

Statement by
H.E. Mr. Lech KACZYŃSKI
President of the Republic of Poland

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of the General Assembly of the United Nations

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Mr. President,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen who represent Member-States of the United Nations,

Sixty-four years have passed since the creation of the United Nations. Let me recall some well-known facts. The reason the United Nations was called into being was to prevent the atrocities that occurred during the Second World War, during 1939-1945. The UN was founded so as not to repeat the failure of the League of Nations, which was the first organization of a global reach that tried to carry out its mandate in the period between the First and Second World Wars.

The United Nations underwent various turns over the past 64 years. There were better and worse times; there were times when the forces of the two camps, the so-called socialist camp and the free world camp, clashed here, on this floor. There were times when this hall witnessed the birth of tens and hundreds of new states: in Africa, in the region of Oceania and Asia. There were also times,

twenty years ago and later, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when many new states emerged, while others, including my own country, Poland, regained their independence in the real sense of the word. At that time, twenty years ago, the whole world believed that we found a way to solve all our problems, particularly economic ones, by applying the rules of the free market, by relying on a very liberal economy and by allowing the capital to move freely in all the fields.

We have to admit that in recent years – as we have repeatedly heard speakers say it today – this faith has been undermined. For this reason I would like to discuss briefly the problem of the current crisis, which this UN General Assembly session is addressing for the first time this year.

This is the fourth time that I am participating in a general debate of the UN General Assembly. The very many conflicts, the problem of climate change that has emerged in recent years, the problem of poverty and many other problems are not new. The same can be said about the problem of health, epidemics, AIDS and others.

What is new however is the current crisis which erupted last year. But before I get to it, I would like to address another issue that my predecessor raised. There are different causes of conflicts in the world; violations of states' territorial integrity being one of them. During the last decades, many new states have emerged, so no wonder that differences of opinion exist over this or that territory. If, in an attempt to resolve such problems, force is used, like, for example, it was used last year against Georgia, then this can cause major problems. It can lead to local wars, but it could also be a source of large-scale, even global conflicts. Speaking on behalf of my country, I would like to warn strongly against it.

Let me return to the problems brought on by the current crisis, which has been discussed today. I represent a country which continues to grow. We are the only

Member State of the European Union that will record economic growth this year, although very small. This growth is due to the factors specific for my country, so I will not dwell on this subject right now.

It is a well-known fact that on the one hand, the current crisis was precipitated by overconfidence in free market rules, overconfidence in the increasingly complicated systems, including the banking system, which sooner or later had to lead to the consequences that we see today.

You may ask: what are the remedial measures? In principle, they are known, but far more difficult to be implemented. I believe that the United Nations could play a significant role here. It is not possible to manage the global economy; such attempts are doomed to failure and would lead to a new crisis. Yet I am not saying that we do not need new regulations in areas that have been discussed today, like, for example, the financial sector where oversight does not necessarily have to be global, but it should cover states, where banks are outside any control. As the lack of such control is the source of economic abnormalities and it fosters large-scale criminal operations, like e.g. drug trafficking.

The second issue that was addressed today is the problem of tax havens. Ships flying under cheap flags are also in this category. We, in Poland, understand all those who try to improve the situation in their country by resorting to such methods. We realize that such actions, from the point of view of individual states, especially those that are not rich, are in some way warranted. I am not saying this to criticize them, but to state that it lies in our common interest to put an end to such practices. And no other organization in the world, except the United Nations can accomplish this by setting international standards.

In his inaugural address the President of Brazil raised certain problems, which I also consider very important. I am referring to the problem of financial agencies, which are affiliated with the United Nations. Another problem is the need for a

greater flexibility of programs, which are launched by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Another issue is how to make a better use of some organizations affiliated with the United Nations. I would like to draw your attention to the International Labor Organization. It has been in existence for the last 80 years, grouping almost all the countries of the world and employing about two and a half thousand people. Shouldn't the ILO, to a greater extent than it has done in the past, serve as a forum for formulating programs that offer an alternative to the programs based on a liberal development? It seems that the reformed International Labor Organization could play this role successfully. This would require an effort on the part of all of us, but it is feasible. It is not about giving the ILO additional financial resources, but about formulating alternative programs that would account for, to a greater extent than in the past, the interests of the working people, that would seek to create equilibrium between different social groups not only in the rich countries, but also in the poorer ones.

Today's address of the President of the United States, which regardless of one's attitude to this country, remains the most powerful country in the world, presented a different approach of the US to the problems confronting the United Nations. It can be seen as an opportunity for this very Organization, for our Organization. We should take advantage of this opportunity and make the United Nations more effective in its peacekeeping operations. We should be appreciative of its achievements so far, but it seems that some organizational changes are needed here as well. They should be pursued in order to make its operations more effective. What I say does not preclude other international organizations, including, in particular, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, from taking similar action, but in this regard the United Nations should play a leading role.

There is the problem of reforming the United Nations, especially the Security Council. I will not dwell on this subject now, but we realize that this is a very important issue as we all know that there is a significant difference between what was established sixty-four years ago and what exists today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

During the past few years the United Nations has been placing a strong emphasis on climate change. A lot has been said about this issue here today, so I do not want to sound repetitive. However, I would like to underscore that this is a very important issue, one which requires a lot of sensitivity on our side. As the more affluent countries want to strongly engage to protecting the world's climate, they must realize that the weaker countries need assistance in doing the same. As this by all means very legitimate goal should not be pursued in such a way that it helps some countries develop, while it hinders the development of others. We should always bear this in mind. We should do so for the sake of solidarity among all nations, remembering about the goals for which the United Nations was established sixty-four years ago.

Last but not least, let me address one more issue, one less talked about today. Besides piracy, international terrorism poses a serious problem today. The situation which we see developing in some countries, like Afghanistan and Pakistan, seems to confirm that this is indeed the case.

Terrorism has its sources, but not all of them are linked to extremist ideologies. We realize that objective premises also exist. In this regard, the United Nations could play a greater role than it did in the past. Poland is a member of the North Atlantic Treaty and is very much involved in out of area operations. We acknowledge that the legitimacy of the United Nations for this type of operations is the only legitimacy, in light of the international law, which may be

considered as fully and one hundred percent sufficient. This is very important today and it will continue to be so in the future, because we have to realize that conflicts, crises and the problem of terrorism will not be resolved within a few years.

We have heard it said many times today that the United Nations is about to embark on a new phase. I believe that it will be yet another phase of its greatness, for its history is marked with such periods; I trust that this great global experiment, which on numerous occasions has passed the test, will succeed again on a global scale and in many decades to come.

Thank you very much.