Speech by the President of the Republic of Poland
H.E. Andrzej Duda
on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the establishment
of the United Nations Organization
New York, September 21, 2020

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Excellencies,

Esteemed Delegates,

Let me make a historical reference first. During the signing ceremony of the Charter of the United Nations in San Francisco on June 26, 1945 Artur Rubinstein, a Polish pianist of Jewish descent, one of the most outstanding piano virtuosos of the 20th century, was asked to grace the ceremony with his performance. To the surprise of many, he preceded his concert with the following words: "In this hall where the great nations gather to make a better world, I miss the flag of Poland, for which this cruel war was fought". Then he asked everyone to rise and played the Polish national anthem.

Artur Rubinstein`s stance eloquently expressed the feelings of the Polish Nation after the end of WWII. The most accurate term is a "sweet and bitter" victory. Poland was the first victim of the aggression unleashed by the German Reich and the Soviet Union in September 1939. That very moment, the attack on Poland, marked the beginning of WWII. Upon occupied Polish lands Nazi Germany built the system of mass Extermination. Though divided between her aggressors, Poland never surrendered. Its soldiers were fighting from
the very first until the very last day of that most brutal armed conflict in the history of the world, on all its fronts. Finally, we were acknowledged as a UN founding member, however the Polish flag was missing on June 26, 1945 in San Francisco. Our country did not participate in that conference. It was the case because the end of WWII did not mean full freedom to Poland. It is symbolic for Polish history that it was Joseph Stalin’s personal objection that resulted in the absence of the Polish delegation in San Francisco 75 years ago. And that precisely was so immensely painful to Artur Rubinstein.

Just like 75 years ago Poland was fighting for a world without domination of certain states over other, so it has pursued the very same goal over the last 75 years, through its active participation in the works of the United Nations Organization.

Among our obvious achievements one should include the efforts made by Rafał Lemkin aimed at sensitizing the international community to the inconceivable cruelty of the crime of genocide. Lemkin first coined the very term and then co-authored the draft UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, dated 1948.

Another significant attainment of Poland in the field of international law was the adoption by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989.
Poland was elected six times as a non-permanent member state of the UN Security Council and sat on it for a total of 11 years, last time in the period 2018-2019. In June 2017, Poland was elected to the Council with a record-high number of votes: our bid was supported by 190 states from all over the world. The main motto of our presence in the Security Council, and more broadly, within the United Nations system, is the idea of "peace through law", which is so deeply engraved in the founding act of the Organization.

It was upon the initiative of Poland and the United Kingdom that the Security Council unanimously adopted, on 20 June 2019, the first historic Resolution on Protection of Persons with Disabilities in Armed Conflicts. Likewise, upon Poland`s initiative, the UN General Assembly designated, last May, the International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief.

Currently we are continuing our mission by promoting the values we consider fundamentally important in the Human Rights Council, which we will be members of through 2022.

In all our activities in the UN forum, we are led by the rule that only international relations based on the principles and norms of international law may bring peace to the world whereas law should not only be respected but continuously perfected.
When looking at Poland's 75 years in the United Nations system, as President of the Republic of Poland, I would also like to highlight **Polish contribution to international efforts in combating climate change.** In recent years Poland has hosted UN climate conferences three times. Last time in 2018. It was precisely during COP 24 in Katowice that we adopted the Katowice Rulebook, which is a "manual", specifying how to implement the provisions of the Paris Agreement. The concept of Just Transition - i.e. striving for harmony between protection of natural environmental and climate on the one hand, and social and economic needs on the other, is also the result of COP 24.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In addition to the above mentioned political and diplomatic actions, Poland was and always is ready to implement **practical co-responsibility for the global peace.** An example of this is Poland's long-established presence in the UN peacekeeping missions. During the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly in September 2015, I declared willingness to restore Poland's participation in peace missions under the auspices of the UN. I am proud that since November 2019, a 250-person-strong Polish contingent has resumed its duties in the UNIFIL peacekeeping mission in Lebanon. The return to the peacekeeping missions, as well as activities in the UN forum over the last decades, constitute Poland's direct contribution to the maintenance of peace and security.
In 1995, while speaking at the UN HQ, my great compatriot, Pope John Paul II, said: "Fifty years after the end of the Second World War, it is important to remember that war was fought because of violations of the rights of nations", and "the Charter`s commitment to save future generations from the scourge of war surely implied a moral commitment to defend every nation and culture from unjust and violent aggression".

Today, as I mentioned, Poland continues the mission of protecting peace through law. We act in this way because we firmly believe in the feasibility of the peaceful coexistence of states. We believe that what gives hope to the world is cooperation and the community of free nations and equal states, and not a confrontation, imperialism and the concert of powers.

Today, the flag of the Republic of Poland - a free and sovereign state - proudly flutters in front of the UN Headquarters in New York. May it remain so forever.