



# B E L A R U S

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General debate**

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## **STATEMENT**

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### **THE SPIRIT OF SAN FRANCISCO IN DECLINE**

We frequently invoke the phrase **the 'spirit' of San Francisco**. We do that while speaking and thinking about positive moments in international relations. Indeed, the message sent from the 1945 Conference in San Francisco imbued the generation that had just survived the most horrible war ever experienced with an immense hope.

That was the hope for **building a principally new world**. Justice was intended to replace violence, cooperation was to substitute lawlessness. The United Nations, founded in that city, was called upon to become the key element of a new order.

Have the hopes, born in San Francisco, come true?

To some extent, they have. After all, there is no longer any sharp ideological confrontation that characterised the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Nor is there an open and clear confrontation between the major powers that had marked all previous centuries with its bloody trail. What is more, such scourges as colonialism, slavery, and apartheid have been irrevocably consigned to oblivion.

The spirit of San Francisco, however, was about something more than just preventing the recurring mistakes of the past. First and foremost, it was a message about a promising future. Unfortunately, it is precisely this part that failed to become a reality. Why?

Reinhold Niebuhr, an outstanding American philosopher, who was writing at those fateful times, said, "General community is established only when the knowledge that we need one another is supplemented by the recognition that the other form of life, or that other unique community is the limit, beyond which our ambitions must not run".

The point is as insightful now as it was then. Some countries see neither the limits to their foreign policy ambitions nor the forms of statehood other than their own. This is exactly what gives rise to many of today's **geopolitical problems**.

The states, that refuse to follow pattern imposed from the outside and choose to defend their real sovereignty, have to pay a dear price for this right.

Take the case of Cuba. The historic choice to pursue an independent path of development, made by its people more than five decades ago, encountered rejection and economic blockade on the part of those who still believe that they can continue to write the history of mankind in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the same manner as they used to do it before. And this is not the only example.

We are fully convinced that any attempt to make someone do something against one's will is doomed to fail. Are we not learning the lessons from the past? After all, it is neither weapons, nor wealth, which constitute the greatest source of power on Earth. That power stems rather from the spirit of **self-determination**. If a nation has embarked

on **its own path of development – peaceful and progressive** – no external force could stop it in its tracks. One can win battles against such a nation, but never – wars.

The time of imperialism, in whatever lofty slogans it is now being dressed – ‘democracy’, ‘human rights’, ‘good governance’ – is irreversibly gone.

Furthermore, we have to deal today with a burden of global **economic challenges**. Almost all of them have resulted from the policy of ‘**market fundamentalism**’ relentlessly pursued by its proponents over the last four decades.

Its major outcome is a **steady rise of inequality** at all levels. Essentially, we are witnessing **the Great Divergence**. No doubt, this has already planted a slow motion time bomb under future mass upheavals with unpredictable consequences.

Unfortunately, the current economic woes are structural. They are not likely to be quickly and decisively resolved. It is attested by the fact that the crisis still persists all over the world, four years on now. Various measures that have been adopted over this period have so far failed to turn the situation much around.

Yet, there is something else that worries more than anything. It is that the countries whose policies had nothing to do with the ‘market fundamentalism’ had to suffer extreme hardships as well. Because of the growing global interdependence of all aspects of international life, they simply had no other option.

We cannot disregard another highly important persisting ailment of modernity – one of a **moral** nature. Double standards in the foreign policy of the ‘mighty of this world’ have become a norm.

As a result, these major world players are willing to go to great lengths to cater for the interests of their ‘friends’. Yet – as a method of engagement with their opponents – they save only forced inoculation of democracy and human rights. Guided solely by their own interests, these actors, who were shaking hands with you yesterday, today openly contribute to your downfall.

Considering human rights situations in other countries under a microscope, these actors refuse to acknowledge the obvious faults in their own countries even when regarded through a telescope. In other words, we have come to witness the rise of **unscrupulousness and barbarity in foreign policy**, worthy of the teachings of Machiavelli himself.

It is only consequential that the United Nations is – by and large – being sidelined in this multi-layer problem context. Nevertheless, it has not been its fault – the brainchild of San Francisco has simply not been allowed to function in a way conceived by its founders.

## **RECLAIMING THE SPIRIT OF SAN-FRANCISCO**

Is there a way out of this seemingly hopeless situation?

We are certain that there is. The current challenges have not become irreversible yet. We will be able to overcome them. This, however, requires us **to revive the spirit of San Francisco**. We should return to the principles and foundations, which could serve as the building blocks for a better world. Multilateralism, justice, and co-operation are as true today, as they were back in 1945.

So, what must be done in practical terms?

Belarus does not pretend to have exhaustive answers. We would like just to draw attention to the four areas, which, in our view, are most crucial. These are **rule of law, politics, economics, and environment**.

First, to ensure the rule of law on the global scale, **the system of international law needs to become fully functional**. Forged through the centuries of suffering, this is the foundation without which all other elements of the modern civilisation cannot operate. Having signed the UN Charter, the world’s countries committed themselves to abide by the principles of international law. In other words, they refused to live any longer in the conditions of destructive anarchy and lawlessness.

International law has been shaped as a historic compromise between the interests of all states. Thus, it could be supplemented and revised only if all of them agree to do so. There should be no place to arbitrary interpretations that seek to subordinate international law to someone’s private interests. Let us bear in mind that this behaviour leads to infringement of interests of other international actors.

This is why no trendy concepts – like ‘humanitarian intervention’ or ‘responsibility to protect’ – can justify interference in internal affairs of sovereign states.

Second, in a **political** context we need a **stable and predictable global order**. It is up to us whether we will have one. Global systems are not being established and managed by themselves – they result from human action.

At this point, we are living in a system that might be viewed as a **dysfunctional multipolarity**. Indeed, we have to witness how a rising number of global players prove unable to cope effectively with growing global exigencies. If we fail to revamp the situation, then, we are most likely to end up with a scenario that is even worse. It is likely to be a contemporary option of the Dark Middle Ages but aggravated by ever more dangerous transnational threats and challenges.

Hence, time and again, we come back to the perennial question: how to build an effective global order in the context, in which we do not have a global government?

We seem to be able to offer an idea. It is about starting addressing the structural issue by means of a functional approach. Let us try to devise an effective global system by tackling specific functional problems. After all, is it not the case that all positive minded global stakeholders have an interest in seeing these problems either diminished or eliminated altogether?

Thus, we are deeply convinced that **global partnerships** is the instrument that could help realise that vision. They are called upon to bring together multiple players on the world stage in a common effort against specific transnational threats and challenges.

So, let us begin working on and implementing functional **partnerships** on each of those issues. Actually, we have already been doing that. For instance, in the fight against trafficking in persons in the framework of the Global Partnership against Slavery and Human Trafficking that was proposed by Belarus some time ago.

Third, it is about an **economic** dimension. The mass protests across the world, like the Occupy Wall Street, testify to **public rejection of the prevailing development model** stemming from the policies of ‘market fundamentalism’. This is hardly surprising. After all, the model has been built around the interests of corporate capital.

Clearly, the classic recipe of Adam Smith does not work in a modern world. Contrary to public expectations, the ‘invisible hand’ of the market has not led to universal public well-being. The experience of a few past decades indicates that the ‘invisible hand’ only contributes to the enrichment of the corporate sector alone and the impoverishment of all others.

The global economy of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century is too sophisticated to be left to market’s devices. That economy requires a reasonable balance among its various elements. As far as the balance *per se* is concerned, it cannot be established by default, someone must do that. It is a state that can accomplish this task, and most crucially, it is a **‘strong’ socially-oriented state** that does not live by borrowing from future generations, as currently some advanced countries do.

We are convinced that a state-based paradigm, which we suggest, could reverse the Great Divergence. Likewise, it is key to significantly reducing poverty in the world.

Finally, what is required of us in terms of the **environment**?

Climate change is **the central and defining challenge of contemporary times**. This is the ‘wall’ that separates the current and future generations from a prosperous future. Our efforts in all other areas will prove futile, if we fail in the main. We must preserve the life-giving ecosystem of the Earth. Therefore, it is here where the need for comprehensive international co-operation is most needed.

The Rio+20 international conference on sustainable development was held in June. The conference’s decisions essentially marked the onset of a **‘New Green Deal’** that is expected to rally all stakeholders for common action.

We need to move decisively ahead with implementing its individual elements. This is, above all, about elaborating **Sustainable Development Goals**, as well as ensuring **transfer and absorption of ‘green’ technologies**.

In the context of Rio’s follow-up we should seriously consider the need for formulating a **comprehensive UN Energy Agenda**. We believe that it will contribute to a comprehensive approach that we so urgently need in order to address the interrelated issues of climate change along with energy and food security.

The United Nations is a natural place for the implementation of all the ideas articulated by our delegation. No other international body wields such universal legitimacy.

So, let us, at last, **empower the United Nations**. We are certain that the UN will then be able to realise with dignity the vision set forth in San Francisco many years ago.