

Deputy Prime Minister of Montenegro
H.E. Mr. Filip Ivanović
General debate of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly
New York, September 2024

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to address you today on behalf of Montenegro and to reiterate our unequivocal support and commitment to the goals and principles of the UN Charter, as well as the overall mission of the World Organization, as we are confronted with unprecedented challenges across the globe, not only in terms of international peace and security, but in other domains as well.

Allow me to extend due acknowledgement and gratitude to the President of the previous session of the General Assembly, H.E. Dennis Francis of Trinidad and Tobago, for his achievements and guidance through these unsettling circumstances.

Furthermore, I would like to express our best wishes to his successor, H.E. Filemon Yang of Cameroon. Your Excellency, we wish you a successful tenure and we welcome your choice of this year's debate theme, as it faithfully portrays the very mission of the UN, for which you can count on the full support of the Montenegrin delegation.

Ladies and gentleman,

Leaving no one behind, while acting together for peace and security, sustainable development and human dignity are the key challenges lying before the United Nations - to which, unfortunately, as a community, we still have failed to provide an effective and a comprehensive response. Achievement of a peaceful and sustainable future, against the backdrop of one-sided, arbitrary and authoritative actions of a handful of international actors, but whose actions are jeopardizing the peace and welfare of the majority, will insist on our full-scale vigilance and awareness, and put our words and our rhetoric to a practical test.

Eventhough the occuring geopolitical developments have clearly demonstrated that our efforts have fallen short and that we must do much more; and not just more, but much better, there is a solution and an alternative – multilateralism, at its best and strongest, lead by a more powerfull United Nations, at the helm of international cooperation and global response, if we are to have a peacefull and prosperous global society.

Dear colleagues,

National based narrow approaches instead of global solutions still dominate the international environment, and rather than uniting in joint endeavours with positive global circumstances, we are losing ground to authoritarianism and unilateral behaviour. In addition to the crisis in the Middle East, Russia's aggression against Ukraine, civil war in Sudan, instability in the Horn of Africa, Yemen, Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar, Haiti, we are facing a number of other issues, including the climate emergency, growing food insecurity, erosion of democracy and human rights, growing terrorism and violent extremism, cyber threats and backsliding on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), only contributing to an already alarming global situation.

We commend and support the Secretary General's New Agenda for Peace, which offers and identifies, indeed, the needed tools and measures for generating a quality response to the ongoing challenges – especially through disarmament, more investments in diplomacy and mediation, mitigation of geopolitical influence on the population, prevention of further fragmentation of global trade rules, effective tackling of the climate change issues, as well as prevention of violence and human rights violations.

As we are all very much aware, the pace of the SDGs implementation is not at the percentage we hoped for. Member States need to commit to the realization of the 2030 Agenda as the best possible way to build longstanding peace and prosperity. However, we need to take into consideration that the developing economies are not able to sufficiently finance policies to implement the SDGs, especially in the light of the negative impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

We are committed to the promotion of good governance and strong institutions at all levels as key enablers of sustainable development, peace and security, and we strongly advocate for reforms towards a more inclusive and representative international financial architecture.

Therefore, we support the Secretary General's appeal for a wholesale reform of the financial architecture, which, at the moment, does not offer developing countries the affordable financing needed to achieve the SDGs, and we join the UN in calling upon the international financial structure to finance these countries in a form of eligible credit arrangements.

Within its capabilities, Montenegro will continue to fully support the transformation based on accelerating the implementation of the goals and objectives of sustainable development, with the aim of achieving continuous, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, whilst protecting natural resources, improving the state of human resources and strengthening social inclusion.

Excellences,

In view of the volatile situation in the Middle East, I would like to express Montenegro's deep concern over the escalating violence and the humanitarian situation in Gaza, with the destruction of infrastructure, lack of water, food and healthcare. We call upon all the parties to deescalate and engage in a meaningful dialogue.

Our position is clear – we have condemned the indiscriminate terrorist attacks by Hamas on Israel from October 7th 2023. At the same time, however, we also condemn every act of violence against the civilian population, as well as the interruption of water, food and energy supplies in the Gaza Strip. It is of absolute importance that the humanitarian corridors are opened and humanitarian aid provided to civilians. Any response to a terrorist attack must be undertaken in accordance with international humanitarian law.

We call for a humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza, during which negotiations would be conducted towards a two-state solution, as only a two-state model guarantees lasting and sustainable peace in the region. Again – regardless of the outcome of the negotiations, the international law must be upheld by all the parties to the conflict and all hostages still in captivity released immediately and unconditionally.

Montenegro also reiterates its strong condemnation of the destruction that the Russian aggression has caused in Ukraine, including the killing of civilians, as well as unlawful attacks on civilian infrastructure, sexual and gender-based violence, and reports of child abductions.

We emphasize yet again that there can be no impunity for war and other heinous crimes and that we must ensure responsibility, as a precondition for ensuring a durable peace. In this regard, we support all accountability initiatives to fight impunity and ensure justice.

As the aggression has been particularly devastating for children, we call on the Russian Federation to fully respect the international humanitarian law and to immediately implement measures to protect children. In addition, we call on the Russian Federation to cease attacks on civilian infrastructure and allow aid to the affected civilian population, including areas under temporary Russian military control.

I would like to reconfirm our support to Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty. Montenegro will continue to support Ukraine and will continue to provide financial, humanitarian, military and diplomatic aid. Like the entire international community, we want to see a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine in accordance with the UN Charter and the adopted resolutions of the UN General Assembly.

Dear colleagues,

I believe we can all agree that the ongoing global crises represent one of the gravest challenges to international peace and security since the creation of the World Organization. The world ought to be united as ever before in defending democracy, human rights, the freedom of choice, rule of law and ensuring peace and prosperity – but above all, preserving human lives.

The international community must also do significantly more in the fight against climate change, with decisive actions much needed, such as the full implementation of the Paris Agreement and the resolution of the interconnections between the triple planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution are needed while strengthening climate action.

Sustainable development goals and the fight against climate change are fundamentally linked to peace and security and human rights. Without peace, all other goals – from human rights and gender equality to addressing climate change, water, and energy and food security – will not be achieved.

The increasing number of conflicts, as well as ever growing threats to international peace and security, require a change in the current global practice and the application of a holistic and coordinated approach within the UN system based on prevention. It is in this context that we must take a better advantage of the preventive capacity of the Human Rights Council.

As a member of the Council for the term of 2022-2024, we fully recognize its contribution to the early warning system when it comes to prevention of violence and mass violations of human rights. Unfortunately, as it is the case with other forums, I'm afraid we do not use them properly and to the fullest scope of their potential.

Nevertheless, Montenegro remains a dedicated defender and promoter of human rights and freedoms, their universality and indivisibility, which we must not take for granted.

Advancing and supporting the integration of human rights and the gender perspective in all aspects of the work of the United Nations, and preserving the universality and independence of the human rights system, remain our absolute priority, and in that light, further strengthening of the HRC role in responding to situations of serious human rights violations globally.

Excellences,

There are still far too many places in the world where peace, stability, human rights and even basic necessities are a luxury. This is something which we cannot be proud of, on the contrary. We more often place emphasis on reactionary humanitarian response rather than on a preventive one. Nevertheless, although of vital importance for the affected population, the humanitarian aid needs to be followed by an adequate political solution, representing the best way to sustainably end violence and to establish long-term peace.

Montenegro is firmly committed and determined to actively and constructively contribute and support collective efforts to preserve world peace and security, and in this line supports the New Agenda for Peace, as an opportunity to shape new responses to old and emerging threats, including strengthening prevention, adapting UN peacekeeping forces to this new environment and strengthening the peacebuilding architecture, including ensuring adequate, predictable and sustainable financing for peacebuilding and implementation agenda Women, peace and security in all its dimensions, as well as the agenda Youth, peace and security.

At the same time, Montenegro continues to actively participate in peacekeeping missions, aware that only a safe neighbourhood can provide a guarantee of our own security and prosperity.

Furthermore, we hope the New Agenda for Peace will contribute to the preservation, implementation and further strengthening of the global architecture for arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as multilateral export control regimes, strengthening, at the same time, multilateral capacities to address the challenges of terrorism and violent extremism, hybrid threats, as well as cyber risks.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The solution to all of these challenges must go hand in hand with the reform of the UN system, in line with the reform agenda of the Secretary General. In particular, as a small country, we are interested in strengthening the authority and role of the General Assembly, as well as its efficiency, but also of other main UN bodies. The reform of the UN system presupposes a flexible attitude of all participants in the negotiation process, especially in the process of reforming the Security Council. We believe that the reform of the UN Security Council as the guardian of international peace and security is necessary, with the expansion of its membership achieving a more equal representation of regional groups, which would thus enable more effective maintenance of international peace and security. In order for United Nations to maintain and strengthen its central position in the global governance system, it is vital that the Organization is reformed and adapted to the geopolitical realities of the 21st century and modern democratic values.

Excellencies,

In the conditions of an increasingly sharp international polarization, fragmentation and instability, economic and geopolitical uncertainty, it is our common responsibility to show the true value of the United Nations and effective multilateralism as a global solution to global challenges. We can either choose further isolationism and erosion of trust, growing xenophobia, nationalism and extremist ideas, or we can make a breakthrough, by choosing a future based on the highest civilizational values of equality, justice, responsibility and solidarity, and not on retrograde ideologies, selfishness and unscrupulous populism.

As John Adams once said “Every problem is an opportunity in disguise”. It is precisely what we have at our hands - a unique opportunity to use the current deteriorating international environment as momentum for building a more equal, just and sustainable world, with a revitalized multilateralism based on fair and humane globalization, respect for human rights and dignity of all. We must act for peace and progress now, while we still have a chance, built on achieving a just and quality of life for all.

Montenegro, proud of its century's old multiethnic and multiconfessional tradition, remains steadfast on the course of a Euro-Atlantic future, good neighborly relations and multilateralism. Being a geographical part of Europe, values as well as principles wise, we are convinced that only the acceleration of integration processes and a stronger incentive of our EU partners can bring about stability and prosperity of the Region, which is undoubtedly, an important asset and contribution to the overall security and stability of Europe. Montenegro will continue to tirelessly pursue and promote those policies, with undiminished commitment to the values of multilateralism, open and friendly cooperation.

To conclude, ladies and gentleman,

The very core principles of the United Nations Charter are not just being compromised, but essentially nullified. We cannot act as innocent bystanders, as we are not. We must rise to the challenge, raise our voice and stand up for those in need, and demonstrate that our common values are not subject to interpretation, but that those who violate these principles have to be held accountable.

Too many people have already lost their lives in recent conflicts across the globe. They have lost their loved ones and their homes, and in most cases forced to flee their countries. This must not happen in the 21st century. This is not what our predecessors fought for - we are better than this, but we must show it. This can not be a heritage we leave to our children. We must do better, for the sake of the generations to come.

I thank you.