



SERBIA

SIXTY-NINTH SESSION
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

by

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PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

New York, 26 September 2014

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

Esteemed Mr. President, your Excellency Mr. Kutesa, I congratulate you on the assumption of the Presidency of the General Assembly of the United Nations. I am convinced that your international prestige and experience will render an important contribution to the crafting of sustainable political solutions to new global challenges that lie ahead of us. I would also like to convey to you Serbia's readiness and unequivocal support to the resolution of priorities relative to climate change, integrated global economy, questions of international security and all other topics that you have included in the agenda that we are to actively pursue.

Esteemed Excellency Mr. Ashe, I would like to express my special thanks to you for your efforts and successful work during the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly that laid down the foundations for the Post-2015 Development Agenda, as well as for your endeavours to strengthen the principles and goals of the United Nations.

This year's session of the General Assembly is held at the time when we mark an important anniversary, one hundred years from the outbreak of the Great War, the war which shaped the twentieth century. This anniversary was commemorated at different places, but, regrettably, no common ceremony at the highest level was occasioned in the spirit of reconciliation and forgiveness.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Serbia strongly supports the agenda of this year's session of the General Assembly and perceives itself as an active partner and participant in the implementation of the United Nations development goals. The world is faced with new security, climate and socio-economic challenges. We shall have to work together a lot in order to ensure mankind's progress in the twenty-first century. Serbia offers its experiences and ideas for global management, so that we ensure a better future for new generations all over the world.

Let me take up three pressing global challenges of today that concern all, as well as Serbia individually: climate change, questions of global security and deadly infectious diseases of vast proportions. I believe that, if not addressed wisely and systematically, they might put into jeopardy the survival of future generations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Socio-economic inter-relatedness accounted for the disappearance of the division into *us* and *them*. All of us, all United Nations Member States, share the same destiny and shoulder equal responsibility for problems that mankind is directly faced with.

One of the urgent global challenges that we are facing is climate change. At the United Nations Climate Summit 2014 in which I participated with great interest, we discussed the historic chance that we shall have at the upcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris in 2015. Consensus among scientists indicates that global temperature in the twenty-first century will rise dramatically. Extreme weather conditions will rise and their frequency depends on the intensity of global warming.

Inexorably, the effects of natural disasters aggravate the fragile economic situation in Serbia and the region of South-East Europe and make the struggle against poverty ever more difficult. The struggle remains the quintessential question of the world today.

The activities aimed at alleviating the consequences of climate change are the imperative of our age. In determining the binding measures, surely account should be taken of the development needs of the poor and underdeveloped countries. I am convinced that you share my opinion that there is a need to act and improve, as soon as possible, the adaptation system and establish mechanisms to lower the risks posed by natural disasters. I therefore view this year as an opportunity to kick off intensive activities in devising climate policy and commit countries to reducing carbon emissions.

We have an historic chance to devise energy policy that is sustainable and would provide for substantive global action on climate change policy. I am convinced that we all share the view that it is urgent and obligatory to improve the adaptation system and set up mechanisms for reducing risks of natural disasters.

Serbia wishes to contribute to reaching a legally-binding, general consent on climate for all peoples of the world. I consider that an important role in the process of the implementation of the agreed principles should be played by the Green Climate Fund which, by 2020, would achieve its ambitious goal and to the fulfilment of which we have committed ourselves for the sake of mankind's well-being.

This year, I witnessed, and my country was a victim of, extreme weather conditions in Europe. Unfortunately, natural disasters, as a consequence of climate change, did not circumvent Serbia and its neighbours in the region. Serbia was, and is subject these days, all over again, to floods of biblical proportions and I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the United Nations for its extensive and efficient engagement and cooperation with the Government of Serbia in the aftermath of the floods.

In particular, I would like to thank French President François Hollande for heeding my call to convene a Donors' Conference to help Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, to the EU Commission and all other organization members, to the Russian Federation, China, Japan, Belarus, African countries and the countries of the region for their assistance and engagement for, without the generous bilateral assistance, we would not have been able to help everyone in dire need of it.

United Nations Member States, short of your selfless assistance, we would not be able to help the affected people, many of whom lost everything they acquired during their lifetime, today, either.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The national priority of Serbia is to achieve a sustainable political solution for the question of Kosovo and Metohija. For Serbia, the only acceptable, fair and just solution is to reject secessionism and preserve the territorial integrity of all countries, including Serbia's. Serbia therefore is clearly committed to the quest for a sustainable political solution through dialogue with representatives of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Priština. The political solution that Serbia advocates includes the interests of the Serbian, Albanian and other populations. This will be a durable political solution that satisfies all parties and we can find it exclusively through constructive dialogue.

The normalization of relations between Belgrade and Priština is contributive in large measure to the process of European integration. We expect the European Union to continue to encourage, through its active engagement, the open dialogue and the compliance with agreed obligations in order to

strengthen mutual trust. Serbia has fulfilled, responsibly and timely, all the obligations it has taken so far on the implementation of the Brussels Agreement. I wish to point out that Serbia is open to the continuation of constructive dialogue with Priština at all levels.

The United Nations mission in Kosovo and Metohija is the guarantor and the basis for action by all other international missions in Kosovo and Metohija in accordance with UNSC resolution 1244 (1999). The reduction of the mandate and competencies of UNMIK is unacceptable for Serbia. In the negotiations with the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Priština, Serbia proceeds from the premise that all solutions must be in accordance with the Constitution of Serbia and UNSC resolution 1244(1999). This concerns the questions of the status of the Province, position of Serbs and other non-Albanians in the Province, as well as the protection of the Serbian religious and cultural heritage.

Our approach to the quest for a sustainable political solution for Kosovo and Metohija has wider political implications. I believe that you will all agree that the creation of conditions for the enjoyment of basic human rights and minority rights would not only bolster the return of displaced population, but would also set a model for political dialogue and toleration, the postulates of the present-day world and the policy of peace spearheaded by the United Nations.

The creation of optimum conditions for the return of internally displaced persons to their homes is the key factor in the process of normalization of relations between Belgrade and Priština. Let me recall that everything started by the terror of the Albanian minority in Kosovo and Metohija aimed at realizing secessionist ambitions. Today, 15 years after the adoption of UNSC resolution 1244 (1999) under which we ceded administration of the province of Kosovo and Metohija to the United Nations, the conditions for the return of internally displaced persons to Kosovo and Metohija have not yet been created. This fact is being noted in the regular reports of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the work of UNMIK and the reports of the UNHCR and the IDPs Special Rapporteur.

Serbia is the country with the largest number of internally displaced persons in Europe. They amount to 230 000 people and they must not remain mere statistical data. They must not be forgotten.

I would like to recall that 58 000 refugees live in Serbia, 42 000 of them from Croatia and 16 000 from Bosnia and Herzegovina. I consider that refugees deserve special United Nations and UNHCR attention. Rather than ignored, the marginalization of the serious problems that this vulnerable category of population encounter must be condemned. The question of basic human rights is a universal question respected by all United Nations Member States. Any hasty decision with regard to this question would be wrong since it could undermine the inchoate reconciliation processes in the region, as well as the fundamental right of Serbs to return to their homes in Kosovo and Metohija, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Serbia has taken a step forward into the future and wishes to make an active contribution to global economic progress, suppression of crime and corruption, and the quest for the solution to all questions of international security.

Membership of the European Union is the foreign policy priority of Serbia. Like any other form of international association, the European Union also falls short of rendering ideal solutions; it, too, is saddled with its own challenges, enlargement crisis, yet it is the best community of European States. Serbia's place is among its members, so that it could achieve full modernization of its society and State and to further develop its economic capacities. The clear goal that we aspire to is to build Serbia as a

respectable member of the family of European nations and progress in EU membership negotiations will make a contribution to it.

Serbia is making active preparations to preside over the OSCE next year. This role and assignment present complex, multilateral challenges for my country, which we are ready for. Serbia carries out this assignment in collaboration with Switzerland with which positive and constructive cooperation has been achieved. Serbia will use the OSCE Chairmanship to encourage and strengthen mutual cooperation among the countries in the region. In past years, the Balkan countries have made immense progress and developed substantial and comprehensive mutual cooperation. Serbia will make every effort to have the process of reconciliation, cooperation and mutual respect fully implemented throughout the region. The Chairmanship will also be used to embolden the continuation of such processes.

We are deeply shattered and worried over the events in Ukraine. We shall do everything in our power to help find a peaceful solution to the problem and overcome differences peacefully. Our Slav brothers deserve peace and tranquil development, certainly with respect for universal principles that should be valid for all countries and peoples and are clearly defined in the Charter of the United Nations. Serbia respects the territorial integrity of Ukraine as a United Nations Member State and equitable implementation of international law. I recall once again that some countries denied this right to Serbia by recognizing and promoting the independence of a part of the territory of Serbia - Kosovo and Metohija.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The principles of safeguarding peace and security, pacific settlement of disputes and crises and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of United Nations Member States are the basis on which the Republic of Serbia will cooperate in the quest for solutions to numerous political and security challenges in the world.

Serbia therefore supports, at the global level, all efforts invested by the United Nations and its Member States, as well as by regional organizations, in finding diplomatic solutions to the most sensitive security issues of the world. Serbia has large political experience and leadership courage to discuss and contribute, in dialogue with friends, partners and the United Nations Member States, to the crafting of solutions to disagreements that threaten to disunite the world all over again.

Serbia makes a concrete contribution to the maintenance of international peace by participating in peacekeeping operations of the United Nations and the European Union. As a result of this work and cooperation with allies and partners, the region is more stable than it was 15 years ago. I would like to point out that we support every initiative aimed at modifying and adapting peace operations to new security challenges. Serbia calls for strengthening regional cooperation and harmonizing approaches to the activities of peacekeeping missions.

The new policy of Serbia brought about sincere and fully transparent relations in the region of South-East Europe. This was evident, in particular, during the disastrous floods that hit Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The solidarity and magnanimity demonstrated at the time set an example for the entire world. Nowadays, our region is teeming with investment opportunities as a strong and peaceful region of South-East Europe is synonymous with strong and stable Europe.

Mr. President,

Serbia experienced acts of terrorism in its territory, in Kosovo and Metohija. Therefore, it understands very well the security problems facing the world at this moment and condemns most strongly all forms of terrorism. Serbia is ready to discuss all initiatives that are contributive to the strengthening of the role of the United Nations in the field of the struggle against this world evil. Serbia has achieved significant success in the fight against terrorism, especially at the regional level, and is ready to contribute by its experience and knowledge to the strengthening of counter-terrorism capacities of other States.

Serbia never supported and cannot support the language of ultimatum. We honour and respect political and economic interests of all United Nations Member States and our approach and actions in protecting our national and international interests are predicated on these positions.

Serbia condemns most strongly the crimes, in particular the brutal murders, committed by the members of the extremist organization of the Islamic State. Such forms of terrorism pose one of the most serious threats to international peace and security and Serbia is committed, more than ever before, to supporting international efforts in the fight against terrorism.

The rapid rise of ISIS and its ability to attract fighters from all over the world has alerted the international community. One of the main questions facing the world is the problem of foreign fighters recruited by terrorist organizations, such as the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda. According to the research conducted by the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence in London, the regions most important for the recruitment of foreign fighters outside Western Europe and the Middle East are the Balkans and the countries of the former Soviet Union. The data on foreign fighters for the Balkans vary: Albania up to 140 and Bosnia and Herzegovina up to 60. The numbers are somewhat smaller for Macedonia up to 20, Serbia 3, Bulgaria 1, while that number for our province of Kosovo and Metohija is as high as 150. This must be stopped.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We face new global challenges. The challenges that call for creative responses, global partnership and flexibility. Serbia is unreservedly committed to the principles of multilateral cooperation and the strengthening of the principles and the system of the United Nations. In that context, we consider the process of the reform of the system of the United Nations to be an historic chance to demonstrate our consistent support of the idea of building consensus among Member States on all key issues. Serbia is ready for constructive cooperation and respect for all participants in the dialogue which will contribute to greater efficiency of the system of the United Nations. Serbia supports the reform of the Security Council.

Excellencies,

Serbia will do its utmost to help bring solutions to global security problems and sustainable development. Traditionally, Serbia supports multilateral approach also in the field of disarmament and arms control, proceeding from the conviction that, in the world of rising interdependence and complexity, common challenges call for common solutions.

It is with great concern that we follow the developments related to the rapid spread of the Ebola virus in the countries of Western Africa. We extend our condolences to Presidents and peoples of Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone over the great number of victims. The disease, unprecedented by the extent of its transmission, as well as the high mortality rate threaten to cause one of the biggest humanitarian crises of the world today and call for immediate collective action since this is the problem

of all of us. It is very important in this situation that the United Nations Member States have recognized the magnitude of the problem and supported the proposal of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to establish an emergency health mission for Ebola emergency response. Serbia is ready to join in and contribute to the collective effort by its scientific and medical capacities and in any other way.

The world has changed, but for the poorest it has remained the same. The greater instability of the developing countries is a clear indicator that they continue to be in need of assistance. The international community must therefore pay appropriate attention also to this group of countries, primarily through financial support, development of new technologies and the training of human resources, the measures meant to conduce to the eradication of poverty and the strengthening of institutions.

For Serbia, the top priority is poverty eradication, but the goals of inclusive education, health, gender equality, sustainable energy and, in particular, the goals of sustainable economic growth and employment are just as important. To jump-start the economy is the mission to which, though always mindful of the afore-mentioned issues, we shall devote most attention in the forthcoming period in order to ensure prosperity for all our citizens.

It is with the higher degree of socio-economic inter-linkage that we must come up with fresh ideas; we must design new ways to overcome the current crises in global management and look into our options in respect of formulating and implementing political solutions.

Serbia stands united with the leaders of the entire world in the action meant to bring prosperity to mankind. This is the responsibility that we all share. Not only can we achieve much working together, but we can achieve much more together. And this is the reason why the establishment of a united, global front around the idea of the common destiny and interests of mankind, which we all share, should be the first step that we, United Nations Member States, must make as we attempt to solve new global challenges.

Thank you for your attention.