



ROMANIA

Check against delivery

STATEMENT

By H.E. Mr. Klaus Iohannis

President of Romania

**General Debate of the 70th session of the United Nations
General Assembly**

New York, 27 September 2015

Honourable President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

My delegation would like to congratulate you, honourable President, on the assumption of the high position as president of this important session. We found inspiration in the theme “The UN at 70: a new commitment to action”. Allow me also to express our appreciation to Denmark, an example of true dedication to the work of our organization, one of its very few members that are up to the old commitment with respect to the allocation of 0.7% of GDP for Official Development Assistance.

The 70th anniversary of the United Nations is yet another opportunity for a lucid reflection on the lessons learned and on the future of our organization. What we have seen is a visionary project born of the ashes of a terrible tragedy with the lofty goal to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. We have seen a working agenda that has continuously expanded into new areas of cooperation, within and beyond its main pillars: peace and security, development and human rights. We have witnessed the continuous efforts of the organization and of its Member States to adapt to new challenges and to major shifts in the paradigm of international relations.

As a consequence, the United Nations has steadily assumed new mandates, thus reaching a level of complexity never seen before. Of course, the United Nations is not a panacea for all humankind’s evils. Its history is one of ups and downs, achievements and failures. At the same time, we all know that the increase in number and depth of tasks entrusted to it has not been matched by the resources needed to accomplish all of its goals. It has become a common practice to ask the United Nations to do more with less.

Yet, the United Nations Charter, after 70 years of being tested against all winds, proved to be a visionary document which stood the test of history. The Charter was drafted as a solid corpus of principles and norms of international conduct. It was conceived in an intelligent manner, which allowed enough flexibility in designing actual ways and means to cope with increasingly complex situations. The United Nations has steadily consolidated its universal vocation and legitimacy. It has created and promoted an impressive body of international law touching almost all domains of international cooperation.

It may, occasionally, have been convenient for some Member States or other stakeholders to point to the failures of the organization. We should try harder to gauge the magnitude of the prevention work done by the organization. Prevention being, admittedly, much more difficult to measure, we tended to underestimate its importance among the achievements of the United Nations. In the same vein, it is worth reminding ourselves that the United Nations is neither an organization born out of the blue, nor an independent and self-ruling entity. The United Nations is nothing but ourselves, the Member States, living on the trust and resources we invest in it.

Romania is among those countries that has fully trusted and supported unconditionally the United Nations. Year 2015 is a special one for my country, as we celebrate the 60th anniversary of Romania's admission. The United Nations helped Romania in different ways in different periods of our post-World War II era. In the beginning, despite and against having been part of the monolithic groups of former communist countries, Romania found in those times, here in the UN, a propitious framework to assert its national independence and make friends and partners throughout the world. Later on, the United Nations provided my country with the opportunity to engage into debates over, and action upon, global issues, in dialogue and cooperation across all continents.

In the aftermath of the Cold War, the United Nations was actively engaged in supporting Romania during its difficult economic transformations and transition towards democracy. The funds and programmes of the United Nations assisted Romania in dealing with social problems related to children, population, health, environment and many others. Allow me to thank UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) for its 45 year presence in my country.

Our 60th anniversary allowed us to have a retrospective look. Romania is a country with limited economic power. Nevertheless, we take pride in making some significant contributions to the United Nations' goals throughout the six decades of membership. Their essence was the reliance upon multilateral diplomacy and international law and in the pre-eminence of peaceful means over the use of force in the pursuit of national interests.

Romania has often been in the front line of major campaigns undertaken by the United Nations. I would highlight just a few of the topics that were subject of initiatives taken by Romania in the General Assembly, the Security Council or the human rights bodies:

- arms control and disarmament
- good relations among neighbouring states,
- role of science and technology in development,
- a more effective and influential role of the youth,
- an increased cooperation between the United Nations and regional organisations and arrangements,
- promotion and consolidation of democracy.

Since 1991, Romania has participated with troops in peace-keeping operations across all continents from Angola to Cambodia, from Somalia to Haiti, from former Yugoslavia to Rwanda. Moreover, Romania hosts the Centre of Excellence for Protection and Security, which contributes to the training of special categories of UN peace-keepers.

Since 2008, Romania has been part of one of the most innovative formulas for the protection of refugees, by hosting the first Emergency Transit Centre in Timișoara, as a result of an agreement with UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) and the International Organization for Migration. After almost two decades as recipient, Romania became itself a provider of Official Development Assistance to countries in our neighbourhood and beyond.

Honourable President,

At its 70th anniversary, the United Nations does not need to prove the legitimacy of its actions. What the organization needs is a strengthened capacity and readiness to act, and to galvanize the political will so as to be able to further enhance its role in maintaining international peace and security and in delivering global public goods. This role is once again dramatically tested these days.

The United Nations is called upon to make, in concert with regional organizations and individual states, new commitments in the fight against terrorism, in all its manifestations, be they coward crimes against innocent people, barbarous destruction of the common cultural heritage of mankind, or the unprecedented abhorrent form developed by the so-called ISIL/Da'esh whose actions constitute clear violations of international law and human rights we are striving so hard to uphold.

At this juncture, let me reiterate Romania's support for the initiative of France and Mexico to propose a collective and voluntary agreement among the permanent members of the Security Council regarding the non-use of veto when action is needed to prevent, or bring to an end, situations of mass atrocities and war crimes at a large scale.

Ten years after the endorsement of the responsibility to protect, we should continue to support it by identifying best ways to understand, to implement and to operationalize it.

The current massive waves of migration are just one of the worrying consequences of the internal and international conflicts in the Middle East and Southern Mediterranean. This phenomenon needs not just responses to the immediate humanitarian needs of refugees. The United Nations must address, in a realistic and energetic manner, the root-causes of migration. We should stop the destruction of the social fabric of the conflict-torn societies, help the populations escape the extreme poverty, youth regain their hope for a better future and individuals rebuild their dignity. Via the Official Development Assistance the UN should play a much stronger role in this respect. For that to happen, a thorough reform of ODA may probably be needed.

The United Nations should be less lenient vis-à-vis the protracted conflicts in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova, Georgia and Nagorno-Karabakh. Any status quo in situations that are contrary to international law will always be fragile and possibly conducive to occasional outbreaks of violence.

In addition, the non-action on such situations creates the wrong impression that unlawful territorial gains, to the detriment of independent and sovereign states, are possible and tolerated. It is the case of the situation in Ukraine with respect to which the United Nations and the Security Council, in particular, did not take the action expected in terms of the UN Charter. We call upon all members of the Security Council to act responsibly and decide in the interest of international peace and security and in accordance with the international law while addressing the situation in Ukraine.

Romania wholeheartedly welcomes the agreement on the Iranian nuclear file. This proves that nothing is impossible if there is a genuine political will and visionary statesmen engage into bold action. We praise the role so ably and diligently played by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The success in solving this long-standing problem proves once again the virtues of diplomacy and negotiations

undertaken in good faith and with patience, with the support of the expertise developed within the United Nations system. We hope to see more spin-off benefits of this agreement in the broader context of the Middle East peace process.

I would like to call upon all members of the United Nations not to miss the opportunity to conclude a new and ambitious binding agreement in response to the climate change. The moment is still auspicious, in view of the commitments of the European Union, as well as the massive activism of the civil society. The example of the European Union is expected to be followed by other major contributors to global warming. The people everywhere, in particular in the small island countries whose very physical existence is threatened, are waiting for new commitments, before it is too late.

Honourable President,

Beyond the thematic and geographical configuration of the United Nations diplomacy we believe that the nuts and bolts of our organization come with the codification and the progressive development of international law. Romania believes that international law and international justice are fundamental values for humankind. We should never cease to act for the reaffirmation and consolidation of principles of international law – a landmark of our society of nations, in all times.

The 60th anniversary of Romania's admission to the United Nations marked an important step concerning our commitment towards international justice: Romania became the 72nd Member State to accept the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice. The declaration, submitted to the Secretary-General on the 23rd of June 2015, is a continuation of the interwar tradition of my country to conduct its international relations in full compliance with international law.

The consolidation of international justice and the need to put an end to impunity should trigger a reinforced legal approach towards international terrorism. Terrorism is a summum of crimes against individuals and societies. Romania believes that the international community should do more in combating terrorism with the tools of law, including international criminal law. It is with that purpose in mind that Romania and Spain triggered a process of reflection on the possible creation of an International Court for the Crime of Terrorism.

We are fully aware of the conceptual and operational difficulties of such an undertaking. However, the values that stand behind this reflection, aimed at

strengthening the rule of law in our multilateral antiterrorist drive, are likely to generate fresh ideas for innovative legal tools. We believe that this process of reflection has its own merit as it will fuel the debate on reinforcing the values of justice and international law. I would seize this opportunity to invite all interested delegations to engage in good faith in discussions about how to implement these values in the fight against terrorism.

Thank you, honourable President!

Thank you to the delegates!