



General Assembly

Twentieth Special Session

1st plenary meeting
Monday, 8 June 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Udovenko Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

Opening of the session by the Chairman of the delegation of Ukraine

The Temporary President: I declare open the twentieth special session of the General Assembly.

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

Minute of silent prayer or meditation

The Temporary President: I now invite representatives to stand and observe one minute of silent prayer or meditation.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silent prayer or meditation.

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (Article 19 of the Charter) (A/S-20/8)

The Temporary President: I should like, in keeping with the established practice, to invite the attention of the General Assembly to document A/S-20/8, which contains a letter addressed to the President of the General Assembly by the Secretary-General, in which he informs the Assembly that 23 Member States are in arrears in the payment of their financial contributions to the United Nations within the terms of Article 19 of the Charter.

I would like to remind delegations that, under Article 19 of the Charter,

“A member of the United Nations which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions to the Organization shall have no vote in the General Assembly if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of the contributions due from it for the preceding two full years.”

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

Item 3 of the provisional agenda

Credentials of representatives to the twentieth special session of the General Assembly

(a) Appointment of the members of the Credentials Committee

The Temporary President: Rule 28 of the rules of procedure provides that the General Assembly, at the beginning of each session, shall appoint, on the proposal of the President, a Credentials Committee consisting of nine members.

In accordance with precedents, and as recommended by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs acting as preparatory body for the twentieth special session of the

The political declaration we will be approving the day after tomorrow is above all the clear expression of our political will to stand up to this problem resolutely. We must now ensure that our political will does not cease with the consensus achieved here. The United Nations will be at the forefront of all coordination and support efforts, demonstrating the importance and irreplaceable nature of its action.

I would also like to mention the subject of financial resources, which are fundamental to helping countries that are committed to the eradication and replacement of illicit crops within the framework of an integrated economic development. Portugal recently increased its contribution to the United Nations International Drug Control Programme. We will soon give financial expression to our political will to cooperate with the United Nations in this field.

There can be no efficient fight against drugs without a firm and determined political will. That will require that we seriously identify drugs as one of the major evils of our times, an evil we must confront by calling on what is today an unequivocal and accepted concept of shared responsibility. More than ever, we must abide by the motto of this special session: "Together we can meet this challenge".

The President: I thank the President of the Portuguese Republic for his statement.

The Assembly will now hear a statement by The Honourable Romano Prodi, Prime Minister of the Italian Republic.

Mr. Prodi (Italy): I am very pleased to participate, together with so many heads of State and Government, in this special session of the General Assembly, an event that marks a watershed in the international mobilization against this plague.

Eight years have passed since the last special session — eight years of profound transformations that have left their mark on our societies and our perceptions of the complex and varied phenomenon of drugs.

Today, we have to radically improve our methods of tackling the problem. We must realize that fighting drugs requires a scientific and cultural adjustment to the ever-changing realities in our countries. Consider, for example, the spread of new synthetic drugs among the younger segments of the population, including pre-teens, who were previously not at risk. We must never lose sight of the

problem's international dimension. As we all know, drugs are often produced in some countries but consumed in others, crossing national, regional and continental borders. To respond to this transnational global challenge, we need internationally concerted action. This is why today's gathering is so important.

To ensure the success of this special session, for the past year we have been hard at work in the sessions of the Preparatory Committee held at the United Nations Office at Vienna. Let me be the first to say that we have done a good job.

Thanks to the cooperative spirit of all the participants, industrialized and emerging countries alike, we have succeeded in preparing a set of balanced draft declarations and commitments. These texts address every aspect of the problem in a comprehensive and even-handed fashion. They are the international community's best and most up-to-date response to this historic challenge. At this special session, we will adopt declarations and programmes of action that contain timely, detailed proposals to strengthen judicial cooperation; reduce the trafficking and spread of synthetic drugs — and I think we are probably heavily underestimating the dimensions and devastating effects of chemical drugs; control the diversion of precursor chemicals; counter the laundering of money derived from narcotics trafficking; and forge local agreements to replace illegal crops with alternatives.

On the last point, we hope that crop replacement agreements can be reached first with legitimate local Governments, but also after hearing and wherever possible heeding the suggestions and concerns of trade unions, farmers' associations and human rights organizations. We must activate new international synergies to tackle an issue vital to many countries: providing credible, effective markets for alternative crops. The political declaration that we approve will unequivocally demonstrate the international community's determination to combat this plague and, in the words of the text, to achieve "significant and measurable results" by the year 2008.

The global threat of drugs to our societies makes us even more convinced that national strategies can work only within a framework of international cooperation based on a globally concerted approach. Italy will thus continue to support the United Nations and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), under the strong leadership of Mr. Arlacchi, whose

activities we greatly appreciate. We will continue to work closely with UNDCP on implementing its many initiatives, confident that they will bear significant results within the next few years.

However, none of this is possible unless the UNDCP has adequate resources. Italy has always been one of the top financial supporters of the Programme. This year, we increased our contribution from 12 billion to 15 billion lire. We invite other countries and the international financial institutions to join us in putting the organization on more solid financial grounds, because financial contributions are the true test of our determination to launch a concrete, substantive attack on illicit drugs.

There is also a domestic side to this dramatic problem. This is not simply to maintain the required balance between safeguarding the principle of sovereignty and the need for international cooperation. It is also to guarantee a more ready capacity to evaluate and test the effectiveness of policies to reduce the supply and demand of drugs in local, regional and continental realities within the framework of treaties and conventions signed by individual nations. Ten years after the Vienna Convention, Europe is dealing with unprecedented problems and consequently with unprecedented roles and tasks. Consider the new challenges to the fight against drug-trafficking created as a side-effect of the elimination of our national borders; but also consider our specific experiences in local, social and health policy that can make a unique contribution to the United Nations discussion.

Our primary strategic goal has always been to reduce the phenomenon through actions to cut both supply and demand. The key to this plan is an information and prevention campaign that capitalizes on the talents and creativity of young people and involves families, schools and civil society as a whole.

An equally important component is our development of a network of public and private services to rehabilitate former drug addicts, restore their health and get them back into work and society. This means going beyond a punitive, repressive approach based on imprisonment. The ineffectiveness of such an approach has been proven again and again. It alienates drug users, makes them harder to reach and increases their social and health risks.

In Italy's experience, programmes to reduce the damaging effects of drugs have had a solid impact. They have allowed us to make contact with drug addicts who have not yet elected to seek help from public or private

rehabilitation centres. Such contacts should be developed not simply to offer addicts better health care, but to give them an opportunity to choose a better life.

It is within this perspective that Italy will continue its full-fledged commitment to a preventive strategy that mobilizes and activates such key forces as the family, the school system, the work environment and the media.

The initiatives we adopt at this session and our ongoing commitment at the national level in the war against drugs must send a clear signal to all our respective public opinions: as individual States and members of the international community, we will take decisive action to eliminate this scourge of our century. Our operative choices and concrete policies will highlight a crucial distinction: those who are spreading this plague and making enormous profits from it will be fought with all our strength; but those who are its victims shall receive our solidarity and support.

The President: I thank the Prime Minister of Italy for his statement.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Hugo Banzer Suárez, Constitutional President of the Republic of Bolivia.

President Banzer Suárez (*interpretation from Spanish*): This special session of the General Assembly is marked by two historic moments: the tenth anniversary of the signing at Vienna of the 1988 Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and the evaluation of the work done, and the definition of actions which our countries and Governments should henceforth pursue in order to put an end to drug-trafficking.

We are gathered here in New York for the purpose of reaffirming our determination, at the end of this century, not to pass on to the generations of the next millennium the tragedy of drugs that is afflicting mankind.

New, disturbing realities have emerged during this decade. Countries that before were only drug producers are today also consumers, while those countries that once were affected only by consumption have now become producers. Drug-trafficking globalizes crime.

When I assumed office in August 1997, I developed a true anti-drug policy that took into account the fact that