

Statement Albania
77th session UNGA 2022
24 September 2022

Mr. President,
Distinguished delegates,

It is a particular honour for me to be here and speak as the representative of a country that is currently serving in the Security Council. This responsibility lends special importance to our role in this august body and beyond.

We gather here each September and 77 years on, the UN has only gained in its universal appeal serving as the parliament of

humankind, the forum where we speak to each other and listen to the world.

Like nowhere else, the world converges here: we share the success and progress; outline issues and challenges; express worries and fears; highlight crises and tensions; talk about agreements and discords, but above all, we bring a joint desire for a better world.

In these nearly eight decades, we have witnessed uninterrupted change, profound transformation, unprecedented mobilization, continued solidarity, and an all-time imperative of the need to work together. As a result, the world has known undeniable progress on many tracks.

We must never forget that our journey has been bumpy. Many times, we have also

witnessed terrible setbacks and even reversal of progress. Unfortunately, this is mainly due to man-made catastrophes, ill-conceived policies, because of narrow national politics, short-sighted interests fuelled by populism, nationalism and greed for domination.

This is why, this place at this time each year, **is the yearly check-up of the health of the world.**

We may sometimes have the impression that we say the same things, that we repeat each other. **I would like to disagree.**

If committing to peace and security, to development and prosperity, to upholding the International Law and respecting human rights, engage into genuine efforts to mitigate

climate change is repeating each other, then we are doing the right thing.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Unfortunately, this year, our hopes and beliefs have been bitterly shattered and our assurances were broken by an **unprovoked, unjustified and premeditated war** of one country against another, the brutal aggression of Russia against its neighbour, Ukraine.

Russia's war of choice is against Ukraine and its people; but not only, it is also an brutal assault against International Law, a flagrant violation of the UN Charter and a direct threat to the European Security Architecture.

It is open battle between an aging cynical tyranny and a young growing democracy.

While we all, in our ways and with our respective means, try, individually and collectively, to project ourselves into the future; one country, led by dreams of the grandeur of bygone times, has decided to drag the world backwards, go against everything we have built over decades.

This is unacceptable.

We will continue to stand in full solidarity with Ukraine and its people, and, just like some 40 other countries, help them, in any way we can, to defend themselves.

Their fight is also ours, and I hope, that of all Members of the UN, that share the core

principles of sovereignty, of territorial integrity, of freedom and the right to independently decide on their future, without fear or interference. Shying away from this defining battle between those principles and all their contrary is shying away from the duty to protect ourselves, our countries, our children.

While the world expects Russia to come to reason, stop the war and engage into peace negotiations, just a few days ago, Kremlin made another choice, that of escalation, announcing a partial mobilization which would deepen the conflict, bring more crimes, more victims, more misery but also more shame on Russia itself.

Sham referendums that are being conducted in some parts of the occupied

Ukrainian territory, with the threat of a gun. It is hard to imagine that anyone here can silently accept such disgraceful disregard of laws, rules, norms and practices that govern relations between states in the 21st Century.

These actions run against international law and not only do not reflect the free will of the Ukrainian people but offer a miserable show of the detachment from everything that bring us together under the roof of the United Nations. We condemn such actions engineered in Moscow and will not recognize any such such unlawfulness.

In the world we want, impunity should not be the shelter of those who must answer for their deeds.

Albania is fully committed to accountability globally and fight impunity everywhere. This is to provide justice to victims but also to prevent future atrocities.

That is why Albania calls and supports the work towards the adoption of a Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Humanity. This new instrument would fill a significant gap in the current international framework and facilitate international cooperation to protect civilians.

Mr. President,

The world is never a quiet place and there are many serious challenges that need to be properly and immediately addressed.

We face serious challenges with open conflict in many parts of the world.

Many countries are subject to intolerable seizure of power by force.

Terrorism remains a serious threat against peace and security.

At a time when a multitude of crisis have put the world in turmoil including by unacceptable nuclear threats, I would like to call the attention of the Assembly on another crucial issue closely linked and with huge impact on peace and security: **cybersecurity**.

Technology is nowadays part of every aspect of our life in Albania 95% of services to the citizens and business are offered online. These user-friendly systems save time,

energy, and drastically improve efficiency, quality and are the best tool to fighting corruption.

Last July, Albania was the target of an unprovoked large-scale cyberattack. The entire government digital infrastructure was under a sustained and coordinated assault, with the clear aim to destroy it, paralyze public services and steal data and electronic communications from government systems, create chaos and foment tension in the country.

A lengthy and thorough in-depth investigation, conducted in cooperation with the best existing world expertise on cyber terrorism has now confirmed, beyond any doubt, that the cyberattack that wanted to bring a sovereign country to its knees, was a

State-sponsored aggression, orchestrated and carried out by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

This is why, in face of a such blatant breach of norms of responsible State behavior in cyberspace in peacetime, which include refraining from damaging critical infrastructure that provides services to the public, **the Government of Albania was left with no other choice but sever the diplomatic relations with Iran.**

We hope this forced extreme measure will be an example and a deterrent for anyone who supports or sponsors such abhorring actions against sovereign states. We urge the United Nations, including the Security Council, to focus more seriously and concretely to address cyber security by

investing in prevention and help Member States build resilience.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Albania is a Member of the Balkans community, a part of Europe that has had its share of troubled history.

Mention the word Balkans and I bet in everyone's mind come the images stained by bloody wars and brutal crimes. You would rightfully recall the scars of repression and oppression, genocide in Srebrenica, and brutal ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. **Nothing of this is or will be forgotten.**

Accountability has and will continue and we must double our efforts to guarantee its unhindered course. This requires a resolved

commitment to the ideals of justice and above all, cooperation between parties. Justice lies in the foundations of any effort for long-lasting peace, stability, and prosperity.

But justice is served with facts, with proof and evidence, not with fiction or distorted reality.

Let me give you a terrible example: in 2011, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted a report, compiled by a zealous parliamentarian, who goes by the name Dick Marty, accusing the Kosovo Freedom fighters of the despicable crime of organ trafficking.

Mr Marty should have been paid as a story teller, but never trusted as a rapporteur of the Council of Europe. His

report was shocking and not only many believed it then, but it became the key factor in establishing the Kosovo specialist Chambers. It also became one of the worst cases of distorted reality, the kind of manifesto for worldwide propaganda against Kosovo independence.

Every investigative effort was made during these long 11 years to prove these allegations, nationally, regionally and internationally. **To no avail.**

Nothing, not a single shred of evidence or proof was found anywhere, in Kosovo or anywhere else regarding alleged trafficking of organs. Yet, the Kosovo Specialist Chambers that were founded based on that report, have, as we speak, arrested without indictment Kosova's sitting president, Hashim

Thaci. He waited a year in detention until he was formally indicted and guess what? Not a single word of the entire indictment has anything to do with the CoE report on the alleged crime of organ trafficking. This is a monumental failure of international politics.

This is not about a person; not about a court procedure. This is about taking of the undue stain on a country and its history.

Nevertheless, exactly because democracy and its institutions have, among many virtues, that of repairing their faults and errors, we strongly believe that based on this crying lack of evidence whatsoever, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe will honor the truth and accept Albania's request to produce a follow up report and restore the

credibility of such an important international organisation as the Council of Europe.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I will say a few more words on the Western Balkans, not of the past but of the future, the one that we are working to build together.

Turn this region in any way you want and you will find a lot of fuel for divisions and toxicity.

But we in Albania have realised that the best way to advance is to do it together, with shared benefits as sovereign countries but close partners; as national players joined by a common enterprise; with our specific

interests as part of a common framework, the one that responds to our citizens.

This brought us together, with North Macedonia and Serbia to launch the Open Balkans Initiative, a platform open to all Balkan Countries, from Montenegro to Kosovo, from Bosnia to Türkiye, Greece and further, an investment for everyone, as part of the wider common European project. The best message of the Open Balkans is that you don't need to agree on everything, but by build a common path to the future you also deal with disagreements. While strengthening its relations with Serbia and moving forward together to boost bilateral and regional cooperation, Albania has not and will not move an inch from it firm position in support of the need for every country that has not yet done so, including first and foremost Serbia,

to recognize the Republic of Kosovo. It is high time to move beyond the current stalemate in the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia, and work bravely towards a comprehensive peace agreement by doing their respective part to adopt a EU/US backed breakthrough.

Dialogue is not just a better way; it is the sole and unique way to deal with issues however difficult they appear; however complex they are.

I remain convinced that Open Balkans will only help facilitate this process to the benefit of all: Albanians and Serbs; Kosovo and Serbia, but also for the entire region and the wider Europe.

Mr. President,

Despite all the worries and challenges that keep us awake at night, we should not lose hope, we should keep trying and renew efforts in order to put **universality** at the heart of what we say and what we do at the national, regional, and global levels.

More than ever, in today's shaken world, we need to commit ourselves to our fundamental universal values and acknowledge that we constitute a community of fate, despite our different national perspectives and interests.

Global warming will not distinguish between North and South, and the rise of the sea level will not stop at any shore. If the pandemic that shook the world to the core, has taught us anything, it is a very simple

lesson, that no one is immune until everyone is.

It is with this spirit that Albania acts in the region, in Europe, including here, at the General Assembly and in the Security Council, that the world expects rightfully to deliver, to stand up and save lives, to prevent and resolve conflict not to be paralyzed or held hostage.

As an African Proverb about the value of Community goes: **“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”**

This is what we all need today, to solve collective problems through collective efforts and partnerships.

Thank you