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**Statement
by
H.E. Mr. Miroslav Cerar
Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia
at the 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly**

New York, 21 September 2017

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellences,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by congratulating His Excellency Miroslav Lajčák upon his election as the President of the 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly. I wish him every success in discharging his duties. Mr. President, you can count on Slovenia's full support. Allow me also to express gratitude to the outgoing President of the 71st Session, His Excellency Peter Thomson for his important contribution to the work of the General Assembly over the past year.

I would also like to congratulate His Excellency António Guterres upon his election as the Secretary-General. I commend his determination to promote the United Nations, its values and its goals, and his tireless endeavours to strengthen the Organisation.

Excellences,

The world continues to confront challenges to international peace and security. These are ever more complex and intertwined. Shocking images of human suffering are our daily reality. The consequence of armed conflicts, degrading environment, famine, lack of economic opportunities, grave breaches of human rights, and terrorism are just some of the global challenges. To be able to address them, effective international cooperation with the UN at its core is essential. We have the mandate and the responsibility to act. We must stand united to address global challenges together.

Despite the mentioned threats, I'm encouraged by a new dynamic and a strong push by the Secretary-General to bolster multilateralism and the UN reform agenda. I commend his strong will to make the UN stronger and fitter to serve as the bedrock of the international rules-based order. More than ever we need a strong UN to be one of the key actors for providing security, stability and life with dignity for all.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Two years ago we achieved a milestone in agreeing on our development road map. Together, the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)** and the **Paris Agreement** provide a framework and a vision for a more sustainable future of our planet and prosperity for all.

Now a true test is their implementation. This is not the time to go back on our promises. We need to turn them into real progress that will benefit people around the globe. Slovenia has embarked on this path with a sense of urgency. This is demonstrated, among others, in **Slovenia's high ranking in the SDG Index and Dashboards Report 2017**. Namely, **Slovenia is among top 10 out of 157 measured countries in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals**.

We are strongly engaged in protecting the **environment** and in ensuring its sustainability. We are determined to raise awareness about the key factors shaping our sustainable future. For example, we recognize the key role of bees and other pollinators in preventing hunger, ensuring food security, improving human health, and in preserving the environment and its biodiversity. In this context we are proposing to the General Assembly to adopt the decision to declare the international day of bees and, therefore, announce May 20 as **World Bee Day**. I would like to thank all the states that already expressed support for this initiative and encourage others to do so.

Achieving sustainable development is only possible if the global community works together in a firm partnership between governments, international organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector.

The same is true of large global **migration and refugee flows**. The shared responsibility and solidarity should be the guiding principle of our global approach. In this spirit Slovenia is constructively engaged in the process of consultations on the *Global compact on safe, orderly and regular migration* and the *Global compact on refugees*. We believe that the adoption of both global compacts in 2018 will be another major milestone in our path towards ensuring a life of dignity for all.

Excellences,

Without respect for **human rights** there can be no peace, freedom, ~~security or development. The United Nations have been instrumental in~~ promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms worldwide. But let's not forget that the primary responsibility for the fulfilment of human rights lies with the states.

Slovenia, as a current **member of the Human Rights Council**, is a strong supporter of human rights. In that spirit we continue to advocate a progressive approach to human rights issues, enhancing protection norms and standards at all levels.

Our main focus is given to the rights of **children**, to the support of **gender equality and the empowerment of women** as well as to the rights of **older persons** and in this context also the importance of **the intergenerational collaboration**.

There is still much to be done before we can ensure a life with dignity for all without discrimination.

More must also be done to mitigate harm to civilians, especially in the context of armed conflicts, and to prevent all forms of **sexual violence**. It is particularly despicable when people deployed to protect civilians engage in abuse. We therefore underline the need for a zero tolerance policy on all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Respect for and the implementation of international treaties, decisions of international courts and tribunals and other sources of international law is indispensable for a functioning global community. Respect for the obligations arising from treaties and for other sources of international law is also embedded in the United Nations Charter. It is the very foundation of international peace and security. Moreover, it is an important guarantor of friendly relations and cooperation among states. Slovenia recognizes the essential role of the **rule of law and international law** and has hence placed their respect in the very centre of our foreign policy.

In the rule of law context, ending impunity for the most serious international crimes remains an important goal for my government. Slovenia is committed to promoting international criminal justice, in particular the **International Criminal Court (ICC)**.

The principles enshrined in the UN Charter attest to the natural partnership between the UN and the International Criminal Court. This relationship is expected to advance even further with the activation of the ICC's jurisdiction over the crime of aggression, which is anticipated by the end of this year. We express our strong support for the swift ~~activation of the Kampala Amendments on the crime of aggression.~~

Understandably, the primary responsibility to prosecute atrocity crimes continues to rest with states. Slovenia, together with other leading states, will continue to actively pursue the improvement of the international legal framework for **mutual legal assistance and extradition** for domestic prosecution of the most serious international crimes.

Excellences,

Years and years of horrific war in Syria, conflicts in Afghanistan, Yemen, Iraq, Libya and Mali, and dire situations like those in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, to name just a few, continue to represent particular sources of concern. We call on all relevant parties to refrain from the use of force and invest in political dialogue.

Violent extremism and crimes committed by terrorist groups continue to plague the world. We must do all we can to prevent and stop them, in particular by providing viable alternative opportunities for youth. The UN plays a key role in **countering terrorism**, including the prevention of violent extremism. In this regard Slovenia welcomes the reform of the UN Counter Terrorism architecture. Slovenia also welcomes the resolution of the General Assembly which will strengthen the capability of the UN system to assist member states in implementing the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

As a strong supporter of **non-proliferation and disarmament** in the field of weapons of mass destruction, Slovenia is committed to treaty-based nuclear disarmament and arms control. We are of firm belief that we have to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons progressively through the full implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). In this regard we strongly condemn the DPRK's violations of Security Council resolutions and of its international commitments. They pose a serious threat to peace and security in the region and wider.

We must intensify our efforts to **sustain peace** everywhere, but most immediately in a wide range of fragile and conflict affected states. Conflicts cannot be prevented or resolved by addressing consequences alone; we must address the underlying causes. For this we need to think long term. The UN can help to defuse latent conflicts. Whenever possible we should opt for **diplomacy, mediation and conflict prevention**.

Excellences,

The emphasis must be on "doing more collectively, timely and effectively". This can be achieved only by a strong, robust, adaptable, knowledgeable and responsible United Nations. This is why Slovenia is very supportive of the **reform efforts of the Secretary-General**. Different parts of the UN system must be better coordinated. Duplication must be avoided, and the common goal must be to achieve tangible results.

Let me conclude by assuring you that Slovenia is committed to ~~supporting the UN, and determined to work with all partners to deliver~~ tangible, meaningful results that will advance peace, security, development and human rights for all.

Thank you.