



Address by
H.E. Dalia Grybauskaitė
President of the Republic of Lithuania

To the General Debate of the 68th Session of the
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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

There are two years left until the deadline of the Millennium Development Goals. It is time to review what we have succeeded to achieve and set the guidelines for further work.

Development is a global challenge. Every contribution that is made, every experience that we share and every lesson that we have learned are very important. By sharing, we set the stage for learning from each other – not only from our own mistakes.

In the world of today, every country has the right to choose a path which suits its experience, culture and needs the best, without infringing on the rights of others and guaranteeing human rights and freedoms. The international community has an obligation to offer support - based on principles of ownership and empowering - for realizing such choices.

Development cannot be imposed, development must be promoted. And it is not only about development. It is about free choice, democracy and fundamental human rights – which are key to the success of the Millennium Development Goals and the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Today we live in the 21st century, but there are still those who want to enforce a specific course of development on others, by economic pressure, energy levers or cyber tools, by distorted information, or threats.

It is true that internationally approved sanctions send a message to those who are producing weapons, not jobs, who violate human rights and use national resources to satisfy individual interests but not those of society. But the use of economic, energy or information tools to demonstrate power or set up zones of influence is unjustifiable.

The 21st century must be the age of solidarity, equality and sustainable development. It cannot be an age of power show-off, zero-sum games or buffer zones. Those times are over. Any attempt to return to those times impedes the development of the modern world. Regrettably, power games still exist.

I would like to share my country's and region's experience with you.

The Baltic States have been rapidly transformed in the last two decades. Complex and painful economic, political and social reforms boosted economic growth, social well-being and political stability. After rebuilding our statehood two decades ago and with the help, advice and experience of the international community, today our nations became donors and have a lot of experience to share with those who are going through similar transformations. Inner resolve and consensus are very important. However, a favorable external climate and international support are also needed, especially for small countries that depend on larger players for their trade, transportation or energy links.

In two months' time, in Vilnius, several Eastern European countries intend to confirm their commitment to completing the painful but so needed reforms for economic growth, political stability and social harmony. For many years, these countries worked hard to reach national agreement on reforms, their scope and direction. They learned from their mistakes and mobilized resources to build their own future. They chose to build modern states of the 21st century – open, transparent and collaborative, not dominating.

It was not easy for these countries to decide which course to take. But their choice would have been made easier if their free will had been respected and their decision supported in good faith and with encouragement by those who could provide such support. Instead, they were facing trade restrictions, bans on goods, price manipulation for energy supplies, the use of pressure and open disrespect displayed in information space.

European Eastern Partnership countries are not the only ones. Even Lithuania, who holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union and who has successfully consolidated its course of development, is under similar pressure. Barriers to travelling, unreasonable delays of cargo transportation, the milk war – these are just a few “hot” examples.

For nations, the decision is really difficult to make when free choice means receiving threats to raise gas prices or block trade, instead of getting support or advice.

Under such pressures it is hard to implement reforms that empower members of society and open up opportunities to engage in the state-building process.

The Post-2015 Development Agenda must provide instruments empowering to seek development based on free will and own needs. There is no place for enforced choices, open threats or power demonstration.

The international community, and especially the United Nations, should empower such self-determination.

And I invite us all to think about it with depth and care.

Thank you.