

Address by
Director of the Institute of International Politics and Economics,
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“The United Nations – Between Vision and Reality”

Belgrade, 22 October 2020

Ladies and gentlemen, Your Excellencies,

The United Nations was formed at a time when, figuratively speaking, barrels of rifles, cannons and tanks had not yet cooled from the still ongoing bloodiest conflict in the history of mankind, in which, according to the most common sources, 48.2 million people lost their lives.

When representatives of fifty countries, including Yugoslavia, met in San Francisco on 25 April 1945, the creation of a single and powerful umbrella world organization was expected. Its beacon would be primarily to achieve world peace, unlike the League of Nations, which moved into history precisely because it could not provide it.

World peace, as the ideal to which it aspires, has remained the leitmotif of the UN to this day, although we should not forget other important areas the UN dealt with, such as human rights, disarmament, humanitarian aid, international development, food, children's program, preservation of cultural heritage, world health, etc.

Dear friends,

Perhaps this is the proper moment to focus exclusively on the results of the UN's work, its 44,000 employees, and the budget of more than three billion dollars.

Undoubtedly, world peace is a precondition for universal development. Individuals, non-governmental organizations, states, international institutions, etc., all participate in peacebuilding. Realistically observed, the question arises in which and what kind of peacebuilding can individuals participate in if the modern world is seriously facing poverty and infectious diseases, among which is the latest pandemic of the disease COVID-19.

The facts, which are rather disturbing, speak best in support of the above statement:

- 868 million people in the world are chronically malnourished.
- 2 billion people do not have access to basic medicines.
- 738 million do not have safe drinking water.
- one billion and 600 million do not have adequate accommodation.
- the same number of people do not have electricity.
- two and a half billion do not have adequate hygienic conditions.
- 796 million adults are illiterate.
- 218 million children (aged 5 to 17) work as soldiers, prostitutes, or servants.
- almost 11 million children die of hunger every year, and more than half a million women die during pregnancy or childbirth.
- in Sub-Saharan Africa, the average life expectancy in the last 20 years has been reduced from 50 to 46.
- while in developed countries less than one child out of 100 children dies before the age of five, in most countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, this ratio is one child out of 10, and in 14 countries even one out of five.

We have to admit that the data are frightening!

Dear colleagues,

It is indisputable that the UN, i.e., the Security Council, is doing a great deal for world peace, but there is a lingering question of whether that is enough. I will refer to only one aspect of these efforts, that is, only to UN peacekeeping operations.

Since the establishment of peacekeeping missions in 1948 until today, the UN has conducted 71 peacekeeping missions involving personnel from more than 120 countries. According to official data from just a few days ago, from 1948 until today, 3,993 “peacekeepers” have lost their lives, of which 167 were members of UNPROFOR.

At the moment, the UN is implementing 13 peacekeeping missions, with 94,875 people, and during this year alone, 86 people lost their lives in UN peacekeeping missions.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I wish to remind you that Serbia has contributed and continues to contribute to world security, first through its peaceful policy and then through its engagement in UN peacekeeping missions.

The former Yugoslavia participated in five peacekeeping missions, which is the same number of missions in which the Republic of Serbia is currently participating.

Since 2002, Serbia has had around 4,000 military personnel in peacekeeping missions.

I will share two more facts that I believe most people do not know. Namely, in the MINUSCA mission in the Central African Republic, Serbia has a hospital, which is the only European hospital in the UN missions in Africa. Secondly, at this moment, out of the total number of Serbian “peacekeepers”, 12 percent are women, and our country is immensely proud of this.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We will agree that globalization has given rise to new security threats and turned towards non-military and asymmetric threats, which became totalitarian and produced a demand for global security cooperation where the UN has an irreplaceable role.

Nevertheless, the number of wars currently ongoing in the world, with the constant threat of terrorism in every part of the planet and other threats humanity faces, including the Coronavirus pandemic, unequivocally raises the question of whether the Third World War is already in progress?

There are numerous ways to ensure world peace, and the most responsible for finding them are wealthy and powerful countries and international organizations, with the UN carrying out a particularly important role. Everything that is being done in the field of UN reform, which, to be honest, was very slow, should provide a framework for modern international relations and confrontation with new security threats.

Finally, the idea of universal peace and cooperative security based on cooperation is far from achievable, but we must not forget that the UN was not created to take mankind to heaven, but to save humanity from hell.