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Statement by

H.E. Mr. Zoran Milanović

Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia

**at the High-level Meeting on the Rule of Law
United Nations General Assembly**

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Permanent Mission of the Republic of Croatia
820 Second Avenue, 19th Floor, New York, NY 10017
tel. (212) 986-1585, fax (212) 986-2011
e-mail: cromiss.un@mvp.hr
<http://un.mfa.hr>

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The rule of law constitutes the very essence of a social contract between individuals and the government.

Citizens have the right to transparency, non-discrimination, fairness and equality in their standing before the law and in their social interactions.

At the same time, we encounter the same principles applied at the international level, contributing to reinforcement of sovereign equality of nations, their political independence and territorial integrity, as well as maintenance of collective peace and security, as envisaged in the Charter of the United Nations.

The rule of law principle should cover every corner of daily political and social life of all citizens around the world.

My Government is firmly committed to effective and equitable delivery of public services, to their transparency and accountability, and to the opportunity to scrutinize and review such services, including by vulnerable or marginalized groups or individuals.

On the part of the citizens, these obligations correspond to the principles of civic responsibility, social solidarity and zero tolerance to corruption, abuse or mismanagement.

At the same time, in exercising the principles of legal security, every government should constantly adhere to established international legal norms and mechanisms against corruption, international organized crime, terrorism or grave breaches of international humanitarian law.

Croatia is a state party to all relevant international instruments aimed at suppression of these crimes and is committed to their decisive implementation.

To strengthen the rule of law agenda, we need successful cooperation among states, in particular within the United Nations framework, and positive contribution from major UN bodies, notably from the Security Council and the General Assembly.

Mr. President,

Croatia remains fully devoted to the principles of international justice and resolution of disputes by peaceful means and in conformity with international law.

We highly value the contributions of international courts and tribunals in advancing the rule of law at the international and national levels, in particular the important role of the International Court of Justice.

Strongly supporting significant efforts aimed at ending, once and for all, the “culture of impunity”, Croatia made the Rome Statute an integral part of its national legislation, including penalizing, in its new Criminal Code, recently defined crime of aggression.

Croatia continues to fully cooperate with the ICTY and closely follows its decisions, as well as their future doctrinal and practical consequences.

Mr. President,

Negligence and rejection of the rule of law often lie at the root of conflicts.

They weaken the state institutions and undermine their independence, impartiality and effectiveness.

Croatia recognizes the critical importance of the rule of law in post conflict peacebuilding, peacekeeping and conflict prevention activities and fully supports greater coherence and mobilization of the UN system-wide expertise on this issue.

My country pays particular attention to rebuilding of national civilian capacities and institutions in creation and implementation of national peacebuilding strategies. We have already contributed to CAPMATCH, an online platform established to better match the demand and supply of specialized civilian capacities, and our ready to deploy our relevant expertise.

As the current Vice-Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, we continue to promote the centrality of the rule of law in daily struggle of conflict affected countries towards sustainable peace and development.

Without peace and the rule of law there can no development and, vice versa, without development there can be no durable peace and prosperity.

Croatia supports the reflection of linkages between security, justice and development issues in the forthcoming considerations of the UN development agenda.

Finally, Mr. President, allow me to reiterate the commitment of my government and my country regarding the application and full implementation of the rule of law.

In the past 20 years, Croatia has gone through a long and demanding journey: from a war-torn nation, host of UN peacekeeping missions and recipient of international humanitarian aid and development assistance, through post-conflict reconstruction, reconciliation and development, to the country at the doorstep of the EU membership, provider of development assistance and a participant in peace-keeping operations and peacebuilding efforts throughout the world.

On that journey, Croatia has made committed efforts to respect the rule of law principle, recognizing it as the very essence of any democratic society.

This principle remains the cornerstone of our national and international policy and we are looking forward to continue to work with our partners on enhancing, promoting and strengthening our joint agenda on this demanding issue.

Mr. President,

Let me conclude by expressing our full support to the Final Declaration resulting from this meeting.

Having in mind the cross-cutting nature of the rule of law agenda, we particularly support the General Assembly's decision to continue to develop further linkages between the rule of law and the three main pillars of the United Nations – peace and security, human rights and development – thus contributing to a more prosperous, peaceful and just world.

Thank you.