



**BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

**STATEMENT**

**By**

**H.E. Mr. Bakir IZETBEGOVIĆ,**

**Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina**

**at the**

**General Debate of the 71<sup>st</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

New York

21 September 2016

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

Peace and security, human rights and development are the pillars of the United Nations -- a founding promise to the world this Organization was created to safeguard. Yet, our world today is anything but peaceful and secure. It is marred with injustice, inequality and intolerance that erode the foundations of our humanity. We are witnessing human suffering of an unprecedented scale, reaching far beyond national boundaries or capacities. Poverty, hunger, disease, natural disasters and climate change afflict millions of our fellow human beings. Many states and societies are trapped in protracted conflicts, with cycles of violence claiming countless victims.

We are facing the worst forced-displacement crisis since the Second World War. Sixty million people have been forced to flee their homes because of wars, persecution, and human rights violations. They are scattered around the world, their livelihoods and communities shattered into pieces, their nations and cultures torn apart. Robbed of their dignity, living in despair in refugee camps, they are compelled to seek a better future on the borders of other countries. They are not faceless statistics, but human beings with every right to a future free of violence, a future of hope and opportunity. Their tragedy is our tragedy. Their future is our future.

This crisis requires not only a humanitarian response, but a sustainable political solution. It requires stronger political leadership and resolve, as well as rethinking of policy, operational and financing strategies at national, regional and international levels. But all too often narrow national interests impede the formulation of such joint responses. When crises transcend borders, like the current refugee and migrant crisis in the Middle East and in Europe, we must look broadly, not merely from the standpoint of national interests, because the consequences of our actions and omissions resonate beyond our borders.

As a country whose hundreds of thousands of citizens experienced the plight of being forced out of their homes, Bosnia and Herzegovina attaches a great significance to addressing this challenge. We recognize the importance and timely organization of the High-level meeting on large movement on refugees and migrants, and we welcome the adoption of the Outcome document that is clearly linked to the Agenda 2030. We hope the commitments Member States made in this meeting will have meaningful impact on the ground. In the Agenda 2030 we pledged that “no one will be left behind”, and committed to empower the most vulnerable. For the millions of refugees and internally displaced persons that means the ability to return to their homes, to be better integrated into their host societies, or to be settled elsewhere if needed. It means the difference between a life of aid dependency and the opportunity for a life of dignity and self-reliance.

Mr. President,

Bosnia and Herzegovina fully supports the Agenda 2030. As a newly elected member of the Economic and Social Council, we will play an active role in the implementation of this transformative blueprint for change. Our achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals will depend on the availability of support for national implementation -- primarily from the revised and improved Global partnership for sustainable development, which must be a true global platform for exchange of best practices in the field of finance, trade, technology and capacity building between Member States. We support the Global mechanism and the monitoring of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, which will outline critical milestones towards a coherent and inclusive follow up and review of the Agenda at the global level.

The Agenda 2030 requires us not only to transform “for people” but also “for the planet”. Our development must not come at the expense of our habitat. Unless we urgently take a coordinated global action to reverse the existing patterns of environmental degradation and climate change, we risk endangering the desired future for generations to come. Fulfilling the commitments of the Sendai Framework and the Paris Agreement is critical to protect development outcomes and adapt to the consequences of natural disasters and climate change, through risk-informed development. Bosnia and Herzegovina is already implementing the Strategy of adapting to climate change and low carbon development, with the aim of becoming a viable and advanced “green economy” by 2025.

We need to stay alert though. The Agenda 2030 is not the answer to all our problems. There is always room for inequality and injustice to thrive if our approach, acceptance and implementation are not cohesive and unified. What we make of the Agenda and how we build upon it will determine its results in improving opportunities for all people equally. Human rights are at the heart of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals, from ending poverty to reducing inequality and promoting inclusive societies. As we strive to bring people in from the margins, we must put human rights into the center of our actions, because they are the most powerful driver of peace and development. They are the golden standards we all committed to uphold, so our people can enjoy dignity, freedom and equality. They are a moral and legal framework that empowers people everywhere to fight injustice anywhere.

Mr. President,

We are deeply concerned about the erosion of world peace and security caused by new and protracted conflicts, especially in the Middle East.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, lasting over 60 years, has been the primary and constant source of instability in the Middle East. A new impetus to negotiations is urgently needed. We strongly support efforts to hold a peace conference that would bring a lasting and just resolution to this conflict, on the principles of international law and a consensus on peaceful co-existence of two independent states.

International peace and stability are dramatically undermined by the violence and crimes against the Syrian people. It is deeply troubling that the most influential global and regional actors have so far failed to find a peaceful solution to the crisis in Syria. Bosnia and Herzegovina fully supports the Geneva peace talks and efforts of International Syria Support Group to find a political solution to this conflict. The peaceful future of Syria rests upon respecting the will of the Syrian people, and allowing them to express that will in democratic elections.

The so-called “Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant” has severely destabilized Syria, Iraq and the broader Middle East, posing a grave international security threat. Its ideology, objectives and actions are contrary to all values and norms of our civilization. We condemn, in the strongest possible terms, the atrocities, systematic abuses of human rights and violations of international law committed by ISIL. As a member of the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL, Bosnia and Herzegovina will continue to contribute, within our means, to international efforts to degrade and defeat this terrorist organization.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Terrorism is a global threat that affects us all. No state or society is immune from it, and no state alone can counter it. With violent extremism on the rise, and a growing number of foreign terrorist fighters, terrorism is becoming an increasingly difficult challenge that requires a comprehensive response involving the collaboration of all States, employing not only security, but preventive measures as well. We face a problem that has deep and complex roots, that transcends national boundaries, and that cannot, and should not, be associated with any one religion, nationality or ethnic group.

Those who perpetrate, organize, and inspire terrorist attacks -- claiming to do so in the name of Islam -- want to turn Islam into an ideology of global fear. Violent extremism and terrorism are unacceptable from the viewpoint of any religion, including Islam. They undermine its system of values and its universal teachings of tolerance and coexistence.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is strongly committed to combating terrorism in all its forms. We are deeply concerned with the rise of violent extremism, and attach a great importance to countering it. We welcome the Secretary General's initiative and Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, as another useful tool in a comprehensive, whole-of-UN approach to preventing violent extremism.

Prevention of extremism and promotion of human rights cannot be separated. Inclusive governance and respect for the rule of law are of paramount importance. Political, economic and social injustices around the world contribute to the rise of despair and hopelessness, creating a fertile ground for the emergence of radicalism and violent extremism. There is ever more injustice in the imperfect world we live in, but actions causing even greater injustice are not the right response. Our governments must and will respond to violence with force and repressive measures. However, if that part of our response is not carried out precisely and selectively, with respect for human rights and the rule of law, it will only cause a new wave of radicalization. The real fight and ultimate victory must and can only be on the ideological level.

Our approach and strategy must be holistic. We must apply a wide range of policies and measures that address the economic and social conditions conducive to the spread of violent extremism, which terrorist organizations exploit to drive recruitment and radicalization. In particular, we must work harder to eliminate discrimination, prejudice and xenophobia in our societies, reduce poverty and inequality, improve education and expand opportunities, especially for our young generations.

Mr. President,

Engagement of the United Nations has never been more critical, as we face unprecedented challenges in confronting the surge in violence of various forms around the world. Global action, guided by the principles of international law, is required to put an end to the violence and instability in Ukraine, Syria, Iraq, Libya and other crisis areas. Ensuring protection of civilians and compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law is imperative. Neutrality and indifference lead to resentment and frustration, further emboldening those who leave devastation and sorrow in their wake.

Humanitarian aid can never serve as a substitute for solutions that address the root causes of conflict. Nor can it create the necessary conditions for lasting peace and stability. The main causes of modern conflicts are discrimination and exclusion, failures of governance, impunity, deep-rooted poverty and lack of opportunities, aggravated by the growing effects of climate change. In our increasingly interconnected world, we can no longer keep the impact of far-away conflicts outside our borders, nor can we ignore their global consequences.

Our past failures, which came at a very high human cost, should have taught us how to better prevent and end conflicts. The scenes from Syria or the Mediterranean shores are a painful reminder that we have not learned these lessons, and are still failing to turn our promises into actions.

Effectively addressing the causes of conflicts in a comprehensive manner requires deeper understanding of underlying social, cultural and economic factors, not just political and military ones, and broader, multidimensional vision and strategy in seeking solutions. Above all, stopping conflicts requires political leadership to mobilize the necessary will and resources for action. Such actions are neither risk-free, nor cost-free. But we owe it to our common humanity to take these actions.

We must act upon early warning signs of potential conflict. It is critically important to develop and strengthen shared frameworks for conflict risk analysis, including early warning mechanisms at the local, national, regional and international level. Bosnia and Herzegovina encourages better use of Articles 99 and 34 of the United Nations Charter by the Security Council, in order to put a greater emphasis on preventive diplomacy in situations which might give rise to conflict and threaten international peace and security. Early UN engagement and use of the Secretary General's good offices, combined with regional mediation efforts, can substantially reduce the risk of conflict. We support the United Nations in convening the "World Prevention Forum" by 2020, and we urge the Secretary General to develop a comprehensive plan to strengthen conflict prevention at the United Nations, based on lessons learned and recommendations from the recent review processes.

We recognize the value of introducing the United Nations peacebuilding efforts at an early stage, alongside peacekeeping activities. The contemporary peace and security environment demands increasingly complex peacekeeping missions with coherent mandates that effectively correspond to situations on the ground. We are proud to have contributed to the UN peacekeeping operations in the Congo and Mali with our military peacekeepers, and with police officers in South Sudan, Liberia, Cyprus and Afghanistan, almost a quarter of which were women. We will continue to actively contribute to international peace- and security- building efforts, with a strong commitment to further increasing the role of women in these operations.

Mr. President,

Bosnia and Herzegovina is deeply committed to the principles of the United Nations Charter, to multilateralism, and settling of international disputes and conflicts through peaceful means. We believe all United Nations Member States are equal in their rights and obligations, and should fully respect each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence.

Using the advantages of our geopolitical position, as a bridge between the East and the West and a meeting point of civilizations, we want to advance dialogue and understanding, and forge partnerships with friendly countries around the world. We strongly value and are committed to regional and sub-regional cooperation, and remain active in a number of regional initiatives, focusing on peacebuilding, migrations, cross-border security, and development issues.

At home and abroad, we will continue to uphold and promote good governance, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. And we will continue advocating use of all available legal mechanisms to seek and achieve justice for all victims of crimes against humanity, because we believe that truth and justice are a prerequisite for achieving lasting reconciliation, peace and security.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the past year we saw a renewed sense of unity and unprecedented levels of commitments. We agreed to the Sendai Framework, the Addis Ababa Action Plan, the Agenda 2030, the Agenda for Humanity and the historic Paris Agreement on Climate Change. We collectively committed to humanity, with renewed focus on conflict prevention and resolution, strengthened efforts towards sustainable development, equal opportunities for all, promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

Peace and security cannot be detached from either development or environmental agendas. Peace is not merely absence of violence. It is a freedom from fear and insecurity. There is no lasting peace and security when injustice and inequality are an everyday experience for millions of people, when basic rights and freedoms are denied to so many human beings. The resulting grievances make our states unstable and our societies vulnerable, and readily fuel extremism, radicalization and violence. Injustice and inequality diminish the human potential of our communities, leaving development and prosperity beyond their reach.

The road of progress goes from ending poverty to reducing inequality and building just, equitable, tolerant, open and inclusive societies, with respect for human rights and promotion of the rule of law at the core of our every action. History will judge us by the difference we make in the lives of millions of people who are suffering from marginalization, discrimination, poverty, malnutrition, disease, natural disasters and climate change. We must listen to their voices and respond to their needs, hopes and aspirations. We must find the will and courage to take urgent action to turn the agendas we agreed upon into instruments of true global change, honoring our pledge to humanity and leaving a legacy true to our values.

Thank you!