

77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly
Address of Mr Andrej Plenković
Prime Minister of Croatia
New York, 23 September 2022

Excellencies,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mister President (Csaba Kőrösi),

We have gathered this year as **a brutal war with a multifaceted and global impact continues** to rage in Europe.

The Russian aggression against Ukraine has upended the **rules-based order**, multilateral system and economic flows.

It has **brought about human suffering and refugee flows**, destruction of civilian infrastructure and war crimes.

The latest announcements about partial mobilisation in Russia, preparations for the organization for sham referenda in occupied parts of **Ukraine and nuclear threats** are another **dangerous escalation** in an already unprecedented crisis.

While Ukrainian people are suffering the most in their struggle to defend their homes, the consequences of the Russian **aggression are felt globally** and so it must be **condemned worldwide**.

Three decades ago, **Croatia itself was a war-ravaged** country in jeopardy, also facing **armed aggression**, almost a third of its territory **was occupied**.

Additionally, **we had to fight for international recognition** and were under an arms embargo.

The **Croatian people know** what it means to be under attack and what it takes to defend their homeland.

Against all odds, **Croatia and the Croatian people prevailed.**

Many **paid the highest price** for our freedom and liberty.

Stronger for its **own experience**, Croatia today is an **exporter of peace and stability**, a **humanitarian donor** worldwide, a popular tourist destination, and the country that produces the fastest electric car in the world.

Success is possible, if **one is determined** and has a **vision of the future.**

Precisely because of our own experience, Croatia **immediately and unequivocally extended support** and **solidarity** to Ukraine – political, humanitarian, economic and military.

To do otherwise would be a **betrayal of principles** and values we all hold dear, particularly respect for **human rights and responsibility** to protect populations from atrocity crimes.

This time around, **Europe and its partners** came together to stand up to aggression, show solidarity and **strengthen their own resilience.**

In October, we will **highlight this unity once** more in Zagreb, as Croatia prepares to host a first ever **Parliamentary Summit** of the Crimea Platform.

WITNESSING THE DEMOCRACY VS. AUTOCRACY DIVIDE

Ladies and gentlemen,

Croatia's transition was long and complex, but it was guided by a **firm notion that democracy**, human rights and respect of national minorities is the best way for Croatian society as a **whole to further develop** and **prosper.**

Today, **our democratic systems are challenged** by the **fallacious and dangerous thesis** that autocracy is ultimately a more **efficient and a pragmatic** way to govern.

Our **national dialogues are distorted by targeted disinformation**, fake news and hybrid attacks.

Our trust in **democracy is being undermined** from both within and from outside of our societies.

As fierce as these **challenges are**, **our commitment** to democracy, its **procedures and values** must remain stronger.

On the crossroad **between democracy and autocracy**, our **choice should remain** clear.

OUR COMMITMENT TO MULTILATERALISM AND RULES-BASED ORDER

In today's perilous moment, **Croatia remains a staunch supporter** of the international rules-based order and the United Nations at the **centre of global** cooperation.

Far from being ideal, this system with all of its flaws has still **enabled the world** to reach common ground and find some **remarkable and inspirational results** for **local and global issues** in the almost **eight** decades of its existence.

We live in a plurality of **simultaneous and** interconnected crises that affect us all.

In order to **overcome this perfect storm of crises**, we need determined action now.

First, **further erosion of our core rules and values** should be halted and reversed, respect for international law upheld and accountability ensured.

Second, we **should act to make our system** fit for purpose.

This is **particularly true** for the reform of the UN Security Council.

The **General Assembly intervened instead** and offered a **platform for an overwhelming majority** of states to **condemn the aggression** against a **sovereign and independent country**.

When the world is **facing a geopolitical crisis** of the scale such as the one in Ukraine today, we must ensure that our **policies and actions are predictable**, reliable and timely across the UN system.

Croatia's **adherence to promoting peace and security** is evident also by its continuous participation in the UN, EU and NATO peacekeeping missions and operations.

It is an **investment we are readily willing** to make.

ENSURING FOOD AND ENERGY SECURITY

Ladies and gentlemen,

As we were **beginning to recover from COVID-19**, the war in **Ukraine has dramatically** altered our perspectives and political agenda.

It **radically changed not only the security**, but also the **energy architecture** of Europe and it is **threatening global food security**.

We **must stand united and step up our efforts** in re-organizing the energy supply lines.

We cannot accept extortion, and we cannot be held **hostage over food and energy**, which all of us need.

We **applaud the Secretary General and the UN** for their role in brokering the deal to export Ukrainian grain.

On the regional level, Croatia is **contributing to energy security and diversification** by its liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal on the Adriatic island of Krk.

Beyond **ensuring its own needs**, Croatia is now able to supply its neighbours and other countries in Central Europe.

Simultaneously, Croatia is **investing in renewable energy** with third of our energy consumption and almost half of **our electricity production** already coming from renewables.

We are **ensuring a fair transition and preventing energy poverty**, implementing financial measures that benefit both the citizens and the business sector.

We must find a **global solution** to the price of gas, which threatens our households and our economies.

It is intolerable for a **minority of speculators** to enrich **themselves** in these times by imposing exorbitant prices.

What is more, we are also **witnessing an intolerable** imbalance in terms of **greenhouse gas emissions**: the richest 1% in the world are responsible for 15% of emissions, **twice as much** as half the poorest of humanity.

This is **not acceptable**.

It is up to **those who pollute the most** to provide the most effort: it is not only fair but also the most effective if we are to achieve our climate objectives.

Clean mobility and innovative technologies are an opportunity and new technologies such as **hydrogen offer** new horizons for **stronger cooperation** between Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

While we in **Croatia successfully passed the test** during the **pandemic and avoided social fracture** with tailored national measures, global inflation and the rise of prices **have to be tackled**.

We as a Government are **continuing our interventionist policy** to alleviate the burden of the energy crisis for our households and businesses, local governments and public institutions, schools and hospitals.

Similar to our efforts during the pandemic, we are now implementing a **strong national package** worth more than 6 percent of our GDP.

This includes financial measures, subsidies for vulnerable groups and limiting prices of basic food items.

AGENDA 2030 - CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY

Ladies and gentlemen,

Despite of **enormous current challenges**, we have a responsibility to **also safeguard our commitments** to the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Croatia **welcomes the ambitious approach** put forward in the UN Secretary General's report "**Our Common Agenda**" as a concrete roadmap towards its realization.

Here too a **revitalized global action** and political commitment is needed to **ensure effective multilateralism**.

By **integrating SDGs** in its National development strategy 2030, Croatia has proven its dedication to their full implementation.

As a **current member of ECOSOC**, Croatia will work closely together with our partners to ensure more sustainable, greener, inclusive and equitable societies in which no one **will be left behind**.

Ahead of the **COP27** (27th UN Climate Change Conference) **in Egypt**, let us evaluate the **implementation of our joint commitments** from Glasgow.

We need to strengthen cooperation in the effort to find mechanisms and financial resources to fulfil the Paris Agreement and to **continue the fight against climate change** on national, regional and global level.

CROATIA AND EUROPE

Ladies and gentlemen,

In the year in which we are marking the **30th anniversary** of our UN membership, Croatia remains constructive and responsible international actor.

In the coming months, **Croatia will join a group of only 15 other countries** which are at the same time members of EU, NATO, the Eurozone and the Schengen area.

This follows a sober and prudent decision in line with my Government's policy of **modern sovereignism**.

Through this policy, we have strengthened our international position by **pooling resources** with our allies and partners, furthering our **national interests** and tackling economic and social challenges.

Croatia also pays special attention to **Southeast Europe**, a region still not fully integrated into the EU.

This **region's stability, development and democratic progress** is not only in our, but also in Europe's interest.

We **support a clear EU perspective** for candidates and aspirants based on the fulfilment of well-established and clear criteria, the implementation of reforms and delivery of **tangible results**.

The **stability of neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina**, with which we share a thousand **kilometres long border**, is of **particular importance** for Croatia.

We would like **to see a prosperous and functional Bosnia and Herzegovina**, progressing firmly on the path to EU membership.

In light of the **current situation** in Ukraine and elsewhere, it is pivotal that **international law** and international treaties be respected.

This includes in **particular peace treaties** such as the **Dayton-Paris Accords**, which brought peace to Bosnia and Herzegovina as the multinational and multicultural **homeland of its three constitutive peoples—Croats, Bosniaks and Serbs**.

For the **cohesion, stability and progress** of the country, their **constitutional full equality** must be ensured and respected.

Given the fact that the **Bosniak political leaders** have **publicly admitted** they had **no true intention** to come to a deal over the electoral reform in line with the Constitutional Court verdict, the only way forward remains for **the High Representative Christian Schmidt to act**.

As a friend of Bosnia and Herzegovina, I call upon him to use his powers to ensure legitimate representation and **equality of Bosnian Croats** in the country's institutions following the 2nd October elections.

As the **least numerous** among the constituent peoples, the Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina **demand no favours, only equality**.

CONCLUSION

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are **mutually interdependent**.

Turmoil in one **region has consequences** for us all.

None of our national goals can be achieved without **solidarity and the rules-based order**, upon which not only our security, but also **our survival rests**.

We must **build, protect and defend**, and stand up to those who destroy, lie and loot.

As we **witness aggression and atrocities** on European soil again and as the rule of power threatens to bring the world order down, we owe it to future generations to be on the right side of history.

The international community must foster its unity and **stand with Ukraine** in the fight for its own existence.

We have to unite in our **respect of the international law**, as well as in **finding global solutions** for solving overlapping crises, including rising inflation, energy and food crises.

To achieve secure and affordable energy, we need a **global solution** for the gas prices as well as to ensure sustainable energy transition.

Our world has changed permanently.

In these new circumstances, more international cooperation has no alternative.

Let us **commit to work jointly** to the benefit of our common future.

Thank you.