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Address by

H.E. Mrs. Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović
President of
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at the

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Mr. President,

Allow me to congratulate you on your election and thank H.E. Sam Kutesa for his leadership throughout the previous session. We have great expectations from this session, recognizing that there is an urgent need for action on so many issues and in so many areas of the globe. Acknowledging the challenges that lie ahead we sincerely hope that working together we can turn these challenges into opportunities and take significant steps forward in achieving some of our common goals.

As we celebrate 70 years of the establishment of the United Nations, my memory reflects upon the past 23 years. Croatia joined the United Nations in 1992 and has contributed independently to its legacy and achievements for almost a third of its existence. Throughout its membership, Croatia has transformed itself from the recipient of UN assistance and an item of the Security Council's agenda, to an active member supporting the work of our organisation in many fields.

Croatia served on the Security Council, held the presidency of ECOSOC, and in the past 23 years has actively and substantively contributed to our common cause, be it in peacekeeping missions, peacebuilding efforts, arms control initiatives, economic and social development, gender equality, promoting strengthening of international legal architecture, or reforming the General Assembly. Rest assured, we shall continue with our efforts and contributions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Can we truly say that we are doing enough to ensure peace, security and human rights? Are we doing enough to protect our Planet, the only one we have? Member States, all 193 of us, should not forget how important membership is, nor how important the commitments that we have made are, to ensuring global peace and security. Strengthening the role of the United Nations and promoting international relations and economic order is in the interest of all nations. This is not an empty phrase, but a reality we must constantly be mindful of.

We must ask ourselves are we currently meeting the expectations that people have, around the globe, from the UN and from us as members. The answer is obvious and not a flattering one.

Too many armed conflicts persist, too many people are denied basic human rights, too many children go to sleep every night hungry, too many women and girls are left behind. We are witnessing the breakdown of basic governance and increasing economic despair in too many parts of the world, with over one billion children worldwide who are living in poverty. It is heart-breaking just to read this number, according to UNICEF, 22,000 children die each day due to poverty. This is where a commitment to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals is not just necessary, but perhaps overdue. I was inspired by the spirit of our summit last week, hoping that it materializes swiftly and adamantly into actions and accomplishments.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We live in a world so rich with potential and beauties, natural and man-made alike, yet we have witnessed atrocity after atrocity. This year also marks many tragic anniversaries: one hundred years of the unspeakable Armenian tragedy, seventy years of the liberation of Auschwitz, and twenty years of the genocide at Srebrenica.

But that's the thing about anniversaries... are they personal just for the victims and the survivors? Or, are they lasting reminders of how much we have forgotten our initial attempt to maintain world peace?

Accountability should always be at the centre of our actions. Fight against impunity for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide is not only a matter of justice; it is an equally important element of conflict prevention. No crime should go unpunished and effective prosecution of those responsible has to be ensured. We should spare no effort to put an end to the culture of impunity. Croatia is a strong supporter of the International Criminal Court. As a victim of aggression in the 1990s, we are proud to be the 13th state to ratify the Kampala Amendments on the crime of aggression.

Nearly everything can be prevented. Time will – as always – determine who was right and who was wrong, but is this the only alternative to hindsight?

Too often, we have to deal with the consequences of our inaction. Too often, instead of solving problems at their source and addressing root causes in their early stages, we spend more time and resources on the crises that we have allowed to spin out of control. This is because we ignored the early signs or we just didn't have the time or the courage to get involved.

We must change this approach. We must act on time, with determination and adequate resources. This is not only the right thing to do; it is smart thing to do. The migrants crisis that has over-flooded many European states is a textbook example of the consequences of inaction, the price is just too high.

The challenge of migration is nothing new; it is a part of human existence since the dawn of mankind. However, with 60 million people on the move worldwide, what is new, is the lack of clear guidelines and comprehensive policies. We need sound legal, social, economic, humanitarian and logistical solutions.

The current migrants crisis and refugee problem has national, regional and global aspects. It cannot be addressed, yet alone solved, by one state alone. It is a multidimensional problem that requires multilateral solutions in terms of defence against terrorism, preventive

diplomacy and sound development. Whoever wants to avoid this issue or pretends it doesn't exist, is just not going to be able to.

Since mid-September, with almost 80,000 people entering Croatia, my country has joined a line of EU and neighbouring South East European countries that has been heavily burdened with this crisis. Croatia has to look at this issue from the perspective of our own country while keeping in mind historical, current and future global policy trends. And that, is the hardest task, to find that right balance between the national, regional and global perspective. We must focus on the micro and the macro at the same time, while keeping in mind what is really at stake - human lives and the future of so many individuals and their families.

Here, I ask for a consensus within the EU. Here, I ask for a global response. Here, I ask that we focus on the rule of law and the conventions that we signed at the end of World War II.

The solution to the migrants crisis in Europe will have to be addressed at the highest global level in several terms. It is an issue of defence against terrorism, which, together with extremism in all its forms must be prevented and defeated at its core. But it is also an issue of providing sufficient financial and material aid to refugee camps in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and elsewhere in that part of the world. And, equally important, it is an issue of efficiently policing and administering the international borders. Last but not the least; it is an issue of combating profiteers of human trafficking and eliminating their networks.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The first thing that always comes to mind is to educate our children, our future generations – to work harder at achieving global citizenship – to build on the UN idea of a global classroom, such as the Global Education Initiative, in which Croatia is proud to be a Champion country. It is important to prepare lessons in common standards for global citizenship that should become compulsory for all children in their formative years. We need to deliver on the promise for the right to education.

It seems clear that legislation is not enough. We need a change in mind set and behaviour and that is only possible through education. We must promote education about tolerance, trust, compassion, integrity, truth and respect for the dignity of the individual and gender equality. Children are not born with hatred, intolerance, racism, sexism, prejudice or stereotypes. They have a lot to teach us and we in turn can learn a lot from them.

On the podium in front of me is the logo which seventy years ago became a symbol of not just the United Nations, but of the better world as we saw it then. Since then, progress has been achieved, while in other areas, things have become alarming. I am hopeful that our quest for a better, safer and prosperous world is far from over.

For one, the impact of climate change and global warming on the economy, development, security, political stability and human rights of all countries can no longer be ignored. See for yourselves: the UN logo shows the world from the perspective of the Arctic and, sadly, last year's winter was one of the warmest ever. As the Arctic ice melts and the oceans thaw, are we capable to fully grasp the impact this has already left on our planet?

We cannot predict the final impact that these changes will have. All over the world, and in Croatia as well, we are recording changes in sea temperature and have witnessed unprecedented changes in the ecosystem. In Croatia's beautiful Adriatic Sea we are starting to register the presence of new species of fish coming from tropical waters. This represents a trend that many other countries are witnessing and on this front there has to be a joint solution. With sea levels rising, many of us, coastal states, will be seriously affected, while some of our fellow members may face even greater impact, detrimental to their mere existence.

It is vital that our actions deal with the link between climate change, natural resources, prosperity and security. We have to fully understand how these interactions affect our future prosperity, stability and development. In this regard, we must respect how fragile life on this planet is and that the damage we have done may not be reversible. Here too, we must teach ourselves and future generations to change our behaviour, to show more respect for our planet.

The Paris conference on climate change is a chance that we cannot afford to miss. We should collectively take pride in the fact that we didn't miss our chance at the Addis Ababa conference. We must remain committed to finding and executing the effective Means of Implementation for our ambitious 2030 Agenda and follow the Addis Ababa Action Agenda to its full extent.

Unfortunately, today, the world is being continuously appalled by the onslaught and brutality of a multitude of violent acts and increasingly complex security threats involving non-state actors. In this context of evolving security challenges, rise of terrorism presents a threat to all of us and calls for a well-coordinated response.

Croatia welcomes the work of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations and their review of UN peacekeeping operations. We hope that the delivered report will provide guidance in the future for increasing the effectiveness of UN peace operations as one of the key mechanisms for ensuring global peace and stability.

In implementing the mandate of peace operations, we stress the importance of giving the highest priority to the protection of civilians and the prevention of atrocities - especially sexual and gender-based violence and the protection of children.

In addition, I would like to welcome efforts invested in other review processes, namely the review of the Peacebuilding Architecture and the Implementation of UNSCR 1325. I am truly confident that all expert recommendations will find a way to be implemented.

We are witnessing a fragile peace and security situation in many parts of the world. In these circumstances, our dedication to security agreements is becoming increasingly important. This is why we regret that the Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty did not produce the much needed results. Croatia believes, that this Treaty continues to be the most effective multilateral instrument for preventing nuclear proliferation and achieving nuclear disarmament. Hence, we should spare no effort in upholding and enhancing the Treaty in the future.

The uncontrolled spread of conventional weapons represents another significant threat to security and stability. In that respect Croatia is proud to preside over the First Review Conference to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which are among the most insidious types of weapons that continue to be a threat long after the conflict ends. It is no coincidence that the Conference took place in Dubrovnik, a city that suffered attacks from these kinds of weapons in the Homeland War.

Croatia, as a country with a rich historical heritage - with seven UNESCO world heritage sites, strongly condemns the deliberate destruction of the world's cultural history and urges the UN and appeals to everyone to do more to protect and safeguard heritage in areas where it is threatened by conflicts and extremists.

In terms of diplomacy and foreign relations, this year could mark a turning point in bilateral relations and a shift towards global policy. Here, I cannot underscore the importance of trust. Not just trust among Member States and international institutions, but trust and truth at every level.

On the positive side, we are pleased to note the resolution of the negotiations on the Iranian nuclear program. We congratulate all the parties involved in the talks on their determination and political will to resolve the issue that has been burdening international relations for so long. This is a major victory for diplomacy. We expect that the following months will prove to what extent the removal of nuclear threat has contributed to the vitally important stabilisation of the Middle East and beyond.

Another milestone in international security has been achieved by the entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty. This legally binding instrument establishes, for the first time, minimal standards in the trade of conventional arms on a global level. Croatia is proud to be among the leading countries in ratifying and putting into effect this milestone Treaty.

Croatia is fully committed to promoting peace and stability globally, but even more so regionally. We host the regionally owned organisation RACVIAC – a Centre for Security

Cooperation. This Centre has an important mission in fostering dialogue and cooperation on security matters in Southeast Europe, with a focus on harmonising their norms and standards and thus facilitating their rapprochement to the EU and NATO.

The issues of most pressing concern is related to the challenges in Europe and its southern neighbourhood. The challenge of the migrants crisis has somehow triggered a connection of geography and peoples' destinies, and has reminded us of the tragic consequences of unresolved conflicts.

As to Syria, Iraq, Libya, Yemen and the other crisis areas of the Middle East and North Africa, we share a grave concern about the continuous trend of growing violence, religious intolerance and terrorist actions.

There we are confronted with unspeakable barbarism and terror with the most appalling forms of murder such as beheadings, sexual violence against women and girls and other most heinous crimes against humanity, culture, religion, dignity and against dearest of all – human life. It is shocking and sickening. And it has nothing to do with Islam, a religion of peace and understanding.

We urgently need to stand together in the face of this huge challenge and mobilise all our efforts to fight ISIL/Da'esh and all forms of intolerance and discrimination. At the same time, we have to bring prospects for a peaceful resolution of these conflicts and pave the way for better life. It is not enough only to end human suffering – it is equally important to provide hope and opportunities.

We need to build safe, tolerant and flexible communities, resilient to radicalisation, and prevent the marginalization of certain social groups, particularly the most vulnerable ones, through the expansion of economic, educational and other opportunities. By doing this, we will eliminate the preconditions for radicalisation that may lead to violent extremism and terrorism and in this regard we urge for the timely implementation of the newly adopted Sustainable Development Goals.

There is no development without security. And there is no real security without justice and human rights, rule of law and good governance. Sustainable development rests upon economic, social and environmental pillars and the positive synergy between them. There are few straight lines towards the final goal; it is rather a meticulous task of connecting all the dots, big and small. The complexity of the 2030 agenda is testimony to this, however, this is the only way forward if we are truly dedicated to leave no one behind.

On the European continent, in the Ukraine, the implementation and the viability of the peace process have to be ensured. The ceasefire must be respected and the Minsk peace plan adhered to by all parties. Croatia, together with its partners in the EU, will remain committed

to Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity as well as to assisting and supporting Ukraine on its reformist path towards its peaceful and prosperous future.

We strongly stress the importance of the stability of South East Europe, as well as its prosperity. Croatia remains strongly committed to do its utmost to support the processes of Euro-Atlantic integration of its southeastern neighbourhood. We strongly believe that this is the most efficient and constructive way to secure security, peace and prosperity for this part of Europe. Particularly, as we approach the 20th anniversary of the Dayton Peace Accords, we all should support Bosnia and Herzegovina as a politically emancipated state, taking decisions for the benefit and prosperity of its three equal constituent peoples and other communities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

History is more often than not the real litmus test for leadership. The thing that all great leaders had in common was their ability to see past the confines of their own fear. This was often called vision or perhaps foresight. Regardless, I believe that all of us fail when we are forced to make a distinction between friends or allies and adversaries.

Drawing these distinctions and picking sides: this is another wall in terms of global policy. It not only blocks vision, but it confines reason and once you cross that line, history teaches us that conflict is inevitable. In terms of all the current crises, I have to say that the traditional bilateral diplomacy should be re-evaluated in light of shifting global policy.

Never judge a country or a person or a problem by its size. Do not look at the numbers, do not limit yourselves by vocabulary or legal terms or boundaries or borders. Size wise, Croatia is at the 124th place in the world, but we are determined that our international presence and relevance go way beyond our size. We have a geographic location that keeps us at the global table, sometimes against our will but mostly by our choice.

But, I -- for one -- am not going anywhere and I will keep asking the real questions and when more and more leaders realize -- like I have from the start -- that all of us are going to have to either accept solidarity, membership in multilateral and international organizations as a privilege for our citizens, when we leave New York and head home...please, go back and evaluate national and international interests and values...re-evaluate if you want, talk with your citizens, talk to your neighbour States and find a dialogue with your adversaries.

Work on dialogue, ask the real questions, build on trust and keep perspective. We, the peoples of the United Nations, we have the tools and we have the ways. Now is the time to find our will.

Thank you.