



President of the Republic of Slovenia

NATAŠA PIRC MUSAR

Address by the President of the Republic of Slovenia Nataša Pirc Musar at the traditional New Year's reception for the Diplomatic Corps

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Prime Minister, Doyen of the Diplomatic Corps, Your Excellencies and Ambassadors, Representatives of international organisations, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a great honour to welcome you to today's New Year's diplomatic reception. It has become more than purely a protocol event. It is a symbol of Slovenia's respectful relationship with the international community. A relationship based on the belief that, even in the most challenging times, dialogue and a commitment to law remain indispensable.

However, ladies and gentlemen, we should not embellish reality. The beginning of 2026 has once again shown how dangerous a multipolar world can be. The language that is becoming prevalent in international relations is the language of isolationism, not multilateralism. Dialogue and the peaceful settlement of disputes based on international law are being replaced by the use of force, which is becoming an almost routine foreign policy instrument in many countries. In such circumstances, humanitarian needs will certainly not diminish. The situation is further exacerbated by the erosion of trust in international institutions.

Withdrawals from international organisations and international treaties, which are likely to continue, compel us to seek an answer to the question of whether we still need them and why. The answer is clear. Multilateralism is imperfect and cumbersome, and it does not meet all expectations. A number of countries find the current international order unsustainable. For some states, it has been unsustainable for a long time, but they lacked the will and the power to subordinate it or adapt it to their interests. Now they possess both the will and the power – and they demonstrate, enforce and use them without reservation.

However, such a policy has no future, as it promises more conflict and less cooperation. Many of the world's problems are shared, and they require a joint solution. Therefore, we must support

international institutions as forums for negotiation and international law as an integral part of the modern international order. Violations of international law are not the way forward, nor is questioning international organisations – including judicial institutions established during the eight post–World War II decades of international cooperation. They can be dismantled in an instant; their reconstruction would take years.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

When we speak about dismantling our hard-earned achievements, we perhaps do not emphasise sufficiently that democracy itself is also increasingly under threat. Many have had to defend it, fight for it at great cost, and continue to do so today. But the report by Democracy without Borders from 2025 is clear. The number of autocracies now exceeds the number of democracies, having increased from 88 to 91 compared to the previous year. The report also highlights that liberal democracies are particularly at risk, as only 29 remain.

I am proud that Slovenia is among them. Unfortunately, there is no sign that these trends will change for the better. There are too many cases of abandoning democracy as a way of life. There are too many concessions being made to intolerance, nationalism, populism, xenophobia and racism, and too little is being done to address the factors that allow merchants of fear and hatred to gain public support. Not only at home, but also abroad.

These factors can be encountered anywhere in the world. Perhaps the most important of them are fear and poverty, which prevent hundreds of millions of people from living a dignified life worthy of the human person. Let us look around ourselves and see the conditions in which people live! How they struggle to secure a daily meal, many of them uncertain of whether they will escape an enemy bullet along the way. The number of children and young people with limited access to education, choice and personal development is staggering.

The means to ensure human dignity certainly exist, yet they remain practically out of reach. We live in an international 'community', that, for a handful of the wealthiest countries is not truly a community at all. These countries control an unprecedented amount of wealth. They have the means to solve systemic problems such as poverty, healthcare and climate change. They could invest in education and entrepreneurship. They could achieve human-friendly changes in society, as they have a great influence on state authorities and public discourse. They could. The problem is that they often choose not to do much – or anything at all – for the common good.

Slovenia finds it hard to understand such selfishness. Here, community solidarity is a virtue, and helping people in need is something natural. It is often solidarity that resolves the problems faced by the rigid state apparatus. Solidarity builds schools, pays teachers and puts food on people's tables. I will never forget the broad smiles and gratitude-filled eyes of hundreds of pupils at a brand-new school in Madagascar's Akamasoa community. The construction of this beautiful, spacious building was financed by Slovenia with just a few hundred thousand euros and the tireless support and assistance from local Slovenian missionaries led by Father Pedro Opeka. Moved also by the immense

gratitude of these children, who live in one of the world's poorest countries, I wish that solidarity – including solidarity on the part of the wealthiest – would become an unquestioned value in international relations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The crisis of democracy and the lack of solidarity are linked to the acute challenges of the modern world that need to be addressed decisively. We must not fear them, we must not look away or, worse, pass them on to future generations. I would like to highlight two such challenges.

Firstly, artificial intelligence, digital platforms and new forms of communication, which bring many opportunities, but also serious risks. Underestimating these risks can deepen inequalities and significantly contribute to the weakening of democratic institutions and the heightening of social tensions. Therefore, these challenges must be tackled decisively. Every step in the development of advanced technology must be accompanied by critical educational content. Advanced technology must be addressed within clear ethical and legal frameworks. This is especially true of the misuse of technology in the form of disinformation, which has become a constant both within states and beyond their borders. This year, Slovenia will have to address the malicious use of technology with particular intensity.

The second challenge is climate change. The outcome of COP30 is proof that the international community is still unable or unwilling to address the increasingly grave threat posed by climate change. However, there is no reason for despair or inaction. Adapting to climate change also brings opportunities, notably through the green transition. Combining economic growth with the production and use of renewable energy sources, while fostering entrepreneurship and solidarity, is an ideal that we should strive for. Such a transition is beneficial both for our lives and for nature. Of course, for the lives of us all, not only the privileged. Some will be affected by climate change more severely and sooner, others perhaps a little less and later on; but ultimately all of us will be affected. An abandonment of the green transition, which includes withdrawing from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, would therefore pose a serious risk to the development prospects of current and future generations, especially if the funds earmarked for it are diverted to the defence industry.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Slovenia is an active and responsible member of the international community, which has also been proven through its term as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. This period coincided with one of the greatest periods of polarisation in the Council's history. Therefore, we have made a special effort to act in a principled, transparent and unifying manner. We have consistently promoted respect for the Charter of the United Nations and international law, as well as the application of equal standards in all cases and for all states.

We devoted particular attention to strengthening the role of non-permanent members of the Security Council. In times of strained relations between major powers, it is precisely cooperation and the search for common ground that enable progress, even where dialogue seems almost impossible. This has been confirmed by concrete results. Let me highlight the resolution that, for the first time since October 2023, called for a ceasefire in Gaza, the release of hostages and unhindered humanitarian access. During our presidency of the Security Council, we also sought to strengthen trust and responsibility through a presidential statement on leadership for peace. In this statement, the members unanimously reaffirmed their commitment to the Charter and international law. They also unanimously adopted Slovenia's resolution to strengthen the UN architecture in support of peace. The historic visit of the members of the Security Council to Syria and Lebanon during our second presidency was also aimed at supporting peace.

Furthermore, Slovenia's engagement was substantively focused on the agenda of women, peace and security, the protection of civilians and the link between climate, water, peace and security. These topics are not marginal; they lie at the very core of contemporary security challenges. We therefore view our work in the Security Council not merely as a completed term of office, but as part of a continuing responsibility. We carry this responsibility through Slovenia's membership of the United Nations Human Rights Council. However, it is already clear that this membership, too, will face serious challenges. Perhaps even more serious, as even states that helped to shape and build the human rights system are now retreating from its protection.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

These and many other challenges that lie ahead, and the consequences that may arise if they remain unresolved, must not be underestimated. We must not remain silent. Of course, we must be able to adapt to the new reality, but at some point in this process a clear red line must be drawn. Genocidal behaviour constitutes such a red line. The brutal treatment of the civilian population in Gaza, the pressure on Palestinians in the West Bank, the horrific violence in Sudan, as well as in numerous other conflict areas, point to selective solidarity and inconsistent approaches to resolving conflicts. Sovereignty, territorial integrity and the inviolability of borders represent another, equally important red line. Slovenia therefore strongly condemns Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which represents a serious attack on these principles. An attempts to seize or control the territories of other states are unacceptable; we must therefore respond to and reject all such actions consistently and unequivocally. The firm declaration by seven European states, invoking these principles in the case of Greenland, is therefore a step in the right direction.

Let us be resolute and non-selective in our support of the fundamental principles of international law on friendly international relations. Our world is not a world consisting of only four or five great powers. Our world cannot be a world of double standards, where states or politicians place themselves above international law and, at their own discretion, defend the interests of some to the expense of others, even by using veto power. This is a world of 200 countries, the vast majority of which do not want to live among enemies. They want to live in a community where the voices of those who strive to extinguish the flames of war are heard, not those who seek to ignite them. The

time has come for states to consciously and more closely unite in such a community. Let us not be afraid of this step. Let us not be afraid of our diversity. Peace is one and indivisible. In today's world on the brink of war, every ounce of strength we possess counts when it comes to advancing the cause of peace. Including the power of words. The more of us there are, the better organised we are, the more clearly we will be heard – and the harder it will be to ignore us, or treat us with contempt.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year will not be easy. The challenges we face are significant and demand a great deal of energy. But it does not mean that we should give up. On the contrary, let us strengthen what unites us and resist the forces that divide us. As a proven advocate of multilateralism and a member of key international organisations, which in addition to the UN also include the European Union and NATO, Slovenia remains an open and reliable partner, committed to dialogue. Slovenia is a country that believes that diplomacy remains one of the most powerful tools of communication. Not because it is flawless, but because it allows us to resolve conflicts without violence and build the future together, in an inclusive manner.

Let us therefore, together, wish for 2026 to be a year of dialogue, mutual respect and the courage to pursue peace. May it be a year of determined efforts to uphold human dignity, everywhere and for everyone, and to protect the environment that sustains it. Let us all strive, individually and collectively, to make a tangible contribution to turning these aspirations into reality.

Thank you, and best wishes for the New Year.