



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

12 September 2017

Excellency,

As you are aware, the General Debate of the 72nd Session of the General Assembly will open on Tuesday, 19 September 2017. It will be based on the theme “Focusing on people: striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet”. This annual event serves as one of the most important and respected traditions of the United Nations. It gives all Member States an opportunity to outline their visions for the role of the UN in addressing the most pressing global challenges. Moreover, it sets the tone for the forthcoming session of the General Assembly.

Maintaining the highest standards of respect and dignity throughout the General Debate is an immediate priority for my Presidency. I understand that delegations will have demanding schedules and heavy workloads. Nevertheless, I would like to remind you of the main purpose of the General Debate: to listen to each other and to hear the messages that the distinguished high level representatives came here to convey and share.

Therefore, I would like to appeal to all delegations present in the General Assembly Hall to prioritize participation in the General Debate. This involves minimizing the disruption that can be caused by discussions among delegates, and by the use of mobile phones and other electronic equipment. Although I strongly encourage bilateral engagement and dialogue to be pursued on the margins of the General Debate, I also request that these activities take place in the many venues available to delegates outside the General Assembly Hall.

Let us ensure, collectively, that due respect is shown to all heads of delegations, while allowing both those present and the millions watching around the world to listen, learn and engage to the best possible extent. I am confident that the General Debate will act as the first milestone of a 72nd Session that is characterized by mutual respect.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'M. Lajčák', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Miroslav Lajčák

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York