



# IRELAND

Statement by

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**Mr. President,**

It is my great honour to represent Ireland today in this General Assembly

Regrettably, this gathering comes at a dangerous time in global history.

Delegates here represent a world facing many challenges.

But these are challenges that can be tackled with unity of purpose and surmounted through strong leadership, especially from this august body, the United Nations.

Indeed, the United Nations must be at the vanguard of efforts.....to eradicate terrorism where it flourishes.....to preserve the sovereignty of States where it is threatened.....and to promote and protect peace and human rights where these essential components of human dignity and human happiness are lacking.

In my speech, I will focus on the conflicts that beset the Middle East and Eastern Europe – and I will do so in a way that reflects my country’s foreign policy ethos:

- Firstly, dialogue and compromise as the solution to intractable conflicts between peoples;
- Secondly, respect for the rule of law and solidarity within the international community when a democratic State is threatened;
- Thirdly, a strong commitment to peacekeeping while preserving Irish military neutrality;
- Fourthly, the critical importance of development;
- and last but not least, the promotion of human rights - particularly the rights of minorities and of women and girls in this troubled world.

I will begin by outlining some thoughts on the importance of reform of the UN and its Security Council.

### **Role of the UN; UN and Security Council Reform**

**Mr. President,**

We see a world beset by warfare and terror on many fronts. Heart-rending reports of escalating casualty and refugee numbers, the slaughter of innocents, the suffering of children and vulnerable adults in Iraq, Syria, Gaza, Ukraine and many other conflicts dominate the news – on our airwaves, on television news and on the Internet.

The people we in this hall represent rightly expect the United Nations to be a source of action. Regrettably, too often, they see an institution that seems hamstrung and stymied in situations where it needs to be decisive and strong. It is not that we lack the necessary instruments. The

many achievements of this great organisation amply demonstrate its capacity to act decisively and effectively when the necessary political will is forthcoming.

For the UN to meet the manifold, complex and grave challenges that are dominating this year's General Assembly, the organisation must review its working methods and priorities. Resources must be directed to the areas of greatest need and used with the utmost efficiency.

In particular, we must see new approaches to the work of the Security Council – something Ireland and its partners in the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) group have been actively promoting.

While ultimately, Ireland would like to see the Security Council's veto power abolished, we strongly welcome the initiative of France, supported by Mexico, to better regulate the use of this power by Permanent Members of the Security Council.

Moreover, Ireland supports an increase in the membership of the Security Council to more closely reflect regional balances as well as the current realities of population and economic weight in the world..

## **Middle East**

### **Mr. President**

The challenge of achieving peace in the Middle East remains as great as ever.

As Member States, we must do more to assist the United Nations in its vital life-saving efforts in Syria and the many other humanitarian challenges confronting the wider region.

I want to pay particular tribute here to the heroic role of UNRWA and its brave and dedicated staff in Gaza, 11 of whom tragically lost their lives during the recent horrific conflict. We are all indebted to Pierre Krähenbühl and his colleagues for providing an indispensable lifeline to the people of Gaza over many years.

Our goal must be to ensure that there is no return to the recurrent cycles of violence which we have witnessed in Gaza and southern Israel on three occasions now, most devastatingly during July and August. Each cycle of violence appears to harden attitudes on both sides of the conflict and yet, ultimately, no one can want peace more than those most directly affected by its absence.

It is widely acknowledged that the achievement of a lasting peace requires that the underlying issues which gave rise to the most recent bout of violence must be definitively addressed. The closures and restrictions which have applied to Gaza for seven long years now must be brought to an end. Equally, there must be assurances for all Israelis and Palestinians that they will not

be subjected to indiscriminate violence - whether that violence comes in the form of rocket attacks targeting Israel or retaliatory strikes with devastating consequences for Gaza.

It is also now long past time for the attainment of a **comprehensive peace between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.**

None of us are under any illusions about the difficult and painful compromises that will be involved. In essence, however, I believe that most Israelis and Palestinians recognise that the only true basis for peace and security between them lies in the realisation of a just, negotiated two-State solution. It remains vital that all actions or policies which impede that prospect must be avoided.

While there is, at least, a clear vision of the difficult compromises necessary to achieve a lasting peace between the peoples of Israel and Palestine, the situation in neighbouring Syria appears, at this moment, to present an even greater challenge. Over the last three and a half years, nearly 200,000 people have lost their lives at the hands of the State and militant groups in this vicious conflict.. Ultimately, the solution to Syria's civil war is not a military one. I strenuously urge all in the international community to fully support Special Envoy di Mistura in his efforts to promote a political settlement based on the principles of the June 2012 Geneva communiqué.

The flagrant violation of international law by all sides in the Syrian conflict must be confronted and referred to the International Criminal Court. All sides, particularly the Assad regime, must comply with their obligations under Security Council Resolutions 2165 and 2139, and end their obstruction of vital humanitarian efforts and such obscenities as besieging communities and attempting to starve them into submission.

The **growth of extremism** which we are now witnessing across the region is a cause of significant concern and one which I know is shared by everyone in this room. The bloodlust and inhumanity which ISIS is displaying in Syria and Iraq has shocked and appalled all civilised people. The destruction and displacement of the ancient Christian communities of Northern Iraq has been harrowing to witness. The gratuitous and almost casual approach to that most gruesome form of murder – beheading;.....the barbaric sexual violence perpetrated against women and girls;.....the base corruption of placing military weapons into the hands of children;.....the scapegoating of people based on their ethnicity or religion - whether Christian, Yazidi, Kurdish, Sunni, Shia or Jewish; .....all of this, taken together, harks back to a mentality and a culture that we thought had long been consigned to history. The rise of ISIS, the continued activities of Al Qaeda, the growing strength of Boko Haram...make clear that there is no room for complacency among the international community when it comes to the growth of extremism. We must unite and mobilise to confront this threat and we must do so with a real sense of urgency.

## Ukraine

**Mr. President,**

Ukraine is the most dangerous political crisis to occur in Europe for several decades. The situation there has profound implications for the viability and future of an international system that upholds the rule of law. The actions of the Russian Federation, first in Crimea, and then in Eastern Ukraine, clearly contravene a wide range of international agreements.

We should remember first and foremost the deplorable violence that has been inflicted on innocent civilians in Ukraine over many months and the serious humanitarian crisis that has ensued.

There can be no military solution to this crisis. We firmly support the path of diplomatic dialogue and welcome President Poroshenko's peace plan. We were encouraged by the Minsk agreement earlier this month within the framework of the Contact Group. A sustainable political solution must be based on the principle of respect for Ukraine's sovereignty and with clear guarantees on border security, disarmament of all illegal groups and the withdrawal of foreign forces.

## Peacekeeping and Peace Building

**Mr. President,**

Ireland has a proud tradition of involvement in UN peacekeeping missions all over the world, beginning in 1958. Our troops have made an important contribution to international peace and stability; 82 of them have made the ultimate sacrifice. I take this opportunity to recall and salute all those who have fallen in UN peacekeeping operations since this Assembly last met.

Today, some 370 Irish men and women are serving on UN peacekeeping duties, the majority in the Middle East. The environment in which they serve has become increasingly complex and challenging.

Like the Department for Peacekeeping Operations we attach a very high priority to the safety and security of our personnel.

I warmly welcome the Secretary General's announcement that there will be a review of UN peacekeeping. This should ensure that the UN retains the capacity to promote peace and stability internationally. Mr. President, please be assured that Irish men and women will continue to wear the blue beret with pride in service of the UN and in pursuit of a better world.

Last week, at the UN Peacekeeping Summit hosted by Secretary General Ban and US Vice-President Joe Biden, I was pleased to announce an initiative by my Government to deliver a

new programme to train African peace-keepers. The training will include a specific focus on areas including protection of civilians, gender sensitivity, human rights and leadership training and logistics.

Full and equal **participation by women** is another essential component in building peaceful, stable societies. Women are key agents of change and must be full protagonists in our ongoing global story. Political will is a crucial element of driving women's empowerment and gender equality forward. Security Council Resolution 1325 was a milestone in recognising this reality and the subsequent Resolutions, most recently Resolution 2122, demonstrate our resolve to pursue the goal of full and empowered participation by women in political processes. This UN agenda includes a welcome and necessary increase in focus on tackling the scourge of **sexual violence** in armed conflict. But we must translate our global commitments into concrete actions. Achieving real gender equality requires a commitment from all of us here – men and women. It is a commitment that Ireland is proud to have made and next January we will launch our second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. This is just part of our ongoing commitment towards ensuring that women and girls can reach their full potential, live a life free from fear, and fully take their place at the decision-making table.

### **Development and Post 2015**

**Mr. President,**

The global threat posed by the spread of Ebola in West Africa is a reminder that not all the challenges we face are manmade. Ireland is active in addressing this epidemic in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Resolution 2177, sponsored by 130 Member States indicates the seriousness with which the world regards this problem and the need for urgent action by the UN.

2015 will be a critical year in the fight to end extreme poverty and hunger. We have 15 months to maximise progress under the Millennium Development Goals and 12 months to negotiate a new framework for international development. This new framework must mark an important shift to sustainable development, with clear and ambitious targets which can end extreme poverty, hunger and malnutrition in a single generation. Ireland plays and will continue to play its part at the UN and with our partners on the ground. We have focused sharply on the continuing scandals of hunger, child stunting and maternal mortality in a world of plenty. I am pleased that last week, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution led by Ireland on the Preventable Mortality and Morbidity of children under five. It is deplorable that some 6.6 million children under five die annually, mainly from preventable and treatable causes.

Ireland is working with its partners in Africa on the devastating impact of climate change, especially on smallholder agriculture, and last week we joined the Alliance for Climate Smart Agriculture. On Thursday, I co-hosted a meeting here at the UN to support the Secretary

General's Zero Hunger Challenge. And days earlier, in Dublin, UNICEF Ireland brought to me the voices of Ireland's young people calling on us to strengthen our efforts and reminding me, in their words, "It's About Us". Ireland's commitment to a more equal, inclusive and sustainable future for the world's children is demonstrated in practice through our development programme, and our work with our partners in sub-Saharan Africa. And, despite the extremely difficult economic circumstances of recent years, we are proud that we have stabilised funding for the aid programme. The fight to end poverty and hunger will remain a central tenet of our foreign policy.

### **Human Rights**

**Mr. President,**

Recent events worldwide have demonstrated that human rights and fundamental freedoms continue to be violated and threatened, particularly in times of conflict. In many parts of the world today, brave women and men seek to highlight and address abuses of human rights, and to stand up for those who are oppressed or are without voice; I salute the courage of these human rights defenders and pledge that Ireland will continue to work for decisive UN and EU action to support them.

As a member of the Human Rights Council, Ireland has sought to highlight the important contribution of civil society to advancing human rights and building democratic societies. Last week, the Council adopted, by consensus, a significant resolution led by Ireland calling on States to create and maintain a safe and enabling environment in which civil society can operate.

We strongly condemn all forms of persecution or discrimination based on religion or belief. The persecution of Christians and other minorities in the Middle East and the recent rise of anti-Semitic attacks, particularly in a number of European countries, are causes of grave concern for me. Too often throughout history, the world has looked the other way when vulnerable minorities were being targeted, often as a prelude to a more serious conflict.

On a more positive note, as a former Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, I felt particularly honoured last week to ratify the 3<sup>rd</sup> Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, reaffirming my Government's commitment to the protection and promotion of the rights of children in Ireland.

## **Conclusion**

**Mr President,**

In conclusion, I believe that at its most effective this great organisation, the United Nations, is a force for good in the world and has much untapped potential. The undoubted achievements in areas such as peace-keeping, conflict resolution, development and humanitarian action, to which Ireland is proud to contribute, should renew our faith in our collective ability and inspire us to meet the challenges which confront us now and which lie ahead.

Thank You.