



CROATIA

Statement by

H.E. Mr. Zoran Milanović,
President of the Republic of Croatia

at

the General Debate of the 80th session of the
United Nations General Assembly”

„Better Together:
“80 years and more for peace, development and human rights “

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Madame President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to address this Assembly at the start of its 80th session under your leadership, Madame President. Croatia congratulates you on your election, a step forward for gender equality. I also thank your predecessor for his dedicated service during the last session.

Allow me also to commend the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, for his vision and commitment in steering the United Nations through turbulent times.

For Croatia, the United Nations has always been a core, essential global institution. During our own struggle for independence, sovereignty, recognition, and territorial integrity, the United Nations played a decisive role. Our path to admission and early years of membership were about braving the stormy seas rather than smooth sailing – and it was this organisation and what it represents, the principles of the Charter of the United Nations that served as our safe harbour. I believe this experience proved productive for both Croatia and the UN, and has provided many lessons for the future – including on how to successfully end a complex war and conduct peaceful territorial reintegration.

Today, the international community faces daunting challenges.

Armed conflicts are more numerous than at any time since the Second World War. They are multiplying and intensifying, overwhelming humanitarian systems and eroding trust in our capacity to prevent or resolve crises.

In Ukraine, we hope the senseless loss of human lives will end as soon as possible. We welcome recent diplomatic efforts and encourage inclusive dialogue that can restore peace.

Beyond Europe, other regions face devastating crises. In Gaza, tens of thousands of women and children have been killed. Millions live without safety, food, medicine, and basic human dignity. This is worse than a mere war - it is carnage and we urgently call for it to end, for safe delivery of aid—especially to children—and for the release of all hostages. Lasting peace can only come through the universal recognition of the legitimate political aspirations of the Palestinian people, long denied.

The suffering in less visible crises is no less real. In Sudan, one of the gravest humanitarian catastrophes of the 21st century is unfolding before our eyes.

UN peacekeeping must adapt to today's conflicts. Missions must be flexible, realistic, and sequenced toward achievable goals. This requires the Security Council to focus on political solutions and remain committed to sustaining peace long after missions withdraw.

Peace is more than silencing the guns. It requires preventing new wars and breaking the cycles of violence from the past. Lasting peace rests on democracy, legitimate governance, and full respect for the right of each people to freely choose their leaders.

Madame President,

In our region of Southeast Europe, Croatia continues to champion and promote legitimate political processes as the foundation of progress. EU membership is not a cure-all, but it remains a strong driver of prosperity, as can be witnessed in Croatia. We promote good neighbourly relations and urge all countries to refrain from actions that undermine stability in the region.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, we call for full respect of the constitutional order, sovereignty, and equality of the three constituent peoples. All parties, and the international community, must uphold the Dayton-Paris Peace Agreement.

Respecting the right of constituent peoples to choose their legitimate political representatives at all levels of government is fundamental prerequisite of lasting stability and progress.

Madame President,

Lasting peace cannot be imposed. It must be built. And if it is to be sustainable, it must include respect for human rights and development that is inclusive and fair – basic building blocks of any just and prosperous society.

The humanitarian system must be reformed to respond with speed, innovation, and stronger partnerships with local actors. Croatia supports the UN's "Humanitarian Reset" in order to make responses more agile, effective, and grounded in resilience. Above all, strict respect for international humanitarian law must remain the moral core of multilateralism.

In Croatia, decades after the Homeland War, families still search for 1,744 missing loved ones. As co-chair of the Global Alliance for the Missing, Croatia draws on its painful experience to raise global visibility of this issue, share good practices, and strengthen cooperation. Survivor-centred justice is enshrined in our laws, and we encourage others to follow this path.

We also share the Croatian model for searching for the missing. It rests on effective interdepartmental cooperation and a comprehensive, transparent approach without discrimination, consistent with the highest international standards. With this in mind, Croatia is proud to host later today a high-level side event on missing persons in armed conflict, dedicated to advancing the search for answers.

Another legacy of the Homeland War is the issue of landmines. Croatia has been active in promoting the Human Rights Council's first resolution on landmines, adopted by consensus on April 4th, International Mine Action Day. The resolution reaffirms the treaty banning anti-personnel mines and sends a clear message: the needless cruelty of these weapons violates basic human rights.

The togetherness which is promoted throughout this debate, especially means inclusion of the most vulnerable. Therefore, Croatia is proud to have led the initiative resulting in consensus adoption and an impressive 99 Member States co-

sponsoring the General Assembly resolution declaring June 27th as the International Day of Deaf-blindness.

Madame President,

Peace and security are inseparable from development and human rights. The founders of the United Nations acknowledged this when they placed these three pillars at the heart of the Organization.

As we mark the 10th anniversary of the General Assembly's resolution on the 2030 Agenda, Croatia reaffirms its commitment to the SDGs and to ensuring that no one is left behind.

We are grateful to Member States for their support in electing Croatia to the UN Economic and Social Council for the 2026–2028 term. Our priorities will include accelerating the 2030 Agenda, preparing momentum for the 2027 SDG Summit and the agenda beyond 2030, and strengthening links between humanitarian, development, and peace efforts.

At home, in Croatia, sustainable development is fully embedded in national planning. Croatia's National Development Strategy 2030 is closely aligned with the SDGs, placing us among leading global performers.

We reaffirm our commitment to progress made at COP meetings, including the landmark COP28 agreement to begin phasing out fossil fuels. COP29 in Baku must deliver a new quantified climate finance goal, and COP30 in Belém must raise

ambition, advance fossil fuel transition, and scale up climate finance. Croatia supports a credible climate finance roadmap.

The triple planetary crisis also threatens global public health. Croatia endorses the One Health approach, recognizing the interdependence of human, animal, and environmental health. We welcome adoption of the Pandemic Agreement at the 78th World Health Assembly earlier this year.

As a Mediterranean nation, Croatia knows that healthy seas are both a national imperative and a global responsibility. We remain committed to multilateral ocean protection under UNCLOS. We welcome the outcome of the 3rd UN Ocean Conference in Nice, have ratified the BBNJ Agreement, and urge others to do so quickly.

Croatia's contributions to development cooperation and humanitarian aid continue to grow. Since 2011, we have steadily increased our support, reaching record levels in 2023.

We share lessons from our own recovery—from democratic transition to mine action and veteran reintegration. In Ukraine, our expertise in humanitarian demining is particularly valued, making us one of the leading contributors relative to GDP.

Our support extends far beyond our neighbourhood, reaching South-Eastern Europe, the Eastern and Southern neighbourhoods, and Africa.

Madame President,

Fundamental changes we are witnessing in our world are not mere historical echo, but an all-encompassing global transformation: we are at a defining moment of an era to come.

Emerging technologies are reshaping every aspect of society—how we live, how we trade, and how we defend ourselves.

Drones are a clear example. They did not only increase the lethality of war. They changed its economics. They showed us that assumptions we held only a decade ago about defense and deterrence are already outdated.

This disruption brings danger, but also opportunity. New tools can be misused by hostile actors, spreading instability and lowering the threshold for conflict. But the same tools, used responsibly, can strengthen our defenses, improve disaster response, and drive economic growth. Artificial intelligence, cyber capabilities, space technologies, robotics—each can be a threat, or a solution.

The choice is ours. We need to rethink security, not only nationally, but globally. Rules, safeguards, and cooperation must keep pace with innovation. If they do not, we risk instability. But if they do, these technologies can become engines of resilience and stability.

The task is urgent. The world must act with clarity, not hesitation. Emerging technologies are not tomorrow's challenge. They are today's reality. And how we

choose to guide them will define not just the future of defense, but the future of peace.

Madame President,

Reforming the United Nations is an existential necessity. At 80, the UN must adapt to stay relevant and effective. We welcome the Secretary-General's UN80 initiative as an opportunity not only to celebrate achievements but also to reform and revitalize the Organization.

Security Council reform remains essential. The Council must become more inclusive, effective, transparent, and accountable. Croatia supports comprehensive reform, including enlargement in both categories of membership and stronger representation of underrepresented regions, especially Africa.

The financial stability of the UN is also vital. All Member States must pay their contributions in full, on time, and without conditions. Without predictable financing, mandates fail and trust weakens.

The upcoming Peacebuilding Architecture Review offers another chance to turn commitments into action. Croatia will contribute actively, emphasizing prevention, coherence, and stronger links between peace, development, and human rights. We welcome the decision to provide assessed contributions for the Peacebuilding Fund from 2025, but needs still outpace resources.

Madame President,

The UN does not exist for itself, but to serve humanity: to save and improve lives, protect dignity and freedoms, and advance peace, security, and sustainable development. On its 80th anniversary, we have a duty to leave to future generations a UN system that is stronger, not weaker.

Croatia will continue to defend the principles of the Charter and international law, to support multilateral solutions, and to build partnerships rooted in respect and responsibility.

The world is not short of strategies, reports, or debates. What it lacks is political courage. Let us find that courage together—and prove that multilateralism can meet this moment and rise to the challenges of our time.

Thank you.