

**Address by the President of the Republic of Poland
at the UNGA on 25 September 2013**

*Using the letter and spirit of the United Nations Charter
to help improve international security*

Mr. President,

Mr. Secretary General,

Distinguished delegates!

I would like to offer my heartfelt congratulations to Mr. John Asheon his presidency of the 68th session of the UN General Assembly.

Mr. President, distinguished delegates,

In one month's time, it will be 70 years since the foreign ministers of the four big powers agreed to set up a universal organization dedicated to ensuring international peace and security. High representatives of the United States, the Soviet Union, China and the United Kingdom took that decision in the midst of the most devastating war in human history. They realized that maintaining peace and the creed of "war no more" requires harmonious and concerted international cooperation. They knew that it requires collaboration between the great powers and respect for the principles of international law as well as the building of infrastructure for peace. The declaration published back then rightly speaks of the need to act for justice between nations. This is important, because it is from injustice, from the sense of a lack of justice, that many conflicts, both internal and international, have originated and still continue to originate.

On the eve of this anniversary, it is worth examining to what an extent the international community copes with threats to peace and open and prolonged disputes. Our Organization and its member states have the right to be satisfied with the body of work produced since then to help maintain security and peace. The United Nations has proven to be an instrument that since World War II has made international relations more civilized in very many areas, not just in relations between countries but also within them. Understandably, the world is still far from ideal, but we should not lose heart. A better world is possible and we should not lose sight of this. This is our real ideal outlined in the United Nations Charter and is a duty of the members of this Organization.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The justified satisfaction with the progress made, which has been ensured with the aid of the United Nations and enjoyed by the whole of mankind, cannot hide the weaknesses of our Organization and its ineffectiveness in situations it was set up to resolve. One such current situation is the civil war in Syria. This conflict has led to high number of victims, has created a major humanitarian crisis. It is a threat to regional security and stability. In such situations, members of the Organization are authorized to demand efficient action by the Security Council. This is a justified expectation based on Article 24 of the Charter. Regrettably, in the Syrian dispute the members of the Security Council have spoken out for individual sides in the war and supported them in various ways rather than make them stop fighting and commit to peace talks. It revealed the lack of capacity and efficiency of the United Nations Organization decision-making mechanisms.

We should not procrastinate or wait for another anniversary as a pretext to return to our efforts to reform the Security Council in a way that would also bolster its authority, legitimacy (representativeness) and effectiveness. At the same time, it is about a more systemic solution, not just limited to the Security Council. At the same time we acknowledge the significance of the original principle of the right to veto of the UN Security Council permanent members.

This is necessitated not just by current or future challenges, but also the changes in the global international order which are unfolding before our very eyes. It would be beneficial, if the discussion about these issues could follow a formula similar to the one that proved successful prior to the sixtieth anniversary of our Organization. It brought about a rather ambitious reform agenda, some of which found its way into the Outcome Document adopted by member states in 2005. Poland was an active participant in that work and intends to continue its engagement for further necessary reforms.

Mr. President, distinguished delegates,

The Syrian tragedy, including the use of chemical weapons, is symbolic of a broader phenomenon, the ignoring of international values, norms and obligations adopted by our organization and the entire international community. After all, they should apply to everybody to the same degree, with no-one set outside or above them. Too often, the immediate national interests of countries have the upper hand which leads to tragic consequences in terms of human rights and humanitarian issues, including the principle of the responsibility to protect, which we had such high hopes for once it was adopted in 2005. Armed conflicts are an extreme manifestation of the mass violation of human rights. Tragic development of the situation in Syria that has claimed over 100,000 victims by now could have been prevented, had the Security Council adopted the necessary decisions early enough. Thus, the solution of difficult, complex and interrelated problems of the Middle east entails a comprehensive imaginative and impartial approach.

In a context where everyone is focused on security issues, including new, non-traditional ones, and where the dominant concerns are the economy as well as crisis mitigation, the fight for growth and competitiveness, competition for markets and land which could provide valuable raw materials, both in terms of economic development or profit, human rights must not be forgotten. Recently, many actors in the international arena have failed to care about them. Is it possible for us to ignore them? For example, if the violations are too close for comfort to genocide? Let me remind you that on the 9th December this year, we will be celebrating the sixty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which was initiated and drafted by the Polish lawyer Raphael Lemkin. The message from his research and initiatives, which started in Warsaw in the early 1930s, is as follows: we must be alert and sensitive to the symptoms of future violations of human rights, it is our duty to respond to them and not just show moral outrage, while the effectiveness of the response depends on international cooperation. The UN is to be a centre for such international cooperation (Article 1 (4)), it is the best and often the only such centre. One must not allow the instruments for the protection of human rights developed by the United Nations to be eroded. Their effectiveness will depend on whether we remain united, not just in name. It is necessary to establish a mechanism which would, in an objective and uncontroversial manner, force harmonious cooperation between the permanent members of the UNSC in the face of situations which fall under the responsibility to protect principle, in order to make sure that the prevention of such crimes and the effective response to them prevail over individual geopolitical interests.

Mr. President,

The practice of exploiting children in armed conflicts is particularly saddening and causes a lot of outcry. The fact that many governments tolerate such practices and that our Organization, despite the existing conventions and protocols, is unable to do more in this area is unacceptable. Let me remind you that the Convention on the Rights of Children was also developed on Poland's initiative. For children, their safety, development and rights, it is the family that matters most. Looking at the family and its role in society makes us aware of how much the family means when it comes to respecting human rights. In Poland, we are particularly sensitive to this.

Mr. President,

What in many countries is a tangible, but mere deficit in the exercise of economic and social rights, is poverty and chronic underdevelopment in many others. Poverty and underdevelopment are not just human rights issues and attempts to undermine the dignity of the individual and entire social groups, but they are also the reason why individuals and nations are unable to ensure survival on their own, and are unable to fulfill their creative potential for their own benefit and that of mankind. That is why international efforts aimed at helping regions and countries that suffer poverty and are constantly underdeveloped are so important for them to be able to enter the path of sustainable growth and stop being chronically dependent on external assistance. First and foremost, however, this is necessary so that fundamental human rights are respected and the local residents regain their sense of dignity in order for their original potential to serve the development and enrich the diversity of the human civilization.

These objectives are to be served by the climate negotiations Poland is going to chair when the climate summit COP19 starts this November. We know in Poland that just one single generation can be enough to make unbelievable progress. When Communism fell in 1989 Poland was a poor country, economically ruined and badly indebted. It needed international aid. Not in the form of non-repayable borrowing, but debt relief and restructuring, technical and training assistance, access to markets of better developed countries and foreign investment. Coupled with the hard-working nature and entrepreneurial spirit of the Poles it has all borne fruit in abundance. Since then, our GDP has gone up by around 400% and at the same time our emissions have dropped by over 30% as compared with the baseline year, which testified to the fact that it is possible and realistic to execute the scenario of economic growth with curbing the growth of harmful emissions. We are obviously aware that there is no single formula for everyone and no single path to sustainable growth. There are different baseline circumstances, environments as well as cultural and geographical conditions. The Polish example, however, and that of other post-Communist countries, should be considered in other regions of the globe. The same is true for the European development model present within the EU, which strives to combine democracy and human freedom, economic competitiveness, social justice and solidarity. This is not about being Europocentric. It is an experience most appreciated by those who come to Europe from the furthest parts of the world and want to stay there. Do not be misled by the economic crisis in the EU, which most countries in the Union are already beginning to overcome. The European development model remains universally attractive.

Our experience also suggests that even the most generous foreign assistance will not replace efforts made internally by a country. It is frequently an indispensable precondition, yet is insufficient in itself. Internal efforts and factors always form the foundation: freedom and the empowerment of individuals, economic freedom and the stability of the state. Good governance is another important aspect of successfully pursuing sustainable growth as it

combines democracy, self-government, human rights, competence, lack of corruption and the primacy of the interest of the country as a whole over particular interests, whether they are political or economic. The entire notion of good governance is spelt out in a resolution by the Human Rights Committee, initiated by Poland in the late 1990s. Only with good governance in place can international aid bring desirable results in combating poverty and taking the route of sustainable growth.

Mr. President, distinguished delegates,

Poland is an active participant in the international community. Not just through its bilateral relations and membership of regional organizations like the EU, or supra-regional like NATO and the OSCE. We are also trying to create a better international order by being active in the United Nations. Poland is an unflinching believer in the objectives and principles of the United Nations, is convinced that it is necessary to respect the treaties and commitments made by the UN, by us, and supports institutions and programs which facilitate their implementation. One of the priorities of our policy for years has been the promotion of human rights and democracy. Poland currently holds the presidency of the Human Rights Council. The European Endowment for Democracy was established on Poland's initiative. Our country's share in development aid is growing, particularly within the European Union and in November, Warsaw will host the climate summit. Poland has always been active in efforts aimed at ensuring the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, particularly chemical weapons. Drawing on our experience and rich relations with other countries, we wish to continue to contribute to reinforcing international peace and security. That is why we are pursuing a seat on the Security Council in 2018-2019. We believe that on the Security Council, we would be able to help achieve the objectives and principles of the United Nations as well as represent the interests of the member states in line with the letter and spirit of the Charter.

Thank you for your attention