

Check against delivery!

STATEMENT

BY

H.E. MR. RUMEN RADEV, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

AT THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 78TH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

MR. PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY,

MR. SECRETARY-GENERAL,

EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

Allow me at the outset to congratulate Ambassador Dennis Francis for his election as a President of the 78-th UNGA Session. I believe, Mr. President, that your able guidance will lead us to the answers of the pressing challenges the humanity is facing.

Today we live in a world of increasing risks and uncertainty. The resurrected ghost of self-destruction, as a result of the full-scale war in Europe, is a nightmare that my generation wrongly believed to be bygone phase in human history. War, conflicts and terror challenge the future of our civilization. So do the higher level of socioeconomic distress, the growing food insecurity, the disruption of chains of supply and the rise of the inflation rates started during the Covid-19 disaster. After the weakening of the pandemic, the hopes for rearranging the broken societal and economic links brought some optimism, but then the war in Ukraine blazed out. It exacerbated all these crises of various kind and destroyed not only thousands of human lives, but also the optimism that we are able to build back better.

The systematic erosion of democracy and human rights and the rise of authoritarianism, are completing the picture. The consensus that the humanity may live according to the rules of internationally adopted world order, is blatantly violated. These rules, that have been forged in this green marble UN hall, are now vehemently contested. All these negative developments are about to distract our attention from the challenges that may turn to be equally deadly for the humanity. The triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution threatens the life on our planet. All these risks and challenges must be addressed in full consciousness that the future of our civilization is at stake.

The first mission, that the leaders must see as their historical vocation at this crossroad for the humanity, is to rebuild trust in multilateralism and to uphold **the rules based international order**. This order must serve the firm will of the peoples to live in peace. This is the fundamental precondition to survive and to embark on the path of building prosperity. Restoring peace and security is our most pressing priority.

It has been 19 months since a permanent member of the Security Council unleashed a war of aggression against its neighboring country, violating the principles of the UN Charter and international law. From the first day, Bulgaria strongly condemns the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. Every day of this war threatens the global peace and security.

Moreover, it has turned into a war of attrition, challenging the economic and social development worldwide.

The last events show an increasing risk of spillover in the Black Sea region, affecting countries neighboring Ukraine. An important priority of the 78-th UNGA Session should be to find modalities that may pave a way towards restoring the peace in Ukraine. What we need is stronger political will, diplomacy and active talks about comprehensive, just and sustainable peace, based on the internationally recognized UN's principles.

Bulgaria is deeply concerned by the decision of the Russian Federation to withdraw from the **Black Sea Grain Initiative**. The bombing of the Ukrainian harbor infrastructure and the restriction of navigation in the Black Sea, leads to further escalation of global food insecurity, especially in the Global South where the price of the war is particularly high.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The maintenance of the international peace and security faces challenges all over the world. The attention is to Ukraine because this conflict has a growing potential to turn into global. Nonetheless, we have ever been deeply concerned by the victims of each and every war and conflict. Human lives are equally precious all around the globe.

The Middle East and the use of violence in the Israeli-Palestine conflict are a source of great concern. We call all parties for refraining from the use of force and for resumption of direct negotiations conducting to fair and sustainable two-state solution.

The political solution to the ongoing conflict in **Syria** marks the only way ahead. Bulgaria maintains its unwavering position in support of the unity and sovereignty of **Yemen**. We support the international efforts for peaceful solutions and humanitarian assistance for the entire region.

On **Afghanistan** we emphasize the importance of preventing terrorist threats and irregular migration. We strongly condemn the Taliban's actions worsening the human rights situation, especially of women and girls, of ethnic and religious minorities and human rights defenders.

My country is a strong supporter of the European path of the Western Balkan countries as the most effective way for stabilizing the region. Good neighbourly relations, comprehensive reforms and fulfilment of accession criteria are the core of integration process.

Bulgaria is a staunch supporter of further strengthening of the global **nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation** architecture. We call for dialogue among nuclear weapon states on confidence-building. Russia's suspension of its participation in the New START Treaty is a cause of great concern. Its intention to deploy nuclear weapons in Belarus undermines the strategic stability and the overall security architecture. We call on Russia to prove its commitment to the January 3, 2022 Joint Statement on Preventing Nuclear War and Avoiding Arms Races. We call on Iran to come back to its obligations under the JCPOA and DPRK to stop challenging the international non-proliferation agreements.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The SDG Summit is a vital opportunity to get the implementation of the 2030 Agenda back on track.

Access to financing and strong partnerships between the UN and International Financial Institutions is a key to achieving sustainable development. Bulgaria is actively participating in focusing their activities on effective financial support for all the countries in need.

The Global Digital Compact should harness the potential of the digital technologies to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs. Our digital future and Artificial Intelligence should be guided by a human-centric and pro-innovation approach, based on human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Bulgaria welcomes the adoption of the **political declarations** at the **three Health Summits** during this High-level Week. These documents of high-political commitment will foster the One-Health approach, thus contributing to the strength of the national health systems and the global health architecture.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a setback in the realization of the 2030 Agenda, especially in education. We support the Vision of the SG for the creation of learning societies, for recognizing education and lifelong learning as a public good, and we stand ready to deliver on the commitments made at the **2022 Transforming Education Summit**.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

These days we spoke a lot about peace among nations but we need as well making peace with the nature. Climate change is a threat multiplier and mitigating it is essential. Decisive climate action is a pressing global imperative and a test for the ability of the multilateral system to respond. **The Climate Ambition Summit** today is an important occasion to foster our joint commitments on the run up of **COP28**.

Urgent action is crucial to halt and reverse biodiversity loss. Bulgaria welcomes the recently established **Global Biodiversity Framework Fund** and the adoption of the Agreement under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. Sustainable water management is critical to the achievement of the entire 2030 Agenda.

This year we celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This remarkable document is a powerful enabler of equality, fundamental freedoms and justice. Bulgaria remains a firm supporter of the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and of the UN Human Rights system at large. Strongly committed to further advancing the human rights agenda worldwide, my country has presented its **candidature to the Human Rights Council for the period 2024-2026** and will strive to ensure their wide support and successful implementation.

As **Co-Chair of the Group of Friends on Children** Bulgaria consistently advocates for the rights of the child and this issue ranks high among our priorities as Member of the UNICEF and UN-Women's Executive boards. Investing in children's health, nutrition, education and protection from violence is crucial for responding to the 2030 Agenda's basic principle of leaving no one behind.

My country consistently emphasizes issues such as **gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, promoting the rights of people with disabilities, fight against discrimination and hate speech**. This year Bulgaria also commemorated 80th anniversary of the rescue of the entire Jewish population of my country counting 50 000 people during the Second World War. This remarkable episode of our modern history inspires us to continue efforts to affirm tolerance and understanding as core values of modern democracy.

Excellencies,

Taking into account the increasing challenges to the fundamental principles enshrined in the UN Charter, and in particular for the international law and the rules-based international order, Bulgaria welcomes efforts towards increasing transparency and accountability of the Security Council and

is among the co-sponsors of the landmark UNGA resolution on the use of the veto. While the Veto Initiative empowers further the General Assembly, the real **reform of the Security Council** remains a difficult and sensitive issue. Bulgaria would like to see the Council being more effective in the performance of its primary responsibility. Allocating at least one additional non-permanent seat for the Group of Eastern European States in the future reformed Security Council remains a priority.

Thank you for your attention.