



STATEMENT BY

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**PRESIDENT
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC**

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

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Dear Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General.

Excellences, Distinguished delegates.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a great pleasure to be here with you today.

Allow me to extend my congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the Presidency. And to wish you well in your endeavors during the entire session. I am convinced that under your leadership the General Assembly will swiftly and successfully advance its work.

Every single minute while I speak here twelve children die of hunger and more than one hundred is born to extreme poverty. Dozens die on preventable diseases. People die on this planet on diseases that we have been able to cure for decades. And it is responsibility of the people in this room to do everything in our powers to help them.

Challenges we face often don't require difficult strategies or unprecedented amounts of money. They need just our dedication and true leadership, on both sides. For those, who can help — to give up on ignorance and selfishness. And for those who receive the help — to put the people at the first place.

So, Mr. President, I want to commend you for choosing such a sound focus for this year's General Assembly session — focus on our people, on striving for peace and decent life for all in sustainable conditions. Indeed, there is no bigger responsibility of us — political leaders — than to take care of this planet and to serve its people. Building safe, healthy, prosperous and just societies for every individual is not a mere ambition. It's our duty. It's the reason why our people trust us with the power to act on their behalf, to make use of limited resources our societies generate.

(pauza)

Ladies and Gentlemen, our devotion to common principles, our virtue to keep promises, our ability to deliver results are the three most vital particles of any respectable public service. And there is no stronger enemy to the effort to make a real difference in this world than egoism, ignorance and narrow-minded national or personal interests.

It's the respect for the principles of peace and security that is essential to the life in dignity for all our people. These principles have been at the very core of this organization since its constitution. The first and the most important responsibility of us, the leaders, the members of the United Nations, is to stick to these principles and values, to enforce them and to punish those who violate them.

And yet far too many are dying in senseless conflicts or suffering in displacement resulting from the violence. The enormous human tragedies, material damage of armed conflicts and the refugee crisis depletes the much-needed resources for social and economic development. This bloody reality of our times is a painful reminder of our ignorance and egoism.

Every year, after this gathering, we all return back to our homes. But there are over 60 million people who have no such place. People, who had to leave everything behind to save their lives and run away from poverty or horrors of war. These people don't ask for much. They just want to have a place to live, to raise children, to prosper with the loved ones. We need to make these people feel home again.

The way we treat our own people is as important to international security and peace as the way we treat each other. Recent findings about the use of chemical weapons by the Asad regime in Syria against its own citizens have to alarm all of us as much as the atrocities in Rakka, in Mosul and many other places in the world. All such horrors demonstrate how little respect is being paid to human lives — to the very principle of humanity, especially when power games are played. Our resolve to act when the UN principles are at stake are often the last hope for those who desperately wait for our help trapped in the middle of the deadly violence, in the ruins of what they used to call their homes.

We are witnesses of short-sighted interests built on spreading instability, undermining collective efforts to secure peace and security. The very core of the UN Charter for securing peaceful coexistence among nations is crippled in the name of the selfish pursue, egoism of the so-called spheres of influence. Which is a fancy phrase too often misused only to cover violations of international order and to justify disrespect for sovereignty. It's a dangerous game of tragic outcomes and unintended consequences. We in

Europe can see it too. Ukraine, Georgia or Moldova, they all know the price of peace. They are all well aware of the pains of their sovereignty being undermined by an aggressive neighbor. Neighbor who thinks the rules does not apply to him.

So we shall not be surprised when things often go out of control and cause enormous and irreparable damage — to people, to countries and to this planet. Today we face one of the worst threats to international peace and security in recent history. North Korea openly threatens our world with nuclear weapons. Such a grave disrespect to human life cannot be tolerated. I strongly call on the North Korean regime to terminate its development of weapons of mass destruction and to return on the path of dialogue and building peace in the Korean Peninsula.

We need a collective resolve in the very spirit of the Charter of the United Nations. This organization must be firm in its principles and stand for what it has been created for. Some of us have a special responsibility to do so on a regional or international level. There is no room for geopolitical games or economic gains at the expense of our common security. It's millions of human lives that are at stake.

(pauza)

We live the most prosperous times in the history of the humankind. We have all the tools and enough resources to help every human being on this planet to live a life in dignity, free from fear or hunger.

But there is one challenge which will test all the limits of our ability to lead, to act together, to adapt, to reinvent our societies and the way we live our lives. We are beginning to see and feel the sinister consequences of our actions on the environment. Be it once-in-a-hundred years' floods repeating with high frequency, hurricanes that struck harder than before, or devastating droughts forcing people to abandon their homes. These disasters are not warnings of the future climate change. These powerful natural events are features of the new environment we live in.

· Last year's adoption of the Paris agreement was an unprecedented demonstration of collective will to address challenges arising from the climate change our societies have to face. It may be remembered as a unique

effort of the present generation of humankind to mitigate the consequences of our impact on the environment. It may become our ultimate legacy, a chance for our children to adapt and to live happily and safely again in the changed environment.

Our devotion to common principles, our virtue to keep promises and our ability to deliver results in this case is far more crucial than ever. No money, no short-term economic interests could possibly compensate the irreparable damage if we fail to act together and change our irresponsible behavior. The price of such planetary ignorance will be much higher than any we have ever paid.

Slovakia understands the urgency for collective action. We pushed for the swift ratification of the Paris Agreement under our European Union Presidency last year. I confirm that we will implement all necessary national measures to fulfill our obligations. Because The Paris Climate Agreement must be implemented in full.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This organization has served us well for decades. It has faced tough challenges. It excelled in some, it may have failed in others. But it has been the best we have had, with countless successes and with a well-deserved global authority.

There are many pressing issues in today's world that had not been foreseen when the United Nations was created. Who would have imagined that one of the most important topics on the UN agenda would be the climate change? And yet we demonstrate we can somehow tackle such challenges. But it would be naïve to think that just by applying the same old procedures we can achieve new results and address every new and unforeseen troubles. We need, as every organization, to adapt. I strongly believe we are capable of such adaptation. But let me underline strongly that while we strive for reform to be more efficient, the very core of the UN must be respected without exception.

To succeed, it will require all of us to be responsible leaders, giving up on national egoism and ignorance — **to stand true to the principles** of the United Nations Charter, **to be honest with each other** by keeping the

promises we give and **to deliver results**, in words and in deeds. Because there is no more noble task for us than to serve our people for them to live in peace, in dignity and in prosperity.

Thank you.