

Content of the Official Statement of the President of the UN General Assembly

On Monday, January 14th, first day of the traditional Orthodox New Year, a memorable concert was held in the Plenary Hall of the UN General Assembly, in celebration of our 67th session.

In its wake, some outrageous claims have been put forward. With solemn respect for all the victims of the wars in former Yugoslavia, these malicious misinterpretations of the song performed as an encore - *Marš na Drinu* - focus on its alleged misuses during the tragic conflicts. They represent regrettable attempts at twisting the meaning of our musical gift offered to the world last Monday, and are deeply offensive to the Serbian people.

Written around a century ago, *Marš na Drinu* is a song that takes a central place in our memory of defending our freedom from aggressors in World War I, during which Serbia lost around 1/3 of its male population in the many battles fought on the side of the allies.

We are very proud of *Marš na Drinu*, which has been performed countless times over many decades not only in the Balkans, but also worldwide, by prominent musicians such as Cliff Richards and Chet Atkins. Its positive effect on the distinguished international audience this past Monday is yet another testament of its artistic greatness.

We decided to share this song with the world, with a clearly stated accompanying message of reconciliation for present and future generations.

In Europe, there is a tradition of finishing New Year's concerts with popular marches, transformed into a message of peace. It is the case with the Radetsky March at the end of Vienna concerts, and so was it in New York with the *Marš na Drinu* last Monday.

Despite this unfounded attack, we will continue with our heartfelt efforts to promote reconciliation in the Balkans and throughout the world.