



STATEMENT

BY

H.E. MR. EDI RAMA

PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA

AT

THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 68TH SESSION OF THE GENERAL
ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS

28 September 2013

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. President,
Excellences,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am the newly elected Prime Minister of Albania and this is my first month in office.

It is truly humbling, to be at this podium, in the steps and the shadow of some of the great figures of history who have stood here and shaped our world; in this forum, which for all the criticisms of the UN, is a living reminder that good must come from bad, that the march of progress through time is powered by debate, ideas, co-operation, argument and agreement.

Albania is no great power, it is a small country but with great potential. It has outstanding natural beauty. Good and hard working people. My challenge is to bring change so that this very potential can be fulfilled.

It will take time. It will take a lot of efforts and perseverance. It will take understanding and support from friends and partners. From my part, I will add leadership. We have a long way to go but it can be done.

I was reading a study recently, which analyzed every country in the world, measured positive against negative media coverage. Switzerland came top. Albania was 161st.

In truth, people around the world maybe don't know that much about Albania, but what they think they know is not good. The film industry has not been kind to us. Wag The Dog? Taken 1? Taken 2? Even I was a bit scared to be in Albania after that! I hope one day Liam Neeson, Dustin Hoffman and Robert de Niro can visit, see what a beautiful country it is, feel the potential that I feel.

But I am not naive. Our problems are not all based in Hollywood. Some are real, and damaging. Corruption, which scars countries in the way the swish of a blade

can scar a beautiful face. It deters legitimate investors from investing. It holds back progress. It stops people from believing there can ever be fairness. Corruption can and must be beaten if we are to build the economic rule of law we need, get the investment we need, attract the tourism our scenery, heritage and warm, welcoming people deserve.

It won't be easy but it can be done and we are fully committed.

Mr. President,

The World has changed tremendously in the course of the last decades and it is changing now at an even faster pace. We all expect the UN to follow suit. UN reform is not only necessary, it has become imperative. If we fail to agree and act on this, the role the UN is to play will remain incomplete.

One of the important aspects of change is the ongoing reform of the delivery of development assistance. In the course of a few years, Delivering as One, has proved to be a valuable achievement and it represents today an avenue for deeper reform. If we want more effectiveness, better efficiency, a coherent action by various UN actors, if we aim for better results on the ground, better value for money, Delivering as One is the way. We have pledged our support and will continue to do so as we are convinced this is the path to go.

The UN is by any doubt one of the most important World Bodies. We joined it in the middle of last century. But it is not alone. For us, the European Union, which represents the most important political project the world has known to date, is another one. We aspire to join it. We know the changes we have to make, and I am determined to make them.

If the European Union has turned its attention towards our region, particularly due to past conflicts, we all together, Albanians, Serbians, Montenegrins, Macedonians and all other people of the region, should maintain our eyes and our focus upon the EU for projects related to our development for a common better

and prosperous future.

Regional cooperation that is not grounded in strategic projects serving to the economic revival of all our countries in their way to integration to the European Union as a developed economic area, would result completely ineffective.

We do not have either the time, or the luxury to engage in time consuming, ineffective projects. No country of the region can afford such luxury.

Consequently, we should create a new momentum in the regional cooperation by effectively combining the objectives of South Eastern Europe 2020 Strategy with the projects of Europe 2020 Agenda.

We should not forget that the successful regional cooperation has a direct effect on meeting economic accession criteria.

Doubtlessly, meeting such criteria through an intense and fruitful regional cooperation is neither an easy, nor a simple task.

And my vision for Albania is also a vision of the Balkans working together, in defiance of our history of so much war and conflict.

Though lets say it loudly and proudly, these are past wars and past conflicts.

I want to share with you my conviction that the remarkable agreement between Kosova and Serbia started a new era in the South East European region.

Their dialog, an act of courage and wisdom from both Kosova and Serbia, defies each country of the region to mobilize the efforts in new and innovative forms of collaborations and cooperation. Not everything is easy or perfect; There are still few here and there who continue to think in the past; But the prevailing truth is that Prime Ministers Thaci and Dacic have stood up to their leadership responsibility to bring their countries to the future they both deserve.

More than everything, in a world interconnected and inter-dependent like never before, where space and relationships are recreated in continuity, it's crucial to live the new time without extending the old one, that of conflicts, that of nationalism.

In this regard, Albania is committed to peace and prosperity in the region. This is why it is committed to the irreversible independence of Kosovo. This is why it calls upon all countries that have not yet recognized Kosovo, to do so. They will not only help Kosovo and its people, they will join those who by recognition have played an important role in strengthening stability and security in South East Europe.

To those who are skeptical I say, Kosovo people, as all other people that enjoy now their fully recognized independent republics after the dissolution of former Yugoslavia, deserve the recognition of their sovereignty, particularly for they have demonstrated more than any people in the region their undisputable commitment to human rights, minority rights, dialog and peace.

Without this commitment it would be very difficult for our region to progress toward integration in the European Union. But their commitment is firm and obvious. And, the region has been remarkably advancing toward its most important goal, integration in EU.

Croatia has joined the EU. We wait in the queue. So do Serbia and Kosovo.

I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT, provided we, EACH AND ALL OF THE COUNTRIES IN THE REGION, replace the politics of division with the politics of co-operation, provided we build shared values and beliefs and policies instead of clinging to ancient enmities, we can show how much we have changed, and show how quickly we can make the further changes needed to take our place alongside other modern European nations.

It will undoubtedly take time and perseverance. It will take understanding and support by EU member States. It will take leadership from all of us. And as past practice and successful examples show: it can be done.

This is a very serious commitment, and I would like to state here that it is my firm

intention to explore every possibility to initiate a constructive debate, to develop a real dialogue, and foster a close co-operation in every possible aspect with each and every country in the region, including, notably, Serbia. Let the Balkans, so long known for war and bloodshed, be known for changing its ways, and so changing the world for the better.

Mr. President,

I wish I could avoid in this statement of hope to have to speak about one of the most terrible human tragedies of our times, which is unfolding before our eyes since two and a half years. It has taken more than 100 thousands of human lives; it is destroying a whole generation and has brought a country to ruins. The recent large-scale use of chemical weapons constitutes a despicable crime, a crime against humanity, which should not and must not remain unpunished.

Yet even within such a bleak picture, a glimpse of hope has been born. The Security Council has finally adopted yesterday a resolution on the removal and destruction of chemical weapons in Syria, which we welcome. It must now be quickly and fully implemented.

Mr. President,

As I strode to this podium, I felt the extraordinary sense of responsibility that leadership of a country implies. And I felt the power of the historic forces pulsating around this building, the new world it has shaped, the challenges it has met, the challenges it has failed to meet, the challenges we, the family of nations, struggle to meet today in this ever more interdependent and complicated world.

I ran for office on the theme of Renaissance. But we all know that the words of campaigning are the easy part. What is hard is turning those words into actions and policies, into projects, which deliver the change. I am confident, but I am humble enough to know I cannot do it alone. I have much to learn and the UN is one of those buildings where you always find people, representatives, governments who can teach with experience, who can lead by example. We need support; we need partners and friends willing to be part of our journey for change.

Renaissance means a new Albania. Building the renaissance is the challenge I face.

It will take time. It will take perseverance. It will take understanding and support by partners and friends. It will also take leadership, which I am committed to. But it can be done.

Thank you.