



**REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA
President**

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Address

**by the President of the Republic of Macedonia,
His Excellency Dr. Gjorge Ivanov,
at the
General Debate of the 71st Session of the
United Nations General Assembly**

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

It is a true honor to address this important forum as President of the Republic of Macedonia, sharing with you the positions of the Republic of Macedonia as regards the current challenges.

The world is at a crossroads of numerous crises. We have entered a phase of fundamental changes of the global order. We are facing transformations that are both hard to stop and to control.

The centrifugal forces of globalization are bringing into question the order established after the Second World War. And along with that order, we redefine its values and principles. In a world in which the powerful do whatever they want, and the weak do whatever they have to, the rule of law has been reduced to an exception, rather than a rule. Instead of international security and order, we have absence of security and disorder. We have devalued the true and inalienable human rights freedoms. Instead of respect for diversity, we are increasingly witnessing persecution and destruction of diversity.

There are crises in many regions and at many levels. Conflicts tend to spread and deepen faster than they can be resolved and rooted out. Often, the diagnosis is belated, and the measures taken are reactive instead of preventive, bringing about short term and painful decisions, rather than long term and painless solutions.

If we are to describe the current situation in the world today with one word only, it would be **instability**.

Excellencies,

Since the very beginning of this millennium, we have been in an open **fight against global terrorism**. The Republic of Macedonia is part of the coalition that destroyed many terrorist cells and won a lot of battles in the past 15 years, but has not yet won the war against terror. We are facing a serious challenge in this sense. Just like the mythical Hydra, for every terrorist cell destroyed, it seems like two other appear. Terrorism in the 21st century developed a capability of absorbing defeats, withdrawing, regrouping and striking back. We are not dealing with organizations, but with movements aiming at conquering territories and driven by ideas going way beyond the ethnic, linguistic and cultural differences. In order to win the fight against terrorism, the sole use of military troops is not enough. It is necessary to fight using ideas; to oppose radicalization with counter-radicalization programs.

The Middle East, North Africa and many other regions are drowning into bloody conflicts in which we see the mosaic of communities with different religions, languages and cultures, so painstakingly composed and cherished for centuries, being destroyed every day. Those conflicts brought about threats, risks, **humanitarian crises and a new major movement of peoples**.

On the other hand, a new reality is looming on the European horizon. Under the pressure of the financial and debt crisis, the social and political seams holding the **European Union** together are slowly beginning to rip. By wiping away internal borders without securing its corridors in the process, the Union is now unable to protect its external borders. Part from other things, Europe today is facing two key challenges – the migration crisis and the threat of terrorism.

The first **migration wave** eroded European institutions, mechanisms and policies. By preventing illegal migration, the Republic of Macedonia succeeded in contributing to a large extent to the overall security in Europe. Europe is already facing a second, more massive wave. More than 20 million migrants and refugees from Asia and Africa are located very close to the external borders of Europe. In the coming years and decades, millions of migrants will try to set their foot on the European continent. The Republic of Macedonia prevents illegal migration coming from EU territory. The Union must find modalities and mechanisms to protect its borders, secure the corridors and integrate the migrants and refugees with admitted entry without assimilating them in the process.

The Republic of Macedonia has been an independent country for 25 years now. Since day one of our independence, we have been facing continuous and direct threats coming from territories of EU and NATO Member States, or countries under UN administration. A large portion of our internal risks and dangers are a consequence of imported crises. With the exception of bilateral assistance for which we are more than grateful, the Republic of Macedonia has been facing crises and reducing risks on its own. We are taking measures and making decisions for the protection of our territory, and with that, of European territory. For this, we have suffered criticism and threats in the form of blockades to our integration processes. The indecisiveness of the EU in handling the migration crisis jeopardized the security of the Republic of Macedonia. We were the first country in Europe to declare a state of crisis and deploy army troops along the borders. As Supreme Commander, I am proud to say that together with the crisis management system entities, with a timely reaction, we succeeded in protecting the national security of the Republic of Macedonia. I am aware that many in Europe are thankful for what the Republic of Macedonia has been doing for them. Some are braver and recognize the fact – some are less brave, but I believe that they still respect that.

The attitude towards migrants so far even created **ghettos without walls** in some European countries, in which those who are different are tolerated without ever being truly respected or accepted. This sort of attitude led to isolationism, alienation and made a fertile soil for **radicalism, violent extremism and terrorism**.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year, the United Nations will elect their **new Secretary-General**. The Republic of Macedonia nominated the former President of the United Nations General Assembly, **Mr. Srgjan Kerim** for this high profile position. We appreciate the efforts for making this process a transparent one, assessing according to the merits of candidates. The selection process has already begun within the Security Council. On this occasion, I would like to wish all the luck to Mr. Kerim, reiterating the urge to

elect the new Secretary-General from the ranks of the Eastern European group of countries. At the same time, I wish to thank the current Secretary-General and a friend of mine, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his unrelenting efforts in tackling various challenges, but also in reforming the Organization.

However, as we discuss the reform of one of the undoubtedly most important segments of the United Nations system, we seem to forget that even the very goals of the Organization have been brought into question. We talk about **human rights** while neglecting one of the fundamental rights – the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. The persecution of people of different faith and beliefs is becoming more and more visible, not only in non-secular, but also in developed secular societies. In such circumstances, some even ask the question of whether today, the United Nations would ever be able to adopt the **Universal Declaration on Human Rights**. This Organization represents all countries with all their differences. However, when making compromises, we should be careful not to compromise the fundamental values, freedoms and vision. That vision is written in both the **Charter of the United Nations** and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

Excellencies,

Even Seneca, when explaining the essence of the city or in other words, the state, said: the strength and security of cities stems from two things: the material from which houses are built and the laws that regulate relations. A city is destroyed every time these two things are lacking. Due to double standards and **lack of respect for international law**, our international order is slowly devolving into a global chaos and disorder.

In its **quarter of a century of independence**, the Republic of Macedonia was well and truly able to feel this cruel reality. On our path towards international recognition and integration, we faced many blockades and suffered many damages. We even faced denial of the right to self-identification of Macedonian citizens, without which there is no integrity of human persona, or human dignity. Due to this issue, even today, we are still **blocked to join international organizations** such as NATO and the European Union. For 5 years now, the Republic of Macedonia is waiting for the international community to observe and respect **the judgment of the International Court of Justice**.

During these few days, you will hear many statesmen speaking about the necessity of respecting international law. And just as many, after leaving this spot, will immediately forget what they were urging for. Here is the judgment of the International Court of Justice regarding the dispute between Macedonia and Greece, adopted 5 years ago – a judgment that I reminded you of two years ago; a judgment that has not been respected to this day. This is one of the classic examples of the non-efficiency of our world organization.

The indecisiveness of the European Union and NATO to unblock the integration of the Republic of Macedonia was one of the main reasons for the perpetual **internal political crisis** in Macedonia that culminated this year. However, the Republic of Macedonia is not an exception. The entire **Balkan region is in stagnation**. We see retrograde processes reappearing. Balkan states believed quite naively that

someone from the outside would solve all their problems. EU obviously does not have such power.

Even in such complex circumstances, the Republic of Macedonia is doing its utmost to maintain the best possible relations with its neighbors. With **Greece**, we have a difference subject to a United Nations-led process. Us two neighboring countries have one open issue, but thousands of areas of common interest, but also serious challenges such as the migration crisis or security, which point to the necessity of close cooperation. **The name issue** must not be an obstacle to maximum cooperation in all areas of common interest. Alas, precious time has been lost.

Therefore, I welcome the **confidence building measures** between the two countries and I call upon their expansion and introduction of new contents. The sooner we deliver on those measures, the sooner we will be able to create a positive ambiance for finding a solution to the name difference within the frame of the **Interim Accord, United Nations Resolutions and the judgment of the International Court of Justice**.

Distinguished Delegates,

I am Macedonian, my fellow citizens are Macedonians. We ask all to respect us as Macedonians, just as we respect everyone else's right to identify as they feel. Just as we respect the right to self-identification and human dignity of everyone else, in the same way we ask for that to apply to us as well. As Macedonians, we wish to cooperate and have the best possible relations with all our neighbors. There is no problem that cannot be solved and no difference that cannot be overcome. The only precondition is to respect each other and reach solutions through dialogue.

Next year, the Republic of Macedonia will host the **Brdo – Brijuni Process**, an initiative that is slowly substituting the declarative regional initiatives and mechanisms. My wish is to have the Prime Minister of Greece as a special guest of the Summit.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I spoke about some fundamental changes in the world that have grown divided, dangerous and disoriented. However, the problem is not in these conditions. They are only the consequences of accumulated wrong positions, decisions and steps. As humanity, we fell off the tracks and got lost in the labyrinth of crises. This is why we should not be caught off guard by the crisis of trust in political elites, but also in the global order itself.

As humanity, we succeeded in achieving amazing scientific and technological development that paved the way for progress, simultaneously consuming all our free time and with that, the possibility for deeper thinking and contemplating. We thought ourselves the masters of Nature, without even being able to master our own greed. This is a time of consumerism, moral relativism and extreme individualism. We disturbed the **fragile climate balance**, the balance between humanity and nature, thus jeopardizing the future of our descendants. **The sustainable development goals** that the Republic of Macedonia fully supports should fix that error. As a

signatory of the **Paris Agreement on Climate Change**, the Republic of Macedonia has already established its national contributions to climate change.

The problem is much deeper though. It is high time to find our way out of the labyrinth of crises.

Excellencies,

As President, but also as University professor, I always listen to **the voice of young people**. I know very well the challenges that they are facing.

Youth potential is still restricted by a multitude of political, but also mental, economic and educational barriers. Young people around the world still do not have equal opportunities for quality education and employment, but they equally feel the cruel rules of international market.

For a long time, we have been the ones to decide on the future of youth, without allowing them to be part of the decision-making process. We took their needs, requests and wished for granted, all while expecting them to follow the rules of the game that we had created for them, without prior consultation. This is perhaps the reason why many global, regional and local policies were not supported by young people and remained on paper only. It is high time for this to change. We need policies not only about youth, but with their participation. We need **policies for youth by youth**.

Let me give you an example. This year, in the frame of the **School of Young Leaders**, held under my patronage for 7 years in a row, young people from the Republic of Macedonia but also from the wider region, were all part of an idea laboratory in which they were able to develop projects on sustainable development, promotion of public administration, infrastructural, educational and healthcare issues, boosting employment and reducing poverty. Such projects should be supported and promoted, and in that sense I already initiated contacts with the adequate entities in the World Bank. These are projects for innovative ideas and creative solutions for youth, who are not slaves to the old world view that is slowly disappearing.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are aware that the **Sustainable Development Agenda 2030** is not a ready-made recipe on how to achieve greater wellbeing, better life for our citizens, a more democratic society and a healthier environment for future generations, but it does contain good guidelines on how to realize these goals. However, even here we are facing a paradox. At this moment, we have an international system trying to establish sustainable development that is difficult to maintain itself.

Young people are a generation of **new technologies**, a generation living the advantages of global interconnection. Young people are already living in a world that provides access to an enormous amount of information and observations. Let us allow them to introduce their idealism and perceptions in regional and global initiatives and organizations. Let us allow them to introduce their new, fresh view in

the new reality that we live in, unburdened by prejudice from the past. Because, past should be a place of reference, and not a place of residence.

According to one saying, humanity is in its best condition when it has the highest degree of freedom. However, without laws, there is no freedom, but anarchy instead. If we wish to leave a safer world to future generations, we must respect international law. But, we must also go back to the highest and evergreen moral principles and values, one of them being respect and acceptance of diversity.

Often, we tend to invent new ideals because we are afraid of the old ones. We look forward with much enthusiasm because we are afraid to look back in the past. But on the dusty shelves of the past, besides conflicts, prejudice and enmities, we might also find models that enabled peaceful coexistence, respect and acceptance of diversity. One of them is our own Macedonian model of integration without assimilation.

Part of the task of the **United Nations Alliance of Civilizations** is to find such models, promote them and make them applicable in today's modern dynamic world. We must assist them in this sense, in order to learn again how to live with our deepest ethnic, religious, cultural and ideological differences.

Dear friends,

A philosopher once said that there might have been better times. However, this is our time and we are responsible for it. We have to think about those who will come after us, for the youth. We must not be afraid, because fear is a filter through which we only perceive the threats and not the possibilities standing before our very eyes.

Changing the vision in order to make it correspond to reality is the easiest thing to do. The hardest part is to change reality in order to make it correspond to the United Nations' noble vision. Part of that vision is finding a way to promote global governance and order without establishing a world government and predominance of the powerful, and how to lay the foundations for a true multiethnic, multireligious and multilinguistic international society that would be free, just, stable and safe at the same time.

Thank you.