



BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

STATEMENT

by H.E. Dragan Čović

Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina

**at the General Debate of the 72nd Session
of the United Nations General Assembly**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

20 September 2017, New York

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellences,
Distinguished delegates,

Distinguished President of the General Assembly, Mr. Lajčák,

Please allow me, first of all, to congratulate you on the mandate you have just started as the President of the 72nd Session. I am convinced that your tact and diplomacy, which we in Bosnia and Herzegovina have witnessed first hand, will help the most important body of the United Nations make new progress and effectively face new challenges. My gratitude also goes to the outgoing President, for the leadership he showed during the previous (71st) Session. I would like to join others in congratulating H.E. António Guterres on his election for the Secretary-General of the United Nations. His noble and wise intention to dedicate more attention to building bridges that connect us all in the years ahead will surely have the greatest possible support in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In a world dominated by uncertainty and insecurity, it is simply not possible to overstate the importance of the principles and the multilateral framework defined for us by the founders of the United Nations. The strength of this Organization is in both individual and our common strength in the effort to eradicate diseases, hunger, terrorism and any kind of threat to human existence. In doing so, of course, we must admit to ourselves how necessary and important it is to use thoughtful and constructive measures to bring the UN system closer to its chaotic surroundings and adapt it in a way that anticipates the challenges coming from such environment and respond to them with force the strength of which goes far beyond a simple sum of our individual strengths.

We still witness, with unquestioning concern, the continued suffering of the Syrian people. Bosnia and Herzegovina strongly condemns every form of violence against the civilian population. Violence must stop. Each Syrian child, woman and man, and each Syrian refugee, must have its dignity of a human being restored, as well as the belief in the possibility of recovery and new life opportunities. We, as well as the others who are here today, will continue to call for a peaceful and political solution through negotiations, in the process the ownership of which can only be in the hands of the Syrian people, based on the Geneva

Communiqué and with the assistance of the international community and the United Nations, led by the Special Envoy for Syria, whose unselfish efforts to continue the negotiations in Geneva are highly appreciated.

Mr. President,

It seems truly unnecessary to repeat that there can be no peace and prosperity for the Israeli people if the same is not provided for the Palestinians, and vice versa. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict represents the most serious unresolved problem in the Middle East, and current absence of any negotiations between the parties is disturbing. Both nations deserve better. Again, and this has been happening for decades, the journey towards peace has been too slow and has become more and more complex. Therefore, it is necessary to firmly recall the ultimate goal, and that is the existence of the two states, Israel and Palestine, and their peaceful coexistence next to each other, in safety and within recognized borders. Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to believe that this goal can be achieved by both parties fulfilling their obligations, based on the relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council, the Madrid Principles and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Evil has always existed, throughout human history, sometimes on the margins of our communities, sometimes to a greater or lesser extent within them, not always in the same form and the same intensity. Terrorism, undoubtedly, is the greatest evil of today, in its form and strength that represents the greatest threat to international peace and security. Destructive forces are always deep-rooted and feature many different faces, but there is no justification for their existence. We need joint and concentrated efforts, along with a multidimensional and integrated approach, to overcome terrorism and permanently eliminate the fear of terror from our communities. Bosnia and Herzegovina will continue to contribute to the full implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the activities of the Counter-Terrorism Committee. We particularly welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General António Guterres in strengthening the United Nations counter-terrorist capacities and, in that regard, the establishment of the new Office of Counter-Terrorism. As far as we are concerned, we are ready to continuously strengthen co-operation at regional, sub-regional and international level, especially in the areas of information collection and exchange. As a member of the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL/Da'esh, we will continue to support the Coalition efforts to liberate entire human communities and help them recover from the

suffering and harm imposed by ISIL/Da'esh and its global network. Bosnia and Herzegovina is committed to the full implementation of all Security Council resolutions aimed at bringing persons involved in financing, planning, preparing or executing terrorist acts to justice.

Furthermore, we fully share the view that for the long-term eradication of the evil of terrorism and violent extremism, it is necessary to continuously invest efforts in the entire spectrum of interconnected areas, from the eradication of injustice and inequality, poverty and lack of freedom to improving the understanding among those who differ and very and strengthening intercultural dialogue and generally accepted democratic values.

Once we start thinking that we have done enough in all areas, we need to start again and double our efforts!

The world without threat of total destruction of Mankind is less Utopia if the means and arms for destruction are fewer. Therefore, disarmament and non-proliferation of weapon of mass destruction (WMD) are still the prerequisite for the global peace and security towards which we all strive. In that context, Bosnia and Herzegovina joins the strong condemnation of the nuclear tests conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). We also call upon the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to comply without delay, fully and unconditionally, with its obligations under all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions.

Mr. President,

My faith in the value of the Agenda 2030 is as strong today as it was two years ago, when we adopted it at this very place. In Bosnia and Herzegovina it received due institutional attention, based on its significance and the nobility of the goals it sets before us. The roles have been defined, the goals are clear, the coordination established, and in the following period we have a reason to expect significant and more measurable developments in terms of its implementation and supervision. However, we are aware that this will not be easy. For the consistent implementation of the goals set by the Agenda, we will have to overcome numerous weaknesses. For us, as well as for other developing countries burdened by the disproportion of wishes and possibilities, a strong political will and even decisive practical steps in the right direction will not always be enough. Fulfilling the noble and ambitious

goals requires knowledge and norms that many of the UN member states do not have, and it might produce an additional burden to the already overburdened state budgets. Therefore, the assistance in formulating strategies and policies, the transfer of technologies, the provision of financial resources, and assistance in measuring progress are indisputably crucial, along with, of course, the countries' full ownership over the implementation processes. In this regard, it should be emphasized that in all the activities related to the implementation of the Agenda 2030 we work extremely well with the UN bodies and agencies active in our country and we want this cooperation to be even more fruitful.

We have fully understood and accepted the strong interconnectedness of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. We ratified the Paris Climate Agreement and chose to follow its guidelines. It is a debt to our children and to the Planet that has to be unconditionally fulfilled.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, through its membership in the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), encourages mutual exchange of experiences in various aspects of the Agenda implementation. We expect the countries that have been a bit faster and more successful on this ambitious path to unselfishly share the best experiences and give recommendations, while the countries facing difficulties need to be willing and ready to accept new and different ways of resolving them.

Whether I look back to our past or look into the present and the future, women in my country hold high positions, which rightfully and naturally belong to them. The role of women is vital for the development and prosperity of the family, as well as the society as a whole. In post-conflict environments, women are always the first to extend the hand of reconciliation. In times of great challenges and risks, we need the strength and natural ability of women to pursue peaceful solutions more than ever. Although we are extremely proud of the significant progress we have made in implementing the provisions of the historic Security Council resolution 1325 (Women, Peace and Security), we are also aware of the areas where it is possible and needed to do considerably more. We will certainly continue to invest additional efforts to strengthen and empower Bosnian-Herzegovinian women and girls in accordance with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

There is another social group that deserves special attention. Young people are a constant source of change and an incubator of inventive solutions to our problems of the past. Healthy, educated, and employed, they represent the engine that drives our societies forward. Environments where young people have limited access to education, economic development and decision-making processes are subject to frustration, social unrest and instability. For this reason, a significant part of the reform processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina is dedicated to creating conditions for reducing the youth unemployment, which corresponds to Goals 8.5 and 8.6 of the Agenda 2030.

Mr. President,

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, unfortunately, we know too much about the high price of wars. For us, preventive diplomacy is a tool that, when used at the right time, can help that wars are never repeated anywhere or to anyone. There are many reasons why, on a global level, the United Nations system must be at the heart of all activities using preventive measures to resolve the crises and prevent people from leaving their homes. Again, much of the responsibility for prevention lies with other levels. Within our communities, we must counter all the symptoms of trouble and conflicts. We must correct social injustice, reconcile what seems irreconcilable, persevere in compromise, strive for pluralistic and inclusive solutions, appreciate equally own and the rights of others, and constantly and continuously seek ways to find a common language. I believe that prevention and mediation, as well as conflict management techniques and conflict resolution in divided societies should be applied first within the respective region, with regional actors who generally better understand the opposing sides, their reasoning and their different views of the problem.

We are proud of our participation in the United Nations peacekeeping missions in Southern Sudan, Cyprus, Afghanistan, Congo and Mali, which we consider to be the most direct contribution to building world peace. We also see our involvement in the United Nations missions as a way to do things that are possible today, but not so long ago were almost impossible to even imagine, to help people in areas affected by conflicts. We appreciate the decisive role of women in all processes of recovery and rebuilding of societies destroyed by the wars, and we will especially promote and encourage the increase in their engagement.

Mr. President,

Bosnia and Herzegovina has learned lessons from its difficult past, and has chosen to follow in its future the principle set by the founders of the European Union sixty years ago. We have adopted the European path, and, choosing between cooperation and confrontation, we chose and will always choose cooperation and search for common compromises. On our own, but also with the unselfish help of our European friends, we do everything we can to find as many opportunities for open dialogue as possible and we use each of these opportunities to build even more trust and mutually beneficial connections for our people who, despite the difficulties and the complicated times, have more common links and interests than we, their leaders, are sometimes willing to recognize. Reconciliation, trust, partnership and cooperation of all of us, in both narrow and wide context, must become living and long-term principles for stable and secure future. Therefore, commitment to regional initiatives and constructive action through the regional organizations we belong to are high on the list of our foreign policy priorities.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is now doing everything to speed up its progress to where it really belongs, within the framework of the strong European family whose values it shares. Reform and other processes that we are pursuing for this purpose are not always simple or easy, but we see them as a unique opportunity to accelerate the harmonization of our economic, social and institutional development with what awaits us tomorrow in the European Union. Therefore, we will continue fulfilling the obligations undertaken in order to reach the status of a candidate by the beginning of next year with true commitment, which will be a powerful and much needed boost to internal consolidation and further acceleration of integration processes.

However, it is with concern that I would like to draw your attention to the fact that my country is going through a period of important challenges. I am deeply convinced that one people in Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot be happy and prosperous if the other two are not; if all other people living in our country are not. In this regard, I believe that it is up to us in Bosnia and Herzegovina to make a crucial step to adopt changes to electoral legislation by the end of this year, in accordance with the Decisions of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina. As in the past, we expect understanding and support of international

community in solving this issue of vital importance for further democratization and achieving our full integration into the European Union.

Please allow me, Mr. President,

to conclude with a reminder that all of our needs - economic, social, security, political, and cultural - can be very diverse, as are our possibilities to achieve them. The choices we make every day to ensure prosperity for our people also vary from one Member State to another. I am convinced that the future of the human race will largely depend on our current ability to turn our differences into advantages. We expect the United Nations system to guide us in this and to assist us, above all, in building a system based on the unity of diversity. The precondition for that is to resist all the challenges and tendencies aiming to disintegrate or assimilate us. A strong UN system, adapted to the complex circumstances of our surroundings, could be of great assistance to us. Therefore, I am firmly convinced that Bosnia and Herzegovina will remain committed to the principles that we all share, promoting the protection of human dignity, equal rights, both individual and collective, as well as respecting the needs of others and those different from us. That is the best way for us to contribute to preserving and building peace and well-being within our global community.

Thank you.