

RESPONSIBILITY, ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEADERSHIP

VISION STATEMENT OF MIROSLAV LAJČÁK, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS OF SLOVAKIA, CANDIDATE FOR THE POST OF THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

The United Nations Fit for the 21st Century

“To practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed forces shall not be used, save in the common interest, and to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples”. These ideals enshrined in the UN Charter remain the cornerstone of this Organization and the driving force behind our joint efforts.

We live in a world that is remarkably different from that of our forefathers 70 years ago. It is more complex, increasingly volatile, facing new menacing challenges. The global interdependence is growing faster than ever. The positive side of the globalization is that it allows us to confront the problems together. It is my deep belief, that the UN is a truly unique, indispensable organization, the only universally recognized forum. It has the essential tools to be a trusted, reliable hub for addressing and resolving issues that require global response. However, it needs to adjust its ways of operation and enhance its capacity to deliver. We need to concentrate on how to boost its efficiency and effectiveness. The shape and impact of this organization reflects the will and efforts of its Member States. My vision is a modern, efficient organization that enjoys the trust of all the peoples. An organization that through respect, dialogue, compassion and tangible results delivered in real time serves as a beacon of light for all. An organization fit for the 21st Century.

Leadership

I have dedicated my entire professional career to diplomatic service, with UN values and principles at the heart of it. I believe the UN needs a **dynamic, creative and stay-the-course leader ready to face the challenges we all encounter**. A Secretary-General who views reforms as a way of thinking, a continuous process of change and adaptation, not just a policy. A manager with a sharp eye on context, costs, and implementation. A personality, who will have a keen sense of ethics and morale in discharging his/her responsibilities as Secretary-General. Head of the Organization who will be able to forge strong relations with the world leaders to transcend national differences and focus attention on numerous daunting global challenges.

I wish to emphasize that **respect** is an essential aspect of international relations. The UN is our Organization. We all, Member States, as well as the staff of the United Nations, must feel a sense of ownership. I believe that apart from being the Chief Administrative Officer, the Secretary-General should be the **chief listener and effective, compelling communicator**. **Compassionate, yet resolute leader able to fully support Member States**. I strongly believe all opinions and all sides must be considered to determine international priorities more

fairly and equitably and garner inclusive engagement and commitment. It is equally vital that the ideas and the work of the United Nations are well communicated to the general public.

Priorities

We are all well aware of the unprecedented challenges and opportunities facing the global community today and in the long-run. It would be imprudent not to accord priority to each and every concern our citizens have. We have all been witnesses of the butterfly effect too many times. Many issues today are mutually intertwined and have a direct impact on peace, prosperity and human rights. The exceptional urgency of this work is underscored by the growing realization that the very survival of the Earth as we know it hinges on the strength of our resolve and the success of our future cooperation. My aim is to ensure a reliable organization fully capable of heeding all the calls of its peoples.

Safe World

Our organization was built on the rubbles of World War II with a clear aim to maintain international peace and security. It still remains our number one goal.

The **scope and nature of conflict is rapidly changing**. Since 2008, major violent conflicts have almost tripled. Heated disputes have escalated or relapsed into wars, while new conflicts have emerged in countries and regions once considered stable. Today's conflicts easily spill over the boundaries and transnational forces of terrorism, violent extremism and organized crime, including illegal trade in arms and drugs, among other things, build on and provoke local rivalries.

Terrorism and violent extremism cause increasing instability and death in all parts of the world. The scope of both challenges is transnational, and as such calls for concerted action: more cooperation in norm-setting at the international and regional level, tailor-made regional and national strategies to address specific drivers, more preventive approach mainstreamed into activities of the whole UN system.

We must step up our efforts in the area of **disarmament and non-proliferation**. It is an utmost priority to avoid the weapons of mass destruction getting into the hands of non-State actors and terrorist groups. Nuclear disarmament is about security for all of us. Too much is at stake and we must overcome the deadlock on these issues. We must generate political will that would bring us to inclusive negotiations.

The amount and scope of threats and challenges menacing our quest for peace is innumerable and still growing.

The only independent political role given to the Secretary-General in the UN Charter is to bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter that may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security. **Early warning** is an essential first step for **conflict prevention**, yet, it has been difficult and infrequent. I consider early detection and prevention of conflicts to be a key role of the Secretary-General in close cooperation with the Security Council.

The importance of the full use of the good offices of the Secretary-General is unquestionable. In 2015 all major peace and security reviews stressed the centrality of conflict prevention in the work of the UN. We, together, must ensure that the Organization is better suited to prepare

and implement **preventive action and mediation** in order to more efficiently address threats to international peace and security. We should review on how our efforts impacted so far on the role of the United Nations as a broker of peace. Mediation requires a special set of skills, leadership qualities and experience. The United Nations must draw upon the **best available expertise** in the worldwide community of mediators, both men and women.

Overall, the **conflict-sensitivity capacities** should be enhanced across the whole UN system. The UN should also do more to help countries build their own national capacities for conflict prevention. The opening of the UN Charter is absolutely clear on this: “to save the succeeding generations from the scourge of war”. It is the most binding pledge. To fulfil this commitment, I believe in the primacy of preventive diplomacy. It has been calculated that prevention is 60 times more cost effective than interfering once violence has erupted. The world spends 1 dollar on conflict prevention for 1885 dollars it spends on military budgets. Early warning and prevention is pivotal in every single challenge we face.

Peacekeeping has become the trademark of this Organization. The scope and functions of the United Nations in the area of peacekeeping have changed tremendously over the last two decades as have the threats, challenges and nature of today’s conflicts. Member States must ensure that the Organization has adequate resources and the right capabilities to fully engage in global peacekeeping of such proportions and complexity. The new Secretary General should **continue the necessary work** to strengthen the planning and operational capacities, both at Headquarters and in the field. In the face of growing demand and rising costs, the Secretariat must be suitably equipped to manage the complex needs of peacekeeping operations. Review of the UN peacekeeping effectiveness must be a continuous process at the United Nations. The important work that has already started on the implementation of the bold recommendations stemming from the peacekeeping review must continue unabated.

Zero tolerance policy on sexual violence and abuse by peacekeepers against civilian populations is a must. Such violations must be fully investigated and perpetrators brought to justice. UN has no jurisdiction over its soldiers; therefore we need a collective and more concerted action by all – Secretariat, contributing countries and the UN Security Council to enforce it. This issue requires immediate response based on strong measures, unequivocal transparency and accountability.

I am committed to ensuring that **gender perspective is fully incorporated** in UN’s peace-making, peacekeeping and peace-building activities. Continuing the **empowerment of women** is critical for both peace and sustainable development. Deep legal and legislative changes are needed to ensure women’s rights around the world. **The UN must lead and must lead by example** – not only in legislation, but also in the practical implementation on all levels of the organization.

Preventing relapse into conflict has been the primary objective of peace-building efforts. Thorough implementation of the recently adopted resolutions on the **peace-building** architecture is paramount to ensuring sustained peace. I want to work with all partners to promote closer and more operational cooperation in providing coherent and integrated assistance to countries in need. Enabling synergies and complementarity of all efforts by all actors is imperative for optimizing results. The main prerequisite of successful peace-building remains national ownership, absolute inclusivity of all parts of population and custom-made approach.

Prosperous World

For many people around the globe, the UN is first and foremost a **symbol of hope** due to its **Humanitarian Aid and Relief**. Millions of displaced persons and thousands of victims of natural disasters are dependent on UN ability to organize, gather and speedily deliver help wherever it is needed. While Blue Helmets are a symbol of a chance for peace, humanitarian aid and relief often represents a thin borderline between life and death. It is therefore of utmost importance to further mobilise resources to ensure quicker responses and better coordination of our assistance to people in need.

Unprecedented surge in large movements of refugees and **migrants** urgently calls for comprehensive joint approach in ensuring humane treatment, above all **safety, dignity and respect** of human rights of all refugees and migrants. We need solid global commitments that address this issue in a comprehensive manner.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that about 795 million people of the 7.3 billion people in the world, or one in nine, were suffering from chronic undernourishment in 2014-2016. In recent years, we have achieved considerable progress in **sustainable development and in addressing climate change**. We have now reached a phase where good intentions must translate into concrete steps and tangible results in implementation. Achieving the SDGs and realizing the commitments of the Paris Climate Agreement will require huge systemic changes. To fulfil the “*leave no one behind*” promise by 2030, that is central to the new development agenda, the most vulnerable countries (Least Developed Countries, LLDCs, SIDS, countries emerging from conflicts) will have to undergo an unprecedented economic growth, rivalled only by that of the biggest emerging economies in their best years. For this progress to materialize, we will need shared responsibility and full solidarity in enhanced North-South and South-South cooperation.

The next Secretary-General will have to further promote solidarity and effectively **mobilise world leaders** around the post-2015 frameworks for sustainable development, disaster risk reduction and climate change. It is essential to make sure the UN system has the ability to help make a real and significant progress in the implementation of these seminal commitments in a coherent and coordinated manner.

The **UN development pillar** needs to effectively adapt to the new realities and the changing development landscape. The focus must be placed on the **poor, the vulnerable and the youth**. We all have to stand for commitments and responsibilities stemming from effective system of Official Development Assistance.

The Youth represents energy, hope and future. Young people are the most important investment we can make. And yet in both developed and developing countries youth unemployment and underemployment have reached alarming levels. The existence of a large number of jobless and frustrated youth further increases social tensions, threatens stability and cohesion. On the one hand young people are a natural source of innovation, new ideas, „*élan vital*“, on the other hand they are the most vulnerable to be a pray of extremist and radical ideologies. I will support and encourage further the UN engagement with the youth on all levels. We shall give them hope and opportunities and they will give us a better future!

Just World

I have always had the deepest conviction that **human rights** represent absolute and universal values and should be protected by all means we have at our disposal. Every person should live in equality, dignity and freedom. This vision should be protected without discrimination by all tools we have at our disposal. Human rights are indivisible and interdependent underpinning of security and development around the world. Their violations are often first indicators of instability. When there is a risk of human rights crimes, violations or abuses to be committed, we must act. The international community and the United Nations must be equipped to do the right things at the right time.

Human rights as universal in their nature must respect the needs of every individual. It is vital that the international human rights' norms and standards are implemented effectively. The United Nations must be the leading advocate for human rights and fight persistent intolerance, discrimination, marginalization and impunity. We should continue with the **institutional consolidation** of the system of human rights institutions in the United Nations and widen the proactive approach of the organization in this area.

Human rights must be increasingly **mainstreamed** across all core activities of the United Nations, including in development, peace and security. Equally, they must be adequately resourced. Considering their prominence in the context of peace and sustainable development, I would engage in a constructive dialogue with Member States to **address persisting sensitivities** surrounding the topic of human rights.

Rule of Law at the international and national levels, including unconditional fight against impunity is indispensable in achieving justice in the modern world. Justice is an essential prerequisite for sustainable peace. The United Nations shall play a major role in upholding, protecting and pursuing these principles. Rule of law and universal justice cannot be achieved without peaceful settlement of disputes. The United Nations shall continue to provide effective dispute settlement mechanisms, including through the International Court of Justice as its principal judicial organ. Violations of international law shall always be properly addressed by the United Nations. Grave violations of international law, including human rights law and international humanitarian law, shall not remain without appropriate redress and punishment and the perpetrators shall be brought to justice.

Effective Secretariat

For the UN to be able to deliver on its numerous tasks, it must be adequately supported by an effective, reliable, responsible and accountable Secretariat. It is the primary role of the Secretary-General as the **Chief Administrative Officer** to keep the Organization healthy. Independent International Civil Service is the greatest asset of the United Nations. I deeply value the vast majority of UN personnel – dedicated, hardworking employees.

The UN Secretariat has more than 40,000 employees worldwide, while most of the strategic decisions are made by only a handful of senior officials. It is therefore paramount to ensure that the UN's management is **transparent and accountable** at all levels, and the oversight mechanisms are strong and independent.

The Organization needs the best **human resources' management** policies in order to attract and retain staff of the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. It is of paramount importance to speed up the recruitment and staffing process. The new Secretary-

General has to concentrate on **building the next dynamic and modern global workforce** able to face the growing demands that will only go farther and get stronger with the emergence of new universal agendas such as sustainable development goals. I believe constant change is a natural process in any organization if it wants to remain relevant and the United Nations is no exception. The Secretary-General must support the advancement of staff through continuous learning and enhanced mobility. The safety and security of the UN personnel must always be fully ensured.

The selection process, including for top officials, must be based on **merit and competence**, complying with policies related to **gender balance** and **geographic diversity**. Continuing with the endeavours to **achieve gender parity** is key. Major systemic rethink but also a change of mind-set is essential. Unrepresented and underrepresented countries must put forward their best men and women with a wealth of knowledge and a keen sense of dedication.

The **UN financial resources** must be managed efficiently and effectively, in conformity with the principles of budgetary discipline and according to the highest international standards. The new Secretary-General should not be requested again to do more with less, but must be prepared also for this option. I, as a manager, have my share of personal experience with drawing more productivity out of fewer resources. In the long-rung, however, continually raising the bar on goals and expectations while spending less money hampers sustainability of our efforts.

The UN is not a stand-alone organization. No one can cope with the challenges of the 21st century alone. The UN needs to further enhance its **partnerships** with other regional, sub-regional and other international organisations, civil society, academia and the business sector. As the UN engages more coherently with outside partners, there is a need to **set up clear and transparent rules** especially in the area of financing to **prevent corrupt practices** and misuse of funds. A zero tolerance policy needs to be enforced in this area, too.

The UN fit for the 21st century cannot succeed without effective use of **innovations and modern technology**. My aim is to help the United Nations to be a truly modern Organization able to swiftly adapt and adopt new technologies and innovations. Technology is here to assist us in our work and we should harness its potential to the fullest.

We must be able to **constantly evolve and adapt**. Be always one step ahead of the new challenge. There are also lots of new areas of critical importance that require our attention, like developing global rules and cooperation also in the areas like **cyber, energy and space**.

Conclusion

Every day, the United Nations makes a positive difference in the lives of millions of people around the world. I want to see the UN apt to respond to every call its peoples make. Strong and effective United Nations means a better world. A more caring and accepting world. A world, in which nations, peoples of different religions, culture and history can live together in peace. A world where right is might, not might makes right. I believe that strengthening the UN is the best investment to achieve the universal desire for peace, development, equality and justice in the world. And that should be the aim of concerted efforts by the Member States as well as the international UN Secretariat.