



Statement
by H.E. Mr. Petro Poroshenko, the President of Ukraine,
at the General Debate of the 70th Session of the United Nations General Assembly
(29 September 2015, New York)

PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Distinguished Mr. President,

Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of Ukraine, I sincerely congratulate distinguished Mr. Mogens Lykkesoft on election as President of the 70th session of the UN General Assembly.

I wish you, Mr. President, every success in your activity in this crucial historic moment.

Our future will largely depend on the outcomes of this session and our collective decisions – whether we will choose to follow the path of peace, security and human rights, or will plunge into the turmoil of new hybrid wars, chaos and sufferings.

Mr. President,

At the moment of the Organization's anniversary I'm proud to speak on behalf of one of the UN founding members.

The State, which back in 1945 took an active part in the San Francisco conference, contributed to the establishment of the Organization and laid down the foundations for its activities.

The State, which added a lot in San Francisco to shape the heart of the UN Charter – its Purposes and Principles.

Regrettably, I am also speaking on behalf of the UN Member State, which is now suffering from a brutal violation of the fundamental norms and principles of the UN Charter.

The statement on Ukraine's joining to the United Nations as one of the founding members, which was delivered at the San Francisco conference, emphasized, I quote "Ukraine has repeatedly been the subject of bloody invasions by aggressors that for centuries have sought to capture its territory ...". End of quote.

It has been a long time since that landmark event.

But, today, I have to recall that my country has become the object of external aggression.

This time, the aggressor is Russia - neighboring country, former strategic partner that legally pledged to respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of the borders of Ukraine.

This country used to be a guarantor of Ukraine's security under the Budapest Memorandum, whereby security guarantees were provided to my country in exchange for a voluntary renunciation of the world's third nuclear arsenal.

Moreover, this state is a permanent member of the UN Security Council, which is entrusted by the UN Charter with maintaining international peace and security.

In February 2014, Russia conducted an open and unprovoked aggression against my country, having occupied and annexed the Crimea.

Bluntly and brutally violating the international law and shocking the whole world community.

I am deeply grateful to the delegations of the majority of our Organization's Member States, that last year supported the resolution of the UN General Assembly entitled "Territorial integrity of Ukraine", which condemned the Russian illegal annexation of the Crimea.

It is regrettable that after this clear verdict of the international community, Russia did not return to the civilized international legal field.

Moreover, Moscow started a new military reckless gamble – this time, in Ukrainian Donbas region.

Despite the fact that until now Russia refuses to officially admit its direct military invasion, today there is no doubt that this is an aggressive war against my country.

To mislead the world community, Russian leadership orders to takes off insignias of its military servicemen and identification marks of its military equipment, to abandon its soldiers captured on the battlefield; to cynically use mobile crematoriums to eliminate traces of its crimes in Ukrainian soil.

Ukrainian territories occupied by Russia in the Crimea and Donbas region constitute approximately 44 thousand square kilometers.

Millions of Ukrainians have found themselves under occupation.

The goal of this war is to force the Ukrainian people to give up its sovereign choice to build a free, democratic, prosperous European state.

All this takes place against the backdrop of traitorous rhetoric about brotherly peoples, common history, related languages and "predestined" common future.

In fact, we are dealing here with a desire to return to the imperial times with spheres of influence, a desperate attempt to obtain self-affirmation at others' expense.

For over 20 months, Russia's aggression against my country has been continuing through financing of terrorists and mercenaries, and supplies of arms and military equipment to the illegal armed groups in Donbas.

Over the last few days we have heard conciliatory statements from the Russian side in which, in particular, it called for the establishment of anti-terrorist coalition, or warned of fire danger to flirt with terrorists.

Cool story, but really hardly to believe!

How can you urge an anti-terrorist coalition – if you inspire terrorism right in front of your door?

How can you talk about peace and legitimacy – if your policy is war via puppet governments?

How can you speak of freedom for nations – if you punish your neighbor for his choice?

How can you demand respect for all – if you don't have respect for anyone?

The Gospel of John teaches us: "In the beginning was the word".

But what kind of a gospel do you bring to the world, if all your words are double-tongued like that?

Back to the situation in Donbas I have to state that here we are forced to fight proper, fully armed regular troops of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation.

Heavy weaponry and military equipment are concentrated in the occupied territories in such quantities that armies of the majority of UN Member States can only dream about.

These are, in particular, the state of art samples of military equipment of Russian production, which are unlikely, according to the well-known assumption of the Russian President might be purchased in an ordinary army store.

Unless, of course, such a wholesale store, with free shipping, is from the Russian Federation.

During this period, more than 8.000 Ukrainians, of whom about 6.000 civilians, died at the hands of the Russian backed terrorists and occupiers in Donbas.

More than 1.5 million residents of Donbas were forced to flee their homes and became internally displaced persons moving to other safer region in Ukraine.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the international community for the considerable efforts in providing necessary assistance to the people in need.

At the same time I call upon the United Nations and all other international actors to continue to pay special attention to this very important issue.

I would like to draw your attention that it is not for the first time that the permanent member of the UN Security Council is undermining peace and security at both regional and international levels.

For over 24 years that have passed since the questionable procedure of transfer of the permanent Security Council membership of the former Soviet Union to the Russian Federation, it is not the only "hybrid" war that Russia has unleashed.

In fact, in order to preserve its influence in neighboring countries, Russia for decades has deliberately created around itself the belt of instability.

These are: Nagorny Karabakh, Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Crimea and Donbas.

All of these are protracted conflicts, which supported by, or directly related to Russia.

But the Kremlin goes further on.

These days the Russian "men in green" tread on Syrian land.

What or who is next?

In every democratic country, if someone stole your property, the independent court would restore justice, in order to protect the rights, and punish the offender.

However, we must recognize that in the 21st century our Organization lacks an effective instrument to bring the aggressor-country to justice, which has stolen the territory of another sovereign state.

70 years ago the creators of the UN Charter have envisaged the mechanism of the UN Security Council sanctions to be one of the restraining tools applied in response to the breaches of peace and acts of aggression.

However, they couldn't even imagine that this tool will be needed against the Aggressor State that is a Permanent member of the UN Security Council.

Since the beginning of the aggression, Russia used its veto right twice, while the UN Security Council was considering questions related to Ukraine.

At the outset, Russia blocked a draft resolution condemning "fake referendum" on Crimea's annexation in March 2014.

The second time Russia put its shameful veto on the draft resolution on establishment of the International Tribunal to investigate and bring to justice all responsible for Malaysian MH17 plane crash.

By imposing its disgraceful veto on this draft resolution, Russia clearly demonstrated to the whole world its defiance in establishing the truth.

Not just the truth about perpetrators of this terrorist attack and arms, used to shot down that plane.

What is most important is the truth about those, who organized this crime and from which country the mentioned arms had been transported.

I think everyone in this Hall clearly understands real motives of Russia's veto on MH17 Tribunal.

Moreover, the establishment of an international peacekeeping operation which could lead to the stabilization of the situation in Ukraine and stop the bloodshed had been also blocked because of the potential threat of Russia's veto.

Abuse of the veto right, its usage as a "license to kill" is unacceptable.

Collective voice of our Organization should be clear.

Ukraine stands for the gradual limitation of the veto right with its further cancellation.

Veto power should not become an act of grace and pardon for the crime, which could be used anytime and "pulled off from the sleeve" in order to avoid fair punishment.

In this context I welcome the initiative of my French colleague President Hollande, supported by President Peña Nieto of Mexico, on the Political Declaration to restrain from the veto right among the P5 Members in case of mass atrocities.

Primary attention should be given to the modernization of the UN Security Council – including enlargement of its membership and improvement of methods of its work.

The membership of the UN Security Council should reflect realities of the 21st century by representing larger quantity of African, Asian and Latin American States.

Additional non-permanent seat in the Council should be given to the Eastern European Group of countries – its composition doubled during the last two decades.

Ukraine also considers improvement of peacekeeping and peace building architecture of the Organization as an important element of the UN reform.

I am proud of Ukraine's international reputation as an active and devoted contributor to the UN Peacekeeping Operations.

Despite external challenges, we remain a reliable partner of the Organization in this noble matter.

The contribution of Ukraine to the maintenance of international peace and security provides us with moral grounds to count on the same assistance from the Organization in time of vital importance of this issue for my country.

The special peacekeeping mission in Donbas under the UN auspices could become a very useful instrument contributing to implementation of the Minsk Agreements.

Ukraine is committed to follow the letter and the spirit of the Minsk deal.

We demand the same approach from other signatories that have lately resorted to the language of blackmail.

Otherwise, there is no alternative to sanctions, and even their strengthening.

Full access of OSCE monitors to all occupied territories, withdrawal of the Russian military forces, military equipment as well as mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine, restoration of full control by Ukraine over the state border with Russia must be secured.

Freedom, peace, respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity – Ukraine doesn't demand more.

However, it will not settle for less.

Mr. President,

Unfortunately, not by its own free will today Ukraine is one of the areas of fight against terrorist threat.

We strongly condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

The activity of ISIL, Al Qaeda, Boko Haram, Al Shabaab and others is the global challenge.

The only possible way to address it, is to unite in common and non-compromised fight against this evil.

International terrorism has proved to be more flexible than the political will of nations, and today it has taken new hybrid forms.

State and non-state actors have become interlinked.

The struggle for one's rights is substituted for ruthless terror.

We are convinced that the need for the universal international instrument able to counteract this crime is not only urgent but long overdue.

For this reason, the conclusion of preparatory work on the draft of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism should become one of the top priorities for this 70th Session.

A special role in the fight against international terrorism should be given to the most reputable legal institutions - the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court.

Making the jurisdiction of these institutions universal is a core element of overcoming the impunity of actual violators as well as their patrons - the regimes whose national policy has become the mass-production of terror.

I strongly believe that one of the most important aspects of fighting against terrorism is keeping and sharing the memory of the victims.

In this context, I propose that 70th Session of the General Assembly consider the establishment of the International Day of Commemoration of Memory of the Victims of Terrorist Acts.

Mr. President,

It was the feeling of humiliation, disregard of people's will and the violation of their fundamental rights that prompted Ukrainians leave their homes for protests in 2013, which was the beginning of the Revolution of Dignity.

Ukraine has paid and continues to pay an extremely high price for its freedom, and the right to live in a free country – the price of human lives.

This is why, the interests of every single individual, and the protection of people's rights laid the foundation for my large-scale reform program launched a year ago.

For the first time in 24 years of its independence, Ukraine adopted a National Human Rights Strategy.

It took into account best international practices from the human rights perspective, including the EU Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy.

Russian aggression exposed the problem of securing the human rights in the Crimea and certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

Leading international human rights organizations are alerting about the radical deterioration of the human rights situation, which directly applies to Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars in the occupied Crimea.

I am referring specifically to the practice, used by the occupation authorities of the Crimea: to enlist forcefully into Russian citizenship, as well as to systematic persecution, arrests, abductions and killings of pro-Ukrainian residents of the peninsula, and complete elimination of independent media.

Ukraine reaffirms its commitment to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

By all legal means, we will continue to defend the rights of the Crimean Tatars - the indigenous people of Ukraine - and the Ukrainians, who are suffering from the repressive policy of the occupation authorities in the Crimea.

I hope that the decision to address this issue will be taken during the current session.

I also feel obliged to mention the names of Nadiya Savchenko, Oleg Sentsov, Olexandr Kolchenko and many other Ukrainians, political prisoners of the Kremlin, illegally detained and sentenced. For example, Oleg Sentsov, a respected filmmaker, was sentenced to 20 years in prison only for being Ukrainian patriot.

I call upon the UN and its Member States to launch a worldwide campaign to pressure Russian authorities to immediately release all Ukrainian citizens, which they hold hostage. We will be able to achieve our goal only if our action is global. Most of all, Ukraine needs solidarity and assistance, which is really a powerful instrument against aggression and injustice. Ukraine will win for sure because truth is on its side. But we will do it much faster if we feel support and solidarity of the whole international community. The ongoing hybrid war of Russia against Ukraine has demonstrated that the international community is facing another challenge, which requires consolidation of our efforts.

The full-scale information war and propaganda campaign have become a particular destructive form of non-military aggression. Fake news, blatant lies spread to justify aggression, propaganda of intolerance and violence are phenomena of the same range, which undermine the principles of freedom of expression and poison human souls and minds.

That is why the task of strengthening the role of information in the maintenance of peace and security is more important than ever.

I call upon the General Assembly to strongly condemn these shameful phenomena and to discuss the ways to confront them.

Mr. President,

Despite the above-mentioned external challenges, Ukraine is fully committed to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

We are ready to share joint responsibility for solving specific vital problems and priorities of the most vulnerable groups of countries, such as small island states. Ukraine as a member of "Friends of Climate" Group is looking forward to reach consensus on the universal agreement in the area of climate change as soon as possible. We hope that this result will be achieved by the UN Member States in December this year in Paris. We have to understand that the price of this issue is the safety of future generations and sustainable development of mankind.

The path towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals will not be successful without overcoming and preventing the consequences of environmental and technological disasters. As a result of the Russian aggression, Ukraine faces another challenge – the protection of the environment in Donbas.

Irresponsible and criminal flooding of mines by terrorists led to the poisoning of drinking water, soil, flora and fauna of the region. The atmosphere is polluted due to explosions and shelling of sensitive industrial infrastructure. In fact, we can speak about the risk of environmental disaster. I am convinced that the issue of environment protection under the conditions of conflict needs special attention of the United Nations Environment Assembly. Speaking about technological disasters, I cannot but recall one of the most horrific of them.

Next year we will mark the sad anniversary – 30 years since the tragedy at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Station. I would like to request you, Mr. President, to hold a special meeting of the General Assembly, dedicated to the thirtieth anniversary of the Chornobyl disaster in April 2016.

Mr. President,

In my country's address on the occasion of joining the United Nations it is said, I quote: «Ukraine ... with its vast human strength and material resources will be able to make a significant contribution to maintaining peace and global security», end of quote.

Just like it was seventy years ago, I reiterate Ukraine's unwavering commitment to further undertake maximum efforts to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war", enshrined in the UN Charter.

Achievement of this noble goal will be the cornerstone of Ukraine's non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council for the period of 2016-2017, if elected.

In this capacity Ukraine will remain the reliable and consistent partner, guided not by own, but global agenda, and resolutely following the spirit and letter of the Charter.

I am firmly convinced, that the Organization will pass with dignity the extremely complex tests, and strengthen its role as a guarantor of world order, peace and prosperity.

Let God be with us.

Thank you for your attention.