



CROATIA

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Statement by

*H.E. Prof. Dr. Ivo Josipović
President of the Republic of Croatia*

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Mr President,

First, let me congratulate you, Mr President, on your election to this important position and express my confidence in your leadership.

It is my great pleasure to address this Assembly for the first time now as the President of the newest EU member state.

Mr President,

Our debate this year is focused on an issue of paramount importance for our planet's future – the post-2015 development agenda. However, before sharing with you my views on this central issue, I would like to share my thoughts on a broader understanding of sustainability.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to foreshadow sustainable development without touching upon one of its essential prerequisites – peace and security.

As a global community, we continue to witness, year after year, a plethora of deadly and prolonged international crises, as well as new and emerging threats and conflicts. The on-going security and humanitarian catastrophe in Syria with all its ill effects and regionally destabilizing potential is naturally foremost on our minds.

We are saddened by the tremendous loss of life as a result of this on-going conflict. We are particularly appalled and concerned with the findings and conclusions of the UN Mission's Report on the use of chemical weapons in Ghouta Area on 21 August.

Croatia condemns in the strongest terms the use of chemical weapons. The international community must make sure that there is no impunity for such crimes and that the perpetrators of these and other crimes be held to account.

We welcome the US-Russia Framework [for Elimination of Syrian Chemical Weapons] of 14 September 2013. The priority must now be to provide for its prompt and full implementation, starting with a process at the Security Council and soonest possible adoption of the relevant Council's resolution.

Mr President,

The United Nations was established at a time when the world was emerging from a period that witnessed the worst atrocities of the 20th century.

In fact, it was built for the very purpose of ensuring that such atrocities would not happen again. While we can and often do debate the overall effectiveness of the UN in ensuring international peace, it is important that we build on lessons learned from both past successes and mistakes.

Allow me to highlight here one such past success. January this year marked the 15th anniversary of the completion of the mandate of the UNTAES mission in Croatia. It is considered to be one of the most successful peacekeeping operations in UN history.

This mission was able to peacefully reaffirm the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Croatia and paved the way for normalizing relations and cooperation in the region.

Mr President,

Over the last 20 years Croatia has undertaken a long and demanding journey: from a host-nation of a number of UN peacekeeping missions in its territory to peacekeeping contributor.

Today, we are determined to continue our participation in many current peace-keeping and peace-support operations and missions around the world.

This year also marks the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the ICTY. It is a well-known fact that Croatia advocated the establishment of the ICTY from the very beginning.

We wholeheartedly supported the strong determination of the international community to finally, once and for all, put an end to the culture of impunity that had for so long accompanied wars and armed conflicts.

The establishment of the ad hoc criminal tribunals changed the landscape of international criminal justice and paved the way for a whole new system, with the International Criminal Court (ICC) at its head.

The establishment of the International Criminal Court in 1998 can be regarded as one of the most important civilization achievements in the last century, and the beginning of a new era of accountability.

That is why we are calling those countries that have not yet decided to adopt the Rome Statute to do this as soon as possible.

Mr President,

Our own experience teaches us that peace often comes at a high price. Maintaining peace often entails the long-term and comprehensive commitment of the international community.

The UN recognised this fact establishing the Peacebuilding Commission in 2005. Its aim is to direct and sustain the attention and efforts of the international community in post-conflict countries.

Croatia's interest and engagement in peacebuilding started some time ago and was additionally emphasised by our bitter experience in recent history. From the very beginning, Croatia actively participated in and contributed to the work of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC).

In PBC we have focused on three different, yet mutually reinforcing areas – strengthening security, stimulating socio-economic prosperity and promoting human rights and gender equality.

For example, as the current PBC Chair and in line with the PBC Action Plan for 2013, last June Croatia helped organize a joint meeting of the PBC and the Global Compact on the important topic of Business for Peacebuilding.

Earlier today, Croatia, as PBC Chair, and in cooperation with UN WOMEN, organized a high-level ministerial meeting on women's economic empowerment in peace-building.

This meeting emphasized the critical role of women in peacebuilding processes and the fact that empowering women in the economy is essential for realizing women's rights and achieving broader development goals.

Mr President

In our view, progress in the areas of security, development, the rule of law and human rights must go hand in hand. We would especially like to stress the critical importance that the rule of law has in post-conflict peacebuilding, thus achieving lasting peace and sustainable development.

For its part, Croatia continues to follow the path of promoting open and pluralistic democracy as the best guarantee for safeguarding human rights of its citizens. We believe that democracy needs to be approached in a holistic manner.

Human and minority rights, the rule of law, good governance and fight against corruption are intrinsic to democratic values.

Democracy is not only about civil and political rights; its focus is not only on free and fair elections but also on economic, social and cultural rights.

Croatia will continue to seek the upholding of human rights standards across the globe. We particularly support abolition of the death penalty, implementation of anti-discrimination policies, effective and full protection of the rights of the child and realization of the rights of persons with disabilities.

We will also spare no effort in raising awareness about the importance of upholding and improving women's and minority rights.

Croatia fully supports the pivotal role of the United Nations and its human rights mechanisms, in particular the Human Rights Council.

For this reason, Croatia has presented its bid for membership in the Human Rights Council for the period 2017-2019, remaining committed to give an active and substantial contribution to the activities and efforts of this important UN body.

Mr President,

In the area of security, we consider prevention of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, especially to non-state actors, to be a global security priority.

Croatia believes that successful non-proliferation is possible only through a combination of diligent work at the national level and the widest possible international cooperation.

We firmly believe that adherence to multilateral non-proliferation treaties, as well as participation in informal non-proliferation initiatives, are an indispensable part of non-proliferation efforts.

The most recent events in Syria are a horrible reminder and warning how important it is that all international agreements on non-proliferation are universally complied with.

Croatia is also very concerned about the issue of uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and their excessive accumulation. We believe that these weapons present a great risk for the stability and security of many weak and fragile areas around the world.

A milestone in this area is the successful completion and opening for signature of the international Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), a uniquely drafted document establishing rules and criteria for trade in conventional arms.

Croatia as an original signatory state would like to add its voice to those requesting urgent and universal adherence to this treaty and its expedited entry into force.

Mr President,

Nowadays we witness all around the world how heavy the toll in armed conflicts and wars is. In any humanitarian crisis, those paying the highest price of the conflict are civilians, especially women and children.

We commend the efforts undertaken by the UN and other international donors aimed at alleviating the plight of civilians, and we are contributing to them as much as we can.

Having been an aid recipient, we have learned that the donor-recipient relationship can be effective and efficient only if based on an equal partnership, mutual respect and understanding. Development cooperation is a multi-level process through which all sides can learn and grow.

Croatia will continue focusing its donor activities on gender and child-sensitive issues, on maternal health and prevention of mortality in children aged under five as well as on enhancing girls' education.

Mr President,

In setting the stage for the post-2015 development agenda, we, as a global community, will continue to be confronted with many challenges, some of which I have just mentioned.

The Rio+20 Summit has provided us with important direction concerning goal-setting and multilateral architecture necessary for its implementation.

In this sense, we would like to express our satisfaction with the establishment of the High-Level Political Forum, which we hope will be a stepping stone for the establishment of a strengthened institutional architecture for sustainable development.

Mr President,

Scientists warn us that soon we will need two planets to keep pace with the consumption-driven growth necessary to sustain our ever increasing population.

While we agree that a transformative shift towards more sustainable development is needed, the question remains how to achieve this.

Knowledge is the key.

The science-policy interface, so often highlighted in the run-up to the Rio+20 Summit and integrated into the vision of the *Future We Want*, stands as a crucial link to these innovative solutions.

To achieve a sustainable future, we need a concurrent basis in strong institutions, in solidarity, justice and social development, with a more targeted approach to marginalized groups, including women's empowerment, as well as a strong respect for the environment and innovative growth.

Croatia welcomes the already widely accepted view that education presents one of the main building blocks in every society and is a crucial driver for development. I am proud to represent a country that is amongst the Champion States of the Global Education First Initiative.

Croatia is fully committed to supporting this Initiative and I would like to take this opportunity to call upon others to join our efforts in bringing the Initiative's goals to life.

Mr President,

On July 1, 2013, just over two and a half months ago, Croatia became the 28th member of the European Union.

One of the primary reasons why my country strove to become a full member of the European Union was to secure a safe, democratic and stable future for ourselves and forthcoming generations. Croatia firmly believes that EU enlargement has been one of the EU's most successful and productive policies.

Because of this, we believe that the European project should not and cannot stop at our borders.

We firmly believe in the strategic importance of the EU's enlargement policy. It must be continued with respect to all the countries of Western Balkans, based on their individual merits, as the best option for long-term stability in the region.

We strongly support all the countries in our neighbourhood in their endeavours. And we believe that their efforts towards their future membership into the European Union will be successful.

It is important to understand that reconciliation and cooperation are becoming a new standard for regional policies and in this regard we welcome closer collaboration among all the countries of South East Europe, both bilaterally and in the framework of regional organizations and initiatives.

Mr President,

Before concluding, I would like to address the issue of UN reform.

We believe that there is a need for true reform of the current UN structures and mechanisms if the UN is to achieve its ambitious goals, and that the UN ability to meet new challenges should be strengthened.

The first is a reform of the UN Security Council. Croatia commends the persevering commitment of the member states in the on-going negotiating process and believes that broader understanding of sustainability should find its place in this case as well.

However, any reform of the Council must not have a negative impact on its ability to perform its main duties and meet its primary responsibilities.

The enlargement of the Council is closely connected with a reform of its working methods, while the continuation of the veto powers of the P-5 continues to raise numerous questions.

That is why the reform needs to be a comprehensive one.

That being said, it is Croatia's position that any enlargement should happen in both permanent and non-permanent categories of membership, with one additional seat to be reserved for Eastern Europe group of states in the non-permanent category. This would more properly reflect the reality of international relations in the 21st century.

As a member of the ECOSOC, we intend to continue advocating a stronger and more efficient role of this main body find solutions to the most significant social and economic challenges of our time. The General Assembly and the ECOSOC should also find ways of working together and supporting each other while deliberating the complex matter of sustainable development.

Within its broad overarching mandate, the UN General Assembly still remains the central point for all our discussions. Croatia welcomes the focus at this year's debate on the post-2015 development agenda.

Mr President,

Finally, I would like to stress that we are all aware of the global challenges we face today.

As a global community, in looking for sustainable solutions, we have made strong commitments at last year's Rio+20 Conference, and we will need to make new ones as we proceed with the post-2015 agenda.

To achieve all this, we need to strengthen old and create new partnerships, both between governments as well as between governments and civil society and other key stakeholders.

In this, it is our belief that the United Nations and its institutions offer the best chance to help meet these expectations. Let us, as its member nations, make the best use of what it has to offer.

Thank you, Mr President.

