)" in Paris invites visitors to take away the works of art on show including items of clothing, sweets, miniature Eiffel towers, from the 18th century galleries which have been transformed into places of exchange for the occasion. 44 international artists were brought together by Christian Boltanski and Hans Ulrich Obrist, the curators of the exhibition, 20 years after a first successful exhibition of this kind in London. According to the curators the "visitor becomes a player, with an awakening of the senses, he/she is invited to question the "uniqueness of art and the modes of production.".. [Read more](#)

Agenda :



22nd September 2015
Brussels
Justice and Home Affairs Council



22nd and 23rd September
Luxembourg
Informal Meeting of Energy Ministers



23rd September 2015
Brussels
Extraordinary European Council on Immigration and the Refugee Crisis



24th September 2015
Luxembourg
Informal meeting of Employment, Social Policy and Healthcare Ministers



28th September -6th October
New York
UN General Assembly

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