



BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

STATEMENT

by H.E. Dr. Dragan Čović

Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina

at the General Debate of the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly

October 1, 2015, New York City

Respected Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellences,
Respected delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Six days ago, world leaders gathered at this very place have brought to life a new vision of a just and sustainable world, free from poverty, fear and oppression. We agreed that our achievements of the past decades, including all our mistakes and failures, form a solid enough foundation to make the implementation of the Agenda 2030 a reality, and not a utopia.

Determination and unity we demonstrated by creating and adopting the Agenda have a special value in a year in which we mark the 70th birthday of the Organization that brings us all together, the small ones and the big ones alike, that has never ceased to be a place we look to when running out of hope.

The anniversary we are celebrating is also an opportunity to analyze and evaluate the degree of both individual and joint progress and achievement of objectives set in the UN Charter, in the highly dynamic global environment of today that continually brings new challenges.

The challenges are many, and it is increasingly difficult to predict the consequences of not addressing them efficiently. The crisis in Syria was up until yesterday a crisis in a country and a region of the Middle East. Several days ago, the refugee and the migrant crisis of the Syrian people arrived to the borders of our country and reminded us that the events of another place, another region and the events at our own borders are closely intertwined and inseparable in this global environment of today.

Number of refugees and displaced persons fleeing the destruction and death and leaving their homes, seeking a safe haven, is literally increasing by the hour. Waves of refugees present a much larger burden for the majority of countries to which the refugees arrive than those countries are able to cope with. In addition, tragedy of innocent victims, especially and unforgivably - of the children, places great responsibility before individual states, but also the entire international community, while testing the limits of human solidarity and empathy. At the same time, this is a warning to us that it is necessary to find urgent and effective solutions.

We are very concerned by the deterioration of the devastating conflict in Syria that additionally destabilizes the region and presents the most serious threat to international peace and security. Bosnia and Herzegovina strongly condemns the unspeakable suffering and torture that the Syrian people are exposed to.

In this regard, we support the efforts of the Secretary General, the UN and the wider international community to find a political and peaceful solution for Syria. We believe it is essential that the political transition in Syria is conducted in accordance with the Geneva Communiqué.

We are also carefully monitoring the situation in Yemen. We are very concerned about the political destabilization of the country and the deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation, which already assumed unbearable proportions in that country. We call on all sides to develop a way to peacefully settle all the outstanding issues in order to establish a lasting peace, and to immediately allow for the passage of humanitarian aid for the civilian population. In so doing, the safety of humanitarian staff and the United Nations staff must be guaranteed.

As for the situation in Ukraine, we hope that the conflicted parties will adhere to the Peace Agreement reached in Minsk, as the basis for a durable solution.

Mr. President,

Terrorism and violent extremism are, without any doubt, the most serious of all the challenges we face today. The ideology characterized by absolute disregard for life is seriously undermining the fundamental values and achievements of civilization.

BiH supports the full implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the activities of the Counter-Terrorism Committee, whose past activities are already showing results in strengthening of intergovernmental cooperation and improving the capacity of individual Member States in this area.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a member of the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL, led by the United States, established in 2014, and one of the countries providing material assistance to the Government of Iraq in this effort.

As Chair of the Council of Europe, our country lead the activities of the Council of Europe and actions taken in the fight against terrorism, particularly in terms of strengthening the legal framework, in accordance with the provisions of the Security Council Resolution 2178 (2014). Adoption of the Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe is a significant step forward in the fight against terrorism. I would like to use this opportunity to emphasize the importance of Article 7 of the Additional Protocol, which provides for

exchange of information and designation of the point of contact by each country, available on a 24-hour, seven-days-a-week basis.

Limited military response, as the only instrument in the fight against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, accomplished nothing but short-lived results. Along with the decisive, thorough, dedicated and well-coordinated military action, there has to be a comprehensive strategy and holistic approach to combating violent extremism and terrorism, in order to address the root causes of this phenomenon. Among other things, reducing poverty and inequality, improving education and providing opportunities to the young generations is extremely important, even crucial. On the other hand, eliminating the effects of prejudice and xenophobia in our societies and communities remains essential in countering the spread of violent extremism ideology.

Mr. President,

Bosnia and Herzegovina welcomes the extremely important agreement on the Iranian nuclear program, reached in Vienna in July 2015. We believe that this historic agreement is the evidence of the true superiority of diplomatic efforts and determination of the parties to find a peaceful solution. This agreement can be a guideline for resolving other crisis situations.

The United Nations are undoubtedly a guarantee of collective responsibility and security, notably through greater use of the potential of preventive diplomacy and mediation, solid and carefully planned mandates of peacekeeping operations, as well as instruments to build a lasting peace.

Mr. President,

Bosnia and Herzegovina endeavors to pass on our vast experience in peacebuilding and democratic transition, particularly through our membership in the Peacebuilding Commission's (PBC) Organizational Committee, since January 2014.

We support all activities and peace initiatives aimed at conflict prevention and give active contribution to collective security on a global scale. By participating in UN peacekeeping missions in South Sudan, Cyprus, Somalia, Afghanistan, Congo and Mali we contribute in the most direct way to maintaining and building the world peace.

Following the suggestions of the UN, BiH has provided significant participation of female police officers, who now account for over 20% of the total number of our UN peacekeeping missions members. We are aware that our contribution to peacekeeping operations, in terms of numbers, is not at the level of the participating countries with far larger military and police forces but, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we are very proud of the bravery of our police officers in peacekeeping missions around the world.

The degree of equality of women and girls in certain rights has been at a high level for decades in my country. The reason for that is that we have always believed a woman to be a pillar of the family, on the local level, as well as the carrier of development of a society, and today we are convinced that women are a major factor of reconciliation, in light of the events my country has been through.

Therefore, we will even more vigorously invest efforts into further advancement of women, primarily as the best way to heal our society, mend what was broken,

strengthen that pillar of the family, and provide for women's further development on the basis of full equality.

As a member of the UN Women Executive Board, Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to invest efforts in promoting human rights on the international level, in particular strengthening the position of women, primarily guided by the Beijing Platform for Action and the objectives set in the 2030 Agenda.

Mr. President,

Exactly 20 years ago we got the long-desired peace. Today we are intensively working on implementation of the reform agenda to improve the social and economic conditions, and the rule of law in our country. At the same time, we are implementing the obligations under the Stabilization and Association Agreement, which came into force 4 months ago. This is the first contractual relationship of that kind signed between BiH and the European Union. The next step for us is to submit the membership application and gain the status of a candidate country. At the same time, we have been making efforts to build a fairer society, a society of equality and parity. I assure you of the very strong belief present in Bosnia-Herzegovina, that our experiences and lessons learned in our past can help and must be offered as an increased contribution to solving numerous challenges on both regional and international level.

Our candidacy for membership in the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for the period 2017-2019 should be viewed in that light. We take part in the general efforts to achieve a better and more unified world through activities of this type and similar.

Our commitment to full respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms by strengthening democracy, multicultural dialogue and respect for ethnic, cultural and religious diversity is unquestionable. In this regard, Bosnia and Herzegovina will spare no effort to combat all forms of discrimination and intolerance against members of any part of society, as written in our Constitution.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a complex, multi-ethnic state. In light of all the benefits and advantages created by our diversity, which we have acknowledged even in much harsher times, we are the ones to know exactly how important it is to protect all individual and collective rights and bring them into mutual harmony, in line with relevant international human rights standards.

We attach great importance to regional cooperation, and we are fully committed to building good relations with our neighbors on the basis of the principles of friendship and openness. We are aware that this is the only way to stability in that region of Southeast Europe, often turbulent in the past. Full European perspective of all countries in the region is possible only on these foundations.

Mr. President,

Though last to be presented among the priorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina at this year's session, this priority is not the least important one. On the contrary. I'm afraid that the importance of climate change determines not only our future but also the future of our children and their descendants.

We felt the consequences of global climate change in Bosnia and Herzegovina last year, during the devastating floods, when many of our citizens were forced to leave their homes. Unlike many other parts of our planet, Bosnia and

Herzegovina is rich in large quantities of clean potable water, which is becoming increasingly invaluable and a rarity in the world we live in. This fact, however, is something we can no longer take for granted, especially after realizing how helpless and weak we are before the forces of nature, after countless abuses we have been subjecting the nature to.

Therefore, along with the other United Nations Member States, we place our hopes in the United Nations Climate Change Conference, which will take place in Paris next December. We also call upon the Parties to the Convention to redouble their efforts in order to reach a legally binding Universal Climate Change Agreement.

Finally, Mr. President,

We all realize that the United Nations will have to change in order to continue being able to respond to our own, increasingly complex, requests and expectations. Therefore, this anniversary is also an occasion for a celebration, as well as critical consideration and reaffirmation of the values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Bosnia and Herzegovina remains fully committed to the most important ideals of freedom, dignity and economic development of every living creature on the planet, internationally and in the country.

Thank you.