

***Statement by***

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President of the Republic of Croatia***

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Mr. President,

At the outset, let me congratulate you on your election and thank H. E. John William Ashe for his leadership throughout the previous session.

The topic of this general debate – *Delivering on and Implementing a Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda* – most fittingly depicts our common priority before Organization's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary next autumn. We are about to set the stage for strategic decisions and concrete actions. Those that should deliver comprehensive and transformational changes both on global and national levels.

Next year will be one of the most important in the history of our Organization –not only because of the United Nations anniversary. The 2015 is the year that has potential to define in more ways than one our common future: we shall finalize and launch the development agenda beyond 2015, encapsulated in the Sustainable Development Goals, and we are supposed to reach a new universal agreement on climate change. Croatia stands ready to continue to actively participate in these pivotal endeavours and give its share of work.

Sustainable development and protection of our Planet remain at the forefront of our efforts; at the same time other pressing issues demand our full attention.

Wars and armed conflicts, natural disasters, pandemic diseases, lingering poverty and many other existing or potential threats to human lives and human rights keep on emerging.

If we do not react adamantly and swiftly and tackle these perils early enough in their emerging phase, we risk that they will increase exponentially and beyond our control. More than ever before, we come to face the fact that security and development and human rights are all interdependent and mutually reinforcing. It demands to be at the very heart of the Post-2015 agenda.

At this time we also witness the type of dangerous discord that spreads fear of the worst possible outcome. The same one that preceded the birth of this Organization. The Charter provides us with so much wisdom. Those words came with the experience of the scourge of war and misery. What we need at this point is to reinvigorate the same level of determination from almost seven decades ago. And do everything we can to avoid regression.

Mr. President,

Croatia is deeply concerned about the situation in Ukraine. There is no other but a peaceful solution to the conflict. The suffering of so many people is unfortunately all too well familiar.

And Croatia echoes the call to stop the violence and resort to political solutions. Croatia strongly supports the principles of international law concerning the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Similarly, we share the grave concern over the spreading of terrorism and violence around the world, most notably in the Middle East and Africa. The sheer magnitude of destruction, loss of lives and unspeakable atrocities, most notably by IS/ISIL in Syria and Iraq, can only be overshadowed by the growing threat that they will not stop soon, nor at any border. And that they will continue to grow and devour everything our civilization stands for. Zero tolerance policy towards terrorism and joint global effort is needed to prevent this from happening. Croatia supports all ongoing efforts to form a coalition against IS/ISIL. We stand ready to make a contribution to Iraqi forces as well as for Iraqi Kurdish forces.

Also, although it is a difficult task, a stable and sustainable peace agreement between Israelis and Palestinians is an imperative. We hope that honest and serious efforts will be brought back to negotiate a comprehensive and sustainable peace agreement. The one that will establish ground for *two state solution* living in peace and security, mutually recognizing and respecting each other, gradually transforming the entire Middle East into a region of peace and cooperation.

Mr. President,

The situation in the world brings the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the centre of attention. In this regard, the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is of a particular importance, and Croatia wishes that the Treaty is reinforced and strengthened by the outcomes of the Conference.

Croatia also commends the unprecedented international effort aimed at the destruction of the chemical weapons of the Syrian Arab Republic. The OPCW-UN Joint Mission successful work demonstrates how indispensable the role of the United Nations is.

Mr. President,

It is truly unnerving to be confronted with problems and crisis I have referred to, while our very best is needed to overcome obstacles such as climate change, natural disasters, scarcity

and degradation of resources, especially food and drinking water. The crises are interlinked; therefore, we need an interlinked and integrated response to them. And again, no serious thought can be given to sustainable development without ensuring peace and security.

Certain conflicts may have even been foreseen, prevented and even averted if the international community had acted timely and decisively. And while indeed, primary responsibility lies within the sovereign state itself, regional and global organizations have the tools and thus also the obligation to assist those states.

One of the effective methods here is peacebuilding where we help post-conflict societies to stand on their own. There is a vast pool of global experience in peacebuilding that could be applied, including the one from my own country. Thus, we expect that the upcoming review of the peacebuilding architecture of the UN will consolidate existing knowledge and experience and bring fresh ideas on how to improve overall peacebuilding process.

The special role in maintaining peace and advancing development lies with women. In particular we see the role of women in achieving successful conflict resolution and sustainable development of post-conflict societies. We strongly advocate women's economic empowerment for peacebuilding and development. This is why we are organizing a high-level meeting here at the UN related to gender dimension of sustainable development within the context of post-conflict recovery. on 26 September.

Mr. President,

We have started this week discussing climate change- the pressing issue of today. Croatia is as vulnerable as any other country - devastating and unprecedented floods we are witnessing right now are proof of that. Yesterday we all renewed our vows to boldly and ambitiously tackle this undoubtedly global issue of most importance. Croatia is hopeful that the upcoming Lima and Paris conferences will lead us to a global agreement in key areas including climate financing and cutting down greenhouse gas emissions. This remains one of the main pillars of a transformative post-2015 development agenda.

Having in mind the need for progress, we have committed ourselves to implement the Millennium Development Goals- this is our unfinished business. The implementation and evaluation of the Millennium Development Goals has made us all conscious that this vital process needs to be continued.

Croatia is pleased that in this regard we have been building truly transformative and people-centred framework of Sustainable Development Goals. These goals represent the capital investment in our common future. We must put maximum effort to make SDGs a reality and

support their continuous implementation on all levels – this is the opportunity for long term development that we as a mankind cannot afford to miss.

We have advocated in this vein the importance of good governance and the rule of law, as the enablers of sustainable development and its inseparable part. Everyone has a role to play: national governments, international organizations, the private sector, civil society, academia, media and other different stakeholders.

Mr. President,

There is a key principle that matters to my country: equality between all human beings, regardless of their beliefs, race, gender, national origin, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation or other status.

Croatia fully supports the pivotal role of the UN and its human rights mechanisms, in particular Human Rights Council, on both tracks - to further develop and strengthen human rights protection and to timely and effectively respond to challenges of gross violations and systematic abuses of human rights, worldwide.

We firmly believe that sustainable development goes hand-in-hand with democracy which should be approached in a holistic manner.

Saying that, a number of international mechanisms ensure stable democracies and sustainable development by eliminating double standards, insecurity and impunity. Thus, we add our voice in calling for universal adherence to the Rome Statute and the universal jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court.

Mr. President,

As I have already mentioned, we have recently been witnessing all sorts of natural disasters. Such situations demand swift and prompt national and international actions, first and foremost, for mitigating immediate damages, taking care of the victims and delivering humanitarian aid.

Outbreak of epidemic diseases also has a comparable effect. Recent example is the epidemics of Ebola in several Western African nations. It, as a matter of solidarity and understanding, demands the world's immediate and comprehensive response to the multifaceted- medical, social, economic and security- crisis.

Mr. President,

Croatia will continue providing assistance to the most vulnerable. Especially considering that we have rich expertise at programmes for building up resilience in humanitarian crisis, raising awareness of the dangers of land mines and other unexploded ordinances of war and providing psycho-social support to victims of violence.

In addition, let me point out that Croatia was devoted and active in delivering humanitarian aid to the flooded regions of its neighboring countries of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina this spring, while ourselves also facing grave floods and their consequences in Croatia. We all need more solidarity on regional as well as global level.

One of the most important goals of my presidency has been and continues to be to promote dialogue and cooperation instead of conflict, as a means of achieving security and stability for Croatia as well as every other country in the world. I am proud to say that Croatia has come a long way in that respect.

Mr. President,

With the World Summit in 2005 we have started reforming the UN system. Despite all the progress made, we haven't managed to achieve palpable results in the reform of the Security Council. Moreover, we would like to see that Council is more engaged in preventing crises and that it remains dedicated to its Charter duties rather than any particular interest. In order to maintain the Council's authority, relevance and indispensability in maintaining global peace and security, its reform needs to be comprehensive and without further delays.

Croatia has stated on numerous occasions its position on the Security Council reform. In our view, the enlargement should happen in both permanent and non-permanent categories of membership, including one additional non-permanent seat for the Eastern Europe group. The enlargement is closely linked with a reform of working methods including the question of the use of the veto powers. Croatia welcomes and supports the initiative for establishing a code of conduct regarding the suspension of the veto use in cases relating to a mass crime.

Mr President,

On another note, we strongly believe that consolidation of European space is possible only with further stabilization and security of Southeast Europe. We look forward to that day when all countries of the region will finally be admitted to the European Union. Croatia has been and will continue to be an advocate for a continuous and strong focus on Southeast Europe.

Countries of the region are finding more and more ways of cooperating together and laying foundation for joint development of sustainable peace and stability – be it in the case of recent devastating floods, or dealing with difficult past while finding truth and justice in an issue of missing persons, or setting the stage for major infrastructure and transport projects.

Mr President,

In conclusion allow me to address the issue that I personally believe can be one of the best remedies to achieve social improvement, economic advance and, consequently, political stability: education. This is why I strongly support the Secretary General's "Global Education First" initiative.

Knowledge and education are major driving forces of societies and one of the most important preconditions for success and sustainable development. Disparities in knowledge, its distribution, access and application have become major factors in determining the overall success of a nation and the level of its development.

That is the best guarantee that world's development and sustainability will go hand-in-hand and that global peace and security will thus become more fortified than ever.

Thank you.