**Statement by H. E. Mr Robert Golob**

**Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia**

**at the 79th Session of the United Nations General Assembly General Debate**

Mr President,

Mr Secretary-General,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my great honour to address the General Assembly today.

Colleagues,

A few days ago, we adopted the **Pact for the Future**. In these times of wars, climate catastrophes, increasing inequalities and deepening polarisation, it was a rare flicker of unity. Unity among countries and groups from all continents. The Pact should represent the start of a new era of a global partnership of the countries willing to strengthen the multilateral system, with the UN at its core.

There was another flicker of hope this week. The Security Council, presided over by Slovenia, adopted the **Presidential Statement on Leadership for Peace**. All 15 members reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining international peace and security and respecting international law, including the UN Charter. It is a good start to re-energise our collective work for a better, more peaceful and more humane world.

1. **Let me address some of the most pressing issues of today and start with *Peace and Security*.**

The Secretary-General, who enjoys our full support and enormous respect, has repeated on several occasions that last year – with the highest number of conflicts in decades – was also the deadliest one.

Slovenia has been an elected Member of the Security Council since January. We have been observing the **gradual but steady erosion of the power of rules**. The Council is increasingly unable to respond in an effective way to major conflicts, such as in Gaza, Ukraine and Sudan. And we are not doing any better in other crisis managements.

What we are witnessing in **Ukraine** is the aggression of a stronger and more powerful neighbour in a smaller and weaker one. This is clearly a blatant violation of the UN Charter. Were we to let this aggression pass, we would open the doors to many similar wars across the globe.

In **Gaza**, almost four months since the Council's resolution on a ceasefire and the hostages, a deal is nowhere close. As the Secretary General said yesterday at the UNRWA ministerial meeting, "the people in Gaza are existing – not living, but existing – among lakes of sewage, piles of rubbish and mountains of rubble. The only certainty they have is that tomorrow will be worse."

In the **West Bank and East Jerusalem,** violence and the dehumanisation of Palestinians is increasing and has reached a boiling point. All this is taking us further away from a two-state solution with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security.

The escalation of the Gaza crisis into the wider region is now a reality. The region is on the brink of an abyss. De-escalation is urgently needed, starting with ceasefires in Gaza and Lebanon.

In **Sudan**, we are witnessing a man-made humanitarian catastrophe, with millions displaced and in desperate need of humanitarian aid. At the same time, we are seeing an atrocity occurring again in Darfur.

How is this possible? Has the Security Council really failed the humanity?

The five permanent members bear even greater responsibility. By misusing the veto and putting national interests first, they have effectively blocked the workings of the UN Security Council.

The concerns and pain that we feel for civilians and condemnation of violations of the Charter and of international humanitarian law should not depend on our geographical or political proximity to the conflict.

**We should all put our common interests first.** And the world would be a better place.

1. **Another important issue is the reform of the Security Council.**

Our experience in the Security Council has given us renewed appreciation for the need to reform the Security Council. We urgently need a Council that is a true representation of the international community. A Council that is fit for the world of today.

We need to ensure that the **distribution of seats is fair.**

The Council needs **stronger voices from the regions** that have been underrepresented, such as the African continent.

Reform of the Council's composition needs to be accompanied by a **reform of the veto powers**. While the reality is that we will not be able to eliminate the veto, the use of this right will need to be more precisely defined.

The Security Council also needs to exercise its power with higher ambition regarding the prevention of conflicts and play a stronger role in peace-building activities that involve all aspects of the UN system.

Colleagues,

We should not forget that the United Nations is so much more than just the Security Council.

We commend the work of the nameless **humanitarian workers** on the ground, in armed conflicts, among the civilians representing the face of the United Nations.

The erosion of respect for international humanitarian law is making their work so much more difficult. The Gaza conflict was, however, a turning point.

In Gaza, humanitarian workers are not just occasional collateral victims, but seem to have become a deliberate military target. There is no other explanation for the fact that the highest number of humanitarian workers were killed last year, of whom the great majority in Gaza.

The sense of impunity for crimes in Gaza is putting humanitarian organisations under stress elsewhere. This is undermining the essence of the UN and is affecting the work of humanitarian organisations and UN agencies such as ICRC, UNRWA, WHO and WFP.

1. **Let me now turn to another pressing issue, the Climate Crisis.**

The impact of climate change is mostly felt with regard to that lifeline of people and nature – water. Extreme weather events are multiplying water-related risks across the world. This global challenge demands a global and collaborative response. Solutions exist but are not equally accessible to everybody.

The UN Secretary General’s **“Early Warning for All” Initiative** is the right step in this direction. As the catastrophic floods devastated my country last year, we initiated the development of an **advanced digital solution** linking earth observation with supercomputing and artificial intelligence.

The system, when built, will help us predict floods and droughts and improve our resilience. We are ready to share this solution with our partners.

Remote sensing and earth observation inform our early warning systems. But we are fully aware that many countries lack the capacity to monitor all the hazards, and are restricted in accessing such technology.

I call upon everyone **to form a global partnership around the Early Warning for All Initiative** to help overcome these challenges. Such a partnership would boost our common preparedness and ensure that everyone on Earth is protected from hazardous weather, water and climate events through life-saving early warning systems.

People suffering from armed conflicts do not have the luxury of high-tech solutions. More often than not, they are denied basic access to clean drinking water. Moreover, we are increasingly seeing how access to water is becoming weaponised: in Yemen, Somalia, Gaza and Sudan.

Slovenia decided to take the initiative and launched the **Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflict** together with a cross-regional group of countries. Such global partnerships are urgently needed to safeguard the human right to water for all.

1. **Last but not least – on *Humanity.***

We need to make sure that people around the world age with dignity and rights. The current international human rights law offers only a fragmented and inconsistent framework for the full protection of the human rights of **older persons**. That is why we are leading a global action towards a legally binding instrument regarding the human rights of older persons.

The world should delay no further in addressing the main issues related to **gender equality**, including the future developments and implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. The UN should lead by example when it comes to the full, equal and meaningful role and leadership of women in our societies.

In its entire history, the General Assembly has been led by only four women. We have never had a female UN Secretary General. The time has come for gender equality to be reflected in the top leadership positions of this organisation.

Slovenia has joined the supporters of the Rotation for Equality Initiative, which calls for gender rotation in the position of the President of the United Nations General Assembly.

In times of crisis, **children** are always the most vulnerable. Today's world is increasingly hostile to children's rights. More children than ever are experiencing violence in all settings, many have lost their lives, are forcibly displaced, exposed to the most traumatic experiences, imprisoned, denied education and healthcare, and face extreme poverty and social exclusion.

Gaza is an example of the extreme suffering of the children. Slovenia is offering concrete help with the **Foundation "Let them dream"**, which deals with the rehabilitation of children from Gaza.

It is an extremely noble and human project, which was launched years ago and has already helped hundreds of children from Gaza who have undergone rehabilitation in Slovenia and will continue to do so. Sadly, some of these kids are victims of the recent aggression in Gaza.

Let me finish with the story of two young girls. At the beginning of this week, I attended an event on Missing Futures in the Occupied Palestinian Territory organised by **Save the Children.**

At this event I heard from two courageous **Palestinian girls, Sara and Rand**. They spoke about their challenges, feelings and the future. In spite of the destruction, dehumanisation and fear, they were not angry or hateful. They just had an enormous wish for a normal life. They want to study and dedicate their future to helping their community. One by becoming a doctor. The other by becoming a humanitarian worker.

Today, I am fulfilling my promise to them by bringing their story to the General Assembly. It is only with a united stance against the war and for peace that we will ensure that Sara and Rand are not among the thousands of missing futures of Palestinian children under occupation.

So let me send a clear message to the Israeli government– stop the bloodshed, stop the suffering, bring the hostages home and end the occupation. Mr Netanyahu, stop this war now!

Thank you.