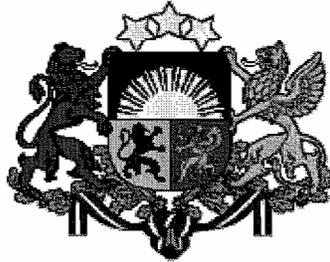


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Statement by

H.E. Mr. Andris Bērziņš
President of the Republic of Latvia

at

the 67th Session of the General Assembly

United Nations, New York
26 September 2012

**Statement of H.E. Mr Andris Bērziņš,
President of Latvia,
at the 67th session of the United Nations General Assembly
(26 September 2012)**

Mister President, Mister Secretary-General, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen!

Allow me at the outset, Mr Jeremič, to wish you a successful term of the President of the sixty seventh Session of the General Assembly.

Mister Secretary General, I commend you for your immense efforts in leading the United Nations and its Secretariat to fulfil its mission and implement tasks, with which the Organisation is charged.

The theme of the high-level debate is very timely. The UN plays a leading role in settlement of disputes by peaceful means. It has the legal and institutional framework for it.

The UN Member States have committed themselves to the principles contained in the Charter.

Therefore, peaceful settlement of disputes primarily depends on the determination of the national and international leaders. Only if they are determined, the United Nations and other international organisations and institutions can come to decisions and actions.

Let me speak about some concrete challenges that require strong will and decisive action by the international community.

Conflict in Syria threatens security and stability in the whole region and beyond. Latvia urges all members of the Security Council to find the political will to unite and solve this crisis. Lives of innocent people must be protected!

The proliferation risk of weapons of mass destruction is one of the most serious global threats. The international community should be united in its commitment to prevent it.

Latvia is seriously concerned about the potential use of stockpiles of Syria's chemical weapons.

We deplore the lack of progress in dialogue with Iran on the nature of its nuclear programme. We believe that its full co-operation to clarify all outstanding questions is needed.

We call for strengthening the efforts to reach the goals of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and its Action Plan. In this regard, we applaud steps made by the United States and Russia towards global disarmament and transparency. We hope it will trigger further efforts to reduce the reliance on nuclear weapons.

Latvia also welcomes the consensus outcome of the Second Review Conference on Small Arms and Light Weapons. And we should redouble our efforts to finding solutions on the Arms Trade Treaty in the nearest future.

Latvia welcomes the increasingly active role played by regional organisations, such as the African Union and the Arab League, in the peaceful settlement of conflicts.

European regional organisations have also been actively working towards resolution of protracted conflicts in Wider Europe.

We see positive trends in the direction of political settlement in Transnistria, Moldova. However, only with progress on foreign troop withdrawal, will any settlement be sustainable. A multi-national peacekeeping mission with an international mandate could be a rational way forward.

The consequences of the conflict in Georgia in 2008 will have a long lasting effect on the security situation in the region. The EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia is presently the only international player that monitors the implementation of the Six Point Agreement. Gaining actual access to the occupied territories would contribute to a lasting progress. In addition, the restoration of the United Nation's meaningful presence in Georgia is needed.

We remain concerned over the increasing number of incidents at the contact line in Nagorno-Karabakh. The conflicting sides should abstain from hostile public rhetoric and should concentrate on confidence building measures. The conduct of major military exercises in this volatile region should be avoided.

Afghanistan has been at the centre of world's attention for much more than a decade. We believe that international community is fully committed to assist the Afghan government to strengthen its public administration and the national security forces.

Latvia will continue its involvement in the EU and NATO missions in Afghanistan. We intend to participate in the missions also after 2014. In addition, Latvia will provide a financial contribution to the international fund in support of the Afghan National Security Forces.

The future of Afghanistan is closely linked with economic development and regional co-operation. We encourage full engagement of the Central Asian countries in discussions on the region's future.

Afghanistan has a potential to become a regional hub for transportation and transit. Using our experience as an entry point of the Northern Distribution Network, Latvia is already engaged in training Afghan experts in the areas of transport and counter narcotics.

The global economic and financial crisis has focused leaders' attention on immediate measures to overcome it, often diverting attention from long term global challenges. The world economy still remains fragile even if some positive trends can be observed.

Latvia welcomes all efforts to stabilize the situation in the Eurozone and supports the recent steps to ensure it.

We are working hard to be part of the solution, and a net-contributor to the global economic stability. Latvia's own GDP has grown more than 5.5% last year and this positive trend will continue also this year. We have achieved significant progress, both in terms of income and structural convergence over the past decade. Quality of governance and economic structures in Latvia are comparable to those of the OECD countries. Transition experience and decisive reforms, leading to recovery from the recent crisis, are what Latvia is ready to contribute to the OECD in its expected enlargement.

Overall - Latvia has emerged from the downturn stronger and more competitive with a balanced economy and a beneficial business environment, thereby well prepared for the next growth cycle. What matters most, is the sustainability of economic health achieved

along with the Eurozone integration process. Latvia believes-in that complications can be overcome and aims to introduce the Euro in 2014.

International peace and security are closely linked with two other pillars of the UN – development and human rights.

Latvia welcomes the establishment of a High-level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. We are pleased that the EU's Commissioner for Development, Mister Andris Piebalgs from Latvia, will contribute to the Panel's work.

The current framework of the Millennium Development Goals has revitalised global action on development and improved its effectiveness. Latvia's EU Presidency in 2015 will evaluate the progress achieved, and will contribute actively to the agreement on post-2015 framework. That should remain people centred, focused, time bound and simple!

During the last years we witnessed a growing number of people in many countries demanding freedom and justice.

The international community must support these aspirations. We must help to build stable democratic institutions and establish the rule of law as we believe that respect for human rights, good governance and inclusive economic development will help to prevent future conflicts from arising.

Latvia participates in capacity-building in several conflict and post-conflict countries. We actively support nations in transition in their efforts to strengthen the rule of law.

We welcome that those issues are now part of the Secretary's General Five Year Action Agenda, and we are committed to their implementation.

Latvia believes that economic and social development will benefit from the introduction of the principles of open government. Civil society in Latvia actively participates in the decision making process at all stages and levels.

Latvia fully supports the work of a strong and effective UN Human Rights Council. We have put forward our candidacy for the elections to the Council in 2014.

In order to keep pace with the modern world, the United Nations needs to change. The time has come to start real negotiations on the reform of the Security Council. We support the enlargement of the Council's membership in both permanent and non-permanent categories. Any enlargement of the Security Council should include at least one new non-permanent seat for the Eastern European Group.

The world is going through a period of turbulence, as witnessed by the recent violent events in the Middle East.

We strongly condemn attacks on diplomatic missions in several countries as unacceptable. Latvia fully supports the freedom of association and right to demonstrate peacefully. We deplore any attempts to use religion to fuel extremism and violence.

Tolerance and respect for our differences are the key for preventing conflicts and violence both in our communities and internationally.

Latvia looks forward to a fruitful sixty seventh Session of the General Assembly. Let us address the challenges with a genuine political will!

Thank you, Mister President!

