



## **SERBIA**

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SEVENTIETH REGULAR SESSION  
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
GENERAL DEBATE

## **S T A T E M E N T**

by

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PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

New York, 30 September 2015

Mr. President,  
Mr. Secretary-General,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Seventy years have passed since the inception of the United Nations. People live differently now, many changes have taken place and many reforms have been effected; it is time, Mr. President, we reformed the United Nations as well. I call on you to speed up this process during your Presidency.

Perhaps no other session in the history of the General Assembly has come at a more opportune time. Last year changed many things. Negotiations, unimaginable before, were begun to end the embargo on Cuba; an agreement was reached to lift sanctions on Iran. We recognize those who took part in making these historic decisions and encourage them to complete the job, much in line with the policy pursued by my country over a number of decades.

The world of today does not resemble the world of yesterday and no one of us must remain indifferent to this fact. Ours used to be a bipolar world, divided into blocs; we did not do well, because the poles were at loggerheads and always within the reach of the most frightful weapons. Neither do we do well with one power alone carrying out diplomacy by sword, heedless of concerns of anyone, the United Nations included.

With concerns for one's own interests alone being attended to, peoples and States were left to extremist religious fanatics, which gave rise to ISIS and other similar extremist movements that now threaten dozens of millions of people, creating in many a negative image of Islam, the religion on whose behalf they profess to act.

Two important elements used to determine international relations and politics: law and ethics. United States President Woodrow Wilson was a staunch advocate, while the greatest Serbian poet Njegoš expressed it in verses in his "Mountain Wreath" in the following way:

*Along his path who maketh  
Might his right-rise  
Stenches of inhuman cruelty.*

and

*As wolf doth on the sheep  
Impose his might, so  
Tyrant lords it over  
feebler fellow;*

*But foot to place  
Upon the tyrant's neck,  
To bring him to the  
Consciousness of right-  
This of all human duties is most sacred!*

Today, though, legal and ethical factors are essentially being pushed back in international politics. Not infrequently, unlawful and most immoral actions are being taken with purportedly ethical and legal alibis, most often, Mr. President, when a clear legal norm, which brooks no exception, such as the need for the Security Council to make a decision, for instance, stands in the way of the pursuit by a major power of its geopolitical goals. International law therefore, and the moral tenets that have to underpin a legal norm and its implementation, are deeply in crisis today. Ample evidence is available everywhere, including the latest dangerous crisis of large proportions. Some call it a migrant crisis, some a new migration of peoples, according to intents and purposes.

What worries us, though, is that those who tend to think that efforts should be intensified to re-establish peace quickly and more easily and bring about economic progress to all and to the developing countries, in particular, are few and far between.

We ought to look each other in the eye and assess the year behind us open-mindedly. We ought to say what we did in our countries; some of us ought to say if their actions helped mankind or threatened the future of our children. Are we still ready to commence our speeches with "We, the peoples of the United Nations"? Are we any closer to peace and prosperity or do we rush and hurry, blindfolded, towards a year similar to 1939 which saw the onset of a great world tragedy that was to last 6 years, the consequences of which we shall never be able to erase? Some of the mighty and powerful appear to think that the global economic crisis has not frightened our children and their parents enough; they continue to use the most sophisticated weapons to make people homeless and stateless and thrust them, fearful for their lives, into the rough-and-tumble of migration roads thousands of kilometers long. The world, though, is short of food, water, electrical power... .

The responsibility for these developments does not lie on those who combat poverty in their countries to create conditions for a life worthy of man. This responsibility does not lie on Serbia which opens soup kitchens to feed many their only daily meal. The responsibility does lie on those who have the most, irrespective of whether God gave or they gained it by the force they use to exploit other peoples. The responsibility does lie on those who spend on arms more than poor countries spend on food jointly. The responsibility does lie on all of us because we cannot think of sustainable development unless we accept our common responsibility in connection with one of the major global challenges – the eradication of poverty or at least its alleviation.

I often ask myself how parents look like in the eyes of their children as they tell them that school and knowledge are important for their future and a normal life, trying to convince them that food will be in their plates once they finish school and acquire knowledge.

Knowledge is not acquired if we live in fear, if we have nothing to eat, if we are threatened by disease, if our parents are unemployed or if we are faced with a threat of a terrible war. Those of you, who represent the rich and powerful here today, think about it as you put your children to bed in a warm room in the evening. Think of it as you make important decisions during the day. Are profits, political and military superiority worth so much that we no longer empathize with the sufferings of others and get carried away with basic instincts instead? Peace and prosperity, Mr. President, must not be a privilege of the people in some countries; they are the right of all men and women on planet Earth.

It is for this reason that we proffer a helping hand in the quest for the realization of the goals of the Agenda, for common actions designed to bring about a better future to mankind on the basis of the principles that ensure progress and prosperity for all.

Evidently, sustainable development is a concept accepted by the preponderant part of mankind. The concept postulates a global economy that connects all parts of the world based on trust, ethics, equality and support, as well as a global management through the analysis and appraisal of the work of governments and companies. Any management, though, calls for a prior establishment of certain rules, so the question is who the rules are to be established by and what place they are to be established at. Can individuals, or groups of individuals, foresee all future events and developments and is it possible at all to control events and developments? Are we establishing a new global centre of power, oblivious of the specificities of individuals, States or organizations of States, a centre which has only one solution for all problems? What do we do with the fact that some of the goals that do get set do not correspond with the specificities of some countries? We must not fail to see that it is not possible to control the lives of all people because it is allegedly dangerous to trust one's free will.

Epochal changes in the way we live require time for adjustment lest basic values implode. Today, the world is extraordinarily interconnected in miraculous, virtual ways; information is exchanged and people and goods move at unprecedented speed. What about people, though? They have never been so alienated. In mega-cities, amid millions, people die alone. Individuals, States and international organizations become alienated. Reasons are aplenty to put up arguments. Ever more frequently, relations among States are based on the imposition of the will of the more powerful, more affluent and more developed.

The new age, we hope, will usher in a new beginning, a new way of thinking, that will essentially be, as it always should, in the best interest of men and their communities, immediate and extended. We are all aware that this is not easy to achieve since modern communications may be used to impose a way of thinking, aimed at implementing ideas that do not command the majority interest. Modern man's conformism, his everyday struggle to meet ever greater demands and the spectre of unemployment and hardships late in life reduce resolve to resist the ever more evident violations of basic human rights.

The world is tragically divided today into enormously rich individuals and a majority living below the threshold of human dignity. The twenty-first century portends to be the age

of the accumulation and concentration of enormous individual wealth by those who have and of poverty and uncertainty by those who have not. Included among wealthy individuals is also an entirely new generation of privileged managers, who are paid, unjustifiably and immorally, much more than their employees.

Apparently, the number of those who will stand up to this phenomenon is increasing up to the tipping point when their demands will have to be accepted.

I call on you from this rostrum that we all make a joint effort in order to bring about an equitable distribution of assets and resources.

Distinguished Colleagues,

We continue to talk about another major challenge, the climate change, noncommittally, as if its consequences were not patently evident everywhere, as if we did not see that they intensify frictions caused by the great inequality that already exists in the world. A wake-up call of sorts, the consequences of what we did in the past and of what we do now affect the weakest the most, the countries which still have to develop industrially and provide better life to their citizens. Most of the developing countries account for just a fraction of global warming; they must be given an opportunity to grow their economies under the same conditions under which others have already become prosperous, even though harmful-gas emissions might be higher than the rich may tolerate. We have to develop technologies which will enable developing countries to develop and be responsible to the environment as much as possible, rather than use harmful-gas emissions and the concern over global warming as pretexts for industrial stagnation of these countries. There are also moral reasons to ensure development.

Politicians should be tasked with providing full support to scientific activities, on the one hand, and with harmonizing and coordinating responses to climate change and extreme weather conditions, on the other. Adaptation and preparation of national and social responses to potential scenarios, including the worst ones, are our basic and most important goals.

With full respect to the relevant international documents, first and foremost the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, the government and scientific institutions of Serbia will continue to render contributions to United Nations and other activities, primarily European and regional initiatives regarding climate monitoring and reduction of the negative effects of the climate change.

Serbia welcomes the forthcoming Climate Change Conference, to be held in Paris later this year. We intend to support and fully contribute to the consideration of this important issue.

We were, and shall remain, part of a joint team and an active participant, hoping that scientists will offer, as soon as possible, clear answers and irrevocable proof, while politicians will render support and quick and best solutions.

We can expect a better future only if we overcome problems such as hunger, wars and diseases.

Therefore, Serbia has actively participated in peacekeeping operations all over the world and has made every effort to train and equip an ever greater number of its officers and soldiers to take part in such lofty assignments.

Therefore, Serbia presides over the OSCE in a manner which elicits recognition from all, including those in conflict among themselves.

Let me also mention, Mr. President, that, for more than three years now, Serbia has been a European Union candidate country and continues to take decisive measures to harmonize its system and practice with the Union standards.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Territory, people, languages and cultural heritage make up a State. Serbia is the only country in Europe which, in addition to the seizure of a part of its territory, expulsion of its people, their unpunished killing and the so-called harvesting of their organs, has now attempts made against its cultural heritage under the protection of UNESCO. I recall that, in March 2004, the Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija destroyed, in the presence of KFOR and its lacklustre opposition, numerous Christian Orthodox churches, church outbuildings, convents, bell towers, monastic libraries and archives, most often by setting fires or explosive devices. That was only a brutal and effective continuation of the damage and destruction of over 140 Orthodox sanctuaries done ever since the arrival of the United Nations Mission and KFOR in June 1999. In this period, the Albanian terrorists destroyed systematically the traces of the spirituality and culture of the Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija, the traces of centuries-long life of the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija, the existence of which on this territory of theirs is evinced by monasteries and churches whose foundations were laid often before the ninth century. These are the Serbian deeds etched in stone, the testimony of the Serbian presence in Kosovo and Metohija.

The 31<sup>st</sup> UNESCO Conference said that crime against cultural heritage was committed in Kosovo and Metohija.

372 cultural monuments of the Serbian people of high value have been registered in such a small territory of Kosovo and Metohija exactly under the standards provided for by UNESCO. As many as 49 monuments from the Middle Ages have been recognized as European and world heritage that mankind can take pride and honour in. More to the point, it took pride and honour in. Invaluable and unique works of art and architecture had survived five centuries of the Ottoman rule, Balkan Wars and the First and Second World Wars. Yet, there they were, in 2004, being savagely desecrated and destroyed, buried and ploughed over, as though this 'undertaking' was a part of preparations, designed in a filigree-precise fashion, for the unilateral declaration of independence of the "Republic of Kosovo", the event that ensued 4 years after the barbaric destruction of the attainments of the Serbian Christian culture and civilization.

Not only Serbian, but also European culture, the world's collective memory, are preserved in Kosovo and Metohija; an important civilizational stride of man on planet Earth is preserved in Kosovo and Metohija. It is therefore important that Serbia continues to be the keeper of its, and the world's, cultural treasure, as a full member of UNESCO.

Dear Friends,

In an attempt to falsify history, unfortunately with the support of a certain number of countries, Albania has submitted, on behalf of the Priština administration, a request to UNESCO that the Serbian heritage be declared Kosovan, i.e. Albanian. Those who strategically destroy monasteries with the aim of marginalizing the importance of Kosovo and Metohija for the Serbs and attempt to establish a new ethnic and cultural identity of Kosovo and Metohija on the ashes of the history of others would be rewarded in this way. How is it possible that arsonists and destroyers with goals that clearly go beyond all ethic norms and the established rules on which UNESCO is rested are now trying to project themselves as guardians and protectors?!

Should that request be accepted nonetheless, a dangerous precedent will be set and room will be opened for the legalization of violence over national, cultural and religious identity of any people wherever. By defending the right of Serbia to preserve and present proudly its identity and cultural heritage, as it has done for the past eleven centuries, by preventing the unscrupulous intention that one's heritage be stolen and ascribed to somebody else, we are defending the underlying principles of international law and human justice, as well as those on which UNESCO was founded. I therefore call upon all the presidents not to allow that the Serbian people be taken its soul, seized its essence and have its monasteries in Kosovo and Metohija, its spiritual backbone, declared cultural heritage of the Albanian people in Kosovo and Metohija. Simply, this is neither truth nor an historical and scientific fact. It is not justice.

Peoples do not acquire history and civilization by snatching centuries of the existence of others or by bribing, with Judas' silver, those to whom the history of others means nothing, who could not care less if the spiritual and cultural roots of one people, of us Serbs in this case, are plucked from the areas that they previously physically expelled us from. The United Nations must preserve its credibility and stand up to the injustice and evil that would be done to Serbia by the acceptance of this initiative. I am confident that, as responsible statesmen and honourable men and women, you will reject the injustice and evil that might have a domino effect on other peoples and States in the future as well.

Serbia talks to the representatives of the administration in Priština, it will fulfil all its obligations under UNSC Resolution 1244 (1999) and all its obligations under the agreements reached in Brussels thus far, but it will never ever recognize the independence of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija, a part of its territory to which its existence is connected.

Distinguished Friends,

The problem of the mass migration from the Middle East is the greatest challenge of today. We cannot dissect the causes and direct and indirect responsibilities for the migrant crisis here and now. This is the issue of paramount importance and should be addressed at an international forum to gather together prominent statesmen and eminent scholars and scientists. This is the best way to assess the situation objectively, provide an answer and propose a solution to this complex problem. For, the humanitarian disaster facing the world is only a consequence of the crisis that has shaken Syria for 4 years now, all along without an adequate response by the international community. Without access to mutual funds, the situation of Serbia is perhaps more difficult than that of the other countries of the Old Continent.

Despite the difficult economic situation, Serbia is making every effort to provide a decent stay and accommodation for refugees. However, if the international community, the European Union in the first place, fails to make concrete efforts to solve the problem, a humanitarian catastrophe of an even larger scale threatens South-East Europe. The consequences are impossible to foresee, but they will surely affect not only Europe, but the whole world as well. As regards the number of asylum seekers in the Republic of Serbia, 125 138 persons arrived in Serbia between 1 January 2015 and 14 September 2015 and only 524 of them submitted asylum requests.

I would like to draw your attention to the worrisome practice of some governments which erected wire and razor fences to ghettoize the asylum seekers fleeing war and destitution. Such attitude runs counter to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the proclaimed solidarity of the European Union Member States with migrants and aggravates the situation in the countries which respect international law and treat humanely the individuals struck by the calamity.

The governments of certain United Nations Member States behave as if they never left the ideology that prevailed until the end of the Second World War, destroying the fragile stability in the Balkans, achieved through hard work and dedication, to which Serbia contributed the most.

My country has had to cope with a deep economic crisis since 2008. Refugees, therefore, cannot expect to achieve much more than personal safety in Serbia; we shall provide it to them irrespective of the fact that certain countries intervene also against people in the territory of Serbia. The way we understand humanity, the way we empathize with those in need, as well as our resolve to give these people what perhaps we do not need at the moment as urgently as they do will not be lessened. Our borders are open to receive them and to let them go. We need no law for that, that's the way we are. Serbia is not a member of the European Union, but it implements consistently the proclaimed principle of solidarity, the fundamental value and a supposedly unconditional mainstay of the Union itself. I do not understand the selfishness, sometimes even the hatred for those who have nothing that some individuals have come to nurture. If the rapid pace with which government leaders of some countries are losing cool and composure are any clue, the situation can become only worse.



We therefore need a comprehensive plan that would have to be implemented within the shortest possible time. Without such a plan, migrants will be left altogether to the mercy of human smugglers. Passivity and an increasingly inhumane treatment of migrants open a market for smugglers. The sequence of catastrophes to ensue in that case from the Mediterranean to the British Isles would be tragic and the one in which more than 800 people died would be remembered just as one sad link in that sorry chain.

Esteemed Colleagues,

Even though it was not directly involved in the conflict in the territory of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, started and stage-managed in the similar way to the conflict in Syria, Serbia was labelled guilty. Even a resolution was submitted to the Security Council recently to stigmatize the Serbs as a paragon genocidal people, although such characterization of any people in the world is unjustifiable. The attempt failed owing to those members of the Security Council who were aware of the ulterior purposes and intentions of the sponsors of the resolution, as well as of its, possibly, disastrous consequences.

What kind of genocidal criminals are we? Is that the image imparted by the footage of migrants, un-frightened and un-worried only in Serbia about the reaction of the people or the authorities unlike elsewhere in the region, or is it the image of a hospitable people with a kind heart? Have the Serbian citizens changed? They have not. The people of Serbia of all ethnicities have, now and in the past, been humane and hospitable, as well as good neighbours.

In addition to refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq, Serbia plays host to hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced persons from the territory of the former Yugoslavia; they are preponderantly Serbs, but include also Bosniacs, Croats, the Roma and others. Some of these people have gone to third countries, while others continue to live in Serbia. We are still faced with the consequences of these migration changes as they altered the demographic, social and other structures of the country and society.

Then and now, my country has not had much to offer to these destitute people who left their homes. It shared the little it had.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Serbia expects the United Nations Member States to act responsibly and humanely. We should all bear in mind that this situation will have global consequences. Civilization is at a crossroads. Europe is going through serious travails and tribulations. Now is the time for it to show if it still is the standard-bearer in the implementation of human rights and the respect of international law or if it continues to turn a blind eye to the apparent double standards and allows the attainments of civilization to be valid only for some countries and some peoples.

Equality is not applicable only to relations among individuals, but also to relations among States. Our fathers shed blood on many battlefields for equality of all peoples. They fought for our freedom to speak our mind and for our opinion to be strong enough to change things. Freedom and equality are the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations, of numerous international documents and of national constitutions; we must not allow, Mr. President, that they become dead letters.

Esteemed Colleagues,

Taking up these topics and drawing your attention to them, I wanted to motivate us to show genuine empathy, solidarity and responsibility in the future and to build, together and indefatigably, true humanism in the organization that gathered us together here today.

I would like us to meet in this place with different messages next year and, if not with problems solved, then at least with steps made towards solving the problems that burden us today. I would like us to be better every coming year; I would like the world to feel that ideas of liberty and equality, of humane and just society are not just empty rhetoric, but genuine resolve to implement them on this planet of ours.

Thank you.