

Dear President of the General Assembly,

Dear Secretary General,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At this Assembly and in other global forums, we hear many words spoken about the challenges we face: from the rising intensity of armed conflicts to the devastating effects of climate change.

We discuss the task of providing for a growing global population with limited resources and exploited ecosystems.

We debate the opportunities of emerging technologies that can transform our lives. But they can also trigger the destruction of our democratic way of life.

These challenges have one common denominator. They are human-made. And it falls to us to deliver human-made solutions. The time for talking, discussion and promises is over.

This General Assembly must start with the ultimate purpose, for which the UN was founded: restoration of peace.

Last year, we recorded more conflict-related deaths in the world than in any year since 1994. Russia's illegal and brutal full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Slovakia's direct neighbour, has greatly contributed to this rise.

One man can end this senseless war almost instantly: the Russian president. Instead, for more than 570 days, his forces have been killing innocent Ukrainian civilians, kidnapping children and destroying towns and cities.

They bomb infrastructure and ports that export Ukraine's grain to those who need it in Bangladesh or Egypt.

We cannot allow Russia to turn the Black Sea Grain Initiative into its own Blackmail Initiative. To hold millions of vulnerable people hostage and turn Ukraine from the world's bread-basket into Europe's basket case.

Slovakia is increasing its transit capacities to bring Ukraine's grain to where it is needed. But the volumes which could be exported by sea are much higher. Moscow must let the grain leave Ukrainian ports.

In this Assembly, and the Security Council, we cannot claim to stand for peace or global food security while turning a blind eye on those who undermine it.

Yes, we need a new Agenda for Peace, as the Secretary-General rightly said but first and foremost, we need action for peace from Russia as a permanent member of the UN Security Council.

Excellencies,

The Climate Ambition Summit starts today but when it comes to our planet, the time for action is running out.

Our cities are becoming warmer, our oceans more acidic and our land arider. This is a result of human-caused climate change. This summer gave us another preview of what we can expect if we sit on our hands.

Scientific report after scientific report makes the same conclusion: we are not doing enough. The current pace of reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and our mitigation measures will not prevent the 1.5 °C rise in global temperature by 2100. Globally, our emissions still exceed our Paris targets.

We can still prevent the worst-case scenarios but global emissions must peak before 2030.

That is seven years from now. This is our responsibility: not that of the governments that come after us. To see results seven years from now, we must all act today.

Let us turn this ambition into our joint and global commitment. Feasible, effective and low-cost options for mitigation and adaptation are already available. They can speed up our green transition.

In Slovakia, we are doing our share. 85% of our electricity is already produced with zero emissions. In the next seven years, we will use 5% of our GDP to decarbonise our economy and increase the use of renewables. In 2030, our emissions will be 55% lower than in 1990.

Europe might be warming twice as fast as any other continent but Africa, while responsible for less than 4% of global emissions, is the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

Working together as partners, we can solve this challenge. The already existing green technologies must be available to everyone. Slovakia will continue to meet its obligations under the global climate finance commitment.

My final remark on climate change is simple. We need to wake up. We are not battling an external threat. This is not a meteor heading for Earth. This is an existential crisis that we created – and we alone must solve.

Excellencies,

These crises hit hardest those who are least responsible for their creation: vulnerable populations, women and children or the poorest. No peace and prosperity can be achieved if they are excluded.

Our collective wealth allows us to provide dignified conditions for everyone on this planet but today, halfway to 2030, only 12% of the Sustainable Development Goals are on track. These targets are not advisory guidelines – they are the benchmark for creating a world built on fairness, equity and stability.

75 years ago, we adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Human dignity, freedom, justice, or the rule of law must be universally protected.

This is even more important today when new technologies promise to unlock huge potential in areas such as public health, connectivity or addressing climate change.

However, technological progress is sometimes moving faster than the evolution of human minds and emotions. The rapid rise of social media platforms and the related flood of disinformation and hate speech prove this.

Platforms have removed barriers across the globe, linking people like never before but they have also destroyed barriers that protected the rights and integrity of others.

Any technology must be used with one goal in mind: that of the dignity and rights of every individual.

If not addressed, social media platforms, artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies can act like steroids for the current crises. That is why we cannot postpone their democratic regulation.

Facts and science are essential to overcoming our global challenges. The Covid-19 pandemic illustrated this well. Disinformation is undermining our efforts to build consensus and a common vision.

If humankind continues to build alternative truths and distrust each other, we will never be able to take the actions needed to address these universal challenges.

In my final words to you, let me leave you with a message of hope. When I meet Slovakia's young people, I am left with great optimism for the future. Data shows, that for them, equality is the most important societal value.

We should listen to our children and work on achieving a vision of humankind where equality is the rule, not the exception. Where development can be sustainable and climate-resilient. Where we can live in peace.

They are looking to us for actions. The cost of our joint failure is not an abstraction. It will count in concrete deaths, displacement, injustices, and the loss of species and ecosystems.

We politicians are often asked about our legacy. My question to all of you is this: should this be our legacy? For me the choice is clear. Our response should be clear as well.

Thank you.