

**[Address by Šefik Džaferović, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, at the General Debate of the 77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, 21 September 2022]**

Mr. President,  
Secretary General,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my honor to address this esteemed body, as the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I congratulate Mr. Shahid on successfully presiding over the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. Despite the difficult working conditions caused by the pandemic, he worked dedicatedly with the UN Secretary General, Mr. Guterres, so that this body of the United Nations could carry out its duties.

I also congratulate Mr. Kőrösi on his election as the President of the 77th session of the UN General Assembly. You can count on the support and cooperation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in ensuring the productive work of this body.

Dear President,

At the recent sessions of the General Assembly and other international fora, we regularly assessed that the global order is experiencing tectonic changes. Today, however, we can conclude that the world has changed irreversibly. International relations that the security architecture of Europe

used to rest on, as well as the wider international framework, are now a thing of the past.

At a time when towns and villages in Ukraine are facing the terrifying reality of war, the least we can do is not to be silent about it. We must not be silent, especially in this building, the home of the United Nations, established with the aim of preventing and stopping what is currently happening in Ukraine. We must not be silent in Bosnia and Herzegovina either. We owe that to our vivid memories of the horrors of war and aggression.

The United Nations system, was unable to prevent or stop the war in my country in the period between 1992 and 1995. Unfortunately, that happened again with Ukraine. I am primarily referring to the Security Council here, the body responsible for the protection of international peace and security, in light of the principles defined by the Charter of the United Nations.

The Security Council, due to internal relations and blockades, is evidently unable to fulfill its obligations. However, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution on aggression against Ukraine by an overwhelming majority.

That resolution confirmed the undisputed principles of the Charter of the United Nations and other acts of international law, which prohibit the use of armed force. It orders states to resolve disagreements by peaceful means.

The resolution expresses support for territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. Unequivocally, it refers to the actions of the Russian Federation as aggression. It calls for the aggression to stop. Finally, it rejects secessionist moves of certain regions within Ukraine directed against its territorial integrity.

Bosnia and Herzegovina supported this resolution and stood on the right side of history, along with 140 other countries. This is in line with the obligations stemming from the UN Charter, our previously held positions and our obligation, according to the Stabilization and Association Agreement, to follow the foreign policy of the European Union.

Although this resolution does not have the power to stop the war, it does have the power to stop the lies. The clear and unambiguous language of this highest international forum extremely reduces the space for those who try to relativize the truth. The first step towards any solution is to tell and respect the truth.

I hope that there will be peace, as soon as possible, so that people in Ukraine can live normal lives and so that the displaced can return to their homes.

Respected President,

The war in Ukraine, as well as the consequences of the pandemic, led to drastic changes in all spheres of life. That is currently very visible in a deep energy crisis, inflation, a general recession and the threat to supplies, especially in the

food sector. We are all facing a very difficult and challenging winter.

Global market and international free trade enabled enormous progress in all corners of the world. Eradication of hunger, availability of consumer goods, and continuous economic growth in all parts of the world... those are all unquestionable benefits of global economic liberalization.

Globalization tightly connected various parts of the globe and made us interdependent. Strong economic, security and political interrelations produced an increasingly integrated global framework. Within that framework, everyone relies on one another in different spheres.

At the same time, this interdependence of different parts of the world is the source of the vulnerability of our global community. That became obvious during by the pandemic, when traffic and supply channels were blocked. It is also obvious in the light of the current crisis, related to the war in Ukraine. Due to the blockade of wheat exports from Ukrainian ports, developing countries in Africa and Asia are facing hunger. Large part of the European continent is facing an energy crisis, due to dependence on Russian gas.

As a result of difficulties caused by the process of political and economic integration, in the past years we often witnessed strong advocacy of political sovereignty and economic protectionism. Consequences of the transformation of developed countries from industrial to post-industrial nations, the migration and most recently the pandemic, lead many to

call for the construction of economic and even literal walls and wire fences.

That is a wrong path to take. The answer to the above problems is not closing. The answer is the opening. The solution is not less cooperation. The solution is the increased cooperation. The answer to the energy crisis in Europe, caused by dependence on a single source, is not only relying on one's own forces. The answer is in diversification, in finding new, multiple channels of gas supply and other energy sources.

No one in the modern world has enough resources to be self-sustainable. Past crises show that dependence on individual external sources is not enough either. We can only overcome those difficulties by increasing our international cooperation.

Respected President,

We live in unstable times, unprecedented in recent history. As we face an extremely difficult winter, we are aware of the destabilizing potential of the current economic and energy crisis.

20th century provides extremely valuable lessons about the correlation between economic crisis and right-wing populism. Nazi movement came to power on the wave of great economic depression. That led to the greatest cataclysm in the history of mankind. After that, the United Nations was established, the UN Charter was adopted as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and other UN acts.

The essential idea of the United Nations is the idea of the equality of all people, regardless of their origin, skin color, religion, national or other affiliation. All the previously referenced fundamental acts of international law are based on this idea. Modern civilization was built on that idea.

Today, almost eight decades later, we can hear voices openly or implicitly denying those fundamental tenets. Right-wing populists more and more often say that all people and nations do not have equal rights, that some are more valuable than others. It is becoming increasingly frequent that they openly advocate the ideas of ethnic and racial supremacy, and claim that domination and brute force are the only principles on which interpersonal and international relations can and should be structured. It only takes one step from those ideas to violence.

From this place, from the United Nations building, I call for caution and action. We will face enormous challenges in the coming period. We must fulfill our duty, and fight for civilizational ideas. At all costs, we must defend those ideas.

Respected President,

Bosnia and Herzegovina has been home to many peoples, cultures and religions for centuries. Our long tradition of multiculturalism is something we take pride in. We are proud of our Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Roma and other communities, as well as the culture of living together and

mutual respect that we have developed over the centuries. All those communities, individually and collectively, make the structure of the mosaic of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina. That is the way things are and that is how things will remain.

At the same time, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as a meeting place of cultures, was a thorn in the side of policies based on the idea of the impossibility of living together and the necessity of confrontation. Such policies led to the terrifying war in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1992 to 1995. That war culminated in the genocide in Srebrenica.

Resolutions from that period, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council, as well as the reports of the UN Secretary General and the judgments of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia qualify the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina as an international armed conflict in which neighboring countries participated.

The judgments passed by the Hague Criminal Tribunal conclude that joint criminal enterprises took place. The goal of those enterprises was the elimination of certain ethnic groups from parts of the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, so that those territories would ultimately be annexed to neighboring countries. This was the most serious violation of international general and humanitarian law.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has gone through an arduous peace-building process since the conclusion of the Dayton Peace Agreement. However, we still face numerous challenges. Some of the major challenges are certain policies in Bosnia and

Herzegovina and the neighborhood, which have never abandoned the war-time goals of dividing our country.

There are parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina that are part of the broad wave of right-wing populism in Europe. They openly claim that Bosnia and Herzegovina is not sustainable, because, according to them, it is not possible for Muslims and Christians to live together.

Muslims and Christians live and can live together. That life does have a perspective. What certainly has no perspective are retrograde policies that oppose such life.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has a centuries-old history and is a living example and proof of the civilizational idea that people of different religions, nations and cultures can live together. The fact is that Bosnia and Herzegovina, even despite the war aimed at its destruction, managed to survive. That shows the exceptional resilience of my country.

Majority of people in Bosnia and Herzegovina want to live in peace with their differences. There is enough strength for such Bosnia and Herzegovina to persevere. I am convinced that will be the case.

Respected President,

The experience of Bosnia and Herzegovina shows that the rule of law is a crucial factor of peacebuilding. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, formed by the UN, granted the victims the minimum of justice. It sent a message



to criminals that their actions will not go unpunished, and that they will be brought to justice and face the consequences for their actions.

Moreover, there were other international community bodies that made a huge contribution to the building and the protection of peace, primarily the Office of the High Representative and the Peace Implementation Council.

Both of those bodies were established on the basis of Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, which mandates the intervention of the international community in order to protect peace. The establishment of these bodies was also confirmed by the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. Consequently, the closure of those bodies is possible only following a new decision of the UN Security Council. It's not time for that yet.

Please allow me to remind you of international supervision that was present in some significantly developed countries, such as Germany, with even greater executive powers than the Office of the High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina. That supervision was ended after 45 years of existence, once the necessary prerequisites for that were created.

The Office of the High Representative and the Peace Implementation Council have been helping domestic political actors to implement reforms for the past 27 years. Through joint efforts, we managed to unite the three once warring

armies into a single Armed Forces. We also united the three intelligence services, tax systems, judiciaries, etc.

Thanks to those reforms and the existence of the Armed Forces and other state institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, even after the gradual withdrawal of 60,000 international troops from Bosnia and Herzegovina, the peace remained preserved.

The past year brought attacks against the 27 years of implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement. In particular, there was an attempt to disband state institutions established on the basis of the clear provisions of the Dayton Peace Agreement.

Thanks to the action of the Office of the High Representative and the Peace Implementation Council member states, led by the United States of America, the attack on state institutions was stopped and peace was preserved once again. That demonstrated the expediency and efficiency of the international community institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

There have been requests for the closure of the Office of the High Representative in the past. More recently, there were frequent requests that the High Representative take steps that would weaken the unity of Bosnia and Herzegovina and introduce additional ethnic divisions. According to the Dayton Peace Agreement and the UN Charter, it is the obligation of the High Representative to protect the sovereignty and

territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and not to contribute to its disintegration.

Respected President,

In addition to the civilian international presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is also the international military in the country, specifically the EUFOR mission and the NATO headquarters, with a total of 1,100 troops. Bosnia and Herzegovina is not special in that regard. Many more developed sovereign states need the presence of international military forces, in much larger numbers than is the case in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The international military presence was established by the Dayton Peace Agreement. UN Security Council confirms the EUFOR mission's mandate on an annual basis.

The Security Council will vote on the EUFOR mandate again in less than one month. It is very important for the stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region that this resolution is adopted. However, it is important to emphasize that in any case, according to the Dayton Peace Agreement, NATO has the right and obligation to deploy its forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Also, the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina has made decisions in the past giving consent to the presence of EUFOR and NATO forces without any time limits. Those decisions are a sufficient legal basis for the presence of an international military mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, until the

Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina takes a different position.

Respected President,

Bosnia and Herzegovina's foreign policy goals are membership in the European Union and NATO.

The June 2022 session of the European Council opened up the space for granting Bosnia and Herzegovina the status of a candidate for membership in the European Union, if certain conditions are met. Bosnia and Herzegovina has recently made certain progress in terms of fulfilling the 14 priorities defined in the Opinion of the European Commission on Bosnia and Herzegovina's application for EU membership. We fulfilled some of the said priorities in full, and some partially. I am pleased to say that, in the past weeks, we have continued meeting those priorities.

I expect that we will continue making even more progress after the general elections that will take place on October 2, next month. I also expect Bosnia and Herzegovina to be granted the EU membership candidate status as soon as possible.

Regarding our relations with NATO, Bosnia and Herzegovina is part of the Membership Action Plan. In terms of reforms that NATO expects from us, as an aspirant country, the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted the Reform Program, which is our annual obligation.

Respected President,

Regional cooperation is one of the foreign policy goals of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bosnia and Herzegovina wants good relations with its neighbors, with mutual appreciation, respect and also the principle of reciprocity. That is the only way to build relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Everyone in our region must understand that the geostrategic and geopolitical configuration of the region is completed. The path to security and prosperity is the path of mutual cooperation and solving the open issues, in accordance with the principles of international law.

We are all equal in the region. No one can dominate anyone else. We all need peace and stability.

Respected President,

The whole world needs peace and stability. All current disputes in the world should be resolved on the principles of international law, with the involvement of the international judicial institutions. That is why it is very important to strengthen multilateral mechanisms and institutions. Therefore, I believe that the strength and authority of the UN as a key multilateral mechanism must be fortified.

– Thank you for your attention.