

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is always inspiring to come to this Forum and time and again experience that there are many more things that unite rather than divide nations around the globe. Indeed, we are united in our vision of a world free of violence, where every individual has the freedom of choice and where human dignity is respected. We are united in our aspiration to fight the challenges of the 21st century because we know that in a globalised world a threat to one nation is a threat to all nations.

Nowhere is this new reality more evident than in the so-much-needed work of the United Nations. Poverty, imbalances in development, armaments, the spread of ideologies of hatred, cyber-crime – these are some of the threats that we face today. The new daunting challenges are different in kind. Therefore, both individual states and the international community have to find ways how to deal with this new reality and how to respond better to new challenges.

Seven years ago, in this United Nations conclave, all nations made a historical step, pledging to eradicate poverty, illiteracy, and environmental degradation, to improve health and promote gender equality. That was our response to the challenges of the time. This year we are halfway to the 2015 deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Over the past few years, an estimated 135 million people managed to get out of extreme poverty. Significant positive changes are taking place in the fields of primary education for poor children, child vaccination, and better access of HIV positive people to retroviral treatment, to name but a few.

Yet, the overall progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals remains uneven and too slow. If we want to live up to our commitments, we must increase our efforts considerably and urgently.

The 21st century has also confronted us with such challenge as deteriorating environment. Global warming affects all aspects of our lives: from social and economic growth to changing habitats and migration patterns. Time is clearly not on our side.

We are taking measures to adapt our policies to counter climate change, but our actions are obviously too slow and sometimes too reluctant.

Therefore, Lithuania welcomes the focus made by the Secretary General on climate change as a global challenge that requires global concerted efforts. We believe that the UN climate change process is the appropriate forum for negotiating future global action to this effect.

But that already may not be enough. I am convinced that the world needs a more coherent and inclusive system of international environmental governance. This system needs to be strengthened by establishing a UN Organization for the Environment, based on UNEP, with a revised mandate.

With the Bali conference in mind, I call on all countries to come to the negotiating table later this year with an ambition to conclude by 2009 a global and comprehensive post-2012 agreement. Before such an agreement is reached, Lithuania is doing its best to fulfill the commitment by the European Union to achieve at least a 20 percent reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 compared to 1990 levels.

We started to focus on a wider use of indigenous and renewable energy resources. The share of these resources in the primary energy balance in Lithuania will increase up to 12 percent by the year 2010. Last year alone, we planted 21 thousand hectares of trees – an area that corresponds to 32 thousand soccer fields. For a country the size of Lithuania, it is no small measure. These are concrete steps, to name but a few, where my country shows sufficient political will to fight new global challenges.

The necessity to “fit in” and effectively integrate into the international system is the corner stone of our policies since regaining independence in 1990. Membership in the EU and NATO is the best successful example of that effort. Now we are taking on increasingly more responsibility in the fields of security, stability and sustainable development in our region and beyond. We are active at the front of the war against terrorism, including our contribution to restoring stability and security in Iraq. We are leading a Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan’s Ghor Province. Over the past two years, Lithuania has doubled its development aid budget and has committed to increase it to 0.33 per cent of Gross National Income by 2015.

Our contribution to global security and the vision of inclusiveness and of building a “Europe whole and free” motivates Lithuania to offer her candidacy for the Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2010.

If Lithuania and the Baltic region in general are a success story in terms of establishing themselves in a new global environment, some countries in our region are not. We may only guess why these countries perceive the integration of democracies at their border as a national threat. We feel sorry for a society at large when its government chooses to spend the country’s natural riches for guns and not for democratic reforms. And clearly we should not tolerate the attempts to falsify historical facts about the Soviet occupation of the Baltic States or the denial of the deliberately caused *holodomor* in Ukraine that killed millions.

Fitting-in is never easy. Therefore, we consider that the United Nations could help Member States efficiently integrate into the international system, like the European Union is

already doing by engaging its neighbors into this process through various neighborhood instruments and cooperation formats.

However, our readiness to stand up and speak openly to the states if they cross the line is also an indispensable element of that effort.

We should ask ourselves: Where did we fail that the killings of hundreds of thousand of innocent people were allowed to happen in Darfur? Today conflicts occur on every continent, with particularly grave consequences in Africa and the Middle East.

Some conflicts in the world, however, are less visible. But that does not make them less dangerous. “Frozen conflicts” in Eastern Europe and South Caucasus may become “very hot” one day unless we act immediately. We consider it morally unacceptable for the international community to remain indifferent to the “frozen conflicts” in the GUAM area. Let us not forget that it is not only the conflicts that are frozen, but frozen are the lives and dreams of the people living in those areas of artificial conflict. This is where the United Nations should be more visible and more outspoken. This also applies to Kosovo where attempts to create another “frozen conflict” must be excluded.

It is not only the states, but also the United Nations itself that have to adapt to the new changing realities.

We encourage the Secretary General to continue the United Nations reform, in particular in making the organization’s operational system more consolidated, coherent, and effective and with the highest standards of conduct and ethics. We have to proceed with real actions in carrying through the UN reform. Mr. Secretary General has my full support in this context. Secretary General has to be applauded for his bold and forward vision of the reform in UN peace-keeping. We welcome all efforts by the UN to streamline and reform the peace-keeping procurement system.

I encourage the UN to further strengthen, develop and use its capabilities in the role of good-offices and conflict prevention as envisioned in the World Summit Outcome Document of 2005. It would enable us to address many issues in a more efficient way, and hopefully to avoid costly peacekeeping operations.

The prevention of nuclear proliferation and the pursuit of nuclear disarmament in accordance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons are crucial for global peace and security. We need to strengthen the authority of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Lithuania will support the process leading to the elaboration of a binding international Arms Trade Treaty. Lithuania will also continue to increase practical assistance and funding to international mine action projects and the implementation of the UN Program of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Three years have passed since the adoption of the World Summit Outcome Document, which elaborated on the concept of Responsibility to Protect, and yet we have been too slow to respond to massive violations of human rights and mass atrocities. The principle of Responsibility to Protect can no longer be confined to paper. We therefore encourage the Secretary General to follow up on the World Summit Document and take measures to operationalise this principle.

Only a reformed and pro-active United Nations will be truly instrumental and effective. Only such United Nations will have the required support and financing. Only such United Nations will be trusted by the people.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The ability to adapt is the quality of the strong. Fitting in is the least we can do for future generations. It is the responsibility of every nation and the international community as such.

Thank you.