



## **OPENING STATEMENT**

**by**

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and International Cooperation**

**of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

**8<sup>th</sup> Budapest Human Rights Forum**

**Budapest, 12 November 2015**

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Distinguished Participants,

Dear Guests,

I have the honour and pleasure to welcome you at the Budapest Human Rights Forum, organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary for the 8<sup>th</sup> occasion since 2008. I am particularly pleased to note that over the past years, the Forum has become an internationally recognized event and, as such, a signature initiative in Europe bringing together human rights experts of international organizations, governments, civil society and academia.

This conference follows the traditions of the previous years; its basic objective is to disseminate information, raise awareness through common reflection and dialogue, exchange of ideas and best practices on topical thematic human rights issues.

This year we are celebrating the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations Organisation. Anniversaries are perfect occasions to take stock of the results achieved, the lessons learnt and the challenges ahead of us, as well as to explore new horizons and new directions we are heading for; “we” means us - members of the international community and our collective and individual contributions and efforts to advance humankind and to transform our world for the better. In this context the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN could not have been better marked by such a substantial and symbolic act as the adoption of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.

Hungary is strongly attached to the founding principles of the UN and we believe in the indivisible trinity of peace and security, economic and social development, human rights and democracy. As a former co-chair of the UN Open Working Group on sustainable development goals Hungary consequently promoted and supported the efforts aimed at giving due reflection to this approach in the new development framework. We are proud of the result: the adopted 2030 Agenda and the sustainable development goals include, in a cross-cutting manner, solid human rights dimensions, as well.

In this respect, I am confident, we are all fully sharing the vision contained in the Declaration adopting this important document - according to which “*We envisage a world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination; of respect for race, ethnicity and cultural diversity; and of equal opportunity permitting the full realization of human potential and contributing to shared prosperity. A world which invests in its children and in which every child grows up free from violence and exploitation. A world in which every woman and girl enjoys full gender equality and all legal, social and economic barriers to their empowerment have been removed. A just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met.*”

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The preceding quotation might also be the motto of our Forum, as all the topics to be discussed have strong relevance. The four panels of the Forum will focus accordingly on the important role of the *Universal Periodic Review* in the promotion of universal respect for human rights and human dignity; on the interconnection of *Business and human rights* in view of a just, equitable, and socially inclusive world, on the *minority media and minorities in the media* to promote the respect for race, ethnicity and cultural diversity, and last but not least on the overall human rights dimensions of the adopted *2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development*.

*In the first panel*, we will have an exchange on UPR, as one of the major improvements of the UN human rights system. Since its establishment the Universal Periodic Review has been proved as a unique process taking stock of human rights records of all UN member states with the aim to improve their human rights situation. The overall positive experiences of the UPR mechanism are, however, contested by some shortcomings, such as using it as platform of expression of political interests or parallelisms with other human rights mechanisms, like reporting to different treaty bodies, regarding national implementation of human rights norms and obligations. In the course of Hungary’s preparation for its second cycle UPR, taking place in May 2016, the debate and the exchange of visions and best practices on this question will be of special interest and relevance.

*The second panel* will be devoted to the challenging issue of Business and Human Rights. One of the most important human rights contests of the upcoming years is how to define means and methods of the practical implementation of the United Nations' "Protect, Respect and Remedy" Framework with particular regard to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights adopted in 2011, and the possibility of elaboration of a new, legally binding international instrument in this domain. The panel will address the state of play of initiatives by different international and regional organizations, in particular the European Union, as well as share best practices by national and other stakeholders.

On the second day of the Forum, minority media and minorities in the media, linguistic and cultural autonomy will be discussed *in the third panel*. Based on Hungary's longstanding commitment to promote the rights of minorities, minority issues constitute a specific and permanent element of the agenda of the Budapest Human Rights Forums. This topic has particular relevance in the context of the new media platforms of the digital age and was also examined in a recent thematic report at the 28<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council this year, edited and submitted by Rita Izsák UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, who joins us at this occasion. The aim of this panel is to discuss the role both of the mainstream and the minority media in the protection and promotion of the rights of minorities as well as how this role could be further strengthened.

*The fourth panel* will focus on the human rights dimensions of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. The debate will be the continuation of the discussion engaged in the course of the previous Forums, in which we have followed the process of streamlining human rights in the Sustainable Development Goals during the different phases of their shaping. After the adoption of the 2030 Agenda at the 70<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly last September in New York, the panel debate will be one of the first occasions to analyse the lessons learnt of the negotiation process and the concrete human rights elements of the new development agenda.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman,

As I remarked at the beginning, anniversaries present perfect occasions also to take a look at the future. From national perspective, the next year will be full of human rights challenges and opportunities for Hungary. I have already mentioned the second cycle UPR for Hungary,

to which we have to prepare, submit and present our national report, and which constitutes a demanding exercise for the whole State Administration and the stakeholders due to the deep and comprehensive transformations in Hungary's legal and institutional systems since its last Universal Periodic Review in 2011. It is worth noting, that preparations thereto are coordinated by the Government's inter-ministerial Working Group on Human Rights established in 2012 upon accepted recommendations at Hungary's first review.

Following Hungary's successful and active first Human Rights Council's membership in 2009-2012 we decided to submit our candidacy to the Council for the period of 2017-2019. The elections will take place next year and we have started our campaign guided by the belief that Hungary offers a meaningful contribution to the work of the most important human rights body of the United Nations. Here, I would like to note, that one of our voluntary pledges is the continuation of organising and hosting the annual Budapest Human Rights Forums, as one of our long-term human rights engagements.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

During its more than millenary statehood Hungary, being in the heart of Europe, has always been at the crossroads of all kind of migratory movements, from all directions - let me just refer to the Roma, German, Serbian, Slovak, Armenian, Greek and other national and ethnic minorities settled in Hungary as a result of such migrations and population displacements. We have rich historical experience of welcoming and accommodating migrants and refugees, but the current migration crisis - in its magnitude regarding both the number of people on the move, and its economic, social, cultural and security dimensions - has been the first since long generations that we, Hungarians, Europe and the World as a whole have to face.

Let me underline that contrary to widespread allegations Hungary provides all assistance and protection to refugees and asylum seekers who are in need, who cooperate with its authorities and respect international and national legal provisions and procedures. Protective fences on Hungary's southern green borders were erected with the unique aim to prevent massive illegal border-crossings in these zones and to impel migrants to use official border crossing points. Contrary to allegations, Hungary maintains an open border policy through these designated crossing points where those who wish can submit asylum application in conformity with the 1951 Geneva Convention. All refugee camps in Hungary are able to accommodate and to take

care of both migrants with families and individual applicants, including unaccompanied minors.

While the suffering and the plight of refugees and migrants cry for compassion and sympathy, we are facing and dealing with an unprecedented mass migratory movement to which the international community, including the European Union, has not been prepared, and has been unable to respond in an effective, consistent and collective manner so far. While admitting that some steps and actions taken by our Government in the context of an unprecedented situation might be contestable - and we are ready to face criticism even by those who are taking similar steps and actions right now -, we firmly refuse summary statements and allegations accusing the Hungarian authorities of non-compliance with Hungary's international obligations regarding the reception and treatment of refugees and asylum seekers.

2016 will be a commemorative year for Hungary as we will celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1956 Revolution and fight for independence. In this context let me comment on those declarations and allegations, which are forging amalgams and drawing parallels between the exodus of two hundred thousand Hungarians in the aftermath of the defeated revolution and the current migrant crisis. While amalgams and parallels of profoundly different historical and geopolitical situations are misleading, I believe Hungarian refugees of 1956 showed the right example to the world of today. At that time, Hungarians asked for asylum in the immediate neighbouring safe countries, they were cooperative and grateful for the help and assistance provided. They complied with all rules and regulations, went through the registration processes, and orderly waited for months or in some cases for years, for a decision and eventual further relocation to other countries. They were respectful towards the societies that welcomed them. If one opts for comparisons, very similar situation occurred in the '90s when Hungary, as a safe neighbouring country, sheltered tens of thousands of refugees fleeing from the territories of the former Yugoslavia. The Hungarian people did assist and comfort refugees as they do today.

Migration is one of the major contemporary global challenges affecting human lives and societies as a whole that require global responses, responsible, sustainable and fair solutions. Hungary wants resolutely to be part of these solutions in order to meet one of the goals of sustainable development as set in the 2030 Agenda: "facilitate orderly, safe, regular and

responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies”.

Excellencies,

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Dear Guests,

While discussing various important issues in the four panels, I hope that basic rules and traditions of this Forum will be respected, namely the equality, thus the equal treatment of and respect for all human beings and all nations, as well the Chatham House rules: participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed or publicly referred to.

As a final key-note message, I wish to express my gratitude to our special guests, moderators and panellists, who kindly accepted our invitation and travelled to Budapest and who will ensure the high quality of the debates. I thank you all for your participation, your dedication, your contribution and wish you a fruitful and useful deliberation.

Thanking you for your kind attention, I am pleased to open the 8<sup>th</sup> Budapest Human Rights Forum!