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STATEMENT BY H. E. MR. BAJRAM BEGAJ, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA, AT THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE

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Madam President of the General Assembly,
Distinguished Chair of the Session,
Excellencies,

It is an honor for me to address the General Assembly today on behalf of the Republic of Albania, on this important anniversary of the United Nations. Indeed, it is also a special significant moment for my country, as we mark the 70th anniversary of our membership in the United Nations.

I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly, Her Excellency Ms. Annalena Baerbock, for choosing this meaningful theme "Better Together" and to extend to her my best wishes for her success in her esteemed role presiding over the 80th Session of the UN General Assembly.

I also would like to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, for his leadership, for his service to the United Nations, and for his commitment to upholding the UN Charter and its core values.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The 80th anniversary of the United Nations is a powerful reminder of the vision that inspired the creation of a world in which nations choose dialogue and cooperation. It is also an opportunity to renew our commitment to the values embodied in the UN Charter: peace, equality, and cooperation among nations — to choose cooperation over conflict, dialogue over division, and solidarity over indifference.

For the Republic of Albania, the United Nations has been and continues to be the universal platform for dialogue, giving every country, large or small, a voice in shaping our shared future. Its achievements are undeniable: the prevention of conflicts, the advancement of human rights, and the provision of humanitarian aid to millions.

Yet, in the context of today's global crises, it is natural to demand more from this organization and from ourselves. This is the moment to renew our commitment to ensuring that the UN continues to serve as the foundation of peace, justice, and solidarity — not only for us but also for future generations.

Albania believes that global challenges — from conflicts and terrorism to climate change, artificial intelligence, and economic insecurity — are not only complex but also deeply interconnected. Humanity therefore needs more multilateral cooperation.

As a member of the United Nations, a member of NATO, and a proud European nation, the Republic of Albania is ready to contribute to the strengthening of international peace and security. We support a global order in which conflicts are resolved sustainably, societies are strengthened by solidarity, and peace is built and maintained on the foundations of trust, cooperation, and progress. Albania remains committed to the UN Charter and will continue to contribute to peacekeeping missions, humanitarian efforts, and the building of a world in which disagreements are resolved through dialogue and diplomacy.

Madam President,

For nearly four years, our organization's credibility has been tested by Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Albania has stood in support of Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity and has consistently condemned Russia's violations of the UN Charter and international law. We condemn Russia's continued attacks against Ukraine and the recent provocations against our NATO allies. At the same time, we value the diplomatic efforts, under the leadership of President Trump, for a just and lasting peace, in full respect of Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity.

Albania is equally committed to peace, security, and stability in the Middle East. The war in Gaza must end, all hostages must be released, and the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza must be addressed urgently. We express our support for the efforts of the United States, Egypt, and Qatar for a ceasefire agreement that will lead to a permanent end of hostilities and to a sustainable peace between Israel and Palestine, one that provides a better future, in security and prosperity, for Palestinians, Israelis, and all the peoples of the region.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Albania actively promotes dialogue, good neighborly relations, and regional integration as the only path toward sustainable stability and prosperity. Our vision is integration, sustainable development, and the preservation of democratic values. We believe that the future of our region lies in cooperation, not conflict; in shared progress, not rivalry. In this spirit, Albania stands ready to cooperate with all its neighbors to ensure that the Western Balkans becomes a zone of peace, development, and opportunity — contributing positively to Europe and to the wider international community.

The newest state in our region, the Republic of Kosova, is increasingly contributing to peace, dialogue, and coexistence in the Western Balkans. Seventeen years after declaring independence,

Kosova has demonstrated through its actions that it is a responsible member of the international community, committed to peace, stability, and democratic values. With strong institutions and a vibrant population, its contribution to regional and broader cooperation is undeniable.

And yet, Kosova's seat in this Assembly remains unjustly empty. Recognition of Kosova's independence and support for its membership in the United Nations and other international organizations is an act of justice toward the people of Kosova. It is a step that strengthens peace and security in the Western Balkans and contributes to the stability of Europe as a whole.

Albania calls for the rights and freedoms of the Albanians in the Presheva Valley to be respected — that they not be discriminated against, but rather integrated; that the Albanian language be used; and that their culture, values, identity, and traditions be protected and promoted.

Madam President,

My country's journey — from isolation to Euro-Atlantic integration, from dictatorship to freedom and human rights — proves that dialogue, partnership, and shared values can transform societies.

Today, Albania is closer than ever to realizing its long-held dream of joining the European Union. Following the opening of accession negotiations, we are advancing our reforms at full speed, aiming to complete the negotiations by 2027 and become a full member of the EU by 2030. Our journey toward a united Europe is not merely a political ambition — it is deeply rooted in the values we uphold: democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

Albania has understood that the prosperity and well-being of its citizens are closely linked to tangible progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. We are investing in clean energy, strengthening climate resilience, advancing digital transformation, and working to ensure that no one is left behind. Our efforts are focused on education, healthcare, gender equality, and youth empowerment — because inclusion is the only path to sustainable development.

Last year, we endorsed the Pact for the Future as a guiding framework to revive multilateral cooperation. Now, we must turn words into action — turning commitments into concrete progress on peace and security, sustainable development, climate, digital cooperation, and the protection of human rights. The Republic of Albania stands ready to work with all member states to ensure that the Pact for the Future becomes a guide toward a fairer,

more sustainable, and more united world. We will lead by example by integrating the Pact into our next Voluntary National Review.

Excellencies, distinguished participants,

Climate change is the defining challenge of our century, and Albania is committed to the transition to clean energy and environmental protection. Recurring floods, fires, and droughts remind us that we must strengthen global commitments, mobilize funding, and ensure that no one is left behind.

In recent years, we have witnessed the rapid spread of digital technologies. Technological progress is valuable only when it advances in parallel with human progress. We must remain faithful to our values, placing technology at the service of humanity. No matter how advanced, the problems of our time cannot be solved by artificial intelligence, but by human intelligence and compassion. The digital age must be guided by international cooperation, ethical standards, and respect for human rights.

For Albania, digital transformation is a priority. We have undertaken ambitious reforms to digitize public services, increase transparency, and fight corruption. Albania is proud to co-lead with Kenya the review process of the World Summit on the Information Society and will work with all member states to ensure a successful outcome.

Madam President,

Human rights and the dignity of every individual must remain at the heart of our mission. Albania has demonstrated — through its democratic transformation — that societies thrive when individual freedoms are protected, when women and youth are empowered, and when diversity is embraced as a strength.

We are honored to bring our experience to the Human Rights Council, where we have worked tirelessly to promote the universality of human rights and the indivisibility of all freedoms. During our mandate, we have focused on protecting vulnerable groups, advancing gender equality, and defending the rights of those most at risk of violation. We will continue to raise our voice against discrimination, intolerance, and violence wherever they occur.

Albania is proud of the progress it has made in advancing gender equality — as a moral obligation and as a driver of societal development. Today, women hold some of the highest offices in our country. Albania will continue to defend the rights of women at home and abroad and work with partners to make equality a tangible reality for all.

No country can envision a better future without placing youth at the heart of national strategies. Through reforms in education, digital

transformation, and employment, Albania is working to expand opportunities for young people to learn, innovate, and participate fully in society. We believe that investing in youth is the most effective investment for peace, prosperity, and sustainable development. Today, we have the obligation — as the generation that inherited 80 years of peace and progress — to create the conditions for our children to live in a world of safety, peace, dignity, cooperation, and progress.

Together, with courage and foresight, let us choose to make this session the moment when we chose unity, responsibility, and courage.

Thank you.

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Write to the President

Address:

“Dëshmorët e Kombit” Boulevard

Email:

info@president.al



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