

SLOVAKIA

STATEMENT BY

H.E. Mr. Ivan Gasparovic
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at the High-level Plenary Meeting
of the United Nations General Assembly

(CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY)

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Distinguished Presidents,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Sixty years is an important birthday for a person or an organization. It is usually a time for celebration. For the UN, it is more a time for contemplation and introspection. A look at today's world often shows us a very contradictory picture:

- On the one hand, we are flying into outer space, and on the other hand whole peoples are dying of hunger.
- We have mapped the human genome, while there are places on earth where people are dying because of shortages of basic medicines and healthcare.
- Human rights have been declared for sixty years and are a part of a universally adopted document adopted right here at the UN. Despite this, there are still states that deny their citizens' most basic rights while claiming that human rights standards vary from country to country.
- We have copious knowledge, which enables us to split the atom, but we do not have enough rationality to prevent the misuse of this nuclear fission for the manufacture of nuclear weapons.
- We are capable of building skyscrapers hundreds of meters high, while in other places we are tearing down the poorest people's tin shacks.
- As if we did not have enough problems, there are people who are willing to sacrifice not only their own lives, but also the lives of others – usually innocent civilians – in pursuit of their goals. But terrorist attacks have not changed one essential thing – they have not changed our values. There has been one change, however. We have changed our perception of international security.

It is evident that the satisfaction of the most elementary human needs cannot be taken for granted in a large part of the planet. On the contrary, even at the beginning of the 21st century it is necessary to fight for them. Millions of people are living in hardship. Additional millions do not have guarantees of basic human rights and essentially all live in fear as a result of global terrorism. In a sentence – the right to a dignified life is still only a right and not an everyday reality.

The world is at a crossroads and the most important global organization also stands at that crossroads. Much hangs in the balance, and maintaining the status quo will solve nothing. To say it more openly, maintaining the status quo could lead to the UN losing its relevance completely. In all probability, if the UN cannot be reformed, its member states will look for other ways to promote their interests. The UN cannot remain just some sort of a discussion club that fails to provide working solutions. The UN and its institutions can only regain their prestige and accountability when they prove themselves able to adopt operational decisions for the solving of imminent problems of today.

Let me mention just one specific example: Given the situation that the list of terrorist attacks grows day after day it is difficult to explain to our citizens why the global strategy on the fight against terrorism has been sitting on our desks for six months. This also goes for a comprehensive convention on terrorism. Further hesitation and endless negotiations on this question only enable terrorists to pretend that their inhuman fight is legitimate. I will not be saying anything new if I assert that a resolute, operational and coordinated approach by the international community is necessary in this situation and the UN's central role in it is irreplaceable.

On this occasion I cannot but mention that we were following with concern the course of discussions on a UN reform, which for a moment threatened to grow into a deep crisis. We were also watching with concern the problems with the drafting of the outcome document. If multilateralism is to be truly effective, it cannot be based on a search for the least common denominator. On the contrary, it must be driven by the world's current needs. We must avoid one long-standing myth and stop equating multilateralism with absolute consensus. Narrow, individual interests cannot hinder the efforts of a large majority of countries. Processes that move the organization forward cannot be slowed by the pretext of consensus. If the opposite were true, there would not be a search for consensus, but an adjustment to the particular interests of a small minority of countries. Slovakia does not consider inaction to be an answer. For this reason, together with the EU, we firmly support efforts for reform that would adapt the UN to new conditions. For Slovakia, the idea of effective multilateralism is not just a trendy expression in international relations but a true guarantee of security, equality and justice.

The draft outcome document, even though it fully does not reflect our ideas and ambitions on the depth and forcefulness of measures for a reform of the UN system, is, in our opinion a basic starting point for a more effective multilateralism whose central role is played namely by the UN. At the same time, it is necessary to remain sober-minded at its assessment. **The draft outcome document is not a solution to today's situation, but it is only a guide to its resolution.**

The draft outcome document is first and foremost just a framework for further steps. For the latter we will need much political will and many compromises. The 60th session of the UN General Assembly will be as important for the success of a reform package as today's summit. On the other hand, a number of ambitious proposals had to bow to compromise, but this does not mean that they should be stricken or forgotten. Further steps will undoubtedly be necessary for making the UN Secretariat more effective and better managed, or for a more effective operation and avoiding duplicities or lacking coordination in the work of individual institutions and organizations of the UN system. Completion and strengthening of the human rights' pillar as well as the renewal of dynamics of negotiations and measures in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation continue to be challenges. We are convinced that in the upcoming period the international community will find enough political will and determination to solve these issues in the interest of the strengthening of the role and authority of the UN in the system of global relations.

Distinguished Presidents,

In conclusion, I would like to draw upon the successful story of the transformation of Slovakia from once a recipient of assistance into a donor country and to illustrate that it is, in fact, possible to overcome serious economic problems and to stabilize social growth and development. It does, however, require more than only international aid or writing off of debts. The creation of a safe and stable legal, political and business environment must be the absolute priority. We are pleased to see that the Report of the Secretary-General "In Larger Freedom" and the resulting Summit decisions as articulated in the Outcome Document emphasise exactly the same thing as Slovakia has found out on the basis of its own experience -- that is the fact that development is not possible without guarantees for the security of the country, without respect for human rights and the rule of law, without good governance and effective management of one's own affairs.

I would like to use this opportunity to assure you that Slovakia stands ready to share its experience and best practices from the carrying-out of its domestic reforms and also this way to contribute towards the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals.

Thank you for your attention.