

Mr. President of the General Assembly

Mr. Secretary-General

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First, I would like to extend my heartfelt wishes and congratulations to the President of the General Assembly for your election as the head of this Assembly as well as for successfully chairing its 66th session. I would also like to express my gratitude to your predecessor for his invaluable contribution.

I would also like to extend special thanks to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the excellent organization of this year's session and for his wise and determined leadership at the helm of the United Nation Organization throughout these years. We wish you, Mr. Secretary General, the utmost success in the next 4 years ahead.

Mr. President,

Our world today is experiencing major and complex crises that threaten the peace and stability of several regions as well

as our planet as a whole. However, this year's spring was a great and historic one for Africa and the whole world. More than one hundred and twenty five million oppressed people stood up with courage, determination and sacrifices and overthrew their tyrannical regimes of five countries in Africa and opened the gates of freedom for their nations.

As a representative of a country that only 20 years ago brought down the Hoxhaist Dictatorship, the worst Albania and Europe had known, I would like to cordially welcome and salute the representatives of Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, South Sudan and Ivory Coast who are present in this Assembly session. Today we pay tribute to the thousands of citizens of these countries who with great courage and legendary bravery lost their lives in order to liberate their countries from ruthless tyrannies and made their countries, the African continent and the entire world more free and more just than ever. But also, with their sacrifices, those who fought and fell for freedom have delivered, in the very hearts and minds of all oppressed people of our planet, a sacred message: "Be not afraid!"

Mr. President,

On the 20th anniversary of the fall of the communist dictatorship, despite the unquestionable difficulties inherent with building democracy based on market values, Albania has continuously affirmed that for the individual, for our

country and our nation as a whole, freedom is the greatest of all assets and riches.

20 years ago, Albania was one of the three poorest countries in the world, plagued in extreme poverty and chronic starvation. Today, Albania belongs to the group of countries with middle to upper income levels.

A former totally hyper-collectivized country, it has today the smallest public sector in Europe, with more than 84% of its GDP coming from the private sector.

20 years ago, human rights and freedoms were forbidden by the country's constitution. Today, Albania is a functional democracy of rule of law, freedom of speech, free elections, fully respected minority rights and religious tolerance "par excellence".

Albania was the most isolated country in the world. Now it is a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance and is helping to offer its contribution to peace and stability in the region and beyond, while remaining firmly focused on its path towards EU integration.

Today, Albanians travel freely throughout Europe while the number of foreign citizens that have visited Albania for tourism and other purposes has increased from three hundred thousand in 2004 to 3.5 million last year.

In the midst of European and global worst financial crises, Albania's economy remained one of the few in the world that

did not go into recession. UNCTAD estimates a decrease of some 37% in the level of direct foreign investments worldwide for the period 2007 to 2010 while the same source confirms that FDI in Albania increased with some 316% in the period 2006 to 2010.

In the last few years, Albanian exports have grown by 300%. Unemployment has decreased and so did poverty by a margin of some 30%. Our economic model is totally based on economic freedom which saw last year a major setback, worldwide, whereas in my country economic freedom increased last year by 16 percent.

The Albanian economy is not detached from the global one, the opposite is true, being a small economy, it is linked to and affected by it. This is why I believe that four main factors determined its performance.

First, a small government and public sector. Albania's public administration and public sector is at least 50% smaller than that of any other similar sized country in the region and beyond. Furthermore, I am pleased to state here that my government ranks among the ten top governments with the least interference in the economy.

Second, Albania is a country of flat-rate taxes 10% with the lowest fiscal burden in Europe. The increase in fiscal freedom and successfully fighting against corruption allowed our country to double our budgetary revenues from customs and taxes in four years time.

Third, we have made big investments in infrastructure to stimulate growth. My government has spent in three consecutive years 8% to 10% of our GDP on road infrastructure, building up 8000 km of new roads, more than in the entire history of the country. Within the next two years, Albania will have a new and modern road infrastructure that will allow our citizens and also foreign visitors to reach our capital from any part of the country, saving 60% of the time that was needed before.

Fourth, we have made it easier to open a business and expand existing ones by putting in place an efficient digital one-stop-shop system for business registration, licenses and permits, and by drastically reducing any bureaucratic procedures.

Yet, the debt and Euro crisis is standing like the sword of Damocles over our national currency "Lek" and on our economy. I take this opportunity to call upon the countries of the Euro zone to take into consideration the effects of this crisis on our and other Euro closely linked countries' economies.

"Albania, a Developed Country!" is the project and biggest dream of all Albanians. I know that the road ahead of us is not at all smooth, it may be bumpy at times, but it is also the one that will climb higher and higher. I am convinced that it is a righteous and a sure path of hope through which the dream of a fully developed Albania will become true.

To achieve this dream, the government of Albania is committed to sustainable development. Developing countries and emerging markets like mine have countless difficulties, but they also have the advantage of learning from the mistakes of developed countries and avoiding them. With this in mind, we are determined to turn Albania into a small superpower of renewable energy in the region. With its rich water resources, Albania resembles to a small Norway in the Balkan Peninsula. My government has already signed with the private sector concessional contracts to build two hundred twenty hydroelectric plants, out of 450 that are foreseen to be built in the country. Companies from all over Europe and the rest of the world are already engaged in this process.

Additionally, major natural wind platforms exist throughout the country and the government has or is giving licenses for the production of thousands of megawatts of electricity through wind parks. Lastly, Albania is also one of the sunniest places in Europe and the government is determined to exploit solar energy as well as the geothermic one.

I believe that in addition to the great efforts to achieve an international legal framework to prevent global warming and lower greenhouse gas emissions, it is necessary to reach a quick agreement that a percentage of the aid that generous donors are offering to support this cause be used for the purpose of supporting private sector companies that are

focused on renewable energy projects. These funds could be used to cover the cost of loan interests acquired for realizing renewable energy projects and I am sure that they will increase the production of the renewable energy in the future.

To counter climate change and improve environment conditions, forestation also remains a very important action. The UN Billion Tree campaign has been met with a successful response by many countries and it deserves credit as a first important step. However, our potentials are much larger.

The government of Albania has started an ambitious program in order to take advantage of our country's potential for fruit trees. We intend to plant in the next 8 years some 50 million olive trees and around 200 million various nut trees. The project started two years ago and is subsidized by public funds. I am pleased to let you know that this project is moving rapidly ahead, as a matter of fact it has turned into a real unprecedented tree planting passion of my fellow citizens. Albania will welcome any help from the UN and/or its member states to successfully complete this project.

Mr. President,

Albania fully supports the Partnership for Open Government initiated by the President of the USA, Barack Obama and the

President of Brasil, Vilma Rousef and that is why we have joined as a member of this initiative. Our efforts for an open government set as a primary objective the project "Albania in the digital age". In a short matter of time, we have expanded the Internet to all our schools and have started offering free Internet to every citizen in all post offices throughout the country.

2.1 million Albanians have availed themselves of this opportunity and have been navigating the Internet, some of them for the first time in their lives. This has helped increase the percentage of the population in Albania using the internet from merely 4.8% which was in 2006 to 60%, now, roughly 2/3 of the population. Free internet will continue to be available in all post offices and some additional offices which will be opened for such purposes.

Moreover, the government is fully committed to making super broadband internet available over the next two years and guarantee one stop shop services to the citizens throughout the country.

We believe that the digital age is above all the age of transparency. Based on this belief, Albania became the first country in the world two years ago with a 100% electronic system of procurement certified by UN agencies. This system led to a 6 times increase in participating bids in public procurement reducing the cost of procurement by 27%. Today, Albania is a country of e-tax, e-customs, e-university

admissions, and e-business registration, e-civil status registry, and the government intends to offer all these services and others to citizens into one-stop-shop in the near future.

E-government and transparency strengthen democracy and our law also guarantees free access for every citizen to all acts, decisions and/or public expenditures of government. In order to strengthen the role of civil society, my government has also approved specific budgetary provisions and these funds are administered by an independent board of the civil society.

Mr. President,

Albania has excellent relations with its immediate neighbors and in general with the countries of the region. We would like to develop and consolidate further relations with the Republic of Serbia as well.

I am very pleased to let you know that the Government of Kosova possesses an equally strong will for good neighborly relations and has shown assiduous commitment and seriousness in the process of negotiations in Brussels

The International Court of Justice decided in July 2010, in the Hague, that the declaration of independence of Kosova is in full compliance with international law. The Republic of Kosova has been recognized by more than 80 states and I

avail of this opportunity to call upon the rest of the states, members of the UN, to recognize the free and independent state of Kosova which has become, in fact, an important factor of peace, stability and cooperation in our region.

I also call upon Serbia which went through this Assembly to ask the opinion of the International Court of Justice to adapt its position in line with the decision of the Court, thus demonstrating that it accepts and respects the international law in its entirety and not only those parts that serve its case.

In accordance with President Ahtisaari's package and in close cooperation with EULEX, KFOR and other international institutions present in the country, the Republic of Kosova has put in place and implemented the highest standards in the region and beyond as regards the freedoms and rights of minorities.

The most worrying problems for the Serbs in Kosova today are the tensions created and orchestrated for nationalistic purposes. Serbian cultural heritage in Kosova is today more secured than ever. This is a precious cultural heritage not only for the Serbs but also for Albanians and all other citizens of Kosova as well as for Serbia, the entire region and Europe. I would like to reassure you, distinguish representatives of the Member States that the only threat they face is their exploitation to serve purposes of a bitter past that must not ever return.

Meanwhile, interethnic relations in all areas where Serbs and Albanians live together in the same communities are very good. However, the parallel structures paid by Belgrade in the three Serbian homogenous communes in north of Mitrovica, where no other ethnic groups reside, have turned them into a safe haven for organized crime and smuggling and traffic of all sorts. The Government of the Republic of Kosova is determined to implement the rule of law in these communes and effective border and customs control in full compliance with the agreement reached in Brussels and the President Ahtisaari document.

This effort, however, has met strong resistance from criminal groups and organized gangs that with weapons and other means are doing all in their hand to block the rule of law. We have supported and will continue to support the will of the Government of Kosova, EULEX and KFOR in their efforts to strengthen the law and order in all the territory of the Republic of Kosova to prevail peace and stability. I call also in Serbia to do its best to remove the blocking of flow of goods in its border with Kosovo, to respect the agreement that was signed this month in Brussels which provides for free exports and imports for both countries.

We believe that respect for the actual borders in the Balkans is a fundamental condition for lasting peace and stability. Belgrade's efforts to maintain in place in these three communes parallel structures of authority demonstrate that it

still believes in reshaping borders in our region based on the failed and long time overdue idea of ethnically “clean” countries and Greater Serbia.

The Republic of Serbia, in implementation of the international law, arrested during this years the butcher of Balkans, and although late, his lieutenants as well, and has received the due appreciation of the international community for this. However, I invite Serbia to cooperate in the finding and the return of the remains of 1500 men, women, children and elderly that were abducted from their homes and were massacred in the territory of Serbia only because they were Albanians. It is very important to clean up your country from those who have committed crimes against humanity, but it is as well important not to hide or sleep over the graves of their victims. Here, yesterday, President Tadic underlined as truthful the accusations raised by senator Dick Marty regarding the alleged traffic of organs and mass graves committed by Albanians, in the territory of Albania. Regarding this report, I would like to state here the stance of the Albanian government. The report of senator Dick Marty, as acknowledged from the General Prosecutor of Serbia, Vukcevic himself, who states that he finds his report fully included in senator Marty’s report, is a cut and paste of Vukcevic’s report.

Every person who reads these reports sees that it raised many allegations not at all motivated, not based in facts and truth,

but mostly in sinister intentions. The Dick Marty's report or let's call it Dick Marty-Vukcevic report does not produce a mere single fact. It synthesizes Carla del Ponte memoirs which seem to have derived from the same unique source.

Ladies and Gentlemen

In thousand pages of Milosevic's interrogation transcripts and accusations of Albanians, there is not a single word about organs trafficking or massive graves in Albania. The purpose of the report is to shift, to divert attention from the decision of the International Court of Justice in favor of the independence of Kosova.

Notwithstanding this, the Government of Albania has officially asked its delegation in the Council of Europe to vote for the report for the sole reason of opening the doors to a thoroughful international investigation. My government sent an invitation to EULEX and we welcome the fact that EULEX accepted the invitation and I assure you that my country will fully cooperate with EULEX and its Task Force in order that the truth about such allegations be clarified.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Despite all this, our region has done an extraordinary progress and efforts to cooperate, to build a common future in European Union are prevailing everyday. My country is doing its best, it is heavily investing in infrastructure to create new lines, new roads, new communications with all

our neighbors. I do believe the time has come that Albanians and Serbs try archiving their past and start looking for a common future in the best interests of their nations.

Ladies and Gentleman

In this rostrum, President Abas presented to the audience his request for the independent state, for the membership of Palestine in UN. My government fully supports the idea of an independent Palestine, but I do believe that unilateral action will not be helpful. That is why I call on our Palestinian friends to support the yesterday's Quartet statement in which they draw a clear roadmap of actions to address this fundamental question of our time.

Thank you.