



SLOVAKIA

STATEMENT BY

**H.E. Mr. IVAN GAŠPAROVIČ**

**PRESIDENT  
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC**

IN THE GENERAL DEBATE  
OF THE 68<sup>th</sup> SESSION  
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Dear Mr President,  
Dear Secretary General,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

To address this General Assembly on behalf of Slovak citizens is a great responsibility; a great responsibility for all of us who have been given the mandate by their citizens. They rightly expect that this unique global organisation will seek and find effective solutions to bring more peace, stability and prosperity for the mankind.

Mr President, I believe that with your experience we will succeed in this task. I wish to thank your predecessor, Mr Vuk Jeremić, for the vigour with which he presided over the previous General Assembly session. My deepest respect goes to the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon whose foresight and impartial service epitomise the values of this Organisation.

Mr President,

We have been going through a period of controversial changes, unseen opportunities, as well as unprecedented challenges. The one thing that remains unchanged, however, is the power of our joint efforts and cooperation. The world thrown off balance expects that we assume responsibility to jointly take resolute actions; in the name of humanity, not governed solely by our narrow national or corporate interests. The time has come to learn to respect our diversity and become the true United Nations. Meeting the two primary objectives of this organisation - ensuring peace and prosperity for all - remains our greatest challenge and our primary responsibility. Effective multilateralism is therefore in the national interest of us all.

The current Syrian crisis is testing our resoluteness and ability to respond effectively. The conflict is a threat for the entire region. It is frightening not only due to the number of casualties and refugees. Equally alarming is the inability of the UN Security Council to take any effective actions. If we thoughtfully consider all the possible consequences of a military intervention in Syria it becomes clear that there is only one good solution to this conflict - the diplomatic one. We shall not fear to adopt compromise solutions that may serve as the basis for a positive resolution of the entire problem in the future. The UN plays a key role in ensuring that civilians have access to humanitarian aid, making sure that those who commit crimes against humanity are punished and, above all, enforcing truce and starting

negotiations on stable post-conflict arrangements under the Geneva 2 initiative. Slovakia principally condemns use of chemical weapons as a crime against humanity and urgently asks to bring the perpetrators before the International Criminal Court. The UN's continued engagement is essential as there is no other functional alternative to its role.

Our recent experience with addressing international and national crises and conflicts in various regions of the world, including the so-call Arab Spring, encourages us to take extreme precaution when considering actions to be taken by the international community. Analysis of the consequences of our actions must be at least as detailed and elaborate as analysis of a possible intervention.

Slovakia's engagement in international crisis management, in building and maintaining peace, stability and prosperity, has long focused on Afghanistan. The Slovak Republic provides military as well as civilian and humanitarian aid. We highly appreciate the work done by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and its challenging role in assisting the Afghan Government in its security, political and economic transition efforts. Security, economic development, good governance, protection of human rights for all and, last but not least, preparation for, and organisation of free elections must be the founding pillars in the building of a new Afghan state. The upcoming presidential election will be a milestone in Afghanistan's history. The key to success of all the processes even beyond 2014 is national reconciliation based on the principles of constitutionality and respect for human rights. Afghanistan needs consistent, predictable and targeted support and assistance both from its neighbours and the entire international community. We consider cooperation between the UN and regional organisations pivotal in this regard.

Africa remains a vulnerable continent with a high concentration of conflicts. I believe it will progress towards stability, prosperity and more intensive cooperation in a sustainable manner, including with the help from the UN and regional organisations, such as the African Union. The fifty years of its existence have contributed to increased cooperation and development of the entire continent, and I believe it will stay on this course. Prevention of conflicts and resolving their primary causes are a long and complex process. Africa still needs attention and assistance from the international community, with the focus on preventive diplomacy and national ownership of all processes. Slovakia supports more intensive cooperation between the UN and the African Union, as well as closer relationships between the African Union and the EU.

We continuously pay high attention to the security situation in the Middle East. We are glad to see some positive signals among the number of disconcerting news coming from this part of the world. Slovakia welcomes and supports the renewal of talks between Israel and Palestine. It seems, however, that talks are not enough. A number of binding agreements and resolutions have been agreed so far to resolve numerous issues, but they have not been complied with as needed. Therefore, we expect more from the implementation of the solutions that have been agreed on. It is vital for peace, security, stability and further development of the entire region.

Terrorism continues to remain one of the most serious threats to peace and security. It plays a key role in many conflicts. A majority of its victims are civilians. We should keep our resolve to do everything to reach an agreement on a comprehensive convention on international terrorism. We can find a solution through our joint efforts only, under the UN's auspices.

We cannot have a secure, safe and stable environment without effective arms control and disarmament procedures in place as the basic instrument for conflict prevention. The signing of the Arms Trade Treaty has shown that the UN has the potential to make history and substantively contribute to increasing security in the world through its shared commitment to taking a responsible approach to arms trading. Slovakia believes that the joint effort of the international community can ensure the treaty will soon enter into force. We are prepared to do everything necessary in this respect. With regard to removing nuclear threats and their secondary consequences on health and the environment, Slovakia actively supports entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty which we consider an important pillar of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

I wish to particularly emphasise, and I repeat this at each meeting here in the UN, that the security sector reform is a key component in post-conflict development and building of the effective rule of law. Therefore, in the context of consolidation processes, we consider it an inseparable part of the security - rule of law - development structure. If we cannot give people security, safety, education and jobs, they will be quick to draw guns again in desperation. Unfortunately, our experience proves this. Slovakia closely cooperates with the UN in building its effective and adequate capacities necessary for security sector reform, emphasising national and local ownership of all processes. The UN is a guarantor of an impartial system of support to its members in this area.

Enduring peace requires respect for freedom, democracy, rule of law and human rights. The culture of impunity has no place in today's world. The role of the

International Criminal Court in the multilateral system is irreplaceable in this regard, as it focuses on preventing that perpetrators of the most serious crimes will go unpunished. But its decisions must be unquestionable. The Slovak Republic welcomed the adoption of amendments to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in June 2010. Therefore, we call on all UN members that have not yet done so to ratify the Rome Statute and its amendments.

This year, we celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the World Conference on Human Rights and adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Plan of Action. These historic documents are still relevant and represent a priority objective which the activities of the international community should pursue in this area. They confirm that the universal nature of all human rights and fundamental freedoms is beyond question. At the same time, they emphasise the interconnection between peace and security, and economic and social development and respect for human rights.

There can be no peace without economic stability and prosperity. Ensuring sustainable development and social stability is, beyond doubt, the most effective way to prevent conflicts. This is an agenda in which the UN has enormous potential but, on the other hand, which is most fragmented within the UN system. We appreciate that this issue is among the key priorities of the current session.

Its relevance is also evidenced by a series of important side events that focus on the meeting of Millennium Development Goals and development agenda in general. We particularly appreciate the initiative of the General Assembly in organising a high-level meeting on disability and development with the aim of ensuring the inclusion of people with disabilities in development agenda beyond 2015. There are around one billion people with disabilities living worldwide (many of them in poverty) who are still excluded from equitable access to education, healthcare, jobs and social and legal support systems. This dialogue is another step forward towards the empowerment of people with disabilities. We want to demonstrate how important it is to include this problem in development agenda beyond 2015. Equally, we pay increased attention to ensuring access to energy supply, water and safe food for all.

Slovakia wants to actively participate in the preparation of development goals beyond 2015 and is getting ready for a new stage in development cooperation. We have only recently become a member of the OECD's Development Assistance Council. This proves our commitment to become a full-fledged member of the international community of donor countries. Slovakia has thoroughly studied the report by the High-Level Panel on Post-2015 Development Agenda advising on the global framework for development cooperation goals. The goals and measures must

be coherent with and integrate development, social and environmental aspects in line with the outcome of the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development. The new goals must be set to bring effective and measurable results. The crucial task will be to identify resources to meet the new sustainable development goals. Our efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals are hindered by the ongoing lack of public funds and resources. The economic and financial crisis has helped to reveal a number of system deficiencies in distribution and control of resources, in particular the public ones, and the need to engage innovative resources, including private ones, in the processes. Slovakia wants to contribute to the discussion through its work in the Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing.

Until recently, Slovakia was a recipient of development assistance. Naturally, it now wants to give back by supporting countries dependent on the assistance from the international community. This year, we celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of a national system for official development assistance. The focus of development assistance provided by Slovakia reflects the needs of countries reliant on this assistance and responds to the global challenges within the international community. Slovakia has experience with political and economic transition and integration in the European and trans-Atlantic structures. The lessons it has learnt from the building of civic society and public governance reforms Slovakia now primarily shares with the countries of the Eastern Partnership and the Western Balkans, as well as with countries such as Kenya and Afghanistan. Slovakia concentrates on poverty eradication by facilitating access to healthcare, education and enhancing the status of women and young people in those countries.

We are going through turbulent times. The UN has the potential to be a global leader in ensuring peace and prosperity for all. But if its effectiveness is not enhanced, the Organisation's relevance is put at risk. In order to perform all of its tasks, the UN must be strong, inclusive and open. Global links require that the existing partnerships with regional organisations are reinforced, as well as with partners from the private sector and, last but not least, with civil society. We understand that the UN needs sufficient financial and human resources to effectively perform its mandates, but we call for their more efficient use.

Mr President,

Slovakia celebrates the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its sovereign existence this year. It was only natural that the first steps of Slovakia as a sovereign state led to the United Nations. The principles and objectives of the United Nations represent firm

cornerstone of the Slovak foreign policy based on the values of effective multilateralism. Over the twenty years, Slovakia's cooperation with the UN has strengthened and intensified as Slovakia grew and its position as a stable democratic country and a reliable, pro-active partner at the international level strengthened. Owing also to this development, I could host the summit of twenty Eastern and Central European presidents this June in Bratislava, where we held discussion on ways to deal with the current financial and economic crisis and on good regional cooperation.

Slovakia has been contributing to a wide range of UN activities through the work in its main organs, direct involvement in more than seventeen peace-keeping operations, or implementation of over four hundred humanitarian and development projects in more than twenty countries worldwide. Having won the trust of its partners, Slovakia was elected to all relevant UN bodies, enabling it to promote and enforce the values of the UN in all three main pillars of its work even more effectively. I assure you that Slovakia will continue its tireless efforts to serve and assist in meeting the UN goals as a reliable partner.

Thank you for your attention.