

**Speech by the President of the Republic of Lithuania Gitanas Nausėda  
at the United Nations General Assembly  
21 September 2021**

Mr. President,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year marks a **special anniversary for the independent Lithuanian state**. Thirty years ago, the Republic of Lithuania became a member of the United Nations.

We had been striving for international recognition ever since the restoration of independence in March 1990. Membership in the United Nations has made Lithuania a full-fledged member of the international community. It empowered us to seek peace, to defend human rights and to contribute to effective multilateralism.

A significant decision of the United Nations General Assembly was made in 1992 to call for a complete withdrawal of foreign military forces from the territories of the Baltic States. It was a powerful manifestation of global solidarity. A kind of solidarity we still often need today!

Recent years have shown us that no country is able to deal with global challenges alone. It is a global effort that helps us to mitigate the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This fight is not over. However, I believe we are on the right path.

The way forward goes through the **widespread use of safe and effective vaccines**. We need an active global vaccine sharing mechanism that would help to protect everyone, including those who are the most vulnerable.

Alarmingly, the pandemic is deepening global poverty and inequality. The widening gaps in education, social security, and digital connectivity divide the global population.

Right now, millions of people are also being overwhelmed by a **dangerous infodemic**. It too causes much suffering and contributes to many untimely deaths. Therefore, I would like to congratulate the efforts of the United Nations, especially by the Verified campaign, in fighting misinformation and disinformation. They pose an ever greater threat to our societies. To counter various kinds of manipulations, we need a holistic approach and concrete new ways to get better in detecting, analyzing, and exposing disinformation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

various forms of pressure and hybrid attacks are closely related to the deteriorating security situation in many parts of the world. We have seen authoritarian states continuing their military buildups and intensifying violent crackdowns on political opposition, free media, and civil society. These regimes demonstrated many times their willingness to endanger our peace, security, and prosperity.

We refuse to accept such behaviour as the ‘new normal’. Therefore, Lithuania fully supports the calls to uphold human rights in all countries. Such cases when political activists and human rights defenders are tortured and killed must be carefully investigated.

We also deplore efforts by Russia to exert pressure on Lithuanian judges and prosecutors who investigate the case of atrocities committed by the occupying Soviet army in Lithuania in 1991. Lithuania calls on all states not to execute related international arrest warrants.

It is also with deep sadness that I remember last year’s developments in **Belarus**. A genuine protest movement that sprang up after a rigged presidential election has been brutally suppressed. Independent civil society and media organizations are being silenced, hundreds of people – detained, severely beaten, tortured.

**The irresponsible actions by the Belarusian authorities** might also have a bigger impact on international security. We saw it in the hijacking and forced landing of the Ryanair flight on May 23. It was done in clear violation of international law. Such actions should be treated as an act of state-sponsored terrorism.

The Belarusian regime is also **testing new methods of hybrid actions**. For several months now, Lithuania has been dealing with an unprecedented hybrid attack. By artificially creating and directing flows of irregular migration, Belarus aims to put political pressure on the European Union.

Lithuania firmly rejects this attempt at sowing discord and calls on the United Nations to address it. We all need to actively fight human trafficking, break the business model of smugglers, and discourage migrants from endangering their lives. There must be serious discussions on how to prevent a country to use irregular migration to pressure another country. We must make it clear that people should not be used as tools.

Furthermore, Belarus has recently generated yet another outrage by starting the commercial exploitation of an unsafe nuclear power plant close to the Lithuanian border. By ignoring numerous worrying incidents and failing to comply with basic international safety standards, the Belarusian regime has once again shown a complete lack of a sense of responsibility.

I believe that it would be a colossal mistake to treat such violators on the same footing as climate friendly producers who respect environmental and nuclear safety rules. Solving the issue of the Belarusian nuclear power plant is crucially important for our environment – and a matter of safety for all the people of Europe.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For the seventh year we are witnessing the **continuing military aggression against Ukraine, as well as the illegal annexation and occupation of Crimea**. These actions violate international law, the Charter of the United Nations, as well as the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act. They should be condemned universally.

We must reinforce the policy of non-recognition of the occupation and annexation of Crimea. It is also extremely important to protect the rights and freedoms of the local civilian population. I commend the Ukrainian effort to keep this issue on the agenda by creating the International Crimean Platform.

Lithuania respects Ukraine's European and Euro-Atlantic choice and continues to support its reforms in this troubled period. Seeking to consolidate international efforts, we have co-hosted the Ukraine Reform Conference in Vilnius this past July.

Currently, we are also witnessing a worsening human rights and security situation in the **Abkhazia and Tskhinvali** regions of Georgia. Aggressive actions of the occupying forces, such as 'borderization', movement restrictions and illegal detentions, are hindering the lives of the local people. Our duty is to make the aggressor accountable.

The international community may also give special attention to comprehensive settlement of the Transnistrian conflict based on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Moldova within its internationally recognised borders.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are being constantly reminded about the need to preserve the international rules-based order. As we have inherited it, our duty is to pass it to the next generations. We must show restraint on international matters and implement our commitments and obligations.

The Open Skies Treaty, the Vienna Document, the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty, and many other agreements are crucial for building confidence in international security. The principles of sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity should prevail in the face of new challenges.

For the United Nations to remain relevant and strong, an efficient Security Council is required. Every instance of inaction by the Security Council encourages aggression and threatens the multilateral system.

Lithuania therefore strongly supports the initiative on limiting the use of veto in the Security Council in cases of mass atrocities, genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

To express Lithuania's strong commitment to the international human rights agenda, we are also running for a seat at the United Nations Human Rights Council for 2022-2024.

If elected, Lithuania will pay special attention to the protection of human rights defenders, the rights of the child, the rights of persons with disabilities, as well as human rights in conflict areas. We will continue defending the rights of women and girls, freedom of peaceful assembly and association, freedom of religion and belief, and stand up for ensuring access to information and the safety of journalists.

To fulfil these promises, Lithuania will make use of experience gained by membership in various United Nations bodies. As the current President of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Lithuania is engaged in international efforts to save children's lives and to defend their rights.

Seeking to make a change, Lithuania has also presented its candidacy for election to the UNESCO Executive Board for 2021-2025. We are ready to promote UNESCO's mission and mandate, and to contribute to making the organization more efficient, responsive, and keen to find sustainable solutions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to turn now to the challenge of our time – climate change.

The recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change<sup>1</sup> has clearly stated that we have little time left for necessary decisions and real actions.

Lithuania fully supports the Secretary General of the United Nations in his call “for the urgent and bold steps to address the triple crisis of climate disruption, biodiversity loss and pollution destroying our planet.” It is crucially important for every country to turn up at the upcoming COP26 meeting in Glasgow with most ambitious proposals. Lithuania seeks a timely transition towards resilient and climate neutral economy and is committed to reaching related EU targets. The recently adopted National Climate Change Management Agenda sets goals for Lithuania to reduce emissions by 70 percent compared to 1990 and to become climate neutral by 2050.

Wide support of society is needed for the decarbonization efforts to be effective. They must bring new major opportunities and benefits of innovative green growth, employment, higher quality of life, public health, and biodiversity.

The shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy is inevitable. The real question now is who will be the first to reap the benefits.

---

<sup>1</sup> IPCC

Lithuania has earlier used its chances for early digital transformation, with advances in modern information and communication infrastructure jumpstarting a fast growth of digital economy. We intend to do the same with green transformation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have always shared one world. But only recently have we been awakened to the fact of our shared responsibility.

Now we know that we have to make an effort. We must actively build our common future. The time for passive observation is gone.

We do clearly need a new social contract anchored in human rights, as well as a better management of our global commons.

How can all of this be achieved? I believe that the way forward goes through an honest and open discussion. Our success relies on our ability to build trust among peoples, and to make it work for the whole humanity.

Our hopes, our brave ideas, and our individual strengths should all be channelled into global efforts. Let us build our future together!

Thank you.