

Prime Minister of Montenegro Duško Marković

**Address at the General Debate of the 73rd session of the
General Assembly of the United Nations**

New York, 28th September 2018

Madam President,
Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to address you on behalf of Montenegro, one of the youngest members of the United Nations, which has clearly and unequivocally confirmed commitment to joint action within the UN system in the past 12 years since the renewal of its statehood.

Allow me, in the beginning, to congratulate Mrs. Maria Fernanda Espinoza Garsez from Ecuador on her election as the President of the 73rd session of the General Assembly, and wish her success in carrying out this responsible duty.

I also want to thank the President of the previous 72nd Session of the General Assembly, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, for his outstanding leadership and contribution to strengthening the role of the General Assembly and stepping up the dialogue with the Member States.

Dear Miroslav, I congratulate you on another job well done, with gratitude for the lasting friendship you cherish with Montenegro.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I welcome the choice of the topic of the General Debate of the 73rd Session. I firmly believe that in these challenging times concerted action and common responsibility for peaceful, just and sustainable societies are the only correct way that will lead us to the goal; that the United Nations be relevant to all people on the planet.

Given the complex situations and challenges that the world is facing, the grave divisions on numerous grounds, the catastrophic consequences of the spread of terrorism and violent extremism, as well as climate change, there is no dilemma that only by joint action can we contribute to resolving conflicts and preventing further suffering of innocent people.

Historic multilateral agreements that we have agreed in the previous period show what we can do with joint action. These agreements, primarily – the 2030 Development Agenda, but also the Climate Agreement, make a vision of our common future and confirm that multilateralism is not an option, but the only effective means.

For the full implementation of the adopted Agreements, the reform of the UN and the strengthening of the central role of the World Organization in multilateralism is necessary more than ever. Therefore, this 73rd Session is of paramount importance for the return of confidence in the United Nations i.e. that, regardless of sometimes justified criticism, they are capable of achieving the NOBLE objectives for which they were founded.

We cannot say that these lofty goals have been achieved in today's world. Let's not hide this fact, let's look it in the eyes and take on our share of responsibility for today's, but also tomorrow's world.

Montenegro strongly supports the process of reform of the United Nations.

I am confident that the issue of fragmentation of the World Organization can be solved with a stronger binding of all three pillars of action and greater transparency, efficiency and accountability. I believe that the implementation of the complex reform agenda and the strong leadership of Secretary-General Guterres will result in a more efficient Organization,

which will contribute to reducing the suffering throughout the world and ensuring common peace, security and prosperity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to remind you in a nutshell of the views of Montenegro on some of the key topics on the agenda and this session of the General Assembly:

First of all, Montenegro is strongly committed to the policy and implementation of the sustainable development goals, which are complementary to the reforms that we are implementing in the process of European integration.

Furthermore, although it has a small share in global emission and population statistics, Montenegro is committed to the implementation of the Paris Agreement through responsible and sustainable management of its development potentials. Montenegro welcomes the initiative of the Secretary-General to hold the Climate Change Summit in 2019.

In terms of finding solutions to conflicts around the world, we are aware that the international community often fails to prevent crime and suffering of a large number of people. In addition to the longstanding conflict in Syria, the findings of the Commission on Inquiry Human Rights Violations in Myanmar additionally warns of the importance of prevention and timely addressing the causes of instability. Our moral and political responsibility is to ensure the eradication of impunity for crimes committed. In this regard, the role of the Security Council, the International Criminal Court and the criminal tribunals is crucial.

Montenegro expresses regret over the stalemate in resolving the longstanding Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the lack of progress in resolving the worsening humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. On this occasion, we call on all parties to uphold the international law and refrain from unilateral actions that distort confidence and make it difficult to reach a mutually acceptable peace agreement. We strongly support the resuming of negotiations and the application of mediation in order to reach a peaceful solution.

Conflicts in Syria, Yemen, Libya and other countries, as well as the longstanding Palestinian-Israeli conflict, require an immediate end to violence, respect for international law by all parties to the conflict, and urgent finding of peace solutions through diplomatic means.

In order to eradicate terrorism and violent extremism, we must step up efforts to strengthen the implementation of the preventive pillar of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. The focus of our activities must be on the integration of vulnerable and marginalized groups, and the care for young people as the main actors of a better future.

We strongly support global efforts towards disarmament and non-proliferation of mass destruction weapons. I am certain that by consistent application of the relevant treaties on nuclear disarmament and arms control, we can get to a world without nuclear weapons. Therefore, we support the activities of the United States of America, the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea intended to ensure the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

Madam President,

I will touch upon two very important aspects of today's world, which are intertwined: human rights and humanitarian challenges.

Any violation of human rights poses a threat to democracy, the rule of law, and a step towards a possible conflict. At the moment when we commemorate 70 years since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 25 years since the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action, but also 20 years since the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, we are witnessing more and more examples of grave human rights violations around the world. It is unacceptable that we remain silent about this fact. In addressing these situations, we acknowledge the important role of the Human Rights Council, and the need for its more efficient and effective functioning in order to build on the results achieved so far. A strong and determined commitment to a progressive approach to

human rights is necessary, as well as improving the application of the highest standards in the protection of human rights at all levels.

In the field of protection and promotion of human rights at the national level, significant progress has been made in the protection of women and girls, children, LGBTI population, and the integration of marginalized groups. We aim to strengthen and expand the national human rights dialogue, which should contribute to a better application of international standards.

Montenegro's commitment to the issue of gender equality and the fight against violence against women is reaffirmed by our chairmanship of the Executive Board of the UN Women. We strongly advocate for the greater role of women as leaders and important decision-makers, stakeholders in conflict prevention, resolution and reconciliation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Although humanitarian challenges are on the rise, I emphasize the importance of defining key multilateral agreements under the auspices of the United Nations, i.e. the two global compacts on migration and refugees.

Adoption of the Global Compact on Migration will contribute to better management of international migration in all dimensions, to the benefit of all states and communities, including migrants. The government is working in all fields to better regulate migration processes. Montenegro undertakes all that is necessary for the possible admission of migrants and refugees, in accordance with international standards in this area, while taking into account its national capacities.

Bearing in mind its experience in the admission of a large number of refugees during the Balkan conflicts in the 1990s, Montenegro has contributed to defining the Global Compact on Refugees. We believe that the Global Compact on Refugees will contribute to the joint action of the international community in terms of the mass movement of refugees and providing support to the countries of admission.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In the past 12 years since independence restoration, Montenegro has made rapid progress in the state-building process based on the lofty democratic values.

Our results are not just a product of political pragmatism, but a vision of today's Montenegro geared towards the stability and prosperity of its citizens. Montenegro has been a new member of NATO since last year. Aware of the necessity of a safe and secure environment, we are committed to the issues of global security, preservation and enhancement of common values, both within NATO and in UN peacekeeping missions.

Membership in NATO has given us a strong incentive to further strengthen the rule of law based on the highest democratic values.

But at the same time we are vigorously implementing the economic reforms that resulted in a high economic growth rate of over 4% in the course of the last year and in the first half of this year. These measures are based on sustainable development that will secure a higher level of living standard in the longer term.

At the moment, Montenegro is a frontrunner in the Western Balkans in the process of joining the European Union. We have, among other things, earned this position with our multinational and multireligious harmony, which is our historical feature and value. We are committed to strengthening institutions and their sustainability with a determined fight against organized crime and corruption.

Distinguished Excellencies,

Allow me to draw your attention at the very end to the current situation in the region I come from.

The Western Balkans is now a better place to live than 20 or 30 years ago, owing to the efforts of the international community and the Governments

of the countries of the region. We in Montenegro believe that there is no better future for our countries and citizens than that in the European Union.

But we are confident that it also comes as a natural choice for Europe. European values are the only and best answer to growing nationalism and populism in our view.

However, in order to achieve this goal, actions must be taken more decisively with a clear vision of a whole, stable and stronger Europe in every corner of it.

Montenegro has been and will remain committed to promoting regional stability and cooperation and developing good neighborly relations. In that sense, we welcome the signing of the historic agreement between Macedonia and Greece, which contributes to the European and Euro-Atlantic perspective of the Region. We hope for the successful implementation of the Agreement reached, which will be conducive to creating a favorable environment for the further overall development of the Region.

We also welcome the negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina. We believe that in the coming period it will result in the achievement of a lasting agreement and a full normalization of relations, which is in the interest of both the Region and Europe.

Madam President,

Montenegro will continue to be a responsible partner to the United Nations. Through membership in the bodies and agencies of the UN, it will be contributing to the UN's tackling of global challenges. In addition to the membership and Montenegro's chairing of the Executive Board of the UN Women, the candidacies have been presented for the upcoming period for membership in the Economic and Social Council 2020-2022, the Human Rights Council 2022-2024 and the UN Security Council 2026-2027 .

We believe that we will gain the support and confidence of United Nations member states in the aforementioned bodies, which will be an opportunity to contribute to a stronger and more effective UN action.

The key interests of our countries are shared - more peace, security and prosperity for our citizens.

In this respect, the United Nations must continue to play a strong role.

Thank you for your attention.