

Mr. Sebastian Piñera Echeñique, President of the Republic of Chile, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Address by Mr. Bamir Topi, President of the Republic of Albania

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Albania.

Mr. Bamir Topi, President of the Republic of Albania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Bamir Topi, President of the Republic of Albania, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Topi (*spoke in Albanian; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): It is a special honour for me to address the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly. I would like to congratulate the President on his election to this important position. His experience and continuing commitment strengthen my conviction that he will take the achievements of his predecessor even further. Albania will fully support him as he fulfils his mandate. I take this opportunity to express our special appreciation to the Secretary-General for his continuing efforts to revitalize the global role of the United Nations, as well as to reform the Organization.

Albania is of the view that the role of the United Nations remains powerful, coherent and irreplaceable as the centre of effective global action. It must continue to be encouraged and supported in its efforts to overcome the challenges of achieving open international cooperation, sustainable peace and security, ongoing development and greater respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We live in a global world, interconnected and interdependent, where States and nations must assist and support each other in the search for a comprehensive answer to the common problems and new challenges that we face. Multilateralism remains a priority for the entire international community. In this context, a reformed United Nations — revitalized,

dynamic, powerful and effective — is crucial to the complicated process of global governance. In this path of cooperation around the world, the role of the United Nations is irreplaceable, especially in regard to how we make use of our human and material resources.

Rapidly evolving issues throughout the world, each with positive and negative consequences that must inevitably influence the challenges the future will bring, must be given special priority and approached with special care. The United Nations challenging agenda must focus on strengthening peace and security, fighting terrorism, and the issues of stable development, climate change, poverty reduction, the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, natural disasters, human rights, migration, and others. Albania remains committed to contributing to this agenda.

The lead role of the Organization and its agencies in administering its budgetary and human resources should be responsive to the requests of Member States. The establishment of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women is the most recent example of tangible success in United Nations reform. Strengthening the role of women in society will not only enhance political life but also help their emancipation and harmonious development.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are a priority in our work. Following the adoption of the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2) a decade ago, Albania has advanced towards meeting the MDGs in all areas and with respect to all indicators. It has also made great efforts to incorporate the MDGs into its national development strategy.

We are fully committed to reaching the goals set forth in the *acquis communautaire* of the European Union (EU), which requires increasing investment in social issues, establishing local and central governance systems, and enhancing development capacity in order to guarantee the ongoing improvement of the well-being of the Albanian people. However, as a full-fledged member of NATO and in the light of its internal democratic stability, Albania is now seeking greater standing in the world as a way to bolster its development in the long term.

Delivering as one is a crucial factor in the reform designed to assist in development around the world. United Nations efforts to establish system-wide coherence offer a real possibility to make the United

Nations more effective. As a pilot country, Albania is a success story, having committed itself fully from the onset. The One United Nations concept in Albania is being developed in complete harmony with national sovereignty and national ownership of development, while responding to the specific needs of the country. The responsibility of being a pilot country further encourages us to make this initiative a success. It is also an opportunity for us to contribute to the overall reform of the United Nations.

Albania has signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations. As a NATO member, Albania is a force for peace and stability in the region. Not only does Albania follow a policy of good-neighbourly relations and strive for the preservation and strengthening of stability in its own region, it also has shown its interest in and commitment to stability and peace in other parts of the world by contributing military and civilian personnel to the peacekeeping missions of various international security organizations and of the United Nations, including the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad and missions in Afghanistan and Iraq. We are thus willing to contribute peacekeeping troops anywhere in the world under the auspices of the United Nations and regional security organizations like NATO.

Terrorism remains a major threat to peace, international security and world order. The fight against terrorism remains a priority that requires great determination resolve. This global threat may be prevented and addressed through collective action, strong responses and the mobilization of all States Members of the United Nations. We must show our nations that, as a part of our responsibility, we shall stand resolute and united against terrorism. Together, we must define a collective platform and strategy for victory in the war against terror by strengthening the international system and order.

We praise and appreciate the work of the Security Council and its committees for their engagement with and active support for Member States through their effective implementation of the Council's counter-terrorism resolutions, in particular resolutions 1269 (1999), 1373 (2001), 1540 (2004) and 1624 (2005). Albania remains fully committed to cooperating with the Security Council in this regard.

Albania appreciates the Secretary-General's contributions to addressing the issue of the Middle East, particularly in the discussions aimed at achieving a sustainable solution acceptable to all parties. All peoples share the desire to live in peace, and Governments have an obligation to guarantee it. We support the relaunched dialogue process and hope that, with the commitment of the international community, the Palestinians and Israelis will take the steps necessary to achieving stable peace in that important region.

Albania believes that the Alliance of Civilizations is a political means for the United Nations to promote peace and harmony among civilizations and to build an inclusive society through education, understanding and mutual knowledge. As a member of the Group of Friends, we shall take active part because we believe in dialogue and contacts among different cultures, in the need to know and respect each other, and in the necessity of defending the unique as part of the richness of the whole. Our approved national strategy for intercultural dialogue and the holding of the Inter-Religious Forum in Tirana in January have served to enrich our experience. However, our participation in the Third Global Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations led us to believe that a better job of fighting stereotypes and prejudice is still needed, as are greater efforts to make modern multicultural societies more cohesive.

Albania's integration into and membership of the European Union is a key priority of our foreign policy, where there has rarely been a broader political and social consensus. The important steps taken by Albania towards EU membership and the phases of cooperation under the framework of the integration process have shown a great deal of potential.

The end of this year promises to be decisive as we approach two decisions of great importance: the completion of the visa liberalization process with the EU and the achievement of candidate status for EU membership. Albanians will finally be able to enjoy the real freedom for which they fought and sacrificed longer and more deeply than any other European nation. The near-unanimous decision of the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs to remove the requirement that Albanians obtain visas to enter the EU not only gives us great joy, but also confers greater responsibility on us to fulfil our commitments as we prepare for EU membership.

We guarantee that the seriousness with which we completed the EU questionnaire and our responsible approach to our relations with all European Union institutions and member countries will remain the hallmarks of our efforts to earn the status of candidate country at the earliest possible date.

Albania's membership in NATO and its integration into the European Union are important regional processes inseparable from the full integration of the region. We believe that every Western Balkan country is entitled to play a role in contributing to and assuming responsibility for the integration and emancipation of the region. I am happy to acknowledge that the high level of regional cooperation and political awareness show that the only way forward is through Euro-Atlantic integration.

These are hopeful and promising times, now that the bitter past of that part of Europe has been consigned to history. Albania and Albanians will continue to contribute to stability, security, long-term peace and economic growth by encouraging integration policies related not just to security and economic development, but also to coexistence among countries, peoples and nations, cultures, traditions and history.

A few days ago, a rare occurrence took place in this very Hall with the adoption by consensus of resolution 64/298 on the international legitimacy of the declaration of Kosovo's independence. That was a very important event for Kosovo, Serbia, the Western Balkans, a united Europe and the United Nations. I would like to express my gratitude for the commitment and engagement of all international actors, especially the European Union, which imbued the resolution with the contemporary philosophy and openness of Europe. The European Union showed its cohesiveness and proved that the integration policies of our region are unstoppable and full of hope, and that the only way to unite with Europe is through dialogue and cooperation among neighbouring countries.

Now that the matter of the status of Kosovo and its borders has been settled definitively, it is time to begin a dialogue on practical issues. We hope that the message enshrined in the resolution will immediately be put into practice by the two independent countries. We support the immediate launch of dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia. We support sincere and constructive dialogue to resolve practical issues of interest to the daily concerns of their citizens, to help

them and to facilitate and even calm the situation of the respective Albanian and Serbian minorities. It is time to resolve the problems and issues concerning representation, language and education, among others, in the spirit and vision of a common European future.

Albania considers the consensus adoption of resolution 64/298 to be an important step not only in respect of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and the authority of the United Nations, but also for the consolidation of the State of Kosovo and its democratic and European institutions, its independence and integrity, and its future as a Member of the United Nations.

Albania appreciates the work of the Security Council in its engagement towards the implementation of the United Nations Charter and international law, which are essential to peaceful coexistence and cooperation among Member States in addressing common challenges and contributing to international peace and security.

The advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice legally confirmed that the independence of Kosovo remains a *sui generis* case that does not set a precedent for situations in other countries. Now is the time to prove with concrete facts that we respect the United Nations and the values that have united us here today. Today is the day to testify that we support its authority and its independent institutions. Today is a golden opportunity to accept the truth and to declare it loudly.

Today, we have a responsibility towards a country and a people that rightly wish to be among us and have given ample evidence that they truly deserve it. I take this opportunity to appeal to my colleagues, whose countries have not yet recognized the independence of Kosovo, to recognize it now, by assuring them that this is the only way to contribute to long-term stability and peace, not just in the region but also globally.

In conclusion, I would like to confirm once again that Albania is determined to continue to support the United Nations agenda and the stronger functioning of the Organization at all levels.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Albania for the statement he has just made.