



PERMANENT MISSION OF GREECE TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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of the General Assembly of the United Nations**

**Statement by
H.E. Mr. Alexis Tsipras
Prime Minister
of the Hellenic Republic**

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Mr President
Mr Secretary General
Fellow delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

Seventy years have passed since the UN was founded, after the most disastrous war in history.

In the wake of this War the UN's noble declarations raised hopes for a common peaceful future, based on universal values, social justice and respect of human rights.

Much has been since achieved. But, regrettably, the vision of the founders of the Organization is far from being fulfilled.

We witness today a large humanitarian crisis, unprecedented movements of displaced people and an increase of poverty, violence, extremism and human rights abuses.

Nevertheless, the big question for us is not to identify the challenges we face.

The peoples of this world know very well what they face every day.

The big question that this great organization was set up to answer, is how do we DEAL with these challenges on the basis of our shared values of the UN Charter.

Unfortunately, as years go by we seem to be returning not only to the same problems, but to the same old failed recipes that fostered these problems in the first place.

This is why, the biggest challenge we face today is an existential one.

Whether to continue with the same old recipes of social exclusion, political fragmentation and economic aggression or try to reclaim our future step by step.

With Confidence, but also with the ability to learn from our mistakes.

Allow me to refer to the efforts of my own country in confronting three specific crises in the last few years.

1) As many other countries, Greece was hit hard by the 2008 economic crisis due to the structural weaknesses of its economy and its high debt and budgetary deficits.

Yet the neoliberal recipe we, and other European countries, were called to implement, came at a devastating social cost and contributed to deepening the economic and fiscal crisis, instead of curing it.

We lost 25% of our GDP, our debt/GDP ratio grew to 180% while unemployment reached 27% and the migration of graduates to European countries, accelerated.

What we faced was a firm commitment of some, to the idea that Greece must exit the Eurozone, or that the institutional and structural reforms that we need, have to be combined with austerity measures and welfare and wage cuts.

After many months of negotiation, Greece agreed to a new stabilization program that includes reforms in our public administration, pension and tax system,

gives us the opportunity to stabilize our economy by setting the foundation for a reprofiling of our debt.

Unfortunately, at the same time, it imposes measures burdening further both society and the economy.

These measures should have been avoided.

We needed and still need to struggle step by step to claim a growth- rather than an austerity- agenda.

To protect the most vulnerable members of society and distribute tax burdens justly.

To link the development of the economy and the restoration of confidence, to the need for a restructuring of our debt.

How familiar does this sound to others in this assembly? How many times since the 70s have countries in the developed and - more recently - in the developing world, struggled to face exactly these problems?

That concern not just their weaknesses, but the recipes they are given to deal with them?

We have to realize that we need a global financial and economic system oriented to fostering national growth strategies and our post 2015 development agenda.

We have to discuss the issue of debt restructuring in all competent fora - including this one - in connection to developing growth and not austerity- strategies.

2) Another regional, european crisis where Greece is at the forefront, concerns recent unprecedented migration flows.

Since the beginning of the year over 300,000 people - mostly from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan - have entered the country with the aim of transiting to Western European countries.

Greece - like all other European countries- was taken aback by this development.

Nevertheless, the people of Greece, showed their solidarity by providing food and shelter to the refugees.

In cooperation with the EU and other international organizations - we are doing all we can to manage these flows in an effective and humane way.

By improving reception facilities and identification procedures as well as setting up hot spots to facilitate relocation.

Nevertheless, for some the only way to deal with this challenge is to build walls higher, to repel migrants by force or to ensure that they remain someone else's responsibility- as far away as possible.

We do not believe that the future of Europe or our world can be built on ever- higher walls, or children dying at our doorstep.

Neither can we forget that many of our ancestors were refugees and migrants.

We cannot allow racism and xenophobia to destroy our common principles.

In the framework of the UN, we have to build the necessary resettlement mechanism from countries neighbouring Syria, while also supporting them directly in hosting refugees and dismantling trafficking networks.

This resettlement mechanism together with the existing relocation mechanism in Europe, will give hope to these people, discouraging them from trusting traffickers.

Furthermore, we have to increase support for frontline European states, such as Greece, in their effort to manage these flows.

3). Greece is also at the center of a third security crisis, that causes this refugee crisis.

We are at the heart of a triangle of destabilization, with Ukraine to the North and the conflicts in Libya and in the Middle East, to the Southwest and Southeast.

Located in this unstable environment Greece, has been striving to bolster regional security and supports all efforts promoting peace and stability.

Nevertheless, again we hear some, insisting that we should embark on unilateral initiatives without considering their prospects and consequences.

Or leave the conflicts to be settled by themselves without contributing to stabilization or reconstruction.

Yet, these are exactly the mistakes that brought us here in the first place.

We do not have the luxury to make foreign policy choices without examining in advance, what their consequences will be.

In Syria we must act decisively in favour of reconciliation and a political solution that will lay the ground for the Syrian-led democratic transition, foreseen in the Geneva Communiqué.

In this regard, we support initiatives aiming at engagement with all relevant international and regional actors.

In Libya, we fully support UN efforts and we welcome the successful completion of negotiations and political dialogue last week.

Furthermore, we believe that the Middle East Peace Process is of key importance for the region.

A new momentum for a solution must be promoted, with a view to the creation of a state of Palestine on the basis of the pre-1967 borders (with East Jerusalem as its capital) that coexists peacefully with Israel.

Concerning Ukraine, we support its territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty within its internationally recognized borders.

We appreciate the efforts of the Normandy Group and the conciliatory role of the OSCE, to avoid a vicious circle of militarization in the region.

And we call on the Minsk Agreement signatories to implement the Agreements in full.

We are also deeply concerned about the rise of jihadism, which must be dealt with, decisively and comprehensively.

4) Beyond the crises I mentioned, Greece attaches particular importance to engagement with its immediate neighborhood.

There also, it is important to foster new initiatives rather than remain trapped in the dead-ends of the past.

I spoke of the need to avoid constructing walls.

And truly it is shameful that for the last 41 years - the same number as my age- Cyprus remains divided.

Today, more than ever and in light of the instability in our region, it is important that the momentum is grasped for a mutually acceptable, just, viable and comprehensive solution to the **Cyprus issue**,

based on the relevant UN Resolutions and on Cyprus' membership of the European Union.

To the benefit of all the people of Cyprus- Greek and Turkish Cypriots - as well as all other communities.

In this context I would like to underline Greece's full support to the intercommunal talks, held under the leadership of President Anastasiades and the head of the Turkish Cypriot community, Mr.Akinci.

I firmly believe that any real and lasting solution will have to eventually deal with the international issue of security,

the cancellation of the anachronistic Treaties of Alliance and Guarantees and the withdrawal of all foreign troops, including the troops occupying the northern part of the island.

5) As a regional player keen on promoting security in the area, Greece has been making **steady efforts to improve cooperation with Turkey**.

We have done so through a wide range of initiatives, including the promotion of our dialogue on Confidence Building Measures.

Full respect of good neighbourly relations and international law by Turkey, as well as a just and viable solution to the Cyprus issue, remain a pre- condition for full normalization of Greek-Turkish relations.

6) In the Western Balkans, we promote robust bilateral relations and a commitment to the region's European perspective.

Greece has stepped up efforts towards the settlement of old differences in the region, among them the name issue of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

We have proposed a pragmatic settlement framework aiming at reaching an agreement and agreed a set of Confidence Building Measures, which provide us with an opportunity to further enhance bilateral cooperation and trust.

Mr. President,

People all around the globe are striving for a better future for them and their children.

People in my country are struggling every day, with pride and dignity, to overcome crises and regain hope.

Even in their most difficult moments they are assisting those more in need, those fleeing conflict zones.

Even in their most difficult moments they are asserting their democratic right to choose their own fate.

This is a daily example of people insisting, even under the most difficult conditions, on their basic humanity and democratic rights.

This example should guide us, in taking the necessary steps, towards a safer, just and prosperous world for ourselves and the future generations to live in.

Thank you