

## STATEMENT

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General debate

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Mr. President,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

For more than six months, the world has been living in the "shadow" of the conflict in Ukraine. It is adversely affecting so many people on the planet.

The conflict like the COVID-19 pandemic that preceded it has once again laid bare the downside of global interdependence.

This session provides a unique opportunity to take stock of the situation.

Let us, in a very honest and unbiased manner, answer two questions. The answers to them – as well as the ensuing necessary action – is what all people around the globe expect from us, the UN Member States.

The first is what were the root causes of the conflict in Ukraine?

The second is what needs to be done to stop the conflict and prevent similar events from recurring in the future?

Mr. President,

We are convinced that the conflict in Ukraine stems from a wider geopolitical chaos, whose causes must be sought in the events that took place 30 years ago.

History teaches us that epoch-making wars that resulted in unfair and humiliating peace terms contained the seeds of future conflicts.

Let us take a look at what kind of peace was established after the end of the last epochal confrontation – the Cold War?

The so-called “winners”, apparently influenced by euphoria, did not consider it necessary to draw on examples from the past.

After all, they could have followed the path of Alexander I, Metternich and Castlereagh. These great peacemakers of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century effectively integrated their adversary into a new security system, the Concert of Europe, thereby bringing a lasting peace to Europe that would endure for decades to come.

Likewise, they could have taken inspiration from the pattern of cooperation established during World War II by the “Great Three Men” – Stalin, Roosevelt, and Churchill, who forged arrangements that significantly narrowed chances for great powers to wage wars against each other.

Notwithstanding, the Western policymakers of the early 1990s, unfortunately, chose the most inglorious and unpromising option. Namely, it

was the path of the 1919-type Versailles diplomats keen on trampling upon their principled opponent.

To begin with, the Cold War ended not even with an official treaty, but with some kind of "gentlemen's agreements" and declarations.

As the subsequent events revealed, the so-called "winning" side did not respect them. In fact, the arrangements stood as nothing more than a "Versailles 2.0".

The West showed itself selfish by offering to the post-Soviet states only one path, that of its satellites. In an effort to embed the status the West staked on the expansion of one of its key Cold War-era institutions – the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance. NATO's eastward expansion occurred despite the arrangements achieved with the West, including by the Soviet leaders. Furthermore, the West overlooked the legitimate security interests of both Russia and Belarus.

In this regard one cannot fail to recall the outstanding American diplomat George Kennan, whose foreign policy prophecies Western policymakers so much admire. The point is why they failed to heed yet just another of Kennan's famous warnings when in 1996 the diplomat had denounced NATO expansion as "a strategic mistake of potentially epic proportions?"

With its drive to enlarge NATO, the West has essentially trampled upon the indivisibility of security, the vital principle, which states that one party must not seek to achieve its own security at the expense of other parties.

The peacemakers in 1815 and 1945 well grasped that logic, whereas the world leaders in 1919 and 1991 refused to embrace it.

NATO's involvement in the illegal wars in Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya and Syria, in addition to the Alliance's attempts to encroach on some historical Eastern Slavic and adjacent lands predetermined for the Versailles 2.0. the fate of the first Versailles.

Therefore, it is the collective West that should fully bear the responsibility for the ongoing bloodshed in Ukraine.

It was exactly the West that made this conflict inevitable – not only through its decision to expand NATO, but also by its refusal to consider the proposals that came from its opponents. After all, such proposals did come.

The questions arises: what to do?

Indeed, in 2009, Russia invited all interested parties to sign a new European security treaty that would *de jure* wrap up the Cold War. The West rejected the proposal.

In 2017, it was President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko who came up with the idea to hold a global security dialogue and proposed Minsk as a venue for negotiations. The opponents let this initiative go unnoticed as well.

Last December, the Russian Federation has made yet another attempt to reach an agreement with the West on the issue of European security. As before, the West remained deaf to the new Russian proposal.

What explains this “rejectionist” stance by the West?

The key problem stems from the ongoing clash at the global level between the two incompatible visions of the world order – concentric and polycentric.

The West wants to establish a concentric or a unipolar world, ruled from one center and subordinated to the interests of a Western hegemon.

Most other countries, in turn, want to create a polycentric or a multipolar world, with no single center of control, in which no one imposes its visions, interests and values on others.

The West dominated the world for the past five centuries. Hence, it believes that it can go on with this kind of history indefinitely.

As for us, we are deeply convinced that the world has changed and that neo-colonialism in any form is no longer an acceptable and viable option.

Five centuries ago, when the West was just beginning its global ascent, the world came to witness the Copernican revolution of knowledge. That revolution took place, first and foremost, in the minds of people of that time, who found it difficult to come to terms with the postulate that it was not the Earth, but the Sun, which stood at the center of the solar system.

A similar "Copernican" paradigm shift must occur today. As was the case half a millennium ago, it must take place in the minds, too. This time around it must occur in the minds of the West's political mainstream.

The West must, at last, realize a number of truths.

First. International relations do not revolve around a single, namely, the Western center of power.

Second. The world's history has no end, because it is not an inexorable movement of all countries towards the so-called "liberal democracy".

Third. The world is a too complex structure as to reduce all its problems to a confrontation between the so-called "democracies" and "autocracies".

We have not seen that this kind of realization has registered with the West so far. What we have seen instead is the destruction stubbornly pursued by the West, including self-destruction.

Economic sanctions are almost the only tool in the West's foreign policy toolkit. One cannot fail to get an impression that the very fact the sanctions have been launched serves as an indicator of their effectiveness for Europe and the United States. And, in this sense what we witness is a substitution of concepts. The key objective has not been achieved, whereas the sanctions keep on living a life of their own.

What common sense does the West invest in economic sanctions it imposes against other countries?

Without any trace of hesitation, the goal has been stated loud and clear – to achieve a change of power through food riots.

This calculation has generally turned out to be a failure. Most countries have not joined the effort to implement the sanctions. Many states under

sanctions such as Belarus and Russia are to a large extent self-sufficient. Importantly, the sanctions have given us a powerful impetus to develop hidden internal reserves and reinvigorate regional integration.

Undoubtedly, we will weather the “storm”. We will survive in the same manner as the free-loving Cuba has been surviving illegal sanctions for more than six decades!

Nonetheless, the sanctions led to the two negative implications, which their sponsors could hardly have anticipated.

First, they reduced the supply of fertilizers and food from the countries under sanctions. As a result, those who suffer the most are the poorest people in developing countries. Suffice it to say that prices in these countries have skyrocketed by 300 percent over the last half a year, while Africa is facing fertilizer shortages to the tune of over 2 million tons.

Secondly, which is truly anecdotal, the sanctions, through a boomerang effect, hit the West itself. And, no matter how some may swagger today, ordinary people in Europe will have to freeze in the coming winter.

It is high time for Western countries to resort to common sense and return to dialogue and cooperation!

Even in the current situation Belarus stands ready to embrace dialogue and cooperation on equal terms, without any preconditions and pressure!

Mr. President,

Belarus speaks a lot about the conflict in Ukraine and takes every opportunity to do so.

We cannot do otherwise. The conflict is happening at our very doorstep. We are extremely saddened to witness how the fraternal Ukrainian people became a victim of the collective West's geopolitical games.

We are convinced that the origins of Ukraine's specific problems should be sought in 2004, when the West managed to carry out the first "colour revolution" in this country. The second revolution, a decade later, firmly secured the anti-Russia status for Ukraine.

Instigated by the United States and their allies, Ukraine has been exterminating the people of Donbass for eight years for no other reason than that the local people want to speak their native language, Russian.

But the West does not need Ukraine, neither as a member of NATO nor as a member of the European Union. The new patrons simply used it in their own "big game" against Russia.

Today, Ukraine is paying the price in blood because its politicians bought into this deception and disregarded the historical brotherhood of the three East Slavic peoples — Belarusians, Russians and Ukrainians.

But it's never too late to admit and correct mistakes!

For Belarus, which itself went through the genocide of the Belarusian people during the Second World War, it is unbearably painful to see the chaos in the neighboring country and the suffering of ordinary Ukrainians.

Ever since 2014, we have been making every possible effort to bring peace to Ukraine. It was Belarus that became associated with peace in Donbas when the Minsk agreements were adopted in 2014-2015.

Right after the outbreak of hostilities in Ukraine last February, it was the President of Belarus who managed to get the parties to the conflict sit down at a negotiating table, once again on Belarus' soil. Belarus hosted three successful rounds of Ukrainian-Russian negotiations, which opened up real prospects for bringing the conflict to an end. Unfortunately, this process has since stalled.

We remain deeply convinced that both a ceasefire agreement and a comprehensive strategic peace settlement around Ukraine in a broad context of regional and global security can be achieved only through negotiation. There is no alternative to talks! Otherwise, we will all get a new third Versailles.

As a neighbor and an affected country, Belarus should be part and parcel of a negotiation process and of final security guarantees.

Mr. President,

We very much hope that the tragic events in Ukraine will compel the collective West to realize rather quicker that changes in international relations are irreversible.

The sooner this happens, the sooner peace can be brought to Ukraine and other hot spots, and the sooner we can lay the foundation for a new just world order.

Moreover, as a crucial step in this process we view a global security dialogue in the true spirit of San Francisco, whose urgency the President of Belarus clearly stated as far back as 5 years ago.

We have consistently highlighted the key role of great powers in this effort. Unfortunately, we ought to ascertain that today they hear and understand each other poorly. There is not the slightest hint that they are ready to move away from the recriminations.

Perhaps the time has come for the countries representing the developing world to collectively take the lead on global security with all of the energy and dynamism, which they had displayed with great success nearly half a century ago in advancing the idea of a New International Economic Order.

We believe that exactly now the Non-Aligned Movement and BRICS, as well as the regional integration unions are on the rise to get involved directly in matters of global peace.

It is true that today, unfortunately, we do not have at our disposal a clear concept for safeguarding peace and security of our planet insofar as the world has become so complex a structure that a multitude of diverse challenges defy any framework of a single design. What is more, the mechanisms for neutralizing these global challenges that were put in place in the framework of

preceding geopolitical realities lag behind with adequate decisions or stall altogether.

The task facing today the whole of humanity's responsible part is to ensure that our civilization would not be destroyed while we transition to a new multipolar world order.

This is exactly what must be the area for our common priority action, including at the United Nations.

It is in this direction, provided we want to survive at all, where we must seek consensus and promptly forge new adequate response mechanisms.

It is for the sake of this objective that we must at once cease mutually destructive rhetoric and put an end to fatal total confrontation that leave no room for diplomatic efforts.

It is only up for world leaders with great responsibility to achieve this, for those who, in the figurative expression of Henry Kissinger, "possess a sense of direction and mission." Leaders of these qualities are bound to emerge on the world stage.

Our present state of mind was well captured by Martin Luther King more than half a century ago in the following phrase *Quote*: "We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now, in the unfolding life and history. There is such a thing as being too late." *Unquote*.

Let us act – lest it becomes too late!

Belarus, for its part, stands ready to play a role of a vigorously engaged and responsible stakeholder in security processes at the global and regional levels alike.

Thank you for your kind attention.