

Prime Minister of Montenegro
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General debate of the 77th session of the United Nations General Assembly
New York, September 23rd 2022

Mr. Chairman,
Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my exceptional pleasure to address you today on behalf of Montenegro and to reaffirm and reiterate our strong, unequivocal support and commitment to the goals and principles, as well as the overall mission of the World Organization – the champion of multilateralism - particularly in these troubling times.

I would like to start by expressing our support for the election of Csaba Kőrösi (Čaba Korosi) as Chairman of the 77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, and wishing him success in performing this challenging and demanding duty. I assure you, Your Excellency, of the full support of the Montenegrin delegation during Your venture.

Likewise, allow me to extend our cordial gratitude to his predecessor, Abdulla Shahid (Abdula Šahid), for his impressive leadership and guidance in creating the necessary preconditions towards the fulfillment of the General Assembly mandate during the corona virus pandemic, but through other burdensome circumstances.

Mr. Chairman,

We commend your choice of this year's General Debate topic, as precisely a dilemma which should and will dominate our attention in the days ahead. An adequate reaction to the multidimensional consequences of the still ongoing pandemic, as well as unilateral behaviour of certain international actors, in order to achieve a sustainable and peaceful future, must have our full attention, the strongest of wills and resources. It is clear, however, what is the *conditio sine qua non* a peaceful and prosperous global society – multilateralism at its best and strongest, along with a more powerful role of the United Nations, which must be at the epicenter of international cooperation and global response. Indeed, the United Nations were created in order to offer solutions to challenges and to maintain international peace and security, standing behind what was achieved in San Francisco, so many years ago. Nevertheless, recent geopolitical developments have clearly demonstrated that our efforts have fallen short – we can and

must do more – not just more, but also better, if we are to preserve the rule based international order, as we know it.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The ongoing geopolitical crisis represents the gravest challenge for international peace and security since the creation of the World Organization. The unprovoked and unjustified Russian aggression against Ukraine, in addition to already existing turnmoils throughout the world, only adding to critical issues such as COVID-19 and climate change, plainly indicate the need to fully return to the provisions of the UN Charter, respect for its binding character and the universality of its goals and principles – civilizational values on which the rule based world order rests. We have to understand - the violation of territorial integrity and sovereignty of any state is a threat to all, which cannot and must not be tolerated.

The Russian aggression against Ukraine has resulted in almost total material devastation, human casualties and suffering on a large scale, which is why it must end immediately. The world ought to be united as ever before in defending democracy, human rights, the rule of law and ensuring peace and prosperity – but above all, preserving human lives. In this context, I would like to reaffirm Montenegro's clear-cut position in condemning Russian aggression and warmongering, and our support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, within its internationally recognized borders.

Russia's unjustified and unprovoked aggression against Ukraine poses not only a pressing threat to the rule-based international order, but to the global economy and food security, with far-reaching negative effects on all countries. We are facing yet a new crisis, especially in departments of basic foodstuffs, energy and finance, with the consequences of the Russian aggression taking its toll especially on those belonging to the most sensitive and vulnerable categories. The risks of social unrest and instability have increased significantly, making it necessary to demonstrate solidarity and unity, in the form of a revitalised and much stronger multilateralism, if we are to adequately address the existing negative impacts and prevent future crisis in a timely manner.

This kind of brutal use of force requires an immediate and an appropriate response. We call on the international community to vocally and continually express its condemnation and denunciation of this unprovoked act of warmongering, attacks on civilians, critical infrastructure and human rights violations. The onslaught we are witnessing represents a blatant and audacious violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, for which we seek and demand accountability.

In light of the aforementioned, Montenegro strongly supports the UN Secretary General's report "Our Common Future" - a historic opportunity to modernize and reform the global governance system, with a strengthened UN at the center of inclusive and empowered multilateralism. The Report comes at a critical juncture, when the world order as we know it is being jeopardized, and with Russia's aggression against Ukraine highlighting major deficiencies in the global governance system.

In the conditions of increase in violence and the threat of use of force around the world, it is high time we define a new and a more effective approach to peace and security, based on human rights and the fundamental principles of international law. Continuous violations of the UN Charter and international law, along with a culture of impunity and, concretely, in this case - Russia's ability to impede an effective response by the Security Council – illustrate the urgency of improving the means at our disposal in addressing the ever rising regional and global challenges. In view of these circumstances, we call for the Security Council, as the guardian of international peace and security, to be reformed in such a manner that it can fulfill its mandate in terms of getting to grips with growing unilateral behaviour, geopolitical tensions and rivalries. A step in the right direction would be a permanent mandate of the Security Council, which would make it possible to convene a session of the Council in conditions where a veto has been previously imposed. Furthermore, Montenegro also supports the banning of the use of veto in the Security Council in cases of massive human rights violations.

We very much welcome the initiative of the UN Secretary General to define a "New Agenda for Peace", with a stronger focus on prevention, through full implementation of diplomatic measures by the UN Secretary General, including the strengthening of capacities for mediation. Montenegro is firmly committed and determined to actively and constructively contribute and support collective efforts to preserve world peace and security. We strongly advocate for the role and work of the UN peacekeeping missions, which, nonetheless, must be more efficient and effective, their actions aligned with the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) agenda and the A4P+ implementation plan, and guided by viable political strategies in order to contribute to the improvement of political solutions to conflicts, all based on respect for human rights and freedoms. Our political commitment to peacekeeping operations and their effective mandate, especially in the area of civilian protection, was once again confirmed through the support for the Secretary General's Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) and the A4P+ implementation plan.

The new agenda for peace will require stronger cooperation on prevention and fight against terrorism, violent extremism, transnational crime, trafficking, hybrid attacks which include the instrumentalization of migrants and refugees, as well as cyber attacks. In addressing these challenges, our actions must be fully aligned with

international law and international human rights law, along with a strong commitment to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. Responding after the outbreak of a conflict or crisis is often not enough, or not timely enough. It is in this domain precisely that we must pay more attention to prevention – prevention of conflict, radicalization and violent extremism. In order to achieve such a goal, it is necessary to work on building fairer and more inclusive societies which will offer equal opportunities for all, and to protect marginalized and most vulnerable groups, primarily women and youth.

The multilateral disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control architecture is being tested by Russia's aggression against Ukraine as we speak, dictating the need for its strengthening in order to prevent further deterioration of the global security environment.

Montenegro is devotedly committed to the fortifying, full implementation and universalization of the multilateral regime for disarmament and non-proliferation, and to that extent, the promotion of the universalization and full implementation of the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Montenegro continues to be a responsible and reliable agent in efforts to achieve sustainable peace and security, which presupposes collective and focused action of the international community. Guided by that postulate, we actively participated in the last month's 10th Review Conference of the NPT, representing the very foundation of the global non-proliferation regime. In this changed, significantly compromised perspective of the global security regime, fueled by the unjustified and unprovoked act of aggression of the Russian Federation towards Ukraine, it is of paramount importance to reaffirm international norms related to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, considering the potentially catastrophic consequences of nuclear incidents for people and the environment. In this regard, the situation at the Zaporozhye nuclear power plant is of great concern to us, which is why we underline the importance of allowing unhindered access to the IAEA experts to this and other nuclear power plants in Ukraine, in order to ensure compliance with IAEA safeguards and the application of the verification regime in all nuclear reactors. The prerequisite for getting back on track to control nuclear power plants in Ukraine however, is for the Russian Federation to return control of the nuclear facilities to the Ukrainian authorities.

Montenegro will continue to support multilateral instruments in the field of chemical and biological weapons, with the aim of preserving the international ban on their use and eradicating the culture of impunity for the use of these type of weapons. Along these lines, and of no less importance, we remind on the necessity for supporting the application and strengthening of instruments and regimes in the field of conventional arms control.

Efforts to preserve peace and security are closely related to the ability to address other global challenges – eradicating poverty, reducing inequality and injustice, addressing the climate crisis, biodiversity loss and ecological degradation, promoting global health, gender equality, universal social protection and decent work for everyone, respect for human rights, democratic principles and the promotion of the rule of law and responsibility.

With the COVID-19 pandemic still ongoing, the achievement of sustainable development goals is very much in doubt, while the triple planetary crisis and the impact of Russian aggression on all parts of the globe indicate the need to strengthen resistance to future shocks and ensure a sustainable, fair and inclusive recovery. The increase in global food insecurity and malnutrition are loud reminders of the need to create sustainable food systems and achieve climate resilience, especially in the most vulnerable parts of the world. Russia's aggression has brought instability and an increased risk of fragmentation of the international community, with ever intensifying severe socioeconomic consequences of the conflict. Food insecurity, limited access to energy and rare raw materials due to trade disruptions, as well as macroeconomic consequences such as high inflation and rising debt levels affect many countries around the world, making it virtually impossible to achieve our common goal of building a better world by 2030.

The commitment of the Government of Montenegro to the systemic and strategic internalization of the concept of sustainable development, the achievement of sustainable development goals and the implementation of Agenda 2030 is unequivocal and, as such, represents one of the pivotal principles of our work. We are proud of the fact that Montenegro is one of the first countries to integrate Agenda 2030 into its national normative framework, more than six years ago, by adopting the National Strategy for Sustainable Development until 2030, along with the Action Plan for its implementation. All 17 goals and 169 tasks of Agenda 2030 are systematically and institutionally treated through the implementation of defined economic and social policies, aimed at generating economic progress, evenly developing all parts of our country, preserving our natural habitat and enabling the prosperity of all citizens, based on the truly transformative "leave no one behind" principle.

Montenegro's position in the context of sustainable development is also strategically reflected in our foreign policy actions. Along these lines, as a member of the UN Economic and Social Council for the period 2020-2022, we actively contribute to the additional improvement of the actions and activities of the UN in this domain, and we remain a responsible and reliable partner in joint efforts to keep a set of the most relevant economic, social, humanitarian and environmental topics high on the UN

agenda. We are particularly proud to point out the fact that at the recently held High-Level Political Forum, in July, here in New York, Montenegro presented its Second Voluntary National Report regarding the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, thereby introducing the results and challenges our country faces in the context sustainable development policy. With this, we once again demonstrated our firm intention to jointly build our communities based on the principles of sustainable development, convinced that sharing good practices and lessons learned in this area represents the most effective way forward. The presentation of the Voluntary National Review, for the first time after six years, is an important experience for Montenegrin society, and the analysis, in addition to the presentation of what was done previously, also maps important segments that ought to be paid attention to in the following period in order to stay on track of sustainable development.

The triple planetary crisis I mentioned previously - climate change, loss of biodiversity and pollution - represents an existential threat to people and the planet and must be urgently addressed since it threatens sustainable development, deepens existing vulnerabilities, and the realization of human rights and global peace. The latest report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warns of the irreversible impacts of global warming, noting that climate change could soon overwhelm our and nature's ability to adapt – unless we reduce emissions quickly.

The international community needs to do significantly better in the fight against climate change, which has cataclysmic, often irreversible effects on our environment. Montenegro, to the extent of its influence on these processes, responsibly contributes to the control and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Although our country has a very small greenhouse gas emission per capita (0.009% of the global level), we are taking important and bold steps to promote post-pandemic recovery based on green development and the use of ecologically clean technologies.

We are particularly proud to point out that we have achieved the set goal of reducing the emission of gases that cause the greenhouse effect by 30% (compared to the reference year 1990) - already in 2018. Encouraged by this success, the next goal is to reduce the emission of these gases by 45% through new activities in the area of improving industrial technologies, implementing energy efficiency measures and increasing the share of energy originating from renewable sources. The most significant investments in the Montenegrin economy in the previous multi-year period were precisely in the field of energy, and today we are investing significant efforts in further improving program budgeting and improving the coordination of international funding sources. Along these lines, in order to allocate additional financial resources for the continuation of the energy

transition, Montenegro continues to cooperate with international climate funds, such as the Global Environmental Facility, the Green Climate Fund and the Adaptation Fund.

Respect, protection and exercise of rights are the basis of a free, prosperous and a sustainable society. As a member of the Human Rights Council for the period 2022-2024, Montenegro will continue to strongly promote and defend the indivisibility and universality of human rights, gender equality, democracy, good governance, the rule of law and the fight against corruption. Aware of the importance of the activities of civil society and human rights defenders, we will tirelessly advocate for increasing the space for their unhindered activities. Additionally, we will support the UN Secretary-General's new vision for the rule of law that places people at the center of the justice system. Indicating our commitment to equality and non-discrimination, we will continue to fight against discrimination on any basis.

In relation to the full enjoyment of the rights of women and girls, we emphasize the need for stronger prevention and eradication of all forms of sexual and gender-based violence. In an increasingly unstable world, which is particularly conditioned by violence and conflicts, the protection of civilians, including women and children in armed conflicts, is a byproduct of the activities of Montenegro, especially as a member of the Human Rights Council. We also highlight the importance of addressing new challenges for human rights, such as hybrid threats, technological development, climate change and environmental degradation, and the intense consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Transitional justice and accountability for serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, especially through the operation of the International Criminal Court, must be strengthened, especially bearing in mind the war suffering in Ukraine. In this context, we call on transferred support to the ICC, full respect of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and provision of unhindered access of humanitarian aid to the affected population. We need to work on eradicating the culture of impunity for committed crimes, and seek and demand accountability for which has been done.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted gaps in the world's ability to respond quickly to global health crises and highlighted the need for a stronger and more inclusive global health architecture, with the World Health Organization at the center. A key lesson learned from the pandemic is that the current multilateral framework for global health is outdated and that we need to invest significantly more in global health security capacity to be better prepared for the future. In addition to fighting the current pandemic and vaccinating the population, while ensuring timely, affordable and equal global access to

vaccines, the ultimate goal remains improving universal health coverage and building strong and resilient health systems in all countries. Montenegro will therefore support negotiations on a legally binding convention, agreement or other international instrument to strengthen pandemic prevention, preparedness and response within the World Health Organization.

Excellencies,

Montenegro, proud of its century's old multiethnic and multiconfessional tradition, remains steadfast on the course of a Euro-Atlantic future, good neighborly relations and multilateralism. We are on our way of becoming a part of the European community - which needs to include the entire Western Balkans region - because we are, and always were - Europe.

We are resolutely and continuously adopting and implementing reforms in various spheres, all with the aim of improving the quality of life and creating a state tailored to the needs of a man. Being a geographical part of Europe, as well as values and principles wise, we are convinced that only acceleration of integration processes and a stronger incentive of our EU partners can be a barrier to the malignant influence of third parties. Promoting and investing in stability and prosperity of the Region is, undoubtedly, an important asset and contribution to the overall security and stability of Europe.

At a time when we are witnessing a negative trend of strengthened unilateralism and protectionism, and increasing deviation from multilateralism, Montenegro has no dilemma. Even more motivated and more determined, we remain unwaveringly committed and devoted to international unity, based on universal values and principles of the UN Charter, with a World Organization capable of providing an adequate response to global crisis, challenges and threats.

To conclude, dear colleagues,

We are at a crossroad in history, as so many times before. And, as so many times before, I am certain that we will only come out stronger. The very core principles of international law that the United Nations stand for are being not just threatened, but essentially nullified. We cannot act as innocent standbys and quietly watch as this is happening in Ukraine. We must rise to the challenge, raise our voice and stand up for those in need, and show that these principles are not subject to interpretation and relativization, but that those who violate these principles must be held accountable.

I would like to use this grand stage to once again call on Russia to stop its hostilities in Ukraine, unconditionally withdraw its army from the Ukrainian territory and return official Kiev control over the occupied areas. Please, stop this needless war. Too many people have already lost their lives. Too many people have had their homes destroyed, and forced to flee their country. This must not happen in the 22nd century. This can not be a heritage we leave for the future generations. We need to give peace a chance.

I thank you for your attention.