



PRÍHOVOR PREZIDENTA SR
na Samite budúcnosti

New York, 23. 9. 2024

Mr President, Mr Secretary-General,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

By the next year, 80 years will have passed since the Bretton Woods Conference, which changed the way of global governance.

We know that what used to take centuries or even millennia, now takes decades or even years. Devices that fit in our pockets are much more powerful than room-sized computers – not so very long ago. The data shows that technological advancements have transformed our society at an unprecedented rate. In plain speech – many changes come more often and much faster than in the past.

On the other hand – despite all these evolution leaps – we are also living in a world with an unprecedented amount of conflicts and increasing humanitarian law breaches. We see the highest-ever refugee numbers and growing climate change impacts – such as drinking water shortages, droughts, pandemics, poverty and famine.

At the top of all of this, we regret to see a situation of strong polarisation at the UN Security Council. What was considered best-in-class for most industries ten years ago is now slower than the average. If this applies to business and our day-to-day lives, why wouldn't it apply to politics and international cooperation? We can afford no more senseless exchanges anymore as we did in the yes-or-no debate on climate change. We need to reflect on facts instead of denying them.

One of the most important – and also most underestimated – positive features of our time is extensive data collection. Compared to the past – it gives us the power to scrutinize and explore the nature of what is going on around us. A view based on facts and scientific data to adjust our decisions and adapt our plans. Regardless of all the gloomy and doom scenarios, the rising AI technology – the next greatest change of our time – may actually help us here.

The flip side of today's robust information flow is the spread of disinformation and lies. This brings us to another key element that we have to integrate into our policies. The fact that our 'real' world long includes its online version too.

Our lives are increasingly transferred to the digital space. Our digital identities and their protection become equally important as our physical identities. We need to create conditions of what I call 'digital humanism' – defining the rights and obligations of the virtual world. And – equally important – tools for their effective enforcement. We need to ensure that the rules of the online world mirror the ones of the physical one. Online threats and dangers aren't less real than their 'offline' versions. And we can't be more benevolent to online trespasses and more lenient to their trespassers.

Expressing opinions in digital space shouldn't be restricted. But it should be guided by similar principles as in our real world – full responsibility and clear identity – shaping people's conduct towards more responsible digital behaviour.

Let's not confuse such rules with harm to the freedom of speech. Every freedom requires accountability. This is often missing in the digital world. Some don't realize that

words and deeds in the virtual world can be even more destructive than those from the physical one because they can easily reach a much broader audience.

We don't know what the future holds for us. But what we do know is that the pace of change will not get any slower. What we also know is that education, inclusion, investing in the youth, and reducing the digital divide play a vital role in bracing for our digital future. We don't get to choose in which part of the world we're born. Everyone deserves an equal starting line when it comes to digital technologies.

Today, they play a huge role in the access to information and creating conditions for higher economic growth and fairer social conditions – the way to a better life. Access to digital tools shouldn't be determined only by money – but by individual skills and talents. As in sports, the fair-play concept should equally apply to education or a chance to run a business.

Living in a digital world also means life-long learning. I'm in my fifties and I have a positive attitude to technology but I have to be constantly ready to learn new skills to keep up with the extremely fast progress of today's technologies.

Change and adaptability will stay the only constant we need to focus on. We need to wisely choose our infrastructure for the future. Rich data collection and analysis – not intuition, bias or prejudice – should primarily shape our policies. We are on a steady road to an increasingly unstable world full of repeated crises. The global challenges humanity faces are urgent and complex and so must be our decision-making. Of course, a stronger, more effective and reformed multilateral system would be great. However, we can also manage with institutions and mechanisms that we already have in place for almost eight decades.

We need to invest more in practical and result-oriented cooperation. This is also a way to reduce the mistrust among UN members and institutions. Slovakia as one of the co-founders of the UN system is – and remains – a long-term and consistent advocate of multilateralism and international cooperation. We therefore fully support the agreed Pact for the Future and its annexes – the Global Digital Compact and the Declaration on Future Generations. My gratitude to the co-facilitators for their work and also to the Secretary-General for his vision that guided and shaped this Summit.

I consider the Pact for the Future a stepping-stone of adaptation, not the end of the journey. There are many tasks ahead. We need to work hard on sustainable development goals towards our 2030 Agenda ambitions. We need to adapt to new technologies.

We also need to foster peace, collective security and conflict prevention. And we have to promote human rights protection, intergenerational solidarity and – above all – the solidarity towards our future generations. We have committed to look out for their health and welfare as well as their needs and wishes.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The best way how to work for a better future for all is to strongly focus and pay enough and proper attention to NOW as well as make sure that whatever we do, we do the best we can.

Thank you.