



STATEMENT

On Behalf of the President of the 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly

H.E. Miroslav Lajčák

International Day of Living Together in Peace

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I want to start by thanking **the African Group** - and, **Algeria**, in particular - for its work in bringing this International Day to life.

And, I have **one main message** to deliver this morning.

Which is: we *can* live together, in peace.

It is happening. It is a **reality**, for many people around the world.

For others, however, it is still a **dream**.

So that is why we are here: To **recommit** to a world in which **peace** and **tolerance** are **realities**, not for some – but for *all*.

And, in doing so, I want to make **three points**.

First, I want to say that this Day serves as a **critical reminder** for countries and people, all over the world.

Intolerance is not limited by geography. **Racism** is not seen in **only one** part of the world. And **hate speech** is, unfortunately, being heard – in all kinds of languages.

That is why this is an *International Day*. And that is why it should be celebrated, in **all corners of the world**.

But there are some places, where the promotion of **peace** and **tolerance** is even more critical than others.

That is why, for my **second point**, I will focus on **post-conflict societies** – where **divisions** and **fault lines** can be the **widest** and **deepest**.

And, here, I want to put special emphasis on **reconciliation**.

A **peace deal** can silence the **guns**. But it cannot, alone, mend the **wounds** that conflict has inflicted. It cannot, alone, bring down the **barriers** people have built around **themselves** and their **communities**. And it cannot, alone, promote **tolerance** and **reconciliation**.

This is what we heard, directly, from **post-conflict countries** – at the **recent High-Level Meeting on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace**. They told us how **critical** nationally-driven **reconciliation** is. And why it must be a **priority**, from the outset. Otherwise, hatred can fester. Divisions can grow. And, ultimately, a fragile peace can crumble.

So, the messages of the *International Day of Living Together in Peace* must be seen and heard, everywhere. But we must put **particular focus** on places reeling from **conflict** – or watching, as **dark clouds** gather on the horizon.

As my **third point**, I want to point to the role of the **United Nations**.

Because, this International Day speaks to the **core** of this Organisation. In fact, it is reflected in the very **first line** of the **UN Charter**. When we committed to **saving future generations** from the scourge of war, we signed up for a world, where people can live together in peace.

And the United Nations has done a lot, to make this world a **reality**. It has worked with **national** and **local** actors on **reconciliation** programs. It has **invested** in **peacebuilding**. It has promoted **respect**, **tolerance**, **unity** and **harmony**.

And it has been the birthplace of some of our most important **international mechanisms**. From the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, to the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*.

And, frankly, we have never needed it more.

Because, the ideal of living in peace is not, unfortunately, at the top of everyone's agenda. There are some – out there – who are **too willing**, to **sacrifice** it.

We are seeing signs of **growing intolerance**. We are hearing more and more calls for **exclusion** – rather than inclusion. We are seeing **hatred** crowd out **humanity**.

And that is why we need to support this **International Day** - and the **United Nations**, as the forum to promote it in - now more than ever.

Thank you.