



# CROATIA

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*Statement by*

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President of the Republic of Croatia*

*General Debate of the 66<sup>th</sup> Session  
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Mr. President,

It is a distinct pleasure for me to participate at the general debate of the General Assembly for the first time since my election as the President of Croatia.

At the outset, please allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to this high position. I also thank H.E. Joseph Deiss for the excellent work he demonstrated during his presidency of the General Assembly in the preceding session.

Let me also congratulate the Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon for his re-election to this highly distinguished but also challenging post and assure him of the full cooperation of my country.

Mr. President,

The current challenges – be it the fall of autocratic regimes, nuclear non-proliferation and terrorism, continuing global financial and economic crisis or climate change and underdevelopment – require all of us here in the United Nations to firmly stand together and offer common solutions on the basis of solidarity, responsibility, and the respect for the rights and dignity of every person on the globe.

Our responses to challenges must not remain just words. We need to translate them into concrete actions, aimed at advancing democracy, enhancing development and well-being, protecting human rights, respecting international law, ensuring social justice and promoting the rule of law, both at domestic, regional and international levels.

Mr. President,

I salute your decision to hold this debate under the theme of the role of mediation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means. Mediation has rightly been recognized as an efficient and cost-effective tool that the United Nations has at its disposal in addressing threats to the maintenance of international peace and security. Political issues often lie at the heart of crises. Therefore, the importance of early engagement and preventive diplomacy, including mediation, is even more significant in this period when UN peace-keeping operations experience unprecedented demand and strain.

My country has come a long way since the conflict in the 1990-ies, when Croatia hosted a total of five United Nations peace-keeping operations on its territory. We have developed stable democracy, free market economy, and serve as an anchor of peace, security and stability in the region of South-Eastern Europe.

This experience and lessons learned have been in the backdrop of our engagement in the Security Council, where Croatia proved to be a responsible and dedicated partner in the common effort to maintain and build peace. We intend to pursue efforts with the same vigor in the Peace-building Commission, the ECOSOC and other UN bodies for which Croatia is a candidate.

Mr. President,

When all efforts to avoid conflict fail, as a rule the international community turns to the United Nations to stop the hostilities and maintain peace. Croatia will continue its engagement in peace-keeping operations under UN auspices.

But keeping the peace is not enough. In countries emerging from conflict peace needs to be strengthened and consolidated. Croatia has, in a relatively short time, effectively transitioned from donor-recipient to donor-provider. Today we are sharing our knowledge and experiences with countries in the region, as well as other countries in crisis, where our post-conflict experience in nation-building is particularly relevant. My country, working together with other Member States and UN as a whole, and acting with the same enthusiasm and spirit that clearly accompanied international community's ambitions almost six years ago, when the Peace-building Commission was established, stands ready to play its part in the revival of the peace-building architecture and thorough implementation of its core functions.

Peace-building is not only important area of work of the United Nations. It is also a principle that the European Union was built upon.

Croatia has closed its accession negotiations with the EU and expects to become a full member in 2013. Once it joins the EU, Croatia will consistently advocate further EU enlargement and will not use its outstanding bilateral issues to set conditions for the progress of individual countries in the process of their integration with the EU.

I have held numerous meetings with my counterparts in the region, in particular Presidents of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. In our meetings, we discussed continuation of the reconciliation process and resolution of outstanding issues existing between the three states and our mutual political support. Croatia has pledged technical assistance in the process of integration into the European Union and the need to jointly define regional networks of infrastructural systems and submit them as regional projects for funding from the EU funds.

As a member of NATO and a future member of the EU, we have a keen interest to see South-Eastern Europe become a region of security, stability and development. This may not happen overnight, but I firmly believe that with sustained effort and targeted actions by all politicians and peoples, the region will lose its pejorative connotation as an arena of political fragmentation often accompanied by bloodshed, and will deservedly be known as an area where good neighborly relations, tolerance and mutual cooperation prevail, thus making it a European success story of peace-building and reconciliation.

However, without justice, efforts to ensure true reconciliation and sustainable peace may not be firmly rooted. Croatia strongly supports determined efforts to put an end to impunity for the most serious crimes of concern to humanity and in that context reaffirms its commitment to international criminal justice in general, and to the activities of the ICC in particular.

Croatia supports the ICTY's main purpose and primary functions, which are establishment of a lasting peace and reconciliation. Croatia recognizes efforts to implement the strategy for finalization of ICTY's work and its transformation towards residual mechanisms. Full

cooperation with the ICTY and respect of international justice is our lasting commitment, not only in the context of Euro-Atlantic integration processes, but as a determination of Croatia's core values and its role in the international community. We highly appreciate the legacy of the ICTY especially its contribution to international law, justice and reconciliation. This legacy has already made improvements of national judiciaries in the region, namely through the acceptance of high standards of criminal responsibility for breaches of humanitarian laws. Further development of international law, international and national judiciary and the sense of justice will be based on this positive legacy, but also on the lessons learned from some weaknesses of the ICTY.

Future development of international criminal law should consider improving the efficiency of international courts, improvements in state cooperation as well as critical evaluation of some institutions of procedural and substantial laws. In this regard, we should evaluate more efficient measures in case of non-cooperative states, the position of victims, compensation to them, protection of witnesses, as well as the concept of joint criminal enterprise and other.

Mr. President,

Protection of fundamental rights and freedoms need to be ensured when addressing most serious security challenges, such as international terrorism. Ten years ago, New York experienced the brutality of terrorism in the most heinous way. This is the moment when we have to remember again all the innocent victims of terrorism, including here in the United States, but also around the world. Croatia strongly supports values and objectives of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy as it confirms that the United Nations is in the center of global counterterrorism efforts. We had a privilege to chair the Counter-Terrorism Committee during Croatia's mandate in the Security Council and are willing to share knowledge and experience with others in the region and beyond.

Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction remains at the top of Croatia's priorities. Substantial efforts are being invested in order to control the transit or transfer of weapons or goods that could be used for its production. Particular attention is given to the control of exports of dual-use goods and technologies, and strengthening of the inter-agency and international cooperation in order to prevent such goods and technology being used for the terrorist or other criminal purposes.

In this regard, we are concerned with ongoing cases of non-compliance with international non-proliferation obligations by Iran and DPR Korea.

Croatia welcomes the holding of High-level Meeting on Nuclear Safety and Security, and is committed to continually seek progress and improvement of standards in the field of nuclear safety. Croatia has aligned its legislation on the issue of nuclear safety with international best practices and institutional framework.

It is also fundamental for the international community to seriously address the problem of illegal trafficking and misuse of small arms, which results in alarming number of casualties each year, particularly among women and children, and has harmful and destabilizing effects on societies. Croatia supports the process leading to adoption of an Arms Trade Treaty at the 2012

Conference. Croatia also has vast experience in humanitarian demining and is ready to assist others with its knowledge and expertise.

Mr. President,

The Arab spring, rooted in legitimate aspirations of ordinary people for improvement in economic opportunities and political participation. The Arab Spring has just moved into summer, but its democratic gains should be nurtured and preserved, if we do not want to see another relapse into instability.

I believe that the course of recent events in Libya has clearly confirmed that the coalition forces and the Security Council have taken the right approach in protecting civilians from the brute force of the old regime. I hope that the democratic forces in Libya shall begin the construction of a new state that will provide the same level of protection and equal opportunities for all citizens of Libya. It is crucial to work towards the establishment of rule of law throughout the country. We trust the NTC shall succeed in achieving that goal. This is truly a historical moment for the Libyan people and it should not be tainted by vengeance and violence, but marked by reconciliation, restoration of national unity and peaceful transition. While Qaddafi's era is over for good, the crimes committed by members of his regime should be investigated and all responsible must be prosecuted. The role of the International Criminal Court in this regard is indispensable.

My country is ready to participate in Libya's reconstruction, especially given its experience in the post-conflict nation and institution building. Taking into account new political and humanitarian priorities in the field, Croatia has sent targeted humanitarian assistance with emphasis on medical needs and humanitarian demining.

In the same vein, Croatia has recognized the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people, who need and deserve wide and undivided support. We share the concern of the international community where it is essential to normalize the situation and prevent further mass violation of human rights, strengthen the democratic standards and rule of law, and assist those who share the vision of democratic Syria. As with the case of Libya, let me repeat: all violations of the international human rights must be investigated, and all those responsible for the crimes committed need to be brought to justice.

Croatia shares the acute sense of urgency to secure an early resumption and conclusion of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations aimed at achieving a two-State solution. The current unprecedented and deep changes in the political landscape of the Middle East calls for urgent and highly responsible action by all parties concerned. Mutual recognition; Israel's recognition of Palestinian state and Palestinian's recognition of the Jewish state is both the starter and the desired outcome of the peace negotiations. Failure to move forward on the two state solution now might have unpredictably negative consequences not only for Israel and Palestine, but for the whole international community. Having in mind our recent experience of war and of reconciliation, Croatia calls upon the leaders of the parties concerned to assume courageously their historic responsibility for the future of their peoples, for peace and stability in the Middle East.

We have recently seen an example of a new state being created in a generally peaceful manner, and I welcome South Sudan as the newest member of the United Nations. However, this and many other ongoing crisis, such as in Sudan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and others, confirm the irreplaceable role of the UN in ending conflicts, and in this context mediation as the topic of our debate becomes even more relevant.

Mr. President,

Croatia continues to promote human rights at the universal level and supports the mainstreaming of human rights within the UN framework. In this context, we devote particular attention to issues such as abolition of death penalty, gender equality and fight against all forms of discrimination, as well as promotion of human rights of the most vulnerable social groups, including women, children, and persons with disabilities. Croatia strongly supports universality, interrelatedness and indivisibility of all human rights.

Croatia supports the work of UN mechanisms in the area of human rights including the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms. Universal Periodic Review has a prominent role as a transparent way to consider and improve the human rights situation in all the countries of the world. In November last year, Croatia presented its national report in the context of the UPR and is currently in the process of implementation of recommendations received.

Croatia will continue to be actively engaged in the implementation of the results of the review of the Human Rights Council. It is only now that we can realistically analyze the achievements and shortcomings of the Council, and offer our suggestions for its future improvement.

Croatia welcomes the establishment of UN Women, a body focused on supporting the gender equality and empowerment of women. Croatia supports relevant initiatives on the rights of LGBT persons and will continue to be actively engaged in the follow-up process to the 2008 Joint statement on human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity.

Mr. President,

In response to dramatic changes in the world in the last few decades a comprehensive reform of the overall UN system has been undertaken. It includes the reform of its structure, as well as the improvements in the functioning of its bodies, including the revitalization of the General Assembly.

Although there are many important elements in this process, the reform of the Security Council remains essential. Croatia believes that the Security Council has to adequately represent structure of today's UN membership. We therefore support the enlargement of the Security Council in both the permanent and non-permanent category of membership. Having in mind that the number of Eastern European Group members has almost doubled, Croatia advocates for one additional seat for the Group in the non-permanent category of the Security Council membership. Croatia is also aware of the importance of resolving all other elements of the Security Council reform.

As we are witnessing the rising challenges all around the world it is clear that we all have to make every effort to strengthen capability, efficiency and credibility of the United Nations in general. We welcome the establishment of the Change Management Team and look forward to

receiving proposals for streamlining processes, increasing accountability and improving the efficiency of the UN in the delivery of its mandates.

Mr. President,

In recent years, it has become increasingly clear how complex, multidimensional and interconnected the global crises are proving to be. In trying to address ensuing challenges of a global recession, we also find ourselves dealing with their far-reaching impacts on societies, economies and the natural environment at large.

We call all international partners to reaffirm their commitments to fully address the implementation gaps that remain in delivering on the Millennium Development Goals. Having invested considerable efforts and funds over the last decade, Croatia will continue in its endeavors to meet the 2015 deadline on its remaining 8 national goals and 31 targets.

As a recent graduate from an ODA recipient country to an emerging donor country at the international and regional level, Croatia is drawing directly from first-hand experience to ensure the effectiveness of its development aid.

Mr. President,

Challenges and consequences of climate change are also undermining efforts to achieve sustainable development. Climate change further needs to be mainstreamed into the work of the whole UN system, with a view to support efforts in transitioning to a low carbon economy consistent with sustainable development, strengthening adaptation and resilience of countries to climate change and minimizing security implications.

In light of depleting natural resources, environment degradation, extreme poverty, hunger and diseases, social unrest, we agree with others that sustainable development has become the defining issue of our time. Our highly globalized and interdependent world means we not only share the same challenges but a common fate. As a member of the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee, Croatia shall actively contribute to the preparations of next year's high-level UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). This summit will provide a unique opportunity to reinvigorate the spirit of Rio, and re-launch the blueprint of political commitment, partnership and action on the ground which does not reopen agreements reached at Rio 1992 or at the Johannesburg Summit in 2002.

Finally, Mr. President, let me return to what this organization stands for. In order to achieve our common objectives, we need to demonstrate unity of purpose, firm resolve, solidarity and responsibility. Or, as a famous composer once said: "Only the pure in heart can make a good soup."

Thank you.