



**Address by**

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**of the United Nations General Assembly**

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*Mr. President...Excellencies...Ladies and Gentlemen...*

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During the past 70 years we – the Member States – have been driven by the *noble ideals and aspirations* of the visionary UN founders laid down in its Charter...At the same time, we have been regularly confronted with the grim realities of international affairs... Over its history, the United Nations, both as an intergovernmental organisation and as an actor on the world stage, has been tested by numerous conflicts, humanitarian crises and immense political and economic changes in the world as well as lack of financial stability...

All these years, the UN has played a crucial role in preventing global conflicts and carried out vital work around the world in its *service to humankind*...Encouraging the development and codification of international law as a way of regulating international relations has been a major contribution of the United Nations since its very beginning...

We should take a step back and see how far we have come and how far we need to go in meeting the challenges across the three pillars of the Organization's work: *peace and security, development, and human rights*...New and acute challenges to the multilateral system and threats to peace and security that transcend national borders have unfortunately emerged...Pandemics, climate change, migration, cyber-security or the multifaceted and violent nature of terrorism including organized crime are the threats that concern each and every one of us...There are no exceptions...

And THE right place where all these threats should be addressed and eventually solved is the United Nations...I am deeply convinced that the United Nations remains *strategically positioned to provide leadership and effective multilateral response*...

Strong and effective United Nations means a *better world*.

A *more caring and accepting world*.

A world, in which nations, peoples of different religion, culture and history, can live *together in peace*.

A world where *right is might, not might makes right*.

I believe that strengthening the UN is the best investment to achieve the universal desire for peace, development, equality and justice in the world...

We should collectively seek practical means that will enable the current system to live up to its original purposes...That will enable the United Nations to meet the weighty demands which are made upon it today, tomorrow and in many years to come...It is the *Member States who own the United Nations*...Every country – big or small, from North or South, landlocked or an island - has an important individual responsibility and role to play as a driver of the change...

My government has had *continued strong confidence* in the United Nations and remains ready to fully shoulder its responsibility and commitments in this regard...

Mr. President,

The *scale of global development challenges is unprecedented*...A couple of days ago in this very place we adopted the historical document defining sustainable development goals - *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

We may call it *a program for a better planet*...This program is not about the numbers, this program is about changing our mindsets...It is setting up the new philosophy of existence in sustainable future...Its cornerstone is full inclusivity and zero disparity...

Mr. President,

The global security environment has never been as dynamic and uncertain as today...The number of major civil wars has almost tripled...The volumes of battle deaths have skyrocketed...The most worrisome fact is an increased number of civilian casualties, including women and children...

The United Nations works to maintain international peace and security in a world where *security threats are becoming more complex and asymmetric and conflicts more intractable and less conducive to traditional political settlements*<sup>1</sup>...The current pattern of violence has also serious implications for the implementation of protection of civilian mandates in the field...In areas where the UN has had a presence it has increasingly come under attack...Naturally, in such conditions, the level and main priorities for the United Nations involvement are being re-evaluated in a process of strategic reflection...

A secondary effect is a dramatic increase of the number of refugees. The World Bank estimates that roughly one fifth of the world's population is affected by some form of violence or insecurity...The total number of people forcibly *displaced by war, conflict and persecution rose to roughly 60 million* at the end of 2014...We are confronted, on a daily basis, with the gruesome images in the news or directly in our streets, squares and ports of transportation...*Forced displacement has sadly become a deliberate and widespread tactic*, meaning displacement is not only a short-term humanitarian problem, but also a long-term development and state-building issue...

The current *migration crisis is one of the most complex challenges* we have to face upfront and address together...It affects all of us – the countries of origin, transit and destination - thus it requires joint responses...Both immediate as well as long-term measures are absolutely necessary to address these challenges, which include illegal migration, smuggling and trafficking of human beings and gross human rights violations...

We must *offer our assistance* to those in need and *prevent further tragedies* involving refugees... For that to happen, we *need a systematic and comprehensive action*, close cooperation of countries – both of origin and of destination – that will bring a long-term sustainable solution...We must address the root causes of migration: conflicts, intolerance, violence, poverty, lack of conditions for decent life - just to mention a few of them...

Mr. President,

As acknowledged many times before, it is *peacekeeping, in which the irreplaceable nature of this organization is most marked*...The last two decades have significantly tested the concept and conduct of the United Nations peacekeeping operations...Slovakia has been an active contributor and stands ready to continue its cooperation with the United Nations in this field...

Mr. President,

I was particularly pleased to see that both review panels have put strong *emphasis on enhanced conflict prevention, diplomatic engagement and mediation support* in the work of the United Nations system...Speaking from my personal experience in 2006 as a mediator in Southeastern Europe, I cannot but support the importance and high relevance of preventive diplomacy across the conflict spectrum and as part of broader, nationally-owned strategies to promote sustainable peace and development...

The *culture of conflict prevention and conflict resolution approaches* that are now taking root in the United Nations system must be further developed, alongside with more effective peacekeeping and peace-building...

It has been 15 years since the adoption of the landmark *Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security*...Yet, the impacts of conflicts on women and children are still inordinate and their engagement in peace processes is still insufficient...*Gender equality* is a natural precondition for sustainable development, stability and peace...As Kofi Annan said: "*When women thrive, all of society benefits, and succeeding generations are given a better start in life*"...

The presence of *women negotiators in high-profile United Nations peace and mediation processes*, role of women deployed by the United Nations to major conflict zones and high-stake inter-state negotiations, as well as in peacekeeping and peace-building in general, is irreplaceable and should continue to grow...

Mr. President,

International terrorism and its most violent forms are an *increasingly alarming threat to global peace and security* and have become more diverse and fragmented over the recent years...Slovakia strongly condemns all terrorist acts as criminal and unjustifiable...No terrorist act should be left without adequate response of the international community, no perpetrators should be left unpunished, and no movement affiliated to any form of terrorism should be tolerated...

The United Nations has *done much to set standards in the fight against international terrorism* and to encourage and help Member States to meet them...The 10th anniversary of the *UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in 2016* shall provide us with an opportunity to make our efforts in this struggle more efficient...It should be carried out in a multilaterally coordinated manner, with full respect for human rights and the rule of law...We should also redouble our endeavor to conclude a *Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism*...

Last but not least, Member States must also *strengthen their prevention efforts by working directly with affected communities* to counter violent extremism, and radicalization that lead to

terrorism...If we want to tackle this threat, we need to confront extremism in all its forms, violent and non-violent...*Hate has never been an answer* for achieving better future for anyone...

***Mr. President,***

We are now less than 60 days before the *UN's Conference of the Parties (COP21) in Paris*, where we will gather to discuss a new international climate change agreement that will cover all countries...The impact of climate change is visible and undeniable around the world...Extreme droughts, melting of polar ice, substantive changes in long-term climate patterns, increase in ocean level are the most palpable examples...

Slovakia is committed to adopting at the UN climate conference this December a *meaningful and fair global climate agreement* that will accelerate the shift to a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy worldwide...

***Mr. President,***

There are various internal and external forces that drive any organization to change...

Terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, poverty, diseases, disparities causing socio-economic tensions, resulting in migration - all these challenges pose vital threats to humankind...and the only difference is how quickly the catastrophe strikes...

So the logical questions are: How ready are we to effectively react to challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Can we draw lessons from the response to Ebola as an international health security threat, which proved to be efficient?

Continuous management reform with optimal use of modern technologies *and gradual improvement of work and structures reflecting global changes is crucial* for any organization if it wants to stay relevant...Notably the United Nations...

The 70th anniversary of our organization is viewed by many as an opportune moment for achieving tangible progress.

We need to address all existential challenges with the same attention.

Act as *one*. Struggle as *one*. Deliver as *one*. *One planet, one humankind, one destiny*.

Let our work here at the UN be as real, practical and focused as possible so that we can deliver good results in the spirit of cooperation and compromise...The key desired result should be *a strengthened and more effective, streamlined and responsive United Nations*...A truly global organization that is better able to address the interconnected and multidimensional threats and challenges to international peace, security and development.

***Mr. President,***

Let me conclude by quoting Norman Cousins, an American political journalist and professor, who received the UN Peace Medal in 1971: *"If the United Nations is to survive, those who represent it must bolster it; those who advocate it must submit to it; and those who believe in it*

*must fight for it.*“ The current General Assembly session will be again a test for our commitment and ability to join forces in a pursuit of common goals...I am confident, *Mr. President*, that under your leadership we will be able to achieve essential outcomes.

Thank you for your attention!

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