

STATEMENT
by His Excellency Mr. Valentin Rybakov
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General debate

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Distinguished Mr. President!

Ladies and Gentlemen!

A year ago, at the UN Summit, world leaders have given “green light” to the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Agenda. That document has become our primary guiding tool for the next decade and a half.

The UN has seen in its history many grand undertakings like this one. Unfortunately, some have remained just plans on a piece of paper. Let us recall, for instance, an idea of establishing a New International Economic Order that emerged 40 plus years ago.

I very much hope that the current initiative will not experience a similar fate. Fears for that to happen, certainly, abound.

The major concern is that the world lacks systemic stability. Thus, we cannot be confident about tomorrow.

Indeed, one cannot but feel that the world is not evolving within a reasonable order and common sense. Wars, conflicts and rising transnational challenges create a pervasive sense of chaos. At the same time, that chaos goes hand in glove with unprecedented interdependence and unknown progress. In other words, we live in the context of highly controversial realities.

How did it happen that the chaos came to seriously rival the positive side of globalization?

I think, this resulted from the interplay of three factors – political, economic and social.

In political terms, troubles emerged because the so-called “winners” in the Cold War failed to integrate the “losers” in their system.

Moreover, like in the case with WWI, the “winners” did their best to impose their will on the opponents in an effort to realize serious global changes, which affected everyone rather themselves, in a unilateral manner.

The attempt has failed. It could not have been otherwise. After all, history is supposed to teach us something. But the consequences of the attempt turned out to be horrible – destroyed countries, plenty of smoldering conflicts, mega-terrorism, and a new “great movement of nations” in the form of migrants.

As a result, the world is in a transition in political terms. It is unclear, however, where we are transitioning to.

Let us consider the economic factor. In this context the world has always, at least, since the onset of the Industrial Revolution, been a witness to the struggle between the state and the market. Balanced and healthy competition is certainly helpful both for achieving economic progress and reducing poverty and inequality.

The balance, however, has been destroyed over the past decades. The market has gained precedence, while the state has been pushed into the backyard. This happened because the so-called “corporate capital” dominant in key advanced countries very much wanted it to happen.

So, what did the free market give us? To the minority, that is, to its true apologists, it gave more wealth. To the rest, it gave nothing but suffering and troubles.

What also matters is that the market has severely compounded environmental challenges on the globe. Indeed, does the market really care about anything but profit? Does it really concern itself with the environment?

Challenges stemming from the social factor may not be so obvious to a broad public. Yet, they are neither less severe nor less dangerous than those associated with politics and economics.

We have been witnessing a growing social and cultural gap in the world. The issues of identity are coming to the center stage. As a result, we are increasingly arguing about matters that essentially affect our souls.

To be sure, there are understandable explanations for how half a century ago the phenomenon of counterculture emerged in some developed countries. Likewise, there are explanations for how the phenomenon has changed the public opinion in the West with regard to such, among others, key life categories as morality, ethical values, and family.

It is not clear, however, why similar changes must occur everywhere. Why those who embraced the changes do their best to impose them on others? After all, others did not have similar historical circumstances. Therefore, other societies lack conditions necessary to embrace such changes.

Mr. President,

Understanding the causes that gave rise to a world that is unstable and replete with contradictory realities, is certainly, important. It is the first step to action.

So, what should be done to change the negative global context for the better?

With regard to politics, we need to understand clearly where we want to arrive at from the current transition period. What kind of a world order do we seek to establish?

It goes without saying that it is easier said than done. In this regard I cannot help but quote Immanuel Kant, an outstanding thinker of the past, who

said, *Quote*: “Building a just and peaceful international system is the most difficult of all tasks, and a perfect solution is impossible” *Unquote*.

Indeed, we all have some ideas on how to change the world. But they are different. And we all have to sacrifice something if we all want changes for the better. The result is likely to reflect the lowest common denominator. It cannot be differently.

It is far from my intention to try to predict what a new world order would really look like in terms of form and content. I would only like to confine myself to focusing on the three principles that are necessary, from our point of view, to build it.

First, the new system must be state-driven. States still remain the key players in international politics. Places where states do not exist abound with anarchy, lawlessness, and violence.

Second, the new order must be inclusive. It means that all countries without exception should have a real rather than a declarative voice in it.

Third, I am profoundly convinced that the new order cannot be imposed, it needs to be cultivated. Only then can it be viewed as being fair by policymakers and ordinary people alike.

When it comes to economics we have been observing certain positive trends. First and foremost, it is about a restored balance between the state and the market.

The last decade’s economic and financial crisis has demonstrated that the ideas of a free market were flawed. As a result, the role of the state in economic matters has been increasing worldwide. It is important for the trend to persist.

Belarus has always backed the ideas of a strong state, above all, in the economy. We will continue to pursue such policies in the future. That is the

will of the people of Belarus unequivocally expressed at the Fifth All-Belarus People's Congress last summer.

Regional integration stands as just another key economic trend. In some sense regional blocks begin to play an independent role, which until recently was only the prerogative of states.

If this is indeed the case, there is an acute need to establish mechanisms for cooperation among regional processes like those that exist between countries.

Belarus feels strongly about the topic. We are very proactive in a number of regional integration processes. We are interested in strengthening all of them. And we are deeply convinced that reaching out to other regional initiatives contributes to advancing the objective.

In a nutshell, our approach can be called as "integration of integrations". In terms of the idea's practical application, Belarus together with the UN Economic Commission for Europe, will soon hold a relevant international conference in Minsk.

Finally, a few words about what needs to be done with regard to culture.

Let us start with some basics. We are all different owing to a number of factors like geography, climate, wars, epidemics, religion and many others. These factors have made us who we are.

Culture and tradition cannot be changed. By and large, they unite on a given territory the dead, the living, and the yet unborn.

That is why it is absolutely clear that imposing one's cultural preferences on others is useless and futile.

What we need in this situation is to have a dialogue. What is more, a dialogue is needed not just for the sake of understanding others, but as an end in itself. A dialogue must become a permanent process that can help find

common ground between different social and cultural approaches and produce positive outcomes.

Consider, for instance, the institution of the family. In Belarus, we stick with the values of the traditional family. Some other countries recognize the diversity of family types. We believe that an individual belongs to the family, some of our opponents view the family as a unit that belongs to the individual.

We do not need to prove to each other our rightness. We must understand why we hold different views. Can our different approaches bring some positive results?

I think they can. Specifically, the Republic of Belarus considers sponsoring a draft resolution on the issues of the family and drug prevention at the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs next March.

All of us have an interest in effectively combatting the drug challenge. So let us think together how the institution of the family can help in our efforts, even though we may view the term of the family differently.

Mr. President,

If UN Member States are serious about implementing the 2030 UN Agenda, they must bring the world back to stability and defeat chaos.

I am convinced that it is possible to do that. The United Nations is a place with rich expert potential that can help the countries in their endeavor.

It is important, however, for the UN to align itself to the practical implementation of the Agenda rather than to immerse in usual optimization, synchronization and report writing. It is necessary to admit that the Secretariat is not always working in synch with Member States. We hope that a new Secretary-General will improve the situation.

The 2030 UN Agenda along with the current complicated global context set enormous challenges before us. In judging the prospects for addressing them with success, I would like to kindly ask everyone to bear in mind the

words of Dag Hammarskjöld, the second Secretary-General of the United Nations, who said, *Quote*: “Never measure the height of a mountain until you have reached the top. Then you will see how low it was” *Unquote*.

Thank you.