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Statement by

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Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my first address in the capacity as the Croatian Prime Minister in front of this high and distinguished body. I feel privileged to present you with the Croatian Government's strategic priorities in the domain of foreign policy.

Let me start by congratulating Minister Ping on his assumption of the Presidency (of the General Assembly) and wishing him every success in performing his highly important task. He can rely fully on Croatia's support and cooperation.

Let me also add the voice of my delegation to those that have already thanked his predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte, for the dedication he demonstrated in chairing the previous General Assembly session and the effort he invested in the revitalization of the work of our Organization.

For the first time, Croatia is addressing the General Assembly as a candidate country for membership in the European Union. Today, I would like to share with you Croatia's position on the most important tasks for the United Nations in this time of great multilateral challenges.

Distinguished delegates,

The very fact that so many Heads of State and government leaders have gathered here in New York to mark the beginning of the 59th General Assembly session, serves as a telling affirmation that multilateralism is a driving force in global politics. And it confirms that we live in no ordinary times.

The world at the beginning of the 21st century is profoundly different from the one in which the Berlin Wall started to crumble. Never before have we faced so many opportunities stemming from new technologies and enhanced regional and global cooperation. And seldom have we encountered so many threats and challenges as we do today.

Tragic events in recent years, from New York to Moscow, from the Middle East all the way to Southern Asia, have confirmed that terrorism currently stands out as the most pressing threat to our world, taking thousands of innocent lives at random.

Equally dangerous is the threat of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). We must resort to all means required to prevent the proliferation of these vehicles of death. If synergized — terrorism and WMD - they could bring upon mankind a level of destruction of an unforeseeable scale.

Therefore, we must not relax our efforts in the fight against global terrorism. Nor can we neglect the fatal impact of weapons of mass destruction. This has to remain at the top of our priorities; any hesitation to address these issues in a timely and appropriate manner could have unforgiving consequences.

Croatia commends and fully supports the ongoing activities of the Counter-Terrorism Committee, and welcomes its recent reform. However, the Committee has to improve its outreach in order to provide a comprehensive and truly effective multilateral response to this precarious scourge. We equally recognize the importance of the Security Council Committee

established by the Resolution 1540 with the goal of stopping the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and expect to see all countries submitting their first reports on the matter.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The United Nations should continue to play a decisive role in our quest for a stable, secure and prosperous world. Croatia welcomes the reports of the Secretary-General on the work of the United Nations and the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. I would particularly like to commend his reform efforts to date. He has identified many challenges to the United Nations and we should not hesitate to meet them. We particularly share his assessment that the United Nations requires adequate security and institutional agility to adapt to changing circumstances in the world.

The Security Council has a paramount responsibility in this regard. However, we must not overlook the role of the General Assembly whose potentials are far from being explored to the fullest.

Against the backdrop of our expectations, the incoming report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change carries particular weight. Croatia is confident that the Panel's findings and subsequent Secretary General's report shall provide us with a sound basis to proceed towards the reform of the United Nations and represent an adequate response to all challenges. In this difficult endeavor speed matters almost as much as substance.

On the subject of the United Nations reform, there is still a vast gap between the awareness within the Member States that this reform is essential if we are to meet the challenges ahead of us, and the genuine readiness to engage on the path to reform. For that reason, calling all members of our Organization to redouble their efforts in the reform of the Security Council and revitalization of the General Assembly is never a repetitive task.

Regarding Security Council reform, Croatia supports the enlargement of the Security Council in all categories of membership, based on the appropriate regional representation.

Let us make the United Nations even more relevant, with a range of inventive and collaborative approaches that shall increase the effectiveness of our joint efforts and result with the Organization's capability to respond to the needs and realities of the new century.

The credibility of the United Nations does not depend solely on the political will of its member states and its capacity to manage crises. It also depends on its capacity to respond to the expectations of those who are in dire need of assistance, who cannot protect themselves from imbalances and injustice.

We cannot shy away from seeking all available solutions to the fundamental global challenges we face today, including extreme poverty, drug smuggling, the spread of deadly diseases and global climate change. Globalization needs to be mastered; the opportunities it offers need to be assessed and its excesses rectified.

Finding appropriate answers to these fundamental questions requires multilateral cooperation, with a viable and effective United Nations at its core. We all wish to see a strong and decisive United Nations that is capable of effectively responding to current and future challenges, but

this cannot happen by default. It depends solely on the contribution and dedication of each and every member state.

Croatia supports the Millennium Declaration as the basis for the reform of the United Nations system and a further step towards the strengthening of the authority, operational capability and effective functioning of the Organization. Achieving political and economic goals envisaged in the Declaration, nationally and globally, has to remain our main concern. In this regard, Croatia has prepared a country report on the realization of Millennium Development Goals.

Croatia supports the universal ratification of international instruments in the field of human rights, but without their effective implementation, support itself shall remain insufficient. During our membership in the United Nations Human Rights Commission, Croatia shared the belief of many Member States that the Commission should continue unhindered in its activities while carrying out its mandate. In an effort to promote and protect the human rights of all people, Croatia is devoting special attention to the human rights of members of national minorities as well as of women, children, refugees and disabled persons.

My country considers arms control to be a pivotal instrument of its security policy. I would like to reiterate our continued support for the further strengthening of major international disarmament and non-proliferation instruments, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We expect concrete results from the upcoming NPT Review Conference in 2005.

Croatia has consistently supported bringing into force the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and we call on those that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the CTBT as soon as possible. My country believes that particular emphasis should be placed on establishing and refining effective verification mechanisms for the CTBT and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.

We encourage those countries that have not signed or ratified the Ottawa Convention to do so without delay. As a country that has directly experienced the disastrous effect of landmines, Croatia is particularly concerned with the continuation of their spread.

Equal importance should be given to efforts to prevent illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. Their uncontrolled proliferation not only fuels regional conflicts, but also plays a considerable role in terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime. Croatia has achieved commendable progress in this field and is prepared to assist others, both in our region and beyond.

Excellencies, dear colleagues,

Croatia gained extensive experience in post-conflict management after the war that was imposed upon us in the nineties, especially in the field of refugee return, confidence building, processing war crimes, economic reconstruction and the reintegration of war-torn areas with the rest of the country. We stand ready to contribute our knowledge and share it with those in need.

In confronting alarming challenges – such as security, poverty, terrorism, pandemics and environmental issues – collective action is most likely to yield the best results, since not even the most powerful among us can bear the burden alone.

Effective regional action also remains important. In this respect, while we are aware of the irreplaceable importance of global multilateralism, a growing significance of the regional organizations has to be emphasized. In today's world, regional organizations have an increasingly important role to play, in accord with the major multilateral institutions, primarily the United Nations.

At this very moment Croatian peacekeepers are participating in seven UN peace-keeping missions. We are determined to further intensify our participation in UN peace-keeping missions - regarding the composition and number of troops deployed as well as the theaters of operations.

We will continue to support the training of peacekeepers from emerging troop-contributing countries, directly or under the auspices of the United Nations, by receiving foreign officers as attendees of the respective training courses in the Republic of Croatia as well as by sending Croatian instructors to organize and execute the courses in the emerging troop-contributing countries.

Distinguished delegates,

Croatia has presented its candidacy for membership in the Security Council for the 2008/2009 mandate. Our membership would not only represent a great tribute to my country, but also the recognition of all the efforts that have been fruitfully invested in the peace and stability of South East Europe.

We are proud of our achievements since becoming a United Nations member state in May of 1992. From being part of the European powder keg, Croatia grew into one of the key generators and promoters of stability in South East Europe and beyond. With a growing economy, much expanded highway network and blossoming tourism industry, Croatia is firmly oriented towards the future. And I can state with confidence that the best is yet to come.

Croatia is successfully embarked upon the road of Euro-Atlantic integration, with a clear goal of the EU and NATO membership. Good bilateral relations with all our neighbors and beyond, cross-border and regional cooperation, as well as constructive multilateralism remain the bedrock of Croatia's foreign policy.

My country is speedily preparing for the opening of accession negotiations with the European Union in early 2005. We are confident that Croatia shall meet fully and on time all the criteria required in this demanding process. We have already demonstrated our reform-making and decision-taking capabilities, through the fulfillment of the Copenhagen Criteria required for the candidate status for the EU. It has been far from easy, but at the end Croatia's success demonstrates that hard work and reform-oriented policy are the best possible investment in one country's future.

Croatia is ready to serve as a model-country in the South East Europe, encouraging and assisting our neighbors to realize their Euro-Atlantic ambitions. The prospect of EU

membership is proved to be the best incentive for the countries in Central and South East Europe to implement comprehensive political, economic, institutional and democratic reforms.

Unified Europe is no longer a dream; it is a reality upon which the prosperity and security of the entire continent is based. European Union is economic prosperity and cooperation, it is stability and security, but above all it is values that stand out so strongly. We all share the same values, the same principles and the same dedication.

A famous Croatian poet, Dobriša Cesari , wrote a poem about a waterfall whose beauty and might are created by thousands of small drops of water. Croatia's drop is a part of this wonder called one Europe.

Croatia is determined to contribute to the best of its abilities to the success of this Organization and to the principles it stands upon. Too many times we fail to fathom the true meaning of the phrase that is much more than the mere name of our Organization: the United Nations.

UN - there can be no better global formula for the mounting challenges and potentials, burdens, hopes and expectations of the new century.

Thank you.