

## **General debate: Building bridges for peace and understanding**

Esteemed chair and colleagues,

The number of armed conflicts around the world has been rising and is currently at its highest level since the Second World War. This has also been accompanied by the highest ever number of casualties, displaced persons, human rights violations, and breaches of international humanitarian law. Sadly, civilians are those paying the highest toll in modern armed conflicts, falling victims to landmines and unexploded ordnance. They are being deliberately targeted, preventing them from accessing their homes, food and water, and education and healthcare.

We must therefore step up our efforts to shield the civilians and critical civilian infrastructure during armed conflicts. Moreover, humanitarian aid should be provided to those affected without delay. And the international community should direct more efforts towards preventing processes leading to conflicts and atrocities, focusing particularly on early and appropriate response.

The key factor in ensuring international peace and security is an effective multilateralism, with the United Nations playing a central role therein. That is why Slovenia has chosen to run for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council, where it is beginning its two-year tenure this year. Securing a non-permanent seat was certainly an achievement, but we are also aware of the great responsibility it brings.

The current difficult geopolitical situation mainly caused by the war in Ukraine and the ongoing developments in Israel and Palestine, has been reflected in the operational dynamics of the Security Council. Items on the agenda are multiplying, yet there seems to be less and less consensus over them.

Given the present dynamics within the Security Council, Slovenia sees an opportunity for non-permanent members to play a role in overcoming the impediments faced by the Security Council when responding to threats to international peace and security.

With this in mind, Slovenia has adopted a proactive, transparent, and integrative approach to addressing the issues within the Security Council.

In this regard, I would also like to inform you that Slovenia has identified prevention of conflicts, protection of the population in armed conflicts, and women, peace, and security as priority areas of its engagement in the Security Council.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Slovenia will continue to act as a connecting force and a constructive player, actively seeking progress on global issues with an unbiased perspective from a small country's standpoint. As a new member of the Security Council, it will promote mediation as a key tool and one of the most effective means for preventing conflicts and creating the conditions for peace. For this reason, Slovenia also takes an active part in the Group of Friends of Mediation and the Group of Friends of Mediation in the Mediterranean.

Let me underline, that we pay particular attention to developments in Europe, notably Ukraine, the Western Balkans, the situation in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, and the Mediterranean, as these most directly impact our region and, consequently, our security. We also pay close attention to the worrying situation in the Middle East and Africa, which the Security Council is monitoring as part of its political, security, and humanitarian endeavours.

Ladies and gentlemen,

No country can successfully overcome the numerous challenges and threats to international peace and security on its own. It is therefore imperative that we join our forces and respond to these challenges in a coordinated and timely manner. As parliamentarians, we play a vital role in this process, that is why I support the discussion in this Assembly, which I believe will prove to be an important step forward in our joint endeavours.

Thank you.