



# SERBIA

---

GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
SIXTY-SEVENTH REGULAR SESSION

Check against delivery

## STATEMENT

by

H.E. MR. TOMISLAV NIKOLIĆ  
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

New York, 25 September 2012

Mr. President,

Your presidency of the 67th Session of the United Nations General Assembly is a great honour for Serbia. Congratulating you on the election to this Office, I express my belief that you will discharge these responsible duties with an absolute commitment to the respect of the values and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. I am sure that you will rise up to the tasks entrusted to you by all the Member States that supported your election.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Republic of Serbia pays particular attention to the enhancement of cooperation within the framework of the United Nations. The United Nations Charter that unites us, as well as the purposes and principles behind it, and the international system based on it, all constitute the only basis for the development of international relations, promotion of human rights and maintenance of peace and security. These purposes cannot become obsolete; they always remain current and, therefore, require that we be resolute in our intention to join our forces and efforts in order to ensure a brighter and safer future of all mankind.

The world we live in and the changes brought about on a daily basis by development in many areas make it incumbent upon us to adjust together and face numerous challenges that none of us can address individually. For this reason, we must bear in mind at all times the responsibilities vested in us as representatives of our countries and the consequences of the decisions to be made by us.

The challenges facing the world have been additionally aggravated by the global crisis tending to persist and to have longer-lasting consequences than previously thought of. Today, more than ever before, we need cooperation and understanding in order to overcome problems and reach Millennium Development Goals.

We have no choice but to get to grips with problems and end the period of recession which can be measured by the crisis of the 1930s and hope that it will not last longer than that crisis. The crisis, from the banking to the balance of payments, mortgage and debt crisis, is affecting all countries without exception, but by far the greatest burden is borne by the most vulnerable – poor countries and countries in transition that have not even created it. We are faced with a serious challenge to international integration processes and to the further definition of the national and supranational policies. The problem is not insoluble. The solution lies in greater responsibility, coordinated international activities and in an appropriate correlation between action by countries and their national interests.

Growing poverty in many countries and the widening gap between the rich and poor are becoming all the more alarming and an uncalled-for and impermissible feature of the great scientific and technological advance of the contemporary world.

Poverty reduction is one of the Millennium Development Goals. In this respect, I would like to point out the importance of support and solidarity with the underdeveloped and developing countries. We need solidarity. Bear in mind that poverty and starvation are not only a characteristic of underdeveloped countries today, as the global economic crisis that is not subsiding has drawn attention to the problem of poverty, lack of food and water in some developed and until recently wealthy countries.

These phenomena are at the same time a real source of serious security risks. Consequently, I avail myself of this opportunity to call upon the rich and powerful countries drawing special benefits from globalization to direct a part of their wealth into economic and social development of underdeveloped countries.

A more equitable distribution of assets, solidarity and support to underdeveloped and developing countries should be jointly agreed upon and systematically planned and organized solutions. An economy based

on renewable energy sources, energy efficiency, responsible utilization of resources, socially responsible business can significantly contribute to reducing poverty and starvation in the world.

I underline the political commitment to the idea of sustainable development and welcome the initiative of the Secretary General of the United Nations regarding renewable energy sources for all. I hope that this too, like the other chapters of the adopted Rio+20 Declaration would be the agenda items to which the 67th UN General Assembly will pay special attention. I consider that it is the obligation of all of us to preserve the planet earth in a way that it deserves. The idea of a better world is an idea about the planet that we will keep for the next generation. I am convinced that the Earth should be treated like a living organism and we can hope for the better only if we look after it on a daily basis.

Within the limits of its possibilities, Serbia will make its contribution to research into renewable sources of energy, especially devoting attention to the education of younger generations of the ways of achieving harmony between planet conservation, development and profit.

Climate change is one of the problems we are encountering today and a problem we were not sufficiently aware of in the past. In the opinion of many, climate change is the direct consequence of irresponsible behaviour on the part of man towards nature and his immediate environment. I wish to stress the principled position that it is the collective obligation of us all to fight the adverse climate change through cooperation, untiring research, sharing of knowledge and experiences, as well as through defining and strictly applying measures designed to adjust to new climatic conditions. Survival and progress of mankind are the eternal ideals of each human community whilst sustainable development is a necessary precondition for reaching that ideal.

A grave threat to human health is being posed by poverty, famine and limited access to clean water. Any purpose is reachable by a healthy man and he can have a lot of problems, whereas a sick man has only one problem – to be healthy. Therefore, I would like to emphasize in particular the importance of quality medical protection of children and mothers, as well as the importance of continuing struggle against all communicable and non-communicable diseases.

When it comes to progress of humanity, we should not definitely disregard the importance of education. I believe that investing into education is the best way of investing into future development. In the time to come, access to knowledge and education should not be the privilege of the chosen, but the standard available to all. Only when a PC and book in the hands of young people replace the gun will the happier pages of human history be written.

My country has spared no efforts for several decades already to contribute, within the bounds of its possibilities, to multinational operations mandated by the United Nations. Thousands of Serbian soldiers have been deployed in missions on all continents. Even today, on new internal legal basis and in line with the modern defence and national security strategies – from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia and Cote d' Ivoire, to Lebanon, Cyprus to Haiti – members of the Serbian Army and Serbian Police are part of the international effort to keep the peace. Our active participation in the coming period will be even more numerous and visible. Despite the great efforts that almost all countries are making, terrorism continues to pose a threat to international stability. This phenomenon is not characterized only by sporadic attacks, they are today a danger to the substantial values of the United Nations, a threat to international peace, security and the rule of law. Terrorism is an attack against fundamental human rights, including the right to life, individual civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Besides, terrorism undermines the development of countries in every sense of the word. The fact that all countries of the world are vulnerable to various manifestations of terrorism and therefore it is only by joining forces that we can fight this evil.

Serbia has aligned its legislation with international documents regulating security sector. We are seeking to contribute to global and regional efforts aimed at countering terrorism through regional cooperation. In this context, it is of vital importance to make progress on the adoption of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism.

At the same time, Serbia has undertaken various activities to suppress organized crime which is often in collusion with terrorism, as well as to fight trafficking in narcotic drugs, human beings and arms smuggling.

Encouragement of dialogue between various cultures and faiths is increasingly gaining in importance in the world today. The Republic of Serbia is a country of religious people who are worshiping god in christian churches and cathedrals or in mosques and synagogues. I can proudly say that my country is place where various cultures and religions intermingle and where spiritual and material heritage combines the traditions and elements of completely different religious and ethnic affiliations, whose mixing still continues and whose wealth we are passing onto future generations.

No one should suffer or be humiliated because of their religion; their religious feelings are sacrosanct and safeguarded as the fundamental human rights. But no life should be lost in religiously-motivated clashes. Irresponsible individuals ridicule the relics people are worshiping, but some that are hurt react in an inappropriate manner. That is why we strongly condemn attacks on innocent people who are to be specially protected. On behalf of the Serbian people I offer our sympathies to the United States over the killing of US Ambassador to Libya.

Serbia plays an active role in regional organizations including the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. The region cooperation mechanism is based on understanding and mutual respect, which is one of the basic principles in achieving common goals. Serbia has successfully presided over regional initiatives: the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, Central European Initiative, Migration, Asylum and Refugees Regional Initiative, South East European Cooperation Process and the Adriatic Ionian Initiative.

Serbia truly wishes to become a full-fledged member of the European Union and is patiently building its relations of confidence and peace in a region which is burdened with the heavy legacy of the past. Serbia wishes to head for a better and more prosperous future, on an equal footing with all nations of the world. A lot has been achieved so far in the implementation of reforms, the fight against crime and corruption, harmonization of laws with the regulations of the European Union. In this sense, Serbia has performed even better than the countries which have already become EU members.

Unfortunately, despite its strong commitment to strict compliance with international law and all fundamental instruments on which the work of the United Nations rests, the Republic of Serbia is now facing violation of the fundamental principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations in a part of its territory. Namely, on 17 February 2008, the authorities of the self-proclaimed Republic of Kosovo unilaterally declared independence in the territory of this Serbia's southern province. I am not a prophet, but I must say that the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo constitutes a dangerous precedent and a long-standing threat to stability in the region of the Western Balkans and beyond it.

This unilateral action violated also the bedrock principles of the Helsinki Final Act and Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). I wish to emphasize that the majority of the Member States of the United Nations have refrained from recognizing the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo, thus remaining true to respect of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia, as an obligation resulting from the Charter.

I take this opportunity to express gratitude to these countries for their support and solidarity, as well as my expectation that, in spite of all pressures, with a view to maintaining peace and stability, they will not recognize any solution which is not the outcome of negotiations and the clearly defined agreement between the Serb and the Albanian parties with a view to maintaining peace and stability.

Serbia is a peace-loving country which is open to East, West, North and South, and which has friends all over the world. It stands ready to discuss with everyone all outstanding issues and will make maximum efforts to have all its citizens live well, Kosovo and Metohija included.

According to our Constitution, Kosovo and Metohija is an integral part of Serbia, and the territorial integrity and sovereignty of UN members are the cornerstone of key international documents. Serbia is a sovereign and independent state, a member of the United Nations with defined and internationally recognized borders and a part of its territory surrendered to the administration of its own family, the United Nations.

As a member of the United Nations, Serbia is a victim of the application of double standards. The principle of the respect of territorial integrity implies prevention of the promotion of secession and prevention of efforts aimed at border change in other internationally recognized states. For the country I am representing, peace and respect of international law come before all other interests and objectives, whereas political as well as armed violence are not nor will they ever become an acceptable means for achieving interest in international affairs. Our battle against the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo and Metohija is at the same time struggle to preserve the principles of the respect of the territorial integrity. Today, the struggle for the territorial integrity of Serbia is also the struggle for peace in all countries of the world and for the rule of law in international relations.

Serbia is proud of having excellent and substantive relations with the large number of world countries; it is proud of its own history. Some individuals of our nation, and there is no nation without such individuals, have made mistakes even committed crimes. We have surrendered our own citizens suspected of having breached international law to international justice. For this reason, we rightfully expect that justice for the country and the people who were on the side of law and justice in both World Wars. We paid the heavy price of fighting fascist and totalitarian ideologies and by losing almost half of our population and we fought shoulder-to-shoulder with the Allies with whom we then founded this Organization. Any community is based on justice, implying reconciliation and trust. How was it possible that the rules of international law and justice have been violated at such an extent, so much so that in the case of Serbs and Serbia, one can speak of discrimination with a reason?

US President Dwight Eisenhower, in his speech delivered on 31 October 1956, said, and I quote: «There can be no peace without law and there can be no law if we apply one rule of international conduct to those opposing us and another to our friends. Is it possible to have negotiations in which one party gets everything, the territory, even part of one's own people, and get nothing in return except further pressure and new conditions attached.

We are more and more frequently forced by the powerful and mighty to face a tough choice to give up Kosovo and Metohija or EU membership. What kind of a choice is that? Am I to tell our citizens that they are going to live better if they abandon themselves? Has Serbia ever asked anyone to make such a decision? I hope that no one in this hall would ever be confronted with such a decision.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Serbia is seeking a lasting, sustainable and acceptable solution for all problems; it aspires to make progress towards a European future and is fully committed to the process which should result in enduring peace between Serbs and Albanians. The Republic of Serbia and myself, as its democratically elected President, are ready to participate constructively in the negotiating process, because Serbia cannot move forward without Kosovo and Metohija, and the inhabitants of Kosovo and Metohija cannot move forward without Serbia. We strongly desire that the talks be continued in good faith and with good intentions, taking into account, among other things, that it is important to keep the dynamics of the European integration of Serbia and of the Western Balkans as a whole in order to ensure progress and stability of the entire region in the long term.

Serbia has committed itself and will fulfil all obligations undertaken by it as a State in the agreements reached thus far, though I look at them as meeting the wish list of the Albanian party and concessions made by our leadership at that time, under heavy pressure.

At the same time, May I be clear: Serbia is not ready and cannot nor will it ever under any circumstances recognize, either explicitly or implicitly, the unilaterally declared independence of its southern province of Kosovo and Metohija.

The issue of Kosovo and Metohija can be solved and will be solved in a peaceful manner. Serbia will enter the follow up negotiations ready to help that all citizens of Kosovo and Metohija live a better life in democratic and secure conditions, but it will not negotiate the implementation of the independence of the so-called

state of Kosovo. This situation will come to an end, even though we hear, all the time, that the status of Kosovo is non-negotiable and that it is not upon us to decide on it.

I wonder what can be the subject matter of negotiations and who is an authority at all to determine it?

Serbia offers a concrete proposal:

Direct negotiations on a highest political level.

An agreement can be reached only through consensus without unilateral decisions and actions.

I take this opportunity to condemn most strongly also an attempt by the so-called Republic of Kosovo to dispossess the tangible heritage of the Serbian medieval state, the spiritual heritage of the Serbian people and property of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the territory of the southern Serbian province of Kosovo. I can understand the attempt at turning four monasteries of the Serbian Orthodox Church into the cultural heritage of so-called Kosovo only as an effort flagrantly to falsify history, as a historical revisionism and obliteration of any trace of existence of the Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija.

I am particularly concerned over the fact that, in the 21st century, such an attempt at falsification of history and stealing of cultural heritage of a nation is taking place before the very eyes of the entire international community. This can set a very dangerous precedent which will give the right in the future to each and every secessionist group to also take over the history of the expelled people after having driven out 220,000 persons belonging to various ethnic groups and illegal separation of the territory.

Serbia urges an investigation into the allegations contained in the report by Dick Marty, Rapporteur of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Some people should have a guilty conscious because of the fact that two years have elapsed since the publication of the report cataloguing cases of harvesting and trafficking in human organs before, during and after the events of 1999. We are simply asking for the truth. We are asking to discover the destiny of hundreds of Serbs missing from Kosovo and Metohija, who are reasonably believed to be the victims of illicit trafficking in human organs and of other crimes committed in Kosovo and Metohija. In the name of my people, I simply demand justice for the innocent victims.

For the sake of the truth an investigation should be carried out, bearing in mind that Serbs were always unjustly portrayed as the sole perpetrators of the crimes – and never as victims.

Serbia is asking the same obligations and rights for itself and the others;

the same appreciation for itself and others, the same kind of attention.....

so as not to become unworthy of its ancestors,

so as not to remain indebted to our born and unborn children.....

Before I conclude, let me point out that the Republic of Serbia will make a selfless contribution to the achievement of the objectives placed by the General Assembly of the United Nations before its Member States. I am convinced that the accomplishment of these objectives is only possible through respect of the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter and through an active involvement of all members in the promotion of multilateral cooperation.

Thank you, Mr. President.