

**Speech of the President of the Republic of Poland
Mr. Andrzej Duda
at the general debate during the 73rd Session
of the UN General Assembly**

Topic of the debate: *Making the United Nations relevant to all people: Global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies*

New York, September 26, 2018

Distinguished Madam President,

Excellencies,

Esteemed Delegates,

I congratulate Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, the President of the 73rd Session of the UN General Assembly, on her election to this honourable function. I wish to assure you, Madam President, about Poland's full support for the measures you will take. At the same time, I wish to express my gratitude to **Mr. Miroslav Lajčák** for his active chairmanship over the 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year Poles celebrate the **centenary of regaining independence**. In 1918, after 123 years of bondage, Poland returned to the map of Europe. The restoration of an independent, free and sovereign state became a reality mainly due to **three factors: the desire of the Polish nation to have its own state**,

the heroic sacrifice of the battling soldiers, and the determination of courageous leaders, who convinced politicians across the world that without a restored Poland, Europe would not be just and safe. Both then and today, the **will of the nations and of the political leaders remains crucial**. Both then and today, Europe will not be just and safe without sovereign Poland.

Each September the Heads of State meet here, in New York, to engage in an in-depth reflection on the most crucial issues affecting our globe. Hence, it is us with whom a particular responsibility lies. **It is us who are rightly expected to be courageous and active, able to rise above divisions**, determined in our search for solutions to the most pressing issues of the contemporary world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The modern world is full of threats. We are witnessing a very dynamic development of the international situation. There are reasons to be hopeful, such as a potential change in the situation on the Korean Peninsula and the ongoing de-escalation of tensions there. But there are also problems that persist and remain unresolved. In order to sort them out, we undoubtedly need the cooperation of as many countries as possible today. To make it effective, two conditions need to be met.

Firstly, we must all comply with the international law, which was the main theme of the Polish Presidency of the Security Council in May this year. I had the privilege of holding a high-level open debate at that time, the conclusions of which were that only 1) **cooperation among countries within the rule-based global order** will provide an opportunity to resolve frozen conflicts and prevent us from the emergence of new ones, 2) **the rule-based global order requires strong institutions** to enforce the international law and 3) **no violation of the law can be justified** or distorted by a whole range of language definitions.

Today the map of the world is full of flashpoints. As part of the rule-based global order that we are promoting, I would like to draw your attention to one fundamental principle that will be our priority throughout the second year of Poland's membership of the Security Council. I am thinking of the **sovereign equality of states**, as referred to in Article 2 of the United Nations Charter.

If we want to be the **advocates of multilateralism**, and the UN is, after all, its source, we must bear this principle in mind. In other words, **not everyone who claims to be a proponent of multilateralism thinks of it in terms of the equality of states**. One can say that there is a **negative multilateralism**, which boils down to the concert of powers, a division into spheres of influence and the conviction that the fate of others can be decided without their participation. **Europe and Poland were often victims of**

this kind of multilateralism, starting from the 18th century, throughout the 19th century, to the times of the Cold War.

Multilateralism and the rule-based global order are there not just for the chosen ones. **The same principles must apply to all and to the same extent.** Everyone has equal rights and proportional obligations. This is how I define the **positive multilateralism**, which Poland stands for. **The multilateralism of equal states and free nations, not the multilateralism of usurpation and hierarchy.** We are committed to relations in which every state enjoys equal rights. This however does not imply a naive perception of the world, a world devoid of differences among states. What it means is that the states which have an **advantage, in terms of potential and power, should not deprive others of their equal right to independence and subjectivity.** Only with such equality ensured, are we able to fully use the potential of states for the common good and according to the rule of *fair play*. This applies both to political and economic relations, since only if the principle of the equality of states is respected, are we able to talk about the exchange of interests and real alliances.

However, the concept of the positive multilateralism, which Poland subscribes to, goes one step further. It claims that, wherever possible, weaker countries should be given additional opportunities to make an impact, in order to make the equal rights of states more realistic. Such opportunities can encompass an additional voting power, or an additional territorial representation in the

decision-making bodies. **To me as President of the Republic of Poland, two areas of application of this principle are particularly close:**

- 1) **the awaited reform of the Security Council**, which we support, and want to participate in, and which should include among its leading themes: expanding the field of equal rights and competences of all Council members;
- 2) a **reform of the European Union as returning to its origins**, which emerged from the concept of positive multilateralism, and which today are repeatedly violated.

Next year Poland will organize a series of initiatives centred around the idea of sovereign equality. The aim of that effort is to win over as many supporters of our vision as possible.

Secondly, it is important that multilateralism serves a certain system of values, instead of being just an element of a political technology and a game of interests. Such system of values is reflected in the Charter of the United Nations. Negative multilateralism, which contravenes these values, may only result in the exacerbation of global problems. On the other hand, a voluntary cooperation of states, equal in their rights, can bring lasting peace to Europe and the world. **Every time a temptation of a concert of powers is born, the global stability is undermined.** Whoever promotes negative multilateralism contributes to the disintegration of the global order. **Multilateralism is meant to be a commitment to respect for**

values, especially the fundamental ones, such as respect for human dignity and life. It is about the values which go beyond the political order and are not politically defined, for they are the foundation of the global political order.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

International relations do not serve states only, they serve the entire humanity. Therefore, **sovereignty of a state should be fundamentally linked to responsibility for the respect of norms which are common for the good of us all. Every** violation of the norms must bear consequences. Wherever leaders might infringe fundamental human rights, use tortures, persecute their political opponents or use weapons of mass destruction, the international community, including the Security Council, should respond swiftly and decisively.

Being a nation with a unique experience of a peaceful democratic transformation and a struggle for fundamental freedoms, **Poland attaches particular importance to protection and promotion of human rights**, as exemplified, among others, by **my country's bid for membership in the UN Human Rights Council, for the 2020-2022 term**. Our potential membership in this body, unique for the global human rights protection system, will complement, in a natural way, our current membership in the Security Council, in accordance with the fundamental UN **triad of peace and security, human rights and development**.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The UN Charter endows the Organization, and especially its Security Council, with special responsibility for matters pertaining to peace and international security. As a non-permanent member of the Security Council we deem this task to be of crucial importance.

Poland actively supports all actions and initiatives aimed at preventing the use and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, as well as bringing the perpetrators using such weapons to justice.

I wish to announce that **Poland intends to return to an active participation in the UN peace-keeping missions**. We have submitted a formal application to the Secretariat in this regard and are looking forward to its positive evaluation. Given our experience in this field, extending over many years, we are convinced that it will positively contribute to the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Poland is involved in the process of stabilization and building of lasting security on the Korean Peninsula, not only now, in its capacity as non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, but also as a member of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission in Korea. I am convinced that the NNSC experience could potentially be applied while establishing foundations for peace and stability on the Peninsula.

Given its extensive experience accumulated during the period of political transformation, Poland stands ready to get actively engaged in the international peace rebuilding and consolidation programmes in the Middle East. In all the places where, after the end of conflicts, it is necessary to restore stability and provide development opportunities.

At the same time, Poland regards it as its duty to draw the attention of the international community to the sources of **threats to world peace resulting from frozen conflicts, occupation and shifting of borders by force, which is happening in Eastern Europe**. International community must not allow a return to "business as usual", and the actions of the aggressors should be confronted with a relevant response.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This December Poland will have an honour to host the **24th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 24), in the city of Katowice**. The primary goal of the meeting is to finalize works on the provisions implementing the Paris Agreement.

A complete and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement is inextricably connected with the attainment of the UN sustainable development goals. Therefore, the global climate action should

bring together the economic, social and environmental dimensions, while at the same time, be conducive to stopping the global warming and eradicating the most serious problems of the modern world.

The implementation package, planned to be adopted in Katowice, provides an essential basis for action to be taken by state entities and NGOs, including international financial institutions, the private sector, local authorities and civil society organizations. Only provisions applicable in the long-term and accepted by all actors, are able to guarantee transparency, legal security, and sustainability of rules, which is indispensable for the implementation of the adopted obligations and for the strengthening of global ambitions.

COP 24 will be launched with the Leaders` Summit, which is scheduled for December 3rd and 4th, and offers an excellent opportunity to express our common and responsible political will. It will also send a clear messege to the world that the efforts we make are aimed at securing a safe future. **Once again, I wish to invite you to attend the Katowice summit and ensure a high-turn out for the event.**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The centenary of Poland regaining independence makes us reflect on the fate of the world, Europe and on my country's difficult road to freedom. Simultaneously, it is a reason to look into the future and an inspiration to sensibly shape our common, international reality based on historical experiences, values and aspirations.

I encourage all member states to work even closer together on the initiatives aimed at achieving the objectives which guide the United Nations Organization. Only the decisions taken jointly by political leaders are able to address challenges faced by the globalized world.

Poland subscribes to the view that our common future requires a strong and effective international community, which will better accommodate the needs of humanity. This however is going to depend mainly on us, since the United Nations Organization is not an abstract entity, it is the common achievement of us all. It is up to us how effective we will be in using it for the sake of building peace, ensuring justice and sustainable development, in other words: building a better world, worthy of the 21st century – for us, but first and foremost, for the future generations.

Thank you very much for your attention.