

Parallel Realities in Increasingly Divided World

The World is People, not Statistics

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Last year, as I was writing an article for our traditional gazette, Slovenia was under water after catastrophic floods. The content of the article was dictated by Solidarity. With a capital S, because without Solidarity, that too often forgotten word, the impact of the floods would have been much worse. Fortunately, there are no floods in Slovenia this year, and I would love to write about more optimistic topics. However, it is often the adverse events that dictate the (foreign) policy agenda. The number of global hotspots has increased again since last year. And if a few months ago I told the UN Security Council that there is no room for frustration in diplomacy, today I have to admit that while professionally this must be true, for me personally – diplomats are human after all – it is distressing to realise that the international community, for all its efforts to bring peace and security to the world, is neither swift nor effective, and least of all united.

Above all, we need the political will to respect the fundamental principles of the multilateral system and the rules of international law, which should never be an optional choice, but an unconditional moral imperative for every UN member state.

As many as 92 states are currently involved in conflicts outside their borders, the highest number since the Global Peace Index was launched in 2008. Armed conflicts around the world are therefore becoming increasingly international and collective, with “minor” conflicts tending to grow into major ones. For example, Ethiopia, Gaza and Israel were labelled “minor” conflicts as recently as 2019.

In the first quarter of this year alone, armed conflicts around the world claimed 47,000 lives. If this trend continues, 2024 could see the highest num-

ber of war casualties since the Rwandan genocide thirty years ago. And this is not counting the wounded, the refugees, the displaced, many of them children, or the global environmental and economic impact of violence, which has risen to 13.5% of global GDP, or to an unimaginable USD 19.1 trillion.

While it is true that these tragic statistics, which in fact conceal the faces, names and destinies of real people, inhabitants of our shared planet, are directly caused by aggressors, we must admit that the world leaders who observe these conflicts and wars, hold dis-



cussions about them and try to help, are by extension also involved by the ongoing conflicts. But – due to the different interests of states, political affiliations, traditional dependencies, physical distance, lack of ambition or other reasons – we are unable to reach unanimous decisions and engage in actions that could prevent or end these conflicts.

In the UN Security Council, where Slovenia is a non-permanent member in the 2024–2025 term, I have yet to meet a leader who is not committed to peace. This makes it all the more incomprehensible and disturbing that we are repeatedly witnessing such grave violations as the violations of the UN Charter (Russian aggression in Ukraine) and violations of international humanitarian law and human rights (Sudan, Gaza, Ukraine, Afghanistan, etc.). We are faced with blatant disregard for Security Council resolutions and sanctions (Sudan, Gaza, Democratic Republic of Congo, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, to name but a few).

In order to be able to fulfil its mission, the Security Council needs to be radically reformed, which is no easy task at a time of such major crises. One

way out of this vicious cycle, at least in part, would be to focus more on ending the abuse of the veto, which is what Slovenia will try to contribute to during its term. Above all, we need the political will to respect the fundamental principles of the multilateral system and the rules of international law, which should never be an optional choice, but an unconditional moral imperative for every UN member state. As Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, I make this very clear at every opportunity.

By recognising Palestine as a sovereign and independent state, Slovenia

reforms. The Palestinian Authority, law and order, structure and peace must return to Gaza; its people, men, women and children, who are paying the greatest and most terrible price in this conflict, must be able to return to Gaza.

And this takes us back to the beginning of this piece – to frustration. It is impossible not to be deeply concerned about the increasing number of children caught up in conflicts around the world. During its debate on the situation of children and armed conflict in June, the Security Council considered a UN report which examined 32,990 grave violations committed against 22,557 children in 2023, the highest number in a decade. The violations include the recruitment and use of children in conflict, killing and maiming, abduction, rape and other forms of sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals, and denial of access to humanitarian aid. Slovenia stressed the need to end impunity for child abuse and called for zero tolerance for violations of international law. We drew particular attention to the situation in Sudan, Palestine, Israel, Myanmar, Afghanistan, Haiti and Ukraine, which require the immediate attention of the international community.

Russia’s attacks on a children’s hospital, civilian targets and infrastructure in Ukraine (as well as similar attacks anywhere in the world) are despicable and I strongly condemned them at the last Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels. Slovenia continues to support all efforts for a just and lasting peace based on the UN Charter and international law. The surrender of Ukraine, which Russian President Putin is currently pushing for, could set a very dangerous precedent. I am well aware that peace cannot be achieved without the involvement of both parties, but, unfortunately, the time is not yet ripe. However, ways to end the war must be discussed together, including with China, Brazil, India and regional organisations. I believe we will all be closely following the US presidential campaign and elections. We need an outcome that will bring a voice of determination, reason, morality and solidarity to international politics, and help us, as a conscious and responsible international community, to stop the growing curve of bleak statistics. ■