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**Statement by
H.E. Mr. Zoran Zaev
President of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia**

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72th Session of the United Nations General Assembly Plenary Meeting

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

Dear Colleagues,

I have the honor to address this important forum and to share with you the positions of the Republic of Macedonia on the most important issues on the United Nations' agenda.

I am convinced that we have the same goal: world peace.

I am convinced that we share the same commitments: decent life for all in a sustainable environment.

I am convinced that we will find common solutions to our common challenges.

Peace, the commitment for decent life and joint solutions are the values that Republic of Macedonia used to overcome a deep political crisis that sent waves throughout our region.

We are a small country full with diversity. We managed to overcome difficult challenges because we united around common values. This is why the Republic of Macedonia today is again free, secure and stable. Republic of Macedonia is a friend with all of its neighbors and is firmly oriented toward full integration in NATO and EU.

As Head of the Delegation of the Republic of Macedonia, I want to congratulate His Excellency Miroslav Lajcak of the Slovak Republic on his election to the prestigious position of President of the Seventy Second Session of the UN General Assembly.

I would also like to express our full support to Secretary General Guterres. We wish him much success in carrying through his comprehensive and ambitious, but very much needed agenda for transformation and adjustment of the United Nations to the demanding tasks and our common existing and emerging challenges.

UN must continue to do more and better to meet those challenges and stand the test of time. We must be vigilant and sustained, but also provide innovative and adaptable conflict prevention, sustainable development and management reform mechanisms, while building on the foundations enshrined in the UN Charter and other core documents.

Mr. President,

The world is plagued by severe humanitarian crisis, protracted and new conflicts, intensification of terrorist attacks and violent extremism, human rights abuses and increasing climate change effects.

Different in scope and weight, those challenges become more complex. They require a wide-ranging response. While we were able to mitigate the consequences for some, others remain unabated.

Just a few weeks ago we witnessed devastating natural disasters in the Mexican Gulf and South Asia. This is a harsh reminder that our Planet is altering and we all have an obligation to do our best to mitigate, and hopefully even revert the consequences. We can progress if we are united.

Mr. President,

Promotion and protection of human rights, democracy and the rule of law must remain at the core of our action. Despite the fact that the UN has a robust human rights architecture, the current blatant human rights violations around the globe, widespread impunity and lack of accountability, remind us that there is much to be done.

Monstrous terrorist attacks have increased. Our actions must focus on prevention of violent extremism and radicalization as major factors for terrorist recruitment. The establishment of the new structure of the UN Office for Countering Terrorism where one of the priorities areas is prevention was a welcome step. On our part, we also work on a national strategy on the prevention of violent extremism and radicalization.

I am aware that there are different approaches to this crucial issue, as we have divergent views on many others. However, I would like to urge you not to focus on our differences, but on our primary responsibilities to act robustly for the common benefit.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery continues to jeopardize global security. The implementation of the UN Security Council resolution 1540 is key to minimize possible disastrous consequences for the generations to come. In that regard, let me underline that we are deeply alarmed by the continued unilateral actions of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. They conduct nuclear tests and missile launches despite the repeated calls by the international community to fully comply with the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. We believe that peaceful denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula is a viable avenue and therefore urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to immediately abandon its nuclear and missile programs and to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Ban Test Treaty.

Mr. President,

Let me briefly comment on the main theme of the 72nd UNGA debate” Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet”.

States must remain focused on the implementation of the new sustainable development agenda we agreed at the 70th Anniversary of our Organization. This remarkable undertaking laid the foundations for future development framework. This has implications on many other important areas of common concern.

Many vital issues for global prosperity are related to its implementation. Therefore, it is important to continue to encourage and build new avenues of cooperation and new partnerships among us. This is central for the integration of the economic, environmental and social dimensions of sustainability. This is the fundamentals for development, a hopeful future, and our peace, stability and security.

On national level, our efforts to transform into practice agreed goals are included in the new UNDAF program entitled “Partnership for Sustainable Development: UN Strategy 2016-2020”.

Allow me to refer to the last year important Summit on the issue of large movements of refugees and migrants. This is a global phenomenon, caused by different reasons, with diverse implications. The UN adopted a comprehensive

political declaration and pledged to intensify international cooperation, in particular among the countries of origin or nationality, transit and destination.

The Republic of Macedonia supports and takes part in the ongoing consultations processes on the two compacts: refugees and migrants. We expect an outcome that will address all aspects of the global phenomena. Let me remind you that last couple of years hundreds of thousands of migrants transited through my country and the region. Even though we faced complex challenges at that time, we managed to provide humanitarian assistance to the people in need.

Mr. President,

As we have to adapt globally, we must also do homework and act as responsible governments to secure and provide better future and prosperity to our people.

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia confirms its dedication to fundamental democratic values, good governance, rule of law and the respect of human rights. We overcame a deep political and institutional crisis through our resolute stand in defense of these fundamentals. Our understanding is that democracy needs to be driven by civic engagement from bottom up. Societies are better off when decision-making is a comprehensive, inclusive and transparent. Public policies need to work for citizens' well-being.

My government has laid out an ambitious reform plan, 3-6-9 Plan, with short, medium and long-term measures. Our goal is to restore democracy, build professional and independent institutions and improve the standard of living for each citizen. Our aim is to expedite the integration of Republic of Macedonia into EU and NATO.

From the depths of the political crisis we emerged stronger and we were able to contribute to regional stability and regional cooperation. Those of you that know Balkan history, know that our region was not always labelled positively. I strongly believe that we have a new chance to make a change – not only in perceptions, but in substance. Over the past few months, the Government of Republic of Macedonia has strongly promoted a new approach to our neighbors. We demonstrated capacity to overcome open issues. We articulated and acted on our national interests. At the same time, we were fully aware and respectful of the national interests of our neighbors. Our policy is based on solving issues through dialogue and cooperation. We hope that it can inspire others and incite new approach to bilateral relations in our region.

As a positive step forward let me underscore the signing of a bilateral agreement on friendship, good-neighborliness and cooperation with Bulgaria. This is a joint success of the two countries.

This General Assembly is the 25th participation of the Republic of Macedonia, as an independent state. Next year, we will be marking a quarter of century of our UN membership. However, this anniversary is also marked with the dispute over how my country should be referred to. This dispute has unilateral consequences to our development and perspectives.

The Interim Agreement of 1995 laid the foundations to normalize relations between Macedonia and Greece. At present the two countries are implementing confidence building measures. This is a very positive development. We have a fresh impetus to overcome the long-standing bilateral dispute.

I would say we both made certain mistakes at different times, but the main goal now is to close the issue. I firmly believe that we must seize the momentum, discuss in bona fide and resolve the issue for our shared future. We highly value the continuous efforts of the Personal Envoy of the UN Secretary General His Excellency, Mr. Matthew Nimetz and the good offices he provides to that end. I firmly believe that there is a way to overcome the problem that Greece has with our constitutional name. For a change, let us try to approach it from a positive point of view.

Maintaining good neighborly and friendly relations is a two-way avenue. We are committed to do our job and expect the same of our neighbors. This message was already clearly sent to our friends and partners. I would like to reaffirm it here, from this podium, where all of us are recalling the Universal Charter's principles and goals.

Mr. President,

The World can be a very noisy place, but the most important things in the World can be very quiet. I believe that if we listen to our people, then we can hear the World.

In conclusion, I want to underline that the Republic of Macedonia remains a staunch supporter of multilateralism. We will continue to work with you and with all UN Member States on jointly reinforcing world peace and security, on promoting human rights, on achieving the sustainable development goals and on all other issues that are crucial for the people we represent. I thank you.