HIGH-LEVEL MEETING

Exclusive side event to the
UN General Assembly

SUSTAINING PEACE & DEVELOPMENT
IN THE CHANGING WORLD

MEETING REPORT

NEW YORK, USA

27 September 2018
On the 27th of September 2018 the Nizami Ganjavi International Center held its XIV High-Level Meeting, entitled “Sustaining Peace & Development in the Changing World”.

Attended by twenty and eight serving Heads of State and Government, selected thought leaders and specialists, as well as a invited alumni of the NGIC Young Leaders network, the meeting provided an opportunity to reflect on diverse dimensions of sustainable peace and development. Marianna Vardinoyannis presented the Nizami Ganjavi International Center with an award from the Marianna Vardoyannis Foundation, received by Rovshan Muradov and Ismail Serageldin, in recognition of the relentless work of its staff, as well as that of President Vaira Vike-Freiberga and Ismail Serageldin as chairpersons and the board. As a result, “the Nizami Ganjavi International Center stands at the core of global co-operation and creates opportunities for bringing about ideas and solutions that demonstrate a neutral path towards understanding among peoples and enhancing the sense of our common humanity.”

This report serves as a account of this one-day meeting. The full opening remarks of Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, President of Croatia; and Viorica Dancila, Prime Minister of Romania - delivered by Ana Birchall, Deputy Prime Minister - can be found in annex.
**Opening Remarks:**

In her opening remarks, Ms *Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic*, President of Croatia, offered the view that in today’s world, countries—especially smaller ones like Croatia—should engage in a proactive, ambitious and innovative approach to foreign policy-making, rather than staying reactive. In her speech, she argued that the region surrounding Croatia could be labelled “South East Europe”, rather than “Western Balkans”. The latter label—also given by the European Union in its recently communicated *Western Balkan Strategy*—continues to hold negative connotations, isolating the region from Europe and acting as a psychological barrier in terms of integration. In contrast, the term South East Europe provides a clear indicator of the region’s European ambitions. She praised the role of the EU as a driver of reform, development and peace in the region. South East Europe is clearly motivated by the Union’s new Western Balkans Strategy, and their accession will serve to consolidate the EU. The interwoven issues of migration and populism represent defining challenges for both the South East Europe region and the rest of Europe. With illegal migration on the rise, solutions must be found at the root causes as opposed to on Europe’s borders, which necessitates more than a purely national response. As such, poverty and conflict as drivers of migration are something that the international community can and should work to reduce, and the pursuit of implementation of the UN’s Sustainable Development goals should therefore be a priority.

President Kitarovic also stressed that EU membership does not preclude the pursuit of national or regional interests. For Croatia, this means also the pursuit and implementation of the 3 C initiative, entailing full integration of Central Europe, “Old” and “New” Europe, as well as the East and West of Europe. It also means working towards interconnection, better transportation, and digital and energy reform.
President Giorgi Margvelashvili, President of Georgia, struck a cautionary note, calling for right language as to recognize injustice. Twenty-five years ago - precisely on the date of this event - Georgia appealed for help to the international community, as Russian troops occupied its territories: first in Abkhazia, then in South Ossetia. He remarked that his country is still suffering the consequences of this occupation.

Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borisov reported on his country’s experience of its first EU Presidency, which it used to push for a pan-EU commitment to the future membership for the countries of South Eastern Europe. Through the support of the EU, he observed, the region has been able to grow together. Within the region however, political tensions remain and have to be dealt with by the leaders of the Balkans in a responsible fashion. At the same time, there is no alternative to a security guarantee but NATO membership.

The message delivered by Ana Birchall, Deputy Prime Minister of Romania, on behalf of PM Viorica Dancila made it clear that also Romania – also approaching its first EU Presidency – attaches great importance to multilateral organizations such as the UN. Sharing new ideas and thinking among leaders, as in the Nizami Ganjavi International Center, is just as important. Referring to the title of the conference, it is clear that sustaining global peace is not possible without implementing commitments to sustainable development. In a time when the principles and norms of international relations are being threatened, greater regional cooperation should be promoted. As global youth is disproportionately affected by conflict, yet most excluded from peace processed, ways of including them in sustainable development and peace making is also to be encouraged. Anna Birchall praised the NGIC’s events, in particular the Baku Forum, as a venue for candid discussion of these issues.
The Future of Euro-Atlantic Relations & The Western Balkans

Zlatko Lagumdzija, former Prime Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2001-2002), opened the Panel as Chair and invited President of Georgia Giorgi Margvelashvili to speak. He too stressed the vitality of Euro-Atlantic relations as an existential issue for Georgia. As its sovereignty and security have been threatened since day one of its newly regained independence, Georgia has sought to proactively contribute to global through various EU and NATO frameworks. Thus, he observed, “a small state with its own serious concerns can still contribute to global peace”. Since the collapse of the Soviet system, Georgia has benefited substantially from the EU’s and NATO’s stability, security and prosperity. The fact is, however, that there are still pockets of conflict in Europe - the so-called “frozen conflicts”. Their persistence represents a weakness for the global security architecture. Russia, he argued, is responsible for this. Ten years have now passed since the Bucharest Process in which Ukraine and Georgia were offered NATO membership. Instead, these countries have been attacked; indeed, since 2016 Russia has become more hostile. This new wave of post-Cold War aggression is a Russian reaction against the active involvement of former Soviet Union states in the EU and NATO. In this regard, Georgia is counting on the newer members of the EU to support others in their pursuit of membership of both organizations. According to the President, this goal is achievable and will result in a more stable outlook for the region. Georgia, in turn, will be committed to international and European security and committed to condemning acts of violence through the framework of international law. He sums up his contribution with “We paid a price to be independent, for a new Euro-Atlantic direction.”
Ana Birchall, Deputy Prime Minister of Romania, offered a complementary perspective from the region of South East Europe, with a special focus on Romania’s upcoming Presidency of the European Council, and in view of the EU strategy on enlargement issued in February. There are important issues on the agenda, including Brexit and the end of the current European Commission’s mandate. Yet the focus of Romania’s Presidency will be the Eastern Partnership and the Western Balkans. Ambitious plans and considerable challenges lay on the horizon, yet this is a reason to emphasize Europe’s role, not to diminish it. Her speech focused on the importance of a joint future for the region and the fact that her country is ready to share its experiences with aspiring EU members there. However, she was clear that decisions regarding membership of both the EU and NATO should be based on merit and not politics.

Connectivity is a key in national, regional but also global integration, both in terms of infrastructure, energy and the digital economy. Enhanced connectivity will provide new job opportunities, especially for young people. Yet barriers to integration and connectivity exist: a wave of populism stands in the way of sensible policies. As such, new ways of cooperation to protect the region need to be found. Complementary to EU integration is, of course, NATO membership. Ms. Birchall noted how few would have thought that Croatia would have joined NATO twenty years ago – quipping that if the Western Balkans’ integration were to be an easy process, it would not be interesting.

Petar Stoyanov, former President of Bulgaria (1997-2002), made the point that the Western Balkans should not fall off the global agenda, and noted with satisfaction that interest in the Western Balkans has increased in the recent years – even if a lot of work in terms of both assistance and supervision remains to be done. Referring to the title of the panel, he reminded the audience that the EU- and NATO are models and ideas that are emulated by politicians all over the world. Even in a period where the US is so divided, the transatlantic relationship cannot be a matter of trade and tariffs, but is defined rather in terms of the challenges to modern civilization, making reference to the Roman Empire and the decline thereof. The future of transatlantic relations, said Stoyanov, is very uncertain, and thus encouraged the audience to come up with new visions and new scenarios for a European civilization.

President Filip Vujanovic, President of Montenegro (2003-2018), spoke on behalf of a country which is a new member of NATO. In his speech, he strongly pleaded for full NATO membership for the Western Balkans, a region that was shaken by war for five years in the last century. At the same time, he also made the point that Kosovo, as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina, should only join when their futures are clearer, while noting that his country is neutral about on the matter of Serbian membership. It is clear, however, that all of the Western Balkans, are aspiring EU member states, and Montenegro respects the sovereignty of them all.
Ivo Josipovic, former President of Croatia (2010-2015), offered a slightly more skeptical view of EU membership. He frankly stated that relationships within the Balkans are, due to its history, not always easy. It must be realized that substantial transformation is still necessary, and the EU could play an important role in motivating countries in the region to resolve pending issues. Border issues remain a challenge, including those between Croatia and Slovenia, as well as between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Rather than endlessly negotiating about these issues - which Josipovic condemns as useless - the International Court of Justice should take a clear role as arbitrator. Thousands of people are still missing due to the war, an issue that is politicized and causes tension. The question of convicting war criminals is still open, and economic settlements are still outstanding. “Before EU membership will be reality, the region should settle its differences, otherwise it could become a threat for peace,” he concluded.

Dora Bakoyannis, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece (2006-2009) provided the view of a close neighbor to the Balkans. Her opening question was: “what do the Western Balkans want from the EU? Are we really countries who want to participate in a structure of joint values? Or are we just a Union and in which we serve our own interests?” She suggested that this critical question will be answered by the electorate in due time, and also cited fatigue regarding the Western Balkans’ problems – not to mention the EU’s ability to handle them. The upcoming referendum on Macedonia’s official name was given as an obvious example of how solidarity between the Balkan states can be called into question. Ms. Bakoyannis ventured that the creation of a regional organization in the Balkans could be a way of dealing with region-specific issues.

Conversely, Viktor Yushchenko, former President of Ukraine (2005-2010), stressed the importance of a strong security policy, and said that this matter should not be sidelined. “Fewer and fewer are discussing security, this is why we are still having such important problems”, he said. He cited Nagorno-Karabakh as an example of a conflict that has not been solved for twenty years. He mentioned that, although the UN may pass resolutions, a way to address frozen conflicts remains elusive. Europe faces new challenges and the system therefore needs to adapt itself to deal with these. He cited his own country, which got rid of its nuclear arsenal twenty years ago in return for security guarantees as to its territorial integrity, yet which now claims 60,000 wounded and has lost seven percent of its land. There must be one, rather than several, security narratives in Europe. This also goes for the Western Balkans. The question of EU membership for Ukraine and Georgia should still be an option. “It is important to be synchronized in terms of security for the entire region, Europe and beyond.”
Pathways and Challenges for Global Sustainable Development

In opening the panel, Ismail Serageldin, Co-Chair of NGIC, evoked the dual momentum that currently exists in both economics and science, as an unprecedented technological revolution changes supply chains. The same goes for our perspectives on politics: as algorithms have changed, so too have our analytical tools. At the same time, one can also observe geopolitical shifts, with China appearing on the world stage whilst the US is withdrawing from it, as evidenced in its rejection of the Paris Accords. The differing perspectives of Xi Jinping and Donald Trump represent an ongoing ideological struggle for the heart of global trade and cooperation. Yet, warned Serageldin, we must be careful not to include welfare, sustainable development and the fight against extreme poverty in whatever “new economics” emerges from this clash.

Jeffrey Sachs, Professor of Economics, began by stressing the gigantic economic growth of the world economy to 90 trillion USD, with a growth rate of 3-4% per year. At the same time, he argued that we are prisoners of this development. The market economy today is inherently exclusive, with the United States being the starkest example: “we have the biggest inequality in the history of the United States for no reason except for greed”. The rampant market economy, as exemplified by the American model, does not take into account the cost of using and damaging the environment, and is therefore at risk of destroying it. He noted that “the planet is warmer, we extinct species and [have created] a huge gap between rich and poor with very high levels of inequality.” Politics in the US has become a private rather than common good: healthcare is powerful business, “election economies” exist, and mass media influences global politics. Yet Sachs made a point that no political system can run on greed and lies. In trying to respond to this challenge, he called for a clear
framework, or points of reference. As regarding the environment, he suggests full decarbonisation by 2050 and a halt on conversions of land into pasture. As to education, taxes should ensure quality education – the “best development aid” one can provide. For Sachs, universal free education should be a global norm, and not enough is being spent to that end despite the almost-unimaginable wealth of some people. For example, just two people are worth 20 trillion USD. This money should be used for responsible investment, but rather world power and wealth is managed according to the maxim of greed.

Sachs closed with the idea that “the American century is clearly over”. As if realising this, the US is becoming overly pre-occupied with China and seeks out partners according to allegiance to one or other system - an inherently-divisive policy. He reminded the audience, especially from Europe and the Balkans: “Don’t fight with your neighbours, they are your partners. Your local fights are the main struggles”. In reference to the discussion on NATO enlargement, he ventured that the idea that the US will be coming to save you is an illusion.

The discussion consequently turning to Amir Dossal, Founder and Chairman of the Global Partnership Forum, who echoed much of Sachs’ comments. He came from the UN General Assembly with two messages. Firstly, that instead of working in a competition, it is always possible to find peaceful solutions through dialogue; secondly, that sustainable development has yet to become a real priority for the world community. The capital of societies should be harnessed for growth, and according to him, the term Less Developed Countries (LDC) should instead be called “less-discovered countries”. In reminding the community about the Global Development Goals he reminds the audience that “we are living on borrowed time and do not think for future generations”, calling on leaders to commit to total decarbonisation by the year 2050, rather than letting this world become merely a money-making machine.

Jan Fisher, Prime Minister of the Czech Republic (2009-2010) spoke about geopolitical tectonic shifts that make it difficult to assess the current world situation, revolving around actors from China, the US, Russia and Turkey. What needs to be reflected upon is the term “equilibrium”, in the economic, social, and political sense of the world. There are issues that cannot be privatized. “Sustainability starts very locally, and thus the role of politicians in empowering it at all levels is decisive”. The power to act sustainably is what will define the future of politics, and a multidisciplinary method which responds to citizens’ concerns should work towards that end, according to Fisher.

Eka Tkeshelashvili, former deputy prime minister of Georgia (2010-2012), spoke from the perspective of a “reformed lawyer”. As her previous speaker, she stresses the importance of sustainable development as a goal that requires holistic approaches, rather than zero-sum games, which should include both governments and private actors. How do we bring balance through thinking and action? Sustainability should be seen as a joint effort between developed and developing countries – the challenge is equal. In this sense, education in itself is not about literacy: in terms of sustainable development, it is necessary to adapt young societies to the new challenges of this world through an education for the future. It is the role of leaders to develop that “feel” for the future, and all policies should be in line with global development goals. This requires innovation and freedom of choice, not oppression. An unequal geopolitical balance prevents such development and should be overcome.

As chief economist from the World Bank, Carter Brandon made the striking observation that people born in 1960 who are fortunate enough to live until 2050 will nevertheless live long enough to witness the fruits of their generation’s wrongdoings. The world population is using all of its natural capital in the development process. In China, 1 in 5 people die from pollution. Ninety percent of the oceans are
overfished. Land is becoming non-farmable because of soil degradation. All the trends are very negative. “Just in order to halt the negative downward spiral, we do not do enough.” These worrying processes demand rapid action. Systematic real-time data is available. There is clear evidence that the eighty percent of the world population lives in degraded environments, and that it is even not possible to work on sustainable development unless environmental challenges are addressed. The relationship between land degradation, migration and poverty is clear. “There are three key messages that come out of this: urgency, a need to focus on values and to move forward together”, Brandon said. What politicians do not realize is that proactivity is vital, and that economists must put values into action without being afraid of consequences. Knowing what we have to do, and what is at stake, this is the only way forward. In this sense, local activism is the best thing we have.

Noeleen Heyzer, reflecting on the global economy, also evoked the important topic of tax evasion. Yet rather than relying on citizen action to overcome this, global financial governance needs to change. Kateryna Yushchenko, former First Lady of Ukraine made the point that the usage of environment should be factored as a cost in economic thinking.

As the last panellist to speak, Wu Hailong, President of the Chinese People’s Institute of Foreign Affairs, made the point that trade has deteriorated to such an extent that this could cause serious confrontation and disaster, yet global institutions are failing to truly cope with the scale of the problem, noting that “this is a political gamble about China”. Referring to Heyzer’s point, he pointed out that tax havens are indeed not local issues but a design of powerful countries, citing the staggering level of global corruption that has led to 20 trillion USD in tax havens by default. “The system is fundamentally corrupt.” Thus sustainable development is not only about technical solutions, it is about containing power. And, with the US representing only 4.4 % of global population, the question is deserved: should they really dominate the world? With a leader like Trump who believes in deals and not rules, can an international system be run correctly? Mr. Wu closes the discussion by asserting that “no one has the power to dominate the world”, and so regional cooperation is direly needed, with a focus on collaboration as opposed to ego.

Keynote Speakers of the Lunch: Marianna Vardinoyannis, Goodwill Ambassador to UNESCO
Kerry Kennedy, President of Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
Andri Anastasiades, First Lady of the Republic of Cyprus
The Middle East:

How can a Strategic Vision for Peace be Achieved?

This panel proved to be as contentious and interesting as the previous one. **Amre Moussa**, Secretary General of the Arab League 2001-2011, and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt 1991-2001 served as Chair and engaged in a lively discussion with the panelists. He began the session by asking why there is no strategic vision in the Middle East peace process. What went wrong? Was the aim to manage rather than to resolve the problem? Peace efforts themselves have contributed, through their failures, to the perpetuation of the problems in the region, and the Arab world is changing. How will it link to the 21st century, he asked?

**Shaukat Aziz**, former Prime Minister of Pakistan (2004-2007) and banker with a focus on the Middle East, ventured that the Middle East's complex and enormous internal issues inhibit its own development, ranging from occupation of territory and secularism to economic issues, migration, and conflict in Yemen and Syria. “The willingness of the global community to really solve this conflict is nominal, at best”, he observed. Yet a settlement for the Middle East will also require Israel and the US to be part of it, and would also need to be interregional. It entails not only a dialogue with both Iran and Saudi Arabia, but also an ability to cross the sectarian divide in places like Yemen and Syria. The P-5 has a major role to play in these efforts. At the same time, there are important leadership gaps in terms of responsible dialogue and getting stakeholders together. In the meantime, however, Aziz states “the region of the Middle East is below its own performance potential and can boom, beyond the imaginable”.

**Tzipi Livni**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Israel (2006-2009) and current head of opposition there, made the assertion that, in the Middle East context, it is not Israel who is the problem but Iran. Livni mentioned the importance of being able to negotiate with a legitimate spokesperson. As such, she felt the absence of the Arab League from peace negotiations at the time she was in government, as the support of the wider Arab world is essential. At the same time, the US is of pivotal importance but often changes its opinions. Evoking the situation of a conflict with two counter-movements, and a question of land rights, thinking outside the box is clearly needed. She made the point that the situation is not even stagnating but deteriorating. “The status quo cannot be accepted anymore. Time works against the idea of two states for two peoples”, she comments, but reaffirms: “my goal is to reach an agreement with the Palestinians”. It is clear that the price the people pay for an agreement is higher than the price paid in the absence of one, and that compromises need to be made at all levels, even in the short term.

**Dora Bakoyannis** recognized a clear worsening of the situation in the Middle East, in part because “moderate people are out of fashion”. Today’s world is looking for extremists. Even the United States is no longer an honest broker but extreme. As such, the question of Palestine is not the cause but a symptom of the Middle East’s problems. Peace negotiations in the Middle East should be inclusive otherwise it will fail. Politicians make peace, she said, but people who want peace need to have partners, too. We need more people who truly want to make peace, rather than politicians who make it populist.
Antonio Zanardi Landi, former Diplomatic Advisor to the President of Italy notes that in his field there is little deep discussion anymore about Israel and Palestine, nor regarding the Gulf and Iran. The conflict in the Middle East is so entrenched that there just anger and fighting rather than reasonable dialogue. Iran needs to be involved in this question, and the question needs to be tackled in an optimistic fashion. As a result of the conflicts in, and migration from, the Middle East, the “big idea” of Europe as a magnet for economic, spiritual and political wealth is getting lost: “As we are now closing our borders, we have gone back 100-1000 years. We are losers in this battle.” The question as to whom the legitimate spokespeople of the region are should be seriously addressed. When, asked Landi, “are Arab leaders going to say: enough is enough”?

Tzipi Livni closed the session by stating her position on the recognition of lines of 1967, with reference to two states for two people. This entails that each side needs to give up some its dreams, and has to give up a sovereign army through demilitarization. Amre Moussa responded by challenging this statement, arguing, “Israel needs to make an offer for peace”.

GENDER EQUALITY ISSUES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:

WOMEN AND POLITICS

Opened and effectively facilitated by President Tarja Halonen, President of Finland (2010-2012), this panel produced important insights into the role of women in different societies.

Prime Minister Joseph Muscat of Malta spoke about a Mediterranean culture that places the role of a women in a specific societal context. In order to overcome gender bias, he instated a Ministry on Equality Issues in order to institutionalise change in the country. Civil society has an important role too, he argued – for example, in the form of the Council for Women’s Rights. Malta also has universal free childcare, and for women in politics the times of parliamentary meetings are being changed to allow for childcare needs. Muscat closed his speech in stressing the importance of women’s financial independence, which can be made possible by adequate education.

Noeleen Heyzer, UN Under-Secretary General (2007-2015) and current member of the UN Secretary General’s Board on Mediation, reminded the audience that the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 mobilized Third World Women’s leadership which placed critical issues on the global agenda: Women’s Economic and Political Empowerment and the need to improve the quality of women’s employment as “smart economics”. The Silence
on Violence Against Women (VAW) was finally broken and today this issue is on both national and global agendas. In fact there is mainstreaming of these issues in both the public and private sectors. The World Bank and IMF today talks of women’s economic participation as “smart economics”. VAW is addressed in the corporate sector and sexual harassment has become a major issue. I am happy to hear the Malta presentation. In 2000, I placed the issue of rape as a weapon of war on the agenda of the United Nations Security Council pushing the definition of security from military security to human security. This has led to Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security which has transformed peace keeping, peace building and recovery of fragile States. The participation of women is now considered critical to sustaining peace and rape as a weapon of war is now regarded as a war crime under the ICC.

Kateryna Yushchenko, former First Lady of Ukraine (2005-2010), pointed to her own country, where Ukrainian women are “victims and heroes”. Until twenty years ago, they were relegated to the role of housewives, yet since independence the role of women have changed. However, the recent partial occupation of the country has caused large-scale violence, causing women to migrate from the occupied territories towards uncertain futures. Despite this, women have also provided important medical and social support in the war - yet in political life, participation in politics is limited, with only three women in the cabinet and only a few women in top management positions. Several initiatives seek to address the shortage of women in leadership positions, such as a leadership academy before women go to college, and internships in parliament specifically for women. Women in Ukraine, as in other countries, are particularly important actors in the prevention of conflict and must be an integral part of the peace building process in order for it to be sustainable.

Dalia Itzik, Speaker of the Israeli Knesset (2006-2009), explored the question of why women do not hold leadership roles in all sectors of society. In her eyes, the key issue is education, which sows the seeds of unequal outcomes and discrimination in early life. To her, “discrimination is everywhere”. She speaks as the only women that represent her parliament. Whilst women are beginning to hold leadership positions and gain more equality, much more work remains to be done – and the role of women as educators needs to be also taken into account, citing her mother from Iraq and her own daughter as an example. Women “need to educate for democracy”.
Jadranka Kosor, the first female Prime Minister of Croatia (2009-2011), says that “women should have of the fifty percent of power” and a continuous and relentless pressure regarding women’s issues has to be at the political forefront so that both men and women can prosper. A political struggle for true equality is still a subject of controversy and a source of prejudice; in everyday life, lack of equality is also very often a factor contributing to domestic violence. However, Kosor was eager to over-simplify, arguing that more men, and not just women, should speak on panels in favor equality – a nod to the woman-dominated panel on which she was speaking.

Sally Painter, an international public sector consultant and co-founder of Blue Start Strategies. made the point of how important it is to have women represented in government bodies and politics. Yet also in the private sector there is still a challenge, and in both sectors there is untapped potential. Sally Painters cites the example of the US Democratic Emily’s List and its efforts to get women elected into office and advance diversity in politics. The organization receives substantial funding and helps three thousand women at the federal level advance their political careers. This year, the organization received an unprecedented amount of applicant women who want to engage in politics. She makes the powerful point that “we got to get to the table and you need to put money behind this.”

**Belt and Road Initiative:**

**Perceptions and Reflections**

Edgar Rinkevics, current Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, spoke first by stressing the importance of One Belt, One Road (OBOR) and positive engagement therein: through the 16+1 arrangement as well as through bilateral relations, as well as by supporting the EU-China dialogue on trade and transportation.

Valdis Zatlers, President of Latvia (2007-2011), sought to take a new view of the topic. China is at a turning point in its economic policy. This started ten years ago with the Beijing Olympics, which created a new vision of China and an economy that had gone truly global. Ten years ago, the Chinese were told to consume more. Now it has become a consumer society. China is also taking seriously its duties of global leadership and responsibility. Yet, OBOR needs to take into account that expanding the economic capacity of China beyond its border might entail restructuring needs. In any case, the initiative is visionary and should be tested, especially on the Eurasian continent. For the Baltics, the 16+1 initiative represents a new format for building a true dialogue of cooperation. There are lessons learned, which ought to be taken into account in order to avoid misunderstanding or conflict. What is important not to duplicate mistakes from other leaders? Working with NGOs such as NGIC, and promoting their role as mediating organizations and bridge builders, can play an important role here.
Dora Bakoyannis confirmed the importance of an equitable trading system, which is beneficial for the world, stating that “a trade war would be a catastrophe”. In the Confucian narrative, China is deemed peaceful but a great power. It can also be read as the creation of internal stability coupled with economic growth. This enhancement of enhancing soft power has the potential to rebalance Russia and the EU. Europe, and its trading system, will have to come face-to-face with OBOR at some point, yet a central issue is that these projects are discussed most often on a bilateral basis not with the EU. It is clear, however, that European standards will have to be met. The challenge is that countries that are located on the route are generally poor, receiving tied loans. Europe and China will need to start honest cooperation, rather than OBOR becoming a competitive project. In this context, a connectivity plan should be developed and should make other countries more economically resilient. Thus, it is important to “to come to a joint understanding to our projects”.

Evan Feigenbaum; a true China expert with 30 years of experience, provided an American perspective, a country that in his view is ambivalent and skeptical of China. “It is interesting to note of how the United States and the EU speak one language, whereas transit countries speak differently,” he observed. Whilst OBOR was created in 2013, there has been a substantial network of connectivity at all levels for twenty years. For example, the Central Asia Regional Cooperation already runs programs with many other regional banks. “Soft” connectivity also refers to cooperation in customs and border procedures. Indeed, the regional perspective will prove important and will regional integration structure also harmonizing coordination investment strategies, and public administration within the OBOR framework is pivotal. One important question concerns the means and ends of OBOR. “In other words what is the intention of China? It is neither bilateral nor multilateral.” With a lack of regional integration strategies, the key issues of debt overhang, procurement methods, use of local labor and different engineering standards are highly challenging. The existence of such non-harmonized infrastructure projects begs the question of whether China will adapt to the region or vice-versa, and whether China will impose its norms if the latter proves to be true. The way it looks at the moment, and with the size of the intervention to date, it is China which has become the standard-setter.

How to coordinate this? Feigenbaum made reference to a “trade spaghetti bowl of conflicting agreements which will also happen in infrastructure.” This complexity raises questions of transparency, particularly in America. The question of how stakeholders can be convened and brought into dialogue is thus a pivotal one.

Prof Wang Yiwei, the youngest Jean Monnet Professor in China, noted that integration - like in Europe - would always start with culture and positive economic growth, as well as reduction of inequality. Linkage through infrastructure has vast potential for economic development of the region, but there is a great need for better mutual connection. Wang also commented that, before reform, China’s budget was a third of that of Sub-Saharan Africa.

According to him, China has demonstrated that “you need to take the highway in order to achieve fast economic
growth”. This goes in particular for landlocked countries. The question is therefore how poorer countries can be part of this growth movement, beginning with limited resources. Wang’s answer is economic integration, as in the case of OBOR, but also the importance of people-to-people exchange. In this sense, Azerbaijan is a crucial powerhouse that can propel connectivity.

Debby Goldberg, from the Schwarzman Scholar Initiative, highlighted the role of the Schwarzman Scholars representing substantial investment in human capital, where handpicked outstanding young people from thirty-eight countries travel around China to study OBOR as part of their one year Masters Programme in China. According to her, “we want to create a cohort of people who understand China more deeply.”

Ana Birchall chimed into this discussion and stressed the importance of interconnectivity, as in OBOR. Yet gaps need to be bridged, for example through the EU-China Connectivity platform. Her country, Romania, will support the EU-China relationship as part of its upcoming EU Presidency. Romania sees itself in an important geostrategic position and connecting hub in this regard.

A point of view from Pakistan through Shaukat Aziz was also offered on the issue of tied loans (i.e. loans granted for infrastructure projects, but with the caveat of using Chinese contractors). Aziz stated that such arrangements were, from his point of view, perfectly understandable, whilst any country borrowing money should just be clear under what conditions it can borrow. Connectivity has several facets: digital, roads, rail and air. “In Pakistan we have built a road link and there is an expectation for road links with China,” he commented.
53rd Annual Appeal of Conscience Awards Dinner

honoring The Honorable Christine Lagarde, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, World Leader Award and Mr. Johann Rupert, Chairman of Compagnie Financiere Richemont
## Confirmed List of Participants

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<th>Name &amp; Surname</th>
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<tr>
<td>Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic</td>
<td>President of Croatia</td>
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<td>Giorgi Margvelashvili</td>
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<td>Boyko Borisov</td>
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<td>Viorica Dancila</td>
<td>Prime Minister of Romania (message)</td>
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<td>Joseph Muscat</td>
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<td>Ana Birchall</td>
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<td>Andri Anastasiades</td>
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<td>Dora Bakoyannis</td>
<td>Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece 2006-2009; Rapporteur on the situation in Syria of the Council of Europe</td>
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<td>Suzanne Bishopric</td>
<td>Retired treasurer of the United Nations;</td>
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<td>Carter Brandon</td>
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<td>Wendy Fisher</td>
<td>President of the Board of Trustees of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation</td>
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<td>Abraham Foxman</td>
<td>National Director of Anti-Defamation League 1987-2015</td>
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<td>Manal Fouani</td>
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<td>Rob Garris</td>
<td>Global Director of Admissions and Strategic Initiatives, Schwarzman Scholars; Managing Director, the Rockefeller Foundation</td>
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<td>Debby Goldberg</td>
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<td>Tarja Halonen</td>
<td>President of Finland 2000-2012</td>
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Wu Hailong President of the Chinese People Institute of Foreign Affairs
Noeleen Heyzer UN Under-Secretary General 2007-2015; Member of UN Secretary General’s HL Board on Mediation
Maya Hristova Consulate General of Bulgaria in New York; Ambassador of Bulgaria in Azerbaijan 2012-2017
Nazim Ibrahimov Chairman of the State Committee on Work with Diaspora 2008-2018
Dalia Itzik President of Israel 2007; Speaker of the Knesset 2006-2009
Ivo Josipovic President of Croatia 2010-2015
Mary Kavaney Chief Operating Officer, Global Cyber Alliance
Jadranka Kosor Prime Minister of Croatia 2009-2011
Zlatko Lagumdzija Prime Minister Bosnia & Herzegovina 2001-2002
Antonio Zanardi Landi Former Diplomatic Advisor to the President of Italy
Tzipi Livni Minister of Foreign Affairs of Israel 2006-2009
Dario Mihelin Deputy Head of Mission at Embassy of Croatia to Turkey
Amre Moussa Secretary-General of the Arab League 2001-2011
Susan Ness Senior Fellow, SAIS Center for Transatlantic Relations
Sally Painter Co-Founder & COO, Blue Star Strategies
Paul Roveda Executive Associate, Concordia
Nazifullah Salarzai Deputy Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the UN
Anna Sinelnikova UNDP
Petar Stoyanov President of Bulgaria 1997-2002
Gligor Tashkovic Minister of Foreign Investment (Ret.) Macedonia
Eka Tkeshelashvili Deputy Prime Minister of Georgia 2010-2012
Filip Vujanovic President of Montenegro 2003-2018
Viktor Yushchenko President of Ukraine 2005-2010
Wang Yiwei Director for Center for European Studies at Renmin University, China
Katheryna Yushchenko First Lady of Ukraine 2005-2010
Valdis Zatlers President of Latvia 2007-2011
PROGRAM

WEDNESDAY, 26 September

10:00 – 12:00  Strategic Meeting
Venue: Majestic Boardroom

THURSDAY, 27 September

9:00 - 9:45  Opening Remarks
Venue: Manhattan Ballroom

Moderator: Rovshan Muradov, Secretary General of the Nizami Ganjavi International Center

Keynote Speakers Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, President of Croatia
• Giorgi Margvelashvili, President of the Republic of Georgia
• Kristalina Georgieva, Chief Executive Officer of the World Bank
• Boyko Borisov, Prime Minister of Bulgaria
• Viorica Dancila, Prime Minister of Romania message delivered by Ana Birchall, Deputy Prime Minister of Romania
• Ismail Serageldin, Vice President of the World Bank 1992-2000; Co Chair, NGIC

Presentation of the Honorary Award of the “Marianna Vardinoyannis V. Foundation” to the Nizami Ganjavi International Center presented by Mrs. Marianna Vardinoyannis, Goodwill Ambassador of UNESCO, Founder and President of the Marianna Vardinoyannis Foundation.

9:45 - 10:00  Family photo

10:00 -11:30  Future of Euro Atlantic Relations and Western Balkan
Venue: Manhattan Ballroom

What is the role of major stakeholders on a way to make Western Balkan integral part of EU and NATO? How to speed up „Berlin Process“ through implementation of New EU Western Balkan Strategy after Sofia Summit in order to Europeanize Balkan instead of Balkanize Europe? Closing gaps between wishes, words and deeds of todays EU and Western Balkan leaders. What are alternative scenarios for future of Western Balkan and Euro Atlantic Relations if fragmentation prevails over integration? Would efforts to negotiate „New Deal for Balkans“ downsize the risk of broader violence? Is European Convention of Human Rights becoming a forgotten paper on major pillar of living European values?

Moderator: Zlatko Lagumdžija, Prime Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2001-2002
• Giorgi Margvelashvili, President of the Republic of Georgia
• Ana Birchall, Deputy Prime Minister of Romania
• Petar Stoyanov, President of Bulgaria 1997-2002
• Filip Vujanovic, President of Montenegro 2003-2018
• Ivo Josipovic, President of Croatia 2010-2015
11:30 - 11:45 Coffee Break

11:45 - 13:00 Pathways and Challenges for Global Sustainable Development

Venue: Manhattan Ballroom

The world has never become richer, and poorer at the same time. Global output is unprecedented, so is environmental degradation and income inequality. “We have become a threat to ourselves” according to Jeffrey Sachs. In this vein, what should be the top priority for the pathway of Global Sustainable Development? What is in the way?

Moderator: Ismail Serageldin, Vice President of the World Bank 1992-2000; Co Chair, NGIC
• Jeffrey Sachs, American Economist; Director of the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University
• Amir Dossal, Founder and Chairman of the Global Partnership Forum
• Jan Fischer, Prime Minister of the Czech Republic 2009-2010
• Eka Tkeshelashvili, Deputy Prime Minister of Georgia 2010-2012
• Carter Brandon, Chief Economist for Environmental and Natural Resources, World Bank

13:00 - 14:30 Lunch

Venue: Manhattan Ballroom B

Keynote Speakers: Marianna Vardinoyannis, Goodwill Ambassador to UNESCO
Kerry Kennedy, President of Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
Andri Anastasiades, First Lady of the Republic of Cyprus

14:30 - 15:45 The Middle East: How Can a Strategic Vision for Peace Be Achieved?

Venue: Manhattan Ballroom

Nowhere is the need for regional peace more manifest than in the Middle East. Peace processes and regional wars give each other hand in a self-perpetuating fashion: It seems that there is little light at the end of the tunnel. The Middle East conflict knows no bounds. Geopolitical powers do not seem helping to solve the conflict. How can a strategic vision for peace be achieved? What kind of confidence building measures can parties agree on as a first step?

Moderator: Amre Moussa, Secretary-General of the Arab League 2001-2011
• Tzipi Livni, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Israel 2006-2009
• Shaukat Aziz, Prime Minister of Pakistan 2004-2007
• Dora Bakoyannis, Minister of Foreign Affairs Greece 2006-2009
• Antonio Zanardi Landi, Former Diplomatic Advisor to the President of Italy

15:45 - 16:00 Coffee Break

16:00 - 17:15 Gender Equality Issues in Sustainable Development: Women and Politics

Venue: Manhattan Ballroom

Gender equality remains a major gap within the GSDG. One key challenge is the lack of female representation in political life and politics. Across all regions, women occupy less than a quarter of parliamentary seats. What needs to be done to give space for women in politics? What initiatives could be taken to increase women interest and participation in political life? What processes need to be negotiated to ensure full inclusivity? How this can change global governance?
As China moves up this value chain, its competitiveness will be different. It is more connected than ever: through infrastructure by means of the One Belt One Road Initiative, What is the value of this Initiative to Europeans?

**Moderator:** Wu Hailong, President of Chinese People Institute of Foreign Affairs  
**Keynote Speech:** Edgars Rinkevics, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia  
- **Ana Birchall,** Deputy Prime Minister of Romania  
- **Valdis Zatlers,** President of Latvia 2007-2011  
- **Dora Bakoyannis,** Minister of Foreign Affairs Greece 2006-2009  
- **Evan Feigenbaum,** Vice Chairman of the Paulson Institute, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia 2007-2009, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Central Asia 2006-2007  
- **Wang Yiwei,** Director for Center for European Studies at Renmin University, China  
- **Debby Goldberg,** Director of Development, Schwarzman Scholars

20:00 - 22:00  **Dinner**  
**Venue:** Grand Hyatt Hotel, Alvin Hall  
**Dress code:** Black tie

- **Keynote speech:** Jeffrey Sachs, American Economist; Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University. Introduction by Zlatko Lagumdžija, Board of Trustees Members of the Nizami Ganjavi International Center
Keynote Address by the President of the Republic of Croatia
Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović

Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear friends,

Thank you for the very warm and kind welcome. Allow me to express my appreciation to Nizami Ganjavi International Center for organizing this event, addressing a highly important issue – as stated in the working title “Sustaining Peace and Development in the Changing World”. Special greetings to my colleagues from Croatia, former president Josipović and Prime Minister Kosor.

Let me start by pointing out something that I underlined in my speech in the UNGA yesterday. The size of a territory or the number of the population does not determine its standing in the world. It's the quality of ideas, action, inclusion, motivation and innovation that matter. Being proactive rather than reactive is the foreign policy course I advocate for my country. This is how I approach my country’s position in the world and its contribution to finding global solutions to global challenges.

In today’s presentation, I will focus on South East Europe and give an overview of the foundations for my views about the challenges to its security and stability. I believe that various influences from Europe’s east to its south are crucial for the long-term stability of this region. I will also address the issue of migration that I consider to be a long-term issue that requires a common approach, which focuses on the root causes of human migration. I will also briefly present the Three Seas Initiative that is aimed toward the strengthening economic and political cooperation, and economic conversion through the advancement of the infrastructure network in Central Europe, as a contribution by the countries involved to overall EU cohesion and integration. This Initiative offers great interconnectivity potential to our south-eastern neighbourhood.

When speaking of South East Europe, I do consciously avoid the term Balkans or Western Balkans. The term implies much more than just a geographic designation. Balkanisation has become a global trope with negative connotations of political instability, insecurity and fragmentation. The sense of (self)-isolation and almost ghettoization is the reason why I refrain from using the official technical term used by the EU and NATO - the Western Balkans. It’s a psychological barrier to their integration in the minds of their European citizens. Instead, we need to start viewing this part of Europe simply as South East Europe not only because it’s a more neutral geographical term but also simply this is Europe and should be called as such.

It is important to note that South East Europe was developing in the right direction and the international community has lost focus and interest for South East Europe in the past decade. The mere idea and prospect of EU and/or NATO integration seemed to be just enough to motivate the countries of the area to continue on their paths of reform and development. This was understandable, since major conflicts and security concerns in that part of Europe seemed to have been settled and other issues occupied resources and everybody’s attention.

Nonetheless, over the past few years, some worrying processes have developed, more or less under the radar.
Once again South East Europe has become a staging ground for the flexing of geopolitical muscle and competing interests, and tensions have regrettably been rising as a result of interference from third parties who do not share our goals and values and unresolved open issues between the countries. The political ideologies that created the foundation for past conflicts have not disappeared. The impact from the South, where the barbaric Islamic state threatened to overrun Iraq and Syria, has hit South East Europe as well. The overwhelming flow of illegal migrations two years ago, created tensions between neighbouring countries and between EU member states and illegal migrations are on the rise again.

At a time when Europe faces a boost in radical and populist political movements and ideas from the left and right, we should not concede to just upholding a status quo in South East Europe. The countries of South East Europe have much to offer as security providers and not consumers.

For example, who can better understand the delicacy and nuances of building moderate Islamic communities in Europe than European countries with a Muslim minority population or indigenous Islamic communities? These communities have been valuable, intrinsic and inseparable parts of our societies for centuries. Due to Croatia’s historical position, as a meeting point of different civilizations - Christianity, Judaism and Islam, maritime and continental tradition - our homeland is a great example of coexistence and integration of different communities. As our Mufti in Croatia often says - we speak of a true joint existence, not integration or coexistence.

It should be clear that South East Europe has been experiencing the impact of all the major security concerns that the EU and NATO are facing. Combine this with the protracted political instability of the area, partially weak institutions and economies; it becomes obvious that these young democracies need a continued, stronger and credible EU and NATO commitment. Croatia has argued their case persistently in the EU and NATO, together with likeminded friends.

Finally, the year 2018 brought a shift in the policy responses. After a successful EU-Western Balkans Summit in Sofia this past May and the presentation of the new EU-Western Balkans Strategy, one can say that the hearts and minds of people of South East Europe are being won once again. Even though there may be some unfulfilled expectations with “A Credible Enlargement Perspective for an Enhanced EU Engagement with the Western Balkans”, Croatia is proud of the fact that we have contributed to these developments, which only a year ago seemed quite improbable. Our message, that the European Union was losing this part of Europe has finally caught much deserved attention and resulted in the reaction that is going in the right direction.

When thinking about the European Union and the wider Euro-Atlantic integration processes, I often say that the EU will not be enlarged with the integration of South East Europe. Instead, it will be consolidated.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As our world has no boundaries on humanitarian and security issues, the topic of migration and large movements of people is going to continue to be one of Europe’s most serious concerns, challenging its unity and solidarity. Several routes cross or could affect South East Europe.

Migration is a global challenge and as such requires a global response. Drivers of migration will continue to compel people to migrate substantial distances and even risk their lives for this goal. Conflict is just one cause of migration, but it is perhaps the only one that the global community can timely act upon to prevent and finally end through both soft and hard power. The other causes, among them stagnant economies, high youth unemployment, population growth, natural disasters, climate change, food insecurity, unstable repressive governments, religious persecution, and human rights violations will remain a long-term quest.
Croatia advocates a strategic, comprehensive and global approach for handling the migration crisis, based on solidarity and responsibility. We firmly believe that the only way to handle this complex and challenging issue of illegal migration is a joint approach based on mutual respect. Therefore, we must continue working on the root causes – seeking sustainable and permanent solutions for conflicts and crises and focusing on stabilization efforts.

An important step in the right direction to effectively deal with this challenge was the successful conclusion of the negotiation of the Global Compact for the Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration this past July. We believe that this catalogue of targeted measures and best practices can guide us in searching for the best solutions in a more coordinated manner and with better results.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Croatia believes in the future and strength of the EU project, which has transformed a continent, where two of the most devastating wars in the history of mankind gave birth to one of the most peaceful parts of our Planet. We can proudly assert that we have built a great economic force that has benefited hundreds of millions of people across the continent and brought a myriad of opportunities to our citizens.

In that sense, I firmly believe that a Member State can have and promote their own national interests, and at the same time remain steady champions of European togetherness, unity and a common vision for the future. Together with our close friends and allies from Poland and 10 other Central European countries Croatia is pivoting the Three Seas Initiative, which is based on our awareness that the European consolidation from North to South has not been completed. Substantial projects, such as energy supply corridors, the development of transport and digital communications infrastructure within this Initiative will allow for the full integration of Central Europe with the remainder of our continent and erase the artificial, but still lingering division between the so-called “old” and “new” Europe.

Just last week, we held the 3rd summit of the Three Seas Initiative in Bucharest and it clearly illustrated our joint success:

- The 3SI short list of priority interconnection projects in the three key areas - transportation, energy, digital;
- Created the 3SI Network of Chambers of Commerce, on the occasion of the 1st edition of the 3SI Business Forum;
- Started the necessary procedures in relation to the establishment of the Three Seas Investment Fund;
- Welcomed our new partner state – Germany in the presence of EC President Juncker;
- Reaffirmed the commitment of the United States towards the 3SI;
- Welcomed many institutions such as the European Investment Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the World Bank Group.

By responding to contemporary challenges and bringing affirmative change that will contribute to the European Union and the Euro-Atlantic community, the 3rd Summit of the Initiative reflected our determination to achieve an economically integrated European Union and thereby become a stronger transatlantic partner.

In spite of the complex and multiple challenges that the European Union is facing today, let us not forget that it has a long history of overcoming many different kinds of crisis. The European Union is an efficient and competitive global economic power and a cornerstone of stability and prosperity. This is our path and the future for all European countries. South East Europe included.

We are confident that the prospect of EU membership will help our neighbours build societies that are prosperous, peaceful, stable, strong, secure and democratic. The EU is a peace project that strongly contributes to reconciliation and trust building.

Thank you for your attention!
Opening Remarks by VPM Ana Birchall

It is an honor and a privilege for me to be here, today, on this most auspicious day, to address such a high-level audience and to convey a message on behalf of H.E. Mrs. Viorica Dăncilă, Prime-Minister of Romania.

We express our appreciation for the initiative of Nizami Ganjavi International Center to call this meeting on a topic highly relevant for the international community. The Heads of delegations intervening in the current ongoing political debate of the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly have already addressed various aspects of this complex and dynamic relation between peace and development.

Romania attaches great importance to the United Nations, an organization with a universal vocation, which is the largest multilateral framework for addressing major global issues, including long-term development objectives and sustainable peace. At the same time, we welcome and encourage debates organized in other forums, which can stimulate new and useful ideas for action.

International peace and security have long been the foremost goal of the United Nations, ever since it was born out of the Second World War in 1945. Through peacekeeping missions, political negotiations, economic sanctions, and counter-terrorism efforts, the UN has led global efforts not only to promote peace, but also in building the security, development, and human rights institutions needed for long-term peace.

Following a review of its peace-building architecture in 2015, the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council have endorsed the new concept of Sustaining Peace. Sustaining peace focuses on the importance of having a long-term, comprehensive vision in all responses to violent conflict. It encompasses activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict and at ending the vicious cycles of lapse and relapse.

International peace and security cannot be fully achieved without paying a special attention to development. We should approach the roots of conflicts, among them poverty, lack of hope, social exclusion and climate change. Poverty could lead to despair and frustration, which are breeding grounds for extremism and violence. At the same time, peace and security – be it at international or national level – are major prerequisites for sustainable development.

The interdependence between peace-security and development was recognized within the United Nations by the adoption in 2015 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The document adopted by the heads of State or Government in September 2015 provides, in its preamble, that “there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development”.

We continue to be concerned with the lack of predictability of the security developments in Eastern Europe. The belt of frozen conflicts around the Black Sea remains a serious permanent threat to its stability, with potential spill over effects in the wider region. We are still witnessing actions undertaken at the expense of the respect for principles and norms of international law.

What we have seen in the past decade is that the proliferation and diversification of protracted conflicts in our neighbourhood hampered regional cooperation and brought mutual confidence to historically low levels.

The international community should actively support and stimulate regional cooperation and confidence-building measures to address decisively the protracted conflicts. Romania has constantly flagged the importance of strengthening cooperation of the UN with regional and sub-regional organizations. Our country promoted a first Resolution in this respect, in our capacity of non-permanent member of the Security Council in 2005.
It is worth to mention that the world’s youth are disproportionately affected by conflict, with the median age in countries where conflicts are taking place being currently below 25. In addition, youth are most commonly the targets of radicalization. Nevertheless, youth have constituted one of the groups most excluded from peace processes.

With a global population of over 1.8 billion, young people possess the ambition and ability to take on society’s greatest challenges. In the global effort to achieve both 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and sustainable peace, we consider it is imperative to engage youth as stakeholders and leaders of the process.

As an active member of the international community, Romania had in the last decade’s important contributions to the efforts of the United Nations in the area of peace and security as well as in the area of development.

Today, our country represents an important contributor to the UN peacekeeping missions. We are honoured to have been serving under the UN flag in such missions for more than 26 years, with more than 10,000 Romanian Blue Helmets (men and women).

Romanian military personnel, as well as police and gendarmerie officers have operated and are currently operating in over 20 missions around the world, from Pakistan and Mali to Angola and Haiti, amassing an invaluable field experience.

Based on this long experience, Romania would be proud to bring its contribution to the work of the Security Council. Our bid for a non-permanent seat during the tenure of 2020-2021 is about my country’s engagement in support of the UN’s efforts in ensuring peace and security; it is about unyielding and enduring commitment to peace, development and justice.

As a member of the European Union, Romania contributes to the achievement of both Sustaining Peace and Sustainable Development not only at national level, but also at international level through the support it provides to other countries through its official development assistance.

As a conclusion, we would like to share with you an important lesson we have learned from our experience: national efforts are essential to achieve sustaining peace and sustainable development. At the same time, regional integration and cooperation as an EU member State, based on shared common principles and values is also essential in this respect.

I would like to once again express my appreciation for the wonderful initiative of the Nizami Ganjavi International Center of organizing this engaging event. At the same time, it gives me great pleasure to congratulate you again for the successful event held in Baku, in April, which meant for everyone involved, organizers, speakers, experts, ambitious targets for next year’s edition. I also look forward to participating in what has become, in recent years, a landmark event – the 7th Global Baku Forum, that will take place in March 2019. Furthermore, I offer my full support for the Conference that will be organized by the Nizami Ganjavi Center in April 2019, during the Romanian Presidency of the EU Council, which will tackle interesting topics such as the 16+1 Format and the European Future of the Balkans.

I thank you for your attention and I wish you all have lively and fruitful debates!