

1 October 2012

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremić,
President of the 67th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Forum of Small States (FOSS)**

Foreign Minister Shanmugam,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Madam Secretary,
Dear Friends,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor to address the FOSS Ministerial Meeting. It gives me particular pleasure to be with you this morning, since I myself come from a Small State the Republic of Serbia.

We are a proud country which neither occupies a large place on the map of the world, nor has great material resources at its disposal. Like many other nations, mine has travelled through periods of tragedy and periods of glory sacrificing men and treasure far beyond its means whenever its freedom was in need of defense.

One quarter of our population perished in the First World War, at enormous cost to our development. In Second World War, close to a million Serbs fell to defeat the scourge of fascism.

At the 1945 San Francisco Conference, our delegation worked very hard with those of other small states to improve the initial draft of the UN Charter produced the year before at Dumbarton Oaks, so that it conformed more to the interests and concerns of the majority of the global family of nations.

By pooling our resources, we were able to raise the status and powers of the General Assembly, enabling it to become a great protector of the rights, interests and dignity of small states. To this day, it remains the only institution where all UN members gather as sovereign equals to advance the aims of the Charter.

Excellencies,

This year, the FOSS celebrates its 20th anniversary. Allow me to congratulate you on reaching this important milestone.

Over the past two decades, the Forum has not only expanded its membership, but also gained a good reputation for its contributions to the work of the United Nations.

By their very nature, Small States share specific concerns and common interests, such as sustainable development, global economic governance, climate change, and UN revitalization to name a few. They face a number of challenges that larger countries do not, which makes them more appreciative of the importance of multilateral cooperation and solidarity.

The historical record shows that it does not have to be your size, but your ideas, initiatives and dynamism that can determine your relevance in the international system. As a great world leader said, close to a hundred years ago, “the heroic deeds that thrill humanity through generations were the deeds of little nations fighting for [a cause greater than their own].”

Globalization has effectively shrunk the world and helped raise hundreds of millions out of poverty. Peoples’ political and socio-economic expectations continue to rise, while the fissures in the geostrategic landscape grow deeper. The heightened vulnerabilities of all nations are manifest, and even the most powerful countries have not remained unaffected.

One of the most alarming aspects of this new global reality is that capabilities once thought to be exclusively in the hands of states such as the ability to inflict harm on a massive scale could become more easily accessible to non-state actors.

The grave danger posed by terrorism is one of the most dramatic threats we all face today.

In my address at the opening of the 67th Session of the General Assembly, I stressed that the fight against all forms of terrorism has to remain high on our agenda. We must spare no effort to defeat this scourge, and we must do it together. It represents one of the most pernicious dangers to establishing lasting international peace, threatening the security of many nations and the stable development of the entire international community.

Excellencies,

The overarching theme I chose to frame our debates for the next twelve months is bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means.

In my view, one of the most strategic conflict prevention resources at our disposal is sustainable development. It is becoming increasingly interwoven into the global peace and security agenda. This is in part due to the attention we have all devoted to the Millennium Development Goals. As President, I intend to work with FOSS countries on bringing us closer to fulfilling this historic objective.

At the same time, we must focus more intensely on the post-2015 agenda. It is crucial for all of us to remain on the same page throughout this process. The outcome of the Rio+20 conference highlighted, once again, that more coherence and coordination is required if the diverse challenges we face today are to be properly addressed.

The broad membership of the FOSS gives it a unique perspective, and I believe your active engagement is critical to ensuring legitimacy for the follow-up process to the Rio+20 Conference.

The General Assembly has been mandated to implement what was agreed by world leaders in June. As President, I will push forward preparations for a High-Level Forum to be convened at beginning of the next session. I will also engage with all Member States on the establishment of a Working Group to define a list of Sustainable Development Goals for consideration and adoption by the plenary.

Excellencies,

In both my addresses to the General Assembly at the start of the 67th Session, I emphasized the importance of the economic dimension of sovereign equality. No nation can lift itself out of poverty if it has no right to have its voice heard.

I will therefore continue the tradition established by my predecessors, and convene informal meetings of the plenary before and after G-20 preparatory meetings, as well as the annual Heads of State or Government Summit. I look forward to the active participation of Small States in these events.

In my view, however, more can be done to increase the complementarity of both policies and actions between the UN and key international economic players.

It is with this in mind that I have proposed to launch a process leading to the establishment of an effective consultative framework between the General Assembly and international financial and trade institutions, as well as groupings such as the G-20.

This could help alleviate the fears and uncertainties Small States have been voicing for a number of years. Inclusivity is an important factor, as steps are taken to create a more stable, prosperous and balanced global economy.

Let me underline that the intent is not to infringe on established prerogatives, but to complement existing efforts with a regularized, broader-based approach, which would in turn help answer a number of questions related to legitimacy.

I also believe that if we do this in the right way, the key actors' decisions can actually help strengthen and further revitalize the General Assembly.

Excellencies,

Since my election as President, I have exchanged views with a number of countries on this idea, and the reactions have been invariably positive.

In conceptualizing this initiative, we may draw inspiration from the words of one of the first women to be awarded a Nobel Prize, Jane Addams. She once wrote that “we have learned to say that the good must be extended to all of [the global] society before it can be held secure by any one [nation]. But we have not yet learned to add to that statement, that unless all peoples contribute to a good, we cannot be completely sure that it is [a good] worth having.”

I thank you for your attention and look forward to hearing your thoughts, ideas and suggestions.