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Seventy-Second Session  
of the General Assembly of the United Nations

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Statement by  
H.E. Mr. Nikos Kotzias  
Minister for Foreign Affairs  
of the Hellenic Republic

NEW YORK  
Friday, September 22, 2017

*Check against delivery*

Mr President,  
Mr Secretary General,  
Dear Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mr President,

I would like first of all to wish every success to the new Secretary General Mr Guterres and to reaffirm our full support to his work.

Allow me also to congratulate you on both your election to the office of President of this 72<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly and the choice of this year's main topic.

Our world is changing rapidly today. We are going through the second machine era. An era when machines no longer constitute the extension of physical strength, but rather produce spiritual wealth and knowledge. Machines that are faster and smaller, yet have an immense impact on our daily lives. On the way we work and produce. On the way we communicate and interact. This trend can be described as the fourth industrial revolution.

This new era brings with it innovations and advantages, but also challenges, especially for states. Challenges that they need to face effectively if they are to survive in today's complex international reality.

States have to show resilience and meet the needs of their people for more human rights, communication, growth and innovation.

They have to evolve. But their evolution is certainly linked to the evolution of the Organization itself. Will the UN be able to follow these developments and adapt to the new emerging reality?

In the light of this double adaptation, this time is extremely critical and requires the promotion of reforms that will make the UN capable of remaining relevant in an ever changing world, one that is very different from the one that existed in 1945.

If the UN is to keep its capacity to uphold its mandate, it also needs to evolve and meet the challenges before us.

As insecurity and instability still abound in large parts of our world, Greece is formulating a multidimensional foreign policy with a view to actively contributing to peace through putting forward concrete ideas at international fora and regional organizations, stability through political initiatives.

More specifically, we favor the prospect of broadening the agenda of the EU-UN institutionalized dialogue and cooperation to an extensive array of issues of global concern.

As a vision, we all want to see a world free of Weapons of Mass Destruction. In this framework, we strongly condemn this latest test and North Korea's ongoing illegal nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes which seriously endanger regional and international peace and security.

Contemplating developments in disarmament and non-proliferation over the past year, I believe that it is imperative, now more than ever, to seek avenues of dialogue with the participation of nuclear states. This could be the vehicle to bridge the gap between the step-by-step approach towards nuclear disarmament and the immediate non-verifiable total ban.

Mr President,

Situated close to what continues to be an extremely turbulent region like the Middle East and parts of North Africa, Greece is a pillar of stability.

In this context, we have recently undertaken many initiatives, such as the Rhodes Conference for Security and Stability and the Athens Conference on Religious and Cultural Pluralism and Peaceful Co-existence in the Middle East, as well as the newly established Ancient Civilizations Forum (ACForum), which was held the last time only yesterday, here in New York.

The Rhodes Conference focuses on a positive agenda of cooperation between 20 European and Arab countries of the Eastern Mediterranean, with the aim of fostering stability and security in the region.

I would also like to mention that alongside Cyprus, in the framework of promoting peace and stability in the region of the Eastern Mediterranean, we have established a number of trilateral forms of cooperation which include Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine.

Our main objective is to develop a positive, manifold agenda of cooperation in international affairs, focusing on synergies and joint activities, especially through culture as one of the main drivers of soft power in international relations, and other areas of cooperation, such as trade, education and research.

Enhancing regional cooperation in the Balkans is the core thinking behind another Greek initiative, namely that of Quadrilateral meetings between Ministers of Greece, Albania, Bulgaria and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, launched in Thessaloniki in April 2016.

The four countries, with a view to responding to the refugee crisis effectively and in line with European democratic values and principles, will focus, during their upcoming meeting in October, on identifying ways for better interaction on issues such as return operations, exchange of information, tackling smuggling, human trafficking, terrorism, organized crime and energy networks.

Mr President,

The Syrian war has taken a great toll in human lives, and millions have been displaced. The cessation of hostilities is sine qua non for progress of political negotiations. Greece sees no alternative other than a political solution to this crisis. We fully support an inclusive political dialogue in Geneva under UN auspices.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains a constant threat to regional stability and security. The current situation on the ground is not sustainable. We support the two-State solution, meaning the creation of a sovereign and independent State of Palestine living in peace and security alongside the State of Israel while responding to Israel's longstanding quest for security.

On Libya, Greece attaches particular importance to the international efforts to stabilize the country. Greece strongly believes that there is no military solution to the Libyan crisis. We support all efforts towards peace and security.

Mr President,

Terrorism remains one of the major global challenges we are faced with. The significant progress witnessed recently in the fight against DAESH demands special mention.

Strengthening international cooperation among all relevant actors and improving information exchange constitute key elements in tackling the movement of foreign fighters, while at the same time it is essential to address the root causes of violent extremism.

Greece participates actively in the common anti-terrorism fight.

In the context of our efforts to prevent terrorists from exploiting any resources for their actions, we particularly support international efforts aiming at promoting a concerted international action against illegal trade of antiquities and cultural artifacts.

Mr. President,

We consistently pursue friendly relations and enhanced cooperation with all our neighboring States as a means of promoting stability and prosperity for all.

In the Western Balkans, Greece remains a firm supporter of the EU Enlargement Policy.

The rise of nationalistic rhetoric in the region raises grave concerns. We wish to underline that actions and statements that undermine good neighborly relations should be avoided by all means.

Greece maintains a friendly approach to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The Greek initiative for designing and implementing the bilateral Confidence Building Measures has strengthened our relations, facilitating efforts for addressing more sensitive matters, such as the pending issue of the name of our neighboring country.

In this respect, Greece will continue to work systematically to reach a mutually acceptable solution to the name issue. Our position is clear: a mutually accepted name, erga omnes.

Accordingly, progress in Greek-Turkish relations can only be built upon the full respect of international law, including the International Law of the Sea. We have repeatedly pointed out that good neighborly relations cannot be served by persistent challenging of Greece's sovereignty and sovereign rights by a neighbor.

Regarding the Cyprus Issue, our objective is summed up in a concept that the UN Secretary General adopted during the International Conference on Cyprus: to make Cyprus a "normal state". A sovereign and independent state, free of foreign occupation troops, external guarantees and intervention "rights".

The International Conference on Cyprus held in Switzerland this year, was unfortunately closed last July, without producing agreement, because the Turkish and Turkish Cypriot sides were the only parties in the Conference who did not share the goal of the "normal state" concept.

We are prepared to continue discussing the key international issue of Security and Guarantees, whenever Turkey demonstrates a clear willingness to resume negotiations on the basis of UN Security Council Resolutions, as well as within the framework of parameters set down by the UN Secretary General in Crans Montana.

Mr President,

In the area of civil and political rights, we actively support the fight against racism and any other forms of discrimination including those based on religious, gender, sexual and any other grounds. In this vein, Greece, prioritizing the safety of journalists and media workers, especially in conflict areas, is going to submit the relevant thematic resolution during the current Third Committee session of the UN General Assembly.

Furthermore, my Country in the framework of Human Rights Council leads an initiative by successfully submitting a resolution on "Promoting Human Rights through sport and the Olympic Ideal".

We remain committed to the protection of human rights in all policies addressing large movements of migrants, with particular attention paid to the specific needs of migrants in vulnerable situations, including children.

We also believe that setting this framework right is more than ever important in order to grant protection to those in need of it, to fight against human trafficking and migrant

smuggling and to return people not entitled to international protection, while at the same time tackling the root causes of migration through effective cooperation with countries of origin and transit. Finally, social and economic inclusion of legal migrants is equally important and deserves our fullest attention.

Greece has reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring full and effective implementation of the Political Declaration of New York and its annexes, which were adopted during the High Level Meeting on the margins of the 71<sup>st</sup> UN General Assembly, and, in parallel, it has stressed its commitment to work in the context of the Global Compact for Migration that is to be concluded by 2018.

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Mr President,

I wish to assure you that, as a founding member of this Organization, Greece will lend it its unfailing support as the UN tries to rise up to the task of creating a more peaceful and prosperous future with justice and solidarity for all and especially for the next generations.

Thank you.