



**PRÍHOVOR PREZIDENTA SR
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Organizácie Spojených národov**

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Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor to address this Assembly to mark 80th anniversary of the United Nations on behalf of Slovakia.

Indeed, it was Slovak - Ján Papánek, who was one of the 14 co-authors of the UN Charter. It proves, that also small nation, can be part of big things, and to contribute to international peace order.

This milestone invites us to reflect on the reality of the world that deeply concerns all of us, including my country.

80 years ago, humanity emerged from the darkest conflict in history. It claimed millions of lives, left entire regions in ruins. My country, witnessed the Holocaust, but also the courage to stand up to evil.

A few days ago, I visited the Hiroshima Memorial. It was a deeply moving experience and a painful reminder of the destruction in a single, brief moment.

All this teaches us important lessons of the past. Hiroshima and Nagasaki must be the last places where nuclear bombs were used. It obliges us to denounce any threats of nuclear destruction. It obliges us to work each day on keeping the world safe, and at peace.

Peace has become the UN's defining mission, alongside the protection of human rights, sustainable development, and international law.

To quote Slovak diplomat Ján Papánek: "The success of the UN was my life's goal, because peace means progress for my nation, and security for my homeland." This is the ambition that we, humanity, agreed to accomplish.

The authors of the UN Charter saw the dangers of unchecked hatred and extreme ideologies. They understood that the world needed a framework, to ensure it wouldn't slip into chaos again.

The rules protected sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity, as well as the resolution of conflicts by peaceful means. And the prohibition of the use of force. Those were the foundations of a stable and just world.

Eighty years ago, 51 founding states signed the Charter, including my own. Roughly 80% of the world's population. And others followed.

I take the liberty to ask esteemed leaders: how many would have the courage to sign the same Charter today?

How many would truly live up to its rules and obligations? Would we be even able to write the Charter in current post-truth societies?

And what's worse, the Charter is openly questioned. The "rule of the powerful" and the use of military force are returning as tools of policy.

International law is being dismantled, piece by piece, norm by norm. We see the mass proliferation of violations and their violators.

But let us ask: Where is this leading us? What will be the result? What will hold up the more unpredictable world?

As small country, in Slovakia, we believe that small countries must be smart, and not only in times of confrontation.

UN Charter and the rules must prevail always the guardrails against the false notion of the "right of might" and the illusion of "spheres of influence," where external powers dictate the lives of other nations.

I sincerely believe that, both in the global north or south, it is in the majority's interest, to uphold the world with the sovereign equality of nations—equal sovereignty for all. A world where the UN Charter, the rules, and obligations remain the highest moral grounds and standards against which the actions of states are judged.

Esteemed Leaders, peace is the defining mission of the UN to which we committed 80 years ago. Even so, the world is more violent today, with dozens armed conflicts recorded last year. Today the world is becoming a more dangerous place than it was before.

Innocent people, elderly, children and women, suffer because of war. This is not an anomaly; it is a structural shift. This is the reality, ladies and gentlemen. The Security Council, to which we have entrusted the greatest powers and special responsibility for maintaining peace, cannot pretend that it is succeeding. It is failing.

The war in Ukraine reminds us daily how fragile peace is when the UN Charter is disregarded and international law is ignored.

As its neighbor, Slovakia witnesses the immense cost of this war. Sadly, despite all efforts toward a peaceful settlement, Ukraine must defend itself against Russia.

This is despite the groundwork for diplomatic talks being set at the US-Russia summit in Alaska. Despite the clear agreement that negotiations would soon continue, with Ukraine being included.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

instead two weeks ago, the airspace of Poland—our neighbor and ally—was seriously violated by Russian drones.

A flagrant violation of sovereignty, international law, and a direct threat to shared Euro-Atlantic security. Equally as we saw in Estonia, and Romania. I want to express my firm support and solidarity with the allies. The door open to negotiations should never be mistaken for weakness or an invitation to further violence.

My country calls to early peace. We call on commitment, and concrete steps, in line with the results of summit in Alaska. We continue to be ready to contribute to it, and to support the guarantees ensuring the future peace that stands the test of time.

In the Middle East, after the horrific act of terrorism, Israel has the right to defend itself. Hostages must return home. In Gaza, children and families do not feel safe anywhere—neither in hospitals nor in their temporary shelters.

Esteemed leaders, the thin line between legitimate defense and unacceptable suffering is being painfully tested. We must allow access to humanitarian aid for those who need it.

We hear the quest by Palestinians to have their own state. I am proud of Slovakia does not need to make big gestures today.

Because for more than three decades ago, we have recognized the right of Palestinian people to decide upon their fate. In Bratislava, we already have the Embassy of the Palestine. And we believe in a two-state solution. But this is achievable only at the table, by diplomatic means, based on the will to live side by side as Palestine and Israel.

Ladies, and gentlemen, the world is changing at unprecedented speed. The triple planetary crisis and quick progress in artificial intelligence are moving far faster than we are able to react. Slovakia has been an active voice in both global climate debates and discussions on the artificial intelligence.

I don't want to sound doom, and gloom. In fact, we must get ready for the new era – the unstoppable revolution. We need a responsible approach from all - international institutions, the private sector, and governments. My country wants to contribute and to steer the debates and find solutions by hosting all the actors at the Summit on Education and AI in our capital, Bratislava, in November this year.

Finally, at the UN's 80, I want to return to the matter of how to make it fit for the next decades. To be diplomatic yet frank: in recent years it has not always been in the best condition to meet its tasks. Its credibility has been reducing.

Yet, it would be unfair and incorrect to say it is irrelevant or incapable.

Over the past eight decades, the UN has provided us a space to speak on equal footing and to be listened to. Enemies can meet here eye to eye.

It has succeeded in a wide range of areas: there have been groundbreaking agreements in many fields, including human rights, disarmament, climate, and health.

G7, G20, BRICS, and others regional organizations, with their own goals, will never be able to fully substitute it. However, the UN's health cannot be a justification for disengagement. On the contrary, the situation calls upon us for reinvestment in its strength. It lies in our hands—the Member States, more than in the executive powers of the Secretary-General.

UN reform is desirable and, in light of the current financial situation, also indispensable. Reform of the Security Council is long overdue, with representation of nations that better reflects the reality of the changed world.

Slovakia welcomes the UN80 Initiative. It will be a difficult task. But we have a common goal: the UN must emerge from this as efficient and capable of having impact where it matters most, in the field.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

we have been called upon by our citizens to fulfill our duties in very difficult times. We can no longer sweep issues under the rug or pass the buck. We must respond. Our steps will be measured, and we will be judged against it.

Slovakia is ready to do its share, also as candidate for non-permanent seat in the Security Council.

Slovakia, a peaceful nation in Central Europe, with multilateralism deeply in its DNA. We will always support international cooperation: a world based on rules with a strong UN in its heart.

No child should be punished for being born in the wrong part of the world. Each child has the right to live in peace. Each child has the right for a decent life. It is our duty, to make this real.

Slovakia will do its part, together with the nations that believe in peace and cooperation. We give this promise to the United Nations and we give this promise to future generations.

Thank you very much!