



Statement by H. E. Mr. Robert Golob
Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia
at the 79th Session of the United Nations General Assembly General Debate

Mr President,

Mr Secretary-General,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my great honour to address the General Assembly today.

Colleagues,

Few days ago we adopted **Pact for the Future**. In these times of wars, climate catastrophes, increasing inequalities and deepening polarization, it was a rare flicker of unity. Unity of the countries and groups from all continents. The Pact should represent a start of a new era of global partnership of countries willing to strengthen multilateral system with the UN at its core.

There was another flicker of hope this week. The Security Council presided by Slovenia adopted a **Presidential statement on the Leadership for Peace**. All 15 members reaffirmed to maintain international peace and security and to commit to international law, including the UN Charter. It is a good start to re-energise our collective work for a better, more peaceful and more humane world.

1. Let me start with Peace and Security.

Secretary-General, who enjoys our full support and enormous respect, has repeated on several occasions that last year – with the highest number of conflicts in decades - was also the deadliest one.

Slovenia has been an elected Member of the Security Council since January. We have been observing **gradual but steady erosion of power of rules**. The Council is increasingly unable to respond in an effective way to major conflicts, such as Gaza, Ukraine and Sudan. It is not much better with crisis management of many others, from Sahel to DR Congo, from Myanmar to Haiti.

What we are witnessing in **Ukraine** is aggression of a stronger and powerful neighbor into a smaller and weaker one. This is clearly a blatant violation of the UN Charter. If we are to let this aggression pass, we open doors to many similar wars across the globe.

In **Gaza**, almost four months since the Council's resolution on ceasefire and hostages, deal is nowhere close. As the Secretary General said yesterday at the UNRWA Ministerial meeting, "people in Gaza are existing – not living, but existing – among lakes of sewage, piles of rubbish and mountains of rubble. The only certainty they have is that tomorrow will be worse."

In the **West Bank and East Jerusalem** violence and dehumanization of Palestinians is increasing and has reached a boiling point. All this is taking us further away from the two-state solution with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security.

Escalation of Gaza crisis into the region is now a reality. The region is at a brink of an abyss. De-escalation is urgently needed, starting with the ceasefires in Gaza and Lebanon.

In **Sudan** we are witnessing a man-made humanitarian catastrophe, with millions displaced and in desperate need of humanitarian aid. At the same time, we are seeing the atrocity happening again in Darfur.

Excellencies,

Why has the UN Security Council failed the humanity?

Permanent 5 bare even greater responsibility. By misusing veto and putting national interests first, they effectively blocked the working of the UN Security Council.

The concerns and pain that we feel for civilians, condemnation of violations of the Charter and of international humanitarian law should not depend on our geographical or political proximity to the conflict.

We should all put our common interests first. And the world would be a better place.

2. Another important issue is the reform of the Security Council.

Our experience in the Security Council has given us renewed appreciation for the need to reform the Security Council. We urgently need a Council that is a true representation of the international community. A Council that is fit for the world of today.

We need to ensure that the **distribution of seats is fair.**

The Council needs **stronger voices of the regions** that have been underrepresented, such as the African continent.

Reform of Council's composition needs to be accompanied with the **reform of the veto powers**. The reality is that we won't be able to eliminate veto. However, the use of this right will need to be more precisely defined.

The Security Council also needs to exercise its power with higher ambition regarding the prevention of conflicts and play a stronger role in peace-building activities that involve all aspects of the UN system.

Colleagues,

But let's not forget that the United Nations are so much more than just the Security Council.

We commend the work of nameless **humanitarian workers** who are on the ground, in armed conflicts, among the civilians representing the face of the United Nations.

Erosion of respect of international humanitarian law is making their work so much more difficult. Gaza conflict was however a turning point.

In Gaza, humanitarians are not just occasional collateral victims. They seem to have become a deliberate military target. There is no other explanation for the highest number of humanitarian workers being killed last year, of whom great majority in Gaza.

The sense of impunity for crimes in Gaza is putting humanitarian organisations under stress elsewhere. This is undermining the essence of the UN and it is affecting the work of the humanitarian organisations and UN agencies like ICRC, UNRWA, WHO and WFP.

3. Let me now turn to another pressing issue, the Climate Crisis.

The impact of climate change is mostly felt on the lifeline for people and nature – water. Extreme weather events are multiplying water-related risks across the world. This global challenge demands a global and collaborative response. Solutions exist but are not equally accessible to everybody.

The UN Secretary General's "**Early Warning for All**" Initiative is the right step in this direction. As the catastrophic floods devastated my country last year, we initiated development of an **advanced digital solution** linking earth observation with supercomputing and artificial intelligence.

The system will help us predict floods and droughts and improve our resilience. We are ready to share this solution with our partners.

Remote sensing and earth observation inform our early warning systems. But we are fully aware that many countries lack the capacity to monitoring all the hazards, and are restricted in their access.

I call upon all **to form a global partnership around the Early Warning for All** to help overcome these challenges. The partnership would boost our common preparedness and ensure that everyone on Earth is protected from hazardous weather, water, or climate events through life-saving early warning systems.

People suffering from armed conflicts do not have the luxury of high-tech solutions. More often than not, they are denied basic access to clean drinking water. Even more. We are increasingly seeing how access to water is becoming weaponized: in Yemen, Somalia, Gaza, and Sudan.

Slovenia decided to take initiative and we launched the **Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflict** together with a cross-regional group of countries. Such global partnerships are urgently needed to safeguard the human right to water for all.

4. Last but not least - on Humanity.

We need to make sure that people around the world age with dignity and rights. The current international human rights law offers only a fragmented and inconsistent framework for the full protection of human rights of **older persons**. This is why we are leading a global action towards a legally binding instrument on human rights of older persons.

The world should spare no time to address the main issues related to **gender equality**, including the future developments and implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. The UN should lead by example when it comes to the full, equal and meaningful role and leadership of women in our societies.

In its entire history, the General Assembly has been led by only four women. We never had a female UN Secretary General. The time has come to reflect gender equality in top leadership positions of our organization.

Slovenia has joined the supporters of the Rotation for Equality Initiative, which calls for gender rotation in the position of the President of the United Nations General Assembly.

In times of crisis, **children** are always the most vulnerable ones. Today's world is increasingly hostile to children's rights. More children than ever are experiencing violence in all settings, many have lost their lives, are forcibly displaced, exposed to most traumatic experiences, imprisoned, denied education and healthcare, and face extreme poverty and social exclusion.

Gaza is an example of extreme suffering of the children. Slovenia is offering concrete help with the **Foundation "Let them dream"**, which is dealing with the rehabilitation of children from Gaza.

It is an extremely noble and human project, which was launched years ago and has already helped hundreds of children from Gaza who came on rehabilitation in Slovenia and will continue to do so. Sadly, some of these kids, were the victims of recent aggression on Gaza.

Let me finish with the story of the two young girls from Palestine. At the beginning of this week I attended an event on Missing futures in the Occupied Palestinian Territory organized by **Save the children**.

At this event I heard from courageous **Palestinian girls, Sara and Rand**. They spoke about their challenges, feelings and the future. In spite of destruction, dehumanisation and fear, they were not angry nor hateful. They just had enormous wish for normal life. They want

to study and dedicate their future to help their community. One by becoming a doctor. The other by becoming a humanitarian worker. Their plea was simple: help us achieve that.

Today, I fulfill my promise to them and bring their story to the General Assembly. Only with our united call against the war and for peace we will make sure Sara and Rand are not among the thousands missing futures of Palestinian children under occupation.

So let me send a clear message to the Prime Minister of Israel – stop the bloodshed, stop the war, stop the suffering, end the occupation of Palestine!

Thank you.