

CONTINUITY AND DISCONTINUITY
IN MULTILATERAL DIPLOMACY

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Preliminary observations

The celebration of the Centenary of the Great Union of Romania offers an appropriate opportunity to scrutinize Romanian contributions in the field of multilateral diplomacy and their impact on current international relations. In this regard a significant source of inspiration and documentation in English is already available. It is a massive volume of 704 pages compiled by Ion C. Popescu and published in 2017 by Uranus Publishing House in Bucharest under the title *Romania at the United Nations General Assembly*.

As a pioneer work, the first ever published collection of statements delivered by Romanian representatives in the general deliberations of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), acting as the plenary forum of the world organization, as well as of the initiatives advanced by Romania in the “parliament of nations” has for many reasons an obvious practical and far-reaching purpose.

This vast collection of texts brings together in absolute premiere in English language official documents reflecting the most significant positions expressed by Romania in the UNGA – the principal organ of the United Nations representing all member states of this world institution.¹

The presence of Romania in the UNGA has to be positioned in the proper political, diplomatic and legal environment offered by this principal body of the universal organization.²

From an academic perspective, Ion C. Popescu’s book deserves to be welcomed and examined in the light of the contemporary complex role of international

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¹ The first elaborate monograph on the UNGA is made by Sydney D. Bailey, *The General Assembly of the United Nations: A Study of Procedure and Practice*, Greenwood Press, 1978, 374 p. A more recent book is signed by M. J. Peterson, *The UN General Assembly*, New York, Routledge, 2006, 160 p. In this book the UNGA is described as a “proto-world parliament”, p. 3. See also *Essays*, UK (November 2013). *Multilateral Diplomacy: The Preferred Path?*. Retrieved from <https://www.ukessays.com/essays/politics/is-multilateral-diplomacy-the-preferred-path-politics-essay.php?vref=1>.

² See for details *The Oxford Handbook on the United Nations* by Thomas G. Weiss and Sam Daws (editors), Oxford University Press, 2009, 848 p.

organizations³ in which multilateral diplomacy in action can be seen in clear terms of continuity and discontinuity.

The President of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Miroslav Lajčák, in an interview given to the Thai daily *The Nation* and published on May 29, 2018, reminded that “What makes up the UNGA are five regional groups and it is up to each member state, whether small or big countries, to propose initiatives and present ideas to be agreed upon so that a formal approach can be launched and supported.”⁴

While dealing with a volume dedicated to UNGA which offers a most comprehensive image of a great chapter of Romania’s participation, with ideas and initiatives, in the complex process of multilateral diplomacy, a few preliminary observations have to be formulated.

Simply stated, securing *continuity in multilateral diplomacy at the UN* means that a new member of the world organization can go its own way at its own pace not only with its regular activities but also with the clear understanding that it keeps permanently in its hands the baton of initiatives advanced over the years at the United Nations.

In the overwhelming majority of cases this interpretation of continuity is illustrated by the actual conduct of member states which beyond major changes in their foreign policy continue to keep on the agenda their own initiatives and act for their further development and finalization.

At the same time, it is not possible to ignore the extent to which major changes at the domestic level and in the world may lead to fundamental discontinuities in multilateral diplomacy. In exceptional cases such changes may leave the underlying diplomatic geometry of some countries in *status quo* in special situations where it is unclear, following important national events, if the coordinates of foreign policy remain traditionally the same.

History shows also that abrupt discontinuities in multilateral diplomacy may occur when a new political regime comes to power and decides to separate itself from the old regime by repudiating, rejecting or just ignoring past initiatives, irrespective of their significance, real value or promising support already gained from the world community of nations.

However, history shows that at the UN some valuable diplomatic initiatives, with universal resonance, have reasonable chances to be continued and developed, even when their original sponsors refuse or abstain to be directly further involved in their promotion.

An attentive analysis of some Romanian initiatives actively promoted before 1990 offers interesting evidence of this original practice in the field of multilateral diplomacy at the UN. In this regard, we will refer to a minimum number of examples illustrating continuity in the multilateral diplomatic process.

³ See *The Oxford Handbook of International Organizations* (1st Edition) by Jacob Katz Cogan, Ian Hurd, Ian Johnstone (editors), Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 764-772.

⁴ See *The Nation*, Bangkok, May 29, 2018. Also, *Statement* by Miroslav Lajčák, President of the 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly, at Seventy-fourth session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, “Inequality in the Era of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, document available at <https://www.un.org/pga/72/statements/page/4/>.

Sustainable ideas and initiatives

In a most prestigious textbook entitled “Bowett’s Law of International Institutions” published in London in 2009 and used by students worldwide there are many interesting assessments which help to understand the real significance of the participation of the United Nations member states in an organization in which the whole community of nations is represented and becomes a unique laboratory in which individual diplomatic initiatives of member states pass through a critical collective process of examination before becoming a common good after their approval, in particular when decisions to that effect are taken by consensus. Romania was one of the most active promoters of initiatives in this original laboratory.

The above-mentioned textbook reminds that in 2005 world leaders reaffirmed the central position of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations, as well as the role of the Assembly in the process of standard-setting and codification of international law. This organ reflects the extent to which the United Nations has become universal and the “world forum“, serving as an effective sounding-board for world opinion.⁵ Romania joined the consensus on this significant assessment.

The most recent academic evaluations, from the perspective of multilateral diplomacy, reveal that the UNGA is the arena where all its members are equally represented according to a one-state, one-vote formula. It is the institution’s hub, with an impressive agenda and a permanent responsibility for coordinating and supervising all its subsidiary bodies, but with real legal power only to adopt recommendations addressed to its members, except on internal matters, such as elections and the budget, where it has exclusive mandatory competence.

In many ways, it is rightly considered that the UNGA comes closer than any other international unit to embodying what today is often called the “international community.” Over time and with the growth of UN membership from 51 in 1945 to 193 in 2018, the number of items on the Assembly’s agenda has increased from 46 in 1946 to more than 150 in recent years, not counting a multitude of sub-items.

There is no doubt that what can be considered as visible politics within the UNGA has generally mirrored world politics. UNGA offers the place to set year by year the agendas of world politics, to get ideas, proposals, initiatives which may be endorsed or condemned, to have actions approved or rejected. Any state has the right to propose an agenda item, and in this regard the Assembly has been an especially valued instrument of small and medium-sized developing countries.⁶

The most recent events reconfirm these assessments. On 19 June 2018, in *Lectio Prima* given by Miroslav Lajčák, President of the 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly, at Presentation of Doctor Honoris Causa from the National School of Political Science and Public Administration in Bucharest we can find a convincing diplomatic and practical definition of the UNGA.

Miroslav Lajčák characterized the UNGA as “the most *legitimate and most representative institution* in the world. It is a place where all 193 countries – UN member states – can sit and meet. Power, size and wealth are left at the door.

⁵ See *Bowett’s Law of International Institutions*, London, Sweet&Maxwell, 2009, pp. 25-26.

⁶ See note 5 *supra*.

They cannot buy you a seat. And they will not give you more time on the microphone. And, the General Assembly can – quite literally – deal with any issue on the world’s agenda“ (italics in the original).⁷

It is in this context that we have to situate the statements made year by year by the ministers of foreign affairs and other political leaders of Romania from the rostrum of the UNGA, as well as the resolutions adopted by it on the basis of Romanian initiatives.

The complex diplomatic profile of an active UN member state like Romania cannot be researched and understood without careful exploration of the positions expressed over the years/decades by a country in the UN plenary forum which is not a simply “talking shop”, as wrongly described by detractors of the world institution.

The frequent references to the UN Charter in Romanian statements and resolutions reflect consistently and not incidentally the official UN vocabulary used in the consideration of all items on the agenda of the UNGA’s sessions, where Romania’s voice has been heard without interruption for 63 years.

A careful reading of 69 statements contained in the volume compiled by I. C. Popescu and of the initiatives presented in annex 6 reveals the absolute priority given by Romania to the firm assertion, promotion and respect of the fundamental principles of international law in the conduct of all states on the international arena, in conformity with the UN Charter.

It can be said without any risk of exaggerating that the relentless repetition and affirmation of these principles lead to the clear conclusion that they are viewed as an integral component of the spiritual, political, diplomatic and legal patrimony of the Romanian state’s thought and conduct in world affairs.

It will take years and the predictable publication in different countries of collections of documents similar to the volume under consideration in order to be able to highlight to its full extent the fact that Romania was truly a dynamic and constructive presence at the United Nations – a reality clearly demonstrated by an impressive number of initiatives advanced by it, in particular during the period 1965-1989.

It could be even anticipated that researchers would discover and reveal that, compared to other countries, Romania is in an unique position not only by the number of initiatives promoted at the United Nations, by special items registered on the agenda of the world organization, or by many resolutions submitted in a wide international co-sponsorship, but highly significantly by the sustainability and undeniable topicality of some ideas and concepts that continue to fertilize today the diplomatic dialogue at the UN.

This finding is of capital significance, whereas at present, Romanian membership in the European Union leaves no chance to Romanian state to come alone at the UN with strictly individual initiatives. According to current practice, any potential initiative has to be first coordinated and agreed upon with members of this regional institution before being presented to the UN.⁸

⁷ The full document is available at <https://www.un.org/pga/72/2018/06/19/presentation-of-doctor-honoriscausa/>.

⁸ For a serious critical analysis of these issues see Bogdan J. Goralczyk (editor), *European Union. The Global Scene: United or Irrelevant?*, Centre for Europe, University of Warsaw, 2015, 279 p. See also Dimitrios Bourantonis (Editor), Spyros Blavoukos (editor), *The EU in UN Politics: Actors, Processes and Performance* (Palgrave Studies in European Union Politics), London, Palgrave Macmillan, 1st ed. 2017, 308 p.

A political and diplomatic major aspect which is yet unexplored, but which appears strikingly obvious from relevant documents contained in the volume published by I. C. Popescu, is the fact that some ideas and proposals formulated for the first time in the statements of Romanian speakers in the plenary of the UNGA before 1990 have become later a source of inspiration for some resolutions and reports initiated by other countries without having Romania as co-author, in spite of the real authorship and origin of ideas stimulating a number of specific initiatives successfully promoted by other member states.

We offer below a few illustrative examples in this regard, selecting them from some Romanian statements which are remarkable by their content and *undeniable topicality*. To understand the originality of the Romanian general approach to the United Nations it is useful to remind some significant assertions made by the heads of Romanian diplomacy which provide a useful reminder of the historical context in which Romania envisaged her participation in the process of multilateral diplomacy.

On 19 September 1967, speaking on Agenda item 4, Election of the President, Corneliu Manescu, President of the General Assembly, said: “Over the centuries and through painful trials, the Romanian people to which I belong has acquired virtues which guarantee the preservation of its national genius, the maintenance of its unity and its independence, the basic premises for its free development. It has known the sufferings of war and the blessings of peace, the bitterness of servitude and dependence as well as the joy of being master in its own house. From such trials it has learnt the invaluable lesson that to command respect one must show respect, and that the surest way to ensure the application of the rules of international life is for everyone to observe those rules strictly with regard to others” (p. 218 of the book under consideration).⁹

In another statement by Corneliu Manescu, speaking as Minister for Foreign Affairs, delivered on 6 October 1971, we can read: “The natural concern of the young generation to see peace, equity and justice reign in the world of tomorrow makes it a trusty ally in promoting the noble purposes and principles of the Charter. The United Nations, the specialized agencies, and the whole international community are called upon to make their contribution to the education of youth in the spirit of high humanistic ideals of peace, understanding and friendship among peoples, to its training and participation in creative activities; they should see to it that young people are enabled to participate fully in building the society in which will have to live. It is our opinion that the United Nations should periodically organize meetings on problems peculiar to youth, solemnly proclaim the rights of youth, and consider how the Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples [resolution 2037 (XX)]’, adopted upon the initiative of Romania and of other States, is being carried out” (p. 272 of the book under consideration).

⁹ See in this regard the volume *Corneliu Manescu Ministrul de Externe al Romaniei. Presedinte al Adunarii Generale a ONU. Sesiunea a XXII-a 19 septembrie 1967 – 23 septembrie 1968. Documente*. Editors Nicolae Ecobescu, Paraschiva Badescu, Fundatia Europeana Titulescu, Bucharest, 2017, 541 p.

These words pronounced by the head of Romanian diplomacy proved to be prophetic. On December 18, 2009, on the proposal of the Group of 77 and China (134 countries) the UNGA adopted a resolution by which decided to proclaim the year commencing on 12 August 2010 the International Year of Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding. In the same resolution the above-mentioned Declaration initiated by Romania is fully recognized and in a separate preambular paragraph it is reminded that it is necessary to disseminate among young people the ideals of peace, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, solidarity and dedication to the objectives of progress and development.¹⁰

Reflecting a critical and realistic assessment of the functioning of the world organization, in the statement by George Macovescu, Minister for Foreign Affairs, delivered on 26 September 1975, it is reminded that “some provisions of the Charter and many resolutions adopted by the United Nations have remained a dead letter. In spite of the authority conferred upon it by the Charter, the United Nations has been unable to prevent conflict, bloodshed and war, and, in many cases, owing both to objective and subjective circumstances has taken no action whatsoever... Taking account of those facts...the Romanian Government in 1972 took the initiative of proposing for inclusion in the agenda an item especially devoted to strengthening the role of the United Nations in international life. The debates on this item, as well as the resolutions adopted by consensus – the result of the co-operation of a large number of States – demonstrated the necessity and the possibility of transforming the United Nations into a vigorous Organization capable of supporting with all its authority the independence and sovereignty of States and the right of each people to decide its own destiny and to make a greater contribution to the consolidation of peace and security” (pp. 312-313 of the book under consideration).

Life itself demonstrated the high topicality of the Romanian initiative. To limit ourselves to the most recent example, it should be reminded that on December 13, 2016 the UNGA adopted a resolution by which it recalled its resolution 3499 (XXX) of 15 December 1975, by which it established the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization, and all its other relevant resolutions adopted at subsequent sessions, thus illustrating the continuity of Romanian initiatives in the field.¹¹

On 1 October 1976, George Macovescu stated: “We are happy that, thanks to the initiative of the Romanian Government in 1972, we have been able to contribute to the initiation of a process meant to strengthen the Organization. We believe that the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization has done useful work, but it is necessary for that Committee fully to carry out the mandate entrusted to it. In our opinion, it should make great efforts-possibly through a more precise mandate-so that it might become a real laboratory in which generally acceptable solutions and

¹⁰ See the full text of the resolution at http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/64/134.

¹¹ The text of the resolution is available at http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/71/146.

measures aimed at raising United Nations activities to a higher level could be prepared” (pp. 324-325 of the book under consideration).

40 years later, in 2016, the UNGA requested the Special Committee “to continue its consideration of all proposals concerning the question of the maintenance of international peace and security in all its aspects in order to strengthen the role of the United Nations and, in this context, to consider other proposals relating to the maintenance of international peace and security already submitted or which may be submitted to the Special Committee at its session in 2017, including strengthening the relationship and cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations or arrangements in the peaceful settlement of disputes”.¹²

Returning to the perennial issue of the younger generation, on 24 September 1981, Stefan Andrei, Minister for Foreign Affairs, stated: “Romania believes that particular attention should be paid to the growing concern of the United Nations about the problems of young people in the light of their role in the life of modern society and in determining the future of civilization in tomorrow’s world. It is imperative that young people in all countries should be guaranteed the right to education and the right to work so that they can use their knowledge in activities useful to society, as well as the right to play a full part in the social and political life of their countries. The Organization and all Governments have a duty to educate the youth of the world in the spirit of the ideals of freedom and social justice, friendship and mutual respect and of the common struggle for the cause of peace and progress, and at the same time to protect the younger generations from the adverse influence of neo-Fascist and racist circles and the degrading impact of what have become full-scale enterprises of the subculture, propagating and fomenting hatred and violence.

The Romanian Government therefore feels that the period of preparation for the International Youth Year, to be held in 1985, should be used for stepping up the efforts of Governments to solve the specific problems of the younger generation. In this regard, we believe that the draft programme of measures and activities drawn up by the Advisory Committee for the International Youth Year [see A/36/215, annex, sect. IV, part & annex to decision 1 (I)] is comprehensive and represents a real strategy for contributing to the identification and solution of the fundamental problems which are of concern today to the younger generation, and for exploiting its creative potential” (p. 385 of the book under consideration).

Elaborating further on youth issues, in the Statement by Stefan Andrei delivered on 27 September 1985 it is asserted that: “Youth now represents an enormous social force for progress. Youth and peace which must resolutely have it say on all the major topics of international life. The young must above all act in close unity, side by side with their peoples and with the advanced democratic forces in the world, to curb the arms race and to achieve disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, in order to protect and strengthen peace. As builders of tomorrow’s world, the young are deeply interested in participating actively and responsibly in the discussion and solution of all problems upon which their future peace, progress

¹² The quotation is from the UNGA resolution mentioned in note 8 *supra*.

and well-being depend. Questions dealing with the removal of social injustices, with the guarantee of fundamental rights to work, training, culture and education... Romania greatly appreciates the proclamation by the United Nations of International Youth Year, under the motto "Participation, Development, Peace". It is an event of deep significance for the present and for the future of the younger generation in the world. We must act in such a way that International Youth Year will be an important factor in uniting young people of the whole world to defend and exercise their fundamental right to create a free and happy life for themselves and to develop in a climate of true security, co-operation and peace" (p. 427 of the book under consideration).

As far as youth and peace are concerned it should be recalled that the UN interest for this issue has not stopped in 1985, but it has increased considerably over the years to such an extent that in 2015, for the first time in history, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted a comprehensive resolution on the matter. In the first operative paragraph of this resolution the Security Council "Urges Member States to consider ways to increase inclusive representation of youth in decision-making at all levels in local, national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflict, including institutions and mechanisms to counter violent extremism, which can be conducive to terrorism, and, as appropriate, to consider establishing integrated mechanisms for meaningful participation of youth in peace processes and dispute-resolution".¹³

Dealing with other major youth issues, in February 2017 the New York session of the UN Commission for Social Development adopted by consensus a comprehensive resolution (19 operative paragraphs) entitled "Policies and programmes involving youth".

This document recalled the UN General Assembly resolution of 25 September 2015 entitled "*Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*" which for the first-time recognized children and youth as agents of change.

The achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals incorporated in the 2030 Agenda requires the full and effective participation of youth, youth-led and youth-focused organizations at the local, national, regional and global levels.

In the light of this requirement, all states are encouraged *inter alia* to develop appropriate policies, programmes and action plans focused on the best interests of youth, particularly the poor and those who are vulnerable or marginalized, and to address all aspects of youth development, in line with the World Programme of Action for Youth and to realize the opportunity afforded by the demographic dividend of the largest number of young people ever in the history of humankind.¹⁴

The consolidation of international cooperation in the field of youth, capacity-building, the enhancement of dialogue, mutual understanding and the active participation of young people are crucial elements in efforts towards implementation of 2030 Agenda.

¹³ The full text of the resolution is available at [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2250\(2015\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2250(2015)).

¹⁴ See the relevant 2017 report and resolution of the UN Commission for Social development available at <http://undocs.org/E/CN.5/2017/L.4>.

While dealing with the eternal problem of conflict resolution, in the statement by Stefan Andrei delivered on 27 September 1985 it was reminded that Romania continues to attach the greatest importance to improving the machinery of the United Nations in terms of the peaceful settlement of disputes within the possibilities provided by the United Nations Charter. Romania has put forward, in the spirit of the Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes adopted by the General Assembly in 1982, the proposal to establish within the United Nations a commission for good offices, mediation and conciliation (p. 428 of the book under consideration).

That proposal was adopted by consensus by UNGA in December 1989.

In March 2017, the Special Committee on UN Charter and on the Strengthening of the role of the Organization dealt *inter alia* with the proposal of updating the *Handbook on the Peaceful Settlement of Disputes between States* in which the Romanian proposal adopted in 1989 is mentioned and establishing a website related thereto; and on the proposal submitted in 2015 by Iran, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, on peaceful settlement of disputes and its impact on the maintenance of peace. The latter proposal by the Movement included a paragraph by which the UNGA would decide that the Committee would hold an annual debate to discuss the means for settling disputes. The UNGA would invite member states to focus their comments during the next Special Committee session in 2018 on the subtopic titled “Exchange of information on State practices regarding the use of negotiation and enquiry”, while ensuring that the other means of peaceful settlement of disputes be discussed in subsequent sessions.¹⁵

Many other global issues and concerns can be detected in Romanian statements from the UNGA’s rostrum. In the statement by Ioan Totu, Minister for Foreign Affairs, delivered on 30 September 1988 it was requested to include a new item on the UNGA’s agenda, entitled “Responsibility of States to ban in their territory, and to refrain from instigating or supporting in the territory of other States, chauvinistic, racist and other manifestations that may cause discord between peoples and involvement of Governments and the mass-media in combating such manifestations and in educating peoples and youth in the spirit of peaceful co-operation and international entente, and evaluation of the implementation of the Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples” (pp. 446-447 of the book under consideration).

The topicality of this initiative whose promotion and finalization, due to its magnitude, went beyond the diplomatic capacity of the Romanian delegations at the UNGA’s session was nevertheless demonstrated by many resolutions on similar matters recently adopted by the world plenary forum. We evoke just one persuasive example. In 2016 the UNGA adopted a resolution by which “Expresses concern that the number of incidents of religious intolerance, discrimination and related violence, as well as of negative stereotyping of individuals on the basis of religion or belief, continues to rise around the world, which may have serious

¹⁵ A summary of debates on these issues can be consulted at <https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/I3270.doc.htm>.

implications at the national, regional and international levels, condemns, in this context, any advocacy of religious hatred against individuals that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, and urges States to take effective measures, as set forth in the present resolution and consistent with their obligations under international human rights law, to address and combat such incidents.”¹⁶

Anticipating serious concerns which have led to the negotiation and adoption of the 2030 Agenda, in 1988, Romania requested the inclusion on the UNGA’s agenda of a special item entitled “Responsibility of States for the protection of the environment and prevention of environmental pollution as a result of the accumulation of toxic and radioactive wastes and strengthening of international co-operation for the purpose of resolving the problem“ (p. 447 of the book under consideration).

This initiative while not further developed by Romanian delegations has been positively analyzed in an academic book entitled “International Organizations and the Law of the Sea: Documentary Yearbook, 1988 (International Organizations and the Law of the Sea) published on October 22, 1990 by Netherlands Institute for the Law of the Sea Staff.¹⁷

A special case in Romania’s relations with small and medium-sized countries is the joint presentation of a resolution on the right to education, – a collective initiative initiated in 1979 and materialized in a first stage by the adoption by the UN General Assembly of resolution 34/170 (38) The list of co-authors included the following countries: Algeria, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Benin, Bolivia, Burundi, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Indonesia, Ivory Coast, Jordan, Liberia, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritania, Morocco, Pakistan, Senegal, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Upper Volta, Yemen and Yugoslavia.¹⁸

The resolution was well received and determined a series of useful consultations with the UNESCO Secretariat for the elaboration of a special report and promised a creative and fertile approach to a fundamental human right. By the first operative paragraph of the resolution the General Assembly invited “all States to consider the adoption of appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures, including material guarantees, in order to ensure the full implementation of the right to universal education through, *inter alia*, free and compulsory primary education, universal and gradually free-of-charge secondary education, equal access to all educational facilities and the access of the young generation to science and culture”.

By the second paragraph, the General Assembly appealed to “all states, in particular to the developed countries, actively to support through fellowships

¹⁶ The title of the resolution adopted by the UNGA on 19 December 2016 is: *Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief*. For its full text see http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/71/195.

¹⁷ Detailed information about this book is available at https://www.amazon.com/International-Organizations-Law-Sea-Documentary/dp/1853334553/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1489046677&sr=1-1&keywords=9781853334559.

¹⁸ The co-authors list is taken from the *Yearbook of the United Nations, 1979*, available at <http://yearbook.un.org/> See Section Two: Economic and Social Questions: XIX. HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS.

and other means the efforts of the developing countries in the education and training of national personnel needed in industry, agriculture and other economic and social sectors”.¹⁹

Although this initiative continued successfully in the years 1980-1981, it was unilaterally stopped by a decision of a member of the leadership of the Romanian delegation at the UN General Assembly session. The interruption of the initiative without any public explanation affected the credibility of the Romanian delegation in its efforts to negotiate other initiatives with small and medium-sized countries.

This element of abrupt discontinuity deserves to be retained in the chronology of the Romanian initiatives at the UN in order to remind future generations of Romanian diplomats that the efforts to promote original initiatives did not take place on a smooth ground, sometimes encountering redundant obstacles caused by some members of the Romanian delegation, despite their professional duties and expected solidarity in supporting the Romanian initiatives. However, the history of multilateral diplomacy will balance things in favor of the truth, even if it will take many years to wait for the opening of the archives of foreign ministries that will reveal other surprising aspects of the diplomatic front involving Romania during the last decades of the 20th century.

In 2018, the Human Rights Council continued to examine the report of a special rapporteur on the right to education. In the resolutions and the mandate for drafting this report, there is no mention of the fact that the resolutions of the UN General Assembly (the last one adopted on December 17, 1981) devoted to the right to education brought this topic to the attention of the United Nations for the first time as a result of an initiative of Romania co-sponsored by 40 other countries, most of them small and medium-sized states. In this sense, it is recommendable to consult the available report at <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N12/464/86/PDF/N1246486.pdf?OpenElement>. A special resolution adopted in 2017 by the UN Human Rights Council reaffirms *inter alia* that “the obligations and commitments to take steps, individually and through international assistance and cooperation, especially economic and technical, to the maximum of available resources, with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of the right to education by all appropriate means, including in particular the adoption of legislative measures.”²⁰

The most recent report under consideration in the UN Human Rights Council dated June 18, 2018 contains many ideas advanced for the first time by Romania. One example is quite eloquent: “The legal obligations of human rights treaties should form the basis of national legislation and legal systems. The universal consensus around the norms and practices in the Sustainable Development Goals provide specific guidance on how national education systems should be guided”.²¹

¹⁹ See note 18 above.

²⁰ The most recent document on this issue is available at <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/SREducation/Pages/SREducationIndex.aspxol.1/2017>.

For a relevant analysis of the right to education see Ion Diaconu, *Dreptul la educatie-drept fundamental al omului, la inceputul secolului XXI*, in *Journal of European Studies and International Relations*, New series, Vol. 1/2017, pp. 36-56.

²¹ See the full document available at http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/72/53.

The paternity of the Romanian initiative on the right to education should be restored, mentioned, recognized and defended at least in academic studies dedicated to multilateral diplomacy.

Valuable anticipations

After 1989, in the statement by Ion Iliescu, President of Romania, delivered in the UNGA on 3 October 1990, we can read the following assessment: “Everything I am attempting to express leads us necessarily to a concept that we believe should play a major role in international affairs. We might call it “human solidarity.” This, again, is something that history has taught us in Romania well. We have had enough experience of an abstract relationship between the individual and the State, of vague ties between entities called nation-States. The obsolete framework of the cold-war era blinded us to what we now perceive to be the basic principles of the United Nations. How could we all work here without feeling solidarity in confronting the major issues of international peace and security, the environment, the phenomenon of terrorism, drugs and the poverty still rampaging through whole area of the world. How could we confront those major challenges, otherwise than in full solidarity?” (p. 459 of the book under consideration).

On 28 September 1993, in his statement in the UNGA Teodor Melescanu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, said: “One of the most original contributions the United Nations could make during the current United Nations Decade of International Law would be to define the legal content of the “duty of solidarity“ which should be implemented in consonance with the universally accepted principles of *jus gentium*, democracy and human rights. In our view solidarity should become one of the central strategic values of the new world order. Undoubtedly, we still live in a time of great challenges for the world community and the United Nations. Though it is true that many of the great expectations raised by the end of the cold war have not yet been fulfilled, we should not give up hope. The best way to turn hope into reality is to work together, leaving both unfruitful habits and selfish considerations behind us. Our joint efforts must, above all, be an expression of a vital, powerful solidarity and of confidence in what we can do together for a better tomorrow” (p. 483 of the book under consideration).

It should be mentioned that on February 19, 2000, UNCTAD X adopted by consensus in Bangkok a final declaration which proclaims *inter alia* that “Solidarity and a strong sense of moral responsibility must be the guiding light of national and international policy. They are not only ethical imperatives, but also prerequisites for a prosperous, peaceful and secure world based on true partnership.”²²

On 27 July 2015 the UN General Assembly approved the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda). The first paragraph of this document reads: “We, the Heads of State and Government and High Representatives...affirm our strong political commitment to address the challenge of financing and creating

²² The title of the document is *Bangkok Declaration: Global Dialogue and Dynamic Engagement* and its full text is available at http://unctad.org/en/Docs/ux_td387.en.pdf.

an enabling environment at all levels for sustainable development in the spirit of global partnership and solidarity.”²³

In 2013, at its 68th session the UNGA considered a progress report on solidarity. One of the definitions contained in this report reveals that international solidarity is “the union of interests or purpose among the countries of the world and social cohesion between them, based on the interdependence of States and other international actors, in order to preserve the order and survival of international society and to achieve collective goals that require international cooperation and joint action.”²⁴

In 2016, in a special resolution on the matter, the UN Human Rights Council recognized that “international solidarity shall be a new foundational principle underpinning contemporary international law, that responds to the need for transformative change encompassing the objectives of equity, equality in outcome, sustainability, security, social justice and empowerment and is applicable to all countries, both developing and developed.”²⁵

Moreover, in the same resolution, the UN Human Rights Council requested an independent expert to convene a meeting with experts from the five geographical regions to assist in finalizing a draft declaration on the right of peoples and individuals to international solidarity, and requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to assist the independent expert in conducting a legal review of the draft declaration prior to its submission to the Human Rights Council in 2017.

In a new resolution adopted on June 16, 2017 the UN Human Rights Council once again “*Recognizes* that international solidarity shall be a new foundational principle underpinning contemporary international law.”²⁶

The most recent document on human rights and international solidarity is dated April 11, 2018 and is available in extenso.²⁷

In a fundamental specialized book addressed to students it is cogently emphasized that the UNGA is “the custodian of the world conscience. This makes it the unique forum of choice for articulating global values and norms and the arena in which contested norms can be debated and reconciled”.²⁸

²³ For the full text of the document see http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/AAA_Outcome.pdf.

²⁴ The full text of the report is available at http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/68/176&referer=/english/&Lang=E.

²⁵ For the full text of the resolution see http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/HRC/32/L.16.

²⁶ For the history of this issue and relevant references see http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/72/53.

²⁷ See the relevant draft declaration available at <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Solidarity/ProposedDraftDeclarationSolidarity.pdf>.

²⁸ See *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy*, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 149. An interesting assessment about the topic of this article can be found in the monograph by Vincent Pouliot entitled *International Picking Orders. The Politics and Practice of Multilateral Diplomacy*, Cambridge University Press, 2016, 340 p. Multilateral diplomatic process is described as “the engine room of world politics, where amazingly the rich and complex processes operate to generate macro- phenomena of power, order and governance”, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

According to the opinion expressed by a Singaporean diplomat and academic, Kishore Mahbubani, author of a remarkable study on multilateral diplomacy, “the only way to find out what the 7 billion people of our planet think on any global change is to hear the voices of their national representatives in universal forums, like the UN General Assembly...”²⁹

The realities of our world today characterized by global vulnerabilities, perplexities and discontinuities compel the 193 UN member states to work together. They are expected to advance multilateralism and, in this process, consolidate the full adherence to international law for promoting peace, expanding cooperation and giving tangibility to sustainable development. This is a vital requirement.

“The UN remains a unique and valuable asset for international relations, but one that serves too often as the theatre for essentially esoteric struggles among those involved with limited impact on the world beyond”, asserts David Malone, Rector of the UN University and Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations.³⁰

Under such circumstances, indeed, multilateralism must be strengthened and the role of the United Nations as a universal institution must be further increased in order to find workable solutions to complex global issues.

To what extent current multilateral diplomacy is prepared to positively contribute to this extremely difficult process is a question to be realistically answered only on the basis of the political consensus for action-oriented measures to be formulated through robust and responsible negotiations in the years to come.³¹

The context of such negotiations is extremely complicated. In his remarks on 18 February 2017 to Munich Security Conference, the UN Secretary – General António Guterres asserted that “We live in a dangerous world (...) we are not in a multipolar world, we are in a kind of chaotic situation, probably leading to a multipolar world. But in these chaotic situations with unclear power relations, impunity and unpredictability have been the name of the game. And it is in this context that I believe that we need...a surge in diplomacy for peace. Members States will have to assume the leading role...” he said.³²

That leading role in the diplomacy for peace can be collectively demonstrated by multilateral negotiations on global issues involving the active participation of 193 countries in the UNGA’s deliberations. This is a most complex process involving elements of both continuity and discontinuity.

This complexity is further accentuated by the current state of the world. In this regard it is appropriate to quote academician Mircea Malita, one of the most distinguished representatives of Romania in the field of multilateral diplomacy.

²⁹ See *op. cit.*, *supra* in note 28, p. 249.

³⁰ The quotation is available at <https://www.amazon.com/Multilateral-Diplomacy-Inside-Global-Institutions/dp/1138236683>.

³¹ See Kamau, Macharia, *Transforming multilateral diplomacy: the inside story of the sustainable development goals*/Macharia Kamau, Pamela S. Chasek, David O’Connor, London, Routledge, 2018, xxiii, 341 p. See also Brett D. Schaefer, *The Role and Relevance of Multilateral Diplomacy in U.S. Foreign Policy*, a report dated February 14, 2011, available at <https://www.heritage.org/global-politics/report/the-role-and-relevance-multilateral-diplomacy-us-foreign-policy>.

³² The full text of the statement is available at <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2017-02-18/secretary-general%E2%80%99s-munich-remarks>.

He asserted that: “the world today is primarily a boiling world. A multifaceted world in the sense of diversity, but especially a world of disorder...Order is a triumph of calm, lucidity and simplicity...Or today (humanity) has none. Mankind would go to a higher order if the simplicity, sincerity and credibility of the people were to grow...Humankind advances slowly, carrying a heavy burden behind, that of universal disorder”.³³

50 years ago, in a speech delivered on October 23, 1968, in the plenary of the UNGA, in his capacity as deputy-minister of foreign affairs, Mircea Malita stated: “Economic and social activities, as an integral part of United Nations work to achieve the goals set by the Charter, namely, the fostering of peace and progress for all peoples, must be conceived as a general strategy designed to encourage and support national efforts devoted to progress and to eradicating the anachronistic phenomenon of under-development and the evils accompanying it, such as hunger, disease and ignorance, the perpetuation of which is incompatible with contemporary world civilization” (p. 238 of the book under consideration).

Mircea Malita has energetically tried, in many statements and complex actions, to encourage fighting in various ways and forms with numerous challenges and political constraints, to make sense of authentic multilateralism and multilateral diplomacy and pursue the national interests of Romania to the best of his high professional ability. His thoughts continue to be inspiring at the regional and global levels.

We quote a recent example.

On May 11, 2018 the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), composed of 62 members and associate members, opened its 74th session in Bangkok with a strong call for strengthening multilateralism and regional integration to tackle rising inequalities in the region. On May 16, 2018 the ESCAP session adopted resolution 74/11. *Strengthening regional cooperation to tackle inequality in all its forms in Asia and the Pacific*. In accordance with this document ESCAP recognized “inequality as a cross-cutting issue that can take different forms, such as inequality of outcome, inequality of opportunity and inequality of impact, and that its reduction requires integrated policy-making that takes into account economic, social and environmental dimensions”.

In the operative part of the resolution, the ESCAP calls upon all its members and associate members “to intensify poverty alleviation efforts and to continue to take targeted measures to reduce and alleviate poverty, to invest in social protection systems that promote access to essential services, resources and decent jobs, especially for lower income groups and groups with the highest vulnerability,

³³ Mircea Malița, *In bataia timpului (In the beating of time)*, a dialogue with Teodor Onea, Bucharest, ISPRI, 2017, pp. 86-87. See also Mircea Malita, Dan Dungaciu, *Istoria prin ochii diplomatului. Supravietuirea prin Diplomatie, “Deceniul Deschiderii” (1962-1972) si Crizele Lumii Globale*, RAO Publishing House, Bucharest, 2014, 380 p. The volume “History through the Eyes of the Diplomat” has the merit of reminding that many understandings in the sphere of multilateral diplomacy that were decisive for our history were accomplished by discrete initiatives and inspired choices of some remarkable diplomats, which remain behind the curtains until the expected opening of diplomatic archives in a great number of countries.

such as youth, elderly persons, persons with disabilities and migrant workers, and to promote gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment at all levels to ensure women's equal rights, access to and opportunities for participation and leadership in the economy".³⁴

This example illustrates the perennial value of Romanian ideas about fighting inequality at the regional and global levels, an idea which has been promoted with vigor both in the UNGA and in many UN bodies and meetings. Its relevance in the diplomatic proceedings of ESCAP demonstrates the continuity of a diplomatic approach on a significant issue present today in the UN 2030 Agenda containing 17 sustainable development goals and 169 targets to be achieved in this field.

The massive collection of Romanian statements in the UNGA elaborated by I. C. Popescu facilitates the direct knowledge of opinions voiced by Romania on the universal arena and can be recommended for useful study and consultation to students, professors, policy makers, diplomats, journalists and to all persons interested in world affairs.

Constructive diplomacy for peace operates through permanent advocacy in favor of this supreme value which demands appropriate educational orientation, in which specialized books have a practicable role to play.

It is in this context that we have to admit that beyond continuity or discontinuity "multilateral diplomacy remains the most effective diplomatic strategy in confronting current global threats".³⁵

At the same time, multilateral diplomacy is challenging. Its dynamics and content are often more complex than bilateral negotiations because of the diversity and multitude of players. This highlights the permanent necessity to develop appropriate qualities of determination, ingenuity and perseverance which are imperatively required of all actors working in the field of multilateral diplomacy.

Bangkok, July 6, 2018

³⁴ The full text of the resolution is available at https://www.unescap.org/commission/74/document/E74_43E.pdf.

³⁵ The quotation is taken from the article available at <https://www.ukessays.com/essays/politics/is-multilateral-diplomacy-the-preferred-path-politics-essay.php>. See also Sana Rahim, *Unique Challenges of Multilateral Diplomacy*, Munich, GRIN Verlag, <https://www.grin.com/document/285829>. While the author of this study recognizes the importance of multilateral diplomacy, one of the main critical conclusions formulated on the matter refers to "its inability to handle the matters of today's world due to its unique challenges". An optimistic opinion about multilateral diplomacy and multilateralism was expressed by Miroslav Lajčák, President of the 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly, at Panel on "Multilateralism in the 'Me-First' World" at GLOBSEC 2018. He said *inter alia* that "If we want to bring about a multilateral renaissance, we need the European Union to speak up, louder than ever, on the international stage". For the full text of the statement see <https://www.un.org/pga/72/2018/05/17/multilateralism-in-the-me-first-world/>.