

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

I wish to congratulate you, Your Excellency, on your election as President of the 67<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly.

I believe that with your zeal, dedication and experience in international affairs you will manage to successfully lead the General Assembly towards greater effectiveness and solidarity.

At the same time, I would also like to express my gratitude to your predecessor, Mr Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, the President of the previous General Assembly, for his engagement and initiative. I would like to especially honour Mr Secretary-General for his true leadership and commitment to the fulfilment of the objectives and principles pursued by this Organisation.

Mr President,

The UN and its General Assembly are a unique tool, the one and only global forum that provides room for a dialogue to discuss strategic visions and to seek policy-level solutions to the problems that we are jointly confronted with at the national, regional and global levels. It is our obligation and moral duty to search together for solutions for the peace and prosperity of all mankind.

Mr President,

Conflicts do not stop at the borders. The world we live in is so much intertwined that every problem is a problem of all of us, every threat is a threat to all of us, but every success will also bring benefits to all of us. In addition to its numerous undisputable benefits, the process of globalisation brings about new challenges, as well. I will only mention three of them which are typical of the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century – the global economic crisis, environmental changes and man-made threats, such as terrorism or weapons of mass destruction. We need a global partnership and cooperation. We need a strong multilateralism. We need UN which is able to effectively combine all dimensions: political, economic, military, social, civil, as well as trade, development and relations with civil society.

We need an UN that people can trust, and rely that it will promptly and without delay save them “from the scourge of war”. We need to work together towards our common goal: the peace and security and dignity for all.

The UN’s primary objective is to preserve the peace and security in the world. We have been through an extremely challenging year full of unexpected changes and twists, including new severe conflicts, grave violations of human rights, spread of diseases, famine, terrorism and extremism, as well as of other threats to peace and security which, unfortunately, we cannot always successfully prevent. Attacks have even occurred against diplomats and diplomatic missions, which we resolutely condemn and consider unacceptable.

It is exactly the way of resolving these constantly arising conflicts and the effectiveness of responses to new threats that serve as a litmus paper showing how successful we are in meeting the objectives pursued by the UN. Violence can never be a means to resolution of disputes.

An open dialogue, respect for mutual differences and joint search for solutions by peaceful means is the only way we can go, with no alternatives. Therefore we appreciate the appeal to concentrate exactly on this crucial aspect of international relations. All of us are obliged under the UN Charter to resolve disputes by peaceful means so that the peace and security are not put at risk.

The Charter provides us with a broad range of instruments which, however, we have to employ effectively, including negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration or other peaceful means of one's own choice. Mediation under the UN auspices is the key to resolving conflicts by peaceful means. Reinforcing UN's mediation capacities, reinforcing confidence, and improvements in the implementation of, and enhanced respect for the UN Charter are in the centre of our attention. The nature of conflicts changes and evolves, but their essence remains the same - achieving goals by violence. I do not have only military methods on my mind, because famine and thirst have even more devastating consequences than weapons.

Unfair distribution of wealth, social imbalances, poverty and the feeling of injustice still remain a breeding ground for conflicts and disputes. Man whose basic needs are met does not seek conflicts. A man whose needs are met seeks ways to make the best of life. In this context, I think that prevention is the most effective tool to ensure the peace, dignified life and sustainable growth.

It is crucial to remove the primary causes of conflicts, including through poverty reduction, sustainable development, respect for human rights, the rule of law and respect for its instruments, building of democratic institutions and arms control. They are the basic building blocks of peace and prosperity. The United Nations with its multipurpose focus possesses the potential to effectively assist its members in all of the aforementioned areas. But it must be adequately empowered to do so.

However, we still considerably differ on what and how the United Nations should do. Terrorism poses an imminent threat to every one of us, yet we are unable to find common ground to describe its characteristics. Climate change has brought about crucial changes with concrete impacts on agricultural production, yet the production of greenhouse gases and emissions does not drop. The gap between the wealth and the poverty is growing. An increasingly more important role is played by non-state actors - multinational corporations and speculative investors. The current economic crisis has shown that even the strongest economies are vulnerable. They are vulnerable when they live on credit, when the moral hazard goes beyond sustainable. The crisis has shown that social peace has its limits in every society (whether more or less advanced). It is important for the global economy that the strongest economies are stable and, in particular, that they are aware of their responsibility for the global development and sustainability of social stability in the world. This is not only about the application of the principle of social solidarity. This is about self-preservation of the mankind.

Therefore, we have to pursue a common target: to transform the UN into an effective organisation with a leading role in a new international environment. We need a political willingness of all the members and a clear vision to adapt the UN to the global demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Mr President,

One of the instruments to prevent conflicts is to eliminate poverty and ensure sustainable development for all, and in all aspects. The UN has the necessary tools in its hands. At the time of fiscal constraints, we have to use the existing ones more effectively. We do not need to create new parallel or duplicate structures.

At the Rio+20 conference on sustainable development we agreed that we need an inclusive and strong multilateral system which will be able to effectively address threats in the area of sustainable development. A system that is crucial for enduring peace and security.

We support “Sustainable Energy for All”, an initiative launched by the UN Secretary-General. In the spirit of this initiative we emphasise, among other things, the positive aspects of the use of nuclear energy in the energy and healthcare sectors. I am convinced that priority investments into research to increase the operational safety and security of nuclear power plants are more useful than massive investment into the closure of functioning power plants.

Slovakia is prepared to intensively and constructively cooperate with partners in order to maximise the effective functioning of the UN system in economic, social, environmental and other areas. We support strengthening of the Economic and Social Council and its more effective cooperation with the General Assembly and other actors across the UN System.

Slovakia takes seriously its moral duty to help developing countries and countries in distress. We have less than three years to go to accomplish the Millennium Development Goals. We need to step up our efforts. Slovakia as a donor country contributes its share to addressing pressing problems of global development. Despite its tight budget, Slovakia increases its total contribution to official development assistance every year.

A secure and stable environment conducive to development cannot be achieved without effective arms control and universal disarmament as the fundamental instruments of conflict prevention. Slovakia is an advocate of a comprehensive, universal and binding Arms Trade Treaty

Our objective is to curb irresponsible dealing in arms and to prevent their transfers to the hands of terrorists, criminals and other illicit groups. I regret that the years--long efforts undertaken by states in cooperation with civil society were not crowned with success at the July conference. I believe that further negotiations will lead to a consensus on an effective agreement.

A world free of nuclear weapons is one of the priorities long pursued by the international community. Even though we have made some progress in this respect in recent years, there are still countries that are not part of the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

We appreciate that a Conference on a Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone in the Middle East has been scheduled to be held in December 2012 in Helsinki. We believe that despite the regrettable turmoil in the region and unwillingness of some countries to cooperate, we will overcome the differences and jointly bring the Conference to a successful end for the sake of our common goal: the peace and security in the Middle East without the fear of nuclear weapons. A success of the conference would also support long-lasting efforts to drive away concerns over Iranian nuclear programme.

Rocket tests performed by Iran do not contribute to believing that its nuclear programme serves a peaceful purpose.

Peace-keeping and peace-building operations are an integral part of the efforts aimed at conflict prevention. Slovakia supports strengthening the cooperation between the UN and the EU and/or NATO in crisis management, as well as intensifying EU support to UN operations, taking into consideration particular needs and optimisation of sources.

Speaking about further improvements in the work and increasing the effectiveness of peace-building missions, I would like to mention three aspects which I consider crucial:

- 1) cooperation among UN missions;
- 2) protection of civilians and contributions to the monitoring of human rights observance;
- 3) the need to prepare a strategy for the transition from peace-keeping to peace-building, i.e., increased effectiveness in implementation and the security sector reform.

More intensive cooperation among peace-keeping missions will allow effective sharing of funds, equipment or personnel between neighbouring missions. Moreover, it will contribute to improving the capabilities of UN peace-keeping forces to adequately respond to unforeseen situations. Secondly, the protection of civilians is one of the main objectives under the mandates of peace-keeping operations.

This will enable restoring political processes in a country, including implementation of measures towards disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of combatants, as well as of ordinary people affected by the conflict, including children.

To that end, Slovakia actively supports development of global, regional and national instruments for the security sector reform which we consider crucial to strengthening the peace and security based on the principles of democracy and human rights.

Thirdly, the road from conflict to enduring peace is complicated. It is therefore important that we prepare strategies for the peace-keeping forces to anticipate and transfer responsibility for peace-keeping in a host country with the aim of eliminating duplicate instruments and procedures.

Last year, the international community devoted a considerable attention and funds to support Afghanistan on its road towards responsibility for its own security and for meeting its obligations.

Afghanistan remains the top-priority foreign military operation for Slovakia. Our troops will stay in Afghanistan as long as necessary.

Security and stability also depend on a stable economy. Therefore we also wish to intensify our involvement in the area of development assistance. Afghanistan remains one of the three primary recipients of Slovakia's official development assistance. At the same time, we support the central role of the UN and UNAMA in capacity building and stabilisation of Afghanistan.

Wherever in the world human lives are at risk, the international community should be prepared to take resolute actions.

Please allow me to express my deepest regret over thousands of victims of the conflict in Syria. The Slovak Republic has therefore joined the initiative requesting that the most serious crimes under international law committed in Syria be investigated by the International Criminal Court.

The primary responsibility for the protection of its citizens is always borne by the government and democratic institutions of a country. If they do not exist or if they are at risk, it is our joint duty to seek solutions to remedy this situation.

All people enjoy equal rights, including a right to peacefully participate in decision-making on the future of their country, irrespective of their origin, religious or political opinions, and gender. The aim is to build a country governed by the rule of law, respecting international principles and, at the same time, reflecting traditional common law. The real enforcement of rights is a criterion indicating the maturity of the functioning of a country that respects the rule of law, and the level of its democracy. Slovakia fully endorses and upholds the authority of international law instruments in the process of interpretation, creation, observance and supervision of international commitments of all countries.

Mr President,

Slovakia is deeply committed to the UN principles defined in the Charter. We believe that the key to resolving global problems of today's deeply intertwined world is an inclusive effective multilateralism.

Global threats – to security (terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, organised crime), to economy (crisis, unemployment, living on credit), to the environment (global warming), to society (poverty, unemployment, migration) - know no borders and are so extensive that no country, no regional organisation can alone respond to, or defend against them effectively.

We believe that we will together make a progress in these agendas at the upcoming General Assembly. That is what our citizens expect from us.

Thank you, Mr President.