

**Statement by H.E. Milo Djukanovic, Prime Minister of Montenegro, at the
General Debate of the 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly**

Check against delivery

Mr President,
Mr Secretary General,
Excellences,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to address you today on behalf of Montenegro and to confirm our commitment to the Organization of the United Nations and its Charter.

Mr President, I wish to congratulate you on the appointment to this responsible duty of President of the 68th General Assembly Session and to express full support of the Montenegrin delegation to you personally and the programme you have presented. I also wish to extend my gratitude to the President of the previous, 67th Session, Mr Vuk Jeremic, our neighbour, for his energetic efforts and his leadership that contributed to the dynamic and constructive discussions on various issues on the UN Agenda.

It is a special pleasure for me to pay tribute to the UN Secretary General, Mr Ban Ki-moon, and his tireless efforts to build a safer and more prosperous world.

Mr President,

Numerous challenges of our times that the United Nations is facing exceed all the previous ones by their complexity. These challenges are such that all of us have to ensure, through joint efforts, a coordinated and efficient action to overcome them. This is our moral, collective obligation towards the wellbeing of future generations.

The challenge of achieving sustainable development, integrating its three dimensions, is the biggest of them all. It is encouraging that the General Assembly, bound by the Rio Outcome Document, is successfully addressing this priority. With the establishment of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Inter-Governmental Committee of Experts on SDG financing and the establishment of the High Level Political Forum, the institutional framework as a platform for substantive work has been strengthened. In this context, the role of the UN and results in achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 Development Goals are becoming more important than ever. I am certain that the UN, guided by the synergy and pragmatic approach of its members and all the stakeholders, will be able to respond to this highly complex challenge. Such an approach will contribute to the wellbeing and safer future of us all, thus

strengthening further the central role of the UN role in the system of global governance.

To this end, poverty eradication and other unmet Millennium Goals must remain at the heart of the post 2015 development agenda. We must define future sustainable development goals based on the experience and lessons learnt from our success or failure in accomplishing the tasks from the Millennium Declaration. Montenegro is working diligently to achieve MDGs and is now close to their achievement.

Sustainable Development Goals must be clear, universal, flexible and coherent, and represent a central part of the post-2015 global development agenda. They must clearly reflect political commitment to sustainable development, promoting economic development, social inclusion, sustainable use of natural resources and environmental protection, as well peace and security. As a member of the Open Working Group on SDGs, Montenegro is working devotedly on defining SDGs, taking into consideration national characteristics, capacities and individual countries development priorities.

After three years of Montenegro's strong economic growth, the global economic and financial crisis affected us, too, which led to a fall of investment, credit activities of the banks and foreign trade. The patterns of economic growth have changed. That is why we have adapted our economic policy to the new circumstances. In parallel, the Government has adopted a medium-term development plan modelled on the EU 2020 Strategy. The three pillars that Montenegro is to base her sustainable development on include: "smart growth", "sustainable growth" and "inclusive growth". The national plan will strengthen consistency of structural and institutional reforms with development-oriented public measures and investments.

Aware of the importance of this issue, we are setting up a Centre for Sustainable Development in Montenegro. This Centre will become operational in early 2014. We hope that in time it will take on a regional role and become part of the Rio Sustainable Development Centres Network.

One issue that is inseparable from the development framework for the post-2015 period is the issue of climate change. Montenegro is committed to intensifying efforts related to the adoption of a comprehensive and legally binding agreement by 2015 that would apply to all. We call upon all the countries, in particular the major world economies, to intensify their efforts related to mitigating climate change impact and reaching a global climate agreement. In this regard we stress our full support to the initiative of the Secretary General to convene a Conference on Climate Change in September 2014.

Mr President,

Preservation and promotion of international peace and security represents a continuous challenge for the UN. Noting that in some of the crisis areas, such as Mali, important progress has been made and a shift away from the state of violence and instability, situations in the DR Congo, the Central-African Republic, Sudan/South Sudan etc. still require continuous attention and efforts of the Security Council and other relevant actors.

Of all the crises, due to the overall consequences for the country and a broader region, the situation in Syria, regrettably, still captures most of the attention of the global body politic and tops the UN agenda. We are deeply concerned by a continuing deterioration of the situation in Syria and most strongly condemn any form of violence, killing of civilians and violation of human rights. We especially condemn the use of chemical weapons confirmed in the report of the UN Inspection Team, which the Secretary General Ban Ki-moon characterized as a war crime. We hereby urge that those responsible for crimes in Syria and violations of international law be brought to account. The agreement reached between the US and the Russian Federation gives us hope of a diplomatic solution to this crisis and ending of conflicts in Syria through a resolute action of the Security Council. We believe that a political solution and a democratic transition is the only way to stop the tragedy and conflict that resulted in a humanitarian crisis of incalculable proportions affecting the whole region.

The Syrian case, among others, highlights the importance of preventive measures and mediation in preserving international peace and security. Strengthening of the UN preventive capacities for early response and suppression of threats before they become a source of conflict is key to dealing with similar situations in future.

Montenegro supports promoting the Responsibility to protect concept and its operationalization, including prevention as its integral part. We are in favour of continuing a debate on the responsibility of the international community to take a timely and decisive action to prevent mass killings.

In the context of the situation in the Middle East, we are particularly pleased by the renewal of the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, after several years of stall, and to that end we welcome the mediation efforts of the US Secretary of State. Montenegro believes that direct negotiations are the best way to reach a comprehensive and sustainable settlement.

With the intention to take additional responsibility and contribute to the promotion of global peace and security and observance of universal values, rights and freedoms, as a responsible and proactive member of the international community,

Montenegro is seeking a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the term 2026-2027.

Mr President,

In addition of a strong support to furthering the concept and structural development of the UN peace-building and peacekeeping capacities, Montenegro recognizes the importance of the rule of law and protection of civilians, in particular women and children, and advocates consistent realization of the mandate of UN missions in this field. Condemning all forms of violence, especially sexual violence against women and girls in conflict, we support implementation of the agenda on women, peace and security, and in that context, the SC Resolution 1325 and other supporting resolutions.

Adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) as the first legally binding instrument in this area, will undoubtedly contribute to the global efforts in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. It is an honour for me to emphasize that Montenegro has from the outset firmly supported a comprehensive and strong wording of the Arms Trade Treaty and was among the first 65 countries to sign it. Aware of the importance of its early coming into effect, we will make our best efforts to ensure its speedy ratification.

Mr President,

Further integration of human rights into all aspects of UN work and preservation of universality of human rights, as well as effectiveness of the UN system of human rights, are the guidelines for Montenegro's action, especially in the Human Rights Council that my country is a member of. Through active cooperation with the Council and its special procedures, as well as with its member states, we contribute to timely and efficient deliberations on human rights promotion issues and an adequate response in case of human rights violations. At the national level, we strive to strengthen the political, economic and social environment that offers all the prerequisites for free exercise of human rights, without discrimination on whatever basis. We attach special attention to the strengthening of the position and role of women in the society and prevention of violence against them and all other vulnerable groups, primarily children, disabled persons and members of the LGBT community. We also attach a particular attention to improving the position of Roma as a country that chaired the Roma Inclusion Decade in the period 2005-2010

Mr President,

Montenegro remains committed to an efficient multilateral system in which the UN plays a central role, and supports pragmatically oriented reform initiatives and

activities of this Organization. We believe that reform and reorganization of the Security Council, as the key actor in preserving international peace, is necessary, as well as the revitalization of the General Assembly and ECOSOC reform. The overall UN reform, especially the SC reform, will strongly contribute to strengthening the position, relevance and authority of the Organization itself and will bring it into harmony with the modern geo-political processes and challenges.

The activities of Montenegro within the United Nations are based on promotion of multilateral cooperation and observance of the principles and values enshrined in the UN Charter. We are aware of the importance of strong and stable neighbourly relations and of strengthening cooperation in all the fields to our visibility and effectiveness at the international level.

Mr President,

We are successfully implementing internal reforms necessary for the achievement of our main foreign policy priorities – membership of the EU and NATO. The accession negotiations with the EU, following the provisional closing of two chapters, are entering a new and more demanding phase. The new approach in this phase of the negotiating process is based on reforms in the field of the rule of law, strengthening of legal certainty, protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, which is of particular importance for the citizens of Montenegro in the first place.

In parallel we are strongly committed to Euro-Atlantic integration. Seen as a country that will soon be a NATO alliance member, we are working devotedly on the 4th ANP and reform implementation in order to be completely ready for the time which will formally mark our invitation for membership of the Alliance. We believe that this would also contribute to reinforcing security in the region of the Balkans, whose bitter recent past is in part due to a lack of strong security arrangements.

Thanks to such efforts Montenegro is seen as a factor of stability in our region, as confirmed by a continuing advancement of political, economic, social and cultural cooperation with all our neighbours.

With regional cooperation high on our agenda, Montenegro actively participates in regional organizations. We believe that the recently launched initiative of the Western Balkans 6 + 2, whose modalities are subject of intense discussions, will help us focus activities in the Western Balkan region on specific development projects of common interest to participating states aimed at speeding up European integration and improving the quality of life of our citizens. We believe that these efforts, together with the synergy coming from the European Union, South-East European Cooperation Process and Regional Cooperation Council will result in bringing us in the region closer together, as well as closer to the EU as our common goal.

Mr President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The international community, led by the UN, with active participation and decisive contribution of all the stakeholders, must continue its search for adequate responses and must channel its efforts towards solving the increasingly complex issues and challenges that we are facing. Each and every country, irrespective of their size, has beyond doubt a part to play in finding such solutions, while mutual trust and cooperation are a guarantee of building a better world.