

# Speech by President of the Republic of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaitė at the United Nations General Assembly

New York  
29 September 2015

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations offers an opportunity to renew our commitments to the ideals and principles of the UN Charter.

Today, those ideals and principles are threatened in so many ways around the globe.

We are witnessing the largest displacement of people since the Second World War. As of last year, nearly 60 million people were displaced by war, conflict or persecution.

Violent extremism is on the rise, with terrorist groups demonstrating new levels of brutality and barbarity. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, women and girls are sold on slave markets by the criminals of ISIS and abused in unspeakable ways.

We have entered an era where the most primitive and brutal executions coexist with the most sophisticated information, hybrid and cyber warfare.

In the middle of Europe the UN Charter has been breached with no consequences. Last year, Russia annexed Crimea. Kremlin seeks to rewrite history and redraw the borders of post-war Europe.

Even in the context of the multiple crises and security challenges the world is facing today, the annexation of Crimea and military aggression in eastern Ukraine stand out because of their implications for the future of international peace and security.

These acts strike at the very core of the international law and the universally accepted norms of behavior that have allowed the world community to survive without world wars for seven decades.

We cannot pledge respect for the UN Charter and ignore its breaches at the same time.

Our collective failure to stand up for the underlying principles of independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of Ukraine would have far reaching negative repercussions for the international order. The occupied territories of Ukraine, Georgia or Moldova are full of red lines that we have drawn, but never acted upon.

Again we are reminded that if you close your eyes to crimes, they do not disappear, they spread, grow and finally they take over.

That is why it is our duty to uphold the international, humanitarian and human rights law, and to seek accountability when these laws are violated.

Vetoing a Security Council resolution commemorating the Srebrenica massacre, or a tribunal for the downing of MH17 is unjustifiable and an insult to the memory of the victims.

It also raises questions about the relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century of the Security Council as it is today. For the Council to maintain its credibility, the least it can do is put an end to the use of veto in the cases of genocide, atrocity crimes, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.

Where would we be today had the Council been able to secure proper humanitarian access in Syria? Had it taken measures to stop the use of barrel bombs and ensure accountability for gross human rights violations and abuses?

The Security Council failed to do so, and millions of Syrians had to flee. By protecting the criminals, the four vetoes on Syria resolutions did nothing to resolve the situation. As a result, today we have the largest humanitarian crisis in the world.

It is a global crisis that requires a global response. Unless we address the causes that make people flee their homes – such as lawlessness, repressions and grave human rights abuses, corruption and bad governance, massive inequalities and marginalization – these flows will not stop. Conflicts will continue.

Lawlessness breeds the worst of the worst, extremists, radicals, and terrorists.

We simply cannot afford this to happen. We live in times when old challenges and threats are enhanced by new ones. At 70, the UN must be adapted to the realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and have the necessary tools to operate.

The United Nations must do much better tackling the underlying causes and not merely the symptoms of the problems and conflicts at hand.

It must be equipped and staffed to operate in environments of asymmetric and hybrid warfare, information wars and the growing threat of terrorism. It must also do a lot better at prevention and mediation in order to save lives as well as resources.

In the twenty-first century, the world will need a strong United Nations that has been renewed in every sphere. Either we act now and shape globalization through cooperation and partnership, or the crises and conflicts of the globalized world will force us to respond, at a much greater cost to us all.

The United Nations will cease to exist if people stop believing in it. Through our reinforced activities seventy years after the founding of the United Nations, we must show that we continue to believe firmly in this Organization that we share.

