

Statement by the President of the Republic of Latvia Dr. Vaira Vike-Freiberga on her nomination for the position of the Secretary General of the United Nations

Upon the invitation of the Governments of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, I wish to announce my candidacy for the position of the Secretary General of the United Nations.

I have made this decision with full responsibility. Today the UN is at a crossroads and faces two choices – to address the challenges of the 21st Century through the combined efforts of all member states and create effective mechanisms for taking action, or to lose its influence in the international community.

As we work together in the 21st century to better the life of all humankind, I am personally committed to strengthen human rights, democracy, freedom, including gender equality. The time has come for a woman to be taken seriously as a candidate for this prestigious position. General Assembly Resolution 51/241, adopted in 1997, requires that in the selection process due regard be given to gender equality.

With my formal decision to run for the post of UN Secretary General I wish to encourage women all over the world to continue their efforts to challenge prejudices and stereotypes. Half of humankind has never been represented at the helm of the UN. It is time to change this practice, which fails to reflect the structure of the world population. At the same time I wish to emphasize that the world cannot be divided into female and male, and we all must join together to defend human values and make the world a better place.

Central and Eastern Europe has been a grateful recipient of UN assistance over the past half a century, which helped us to return as fully fledged members to the family of nations. We highly value the support extended to us at a difficult time.

I wish to thank the Presidents, Prime Ministers and Governments of Estonia and Lithuania for their readiness to join in my nomination. This testifies to the close partnership of our countries and a common understanding of the need for UN reform. On the 15th anniversary of the renewed independence of our three countries, we wish to draw attention to the fact that as a result of historical events in the 20th Century, the Secretary General of the UN has never come from the Eastern European group. I am convinced that in the 21st Century our region is ready to share its experience with countries that face important challenges.

Since my election as President of Latvia in 1999, I have been an active and committed participant and supporter of UN initiatives by representing Latvia in the international arena. I took part in the Millennium Summit in 2000, the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in Durban in 2001, the Meeting of States Parties to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees in Geneva in 2001, the World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva in 2003 and in Tunis in 2005, and in other forums such as those held by the Council of Women World Leaders.

I highly appreciate the confidence placed in me by the UN Secretary General Mr Kofi Annan as he appointed me Special Envoy on UN Reform. Over the past two years

notable progress has been achieved – the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission have been established, yet the most difficult work is still ahead of us. We need to restore trust in the UN and we need to make the UN capable of resolving the challenges that we face in the 21st Century, including poverty, inequality, insecurity and violence. It is fundamentally important to pay more attention to the dialogue of civilizations. It is necessary to restore mutual trust among member states.

Most importantly, the member states of the UN should be able to select the best candidate for the post of Secretary General in an open, transparent process. We do not accept the principle of regional rotation as the principal and sole factor in the selection of a candidate. While I deeply respect the candidates that have already been nominated, the selection procedure should not restrict the rights and opportunities of other potential candidates. I hope that the choice made by the Security Council and the General Assembly will be based solely on the candidates' qualifications, personal qualities and vision of the future of the UN.

This world is not so small, yet it is also not so large. This is our world, which needs resolute action by individuals and states of all regions and countries of all sizes.

I wish to thank my supporters in Latvia and throughout the world.