



**BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

**Address by  
H.E. Bakir Izetbegović  
Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina**

**at**

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**Check against delivery**

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

It is my honor to address you for the fourth and final time as the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I congratulate Miroslav Lajčak for his leadership of the 72<sup>nd</sup> Session of the General Assembly. Together with Secretary-General Guterres, he worked tirelessly to make this Organization more effective. I am glad the agenda of this year's session will maintain focus on these efforts.

I congratulate María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her election. The fact that she is only the fourth woman to hold this position since 1946 is a reminder that gender equality and empowerment of women must remain our top priority. She can count on Bosnia and Herzegovina's full support in getting the work of the General Assembly to be productive and impactful.

Madam President,

Two years ago, from this podium, I reflected on a number of ways and means to make our world more just and prosperous for all. Standing here today, there is not much to rejoice about, in terms of progress we have made.

Challenges have continued to multiply uncontrollably. Old conflicts have been magnified, and new ones have been created. Compared to the past three decades, more countries are engulfed in crises that are more violent, more disruptive for development, and which result in ever greater divides. These modern crises and conflicts are rarely confined to their place of origin. They shake entire regions, and often proliferate further into the transnational arena.

Record numbers of civilians are victims of indiscriminate yet deliberate armed attacks. Many more are subjected to persecution, discrimination, marginalization and violations of basic human rights. Many others fall victim to natural disasters. The number of refugees, displaced persons, and those in dire need of humanitarian assistance keeps rising. Peace, security and prosperity remain merely a distant hope for so many human beings around the world.

It is through this lens that I wish to reflect on three issues that are critical to addressing global problems we face: multilateralism, international law and the rules-based international order. For, I believe that adherence to multilateralism, compliance with international law and shared commitment to the rules-based global order, are our only hope and only way to resolve the complex challenges that confront us.

Whether it be conflict prevention or resolution, security, development, climate change, nuclear proliferation, terrorism, migrations or human rights – none of these problems can be successfully addressed and resolved by one, three, or five countries alone. Each and every one of these issues has transnational dimensions. Solving any of them requires transnational, multilateral responses that are based on dialogue and cooperation between all nations. Effective responses require an exercise in responsibility and respect for agreed international norms and standards, strong coalitions based on mutual trust, and a progressive, inclusive and democratic vision and leadership that embrace a new understanding of national sovereignty.

Yet, today, we are witnessing severe attacks on the rules-based international order, on the purposes, principles and norms of international law. These attacks pose a grave threat of undermining international peace and security. There are plenty of examples in our recent past showing what disregard for international law and the rules-based international order can bring. These dark chapters of our history were a direct result of the community of nations failing to uphold the rules and norms upon which the world order has been based, when these very same rules and norms were challenged.

Madam President,

Our citizens want to live in a peaceful world in which human dignity is respected and fundamental human rights and freedoms are protected. That is the *raison d'être* of this Organization. That obligation goes far beyond our national borders or interests. No government can focus only on delivering stability and prosperity to its own people, while ignoring what goes on beyond its national borders, in its neighborhood and in the wider world. To paraphrase Franklin Roosevelt, *the structure for solving any of the numerous challenges we face, including building and sustaining world peace, cannot be the work of one man, one nation, large or small, but a cooperative effort of the whole world.* These words resonate today as they did over seven decades ago.

Cooperative approaches have been key to eliminating smallpox, vaccinating record numbers of infants against preventable diseases, and beating back the menace of HIV/AIDS. Concerted efforts and the alliance of all the nations are necessary to contain the risks of nuclear confrontation and successfully address global issues, such as gender equality, climate change or prosecution of war criminals on the international level. The spirit of multilateralism is essential in order to bring and maintain peace, security and development around the world.

A man who championed multilateralism in his life-long work on the world stage, former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, once said: *“More than ever before in human history, we share a common destiny. We can master it only if we face it together. And that is why we have the United Nations.”*

We must reaffirm the Organization of United Nations as the true embodiment of multilateralism. It is the only forum that brings together 193 countries to seek joint solutions to global problems that affect us all. It is the only forum that has the capacity, dedication and compassion to solve these problems. It is the only forum where the voices of both big and small countries can be equally heard – even if all of those voices are not always equally acknowledged.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is strongly committed to the preservation and strengthening of the Organization of United Nations, of its values and principles, of its mission and mandate, of its relevance, credibility and cohesion. To this end, we welcome and support efforts to reform this Organization so that the voices of all its Member States are more democratically represented in its deliberations and actions.

Madam President,

Time and again we must remind ourselves of the fundamental values and principles that are enshrined in the United Nations Charter, and that embody the essence of the rules-based international order. These principles and values remain equally relevant today as they were in 1945. The primary responsibility of this Organization and *all* its Member States is to uphold and protect these commitments in the face of the modern challenges that profoundly test them.

Upholding the rules-based global order and the rule of law in general is essential to preventing and resolving crises and to sustaining peace. Strong leadership and engagement of the United Nations, and especially its Security Council, in line with the norms of international law, is indispensable in situations like Ukraine, Syria, Iraq and Libya, and in other crisis areas.

Yet, our responses to modern crises and conflicts have unfortunately been marked by disregard for international law, departure from multilateralism and failure to adhere to the rules-based international order, by inaction and by indifference to human suffering and violations of basic human rights.

Take the Middle East, for example. The conflict in Syria has entered its eight year, and we are nowhere close to bringing it to a resolution. Some of the most egregious and sustained violations of international humanitarian law in modern times, including indiscriminate use of chemical weapons, have gone unabated. Civilian casualties are constantly on the rise; the humanitarian situation keeps deteriorating.

The same applies to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which has lasted for more than half a century, and which has brought about immense human suffering. Holding a region hostage, as individual national interest compromises the interests of civilians who are caught in the endless cycles of violence, is unacceptable. The national interest of any country cannot be justified when the most basic services and means to sustain life are lacking for a large segment of the population.

Bosnia and Herzegovina will continue to support multilateral efforts to find solutions that would bring sustained peace and stability to the Syrian people; that will meet the legitimate expectations of both the Israelis and Palestinians to have two democratic States, living side by side, within secure and recognized borders in line with international law. As much as finding such solutions is a political question, it is also a matter of our common humanity.

Madam President,

Our shared ambition to leave no one behind is also put at serious risk by the evolving threat of radicalization, violent extremism and terrorism. This modern scourge easily finds fuel for its sustainment not only in armed conflicts, but also in social and political injustices, discrimination, marginalization and exclusion, in poverty, unemployment and economic disadvantage.

Violent extremism and terrorism transcend physical and virtual borders. They constantly change tactics and invent new ways and means to spread. Extremists and terrorists remain intent on driving a wedge between and within societies, hindering our efforts to maintain peace and security, protect human rights and foster sustainable development. Our response, therefore, must be decisive, coherent, comprehensive, and grounded in the international counterterrorism framework we have created.

Bosnia and Herzegovina remains strongly committed to contributing to global efforts to counter and eradicate this modern menace in all its forms and manifestations. This is a profound challenge of our time that needs to be confronted at every step and by every means at our disposal.

Madam President,

Nuclear weapons and their proliferation continue to pose a grave threat to our civilization. That threat perhaps overshadows all the other ones combined. The stakes are as high as they have ever been. Preventing nuclear proliferation and eliminating weapons of mass destruction concern the survival of humankind.

Madam President,

The United Nations peacebuilding architecture remains as important as ever in addressing all the challenges that persist on the path towards sustainable peace around the world. We recognize the value of introducing the United Nations peacebuilding efforts at an early stage, alongside peacekeeping activities. Bosnia and Herzegovina supports the vision and efforts of Secretary-General Guterres to mainstream conflict prevention and peacebuilding as priorities of the United Nations.

As part of a comprehensive response, peacekeeping has proven to be an effective tool for the United Nations to assist countries on the path from conflict to peace. Bosnia and Herzegovina is proud of our contribution to these goals, through our participation in the United Nations peacekeeping missions in Southern Sudan, Cyprus, Afghanistan, Congo and Mali. We have joined over 130 other countries and organizations in endorsing the Secretary-General's Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations. We support his efforts to make the United Nations peacekeeping missions stronger and more effective.

Madam President,

Agenda 2030 is the most powerful connector among the various pillars of the United Nations work. Its implementation is the most important pathway to global peace, security and prosperity. It will help our states and societies establish resilient institutions that are able to detect, manage and absorb tension, to address the drivers and root causes of conflicts and prevent their recurrence, and to create conditions for inclusive and sustainable development by reducing poverty, inequality and discrimination, ensuring respect for human rights and combating environmental degradation. Agenda 2030 is a catalyst for sustainable and inclusive development rooted in respect for economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights. And that is the best prevention against conflicts and instability.

Madam President,

Strong global and regional cooperation, be it on matters of conflict prevention and resolution, the fight against terrorism or the implementation of Agenda 2030, is essential for the success of all these efforts. Bosnia and Herzegovina strongly values the cooperation we have established within our region of the Western Balkans. We remain committed to advancing that cooperation, including on our joint path to membership in the European Union.

Madam President,

Bosnia and Herzegovina strives for protection and promotion of values and principles that are shared by all countries. We believe that the ideals, values and principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and the norms and standards inscribed in international law should never be violated or disregarded. We believe it is the obligation of all countries, big and small, powerful or less so, to uphold the noble values and principles this Organization is built upon. If any of us lack the will to uphold these values and principles, then all our endeavors will be less valuable and less successful.

On that note, I leave you with the words of a great man, Nelson Mandela, as we mark the centenary of his birth: *“What counts is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead.”*