

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

Allow me, Mr. President, to begin by congratulating you on your election as President of the 59th Session of the UN General Assembly. I am convinced that your work in this important post will ensure further progress towards achieving our common goals. I wish you the greatest of success, and pledge full support of our delegation. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank your predecessor – His Excellency, Mr. Julian Hunte, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Saint Lucia – for his excellent work, and above all, for his personal contribution to the revitalization of the General Assembly.

Mr. President,

It is for the first time that the Slovak Republic is participating in the General Debate of the UN General Assembly as a member of the European Union. Slovakia fully endorses the position set out by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands on behalf of the EU. I am convinced that the enlarged EU will further strengthen its constructive partnership with the United Nations.

Mr. President,

The international community is now facing challenges and threats that were unknown when the Charter of the United Nations was drafted. The multilateral mechanisms set out in the previous century have proven to be less than adequate. Recent global events, accompanied by an increase in new and potentially more dangerous and destructive threats, have clearly demonstrated that no country can cope with security issues single-handedly, let alone tackle

permanent members, with the aim of ensuring a balanced regional distribution of seats – including the greater representation of the Eastern European region.

In addition, I rest assured that this year's General Assembly will help build a global security system by strengthening and consolidating the Anti-Terrorism Coalition under the auspices of the United Nations, along with the Anti-Terrorism Committee of the Security Council.

Continuing terrorist attacks are leading to significant changes in the area of global security. Terrorists do not shy away from perpetrating the cruellest and most bestial of acts, and as the recent events in Beslan have shown, neither do they hesitate to take the lives of innocent children. Terrorism poses a threat to everyone. No one can be neutral or indifferent. It is necessary that we are resolute and we jointly mobilize our efforts in combating it. The governments of Member States must fight more effectively against this inhuman phenomenon through mutual support, the application of international law, and by improved cooperation between international and regional organisations. The twelve UN anti-terrorism conventions and protocols are of utmost importance in the fight against terrorism, and the UN must continue to play a key role in bolstering legal instruments in this battle. The Slovak Republic supports a prompt approval of a comprehensive convention against terrorism as a whole, along with a convention aimed at averting acts of nuclear terrorism.

Maintaining international peace and security has always been one of the Slovakia's main priorities. We have long contributed military units, observers, and equipment to UN peacekeeping missions. Since our accession to the UN in January 1993, we have participated in 14 UN-led missions – from military observer missions, through humanitarian and demining operations, to peacekeeping duties. Throughout the 1990s, and continuing to the present day, the Slovak Republic has dedicated itself both militarily and politically to the peace process in the Balkans. Nonetheless, Slovakia has never abandoned its efforts to help bring reconciliation and humanitarian aid to other parts of the world. We have gained respect for our participation in UN peacekeeping missions in Africa and the Middle East.

Slovakia also contributes to the training of peacekeeping forces. In line with UN General Assembly resolutions, the Slovak government co-sponsored a UN Seminar held in the Slovak Republic last May, which was attended by a wide range of delegates from over 70 member countries. The seminar discussed the conclusions of the Brahimi Report, which highlighted the importance of standardised training for UN peacekeeping missions.

In recent years, the number of attacks on UN personnel has increased alarmingly. Slovakia is a signatory to the Convention on the Security of UN and Associated Personnel, and appeals to all those countries that have not yet done so to endorse this important international legal instrument, which guarantees protection for UN staff.

Mr. President,

Stabilising the Western Balkans is a global priority, which also has a direct effect on the stability of Europe. For this reason, it is also one of Slovakia's foreign policy priorities. We have fully supported the activities of the UN to date in using its authority well to help resolve the conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the Serbian-Montenegrin province of Kosovo, and in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Slovakia's proactive approach was demonstrated by the political stance it adopted towards the resolution of these conflicts,

along with its participation in peacekeeping missions to Bosnia and Herzegovina (SFOR) and the province of Kosovo (KFOR). We believe that resolving the situation in the province is a

Mr. President,

Another issue that calls for efficient international cooperation is *the fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs)*. The Slovak Republic welcomed the adoption of the UN Security Council Resolutions.

Mr. President,

Let me to also address the crucial issue of human rights. We perceive democracy as the system of government that is capable of fully guaranteeing respect for *human rights*, whilst simultaneously ensuring progress, prosperity, and peace. The observance of human rights throughout the world is one of Slovakia's foreign policy priorities. The Slovak Republic is a signatory to all key UN conventions on human rights, and has taken all the efforts necessary to implement their provisions. In addition, the Slovak Republic supports every international endeavour aimed at strengthening human rights mechanisms, as well as the UN's concerted endeavors aimed at establishing international standards in this area.

Mr. President,

The Slovak Republic is fully aware of the enormity of the tasks facing the United Nations in the field of ensuring global peace and security. In this regard, I would like to highlight that *Slovakia is a candidate for the seat of a non permanent member of the UN Security Council* for the term of 2006 and 2007, in the elections to be held during the next session of the United Nations General Assembly in the fall of 2005. I can assure you that in every respect, the Slovak Republic is ready to take on the responsibilities arising from the membership of this key UN body. As my country's Head of State, I feel it important to make this personal pledge before the highly esteemed Session of the UN General Assembly. We want to use our membership of the Security Council to intensify cooperation with member states in all regions, and to be a dependable partner when seeking consensus in the resolution of complicated global-policy issues.

In conclusion, allow me to wish this year's Session of the UN General Assembly the greatest of success; may it reach conclusions that promote cooperation among Member States, international and regional organisations, and non-governmental organisations and associations – based, above all, upon the principle of multilateralism.

Thank you, Mr. President.