



**Statement of the President of the Republic of Costa Rica,
HE. Mr. Luis Guillermo Solís Rivera,
At the General Debate of the 72nd Session,
General Assembly of the United Nations,**

New York, September 19th 2017

**President of the Seventy-Second Session of the General Assembly of
the United Nations, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák**

Excellencies, Head of State and Government,

Distinguished delegates,

Dear friends,

Mr. President, Costa Rica congratulates you for your appointment and celebrates the priorities you have established under your leadership. I want to reiterate my country's commitment to work with you, along with the other Member States, in order to set the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, enforce without delay the Paris and Marrakech commitments, implement the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and reinforce world governance and multilateralism as spaces to preserve international peace and stability.

Mr. President,

Each word, declaration, and action adopted at these premises keeps alive Kant's hope and inspiring faith in humanity. Building a world from the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement, Beijing+20, Treaties on the Non-Proliferation of Weapons, and Treaties on the Prohibition and Disarmament of Nuclear Weapons, reveals that we are aware of the multiple challenges that we, Human Communities, face. We recall our firm belief in cooperative response to the most pressing issues to humanity. At the same time, these recent milestones are inspired by the enlightened understanding of those who, before us, and under critical conditions, stood up for a decent coexistence, defended Liberty as life mandate, and kept hope alive as a daily imperative.

As world leaders, we are charged with directing our people towards Sustainable Development. The ethical power of our actions should not be limited to our domestic policies, but transcend to this Assembly, where active engagement can generate well-being and tackle inequality, injustice, and violence, even if this implies generating inconvenience to those who refuse the world to be an open, unbiased, and inspiring hearth for us all. Thus, this aspiration has resistance and misconceptions.

Before the walls of shortsightedness and evil, Costa Rica has always chosen honest work; our lack of stature has not limited our restless capacity to give generously to others. As the main values for the full observance of human rights, my country has chosen compassion, solidarity, and peace-building. Our values have converted International Law, active multilateralism, and the rejection of environmental predation into the ideal mechanisms for conflict resolution inside and among world states. This is, essentially, our commitment to humankind.

COSTA RICA: THE FIRST COUNTRY TO SIGN THE AGREEMENT TO MEET SDG OBJECTIVES

In September 2016, Costa Rica became the first country to establish a national agreement to meet SDG Objectives. We included a special provision to include, along the process, the Heads of the Supreme Powers of the Republic, local government representatives, the business sector, religious groups, social organizations, and academia. They have actively engaged their agendas in the implementation of the SDG Objectives.

This initiative aligned the *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo* (National Development Plan) 2015-2018 with both the SDG's and targets for national and local programs and projects. Through consensus building, dialogue, and accountability, the PND established the functional strategy for SDG planning, implementation and follow-up.

Two years ago at this Assembly, I stated that Costa Rica committed to the design and implementation of the appropriate tools to wage a real and sustainable campaign against poverty. Given the multidimensional nature of poverty, we implemented the Multidimensional Poverty Index along with a functional and multi-actor governance structure. This became one of the most important breakthroughs. We reduced poverty in Costa Rica for the first time in the last seven years. This was achieved through an articulated and coordinated decision-making process, draft of initiatives, and implementation of domestic strategy.

On the occasion of the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, Costa Rica and another 42 countries submitted a national voluntary report on the implementation of the SDG objectives. In this sense, Costa Rica, along with the other member countries of the Central American Integration System, sponsored the harmonization of the regional agenda with these objectives.

Costa Rica is aware of the integral, universal, and multidimensional nature of the SDG. Therefore, we believe implementation requires political and governance innovation. *Leaving no-one behind* is a State and government responsibility, but these entities should not act alone. This is why, the 2030 Agenda should be based on consensus, generating synergy, creative participation, and on the commitment of multiple stakeholders and productive sectors. It should be based above all on this Assembly's commitment and call to action since *leaving no-one behind*--more than a motto--is a compelling call to action for all sectors in society.

I emphasize, therefore, the content and quality of Secretary-General's report on the repositioning of the UN development system to honour the ambitious 2030 Agenda objectives. I consider this to be the appropriate route to coordinate and undertake global actions that will respond to current and future specific Sustainable Development needs.

Within this framework, it is necessary to think about the needs of middle-income countries. I find it convenient to continue working on these efforts and on the interests of these countries so the United Nations system offers efficient, focused, and best coordinated support.

In these regards, Costa Rica wants to emphasize the importance, for other countries as well as the UN system of, rethinking the concept of per capita income as a reference for determining a country's development . Only a multidimensional vision of development, especially a multidimensional vision of poverty, will allow us to understand the needs of populations, families and their members in terms of access to healthcare, social equality, gender equality, and address social, economic, and environmental vulnerabilities, among other challenges of developing countries.

With all due respect, but with urgency, I request the Secretary General to promote spaces that will implement working strategies to strengthen the capabilities of these countries and will allow more efficiency when cooperating with middle-income and least developed countries.

For these countries, meeting the sustainable development goals will be impossible unless the economic, social and environmental problems are incorporated to the global roadmaps. As a universal forum, the UN system is in a privileged position to consolidate a cooperative strategy with middle-income countries.

Changing Development and Institutional Entrenchment

With indisputable authority, Amartya Sen has stated that in order to talk about development of any society, it is mandatory to analyse the life of its members. Economic success is not possible without taking the quality of life of the communities into account. That is, the quality of life of each of their members.

In this regard, minority groups that have been historically excluded from the full realization of their rights and those societies hosting them, must be given special regard to meet the 2030 Agenda.

We must be especially attentive of productive sectors such as family farming. Family Farming is the main source of income for 70% of the poor rural population worldwide, that is 40% of the world's population. Around 500 million of small farms provide 80% of the food consumed by developing countries, becoming, in many cases, the historical basis of the productive development of entire nations, as is the case in my country.

Family farming is essential to meet the sustainable development goals since it encompasses, in a comprehensive way, the SDG goals. It is the basis of sustainable food production, is essential for the environmental management of rural and marine territories where it is developed, and to biodiversity, it is the source of remarkable cultural manifestations of communities, and, is definitely, the cornerstone of countries' comprehensive development.

From this perspective, Costa Rica, along with countries from different parts of the world, will have the honour to present during this session a resolution stating "the Decade of Family Farming 2019-2028", inspired by the success of the International Year of Family Farming approved by the General Assembly in 2014.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Gender equality, Mr. President, remains an objective of the greatest importance for all countries. Every day, women strive for a world where the full recognition and exercise of their rights is more tangible. Their fights are inherent to the building of truly democratic societies and the inclusive coexistence in all our countries. Even more, the fight to achieve full women's rights is an exercise that needs to be fully implemented to make the SDG's a reality within the time expected by this Organization.

Literature is extensive and political declarations are decisive by stressing the sensible democratic deficit and prejudices in terms of development derived from persistent patriarchal structures forged in former times, but remained perpetuated today because of the lack of education on rights and respect for democratic coexistence.

Gender inequality is not an alien topic that manifests in a hidden way within the inner relations of countries beyond our sight. Inequality is everywhere before our eyes. Take a moment to look around; it is imperative to take concrete actions and make more women our peers fully at these important premises.

My country has understood this commitment and embraces the proposals of the International Gender Champions which aim to reverse gender inequality within the United Nations and take specific actions in this 72nd Session to call upon these gender champions in order to promote gender balance within the delegations attending the General Debate during the high-level week of the General Assembly.

Women's effective participation in the economic sectors of their societies has a deep and significant impact in other areas of autonomy because a woman economically empowered is a person with the tools and capabilities necessary to make a positive impact in her community.

While it is true that many women work, are entrepreneurs, and work in the public and private sectors, millions work in the informal sector, and others do domestic work and unpaid care. It is estimated that the unpaid work of women is equivalent to 10,000 million US dollars per year, or 13% of the world GDP. However, if I were to choose a singular insulting and absurd example of this discrimination, the one that causes me the most indignation is that the average woman's salary is 25% lower than the average man's for the same job.

I had the honour to co-chair the High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment along with Mrs. Simona Scarpaleggia, CEO of IKEA Switzerland, at the request of the former Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, and UN Women. The final report, in which women worldwide participated, concludes that:

- it is essential to expand social protection coverage and the access to justice with due process;

- Care is also an economic activity which contribution should be reflected in the country's productivity. Men should have a shared responsibility of fulfilling this labour and private companies as well as public institutions must facilitate it;
- women have the challenge of accessing digital and financial services as well as being tenures in land redistribution;
- it is necessary that enterprises recognize women leadership;
- it is urgent that macroeconomic policies of States empower women and promote decent jobs;
- laws causing and perpetuating discrimination must be amended and those encouraging equality must be enacted;
- affirmative policies on hiring women must be extended to public institutions and private companies and women-owned businesses must be promoted;
- it is necessary to reinforce the support to informal workers and agricultural workers.

With no hesitation, it is necessary to adopt a multidimensional and inter-sectoral strategy to address the barriers to women's economic empowerment. In this sense, Costa Rica has a public policy that guarantees women's employability on an equal basis. As its main objective, this policy addresses the work access and permanence gap, which main actor is the private sector, as the main source of employment and national development. This practice is part of the new tendency of international markets and global economy, where companies seek to increase their productivity through innovation, improvement of work environment, talent attraction, and adoption of value and practices under a Human Rights-based approach.

Nevertheless, we recognize that multiple challenges remain towards substantive equality for women. Our determination is to achieve women's incorporation in paid work, with measures that eradicate division based on sex in the workplace and facilitate economic autonomy and high quality of life as necessary conditions for the full enjoyment of Human Rights.

Today, I would like to recognize all women on Earth. You are capable

enough to move ahead despite the rigid and rude patriarchal heritage that tends to not acknowledge your abilities and accomplishments and that fills with doubts and dangers your road towards your full autonomy. You are an example for others: your internal strength leads you to break the chains of oppression, rise above tearing migrations and forced displacement, free entire communities for unexpected forms of slavery. And within this grim march that your life is, you devote with deep passion to your people, with whom you are sensible and protective even when your love and generosity are not understood nor repaid. You are masters of resilience, since you have learned how to deal with the wrong people and painful moments. You know how to fulfil your roles of mother, partner, friend, or leader and you dedicate to them even if you need to sacrifice yourself because of a superior responsibility, a greater good that you accomplish with sincere devotion, aware of the risks and bearing in mind that you are an example to other women that follow your steps.

Definitely, it's not easy being a Khaleesi. Whether in fiction or in real life, the goal of equality is much greater than we that are circumstantially here. Today is a good day to look ourselves in the mirror, start to create truly equal relations, and take this long night to its end.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. President,

Our grandparents could not foresee the consequences that industrialization and business models would have on climate. We, grandparents of future generations, can. That is why we cannot be indifferent. It is true that for many decades humanity has had the resources and scientific knowledge to measure with precision the behaviour of endless variables related to the environment and can design future scenarios of weather conditions in different world regions and their impact on humans and their social, productive, and cultural activities. These capabilities commit us at levels seldom achieved throughout the history of humankind. We are endorsed by an ethic responsibility about the future of life on Earth and the interaction between human groups and their environment.

There is enough evidence to support the idea that a transformative solution to climate change is within human capabilities. That is why we welcome the French initiative of the Global Pact for the Environment, which would complement the legal framework of the international agreements adopted by the UN in 1966. We also express our great satisfaction in being a member

of the group of friends that under the leadership of Slovenia, Switzerland, Morocco, the Maldives, and Costa Rica, promotes the resolution on Human Rights and the Environment, articulated within the Human Rights Council.

Also, along with countries of the Alliance of Latin America and the Caribbean (AILAC, in Spanish), we have exercised a positive leadership position in the negotiations of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, building bridges between the negotiating groups and making proposals.

Our countries, Mr. President, must adopt increasingly ambitious positions on environmental conservation as well as in the fight against climate change, understanding them as the ineluctable right of every human being and future generations of living in a healthy and ecologically balanced environment.

Mr. President, please count on the unconditional and unrestricted support of the Costa Rican people in promoting this vital agenda.

With satisfaction, I would like the plenary to know that the shared leadership of Chile and Costa Rica has caused Latin America to move towards establishing a regional instrument on the rights of access to information, participation, and justice on environmental matters.

This initiative seeks to produce more effective agreements in the context of socio-environmental conflicts through an environmental governance scheme, in which the State acts as facilitator in agreement and decision-making spaces with the participation of all interested and affected stakeholders. It includes the principles of precaution, repair, and non-regression.

We reaffirm the aspiration of directing our economy towards carbon neutrality as part of Pre-2020 voluntary actions; we also deepen our long-term commitments towards decarbonising the economy. Our electricity matrix continues to be a global example of planning and use of renewable energies thanks to the long periods of energy generation based solely on renewable sources, for instance water, wind, geothermal, biomass and sunlight.

In addition to the compensation process of our forests, we add the reduction of emissions in critical sectors such as transport, livestock, and waste. We

have defined an absolute emission limit by 2030, equivalent to a decrease in emissions of 25% compared to 2012. This places us in a privileged place to become a green centre for management, innovation, and knowledge transfer. We invite our strategic partners to join this effort.

It is clear that we cannot not improve the health of our oceans if we do not change on land production and consumption. In this sense, we recently issued the *Política Nacional de Saneamiento de Aguas Residuales* (National Policy on Wastewater Sanitation) that seeks to stop pollution resulting from land-based activities and reverse its cumulative effects; we also issued the *Estrategia Nacional de Sustitución de Plásticos* (National Strategy for Plastics Replacement) which it is intended to replace the use of straws, coffee and plastic containers. In addition, we work to end destructive fishing practices and articulate efforts for coastal populations to develop from the use and sustainable management of marine-coastal resources.

Also in regards to conservation, we presented the *Política Nacional de Humedales* (National Wetlands Policy), which seeks the ecological rehabilitation of Costa Rican wetland ecosystems and the promotion of actions for their sustainable and participatory use, as well as the establishment of a planned framework in the long term to achieve the restoration of the national wetland systems and ensure a responsible use of them that will contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of communities.

We believe that all these efforts not only favour the attention and mitigation of climate change but also its impact on Human Rights and public policies that promote gender equality, non-discrimination and the enjoyment of the rights of indigenous peoples.

That is why we also welcome the process of preparing the Global Compact for Regular, Safe and Orderly Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees.

It is remarkable to see here the principle of progressivity of Human Rights, an essential principle which implies the extension of the range of rights granted and from which we cannot step back. But above all, it entails that we are called to provide our inhabitants with more and better guarantees that allow the free and full exercise of each of these rights.

Peace and Security

The 20th Century witnessed some of the greatest and most atrocious conflicts that humanity has experienced. The end of World War II marked an even greater threat, one with the potential -now possible- to destroy us as a species. The nuclear arms race was, for much of the second half of the last century, a constant concern that threatened the continuity of the human family.

Costa Rica sees with great concern the events developing in the Korean peninsula. The increase in the warmongering rhetoric in that place of the Asian continent means a serious and real threat to the peace and stability not only of the region, but of the world. Costa Rica looks with amazement at how, almost three decades after the end of the Cold War, ghosts appeared once again after being previously banished from our world where it is now more necessary to provide people with medicine than rifles; more schools than military infrastructure; and more projects to provide clear water than main projects to produce weapons of mass destruction.

That is why we strongly and vehemently condemn the nuclearisation of the Korean peninsula. We will always be supportive of dialogue, active diplomacy, and multilateralism. We call on the parties involved as well as the United Nations Security Council to take an active role in avoiding escalations of tension that could lead to dire consequences and from which there is a risk of non-return. We cannot remain silent or stand idly. We demand that the Security Council acts immediately to contain this situation, as it is its responsibility.

Mr. President,

We see with hope, joy and pride, that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was finally approved in July of this year, a process in which I congratulate the Costa Rican Ambassador Elayne Whyte, who, as president of the conference during the negotiations, led the process with courage and great skill. That effort, together with that of the participating delegations, made a dream come true after more than seven decades.

This Treaty is a strong message that most of United Nations member states do not support, do not accept, and do not consider nuclear weapons as legitimate and that the international community clearly states that nuclear

weapons are not only immoral, ethically repugnant, but are henceforth, illegal.

The adoption of this new norm of international law that absolutely prohibits nuclear weapons is therefore established in all circumstances and provides a solid and legally binding framework for the destruction and total elimination of nuclear weapons in a transparent, irreversible, and verifiable manner within specified time frames.

As an unarmed democracy resting its defence on International Law, we are satisfied that in addition to prohibiting the development, production, manufacture, transfer, possession, storage, location, installation, and deployment of nuclear weapons, the Treaty explicitly prohibits the threat of its use, thereby also banning so-called doctrines of nuclear deterrence security.

Many will say that all this effort is meaningless, since none of the nuclear powers had wanted to be part of it. I tell them they are wrong. The desire of the 122 countries that approved the text of the Treaty is the legitimate voice of people who are lovers of peace and of the defense of humanity. Any effort to be on the side of disarmament will never be nonsense. Being on the side of peace will never be a mistake. Costa Rica applauds these 122 countries and all those who will sign the Treaty tomorrow and makes a vehement call for others to join in, so that we can ensure a future for us and for those who will come after us. It is our responsibility to continue to support the creation of peace so that we can build the world we dream about.

Costa Rica is constantly shocked by the terrorist attacks that unfortunately happen anywhere in the world with uncomfortable consistency. We want once again to express our absolute and unequivocal condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, no matter who commits it, in what place, or for what purposes, as well as the need to bring its perpetrators to justice. The fight against terrorism must be framed in strict observance of international law, including human rights law, international humanitarian law, and international refugee law.

I wish to emphasize the crucial role of International Law as a legitimate mechanism for settling disputes which we, as states, must settle. To this respect, unilateral economic sanctions lack efficiency as ways to punish governments but cause serious injuries to the rights of the peoples to

well-being and development, thus, once again I would like to express the opposition of my country to the embargo the United States has imposed against Cuba for 55 years, carrying high human, economic, and social costs for its population.

Sixty nine years ago Costa Rica decided to change weapons and soldiers for notebooks and teachers. 69 years ago Costa Rica decided to believe, strengthen, and promote International Law as the civilized way to resolve their differences with others and today, 69 years later, Costa Rica continues believing in this way.

The original goal of the birth of the United Nations was to avoid the scourge of war for future generations. Since 1945, the world has changed dramatically. The threats, against peace, stability and global security are increasingly diverse and complex; however, there is something that has not changed a bit, and it is the intrinsic and natural impulse to strive inexhaustibly to reach the dignified and supreme universal values based on law and the prevalence of strong, just institutions over brute force. That is the essence of this Institution: to create and sustain peace and the protection of the welfare of citizens of all member states

The Andalusian poet Federico García Lorca said that "theatre is the poetry that rises up from the book and becomes human. And on becoming so it speaks and yells, cries and despairs." Today we have the obligation to rise from the words we have spoken and to make them a reality. Today we must bring hope back to the heart of every inhabitant of this planet, and ensure that this hope is manifested in a dignified life, which is based on the guarantee of fulfilment of their rights and the entirety of their freedom.

Although the struggle for human rights is a long-standing historical enterprise, the planet has never had such high levels of education, peace, and fewer armed conflicts as in our time. This should not become a call to demobilization or complacency, but rather an indication that, despite everything and even when there are regions still dominated by war and structural violence, human society is on the right path, with much gratitude owed to the efforts of this Organization.

We own our future. Despite the pain generated by injustice and irrationality that still prevail in our time, there are more people convinced of goodness, solidarity, freedom, justice, peace, forgiveness and reconciliation, than

those who sponsor death, pain, torture, militarization or the predominance of fear over our beautiful capacity to create.

Mr. President,

This will be the last speech I address to this forum as President of Costa Rica. Next year, in fulfilment of a civic ritual that my country has celebrated for many decades, my people will send a new representative to bear his voice in this Organization, of which we feel very proud. As it will be many times in the future, because inevitably, the presidential mandate, when living in democracy, requires the permanent renewal of its leadership.

Thinking on this moment for months, I wish to dedicate these closing words to my daughters and sons on behalf of all delegates and their children. The new generations that we have begotten deserve to be acknowledged in this Universal Forum because in many ways they are the beneficiaries of what their parents solve here, both in a metaphorical sense, and in a deeply human one. I want Mónica, Cristina, Beatriz, Diego, Ignacio, and little Inés to know that every time a father or mother has come to this podium to preach about peace and justice, reconciliation and solidarity, he or she did it thinking about them, in their present and future. I want them to know that every time a father or mother has claimed from this rostrum for Human Rights, for equality between women and men or for the defence of Nature against the irrational forces of human greed or consumerism, he or she has felt responsible for the well-being of their children and the individuals who will inherit the future. And I want them to know also that their parents, and before them other Costa Rican fathers and mothers who have stood before the General Assembly, did it so with the great pride of being representatives of worthy, hardworking and brave people who love freedom, builds peace day to day, and that will always defend Human Rights as the supreme good of our universal family.

That should make them feel proud and happy. Proud of being part of a historical continuum that, like the waves of the sea, will happen again and again while the world has hope and aspirations of human progress, and happy in the certainty that our work in favour of Justice and Peace was not -nor has it been- in vain.

Mr. President, Excellences,

I hope that the United Nations will continue to be the preferred space of understanding among the peoples of the world. Not a conflict-free space, which unfortunately is not the natural condition of our species, but a meeting point and agreement to make a reality the aspirations of human progress that require survival. And I also hope that this session can be conducted within an increasingly luminous framework of demilitarization and denuclearization, the only ways that will make this survival possible beyond all efforts to guarantee it.

And I also hope from the bottom of my heart, that all Nations of Earth represented here are happy in peace and capable of asserting the wise biblical admonition of "beating swords into ploughshares" which is another way of saying "love your neighbour as yourself".

Thank you.