

Sixty-second session of the General Assembly To convene on 18 September 2007

Statement

H.E. Dr. Srgjan Kerim

Acceptance speech upon his election as President

New York, 24 May 2007

Madame President, Secretary-General, distinguished delegates, dear friends,

This is an overwhelming moment for me. I am deeply honoured to have been elected President of the General Assembly for its sixty-second session. It is with my sincerest thanks that I express my appreciation to all Member States for their unanimous endorsement. My special acknowledgement goes to the Eastern European Group for its unwavering support.

Allow me to commend the President of the General Assembly, Ms. Al Khalifa, for her leadership and accomplishments. She has built on the 2005 World Summit, in particular bolstering the United Nations role in peace and security, strengthening the Economic and Social Council and elaborating possible building blocks for negotiations on Security Council reform.

I would like to offer my strong support to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his initiatives and leadership in strengthening the United Nations role in peacekeeping and disarmament and in revitalizing the Secretariat, and for his determination to ensure that the United Nations system is managed more coherently and effectively.

Exercising the authority of President of the General Assembly requires investing every effort to live up to the ideals and values of the United Nations. I can assure the Assembly that I will discharge my duties in a balanced, considered and forthright manner, with the utmost respect for the dignity of every single Member State.

Multilateralism is rooted deeply in the history of mankind. Let me illustrate this point by quoting the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle:

“Now, we may say that the most important subjects about which all men deliberate and deliberating orators harangue are five in number: ways and means, war and peace, the defence of the country, imports and exports, and legislation.”

The world needs, more than ever, effective multilateralism. The United Nations must be at the centre of this. For the General Assembly, this means that we must deal as much as possible with substance. Revitalization is much more than procedural improvements.

The major challenges of our times transcend borders: globalization, climate change, terrorism, immigration and sustainable development cannot be entirely solved within national borders or at the regional level.

The United Nations has experienced failures. The main causes of this should, however, not always be sought in the deficiencies inherent in the United Nations system, but at times in the lack of political will of individual Member States to cooperate within the multilateral framework.

[Spoke in French] Today, when we speak of governance we are of course speaking of Governments, but we are also speaking of citizens. In this sphere, the kingly era of negotiation purely among States has passed. The future of the planet is everybody's business. Sustainable development must be a democratic, inclusive and participatory undertaking.

Tomorrow's governance—democratic governance—should involve decision makers at all levels. A credible reform plan must not be the plan of a past generation: international governance of the environment should follow the pattern of the democratic spirit that underlies the mission of the General Assembly.

[Resumed in English] Scientists and experts have now told us the inconvenient truth about global warming. In this regard, I would like to praise the recent work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Now it is up to politics, business and civil society to take over. Climate change has implications for every aspect of our daily life from the environment, health and energy to economic development, human rights, peace and security and global governance. While the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the negotiating framework on climate change, in terms of comprehensive action the General Assembly should be the forum for concerted action. The debate must focus on the links between technological innovation, renewable energy and the environment. Together, we can tackle climate change and achieve dynamic economic growth and sustainable development.

As we reach the midpoint to 2015 we must accelerate our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It is clear that many will not be reached. Particularly in Africa, achieving the MDGs is not solely a test of our ability to deliver on commitments; it is above all a test of our moral obligations and the ethical values that are enshrined in the United Nations Charter. To achieve these and other development goals we should demand more of ourselves as well as of the Organization. If the United Nations is going to make its full contribution and better serve the needs of developing countries, greater system-wide coordination and coherence will be necessary.

I see these among other priorities for the sixty-second session: reviewing progress in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy; preparing for the Follow-up International - Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Doha, and the commemorative meeting on children; and defining further concrete steps towards a reformed Security Council—a vital aspect of the overall United Nations reform agenda. In addition, because there is increasing urgency to develop a sense of respect for the other, which can provide a basis for mutual understanding, friendship and peace, we must continue to make further progress in promoting dialogue among civilizations during the sixty-second session.

I see the future and the relevance of the United Nations as an organization that is based on open networks, and as a network that engages with ideas from civil society, non-governmental organizations, business, universities, the media and the global public.

Whether we like it or not, in some areas we are confronted with widening gaps on issues that are vital to the future relevance of the Organization. We all have a responsibility to tirelessly seek out bold compromises based on greater mutual respect. After all, we all share the common ideal of living in a safer, more prosperous world.

I am aware that compromise is not the most resounding of battle cries. In this regard, I am reminded of the famous German philosopher Immanuel Kant, who once said, "Out of the crooked timber of humanity no straight thing was ever made." This is, in my opinion, why we have to deal with the knots.

In this common endeavour, we are fortunate to have some of the brightest and most able diplomats in the world based here at the United Nations in New York. To them I pledge my conscience, my compassion and my capabilities.

The Assembly's decision today is recognition of my country's commitment to the principles of the United Nations Charter, including its contribution to fostering greater stability and cooperation in South-Eastern

Europe. In fact, my country has been actively involved with the United Nations since its inception in 1945.

Fellow members of the Assembly, on behalf of my country, the Republic of Macedonia, and myself, I thank you.

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