



LITHUANIA

STATEMENT BY
HIS EXCELLENCY MR. VALDAS ADAMKUS
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA

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

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23 SEPTEMBER 2008
NEW YORK

"I Still Believe and Care"

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

First, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to lead this distinguished Assembly and to wish you the best of success.

I would like to thank His Excellency Srgjan Kerim for his important personal contribution to the results of the last session.

We also appreciate and support the leadership of the Secretary General of the United Nations in guiding this Organization through multiple global issues and challenges.

When I was standing at this podium ten years ago, the list of issues to be urgently addressed was about the same. Yet the mood was different. The Kyoto Protocol had just been signed and preparations for the Millennium Summit, including the drafting of the Millennium Development Goals, were underway. The international community guided by the principles and the leadership of the United Nations showed the will and the ambition to resolve global issues.

Have we managed to turn this collective will into principled and decisive actions?

I have to admit that many nations, big and small, today have many more concerns than a decade ago. Today we feel less secure. The very structure of the international system seems to be fracturing, depriving us of the protection provided by international law and international institutions.

In my region, in Eastern Europe and in the EU eastern neighborhood, this is more obvious than anywhere else. Take energy security. Oil supplies to Lithuania have been cut

off without warning and we do not stand a chance of conducting a normal civilized dialogue on how to fix this problem. Gas supplies were interrupted to our neighbors Ukraine and Belarus.

In this light and on the eve of closing down our only independent power generator, we have a very serious reason to worry about the possible risks for the future of our economy. And I would say that concern about unreliable energy supplies is felt by other countries in the region as well. Such situation threatens the stability of the entire region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The United Nations cannot be a mere passive observer if and when universal values and international law are under threat. Still, too often we remain observers in the face of mounting security crises.

What happened to Georgia a few months ago is a case in point. The United Nations has largely failed to react to an act of aggression against a small nation, member of the UN since 1992.

Perhaps we have failed to react because one of the interested sides to the conflict is a Permanent Member of the Security Council, which has the responsibility to adhere strictly to the letter and the spirit of the UN Charter and United Nations resolutions.

But maybe we failed to react also because our faith in the United Nations has weakened. It is the very mission of this organization to protect human life and human rights, but too often voting on human rights receives less and less support from the member states. Today there are about 26 million internally displaced persons globally, including Sudan, Somalia, the South Caucasus nations of Georgia and Azerbaijan, and others. Last year alone, we faced serious crises in different corners of our planet, including Myanmar, Sudan and Zimbabwe. The world needed UN leadership. But the organization has not acted accordingly. It is because some states hide behind the technicalities or the shield of national sovereignty, thus paralyzing the UN.

Evidently, the UN cannot continue with business as usual. It needs reform and a greater role in areas that will determine the future of the 21st century, such as energy, information security, fight against terrorism and fundamentalism, and the like. How long will we continue with the Cold War era security definitions, closing the eyes to the less visible but no less dangerous risks of the 21st century?

When seventeen years ago, after fifty years of the Soviet occupation, my country regained independence and joined the UN, we were told that 'Never again will molotovs and ribbentrops dare to decide the future of other nations.' Next year we will mark the 70th anniversary of the shameful Molotov-Ribbentrop secret protocols, but Lithuania and other nations of the former Soviet Union still have to fight against the revisionism seeping down from the Kremlin towers, blatant claims that there was no occupation of the Baltic States and that there was no Holodomor in Ukraine where millions of people were starved to death by a ruthless dictator.

Shouldn't an alarm bell ring across the entire international community when we see such blatant attempts to cover up crimes against humanity?

Today my nation commemorates the Day of Genocide of Lithuanian Jews. This tragedy is a powerful reminder to us all of the vulnerability of freedom. It also teaches us that sincere efforts to admit ones' crimes help nations to reconcile and create a truly peaceful, secure and stable area. On this solemn day we not only remember, but we learn.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

If we are to reform the United Nations in a meaningful way, perhaps we should have a better look at the experience of the European nations after the end of World War II and after the end of the Cold War.

Based on this experience, it is obvious that we need to strengthen democracy at home in order to have good governance and a responsible leadership. Perhaps, responsible

leadership will not be able to protect us from all global challenges, but it will at least seek cooperation with its people and other nations to resolve persisting problems.

It is only through integration that a truly indivisible security can be achieved. Indivisible security has a special meaning and importance for smaller nations who have all too often fallen victims to the redrawing of maps.

It is my conviction that interaction and cooperation between different organizations, like the OSCE, the EU, NATO, and the Council of Europe, have been and should remain the foundation of security and stability in Europe. It has its difficulties and deficiencies. But it has no alternative and new alternatives are not needed here. I am deeply worried by new calls to revise the institutional structure of European security rather than follow the commitments taken before the whole international community.

Security, based on cooperation, should remain the basic principle of different European organizations and of international relations on the whole. The philosophy of the “balance of power”, which is again growing popular in some capitals, has no place in contemporary Europe.

Because security is indivisible, it is in the interest of the international community that the UN plays a greater role in strengthening preventive diplomacy and making the principle of “Responsibility to Protect” work.

The United Nations also has to be more responsive to emerging threats, such as unreliable energy supplies, fundamentalism, or cyber-attacks.

It does not matter if the world is unipolar, bipolar or multipolar, human life and human rights remain at the heart of our world. Only such a world can create a truly viable architecture among the states – an architecture based on trust, openness, and respect for human rights. But have we seen any efforts to create such an architecture in the Georgia-Russia conflict? What we saw instead were renewed attempts to divide the world into zones of influence or privileged interests. This should be unacceptable to the international

community of the 21st century. Division and exclusion are bad remedies for conflict resolution. Therefore, conflict resolution in South Ossetia, Abkhazia or elsewhere should be the responsibility of the international community and international institutions, not of one participating side, which hardly remains impartial.

We also have to keep the commitments to value-based policies. It is through our commitment to change and reform that Lithuania has become what it is today: a consolidated democracy, a strong reformed economy and an active contributor to international peacekeeping missions from the Balkans to Afghanistan.

I believe that we, the peoples of the United Nations, have to re-new our commitment to the universal values and principles so that we march together and in the same direction and our steps become stronger.

I believe that we must learn these lessons well so that in ten years time we would celebrate not only the fulfilled promise of the Millennium Development Goals, but also the fulfilled promise to create lasting peace and an area of progress, prosperity and human dignity.

The United Nations primarily consists not of the total sum of the votes, but of universal principles, and these principles shall be the guiding light to us for the years to come.

I still believe that this is the core mission for this organization and I care deeply about it.