



# MISSIÓ PERMANENT DEL PRINCIPAT D'ANDORRA A LES NACIONS UNIDES

77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

- speech by the Head of the Andorran Government, H.E. Mr. Xavier Espot Zamora-  
New York, 23rd September 2022

Mr. President,

Mr. Secretary General,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

After two years of absence due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is an honour once again to take part in person at this General Assembly. I would like to start this address by congratulating His Excellency Mr. Csaba Körösi, on his election as President of the 77th General Assembly of the United Nations.

Thank you, Mr. President, for the motto you have chosen: “Solutions through solidarity, sustainability and science”, which we shall assume as our own and which is aligned with the principles applied in Andorra, from both a domestic and an international political perspective. You may depend on Andorra’s loyal support for the 77th session, and we wish you every success.

Please allow me also to express my acknowledgement of the presidency of Mr. Abdullah Shahid, and of the innovative and action-oriented initiatives he has encouraged over the course of a year, in which there has been no shortage of challenges. These have once again emphasized the essential role of the United Nations and the multilateralism it embodies.

A year ago, when the COVID-19 pandemic was still very much determining the social and economic policies of many countries, the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. António Guterres, warned us that the global and multidimensional crisis generated by COVID-19 once again underlined global fragilities and structural inequalities. Global governance neither knew how to respond, nor provided the appropriate means for vaccines to reach all countries, which left millions of people in a situation of extreme vulnerability.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Secretary General on his excellent work in what remains a very delicate context, which, unfortunately, has many points in common with the reasons for which the United Nations was founded.

Indeed, today the world continues to experience a succession and accumulation of different crises, accentuated by the devastating impact on the planet of an economy that is nearing the end of its cycle and that has based its productivity on excessive use of raw materials. The planet is exhausted, and the symptoms are all too evident. The climate emergency is being felt in the form of heat waves, wildfires, water shortages and extreme phenomena that lead to catastrophes. The planet's triple crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, affects everyone. We now have the last opportunity effectively and forcefully to address the climate crisis, which is the most global and important challenge we are facing.

Unfortunately, climate change is not the only transnational challenge that besets us. Just as we were starting to discern an improvement in the circumstances created by the pandemic, the war in Ukraine, a clear violation of the United Nations Charter, has exposed cracks in the international order and corroborated the loss of respect for the common values that sustain our peaceful coexistence and that are the essence, or the *raison d'être*, of this Assembly. This conflict is having a devastating impact on the civilian population and causing one of the worst refugee crises on the European continent since the Second World War, which is why Andorra, once again, has shown its solidarity by welcoming numerous Ukrainian families, to whom it has given the chance to live and to work in our country. This is also what we did in 2018, during the humanitarian crisis caused by the war in Syria.

As I explained in the political orientation debate held last week in the *Consell General*—our parliament—, although our voice in the world does not have the backing of a large population, armies, natural resources, or a strategic geographical location, it is sustained by the fortitude of principles and values. Values that inspire our model of society and the order by which we would like international relations to be governed.

The impact of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, moreover, is not limited solely to our region. The threat of a food crisis due to a shortage of distribution of agricultural resources on other continents has required negotiations to prevent it. The energy crisis and rising prices are also generating economic difficulties beyond Europe, which need to be rectified.

The situation is not hopeful, yet we should not allow it to bring an end to real politics, politics that makes what is necessary possible. We cannot allow unilateralism to prevail over multilateralism. This is how we understand it in Andorra because a world without international rules or consensus would be a world governed by the law of the strongest. Our adherence to multilateralism is based on the conviction that tackling crises, challenges, and common threats requires a strong multilateral system, based on the universal values that inspired this organization's founding document.

One may wonder, what can a country of just over 80,000 inhabitants and a mountainous territory half the size of New York city do for a planet that will soon have a population of over 8,000 million? Well, belief in our ability to set an example, in our role to face global and common challenges based on the responsibility and commitment we assumed twenty-nine years ago when, with the approval of our Constitution, we entered the international scene and joined the United Nations.

Andorra believes in multilateralism, its value, and its capabilities as an essential way of engagement and of working, to identify challenges, come up with solutions, propose consensus, promote fresh cooperation, and keep lines of dialogue and action open. When we are all in attendance, as we are now at the United Nations, we can listen to everyone's voice and establish truly successful proposals and action.

This conviction means our country is and wishes to take active part in numerous multilateral organizations, as we understand that recovery and change can only be achieved through a spirit of collaboration and by encouraging synergies among peoples, however far apart they may be, in every sense.

2023 will, in fact, give the Principality of Andorra an excellent chance to celebrate the multilateral order and to reiterate our firm and constant commitment to this order, as it will be the 30th anniversary of Andorra joining the United Nations and UNESCO. This anniversary also coincides with the 30th anniversary of our Constitution, which will provide an opportunity to familiarize our fellow citizens with multilateral institutions.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Throughout our history, geography has shaped our character. Andorra is a high mountain region and therefore particularly vulnerable to climate change. We understand that the impact of this change has unleashed an existential struggle that must be overcome if we are to protect our territory. No issue has ever yielded such consensus among our parliamentary forces, a consensus that has made it possible to create a solid framework for action and continuity. We were one of the first parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to submit a national contribution in 2015, and to update it in 2020, with a view to achieving carbon neutrality by 2050. The *Consell General*—our parliament—unanimously approved the Declaration of a State of Climate Emergency and the Law on Promoting Energy Transition and on Climate Change.

We have indeed acted. I shall cite an example. Advances introduced in ecotaxation have led to the creation of a green fund that is allocated entirely to encouraging ecological transition and ensuring that the economic sectors with the greatest environmental impact contribute most. We have pioneered in introducing a green tax and established a carbon price of 30 euros per ton, which will lead us towards more sustainable mobility. This has practical and clearly beneficial effects for our citizens, as the green fund has enabled us to finance more and better energy efficiency programmes and to become one of the world's first countries to offer free public transport; a milestone reached just a few months ago with indisputable success.

Another law recently passed, the Law on circular economy, is also a remarkable and pioneering initiative that establishes 2035 as the deadline for changing from the current linear production model to a circular production model in which most waste becomes a by-product that is reintroduced into the production chain. Special emphasis is placed on combating the waste of resources and, specifically, of food.

This is because we carefully monitor the FAO's reports on the basic issue of the right to food, the second Sustainable Development Goal. We took active part at the 2021 Food Systems Summit, where I had the chance to highlight our fight against food waste and move towards sustainable food systems, which, alongside San Marino, we have had the honour to make a priority policy.

Likewise, to mark the International Year of Sustainable Mountain Development—and since we are mentioning the FAO—I would like to mention the Mountain Partnership and its members, which raise awareness and offer insight, tools, and action for the development of mountain regions. Andorra has the highest capital city in Europe, at an altitude of over 1,000 metres, and an average altitude of around 2,000 metres. Mountain regions are of vital importance in natural systems with their water cycles, influence on the climate, natural resources, biodiversity, . . . , and are, meanwhile, highly vulnerable environments. In Andorra, for years we have therefore been committed to caring for our natural heritage and make environmental protection a priority.

Mr. President,

Most countries have reappraised their actions or have observed how some processes of change—which were half-heartedly introduced before the COVID-19 pandemic—, now need to be accelerated, while others require strengthening. The 2030 Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals and, over and above that, our Common Agenda proposed by the Secretary General, are powerful instruments that provide collective and holistic solutions, establish a deadline by which the goals must be achieved in order to build a better world in which human rights, a pillar of the United Nations, are the cornerstone for all of our actions.

Andorra, which is firmly committed to the 2030 Agenda, presented the second Voluntary National Review last July. The report features a detailed analysis of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and describes the policies being implemented to guarantee Andorra's sustainable, resilient, and inclusive recovery, through the Horizon 23 Action Plan, the government plan that, following the outbreak of the pandemic, we reformulated for this legislative term, and which ends next year.

Globally, COVID-19 has had a negative impact on the progress and achievement of the 17 SDGs. In some cases, we even strayed from the targets. SDG 4, which calls for quality education and the priority objectives of which include the completion of free primary and secondary education for all girls and boys by 2030, is unfortunately far from a reality in many parts of the planet.

The education of almost 90% of students around the world was interrupted at the end of April 2020, which was detrimental to over 1.5 billion children of school age. Many have not set foot in a classroom since then. The collateral impacts of the pandemic have therefore been particularly intense in the field of education and have highlighted the need to give fresh impetus to schooling.

I therefore wish to highlight the Secretary General's role in making education one of the core values of the United Nations system. A good example of this is the Transforming Education Summit, which was held on September 19. There is certainly no better tool for overcoming discrimination and prejudice than giving all children access to schooling, lifelong education and quality education.

Our country is fully committed to education as an essential tool for achieving a fairer, more responsible society, based on ethical values, critical vision, and cooperative and supportive attitudes. Andorra's educational structure is one of our country's finest assets, as three plural and diverse public education systems —the Andorran, French and Spanish— coexist, thus allowing us to ensure higher levels of tolerance, freedom, and democracy in the education of our children and young people.

Specifically, multilingualism is one the characteristic, differentiating elements of the Andorran education system. We therefore wish to give our support and commitment to action promoted by

the United Nations on multilingualism, as a tool for dialogue, communication, exchange and, in short, as a vehicle for peace.

We share the Secretary General's view of the need for solidarity with the young generations so that they may be involved in decision-making. All Andorran institutions thus work with young people so they can take active part in political life and are endowed with the skills they need to manage their futures. As political leaders we are responsible for creating opportunities for future generations and this is one of the goals that we work hard to achieve, so that our country will be able to offer opportunities for progress to new, increasingly well-trained generations, and they need not envision a future a long way from home.

In Andorra, we believe that the creation of these new opportunities for the future is an inevitable step in completing the process of economic diversification that we started in 2012, and that, because of the pandemic, we have wished to intensify by prioritizing key strategic sectors of sustainability and of innovation and research. This culmination is linked to the strengthening of our relations with the European Union, through an association agreement that we have been negotiating since 2015, which has allowed us progressive, structured participation in the European internal market. It will therefore be possible to promote the internationalization of our companies and encourage mobility among our young people and thus also contribute more to global prosperity.

Mr. President,

I now wish to mention another global challenge that we have considered and that relates to SDG 5: achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Observation everywhere of persistent gender-based violence, a growing number of sexual assaults, murders of women, increasing job insecurity and wage gap, shows that inequality still leads to vulnerability and excludes half of humanity.

Feminism is one of the great challenges of the present moment and it is absolutely essential for us to invest all our effort in developing active, determined measures to build a new reality in which

the equality of women and men is not only a right, but also a fact, whereby the collective imaginary cannot conceive of or accept discrimination against women.

Last spring, the *Consell General*—our parliament— approved the Law for the effective application of the right to equal treatment and opportunities and non-discrimination between men and women. It is a pioneering law that provides essential tools for breaking down the invisible barrier that still prevents full equality. Some of the aspects regulated by this law, such as co-education as a guiding principle for the entire education system, the requirement to draw up annual records of gender-related data, a determined commitment to eliminate the wage gap and the coordination of equality plans in companies, are the first of their kind.

Mr. President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

A year ago, in the report *Our common agenda*, Mr. António Guterres delivered a very clear message: the United Nations' ability to fulfil the objectives established by its founders depends entirely on the collective political will of all its members and commitment to the pillars of the United Nations. This message has been understood and Andorra fully supports the road map, which urges us to intensify action to strengthen and coordinate global health architecture, address the climate emergency, renew solidarity among peoples, provide space for youth, encourage a new social contract on human rights and an approach to global commons. In assuming our responsibility, we must now work to achieve all this and now have a—I dare to say historic— opportunity to do so.

We come from a very small country, in which years ago we pledged to do things right and in which everyone can express themselves freely, with an over six-hundred-year-old parliament—depository of the people's sovereignty—, and in which for over seven centuries we have fortunately known only peace. You may therefore depend on our help, based on the values that have shaped us over history, to defend, globally, a fairer, more equitable world with a more efficient and sustainable economic development.



As political leaders, we cannot afford to look back and see how our inaction led to catastrophic and irreversible damage to our planet and to humanity. No individual effort will be enough, but it will be necessary, as the struggle facing us and in which we are now immersed requires everyone to contribute. Andorra is willing to take part and to act with determination to be part of the solution.

Thank you very much.