



Predsednica Republike Slovenije

**NATAŠA PIRC MUSAR**

**Lecture by the President of the Republic, Dr. Nataša Pirc Musar, upon the conferral of an honorary doctorate in international relations at the University Orientale in Naples**

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Chiarissimo Professore Giuseppe Cataldi,  
Chiarissimi Professori tutti,  
caro Ambasciatore Longar, caro Console Fronzoni,  
Autorità, signore e signori.*

*Buonasera a tutti i presenti e grazie per un'accoglienza così gentile e cordiale.*

I hope that all of you have lived and are living a decent life. Perhaps a humble one, but safe. Feeling that, in difficult times, you will not be alone. Because this is the world you grew up in. A world that, more than ever before in history, has tried to foster certain fundamental values. It has also raised us to remain vigilant in protecting and upholding the fundamental achievements of civilisation, including the rule of law, justice, and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

I hope that all of you are alarmed by how easily and repeatedly the fundamental rules of international law are being broken, coupled with aggression as a means of advancing foreign policy interests. Tens, hundreds of thousands of dead soldiers and civilians, destroyed infrastructure, and irreparable damage to nature due to wars, all of this is becoming irrelevant at a time when the powerful are again able to exert their will over others just because they can.

I hope that all of you are horrified to realise how little another person's life can mean. The Democratic Republic of the Congo. Palestine. Rwanda. Srebrenica. Sudan. These are only some of the places where we have witnessed brutal killings, often in ways that can only be conceived of by a twisted human mind. And all of it despite the indescribable horrors of World Wars I and II that our ancestors swore would never be repeated, proclaiming that lasting world peace would finally prevail.

I hope that all of you are afraid for the future of our environment on the only liveable planet that we have. We no longer live in the age of climate change. We live in the age of climate crises. And

yet the impact on our planet and lives is grossly underestimated by far too many politicians. They are supported by powerful individuals and interest groups, whose financial interests would be threatened by any meaningful climate agreement.

I hope that many of you are aware that the gap between the rich and poor is widening. The concentration of wealth in the hands of a few individuals and multinational corporations may be the major obstacle to ensuring that people around the world have equal opportunities in an era of rapid technological advancement, especially through accessible education.

I hope that all of you are worried by the changes happening in the international community. Along with the rivalry between superpowers, new players are stepping into the arena of international relations – ultra-wealthy individuals with incredible influence. Individuals who can purchase media spaces or even directly support their chosen political options around the world as easily as buying ice cream for a child.

All this is fuelling discomfort, uncertainty and confusion among people. And perhaps that is why we remain mostly passive observers of all these events that are becoming an increasingly immediate threat. We fail to use the only power we truly have – the power of words. As if we did not believe in it. As if we had forgotten that it is the power of words that inspires people to act, and to create a world that ensures our fundamental rights and security.

But we must not accept the rule of silence. Not among our friends, not in our societies, not in our countries and certainly not in international relations.

I believe we can all agree that every human being has the right to live in a safe, clean and healthy environment. In a multipolar world – a world driven by the race for prestige and power – this right remains elusive. The pursuit of short-term gains and narrow interests comes at a significant cost. And the real concern is how high these costs may be. It is therefore our duty, especially for small and medium-sized nations, not to remain silent, not to wait passively for the outcome of major power rivalries, and not to stand idly by in the face of global crises and growing inequalities.

By breaking the silence, we must speak out much more often and louder about the challenges we face – challenges that require nothing less than intergenerational reflection. On this occasion, I would like to focus the debate on the implementation of the policy of inclusion in the processes and relations of the international community. Without inclusion, a peaceful future for us all is difficult to imagine.

Discussing the policy of inclusion means discussing its implementation at the neighbourhood, regional and global levels.

When it comes to the neighbourhood, two points must be made. First, mutual relations. When considering its lyrics, the Slovenian national anthem A Toast (Zdravljica) could in fact be an anthem for the world. It says: "No more shall foes, but neighbours be." Stable relations between neighbouring countries mean close economic cooperation, open borders and trust. Second, the conditions for such good mutual relations must be ensured. A prerequisite for this is respect for other countries' territorial integrity. This is a fundamental principle of international law and

essential for peaceful relations between nations. Without respect for this principle, international relations cannot be viable. And not only between neighbours, but between any other countries.

In the European Union, we need to place particular emphasis on discussing integration at the regional level. From the EU's perspective, enlargement – meaning the accelerated accession of candidate countries on the basis of expected and consistently implemented reforms – is a crucial political, economic and geostrategic issue.

For the majority of the population in the candidate countries, the EU is a factor of stability and a guarantee for a democratic future based on the rule of law and the protection of human rights, including minority rights. Clearly, the EU expects candidate countries to fulfil all the conditions required for membership, as has been required of previous candidates. However, it is important to emphasise that the burden and responsibility for successful enlargement is a shared one. Candidate countries, Member States and European institutions must all contribute to this common endeavour. Indeed, delays in the enlargement process – for whatever reason – risk fostering disappointment, opposition to the EU and a tendency among the populations of the candidate countries to seek or accept alternative paths of development.

Unfortunately, the enlargement process is still progressing slowly. This is why young people are leaving. And those who remain are vulnerable to the influence of non-EU actors. The experience of the recent elections in Georgia and Moldova speaks volumes. It is not enough to simply acknowledge that both countries have been targets of malicious disinformation campaigns and other destabilising activities by global actors in our neighbourhood. Above all, we need to reflect on whether we can afford to keep these young people waiting another 20 years – or more – for the next wave of EU enlargement. Whether they can be excluded without risking worse consequences for the region and Europe as a whole.

Inclusion is equally important at the global level. As a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, Slovenia is aware of this. We actively engage in discussions with all nations, stressing in particular the vital importance of respect for international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, in global relations. That is why the genocidal actions taking place in different parts of the world are unacceptable for Slovenia. Equally unacceptable is the failure to comply with international court decisions aimed at putting an end to such atrocities.

Small and medium-sized nations are particularly vulnerable to such violence and indifference to international law. Slovenia included. During and before World War II, we were ourselves victims of Fascism, Nazism and foreign occupation. For us, the 80th anniversary of the end of the war is a solemn reminder that we must commit to doing all we can to ensure that such horrors never happen to anyone else. We also recognise that in order to achieve a lasting peace, certain essential conditions must be met. This requires justice and equality in all areas. Equality must begin at the symbolic level. This is also the reason why Slovenia is seeking solutions to the shocking inequality and lack of women in the highest positions in international institutions, such as the United Nations. However, the policy of inclusion must be discussed not only in the context of multilateralism, but also with a clear understanding of the reality of a multipolar world. After the end of World War II, countries had to adapt quickly to the special status of the two superpowers. The same was true

after the end of the Cold War. We understand what this means: without the superpowers, globally important decisions cannot be made. Without them, discussions on how to ensure human dignity for all become impossible. Competition between them, or an exclusionary approach towards them, is counterproductive and cannot guarantee the creation of a predictable, stable international community, which is essential for effective cooperation in addressing global challenges. The future of relations between the superpowers and other countries must be shaped by honest dialogue, not by exclusionary monologues.

The alternative to inclusion is therefore not exclusion. And I sincerely hope that many of you reading this are worried that this is exactly what is happening to the world, to all of us – growing exclusion. This type of discourse is slowly but surely pervading all aspects of foreign policy. In technical terms, this is called isolationism. It is becoming increasingly common, resulting in growing distrust, dissatisfaction, the scapegoating of those seen as outside our communities, and finally, violence. This is what led us to the brink and then outbreak of World War II, the worst conflict the world has even seen.

That is why we have to fight against exclusion. In the dance of interests led by the major powers and, increasingly, by influential, ultra-wealthy individuals, a third way will have to be found again. We must strive for a coalition of small and medium-sized nations that will advocate in international institutions for an inclusive international community, based on the rule of international law and peaceful conflict resolution. As dictated by the Charter of the United Nations. The UN has 193 Member States. The vast majority of them are small and medium-sized nations. Nations that stand to lose the most if a greater conflict breaks out. Their voice – our voice – can play an incredibly important role in future international relations. Their motto – our motto – must be: if we wish to make progress, which requires peace and security, it is our duty and our right to not stay silent. It is our duty and right to come together with like-minded nations who refuse to be silent. Who refuse to be collateral damage in the competing interests of larger countries.

As heads of state, politicians, diplomats and opinion leaders, let us focus on developing an inclusive, long-term vision rooted in the values that define our common humanity, regardless of our differences. That is why inter-generational reflections or agreements on the future of our civilisation – whether on building peace, promoting economic cooperation, or protecting our environment and climate – should carry far greater weight than the many agreements to which we commit ourselves, but which we rarely implement fully or consistently. There is still time. But if we do not come together, time will run out. And when it does, future generations will judge us for our lack of responsibility.

*Lo dico in questa nostra meravigliosa Città di Napoli, che quest'anno celebra duemila cinquecento anni dalla sua fondazione, e che da sempre è città di pace e di accoglienza, e dico nostra perché mi ci sento ormai molto legata. Lo dico in questa nostra autorevole Università che, sin dalla sua costituzione nel lontano diciottesimo secolo, persegue la pace attraverso la cultura degli insegnamenti linguistico-letterari e storico-artistici di Paesi diversi vicini e lontani.*  
*Grazie.*