

Statement by

**Her Excellency**

**Ms Tanja Fajon**

**Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs**

**of the Republic of Slovenia**

at the

High-Level Segment of the 52nd session of the UN Human Rights Council

*Geneva*

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Mr President,

Excellencies,

We are meeting in the shadow of the devastating earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria, a brutal war in Ukraine and many other humanitarian tragedies, conflicts and human rights violations around the globe.

This is the time to recommit to the UN Charter and international law, to join forces to protect human lives and dignity, and to stand together in solidarity. The need for multilateralism, dialogue and cooperation is now greater than ever before. And this is what will guide Slovenia's actions if elected as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council later this year.

*Time to reflect*

*“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”* is the timeless message of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted 75 years ago. This milestone document for human rights paved the way to an impressive body of international legal instruments and mechanisms we have at our disposal today. Now is the time to recapture its spirit and live up to its highest standards. Out of respect for our common humanity, we have to find the determination to protect *all human rights for all* in this era of global insecurity, environmental, food, health and climate crises, rapid technological developments and fragile political stability.

Thirty years ago, meetings in Vienna led to the establishment of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and his Office. As a staunch supporter of the High Commissioner's mandate and his independence, I would like to take this opportunity to wish him every success in fulfilling this important mission and continuing the remarkable work of his predecessors, marked by challenging and unpredictable conditions, but also by great successes. Slovenia will continue to support the Office financially and advocate for more predictable funding. It will also continue to contribute to the Trust Fund for Participation of LDCs and SIDS in the work of the Council.

*Time to protect human dignity*

Mr President,

We have to ensure respect for civil and political rights as well as for social, economic and cultural rights. There are no first or second-rate rights. What matters is making sure that we do not regress from what has been achieved so far and work together better to ensure that the most vulnerable and underprivileged also gain access to the world’s resources and riches.

We should never forget that *woman's rights are* *human rights.* Women and girls hold immense potential for a better future of our countries. Gender equality and full, meaningful and equal participation of women and girls in all segments of our societies are fundamental to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. This is Slovenia's priority, both nationally and in its foreign policy.

Our development cooperation supports women and girls across the globe: from training Venezuelan women in mediation and conflict resolution; beekeeping workshops for Afghan refugee girls in Iran; to medical care for women and girls in Afghanistan and for Syrian refugee women and girls in Lebanon. Slovenia's Peace Operations Training Centre provides training in gender equality for the personnel deployed to peacekeeping operations and missions.

I remain deeply troubled that the Taliban in Afghanistan deny the right of women and girls to higher education, work and freedom of movement, and that Iran is limiting the freedom of expression and assembly and imposing the death penalty on peaceful protesters.

Slovenia stands in solidarity with the women, men and children whose lives are affected by the unjustified Russia's aggression against Ukraine. We are voicing grave concerns over the reports of growing numbers of civilian casualties, and alarming testimonies of weaponized sexual and gender-based violence and forced deportations of children. Indiscriminate attacks against civilians and deliberate destruction of critical infrastructure constitute the most serious crimes. All those responsible must be held to account. Slovenia supports the efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine, consistent with the UN Charter and international law.

*Time to take initiative*

Mr President,

We have to act now to address the challenges of the future, such as planetary crisis and demographics. Slovenia is proud to be in the core group of countries promoting two ground-breaking initiatives.

Firstly, the Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly recognized the *human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.* Our engagement is an expression of Slovenia's broader commitment to climate and water agenda. The next step is making sure that this right is implemented and mainstreamed. I am especially pleased that it was included in the COP27 and COP15 outcome documents.

And secondly, for over a decade Slovenia has engaged in addressing the *human rights of older persons* on the international level. The High Commissioner made it clear in his report to this Council: with a rapidly ageing global population and the fragmented system of international protection of older persons, the time is ripe to take a step towards a legally binding instrument. My country stands ready to contribute to this process.

*Time to commit*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We cannot have prosperity and peace without respect for human rights, and the protection of the most vulnerable groups is essential.

The protection of minorities and ensuring full implementation of their rights in keeping with international legal obligations remains at the top of Slovenia's human rights agenda and a vital element of cooperation with our neighbours.

Human rights education, starting from a very early age, is our best bet to create a culture of human rights and to build peaceful, resilient and inclusive societies.

The solutions we need do not pertain to particular states or regions, but must be global.

Overcoming the traditional “silos” approach and working in synergy is the only way to address the human rights challenges of today and tomorrow. And in these efforts, political will and constructive dialogue are of paramount importance.

Thank you.