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**Statement of H.E. Mr. Srgjan Kerim,
President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly,
at the Lecture “Towards a New Culture of International Relations:
Rights and Responsibilities of the Individual in Multilateral Decision-
making”**

Following are excerpts from the remarks made by the President at the Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Relations on 10 December 2007

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me start with a remark before I elaborate on the topic of Towards a New Culture of International Relations: Rights and Responsibilities of the Individual in Multilateral Decision Making.

Recently, when I was in Milan, I talked to some of my hosts about politics, and I tried to draw a definition between a politician and a statesman. All the politicians try to become statesmen, but few of them actually succeed. The difference is that politicians always try to position themselves, before elections and after elections, and they are mainly preoccupied with themselves. Statesmen on the other hand are people who are preoccupied with the world. They try to reshape the world, to shape it in another way, and to create something new.

Reading about history and following what is going on in the world in this last 30 years at least, I realized that statesmen act differently depending on the times they live in. During a war and immediately after a war, they show more vision than in a period of peace. This is what we are confronted with now. The world unfortunately does not have leaders of the caliber of those who drafted the Atlantic Charter, of those who created the United Nations and shaped the world as it is today.

The political map of the world of today was mainly drawn in the 1960s and 1970s. If you look at the statistics, the United Nations had only 15 or so members when it was created in San Francisco, and later when it moved to New York. In the 1960s and the 1970s, a series of new emerging states in Africa and Asia joined. It became a club of 130 nations.

Then in the early 1990s, we had another new set of emerging states in Eastern Europe, due to the breaking up of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. This is how we come to today's number of 192 states, the latest one being Montenegro, which used to be one of the republics of the former Yugoslavia.

In the 1960s and in the 1970s, many African and Asian states became independent. Former colonies joined the United Nations and became partners in international relations. During that period, particularly in the 1970s and in the 1980s these countries tried hard to change the world order and to introduce a concept called "a new international economic order." That concept did not have appropriate results and did not work. The new international economic order remained a proposal on paper.

In the beginning of the 1990s, when the Berlin Wall fell, people believed that a new world political order would be established. We know today that this is not the case. We do not have a new world political order. There are a lot of failures, problems and controversies around the world since then. Only Eastern Europe has changed. But that is not the world; it's only a tiny part of it. It is less than 10 percent of the population of the world.

Reflecting on what may be the reason that prevents us from establishing a new world order – whether political or economic in nature -- I believe it is because people in today's world—in the world of ICTs, of information communication technologies, of interdependence of globalization - - are frightened when they hear the word "order." They may be tired at attempts to impose an order. I believe people would like to have something else: normal transparent relations amongst themselves in a world that is very interdependent and made transparent by the ICTs. In today's world you can communicate with every person you would like to; you just need an email address and a computer. Nobody can prevent you from doing that. No order can prevent that.

However, in terms of international relations, we are dealing with a lot of stereotypes. The first one is sovereignty, understood as it was after one of the cruelest wars in history, which ended with the Westphalian peace treaty in Western Europe, and which established sovereignty. But that was in the 17th century. Now we are in the 21st century, and the world has changed tremendously. The classic notion of sovereignty does not fit the world of today.

The United Nations is yet another example where we are confronted with this contradiction. When we have our discussions, dialogues, sometimes misunderstandings and disagreements—even political struggles—it is mainly related to national sovereignty, the understanding of sovereignty. For example, many people still believe that talking about human rights is interfering in internal affairs.

This brings me to another issue that also causes a lot of misunderstandings: the issue of majorities and minorities. The problem of Kosovo, ultimately, is a problem that in the Balkans we still do not differentiate between those two categories. People have serious problems with that, with the definition of majority and minority and then with the understanding of those concepts and then with their application. What are ethnic roots, and what is citizenship? What is the basis of the nation-state?

Due to the fact that in the Balkans there was always an identification of the majority, on an ethnic basis, with citizenship and with the nation-state, we always created a situation of conflict between ethnic majorities and minorities. The minorities, of course, were never prepared to be second-

class citizens, with good reason. But the majorities never understood that. On the other hand, the minorities could not completely identify themselves with the nation-state. That created a lot of tension.

You can imagine the frustration and problem that raises on the individual level. People cannot understand each other, cannot correspond with each other and communicate with each other. This is definitely the wrong perception of what a nation-state should be.

In fact, if you go back in history you will see that there is no single nation which created a state. It was the other way around: states created nations. Look at the history of the United States. Look at the history of France. Look at the history of Germany, Egypt, and many, many others. First, the state was created and then the nation, and not the other way around.

In the Balkans, we still have this problem. This is the problem that escalated between the Serbs and the Albanians in Kosovo. The problem of the majority dictating to the minority. Albanians and Serbs lived for decades in the same state, but the Albanians were always regarded as second-class people. This culminated when the process of breaking apart and secession in Yugoslavia started and the nations wanted to leave this association of nations and community, because they always felt the majority's pressure on the minority, the confusion between ethnic roots and citizenship.

Let me give an absurd example. For those of you who are interested in soccer, if you watch the national team of France, one can claim, according to the Balkan criteria, that there is no national team of France because they are all black people and Arab people from Africa—so no French people on the team, thus no national team. But of course there is no point in this.

This is why I think we badly need—and I come now to my point—a new culture of international relations, which places the individual at its center. There are a number of reasons for this.

First the issue of human security. I had recently a lecture at the Harvard Business School, and the topic was "Does Globalization Mean that National Sovereignty is in Decline?" It is in decline, but it is transforming itself. It will not disappear. We will have to work with nation-states and with sovereignty. The structure of the United Nations is based on that. But sovereignty has to transform itself in a way that it will disaggregate. This disaggregation will be in favor of the individual. The sovereignty of the individual has to be strengthened, and in order to strengthen that, we have to deal with human security. Human security is not only about nations; it is about individuals. Look at all the crises we are facing, from Sudan to Myanmar—everywhere in the world—and conflicts. They have to do with human security. People do not feel secure, and they are then part of a conflict.

Then human rights. Today of course is a special day. Today is the anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights. In terms of human rights, we have established a lot of norms, conventions and many other documents, but I believe we have yet to make tremendous progress. There is a lot of work to be done, to involve people, individuals. This is why I am involving a lot of NGOs in the

work of the General Assembly during its current session. I am glad to tell you that countries, no matter from which region—from Asia or from Africa, from Eastern or Western Europe, from North America—are now more and more aware and interested in involving the NGOs in our work, because that is another opportunity—along with reaching out to business sector—to involve individuals.

After human security and human rights, a third principle I would like to mention as a part of this new culture of international relations—because people need more of culture and less of an order in the world—or, as I put it in other words, more software than hardware in developing international relations—is the principle of the responsibility to protect.

There are still controversies within even our own ranks in the UN on that. But it is becoming, more and more acceptable. Even the Secretary-General has recently appointed his envoy, Professor Ed Luck, from New York, to deal with the issue. We cannot talk about humanitarian assistance, we cannot talk about peacekeeping, peace building, and all the instruments we are using in the United Nations, without bearing in mind that many of the conflicts have been in a terrible phase, and we did not intervene. We were just observers. We were just hypocrites who were looking in the other direction when the conflict arose. That is unacceptable in today's world. This is why we have to develop this principle into a real instrument.

I know how difficult it was at the beginning to design this concept, and then to bring it to the United Nations as a topic of discussion. But times are changing, for the better. We can say now that this is becoming more and more an integral part of our philosophy in dealing with each other.

Last but not least, all of the above principles would not make sense if we did not include the principle of sustainable development. I am very glad to see that the new president of the World Bank, Bob Zoellick, in talking about his plans said that his mantra as far as the World Bank was concerned was and would be climate change and sustainable development.

Dealing with climate change is the perfect example to round up the whole concept. How can we deal with climate change? It affects the whole planet, so it has nothing to do with national borders, with sovereignty, with individual states or regions. It's a global threat, an unprecedented global threat. The whole world has to deal with it, because this threat has the dimensions of posing a devastating threat to the Member States of the United Nations. All the small island states are in danger. Many other vulnerable countries in Africa and Asia are also under attack. This is a reality we have to accept and must confront.

But who is going to do it, and on what basis? I do not believe the United Nations by itself can do it. The Member States need to work with the business sector. They need to reach out to the NGOs, the academic sector, individuals, people who are prepared to be part of a mission called "How To Save the Planet from a Disaster." I know it is not something that may happen tomorrow or after tomorrow, but it is something which is a threat on a daily basis, and in the medium and long run it can have disastrous consequences for the whole planet. We have to be aware of that.

This is why we need statesmen. We need people who are able to create visions and to share them with the people and with individuals and involve them. Part of that vision is to understand that we have to give a lot of what we call our sovereignty and integrity to the individual.

But with rights must come responsibilities. They go hand in hand. I am not here only to preach and to plead for human security and human rights and minority rights, but also for shared responsibilities. Shared responsibilities should be the value of such a new culture of international relations, together with freedom, with equality, with tolerance and respect.

This may sound very familiar, like everyday words such as "coffee," "tea," "juice." But that is unfortunately not the case. We must be very persistent in promoting these values and apply them in international relations, starting from the United Nations and all the other international organizations, and in the dealings of Member States with each other. If we succeed in this, we will truly be able to shape a world of the 21st and even 22nd century. That is what the world of today needs, at the beginning of this century, and not the visions that shaped the world of the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries.

Thank you for your attention.