

11 November 2012

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremić,  
President of the 67<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
at the Conclusion of the New York Forum on World Civilizations  
Organized by the China Energy Fund Committee**

Esteemed Dr. Ho,  
My Friends,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a very special honor to have been invited to give a toast at this banquet.

We are here to mark the conclusion of the New York Forum on World Civilizations organized by the China Energy Fund Committee, with the participation of the Organizing Committee of the Nishan Forum on World Civilization, and the assistance of the NGO Branch of the Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

The stated aim of the New York Forum is to enhance understanding between great civilizations which gave birth to Confucianism and Christianity.

In our era of globalization, it has become self-evident that such endeavors in fact amount to an imperative. The first-tier issues of our time have all become global in their essence from energy security, economic instability and climate change, to nuclear safety, terrorism and organized crime.

In centuries past, technology placed limits on the scope of the knowledge of whatever we defined as the outside world. For millennia, various cultural and religious traditions could develop autonomously from one another. Identities were formed and narratives established with little need or capacity to take into account those of others.

Today's international geopolitical reality has made this impossible. Information flows instantaneously, whether its source is across the street or on the other side of the planet. In other words, the gap between what is local and what is global is bridged in the blink of an eye.

This appears to be an irreversible development. A basic issue before us is not how to counter globalization, but how to harness it to the advantage of civilizations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The current Ecumenical Patriarch of the Orthodox Church, His All Holiness Bartholomew, has written that “our humanity is realized through the free act of relationship with others. [...] To be myself, I need you. If we do not look one another in the eye, we are not truly human.”

More than anything else, this capacity to communicate, to share our thoughts and convictions in an orderly and meaningful way, is what gives our species the ability to come together.

This requires what the philosopher Aristotle called *logos* or “reasoned speech.”

We learn from each other by listening and responding and by the fact that we are naturally drawn to live in communities, not in seclusion.

Today, our discursive horizon is a global one. Promoting our own tradition requires us to recognize the need for conversing with others.

This encounter this ongoing *logos* must not be about imposing uniformity. Dialogue is not about sameness. It is not about standardizing cultures, but about respecting others and thus enlarging the common denominator of values and principles that bind us to each other as human beings.

Above all, it is about coming to terms with the fact that no civilization or intellectual tradition holds a monopoly on the claim that it is the keeper of values thought to be universal.

It is my deeply-held view that this constitutes a prerequisite to advance what I have chosen as the overarching theme for the 67th Session of the UN General Assembly, namely bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means.

Those who drafted the UN Charter understood this very well. When nations feel secure, they are much more likely to unclench their fists and give the process of conflict prevention a genuine chance to succeed.

Doing anything less, in my view, is anathema to the respective civilizations which gave birth to Confucianism and Christianity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My candidature for President of the UN General Assembly was put forward by the Republic of Serbia a proud and democratic country I have been greatly privileged to serve in two successive terms as foreign minister.

Today is Armistice Day, which marks the end of the First World War. Its significance for the Serbian people cannot be underestimated. Between 1914 and 1918, we lost more than a quarter of our pre-war population and approximately half of our country’s adult males gave their lives in the fight to liberate our lands from a coalition of invaders.

In some European countries, the symbol of remembrance for the fallen is the red poppy flower, which grows in abundance in the fields around Flanders, where much of the fighting took place on the Western front.

In the Serbian tradition, we pin onto our lapels a representation of the Ramonda nathaliae a flower that grows exclusively in the high peaks of the Balkans, especially around the Mount Kajmakčalan, where some of the fiercest and most decisive battles on the Eastern Front of the First World War took place.

Named after Serbia's Queen Natalija, the flower is also known as the phoenix, because its purple leaves wither in dry conditions but very rare in plants fully come back to life with enough water. It is therefore a symbol of national rebirth, a physical reminder that even when the entirety of our nation had been subjected to the occupiers' brutality, it was able to rise again and reestablish its institutions, culture and faith.

In coming to the end of my remarks, I wanted to share this story of resurgence with you. I believe its meaning is innately understandable to everyone who identifies himself as belonging to either the Confucian or Christian civilization, which teach us self-sacrifice, patience, solidarity, and mutual respect.

In this context, I am reminded of the Nishan Forum's core idea of "creating your own beauty, discovering others' merits, and sharing with each other for a harmonious world."

At bottom, that is what this gathering is about: working together to forge a stronger partnership for peace and development, promoted through dialogue intended to deepen cooperation within and amongst our respective cultures, faiths and societies.

To the everlasting endurance of our traditions, then, do I ask you to rise, and to drink to the good works, past and future of the New York Forum on World Civilizations.