

ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA,

H.E. BAJRAM BEGAJ

THE 78TH SESSION OF THE UNGA

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Dear Mr. President,

Your Excellencies,

I am honored to speak in front of you today and express my deep appreciation for the United Nations General Assembly. This assembly serves as a unique platform for global cooperation and offers hope for a better world.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to President Francis for his election and convey my best wishes for his continued success in leading this assembly.

I would also like to extend my warmest regards to Secretary-General Guterres for his continued efforts for peace in the world and for his standing firm in defense of the UN Charter, International Law and human rights in face of so much adversity of our times.

His leadership fosters trust in the United Nations.

Rebuilding trust and reigniting global solidarity is more than ever a necessity for reconciliation, good understanding and more cooperation. It is the only way we can face today's common and global challenges that are not just affecting the present, but also risking the future of the next generations.

And it all should begin by assessing regions and countries based on their contributions rather than their failures.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Since 1955, when Albania became a member state of the United Nations, a lot has changed. From a self-isolated country, Albania now proudly stands as a NATO member and has initiated accession negotiations with the European Union.

Currently, Albania is concluding its first term as a non-permanent member of the Security Council and this month we are productively chairing this UN body for the second time.

As part of the Western Balkans, Albania continues to make unwavering contributions to peace and stability in this region.

Albanians play a crucial role in Southeastern Europe. We constitute the large majority in two independent Republics, Albania and Kosova, we form a constitutive minority in North Macedonia and Montenegro, and significant minority in the Southern part of Serbia.

Throughout our history, Albania has adhered to a policy of friendship and good neighborly relations. We remain deeply concerned by the recurring crises that reoccur from time to time regarding the relations among its neighbors.

Both Albania and Kosova have consistently championed peace over tension and conflict, and we remain committed to this path.

We hope to be recognized for our contributions and not let our endeavors be overshadowed by opposing narratives.

In this context, Albania supports the difficult yet ongoing dialogue between Kosova and Serbia, facilitated through careful mediation by the European Union and strongly supported by the United States.

At the same time, Albania remains sensitive to Kosova's integrity and prosperity.

Kosova has managed to heal many deep wounds from the tragic past.

The rights of the Serbs in Kosova reflect the European norms and values, and the same should apply for the Albanian minority in the Presheva Valley, in southern Serbia.

Unfortunately, we still remain concerned about the passivation of their residential addresses and the absence of substantial investments and economic incentives in that region.

Kosova has demonstrated that pain need not breed hostility; it can translate into understanding and support.

Yet, Kosova still awaits recognition of its independence by many countries. I hope that these countries will soon acknowledge Kosova's contribution to a fairer and more peaceful global community and grant Kosova the recognition it deserves.

RECOGNIZE KOSOVA'S INDEPENDENCE!

Excellencies,

Albania, despite being a small nation with a young democracy, has history marked by wars it did not choose and dominations it did not seek nor accept.

While these are painful memories, they have also imparted invaluable lessons.

It is precisely because of its history that Albania places great importance on international law as its foremost defense. We firmly embrace the principles of the rules-based international order, where relations among nations are founded on respect rather than sheer power. This commitment is why we have consistently and unequivocally condemned the military aggression against Ukraine, and we will continue to do so.

Despite our size, Albania has been actively engaged on the international stage, both regionally and globally, in the pursuit of peace and security.

However, we recognize that sustainable development is an integral component of achieving international peace and security. On the other hand, meaningful sustainable development is unattainable without a foundation of genuine peace and security.

The unprovoked and unjustified Russian act of aggression against its neighbor sadly speaks louder than our words. This absurd and malicious war has directly and indirectly affected various dimensions of sustainable development, not only for Ukraine and the region but also for the entire globe.

This senseless war has disrupted trade, caused economic instability, destroyed infrastructure, including transport networks and industrial facilities, and diverted attention and resources away from addressing shared development challenges and implementing the 2030 Agenda.

The war in Ukraine has strained regional stability and affected cooperation among countries. It has highlighted geopolitical tensions and strained diplomatic relations, hindering international collaboration on sustainable development initiatives.

The spillover effects of the war, including displacement, migration, and economic and security concerns, as we have witnessed, can have global ramifications that impede progress toward achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Ladies and gentlemen,

Albania welcomed the SDG summit called by the UN Secretary-General and the political declaration adopted. It is a milestone in reenergizing our joint efforts and commitments to achieving the 2030 Agenda.

We firmly believe that the success of the SDGs lies in our collective efforts to address challenges that hinder sustainable development. Collective efforts mean the urgent need for decisive action to better support developing countries.

Albania acknowledges the imperative for reforms and stands ready to work alongside the international community in ensuring an enabling environment that allows developing countries to actively participate in and benefit from the global economy.

I would like to emphasize that Albania is committed to reducing domestic poverty and inequality levels by 2027 and 2030, in line with our nationally determined climate contributions. We recognize the need for comprehensive policy commitments to drive the necessary energy, food, digital, and social transitions to achieve these benchmarks.

Aligning our national budgets with the SDGs, mainstreaming gender equality, revitalizing public sector capacities, and strengthening our data and monitoring systems are among the foundational actions we prioritize.

Albania recognizes the significance of this session as a pivotal moment for our world. It is an opportunity to shift from fear to hope and from deepening pessimism to accelerated action. We are committed to playing our part and collaborating with the international community to ensure the successful realization of the 2030 Agenda.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would also like to bring to your attention Albania's position on one of the most debated issues today, that of multilateralism.

Today's critical challenges show that universal reason is the only way out. We recognize that peace is indivisible: we cannot secure peace on the back of people who perish in war. No one can truly have lasting peace until everyone has it.

Albania also recognizes that human rights are indivisible: we cannot ensure basic rights for all if we select one subset of rights and ignore the rest. The suffering caused by torture or famine is hard to distinguish—it is unacceptable and unnecessary suffering that can be eliminated if we embrace all, civil, political, socio-economic, and cultural rights.

Albania is a candidate for the Human Rights Council in the upcoming elections next month. If elected, we will champion human rights in their broadest sense. This includes women's rights, children's rights, minority rights, and the fundamental right to equal opportunities. We will work with other countries to protect, promote, and defend human rights and freedoms as a vital condition for individual and collective development and prosperity.

On the regional front, we eagerly anticipate the upcoming EU-Western Balkan summit in Tirana this October. We are committed to transforming our region into an example of trust and partnership that transcends borders and communities.

Multilateralism is central to our collective endeavors. It is, above all, a vision of how states should cooperate to achieve better results for everyone. Fundamentally, it is about expectations of acceptable behavior in the future.

Multilateralism in a normative key requires us to consider not only whether existing arrangements are effective or efficient but also whether existing multilateral practices and processes are fair and just.

It is high time that we engage unconditionally, fully, and in good faith to achieve meaningful reform of this house, with the Security Council at its core. No state, government, or individual can be above the law.

Albania supports the reform of the United Nations and its main bodies, with the aim of strengthening the Organization's ability to address the current emerging challenges and threats to international peace, security, and development.

The power of the Security Council rests in its capacity to intervene decisively in the service of peace and security.

The question nowadays should no longer be whether the Council can interfere in the domestic realm of states or not. Rather, the question should be how the Council can intervene in an intelligent, reflective, and timely manner in the service of the values and mandate for which it was created.

Dear Excellences,

Since gaining independence in 1912, my country has undergone significant territorial transformations. Presently, Albania boasts captivating urban and rural landscapes that I wholeheartedly encourage you to explore.

I mention this not merely to extend an invitation to Albania, but also to underscore the importance of territorial transformation that lies before us.

In the face of climate change, this challenge runs as a red thread through the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

I hope that my country and our nations can effectively address this challenge by safeguarding our natural resources and cultural heritage. Our approach should involve respecting the diversity of these resources and collaborating with communities engaged in both environmental causes and cultural preservation efforts.

I firmly believe that this approach reinforces democracy —a political system uniquely capable of ensuring sustainable and fair development.

It is in such a world that our younger generations can find joy and prosperity.

Our collective efforts can pave the way for them to tell a story of successful collaboration.

One that centers around us and this esteemed organization.

Thank you very much for your kind attention!