



CROATIA

Statement by

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at

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General Debate

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- Check against delivery -

Mister President (Philémon Yang),
Excellencies,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentleman,

- Today, we stand united in the face of unprecedented global challenges.
- From the proliferation of conflicts and deteriorating geopolitical situation to climate crises and food insecurity, the world is at a critical juncture where every nation, regardless of its size, plays a vital role.
- Croatia's journey over the past 34 years has been a testament to resilience and determination.
- Emerging from conflict and building a modern, progressive state, we have positioned ourselves as active contributors on the global stage.
- As we convene here, Croatia brings not just its experience but a deep commitment to fostering peace, advancing sustainable development, and upholding human rights as fundamental values rooted in our history.

PEACE AND SECURITY

Ladies and gentlemen,

- We live in a world increasingly ablaze.
- As a country that has endured conflict and the painful process of post-war recovery, Croatia understands first-hand the value of peace, security, and international solidarity.
- Our journey from a nation affected by aggression to a contributor to global peace efforts equips us with a unique perspective.
- The lessons we have learned — about resilience, reconciliation, and the importance of upholding international law — shape our commitment to promoting peace and security worldwide.

- In a world facing intensifying crises, from Ukraine to Gaza and Sudan, Croatia stands firm in its belief that every nation has the right to self-determination and protection under the UN Charter.
- The Russian Federation's brutal aggression against Ukraine continues well into its third year, trampling all tenets of international law.
- While Ukrainian civilians continue to die and suffer, the largest active nuclear power plant in Europe is also at risk.
- This undermines all principles of nuclear safety and may bring about catastrophic consequences with cross-border impact.
- All Member States of the United Nations have the right to be independent and their people must be free to choose their own path.
- They must not depend on their neighbour's permission, nor should they be left alone to succumb to a neighbour's military aggression.
- In that vein, we will not tire in our support to Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity and in our assistance, and we call upon all to do the same.
- At the same time, the looming threat of a wider conflict in the Middle East is evident.
- The heinous terrorist attack on Israel on 7 October horrified us.
- So did the unspeakable, continued tragedy since endured by the Palestinian civilian population in Gaza, where tens of thousands were killed, wounded or maimed.
- Whatever historical or present grievances, continuing down this path will not bring a lasting resolution – only more death and destruction.

- We call for the immediate and unconditional release of all remaining hostages and on both sides to engage in genuine negotiations to end hostilities and prevent further escalation.
- The Middle East and its people deserve a better future. The rest of the world as well.
- The wars in Ukraine and Gaza are overshadowing the immense humanitarian and civilian catastrophe unfolding in Sudan.
- This is even more alarming considering the context of increasing fragmentation of the security architecture in many parts of the African continent.
- Reversing this trend should be seen as a priority by all of us.
- We must not leave Africa behind. A continent where half of the population is younger than 19 should and must be seen as a source of hope for humanity, not as an afterthought.
- The UN Charter is not just another document we can simply and easily replace.
- The world's constitution must be upheld more than ever before.
- Reinvigoration of effective multilateralism with the UN in its centre must not be reduced to a phrase we use on occasions like this.
- In the same vein, we must not falter when it comes to strengthening international arms control, disarmament and the non-proliferation architecture.
- This is essential not just to avoid conflict, instability or even greater tragedies, but to reduce the already heightened risks of escalations – either deliberate or as a result of a misunderstanding.

- Extremist and terrorist groups and their affiliates continue to pose a severe threat around the world, leaving no society safe.
- Their continued expansion in various regions and the increasing level of violence they resort to only remind us that countering and preventing terrorism requires long-term commitment as well as continued, coordinated efforts of the entire international community.

PEACEBUILDING

Ladies and gentlemen,

- As a country that proudly hosted, supported, and enabled the success of the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia (UNTAES), rightly considered by many as the most successful peacekeeping mission in the history of the United Nations, and which managed to join NATO just a decade after the departure of the last UN peacekeeper, Croatia knows all too well the meaning of peacebuilding, its significance, and the efforts it requires.
- As this year's Vice-Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and last year's chair, Croatia supports strengthening the links between the three pillars of the UN – peace and security, development and human rights.
- There is no peace without sustainable development and no sustainable development without peace.
- There is little time left to strengthen our focus on prevention - at all levels.
- For the Peacebuilding Commission it means to focus more on structural prevention through national prevention strategies, and operational prevention – by sending flexible civilian missions upon a country's request.
- The 2025 Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture will be a crucial moment to strengthen the PBC and to broaden its mandate to give it some decision-making powers. You can count on Croatia's active participation to share its experience and in view of its candidature to be again a member of the PBC in 2026.

- Croatia is also proud that today, a Croatian company is a global leader in robotic demining, and we are actively supporting Ukraine by providing our expertise to assist in the clearance of mines and unexploded ordnance in conflict-affected areas.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, CLIMATE, DIGITAL

Ladies and gentlemen,

- Croatia's commitment to sustainable development is deeply rooted in its unique position as one of the most biodiverse and nature-rich countries in Europe.
- Often referred to as the "Nature Park of Europe," Croatia has long recognized the importance of preserving its natural resources.
- Our achievements in renewable energy, where we rank among the top in the EU, and our strong performance in meeting the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, reflect a national strategy that balances economic growth and social stability with environmental stewardship.
- As we stand at the crossroads of environmental crises and digital transformation, Croatia's experience offers valuable insights into how we can harness innovation while protecting our planet for future generations.
- The path we take today will determine our future tomorrow.
- Therefore, we must choose it wisely.
- Croatia, in its national development strategy until 2030, espoused a vision of a competitive, innovative and safe country with a recognizable identity and culture, a country with preserved resources, quality living conditions and equal opportunities for all.
- We have built our strategy on the three main, interrelated development pillars: digital transformation, decarbonisation and demographic revitalization.

- The digital transformation of our societies is inevitably changing our way of life and our way of doing business, more rapidly and intensively than any transition in the last century.
- We are transforming our state and public administration, businesses and society and half of our population is using e-Citizen portal. ,
- Croatia's IT industry is competitive and booming.
- At the same time, while new and emerging technologies are unlocking great potential, they also come with risks.
- To manage these, we need effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, as well as informed citizens.
- My Government will continue with policies which promote this path.
- Humanity's greatest challenge of the 21st century is climate change, coupled with loss of biodiversity, reduction of food and natural resources, increase in the number of droughts, fires and floods, as well as the acceleration of sea level rise.
- Croatia is located in the Mediterranean, one of the world's regions expected to be hit hardest by climate change. It is not by accident that Croatia got a portfolio for the Mediterranean in the new EU Commission.
- This summer we saw record breaking heat waves followed by torrential rains in our part of Europe only last week.
- The green transition is therefore pivotal for us all.
- Promoting nature-based solutions is one of our main national tools for climate change adaptation and mitigation.
- For this reason, we need to strengthen the multilateral system of dealing with climate, biodiversity and sustainable development. We need to put more efforts in

dealing with climate as a threat amplifier that endangers security and stability of many regions and countries in the world, especially in Africa.

- Croatia spares no efforts to integrate the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals in our national policies, initiatives and strategies and into the reinforced and reformed global governing structure.
- We are proud that our reforms and investments have earned Croatia a high 8th place among 193 UN Member States according to the 2024 Sustainable Development Report.
- Finally, for Croatia, all these measures culminate also in demographic revitalization as another key national priority.
- We consider it an indispensable element of our resilience, competitiveness, and a prerequisite for successful, sustainable growth.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN SEGMENT

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- Croatia's deep commitment to human rights stems from its own difficult experiences under totalitarian regimes and the horrors of the aggression during the Homeland War.
- The violations of fundamental rights that we endured as a nation have shaped our understanding of the importance of protecting human dignity, justice, and equality.
- Croatia's journey from a war-torn country to a strong advocate for human rights in the international arena has given us a unique perspective on the necessity of upholding these principles.
- With this background, Croatia remains steadfast in its dedication to promoting human rights, preventing atrocities, and providing humanitarian assistance to those in need, both at home and abroad.

- The 2030 Agenda sets out a vision for sustainable development grounded in international human rights standards, promoting one of the main values of the UN Charter – to leave no one behind.
- Only through respect for human rights can we achieve a more peaceful, equal and sustainable world.
- Croatia will continue to champion this cause.
- As a country still searching for 1792 missing persons from the Homeland war, Croatia spares no efforts to end the anguish of uncertainty for their families.
- We shall never cease the search for them and we shall never stop demanding answers from those who know their fate.
- We contribute by sharing our acquired expertise with interested countries and by advocating for the missing persons everywhere in the world, in our national capacity, and as a committed member of the Global Alliance for the Missing.
- Croatia is today extending its support to Ukraine by offering its expertise in prosecuting war crimes and making its seasoned experts available to assist Ukraine in navigating the complex process of accountability and justice, drawing from its own experience in addressing the aftermath of war crimes committed during the Homeland War.
- Committed to eradicating domestic violence and violence against women, we have introduced femicide as a distinct criminal offence.
- Our goal is the elimination of gender discrimination and creation of conditions for real equality of women and men in society, at home, as well as abroad, and in the multilateral system.
- This is why Croatia promotes women, peace and security at the global level as we know the disproportionate effect of conflict on women, but we have also seen how women when participating in all peacebuilding and sustaining peace processes are agents of change and harbingers of peace.

- Croatia also advocates a comprehensive approach to issues affecting persons with disabilities.
- This includes mainstreaming disability in all fields of human rights.
- With this in mind, in the UN we will be leading an effort by a cross-regional group of countries to proclaim the International Day of Deafblindness.
- This resolution will hopefully contribute to understanding as well as encourage and inspire national and legal recognition of deafblindness as a distinct and unique disability worldwide.
- In the past three years, Croatia has also been honoured to serve as co-chair of the Group of Friends of Responsibility to Protect in New York.
- We still believe more has to be done in terms of atrocity prevention and the operationalization of the Responsibility to Protect concept.
- In the humanitarian context, we are facing worse circumstances than ever.
- Croatia presided this year over the Humanitarian Affairs Segment of the Economic and Social Council, against the challenging backdrop of unresolved conflicts and eruption and escalation of new ones, climate-related disasters, disease outbreaks, economic shocks and famine for millions of people.
- Focusing the discussion on the consequences of the erosion of respect for international humanitarian law, clear and strong calls were heard across the board for upholding international humanitarian law, ending impunity, bolstering women's leadership, addressing climate emergency and for ethical and responsible use of new technologies.

UNITED NATIONS REFORM

Ladies and gentlemen,

- As one of equal successor states of former Yugoslavia, Croatia is among the founders of the UN. Following the dissolution of former Yugoslavia, in the midst

of defending itself from aggression and invasion, 32 years ago Croatia reconfirmed its commitment to the UN Charter – this time as a free, sovereign and independent Member State of the United Nations. Ours is a journey of liberty and democracy, a pursuit of peace and prosperity, of vigilant defence of human rights and dignity, while honouring the values and principles of multilateralism and international cooperation that the UN embodies.

- Our experience as a small but resilient nation with a deep understanding of peace, security, and development underscores the importance of reforming and revitalizing the UN to ensure it remains fit to address the global challenges of today and tomorrow.
 - The Pact for the Future, a pivotal document for strengthening multilateralism that we adopted earlier this week, elaborates about both General Assembly and Security Council reform and we believe we should further strengthen, reform and revitalize these two institutions.
 - While the role of the General Assembly has been strengthened recently with regard to issues which the Security Council failed to address, more should be done in relation to the maintenance of international peace and security.
 - This relates also to the cooperation of the General Assembly with both the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission.
 - The UN Secretariat should be made fit for purpose and the selection of the Secretary-General and all other, especially high-level posts, need to be guided by the principles of merit, transparency, inclusiveness, gender and geographic rotation.
- SOUTHEAST EUROPE

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- Finally, allow me to reflect on South East Europe, a region in our neighbourhood.

- As a country with deep expertise and a nuanced understanding of Southeast Europe, Croatia stands as a model of successful integration into both the European Union and NATO.
- This unique position not only gives Croatia a special status within the region but also grants it significant authority in advocating for peace, stability, and the European aspirations of its neighbours.
- Croatia consistently encourages our Western Balkan partners to invest even more efforts in fulfilling the established criteria.
- Regional cooperation and good-neighbourly relations, along with solving outstanding issues and disputes remain an essential, indispensable part of the process.
- The merit-based approach and rewarding individual achievements in fulfilling the standards will accelerate accession to the European family.
- In this regard, those who cooperate in good faith, (align with the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy) and conduct genuine reforms should move ahead on their EU accession paths.
- Of particular importance for Croatia is the stability of neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina, with which we share more than a thousand kilometres long border.
- In order to achieve security and stability in the country, the constitutional full equality of the three constituent peoples – Croats, Bosniaks and Serbs – must be ensured and the Dayton-Paris Accords, the peace treaties that ended the war and confirmed the multinational, multi-confessional and multicultural Bosnia and Herzegovina, must be upheld.

CONCLUSION

Ladies and gentlemen,

- In conclusion, Croatia's story is one of transformation—from a nation rebuilding after war to a committed partner within the global community.
- Our journey reflects the power of collaboration, vision, and perseverance.
- As we look ahead, Croatia is ready to continue contributing to a world where peace, justice, human rights and sustainable development are attainable for all.
- Together, through multilateralism, we can overcome today's challenges and build a future where every country, every citizen, can thrive.
- The path may be long and difficult, but by standing united, we can make it a reality.
- Let us move forward with renewed purpose, ensuring that the foundations we build today will support a prosperous and peaceful tomorrow.

Thank you.