

UN Speech – Prime Minister of Albania

As we meet today, we confront yet another year of complex crises and conflicts—as a deeply divided world watches.

Our prospects for a more peaceful, just, and equitable world are blurred today. Our times are challenging.

A few days ago, we committed to the Pact of the Future, a sound framework with a high level of ambition and actionable deliverables. We have made other similar major commitments in the past. We have not always kept them. We hope paid the price. This is yet another our chance, one we take under pressure, to make a difference for a more peaceful and prosperous future.

Albania humbly joins this discussion after the conclusion of its mission, for the first time, at the UN Security Council.

Albania aimed to represent this community of countries that stand together for those values and principles that are non-negotiable, and we sincerely hope to have met the expectations of many.

Today more than ever, we need tolerance and trust and an extended hand of friendship to each other. Make no mistake. By tolerance, I do not mean complacency.

Tolerance demands that we go beyond our comfort zones and not merely “tolerate” but tolerate respectfully, actively, and graciously, by not simply accepting other views but constantly engaging with the complexity of all our own histories.

Tolerance for us Albanians is not merely the passive acknowledgment and grudging acceptance of someone’s diversity.

That form of tolerance—the tolerance that Muslim and Christian Albanians expressed during WWII towards the Jews by putting their lives on the line against Evil—requires its own partisan spirit.

It requires engaging with the one who is different from us, accommodating disagreements with respect, and continuing to build bridges so that we can continue to debate.

But it also requires that we continue to challenge ourselves, by reflecting on the possibility of our own biases and prejudices, by reflecting on the arbitrariness and unilaterality that we attribute to others, and by constantly interrogating our own double moral standards.

It is with this trust in humanity and humanism that Albania became a safe haven for the people who escaped death after the fall of Kabul under the Taliban, who were welcomed and accepted by my country.

In the same spirit, we gave shelter to several thousand Iranian refugees, whose lives were in daily danger in Camp Liberty in Iraq, where they were raided and killed by Tehran assassins.

We paid a dear price for being their hosts. The Tehran totalitarian regime engaged in a large-scale cyber-attack on Albania, which aimed to bring the country to its knees by wiping out all our digital infrastructure of public services. They were brutal, but they failed.

We didn't waver, and we will not waver in our commitment to shelter those people in our country for as long as it takes. Our hospitality was and is not at all related to any political stance against Iran, but only to a humanitarian belief engraved in our spirit as a nation.

We recently extended a hand of help to our neighbor and special friend, Italy, in an effort to ease the difficulties that geography has burdened on them with one of the most challenging phenomena of our times: immigration.

Meanwhile, instead of just talking, we tried to act—without pretending to solve this huge immigration problem in Europe, but on the other hand, without just sitting around, and by trying to build and add something constructive.

This attitude of solidarity, cooperation, and good-neighborly relations is the lynchpin of our policy in our region, the Western Balkans.

In our region, after more than a quarter of a century, the deep wounds left by the violent disintegration of the former Yugoslavia still need to be healed, but we have also seen the construction of peace, reflected above all by the vision, unparalleled wisdom, and courage that led to the creation of the EU.

All of us in the Western Balkans have tried for over a decade to come together and meet to talk about our challenges and plan our futures.

It is Albania's firm belief that we need to look at the past with the eyes of the future and not look at the future with the eyes of the past.

Today, the peoples of the Balkans have a moment of historical opportunity in a context of historical danger in the wider Europe, i.e., Russian aggression against Ukraine.

I would say that the Western Balkans is in a much better position today than before, but we must work tirelessly among ourselves in the region and, above all, with our partners, to make the return to the past not just impossible, but simply unimaginable.

In this context, our brotherly Republic of Kosovo is an irreversible reality as a state among the six countries of the Western Balkans, with a clear European perspective and an undisputed allegiance to the large democratic community of nations.

Any artificially drawn parallels between Kosovo and the occupied areas of Ukraine are meant to distract and confuse whomever possible under this roof and the international public opinion, but they can never achieve to dilute the truth, which is: Kosovo is now an intrinsic part of the international reality, an aspiring member of the Euro-Atlantic community, and must not be held hostage by anyone with false pretensions and excuses—starting with the group of EU member states that still do not recognize Kosovo's rightful place in every international organization.

There is still a war waged on European soil!

In the third year of the unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression of Russia against Ukraine, we feel compelled to renew our call for Russia to stop this war.

This is a war that neither Ukraine nor our community of like-minded nations chose—a catastrophe conceived by the decision of one country and, indeed, one delusional dreamer of an old imperial past.

Rewarding an aggressor who annexes the territories of a sovereign country by disarming the victim of aggression does not bring peace but paves the way for more war.

All those who seek peace by stopping Ukraine instead of stopping neo-imperialist Russia's aggression are wrong, and they should be aware of a very simple truth: A peace that defeats Ukraine would bring only further aggression and turn our world into one ruled by might, not right.

Yes, we seek peace too, and we want peace to be made between Ukraine and Russia as soon as possible. And of course, we would support any peace attempt and format that would include Russia around the table.

But we seek a just peace based on the Charter of the United Nations, international law, and the resolutions of the General Assembly of the United Nations. A peace that cannot undermine Ukraine and its rights.

Earlier this year in Tirana, we hosted the second summit between Ukraine and Southeast Europe and welcomed President Zelensky, a leader of a resistance which is not simply a resistance to brutal aggression against their homeland, but at the same time a resistance for the very existence of democracy and a just, rules-based world.

Albania will continue to stand by Ukraine and support it for as long as necessary and as long as a lasting, just peace is achieved.

There is a war waging in Europe's South-East too.

Albania stands firm in its position that there is no place for Hamas and its likes in the world we want to live in, as we recognize the right of the Palestinian people to have their own safe place in this world, and their right to give birth and raise their children in their own state.

Guaranteeing such a basic condition for millions of Palestinians is much easier said than done, just as it is much easier said than done for the Jewish people to live in their land without anyone questioning their right to exist.

We need to restore our moral compass in the Middle East, yes, but there is no moral compass that can relativize and, God forbid, normalize terror and a terrorist organization like Hamas as a part of the peace we all want between Israel and Palestine.

Doing so would be like relativizing the scourge of anti-Semitism and accepting to coexist with a new vicious form of Nazism, which is the worst thing that could have happened for so many years to, first and foremost, the Palestinian people themselves.

Nevertheless, it is not too difficult to state loudly and strongly that so much violence and destruction cannot be the long-term solution for both Israel and Palestine.

We reaffirm our national support for a just and comprehensive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on the two-state solution.

Albania supports the international community's efforts related to this conflict, through dialogue and negotiations leading to an independent state solution, living in peace and good neighborliness; a functional state of Palestine and a secure state of Israel, which, instead of being lectured from afar, should be supported—with no “yes, buts”—in its fight against terror, while still more than a hundred innocent people are being kept hostages in hellish holes under the face of the earth by the butchers of October 7th last year.

The rule of law stands at the heart of one of the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda, a goal which plays the role of the enabler and accelerator of all the other Sustainable Development Goals.

Its importance stands on the promise of achieving more inclusive, just, and peaceful societies. Without strong institutions, access to justice, and respect for human rights, progress on other goals such as ending poverty, ensuring food security, and promoting health and well-being will be limited.

Albania is living proof of the radical transformation of good governance practices and mindset. Our public services are now over 95% paperless, and the digitalization of access and services has curbed corruption, informality, and mistrust in institutions.

With its unprecedented justice reform, Albania has invested tremendously over the last few years in achieving SDG 16 as a crucial tool for achieving a sustainable future, for social progress, economic prosperity, environmental sustainability, and justice.

But the struggle for just and fair institutions and good governance is not one that can be won within a year, through one reform, or during a single decade. On the contrary, it is a perpetual effort to transform domestically over a generation—from the highest level of policy-making to the most effective practices of providing access to citizens at all levels and instances of government.

We are committed to playing our part and collaborating with the international community to ensure the successful realization of our Albania 2030 Agenda.

Building upon the ongoing work during our previous mandate as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, we will continue to work with like-minded countries to improve the governance and institutional efficiency of the UN, as well as multilateralism and respect for human rights.

As a member of the Human Rights Council, Albania is committed to the universal principles of human rights and dignity, in a world where every human being can realize their full potential and live with dignity and respect.

A dear daughter of the Albanians, Saint Mother Teresa, once said: “I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.”

No better saying can mirror today’s need to work together on what is clearly the substance of multilateralism.

Thank you.