

27 September 2012

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremić,
President of the 67th Session of the General Assembly,
at the High-Level Launch of the United Nations Guidance for
Effective Mediation**

Mr. Deputy Secretary-General,
My Dear Friends Ahmet and Erkki,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to join you in launching the United Nations Guidance for Effective Mediation.

At the outset, let me express my sincere appreciation to the Group of Friends of Mediation particularly its co-chairs Finland and Turkey for their commitment to this important issue. I am convinced that this will help advance our efforts to strengthen international peace and security.

Mediation is more of an art than a science. When someone takes on the responsibility of mediating a dispute, he or she has to be not only evenhanded and persuasive, but also truly needs to believe peace is possible perhaps more than the parties themselves.

In addition, the mediator must have a well-developed sense of fairness, coupled with a detailed, unbiased knowledge of the issue at stake. He or she needs to truly understand the positions as well as the prejudices of all parties.

This requires a keen appreciation of not only the political differences, but also the cultural ones at stake. It also necessitates the ability to develop trusted, personal relationships with a number of actors at various levels as well as the strength of character not to try imposing a preferred outcome on the parties. Perhaps this is the most important trait of all: working in a patient and fair-minded manner to formulate a solution acceptable to everyone.

Excellencies,

I believe that the launch of the UN Guidance for Effective Mediation could not come at a more opportune moment.

The geopolitical circumstances of our time are unlike any we have seen before. Right before our eyes, the international system is becoming both more volatile and more unpredictable.

Globalization has effectively shrunk the world and helped raise hundreds of millions out of poverty, yet political and socio-economic expectations continue to rise, while the fissures in the geostrategic landscape grow deeper.

Ever-scarcer resources, a series of devastating economic crises, and the growing effects of climate change to list just a few of the problems we face seem to be decreasing the capacity of governments across the world to improve lives and enhance security for their citizens, further nourishing already strong feelings of uncertainty.

Under such circumstances, the danger of new conflicts erupting, the challenge of preventing those which are gathering, and the difficulties of resolving existing ones, are pervasive.

In my view, an integral part of the response to such global conditions is the sort of mediation that advances the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

I believe the General Assembly, as the universal conclave of mankind, should play a more visible and active role in promoting this and all other instruments that can bring about the adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means the overarching theme I have chosen for the 67th Session.

Excellencies,

The United Nations has already taken several steps in that direction.

During its 65th Session, this body unanimously adopted Resolution 65/283, entitled “Strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution”.

As a follow up, the Secretary-General’s Report (A/66/811), which contains the United Nations Guidance for Effective Mediation, took stock of UN mediation efforts.

I believe this Guidance can be put in the service of efforts to strengthen international peace and security, as mediation offers a legitimate, democratic and consensual instrument for conflict prevention and resolution.

It has another advantage: it does not require any of the parties to a dispute to make the first move or grant any initial concessions. Sometimes political constraints or the lack of trust in the good faith of the other side make this the hardest thing to do.

Properly executed, mediation can help overcome that challenge. In my view, it can serve as a bridge in the way that my country’s Nobel Laureate in Literature Ivo Andric once described their fundamental meaning. In his most famous book, the Bridge on the Drina, Andric wrote that bridges “do not serve for anything secret and bad. [...] What we aim for, will be granted its true meaning on the other side,” he concluded, “for bridges represent the eternal unsatisfied human desire to link, to reconcile and join all

that springs up before our spirit and our eyes, so that there should be no divisions, no confrontation, and no parting.”

Excellencies,

Let us take the UN Guidance as a starting point in exploring further ways to arrive at solutions based on the consent of the parties.

I believe that when a settlement is reached anywhere in the world through mediation or any other soft-power instrument deriving from the Charter the General Assembly, coming together in consensus, could act as a moral guarantor of what has been agreed.

Such an approach would surely confer indispensable legitimacy on any peace agreement, to the benefit of the stakeholders, and all of mankind.

Thank you for your attention.