

Human rights a precondition for peace; dialogue 'only way' to make it sustainable, Montenegro tells UN

20 September 2017 – Reiterating Montenegro's strong commitment to multilateral cooperation, President Filip Vujanović told the Assembly today that his country puts good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation in the Balkans at the top of its foreign policy agenda.

He noted the region's success in dialogue and cooperation as the only way to achieve sustainable peace, announcing that early next year Montenegro would organize a regional conference to help in defining new mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution.

Montenegro unequivocally supports nuclear non-proliferation, he said, calling the Non-Proliferation Treaty "a foundation for improvement of the global stability." The country "strongly condemns nuclear weapons tests conducted by North Korea as an act that violates international obligations [...] and poses a serious threat to global peace and security."

Stressing that respect for human rights is a precondition for peace, stability and development, the President said his country attaches special attention to: strengthening the position and role of women in society and prevention of violence against women; child protection and development; fight against discrimination of LGBTI [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex] population and persons with disabilities.

Turning to humanitarian assistance, which is much needed for civilians in conflicts and natural disasters, Mr. Vujanović said Montenegro has invested significant efforts to ensure appropriate legislative and strategic framework for financing international development cooperation and humanitarian assistance.

[*Full statement available here*](#)

Growing number of rights defenders facing reprisals for cooperating with UN

20 September 2017 – A growing number of human rights defenders around the world are facing reprisals and intimidation for cooperating with the United

Nations, ranging from travel bans and the freezing of assets to detention and torture, says a new report issued by the world body.

“It is frankly nothing short of abhorrent that, year after year, we are compelled to present cases of intimidation and reprisals carried out against people whose crime – in the eyes of their governments – was to cooperate with UN institutions and mechanisms,” said Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Andrew Gilmour.

“We should see these individuals as the canary in the coalmine, bravely singing until they are silenced by this toxic backlash against people, rights and dignity – as a dark warning to us all,” Mr. Gilmour told the Human Rights Council in Geneva, as he presented the Secretary-General’s report.

The report, the eighth of its kind, names 29 countries where cases of reprisal and intimidation have been documented; this is higher than the previous highest number of 20. Eleven of the States are current members of the Human Rights Council, a [news release](#) pointed out. Some have featured in the annual report on reprisals nearly every year since it was instituted in 2010.

“People engaging with the United Nations experienced intimidation, harassment, threats online and offline, derogatory media campaigns, travel bans, arbitrary arrests and detention, enforced disappearances, torture and ill-treatment, disbarment, and dismissal from their posts, amongst other measures,” the report says.

“Beyond the grave impact on the life of persons concerned and their relatives, intimidation and reprisals also systematically undermine United Nations action on human rights and shake partners’ trust in the Organization,” it adds.

Mr. Gilmour told the Council that the problem was much more widespread than presented in the report.

“Since this report is limited to reprisals against people cooperating with the UN, the cases covered in it represent only a small portion of a far more generalized backlash against civil society and others challenging State authorities, especially human rights defenders,” he noted.

The report urges all States to stop reprisals, investigate existing allegations, provide effective remedies and adopt and implement measures to prevent recurrence.

[‘We bear responsibility for a fruitful](#)

future,’ says Argentine leader at UN Assembly

20 September 2017 – Addressing the 72nd annual general debate at the United Nations General Assembly, the Vice-President of Argentina, Gabriela Michetti, set out her vision for the future, expressed her passion for human rights and hope for a prosperous global society.

“A natural disposition to unify,” and “an ability to envision the long-term,” are vital attributes in sustaining an inclusive society, she explained.

Ms. Michetti acknowledged this is a time of much conflict, but this does not come without ample chances for improvement. She said: “The historical time we live in is full of challenges and opportunities.”

Speaking for her country, she said Argentina reaffirms its will to become more globally integrated through building bridges with the international community.

This commitment, she said, is reflected in the plans for Argentina to be the host of the eleventh World Trade Organization ([WTO](#)) Ministerial Conference in December.

Detailing more efforts to improve and expand cross-cultural relationships, the Vice-President underscored the importance in addressing the long-standing dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom.

In conclusion, Ms. Michetti expressed that the international community carries an “enormous responsibility to sow a fruitful future.”

“Our society should be, without a doubt, a work of love. Because justice and the search for the common good are a manifestation of love in the public sphere.”

[Full statement \(in Spanish\) available here](#)

Time to translate nuclear test moratorium into legally binding obligation – UN chief

20 September 2017 – [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today expressed the readiness of the United Nations to help bring into force the global treaty

banning nuclear tests, adopted more than 20 years ago, while noting that the “destabilizing and provocative” actions by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) seek to undermine the global norm against nuclear explosions.

“If there is something I take very seriously it is the fact that, as Secretary-General, I am the depository of the Comprehensive-Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT),” said Mr. Guterres in his [remarks](#) to a biennial conference on facilitating the Treaty’s entry into force, held at UN Headquarters in New York.

“A CTBT that is in force would be a milestone on the road to a world free of nuclear weapons. It has the potential to prevent a nuclear arms race and an escalation of regional and bilateral tensions,” he added.

Since its adoption in 1996, 183 States have signed the Treaty and 166 States have ratified it.

However, for the Treaty to enter into force, it must be ratified by all the 44 States that formally participated in the 1996 session of the Conference on Disarmament and possessed nuclear power or research reactors at the time.

If we want to eliminate the risk of nuclear attacks, we need to stop nuclear testing. If we want to stop nuclear testing, we need a legally binding instrument.

Of the 44 States, China, Iran, United States, Egypt and Israel have signed the treaty but not yet ratified it. DPRK, India and Pakistan have not signed it.

Mr. Guterres noted that for almost 20 years, with the sole exception of the DPRK, all countries possessing nuclear weapons have helped to create a global culture against nuclear testing through their voluntary unilateral moratoria.

“Sadly and dangerously, the destabilizing and provocative actions by the DPRK seek to undermine this norm – and along with it, global stability,” he said, reiterating that it is time to translate this shared norm into a legally binding obligation.

Also addressing the meeting, General Assembly President Miroslav Lajčák [said](#) that when the CTBT enters into force, a complete halt to all nuclear testing will be in even clearer sight.

“Make no mistake: we need this Treaty,” he stated.

“If we want to eliminate the risk of nuclear attacks, we need to stop nuclear testing. If we want to stop nuclear testing, we need a legally binding instrument. And if we want an instrument, we need political will to achieve it.”

A more flexible UN can have real, positive impact on the ground, Latvia tells Assembly

20 September 2017 – The President of Latvia, Raimonds Vejonis, told the General Assembly today that while the United Nations remains the central forum for multilateralism and a rules-based global order, if the Organization is more transparent and flexible it could “bring positive, real influence to people on the ground.”

Mr. Vejonis noted that for people to fully realize their potential, they need a stable and secure environment – adding that UN resources often go to managing and responding to crises, instead of preventing them. He emphasized that conflict prevention must be at the core of UN action, saying “saving human lives and upholding human dignity must be our common priority.”

He expressed Latvia’s deep concern over nuclear proliferation, strongly condemning all nuclear tests and ballistic missile launches by Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. While saying that a peaceful and diplomatic solution to this situation is a “a priority,” he noted that in the meantime, “all States must fully implement relevant UN Security Council resolutions.” Mr. Vejonis also reiterated Latvia’s call for “long overdue” Council reform and encouraged “especially the veto-wielding members” to move beyond their domestic interests to address global challenges.

He spoke about the rules-based security order in Europe, underscoring the territorial integrity of independent States, and calling Russia’s “unprovoked aggression against its neighbours” a serious breach of international security rules.

The Latvian President concluded by underscoring that all Member States must work together to ensure that the UN adapt to a changing global environment, focus on priorities and deliver results.

[Full statement available here](#)