



# SLOVENIA

*Check against delivery!*

ADDRESS

BY

**H.E. DR. DANILO TÜRK**

**PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA**

**AT THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE SIXTY-THIRD SESSION  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

New York, 24 September 2008

Distinguished heads of State and Government,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,

We are starting this 63<sup>rd</sup> Session of the General Assembly under the wise and inspiring leadership of our President, Mr. Miguel d'Escoto. Mr President, we rely on your experience and your political acumen and I wish you every success in your work.

At the same time I wish to express our sincere gratitude to your predecessor, Mr. Srgjan Kerim, President of the 62<sup>nd</sup> Session of the General Assembly who has guided this Assembly with great sensitivity and determination.

I also wish to pay tribute to our Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon whose tireless effort is guiding the UN at this turbulent time and which promises adequate responses to the many challenges our organization is expected to address.

Indeed, Mr. President, we live in a turbulent world at a turbulent time. We need real answers to the accumulated global problems. The era of optimism generated by globalization has come to an end. The eruption of the financial crisis in the recent weeks has removed the last shreds of doubt about that. The World needs real answers to big questions.

Mr. President,

If you asked me to identify the key policy requirement for the United Nations today with a single concept – and in one word – my answer would be this: We live at a time requiring transformation. This should be the key idea of policy making to guide the UN action. The UN should look to policies with a

transformational potential and capable of producing transformational effects in a not too distant future.

Obviously, this ambitious and general proposition begs further questions:

Is the UN capable of generating social, political and economic transformation?

Does the UN of today know which is the main area of the needed strategic transformation so as to adequately concentrate its further effort?

And, what needs to be done, by way of transformation, in the most sensitive area of UN's mandate, in the area of maintenance of international peace and security?

Let me address these questions one by one.

Is the UN capable of generating social and political transformation?

The UN has demonstrated such an ability in various areas of its work in the past. The UN action in the field of human rights offers an excellent example. Later this year we shall celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It doesn't take much effort to realize how much the change that has occurred in this period of time owes to the transformational energy of human rights.

Only consider this: At the time of adoption of the Universal Declaration in 1948, the World has experienced one of its most traumatic moments. World War II had barely been over, its aftershocks were still strongly felt and much of the world was still physically destroyed. Stalinist oppression was the dominant feature of Soviet Union and of a large part of Europe. In Asia and Africa large populations suffered under the yoke of colonialism. The system of Apartheid was being introduced in South Africa. And yet, this was the time when the

authors of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights outlined an optimistic vision of a just society and a better world. Human Rights were the genuinely transformational idea of the time and it has guided social change and development ever since.

The world of today, while still far from ideal, is substantially better than the world of 1948. Human rights have triumphed in many parts of the world and are making steady progress in others. Many of the oppressive systems have ended in the “dustbin of history”. The remaining ones are likely to follow. Democracy has progressed globally and is today the way of life of more people than ever before.

Obviously, violations of human rights still persist, as reported by the UN experts and by NGOs. Some of the causes of violations – like racial discrimination – are persistent and take place in new forms. New issues of human rights have also arisen. Concerns related to security and counterterrorism seem to have contributed to a diminished care for human rights in some societies. The abhorring practice of torture has gained a degree of understanding which should be a cause of serious concern to all who take human rights seriously. Armed conflicts continue to produce atrocities and massive violations of human rights. These phenomena must be met with resolute counteraction. The institutions of human rights need to be strengthened and supported. Human rights education deserves a higher priority. The principle of the responsibility to protect must be given real meaning and teeth through diplomatic and other action. The International Criminal Court has to be accepted and made effective as the key institution to punish perpetrators war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. Violations of human rights have to be combated wherever they occur.

But in addition, there is an even more fundamental reality which affects the actual enjoyment of human rights by all. The Universal Declaration proclaimed, in its Article 28, that “everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which his human rights can be fully realized.” Its authors realistically envisaged the long term nature of the effort for human rights. Guided by this spirit, the General Assembly adopted, in 1986, its Declaration on the Right to Development, a right which became recognized as universal at the Vienna Conference on Human Rights in 1993. This was a significant and realistic recognition of the intrinsic link between two fundamental human aspirations: the one for human freedom and the other for human development. In the subsequent years the UN also developed a comprehensive understanding of development. This understanding was elaborated at a series of global conferences on various aspects of development and summarized in the year 2000 in the form of the agreement on global development goals.

The vision exists and practical progress - while still uneven - is visible. The high level event on Africa last Monday strengthened the existing global consensus about the immediate priorities, including more effective financing of development. The panels on the millennium development goals tomorrow will be an opportunity to discuss the key issues of today, in particular those emerging from the current food crisis. I also hope that the proposal of the Secretary-General for a Summit in 2010 to consider progress in the achievement of the MDGs will gain wide support.

Mr. President,

These and other discussions also helped in answering my second question: Does the UN know the strategic direction in which the transformational effort must be concentrated today?

It is already clear that global development – now and in the foreseeable future - will vitally depend on the preservation of our natural environment and, in particular, on how we address the problems of energy and global warming. The battle for our common, global future will be won – or lost – on the environmental front and it is there where the main transformational effort has to take place. There is no time to lose.

Earlier this year the EU, then under the presidency of my country, Slovenia, adopted a plan of activities to reduce the emission of greenhouse gasses. Yesterday, President Sarkozy of France, The current President of the European Council, reiterated European Union s commitment to success of the Bali roadmap and the Copenhagen conference to be held next year. In between, progress must be made at the conference in Poznan and in the process leading to Copenhagen.

These efforts will succeed only if adequate partnership is established among the key economic and political players. Partnership between the EU, the US as well as Japan, China, India and the G-77 countries is essential. The existing environmental challenges call for transformational approaches to the way the world consumes energy, the way it develops technology and pursue development. Incremental change will not do. Global cooperation is essential. Obviously, the responsibilities of the developed and the developing countries are not the same. They are differentiated. But the world as a whole has to move

ahead and the UN has to get the direction right. Transformation is the order of the day.

Mr. President,

My third question relates to the maintenance of international peace and security and the necessary transformation in that area. Let me state right at the outset that there is a serious need for transformation of the existing institutions in the field of international security.

The international security landscape of today offers a mixed picture. After the end of the cold war there were moments of high hopes and moments of deep disappointment. There were successes and failures, including the failure to prevent genocide. But we also have to point out that the overall number of armed conflicts has been on decline for more than a decade now, an encouraging development, indeed. This is in no small measure due to the contribution of the UN which has steadily increased its experience and its capacity in the peacekeeping, in post-conflict peace-building and also in preventive diplomacy. The role of the UN Secretary –General has been strengthened in all these areas.

Progress made so far has established a degree of confidence in the capacity of the international security structures and their key players to cooperate and even to work in partnership for the maintenance of international peace and security. However, it appears that the confidence developed so far is still fragile and that the remnants of cold war mentality are still in existence. So further efforts are needed.

These efforts involve two sets of tasks. The first set of tasks relates to development of partnerships to address the key security issues, in particular

those in the Middle East, the Caucasus, the Balkans and in several regions of Africa. In all these areas there has been a degree of success in establishing cooperation and partnership of the key regional and global players working for peace. Models of concerted diplomacy such as the one established to deal with the issues of North Korea can and should inspire preventive diplomacy and peacemaking in other parts of the world.

The second set of tasks is equally urgent. Immediate consideration has to be given to transformation of the existing security structures. Reform of the UN Security Council is long overdue. Incremental improvement of its working methods, while welcome, is far from sufficient. The time is ripe for changes in the Council's structure.

I believe that the membership of Security Council should be expanded in three directions:

- There should be six additional permanent members from all the regions of the world;
- There should be an additional category of non-permanent members with a more frequent rotation, six in any particular composition of the Security Council, elected in accordance with a formula to be determined by the General Assembly and alternating every second two year term;
- The remaining eight non-permanent members would be elected in accordance with the principle of equitable geographic distribution. Thus the total number of reformed Security Council would not exceed twenty-five members.



Mr. President,

I offer these ideas on reform of the Security Council to you to use in the coming efforts for the Security Council reform. It is widely accepted that this work needs to progress towards a successful conclusion. Success in the Security Council reform would represent a key contribution to the transformation of the international security architecture. Together with other major projects of the United Nations it would constitute a major contribution to the improvement of the world.

Is all this new? In a certain sense – yes because the specific projects are new. But more deeply the answer is that all this has to do with continuity. The UN has, from its inception, represented the hope for and the promise of an improved world. Let us not betray this hope and let us live up to this promise. Let us work for transformation wherever necessary. Let us make this era of the UN its finest hour.

Thank you Mr. President.