

Slovak Foreign Minister elected as President of 72nd session of the General Assembly

31 May 2017 – The United Nations General Assembly today elected by acclamation Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák of Slovakia as President of its upcoming 72nd session.

Following his election at UN Headquarters in New York, Mr. Lajčák outlined as the six priorities for his tenure: people; peace and prevention; migration; the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) and climate action; and human rights, which would guide his work as an overarching principle.

"I do believe we can do more to bring the UN closer to the world's citizen and make a real difference in their lives," he began. With a focus on quality, he pledged "not to launch any initiative that would result in additional burden, particularly for smaller States. I would rather create a streamlined agenda organized in clusters."

"Indeed, it is a common goal to create a stronger United Nations able to meet the multitude of expectations placed upon it," he underscored. "To that end, I will facilitate a constructive, informed and open interaction among Member States and with the Secretary-General."

Mr. Lajčák called for greater trust between the UN and its Members, stressing that he would do "his utmost to support progress on the United Nations reform agenda, which is vital to improve the efficiency and role of the General Assembly, as well as reform the Security Council into a twenty-first-century body."

Immediately after leaving the General Assembly Hall, Mr. Lajčák spoke to the press.

"I've always believed strongly in multilateralism, with the United Nations at the very centre of it, and I want to use my mandate, when I take over from the current president, to strengthen the role of the United Nations. We live in difficult times, and therefore I believe we need the UN more than ever, and we need a strong and efficient United Nations," he said.

Turning to peace and prevention, Mr. Lajčák explained: "As a professional diplomat, I really believe that we should invest more in preventing conflict, and thus saving human lives and also saving money. There is one important event that is already mandated for April next year, which we want to use to strengthen the importance of sustaining peace and preventing conflict."

"Migration is another priority," he continued. "We have to

deliver on the migration compact, so this will be one of the most urgent issues during the 72nd Session. The next one is to stay focused and keep the speed and attention when it comes to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals and also climate change.”

The Assembly President-elect then added that the “next priority is human rights – respect for basic rights and dignity of every human being. And this is an overarching principle that must be reflected in everything we do.”

Congratulations abound

In his remarks to the General Assembly, [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres offered his warm congratulations, [saying](#): “Foreign Minister Lajèák has always demonstrated an impressive command of all aspects of UN action and a strong commitment to the principles that govern our work.”

The UN chief highlighted Mr. Lajèák's strong commitment to the implementation of Agenda 2030 and the [Paris Agreement](#) on Climate change, adding that his “enthusiastic leadership in relation to the Oceans Conference represent a legacy that will never be forgotten in the United Nations.”

Mr. Guterres also lauded current President, Peter Thomson, saying: “You have guided this Assembly outstandingly well during the transition from one Secretary-General to the next – and you have fully supported my efforts to sharpen our focus on prevention, achieve reform, and better serve the peoples of the world.”

For his part, General Assembly President Thomson [offered](#) congratulations, highlighting that his successor brings “a dedicated work ethic, an unwavering commitment to multilateralism, and a wealth of experience to the role,” skills, he added “that will serve him, and the United Nations, well over the coming session.”

Mr. Thomson commented that he had been struck by Mr. Lajèák's “commitment to forging a United Nations fit for the 21st Century, an Organization that serves the people, one that is based on ethics and transparency, and one that promotes human rights and the rule of law.”

Finally, he expressed his confidence “that under Minister Lajèák's leadership, the United Nations will be strongly positioned to advance our global efforts to sustain peace; promote human rights; and stay the course on implementation of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.”

Having served as a three-term Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Slovakia, along with the UN and European Union in a number of senior conflict prevention, resolution, and mediation role, Mr. Lajèák will assume the Presidency on 12 September.

Made up of all the 193 Member States of the UN, the General Assembly provides a forum for multilateral discussion of the full spectrum of international issues covered by the UN Charter. It meets in regular session intensively

from September to December each year, and thereafter as required.