

***Address by H.E. Dimitar Kovachevski,  
Prime Minister of the Republic of North Macedonia***

***General Debate - 77<sup>th</sup> UN GA Session:***

***New York, 24 September 2022***

Dear President of the United Nations General Assembly,

Dear Secretary General of the United Nations,

Dear Heads of State and Colleagues- Heads of Government,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The best and strongest tactic is unity. A lesson that sport players already know that a united team can achieve much more than a single player, is a lesson that the world of today is learning in unanticipated circumstances in the XXI century: first the pandemic, and now the cruel war in Ukraine. Now and in the future, the democratic world needs unity in overcoming the globally spread consequences that countries in Europe and worldwide are facing.

As of the start of making joint and united efforts in response to the start of the war, the Republic of North Macedonia immediately and decisively aligned itself with the European Union foreign policy and that of the democratic world. We joined global efforts in response to the war as a country committed to peace and to finding dialogue-based solutions, as a country fully dedicated to European values. In doing so we relied on our own experiences and lessons learned according to which peace, strength and progress can be achieved only with unity. We learned this lesson both

when we peacefully declared independence in 1991 and in 2001 when we rose above the internal inter-ethnic conflict, while today we rely on our experiences in pursuing our established concept of “One society for all”, setting thus an example of a functional multi-ethnic democracy, while being a significant factor of stability in the Western Balkans and consequently in Europe, as well, which on its part makes us a reliable partner of the international democratic community.

Functional solutions, solutions that work in a small area always serve as a roadmap to finding solutions in the global setting. No matter how many challenges arise in a given wide geographic area, they do erupt in a certain smaller area, becoming then a potential global threat. That point of eruption today is an independent and sovereign state – Ukraine, whose citizens are faced with an unacceptable and unjustifiable aggression by the Russian Federation.

There are two especially concerning aspects, which demand our full attention. One of them is related to the fact that a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council committed the aggression – the Russian Federation. The fact that a country has decided to resolve a challenge using force despite being a member of an organization, which is founded on the commitment to preserving world peace runs contrary to all endeavours and commitments of the civilized world to putting an end to all forms of actions which cause loss of human life and jeopardize the global peace. Furthermore, the demonstration of force by a geographically larger country against a geographically smaller country, which is committed to fostering and sharing democratic values, is a dangerous and impermissible precedent. In simple terms, everything must be done in order to prevent that this become a practice in this world we share, where there are geographically smaller and bigger countries.

As we can see problems are multidimensional and affect us all. These are challenges we all face, in the most severe winter we have ahead of us since World War II: to ensure availability of food and energy for our citizens.

Therefore, we must search for solutions acting in unison.

Response or solutions to interlocking challenges is the essential topic of this debate, i.e., that solutions are to be found in solidarity; solutions must be sustainable, and science based.

Speaking about sustainability, I believe we should take into consideration another bitter experience from the war in Ukraine. The struggle for peace is on-going and peace necessitates continual dedication to mutual understanding, vigilance, and prompt reactions.

Dear Colleagues,

Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I should like to convey a clear message from my country: the unprovoked aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine is a gross violation of the United Nations Charter and of international law norms and principles. The aggression cannot be justified or be relativized. The Russian Federation must put an immediate end to the aggression and withdraw its troops from Ukraine. History teaches us that no problem can be resolved by using force. Putting an end to the aggression is the necessary precondition in order to open the only feasible way of finding a solution and that is diplomacy and dialogue. The latter can and must be the sole mechanism for settling disputes and resolving differences between countries.

The uncertainty of food and energy supply will deepen differences at the global level between the rich North and the poor South and will bring millions of people at the brink of their existence, even being threatened with hunger. We will all feel the impact, both economically more developed and economically less developed countries. We must rely on lessons learned from the pandemic, i.e., international solidarity is not to be guided by the fact whether solidary is needed among better developed countries or is required among less developed countries. This especially if we want to prevent the rise of new challenges ensuing from the growing dissatisfaction of citizens in global terms.

The pandemic reminded us all that we are all equal when faced with a common, in this case invisible enemy that took millions of human lives worldwide. The pandemic also brought to light the importance of solidarity and unity, transposed into concrete intentional cooperation. These are the principles that should guide our future actions when facing present and future challenges.

In the specific context of overcoming the consequences of the war in Ukraine, it is necessary to double the efforts in enhancing international

solidarity and mutual assistance on equal footing, both in the European Union, where the Ukraine war impact is of the largest scope, by also worldwide. This particularly applies to finding viable solutions to overcome challenges relating to energy supply, but food, as well. In this context, I would like to underscore the important active role of Secretary General Guterres, as well as of Turkiye mediating in the exports of wheat from Ukraine.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Developments in and surrounding Ukraine have pushed numerous other conflicts worldwide in the background. However, the focus on such conflicts must remain sharp. Terrorism in all its forms is still a global threat jeopardizing the entire humanity. Numerous hybrid threats cause great concern and distress. Fake news and the possibility provided by social networks, i.e., by internet communication that such news is spread on a mass scale is a challenge facing the entire democratic world. Authoritarian tendencies, disguised under the veil of disingenuous patriotism pose a serious threat to human rights and freedoms and prompt potential instabilities. We also face the burning climate change issue, despite all endeavours for putting up a joint and united front in saving our Planet Earth. The recent catastrophic floods in Pakistan are but one of the last visible consequences in the series of extreme natural disasters worldwide, occurring due to climate change. Losing biodiversity, air pollution and the lack of water impose themselves as priority threats, not only against the environment and ecosystems, but also against people's lives. And such a situation will persist until every individual becomes fully aware that nature is not ours, but is part of us, and we should treat it as such. All these problems demand concerted actions, founded on intensified and consolidated efforts that would be focused both on prevention and on finding solutions.

Conflicts, instability, violence, climate change cause the spread of grave poverty for millions of people, as well as displacement of population, which is growing into an exodus. Emigration waves we faced in past years coming from Syria and Afghanistan are not winding down. Now we also have millions of refugees from Ukraine.

The Republic of North Macedonia opened its doors to citizens of Ukraine, who forced to flee their homeland sought refuge in our country. This is a good opportunity that we dully commend countries worldwide that received the largest number of refugees, as well as substantial number of citizens

throughout the world who work every day to provide care for refugees and help those in need. My country, the Republic of North Macedonia, using its available capacities, remains committed to honouring international commitments in the humanitarian area. In order that we successfully deal with and manage immigration of diverse types, it is necessary to strengthen the awareness that it is a matter of a global challenge, which necessitates coordinated activities in pursuance with the shared responsibility principle.

Dear Colleagues,

We learn from experience that no problem is a minor problem. Every minor problem has the potential of growing into a more difficult and larger scale problem. However, our coming together these days at the seat of the United Nations serves as a good reminder that strength and solutions can be achieved by uniting ourselves in support of genuine values. Multilateralism and respect for established rules and obligations, starting with the United Nations Charter are the only way of providing the much-needed predictability in international relations.

We are building our future now, today, and together. Despite all deficiencies of international mechanisms, multilateralism, and the United Nations, as its most visible and recognized form, having the universal mission of preserving the peace, are still the key importance catalysts encouraging joint efforts towards better, safer, and more just world.

Global challenges require global response. No country could deal with XXI century problems acting on its own. Now, more than ever, we need to demonstrate that multilateralism works and gives results in times of crises. In this context, the Report "Our common agenda" by Secretary General Guterres is to be our roadmap in pursuing global governance reforms, which would open the way for the UN multilateral central system to adapt to the future and be able to contribute to joint endeavours.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of course remains the starting point in pursuing global actions. This Agenda not only addresses chronic and persistent problems of poverty and inequitable development, but it can also serve as a platform for finding solutions to all other problems, starting with the necessity that we unite standing behind a new agenda for peace, while placing the human dimension in the focus of technological development in the digital era.

The Republic of North Macedonia works intensively to accomplish the Millennium Development Goals and supports all efforts aimed at making the United Nations stronger and more efficient.

In pursuing the Millennium Development Goals, as well as other development activities in the national, regional, and global settings, we need to ground ourselves on the supposition that we owe it to young generations to provide them with conditions for progress.

Young people, their access to modern forward-looking education and resolution of problems they face must be the centre of our attention and of our political engagement in the coming years. In this respect, I should like to emphasize that for the second consecutive year a youth delegate from the Republic of North Macedonia participates in the work of the General Assembly.

Dear Friends,

On 1 January 2023, the Republic of North Macedonia will have the honour of taking over the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the largest regional security organization. This brings great responsibility, especially taking into consideration that my country is taking over the OSCE chairmanship at times when there is a military aggression in Europe, along with all ensuing consequences for the peace and security in the OSCE area and wider. Yet, I am confident that we will successfully justify the trust bestowed upon us. North Macedonia, has sometimes been the beneficiary of mediation-security mechanisms, including the United Nations peace mission and has had first-hand experience with the benefits of peace building efforts of the international community. Relying on such experience we stand ready to contribute to strengthening and developing the security in the wider context. As the 2023 OSCE Chair, we will be fully committed to the noble mission of serving peace and security, as a precondition for economic and social development and I am confident that we will contribute to advancing multilateral security mechanisms.

Our confidence is based on our practices of living together in unity and the related benefits in the national, regional, and international setting. Today I am representing before all of you a country in which all ethnic communities have equal constitutionally guaranteed rights and obligations. We are working to make the Republic of North Macedonia a civic, democratic society in which differences are regarded as an enriching advantage, and

not as an obstacle. Standing united, as a multi-ethnic functional democracy today we are a successful example of a mini-Europe on the Balkans. However, having in mind the significance of mutual understanding, respect, and support, which prompt and motivate unity, working together with our two neighbours, Albania, and Serbia, we have established the Open Balkan Initiative. Today, this Initiative has grown into a successful example of regional inter-connectivity. It has also contributed to our shared commitment to removing unnecessary barriers for movement of people, trade, transport of goods and provision of services. In the present circumstances the Initiative has enabled us to ensure availability of food for our citizens, based on our agreement to help each other if faced with lack of food on our respective domestic markets, as a consequence of the global crisis; we have furthermore agreed that there will be no bans on trade in basic agricultural and food products. We are also intensively considering options for cross-border trade in electricity and providing assistance with various energy sources, as part of our effort to overcome the serious energy situation the entire world is facing. We are also developing good-neighbourly relations with a keen sense of responsibility and by way of dialogue, convinced that safeguarding national and state interest does not run contrary to wider-scope integration processes and advanced cooperation with countries in our neighbourhood. Quite the contrary, self-affirmation finds its most relevant and appropriate reflection in a wider community of shared values. Guided by these policies of building bridges, while employing functional diplomacy, dialogue and understanding we have succeeded in accomplishing the strategic goal of becoming part of NATO and today we are a proudly-fledged member of the Alliance. After long 17 years since we were granted EU membership candidate status, we have started accession negotiations with the European Union. My country attaches particular importance to our speedy EU integration. We work with dedication and persistence to undertake all steps required for the accomplishment of my country's second strategic goal. I would like to underscore that the EU membership of the Republic of North Macedonia is of essential importance also for the European Union itself, especially in the new circumstances in the global context, in which such a message of encouragement, i.e., that the enlargement process continues and awaits the entire Region, which no matter the progressive leadership, is not immune to global challenges. This especially in conditions in which the European integration and democratic path of Western Balkan countries should and must be ensured, as a contribution to European peace.

The story of my homeland, the Republic of North Macedonia, which two weeks ago celebrated 31 years of independence is a story of peace, cooperation and understanding, employing which it was established, while dealing with challenges and overcoming threats both for our internal stability and on our way to international integration. Thus, I should like to underline that we are solution oriented, working together in facing challenges that do not recognize state borders, ethnic, linguistic, religious or any other differences.

Dear Friends,

Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am especially honoured and pleased that as the Prime Minister of the Republic of North Macedonia, I have had the opportunity of addressing you for the first time here at the United Nations, the Organization that is the guardian of peace, solidarity, and prosperity.

I would like to offer my appreciation to Mr. Abdulla Shahid, President of the 76<sup>th</sup> General Assembly for his successful work. I am confident that Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, who took over the Presidency of the 77<sup>th</sup> General Assembly will be equally successful.

The pandemic and the war in Ukraine have brought to light human weaknesses or fragility even in this modern XXI century. Yet, as the pandemic has also demonstrated the power of human endurance and resilience, i.e., the power of innovation and the capability of science to quickly produce the necessary vaccines, humanity must also continue relying on science and keep believing in its humanistic foundations and capabilities and peace.

We are all in the same boat and we have no other choice except to treat each other with solidarity and work in unity defending and advancing fundamental values of freedom and peace throughout the world. Peace is reached by making compromises, but peace is preserved with mutual understanding.

Thank you for your attention.