



Check against delivery!

**Statement
by
H.E. Mr Borut Pahor
President of the Republic of Slovenia
at the 76th Session of the UN General Assembly
New York, September 24, 2021**

Mr. President, Secretary General, Ladies and Gentlemen

ALMOST ALL the challenges we face, are global. The solutions for them can be found only in working together. We have a historic opportunity to steer change in a direction beneficial for all humanity. I welcome the Secretary General's intention to hold a wide debate about our common future. We have to engage in meaningful discussion and dialogue, even with those – or specifically with those, we do not agree with. The culture of dialogue has dangerously deteriorated with the widespread intolerant, offensive, even exclusionary and hate speech. We must do everything within our power to emphasise respect for and consideration of different opinions and their reconciliation. It is about art of listening and speaking to others. Constructive cooperation is possible only through a dialogue, and cooperation is the only way of reaching peaceful solutions to all disputes.

I would like to address three main topics: Covid-19 pandemic, climate change, and peace and security.

First: about Covid-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic is proving to be a demanding and divisive challenge for our societies. I express my deepest sympathies to all those who have suffered. And I pay respect to new heroes, among them medical and care workers, scientists, teachers, and the young generations, who struggled with limited access to education. Science has once again proved its decisive role. The pandemic has set us the greatest test in global solidarity in generations. I am proud to say that my country pledged half a million euros to COVAX and our share of donated vaccines, measured per capita, is among the highest.

Second: about the CLIMATE CHANGE

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The recent report of International Panel on Climate Change is alarming. It has become clear that environment is in worse condition than expected. Let me assure you, that in its capacity as the Presidency of the EU Council in the run up and during COP26, Slovenia is committed to the objective of Climate Neutral European Union by 2050. We will do its utmost to contribute to the success of the COP26 conference in Glasgow. It is imperative we move on climate change mitigation, adaptation and financing in order to meet the objectives of the Paris Agreement. The IPCC report is, in fact, a final urgent call for our immediate climate action. More than ever we need to listen to scientists and experts. We can learn from them and our decisions will be better. My Permanent Advisory Committee on Climate Change established two years ago, is an example of good practices. We regularly discuss whole variety of aspects of climate changes and recommend to the Government measures to be adopted. The much-needed green transition should go hand in hand with digital transformation. We must commit to achieving climate neutrality through reforms and investments in the areas of energy efficiency, renewable energy, sustainable mobility and circular business models.

The effects of climate change greatly impact water, both through droughts and the floods we have witnessed this summer, and by affecting its quality. Competition for scarce water resources will intensify. The imminent water crisis is a threat but also as an opportunity to rethink water innovation, governance, and collaboration on all levels. Slovenia is a country with a long tradition of integrated water resources management and cross-border cooperation on water. We will continue to raise awareness and understanding of the interlinkages between water and climate change, and the importance of water for international peace and security.

Mr. President,

Climate changes profoundly affect food security. For the very first time in modern history, a famine in one country - Madagascar, is attributed solely to global warming. Since 2014, Slovenia has doubled its contribution for food security. In particular through the World Food Programme for South Sudan and for Yemen but also in bilateral projects. Slovenia is recently helping to ensure food and water security for children and other vulnerable groups in Madagascar through Akamasoa founded by Father Pedro Opeka – an outstanding example of fighting poverty – who over last 30 years has changed the lives of thousands of poor people who once lived on rubbish dumps. The Akamasoa community in Madagascar gives humanity high hopes that poverty can be eradicated. However, our efforts to fight famine need to go beyond humanitarian aid. We have to accelerate the transition to sustainable and resilient food systems. That is why Slovenia welcomes the holding of the very first UN Summit on Food Systems. I see it as an opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of responsible investments in environmentally friendly agriculture and the prevention of food losses and waste.

I believe the responsible use of new and emerging technologies can help us deal with modern challenges. New technologies offer numerous opportunities to mitigate climate change, support

sustainable agriculture, introduce smarter mobility, offer better education, and improve the effective use of resources – to name just a few.

That is why I was delighted, to - together with the UNESCO Director-General, Mme Azoulay - officially launch the International Research Centre on Artificial Intelligence back in March in Ljubljana. The pandemic has only increased our dependence on the digital space, while at the same time revealed its vulnerabilities to the spread of hate speech. It is important to keep in mind that fundamental freedoms apply both online and offline.

Third: about PEACE AND SECURITY

The dependence on digital space has revealed also our vulnerability to security threats and to cyberattacks. It has highlighted the extent of the damage caused by such attacks with regard to critical infrastructure, the economy, society or even loss of life. The nature of conflicts has expanded. To enable peace and security in all domains, we should collectively and more effectively respond to different crises, which exceed the capacities of individual States to react. We should also more energetically promote reconciliation processes once peace and security are established.

The interconnected and interdependent nature of peace and security, sustainable development and human rights is more evident than ever. Covid-19 Pandemic has worsened the situation of most vulnerable members of our societies, children, elderly, human rights defenders. In many societies, we face shrinking space for freedom of expression. The full realisation of human rights for all have proven to be key to our resilience and must be an integral part of our recovery. The situation in Afghanistan has exposed the fragility of our human rights system. Let us never forget that women and children's rights, as well as rights of different minorities, are universal human rights. Slovenia thus welcomed the Secretary-General's call for action on human rights and supports allocation a higher regular budget for the work of the UN Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Mr President,

Following the atrocities of the Second World War we have built the international system for the promotion of dialogue and peaceful settlement of disputes. The system is codified by international law and we must actively ensure respect for the principles of international law and the strengthening of international justice. This is about effective multilateralism, which Slovenia is passionately advocating for. This is the United Nations' finest achievement. Once again, let us work together.

Thank you for your attention.