

INTERVIEW: UN Assembly President aims to achieve 'results for people'

12 September 2017 – Miroslav Lajčák hopes, that under his presidency, the United Nations General Assembly will overcome narrow national interests and produce tangible benefits for people.

“My hope is that the 72nd session of the General Assembly will be a good one, a productive one that will result in many concrete solutions to the world’s problems,” Mr. Lajčák told *UN News* ahead of the session’s opening today.

The career diplomat from Slovakia, who was elected by the 193-member Assembly as its President, highlighted two of the world’s most pressing issues – conflict and migration – as his priorities.

“I wish to pay attention to what we can do better to prevent conflict. Because by avoiding conflict, we save human lives and we also save money,” he said, while noting that Member States will also be devoting time and energy to the drafting of a global compact on migration, which is expected to be adopted in 2018.

Having been through difficult missions, particularly in the Balkans, Mr. Lajčák said he understands what it takes to succeed in multilateralism.

“If we disagree, this is not the reason to punish each other. It’s the reason to sit down and try to find a consensus or compromise. This is what I understand as the essence of diplomacy,” he said.

VIDEO: Miroslav Lajčák outlines priorities for his tenure as President of the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly, aiming to bolster the world body’s efforts to promote peace and security, sustainable development and human rights.

UN News: How do you view the role of the General Assembly in the 21st century?

Miroslav Lajčák: The General Assembly is a unique organ. It’s the most representative organ of the United Nations, where all 193 Member States are present. Each has one vote regardless of its size, power or wealth. That gives the body a huge authority. Plus, according to the [UN] Charter, the General Assembly can discuss any matter. So, therefore, I wish to see the General Assembly being a body where the most important issues are being discussed and where we are able to generate answers to the questions that our people are expecting from us.

UN News: What are your hopes for the new session? What do you see as the biggest challenges?

I believe in respect. We might be different, we might have different views, different interests, but we have to respect each other.

Miroslav Lajčák: My hope is that the 72nd session of the General Assembly will be a good one, a productive one that will result in many concrete solutions to the world's problems. Most pertinent being probably the two of them. First is the prevention of conflict, because I don't think we can say that we are in control of what's happening around us. There are too many conflicts, and too few solutions. So, I wish to pay attention to what can we do better to prevent conflict. Because by avoiding conflict, we save human lives and we also save money.

And the second hope is linked to the issue of migration. It's a global phenomenon. It's an issue that we are all confronted with, one way or another. We have a task or mandate to prepare the Global Compact on Migration. This will take a lot of time during the 72nd session. But I really hope that we will be able to present a document that is rich in substance, that is credible, and that will be well received by our citizens.

UN News: In your acceptance speech, you spoke about wanting to focus on six priorities [people; peace and prevention; migration; the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) and climate action; human rights; and quality]. Given the situation in international affairs now, do you envisage difficulty in keeping your focus on these six priorities?

Miroslav Lajčák: We have to have priorities. At the same time, we have to be flexible and to be able to deal with the issues that we were not foreseeing at the time when we were preparing priorities. So, my six priorities cover all three pillars of the UN work, namely peace and security, development and human rights, and also the ongoing activities. I mentioned already peace and prevention, I mentioned migration. Of course, there is a sustainable development agenda, and the climate agenda where we have to stay focused. There is an agenda of human rights and human dignity. And there is an agenda of a modern UN, which means to support the reforms and also to adopt a budget that will allow us to work also for the future. But as I said, we must not be rigid in sticking to these priorities. Whenever there is a need to address an issue that has emerged and the UN is expected to deal with, we should be ready to do so.