

**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. MIROSLAV LAJČÁK, PRESIDENT OF THE  
72<sup>ND</sup> SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY, AT YOUTH DIALOGUE  
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*Good morning, excellencies, colleagues, dear young participants,*

Welcome to the United Nations; welcome to our Youth Dialogue. We are very excited to have you here, because we – my team and I – are very excited about this event. We want this Youth Dialogue to be different from any other meetings that are taking place in the United Nations. We don't want this to be an event when we talk *about* young people; we don't even want this to be an event when we talk *to* young people. We want this to be an event when we take a step back, and we listen to young people, talking to each other. And we want to get inspired – and to follow your lead and your advice. So, even though I am technically the boss here, right now I understand that I am standing on *your* stage. And I will get out of your way, as fast as I can.

But first I would like to make two points, to open our discussion today. And point number one is: why do we need this dialogue? And the answer is very simple: we need it because the United Nations is here *for* people – and the United Nations is *about* people. If the United Nations is to meet the goals set for itself in the UN Charter, it needs to engage with people; it needs to bring people inside of this building; it needs to talk to people, and reach out to people. And, not just *some* people – not just people of a certain profession, certain rank, or certain age. But all people – in particular, young people. And, it makes sense, because there are more young people on this planet than ever before. And young people are better educated than ever before. And they have better means of communication and interaction than ever before.

And I am not saying that the UN is not engaging with young people. There *are* many forums, many interactions and many dialogues. But, at the same time, I also have my personal experience – from travelling to many countries and meeting with many young leaders and young activists. And I heard from many of them that they still feel that they are excluded from decisions that are affecting their lives; that they are not invited to the table as they are supposed to be. And way too often they have the feeling that, when they speak, no one is listening. I am not naïve; I know that we are not going to change that with this one event. But I hope there will be many more. And I also hope that we will have follow-up to this discussion outside of these walls – outside of the United Nations. So, let's use this platform; let's make sure it's interesting and it's useful for each and every one of you.

My second point is about the themes – the topics – of today's discussion. We want to focus on three in particular. The first one is education. And, speaking about education, it's not about numbers, it's rather about *access* to education; it's about *quality* of education. And, we want to hear from you. What is your experience? How well did schools prepare you for the challenges of today – and even more, for the challenges of tomorrow? What is your piece of advice? How can we best deliver on SDG4, on education? The second issue we want to discuss today is employment. Everybody understands that the prospective to get a decent job is one of the most important things in people's lives. And here again, we want to hear about *your* experience. How is it, when you cannot get the job – or when you cannot get the job you *want*? What about people who do get the job, but they still live in poverty? And what about young women on the job market? What should we do better, to improve prospects for people – for young people – to get better jobs in their lives? And the third issue is a very complex one: radicalization and the risk of extremism. We talk about it, but we still don't really get it – don't really grasp it. Because

it's so complex – but probably also because we don't talk enough to the people who have been affected by this. And we know that the motivations are different. There are some people who were introduced to radical movements by friends. But there are some others who were actively searching on the internet about the ways to get there. There are some people who are unemployed and frustrated. But there are also some people with good education and excellent jobs. So, there are no simple answers; there are no simple solutions. But we would like to get your advice on how to deal with this phenomenon. What can we do about it?

So please open up, and speak freely and honestly, because that's the purpose of today's dialogue. And before I finish, I want to address two or three housekeeping issues. First of all, we are web-streaming this event live. So, for those who could not make it into this room today, be present and follow our discussions. You can actively contribute to it. You can tweet; you can post. Please use the hashtag: #Youth72. Second, my team and I will be following your discussions. And we will note down the most important and most useful suggestions, and...we will prepare some sort of toolkit, which you can take with you – back to your homes and communities, and work with in the future. And the most important thing is the dialogue. I would like to discourage you from reading statements. We have enough of it at the United Nations.

Please open up. Speak freely. Be frank. Be open. And, have fun!

So, I wish you a very enjoyable and useful Youth Dialogue today.

*Thank you very much for being with us.*