

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Petro Poroshenko,
President of Ukraine,
during the General Debate
of the 72nd session of the United Nations General Assembly**

September 20, 2017

Distinguished Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of Ukraine, I sincerely congratulate the honorable Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election as President of the 72nd session of the General Assembly.

Mr. President, Ukraine fully supports all six priorities defined by you for the upcoming session and is ready to assist you in your noble efforts.

A lot must be done to translate our common vision of a peaceful, prosperous and equal world into reality.

The spiral of violence continues to affect more and more countries and regions.

Transnational terrorism, use of force in international relations, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, refugee crisis, poverty, human rights violations and environmental fragility are only some of the challenges we face.

The scope of threats demands our joint resolute response.

It is time to act and we have a very narrow window of opportunity to avoid sliding down into irreversible chaos.

The United Nations should be at the forefront of this process.

Ukraine has always advocated the need to reform the United Nations to meet the most urgent global challenges timely and adequately.

In this regard, we welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General, since the first day of his mandate, to develop and implement a robust, comprehensive UN reform agenda.

No less than we welcome and support the US initiative to promote an effective and meaningful reform of the United Nations.

A comprehensive reform of the Security Council is long overdue.

We hope that this session will herald a new momentum in the Intergovernmental Negotiations on a blueprint for Security Council reform.

Mr. President,

Let me take this chance to state clearly that we in Ukraine cannot agree more with the call for the sovereignty to be universally respected and guaranteed.

This very conclusion was timely and rightly raised yesterday from this podium.

When the UN was set up, it was designed to maintain peace and security in the world based on principles of respect for sovereignty and integrity of borders.

The founding nations, among those was Ukraine as well, aimed at securing the world where the sovereign right of free choice to be respected.

So was this principle to be guarded by P5 in the name of sustainable peace and security.

That was the principle that happened to be so blatantly violated against my own country by one of the P5.

This is the principle which is to be back on track upon whatever means and tools we have at hand.

And Ukraine is a right place to invest into this noble endeavor, in the name of sustainable peace and security.

That is what millions of Ukrainians have struggled for since the beginning of the Russian aggression in 2014 in Donbas and Crimea.

A three-year-long war with Russia has resulted in 10 thousand people killed, 7% of Ukrainian territory occupied, 20% of Ukrainian economy and industrial output is seized, destroyed or simply stolen.

However, the most horrific thing in this situation is that the Kremlin has consciously chosen the tactics of increasing human sufferings.

The occupied Crimean peninsula, according to the human rights activists, has turned into a territory of repressions.

Anyone disagreeing with Kremlin risk their freedom and even life.

Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars get arrested even for posts in social networks or, as it was in case of Crimean farmer Volodymyr Balukh in December 2016, for putting a Ukrainian national flag on a private residence.

Persecution of the leaders of the Mejlis – the representative organ of Crimean Tatars, whose activities were banned by the Russian occupiers continues.

Only a week ago, Ahtem Chygoz, Deputy Head of the Mejlis, was sentenced to 8 years of prison for standing up against the Russian occupation.

Another Deputy Head of the Mejlis, Ilmi Umerov, with serious health problems, remains under house arrest, not even allowed to leave Crimea for medical treatment.

Russia blatantly violates the UN General Assembly Resolution 71/205 "Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol".

It keeps ignoring all requests of the Office of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to ensure proper and full access of the international human rights monitoring missions to Crimea.

The Kremlin pays no respect to the provisional measures of the International Court of Justice imposed on it.

The ICJ urged Russia to refrain from maintaining or imposing limitations on the ability of the Crimean Tatar community to conserve its representative institutions, including the Mejlis, and to ensure the right for Ukrainian citizens to study in Ukrainian language.

Such disregard of Russia's international obligations must receive proper response of the international community.

The international community has to keep a close eye on Crimea to prevent a new genocide inspired by modern proponents of Stalin's totalitarian ideology against the Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians.

I rely on support of your delegations for Ukraine's initiatives to ensure observance of human rights in the temporarily occupied Crimea, in particular a further respective UN GA resolution.

We need to strengthen the international regime of de-occupation of Crimea.

The fact that at the highest international level – UN General Assembly – Russia was recognized as an occupying power, proves that we are on the right track.

The time has come to establish an international group of friends of Ukrainian Crimea to coordinate our common steps.

We count on coordinated and targeted support of our international partners.

Militarization of Crimea is another security threat that affects the whole of Southern and Eastern Europe as well as North Africa and the Middle East.

Ukraine strongly condemns numerous military exercises conducted in the occupied Crimea as well as close the borders of Ukraine, in particular "West-2017".

Together with our neighbors and partners we urge Russia to ensure full compliance with its commitments under the OSCE Vienna Document and other international rules concerning military activities.

The security and human rights situation in Donbas remains no less dramatic than in Crimea.

This year Ukraine initiated three major ceasefire attempts - Easter, Harvest and Back-to-School ceasefires. Yet again, Russian occupation troops and their proxies violated them almost immediately.

In breach of the Minsk agreements, Russia keeps its regular military and continues to supply heavy weapons and ammunition to the occupation troops in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

It flatly denies the establishment of the OSCE permanent control over Ukraine-Russia border.

The release of hostages within the Minsk process is completely deadlocked.

A list of Ukrainian hostages in Donbas grows constantly. People are captured deliberately. Their only fault is that they have a pro-Ukrainian position.

We remember the fate of 16-year-old Stepan Chubenko, who was killed with 5 shots in the head (!), after Russians saw him wearing a Ukrainian ribbon.

Another example. The 63-year-old Donetsk theologian Ihor Kozlovsky is in jail for over two years under false accusations and deprived of any communication with family and friends.

Russia still keeps at least 16 Ukrainian political prisoners on its territory.

Ukrainian film-director Oleh Sentsov and Ukrainian journalists Roman Suschenko are among the most prominent cases.

Just think about it.

Stealing other nations' land... kidnapping people... conducting a hidden war...downing a civilian aircraft... spreading lies globally – is this the kind of behavior we expect from a permanent Security Council member?

Russia is not a contributor to international security, but its biggest threat.

Today Russia is, perhaps, the only country in the world that has conflicts – hot, frozen or potential – with almost all its neighbors.

Mr. President,

The key problem in Donbas is that Ukraine and Russia strive for completely different things.

Ukraine wants peace and restoration of sovereignty over its territory.

Russia wants control over Ukraine and undermines every effort to restore our sovereign control within Ukraine's borders.

So, Russia tries to exchange peace in Ukraine for Ukraine's freedom.

Ukraine will never accept that kind of a deal, nor will the international community.

The latest hybrid “peacekeeping proposals” from Moscow are yet another example of Russia’s real ambitions – to legalize its proxies and to freeze the conflict forever.

We would welcome any proposal that would bring peace to my country.

We remain convinced that a full-fledged UN peacekeeping operation is the only viable solution to de-escalate, to protect people of Ukraine and to get us closer to a political solution.

That is why the peacekeepers’ mandate should cover the entire occupied area, including the Ukrainian-Russian state border.

This is the must.

As long as the border is used as the main supply route for manpower and weapons to Donbas, there will be no peace in my country.

This mission should respect basic UN peacekeeping principles and guidelines.

One of them is that UN peacekeepers should be impartial. There is no place for aggressor’s personnel. They cannot be a part of it by definition.

Let me stress: any abuse of the UN peacekeeping toolbox to secure the gains of aggression is unacceptable.

If we have an opportunity to bring peace to the heart of Europe – we should get the conditions right.

A robust international presence can also help us cope with the increase of terrorist activities in the conflict-affected areas.

The terrorist component in Russia’s hybrid war against Ukraine is clearly visible and became a reality of everyday life in Donbas.

Three years ago, the world was stunned when the Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 carrying 298 people onboard was blown up in the skies over Donbas.

Ukraine is determined to do everything to bring to justice those responsible for this mass murder.

Two investigations – technical and criminal – have been carried out.

Both revealed the details.

Those who were behind this horrible crime came from Russia. The missile came from Russia.

The death of the MH17 victims is on Russia's conscience.

The five countries comprising the Joint Investigation Team have decided to prosecute those responsible for downing of MH17 within the Dutch judicial system.

This year, the International Court of Justice has started hearings in the case brought by Ukraine against Russia for violating the 1999 Financing of Terrorism Convention.

We hope that the decision of the United Nations' highest court will help bring the Russian Federation to justice for its numerous violations of international law and for financing crimes committed since 2014.

As the process begins, we count on support and facilitation of all UN Member States.

Mr. President,

For decades, Ukraine has served as a resolute contributor to global security.

In the name of peace and in exchange for security assurances, Ukraine gave up its nuclear arsenal – third largest in the world.

Twenty years after Ukraine was invaded by one of those who vowed to respect and (if necessary) to protect Ukraine's borders.

Yet, we remain resolute advocates of global non-proliferation and disarmament.

That's why we strongly condemn nuclear tests and multiple launches of ballistic missiles by the North Korea.

We are deeply concerned about the continuous diversion of the resources from critical human needs to feeding Pyongyang's nuclear arsenal, coupled with serious human rights abuses.

We resolutely stand for reinforced measures to stop Pyongyang's illegal activities and bring the North Korea in line with the international legal framework.

At the same time, let me reiterate Ukraine's call upon the UN Security Council to undertake in-depth investigation into the development of the North Korean nuclear and missile programmes, in order to expose any possible foreign assistance to Pyongyang in this area.

We also express our deepest concern with the current situation in Syria.

We believe that full implementation and adherence to the word and spirit of the 2012 Geneva communiqué and UNSC resolution 2254 are absolutely vital for the settlement of the conflict in that country.

What draws our special concern with regard to this bloody conflict is Russia's use of the occupied Crimea as a military outpost for projecting power in Syria.

As the war there rages on, huge numbers of Russian military assets are deployed to Syria by ships based in the Crimean harbors.

It is also deeply disturbing that the African continent continues to suffer from the numerous unresolved conflicts.

Being the UN Security Council non-permanent member, my country has spared no effort to support the African continent in safeguarding the main principles of the international order – sovereignty, non-interference in domestic affairs, the rule of law and peaceful settlement of disputes.

As Chair of the Committee established by the Council Resolution 2127, we have actively supported regional and international efforts to stabilize the situation in the Central African Republic.

As of January 2017, Ukraine assumed chairmanship of the 1591 Committee on Sudan, and we are determined to contribute to the international efforts to resolve the conflict in Darfur.

African countries can fully count on Ukraine as its reliable friend.

Mr. President,

My country is fully committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Despite heavy defense expenses more than 5% of its GDP, Ukraine keeps going through fundamental transformations – fighting corruption, promoting judicial reforms, implementing decentralization, improving business opportunities.

A year and a half ago the economic situation in Ukraine was so dire that we could only dream about macroeconomic stabilization.

Now we have all grounds to say that economic recovery is in place.

Such areas as ensuring sustainable energy supply, food security, promoting innovation development and sustainable infrastructure as well as promoting an effective public health system, affordable education and decent work are among priorities within the 2030 UN Development Agenda in Ukraine.

I am convinced that no country alone can achieve sustainable development without sustainable peace and security.

There is also no doubt that the mitigation of global warming remains one of the indispensable elements of sustainable development.

Ukraine is fully committed to our obligations under the Paris climate agreement.

Our intentions in this regard are very serious. Ukraine was the first European country, which deposited its instrument of ratification to the United Nations.

Mr. President,

The United Nations has always played a leading role in ensuring that the crimes of the past could never happen again.

The 72nd session of the General Assembly coincides with the 85th Anniversary of one of the deadliest crimes of the 20th century – the crime of Holodomor.

It was a man-made famine in Ukraine in 1932-1933 organized by the Stalin totalitarian regime that killed 7 to 10 million Ukrainians.

Dr. Raphael Lemkin, the author of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948, described that destruction of the Ukrainian nation as “the classic example of genocide”.

I appeal to all UN member states to make their own historic judgement and to make decision by recognizing Holodomor as an act of genocide.

Mr. President,

This is a challenging time for all of us.

Evermore people die in wars and natural disasters.

Truth is blindsided by the post-truth.

The world is divided again – between those who believe that freedom is indispensable and those who believe freedom is expendable.

One group wants to reach a better future.

The other one drags us into the past.

It's time for those who believe in freedom to come together.

It's time for freedom to be strong, convincing and convinced.

Let's be that way!

Thank you for your attention.