



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC
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by

H.E. Mr. NIKOLA GRUEVSKI

PRESIDENT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE

REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

at the

GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 66th SESSION OF THE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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Distinguished President of the 66th United Nations General Assembly,
Distinguished Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my special honor and privilege to address this particularly important forum and to share the positions of the Republic of Macedonia regarding current issues on the United Nations agenda. Those are issues that concern all of us in some respect, and which require appropriate dialogue and leadership in order to be addressed.

First of all, please allow me to extend congratulations to His Excellency Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser for his election to the prestigious position, as President of the 66th General Assembly and simultaneously, to extend congratulations to the previous President, Mr. Joseph Deiss, for his remarkably successful chairmanship of the 65th General Assembly.

Likewise, please allow me to wish welcome to the newest, the 193rd member state in the United Nations family, South Sudan.

Concurrently, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the United Nations Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon for his re-election, being assured that he will continue to work devotedly to the realization of the noble objectives of the United Nations, thus directly contributing to the strengthening of the role and increased reputation of the world organization.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Republic of Macedonia celebrated the 20th anniversary of its independence. In the past two decades we were faced with many challenges and temptations; from the peaceful declaration of independence, the introduction of a new political system, by duly respecting democratic values and human rights and freedoms; transformation of the economic system, followed by solving many social problems, establishing ourselves as a responsible and active member of the international community with all difficulties that accompany this process by default, and being additionally burdened with certain requirements and conditionings. During the entire period of development

as an independent and autonomous state, the Republic of Macedonia had the United Nations as its partner.

Based on the experiences from its own history and lessons learnt in the past 20 years, my country especially values the role of mediation in the peaceful conflict settlement. In that sense, the Republic of Macedonia welcomes the timely and wise decision of the General Assembly to put the role of mediation in solving disputes in the focus of this year's debate. The majority of the conflicts do not happen overnight, they are predictable, and so there are realistic opportunities for an effective diplomatic engagement towards their prevention. In such a case the price to be paid is the lowest in any aspect. Preventive diplomacy deserves greater attention both as a theoretical concept, and even more as a means for conflict prevention. When confirming the sovereignty of states, we must take into consideration that there are moments in which some state or states are in need of mediation services – impartially and with a strong will of the mediators to understand the essence of the issues and help all concerned parties solve the problems in a mutually acceptable manner, before they escalate in an unwanted direction.

In this context, the regional and sub-regional organizations are of great significance, along with the possibility of taking advantage of their instruments for anticipating, preventing and solving potential crisis situations. The EU, to which the Republic of Macedonia aspires with ambitions for a quick start of the accession negotiations, was created as a result of a historic reconciliation and the desire for preventing the re-occurrence of past conflicts. Taking into consideration the specificities of each situation, the European experience has deserved due attention and the building of capacities and possibilities of the regional organizations in preventing crises and in mediation for their peaceful resolution, will certainly contribute to the realization of the basic UN objectives and tasks.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Millennium Development Goals remain parameters according to evaluation of the success. . Being aware of the serious consequences of the global economic crisis, the commitment to realization of the Millennium Development Goals must not weaken. The world used to face economic crises even before, but history shows that the greatest crises occurred as a result of a lack of vision and dedication. Turning a blind eye

to problems today or finding excuses, no matter how much they are based on objective economic indicators, for absence of actions for realization of the set objectives, will only increase the price to be paid in the future; and it will not be calculated only in dollars or euros, but also in the most valuable and priceless thing: human lives.

One of the main challenges that require immediate and long-term solution is the issue of climate change. It is alarming that precisely as a result of climate change, caused by human activity, entire nations and states – members of the United Nations, are facing an everyday fear. The Republic of Macedonia, although it has been experiencing the adverse effects of climate change in a less dramatic way, expressed its solidarity with the countries that are most exposed to this phenomenon, above all, the small island countries in the Pacific. According to the principle of common, but differentiated responsibilities, we are joining the appeal for a responsible, dedicated and adequate tackling of this global phenomenon with polyvalent effects and consequences.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A large number of politicians and international experts believed that with the termination of bipolarity based on the nuclear balance between the two super powers at that time, the world would enter calm waters! In other words, there would be enduring peace and stability worldwide!

However, in the past two decades since the end of the cold war, the world has undergone strong turbulences and is faced with new challenges that not only disturb stability, but they also threaten world peace! International terrorism, serious problems of tackling climate change, and recently, the global financial crisis, create great disturbances and misbalances in international relations!

When I spoke about the failed expectations after the end of the cold war, it was not my intention to emphasize the dark sides of more recent history. There were many disturbances, but also the positive aspects of spreading human freedom and democracy around the globe. Especially in the Eastern Europe region, to which my country, the Republic of Macedonia belongs! These historic benefits have a double effect! Internally, they enable the small nations to develop independently and freely based on liberal markets, rule of law, human rights and minority

rights! Internationally, they enable their equal and voluntary participation in the regional cooperation and integration!

In the past period, we were witnesses of several conflicts and disturbing of peace and security in certain regions in the world. Democratic awakening, especially the so-called Arab spring, showed us once more that democracy can be derived only from the people, by rejecting dictatorships and regimes that are against the interest of the people, and by respecting the basic human rights and universal freedoms and rule of law. The old and frozen conflicts are still a regional and global challenge. The abuse of programs for the peaceful use of nuclear energy and their use for other purposes has not been resolved yet. Terrorism and extreme hunger caused by conflicts are only some of the numerous challenges that all of us, together, are faced with, and for which it is imperative to find immediate solutions aimed at lasting peace and security both at a global and regional level.

The human being must be the focus of our attention, above all, in national policies, and of course also in multilateral activities. Experience from the past, but also current events in certain parts of the world, clearly indicate that there is no greater value than human life, human dignity, the right to individual development, prosperity and happiness. It is a right and duty of every country to preserve and advance its citizens' rights. It will be the best guarantee that the "responsibility to protect" as a principle, will mostly be retained on its first, primary pillar. As a country that is building a model of inclusive democracy, we are convinced that human rights and freedoms should be an integral and important part of global governance.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Republic of Macedonia firmly believes that the Organization of the United Nations remains a focal point of multilateralism and global governance. Tackling the existing challenges, as well as the occurrence of new types of crises, emphasizes the unparalleled role of the United Nations as the only world organization that enjoys undivided legitimacy. Every one of us and all together, should be aware that human kind has a need for constant affirmation of universal values and their active promotion through the United Nations system, but human kind also requires action with which our declarations and good intentions will be transformed into concrete deeds. Asking for that moral imperative from

the United Nations, we are proceeding from ourselves. Within its possibilities, the Republic of Macedonia will continue to be an active factor in the realization of the United Nation's objectives.

What will the United Nations look like, how much will their voice be heard, and to what extent will its actions be successful and effective, depends only on us, the member states. Sometimes the challenge of faintheartedness, skepticism and perhaps cynicism is strong; that challenge, so typical of the modern time, can be defeated only by another, stronger challenge, a challenge of a vision, action, and an active approach to facing the challenges and the real awareness of the potential that every member state individually and more over, all united together, posses and should put it in the service of the noble objectives that unite us.

Distinguished Excellencies,

With the holding of the high level meeting in the wake of the general debate, under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General, the United Nations demonstrated a will and readiness to minimize the risks of nuclear wars and eliminate as much as possible a huge load for protection of global peace! We welcome and support that unreservedly!

On the other hand, we are obliged to indicate that the sustainable development as a nexus of financing of development, climate change and realization of the Millennium Goals is also a condition sine qua non for the maintenance of peace and stability in global frameworks!

It is precisely why I consider that the leaders' meetings in the UN, whether within the General debate or in a form of high level meetings, should be focused on the most immediate issues connected with the development objectives! In the previous years there were general debates on global challenges, which was certainly important for the UN. Because we have created a relevant agenda and determined priorities, which is not a simple task in the assembly of 193 member states!

Now is the time to debate and decide on specific issues! Allow me to make a suggestion: let us dedicate a leaders' meeting during 2012 to one of the key themes aimed at fulfilling the millennium goals: education,

innovations and technological progress as the factors for a sustainable development!

To that end, it will be significant to establish close cooperation between the UN under the leadership of the Secretary General and the G-20!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There are many words that I could use to describe my country, and each and every one of them would fit perfectly, in their own manner. But, to begin, I choose one of them, and I am deeply convinced that this word describes the being of my country and my people. This word explains accurately all our endeavors and strength that we gathered in order to overcome the madness and chaos which rumbled throughout the region in the nineties, as well as the possibility of a widespread interethnic clash in 2001. This word clearly depicts our patience that we had for every imposed blockade which we survived and we are surviving, from an economic to an institutional standpoint, simply because of our own identity and self-recognition. Blockades, not because of what we have done, but just because we exist. This word is: RESPONSIBILITY!

Macedonia has been acting responsibly these past 20 years. Our country was won through a turbulent and not necessarily merciful history. It rests on a great sacrifice, many lives and broken dreams. Yet, the past and our ancestors are not the only reason why we act responsibly. We Macedonians believe that we have a European future and that we can leave much behind for generations to come. For me personally, the greatest obligation is exactly the heritage that this generation leaves behind. This is precisely why today in Macedonia we are trying to create a wide front of support and unification of all strengths and potentials around the brave idea of us becoming a regional leader. A leader in economic reforms, education, investments, technologies and innovations, environment protection, protection of human rights and freedoms, a leader in all segments of modern living. Knowing the high consciousness and responsibility of my people and taking as an example how my country coped with the global crisis, when economic solidarity was not shaken and everything went by without any major problems, I am convinced that

this unity will be successful, and Macedonia will achieve its highly set goals.

However, one could not talk about Macedonia without mentioning another great feature that has found its way through thousands of years. As our heritage of the old times, this feature guards the cosmopolitanism, an idea that enables a functional multiculturalism. Side by side, throughout the centuries, different cultures, religions and nations live in my country. That, which for many Europeans is almost astonishing and unique, for us Macedonians it has been continuity throughout the centuries. We try to incorporate, without any assimilation or disintegration into the dominant culture. As opposed to many others who try to suppress the difference, frightened for their own national narrative, we are proud of our differences and we consider them our treasure.

Ladies and gentlemen, our system is not perfect and we have many issues to resolve. Macedonia is on the verge of a great transformation, which will not last for hundreds of years, but it will also not happen in a day. We, as any other nation in the world, have the right to an identity and to unite around our own national narrative. In our narrative, there is a place for Macedonians, Albanians, Turks, Roma, Serbs, Vlachs, Bosniaks and others... there is a place for all who accept the virtues left behind as an experience throughout the centuries. These virtues praise peacefulness, justice, coexistence and cultural competitiveness. Chauvinism has never been dominant and recognizable for our people. The constitutional amendments from 1993 and the change of our flag showed more than just our goodwill, openness and cooperativeness. But, our responsibility and maturity should not be considered as our weakness, our complaisance, nor should it be subjected to a continuous abuse from anyone, because on the other hand, we must not forget our dignity and pride. We know who we are and how we will live. We are Macedonians, we speak Macedonian, and our country's name is the Republic of Macedonia.

Therefore, being the Prime Minister of the Republic of Macedonia I would be remiss if I neglect the obvious issue, that of our name and identity and our southern neighbor's objection to both our name and identity. And I mention this not only because of my position and obligation to the people of the Republic of Macedonia, but also because it relates, in many ways, directly to what I have just spoken about, the need

to solve conflict and disputes peacefully and the role mediation plays in that which is actually the topic of this debate.

We do not like being in the position of having our name and identity objected to by one country and we certainly did not ask for it. But reality is often cold, hard and brutal. The fact is our southern neighbor objects to both our name and identity. And their objection has become our problem and a dispute has arisen. A dispute unique to the world, a dispute imposed for the needs of one country, our neighbor, to monopolize two names, or on the other hand their strategic determination for us not to exist like we feel ourselves to be. Imagine the virtual state that my citizens find themselves in, blackmailed, with a blocked development and perspective, because of the blockages from our southern neighbor to enter the Euro-Atlantic institutions, just because for what we are, i.e. what we feel like. I too, personally, and literally all citizens of my country cannot believe that we have been brought into a situation to resolve a dispute which has been artificially created, absurd, and I believe for all of you, personally, intimately, it is also utterly incomprehensible.

Please, just for a moment imagine that you are in our shoes, try to consider how would you feel like if someone demanded you not to be French, German, British, American, Russian, Chinese, Nigerian, Japanese, Argentinean, Uruguayan, Kenyan and so on. This is the only thing I ask you for: this is the only thing I plead you for. I ask for your support to end this, for your support to allow us to be what we are, without hurting anybody, without inflicting damage on anyone, with understanding, tolerance and respect for our neighbors, friends, for all of you, with respect for our neighbor with whom we have this dispute and understanding of its fears, we do not bear any pretensions, nor do we have any intentions to monopolize the term Macedonia in this case.

Please, give us support to be proud and dignified, and to avoid the situation to discuss a solution that would break our backbone: we seek a solution that will not harm our spirit, a name that will recognize our commitment, desire and determination for coexistence, community, individuality, and identity, but also our affiliation to the world, to this world which we are building, whose virtues we establish, whose future we fight for. Macedonians, however, are a peaceful people and we are working, with mediation, to solve this dispute which our neighbor has, peacefully.

In a speech to the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia on August 31, 2001, our late President Boris Trajkovski said "...we demand the international community to recognize us by our name -- the Republic of Macedonia -- and not by a fictional derivative. It is high time that the world recognizes us by what we call ourselves -- just like any other country and its citizens. Otherwise, how do you expect us to believe in your values, principals and intentions, if you deny our basic right, the right to identity?"

Fortunately 131 countries around the world have made a choice to recognize us by what we call ourselves – the Republic of Macedonia – and for that, we thank you: we thank you for the principality and consistency in the values of protection of the rights and principles established by the UN themselves. Unfortunately, the rules of the world are arranged in a such a manner that we cannot be called by what we call ourselves in this very body – the United Nations – nor can we join organizations we have worked hard to become members of and, in the case of NATO and EU, have earned a right to be a part of. And this, frankly, is wrong. There is no other word for it. What you chose to do about it – your behavior – is entirely up to you.

Excellencies,

It is a high honor and great privilege to address this body. All of us are leaders of our people and all of us represent them to the best of our abilities. But we must re-commit ourselves as leaders to our own people first, and to the people of this world second. If we do that, we can survive, we can succeed and we can build a better world for ourselves, our children, our grandchildren and for future generations which ultimately is what each and every one of us wants.

Thank you!