

**Elements for a Statement by President of the Republic of Serbia Aleksandar Vučić at the General Debate of the 77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly**

**21 September 2022, New York**

**Main theme: „A watershed moment: transformative solutions to interlocking challenges“**

Esteemed President of the General Assembly,

Distinguished Secretary-General,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me a great honor to address you on behalf of the Republic of Serbia.

Due to limited time, please do not mind if I skip the burden of formality, courtesy words, greetings of those who are present in this room or absent, and instead speak directly about the essence of what we gathered here.

I've been so many times in these premises. The seriousness of the present moment obliges me to share difficult, but true words with you.

Everything we are doing here today seems impotent and vague. Our words make hollow and empty echo compering to the reality we are facing. And that reality is such that no one is listening to anyone here , no one strives towards real agreements and to resolving problems, and almost everyone takes care only of their own interests, breaching often along the way the basic principles of international law; throwing away the UN Charter and other documents this Organization is founded on.

It is neither fault of Antonio Guterres nor of anyone from UN, but of those powers who take care of nothing else but of meeting their own political, economic and unfortunately military goals.

We are witnesses that the age we live in is featured by complexity of global geopolitical situation. Our General Debate is being held in terms of undermined world peace, to the extent that has not been seen ever since the World War II and since the time the United Nations had been founded. Global challenges we are facing are threatening to radically change international security architecture and jeopardize established international legal order. Such complex times demand a lot of wisdom and unity, in order to preserve peace as the absolutely most important heritage woven into the foundations of the United Nations Organization.

That is why I would like to speak clearly and accurately before you about five key challenges we are facing today:

Point 1: Returning to peace and preservation of global stability;

Point 2: Preservation of territorial integrity and sovereignty of internationally recognized states, members of this Organization, as a key principle of international public law and relations between the countries;

Point 3: Energy security in terms of global crisis;

Point 4: Financial safety of the poor and developing countries;

Point 5: Food supply in terms of global supply chains interrupted by war.

Current global developments remind us more and more often that the principle of peaceful resolution of disputes has no alternative. This principle is outstanding today more than ever before and it is best described in the UN Charter Preamble which reads as follows – “to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors”. Denial of use of force and peaceful resolution of disputes are the pillars of world stability; but they must be accompanied by principles such as non-selective

observance of the UN Charter, implementation of mandatory UN Security Council Resolutions and basic principles of the applicable international public law.

Point 2: Preservation of territorial integrity and sovereignty of internationally recognized states, members of this Organization;

Serbia supports territorial integrity of all UN member states, including also territorial integrity of Ukraine. In such a way, we behaved responsibly and seriously in this renowned institution. Nevertheless, we could hear from many speakers the stories about aggression and violation of territorial integrity of Ukraine. Many say that this was the first conflict on the European soil after the World War II. But, the truth that the territorial integrity of a country in Europe- Serbia as a matter of fact, which did not attack any other sovereign country, was violated is constantly unspoken. We ask for a clear answer to the question I've been asking my interlocutors, leaders of many countries for years – what is the difference between the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine and sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia, which was grossly violated, and for which you provided international recognition and legitimacy? Nobody has ever provided a rational answer to that question.

Let me remind you – Serbia has not stepped its foot on someone else's territory, nor has it endangered territorial integrity of a single sovereign state, so that anyone might intervene or carry out aggression against it, the way it was done in 1999. Nevertheless, it did not prevent NATO from attacking a sovereign country without the decision by the United Nations Security Council. Signing of the Agreement with NATO – upon termination of armed conflict – whose provisions envisaged adoption of the UN Security Council Resolution 1244, and which confirmed and guaranteed partial sovereignty and full territorial integrity of Serbia, did not prevent many western countries from unilateral recognition of independence of the so-called “Kosovo” and from violating, once again, territorial integrity of our country. Precisely for such developments that Serbia experienced and that is has been experiencing, I am convinced that I am fully entitled to quote, in this place, the words of great Martin Luther King: “Injustice anywhere is threat to justice everywhere”. These words are carved like a reminder, but as a warning to all of us.

Regardless of the fact that we still feel the consequences of the gross violation of basic provisions of international public law, we do not give up on United Nations foundation principles. We shall keep advocating consistent observance of the principle of inviolability of borders, respect for sovereignty and integrity of all other UN member states. Despite such position of ours, many in this room have issues with respecting territorial integrity of Serbia. You wonder why? Because they have the power is in their hands, and in their eyes, we are small and weak. However, as you could hear, we do have the strength to tell the truth here.

Your Excellencies,

We owe special gratitude to all those UN member states – and they currently constitute majority at this Assembly, who support territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia, particularly in the space and territory of Kosovo and Metohija. It is additionally encouraging that number of countries who support Serbia's position increased in period between two sessions, which is a trend that must continue, because it is of utmost importance to remain loyal to basic principles woven into the UN Charter, such as the principle of inviolability of borders.

The Republic of Serbia, and I as its President, search very patiently and with a lot of good will for compromise regarding Kosovo and Metohija under the auspices of the European Union, and within Belgrade-Pristina dialogue. It is a difficult process, it has been lasting for more than ten years, but we see no alternative to it. It is better to negotiate for hundred years, than to wage war for a single day. I hope that we will reach mutually acceptable solution, based on compromise, because this is the absolutely only way for reaching our goal, which is a long-lasting peace, as a

prerequisite of prosperous life for Serbs and Albanians in our region. We have exhausted all other options and, and speaking for Serbia, at least, we do not even dream about going back to the paths of conflicts and bloodsheds. The Balkan region could not stand another conflict. I rely on good will and understanding from our international partners, because they know well that some earlier decisions by their governments had been bad and that they had not been acting in favor of the future of our region and world peace. Belgrade is running this process under very complex circumstances with elements of hybrid war and dirty campaign in part of international community against our country, in different fields. It would be enough just to remind you of the quotes and allegations of world media that Serbia would attack its neighbors and that Serbia was a threat to regional stability. Of course, it has never happened. And it was only one among numerous lies against the Republic of Serbia. Serbia was featured as a potential destabilizing factor in the region, only to be prevented from telling the truth- that the principle of inviolability of borders must be equally applicable to all. Serbia was and it will be a factor of stability in the entire region. Serbia, despite many untruths and forgeries supports Dayton Peace Accords, territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina and integrity of Republika Srpska within Bosnia and Herzegovina.

On the other hand, we are convinced that the nations of the Balkans do have the capacity to continue their lives in the future as friends and partners with common vision of membership to the united Europe. I know this well, because we have already surpassed many barriers that had been standing between our nations for years and that had costed us thousands of lives and wasted future. Serbia and Albania, for example, today have the closest and the friendliest relationship in the entire several centuries long common history in the space of the Balkan Peninsula.

It took only clear-headed and pragmatic discussions about our future, not about our past. To talk about how to resolve problems that were bothering our people, our

companies, workers, students and entrepreneurs. We had discussed a lot and reached, by ourselves, numerous solutions that have already cancelled barriers that existed between us for no rational reasons. First of all, in economy, trade and flow of people and capital. Serbia, Albania and North Macedonia have been implementing for three years “Open Balkan” Initiative, which has a clear vision - to open the region for the people, goods, services, capital and companies, in order to create the space which would be permanently liberated from tensions and conflicts. In addition to unquestionable common economic benefit that this Initiative brings, it has a broader dimension, first of all in connecting people with different cultures and in promoting diversity, which, by all means, contributes to general development of society in this part of Europe. In this way, Serbia, actually continues contributing to peace, stability and reconciliation process in the region, whereby it certainly gives significant contribution to global security.

We found the inspiration for the respective in words of one of the greatest diplomats in history and a great UN Secretary General Dag Hammerstad that this Organization “wasn’t created to take mankind into paradise, but rather, to save humanity from hell”.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The moment we curbed the global pandemic, we have already faced new, unprecedented challenges for this century. While we, as a mankind, take one step at a time in accelerated technological development, there are existential problems ahead of us such as energy security, financial safety of the developing countries, but also distortions in the supply chains of the basic food provisions. Solidarity which had been necessary in fighting pandemic is needed to a far greater extent today, when people’s basic necessities for food and energy are endangered.

The Republic of Serbia thinks of its energy security as of the inseparable part of the national security and as the key prerequisite for the continuation of economic development and progress of our country. We strive to provide the continuity of energy supply, but we share the concern for current geopolitical challenges that undermine the energy stability in the world and Europe. We remain committed to finding solutions that might have the transformational strength in attempts to reach regional and European energy safety. I would like to underline that the Republic of Serbia managed to preserve continuity in energy supply during the ongoing crisis. Nevertheless, we remain vitally interested in diversifying supply sources, in additional investment in energy infrastructure, but also in faster and more efficient development of capacities based on renewables.

It is precisely at the United Nations where we named the ongoing decade the “decade of more sustainable and resilient future, action and transformation.” It has to remain like that, but at a bit faster pace! Unequal development, but also financial perils in the developing countries, cause additional social layering and inevitably bring new antagonisms. Equal development must neither be limited nor conditioned either geographically or politically, but it must be provided to all people regardless of ethnical, racial, cultural and religious affiliation.

There is another, very important challenge ahead, which we must overcome together, and it is finding the most efficient way to avoid consequences of the current international crisis inflicted on global food supply security. Developments are highly alarming, and the reality is such that all of us, with no exceptions, are struck by them. Food supply security could be endangered in our part of Europe, and situation on continents, such as African one, threatens to be devastating. Growing prices of food and its availability have become an additional problem. Task for all of us is to find operational and efficient solutions that will leave no one behind. It is up to us- states-

as the most important international subjects, to involve individually in coordination of measures, first of all by contributing to this noble task at national levels, in order to preserve the most valuable things- human lives and their dignity.

The topic of this year's General Debate warns us to the preciousness of a moment and relatedness of international challenges. Crises we are facing remind us of the importance of open communication. It does not take much wisdom to conclude that challenges can be successfully overpowered only if their causes are properly observed. We are witnessing that any problem ignoring and lack of communication between the countries makes the situation only more complex. Serbia believes that it is imperative that current challenges must not deepen world divisions in any way, and that already obvious and intentional polarization at global level should make room to principles of multilateralism

I would like to underline that the Republic of Serbia take part in collective efforts for reaching sustainable development goals and implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Serbia shares Secretary General's vision in future of global cooperation in a way envisaged by "Our Common Agenda" and it strongly supports inclusive, networked and efficient multilateralism as the best tool for responding to the most urgent challenges for the mankind.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Multilateralism, collective actions and common responsibility are irreplaceable elements of our discussions so far, but allow me to underline that starting point for each such constructive engagement is solidarity.

Finally, I would like to reiterate that the Republic of Serbia will continue being a reliable partner in achieving common goals defined within the UN framework, firmly believing that it is the best path to create world for us and generations to come. But we must not forget that the United Nations are as strong as we respect commonly harmonized decisions and documents of this Organizations.

Thank you for attention.