



General Assembly

Fifty-ninth session

7th plenary meeting

Thursday, 23 September 2004, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Ping (Gabon)

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

Address by Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Senegal.

Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal, and to invite him to address the General Assembly.

President Wade (*spoke in French*): The delegation of Senegal would like to congratulate you very warmly, Mr. President, on your election to the presidency of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. I assure you of our full support as you carry out your noble work. I also wish to extend my congratulations and encouragement to all the members of the Bureau.

I would also like to recognize the commitment of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, whose tireless efforts to make the United Nations a strong, working and credible Organization reflects his faith in the ideals of peace, development and concord among peoples. We must now continue to breathe life into these ideals, so that current and future generations will have a peaceful and safe world, a world without absurd hatred or

gratuitous violence. This vision should lead us to reinvigorate the values of multilateralism and universality that are epitomized by our Organization. In other words, the world needs now, more than ever, a United Nations that is strong and strengthened in its legitimacy.

We welcome, therefore, the decision of the United Nations Secretary-General to establish a panel of eminent persons on threats, challenges and change, whose conclusions will be presented next December. In this respect, we recall the African position on reform of the Security Council, which advocates among other things, the assignment to Africa of at least two permanent seats and two extra non-permanent seats. Africa would choose the recipients of those seats according to a process that has yet to be determined.

As I extol universality, I feel it is unfair that the Republic of China on Taiwan, with its 23 million inhabitants, its major democratic system and its impressive economic vitality, would still be sidelined from the work of the United Nations, whose Charter does rightly enshrine the essential principles of justice and universality.

This denial of justice also affects the valiant people of Palestine, who, under the legitimate authority of President Yasser Arafat, have been deprived of its fundamental right to sovereignty and ongoing existence. The defiant attitude of the occupying Power vis-à-vis the international community, recently illustrated by the Israeli authorities' refusal to abide by the opinion of the International Court of Justice requiring Israel to immediately stop the illegal building

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goals, and terrorist attacks cannot be justified by any means.

As to Iraq, we are deeply committed to the territorial integrity and unity of the country in a federal system. We are deeply worried by the ongoing violence, and we hope for progress in the political process, which will lead to a stable and prosperous democratic country, allowing all of its citizens to enjoy the fruits of peace and exploit the country's enormous potential.

(spoke in French)

In the light of the great challenges on the African continent, we note with great satisfaction the dedication shown and the results achieved by the African Union, an organization that is only 3 years old. Greece and its European partners want to help to improve Africa's prospects through development assistance, humanitarian assistance and logistical support. Moreover, we support the prospect of strengthened political cooperation with African countries and with the continent's regional organizations.

I take this opportunity to express the congratulations of my Government and of the Greek people on the tenth anniversary of the establishment of democracy in the Republic of South Africa, a historic event of pan-African significance.

(spoke in English)

My country has applied for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the period 2005-2006. I wish to express our deep appreciation to the members of the Group of Western European and other States for their endorsement. Elections are taking place in a few weeks' time. We are asking for the support of the Assembly, which we would greatly appreciate. Let me assure Members that we shall respect its mandate and that we remain strongly committed to contributing constructively to the maintenance of peace and security and to the preservation of the multilateral order.

Greece remains completely devoted to the promotion of democratic principles of government, the peaceful resolution of disputes, strict adherence to international law and respect for human rights. We are determined, should we be elected, to devote all our efforts and all our capacity to fulfilling that responsibility and honouring the trust of this Assembly of all nations.

The President *(spoke in French)*: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Franco Frattini, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy.

Mr. Frattini (Italy): This year's general debate unfolds against an international backdrop in which terrorist acts of great ferocity have become all too common. The latest, heinous form of terrorism is hostage-taking, which has caused deep sorrow to many of our nations. Again and again, the international community has been caught off guard, unable to respond quickly or effectively. New humanitarian catastrophes have afflicted some of the world's poorest peoples. Difficult stabilization processes are still under way in many regions where the international community is implementing United Nations resolutions.

Some areas of the world have seen economic and social progress. Yet we cannot ignore the fact that entire regions — especially in Africa — are crippled by poverty, malnutrition, disease and illiteracy. That is why Italy takes a leading role in combating those ills in multilateral forums and through bilateral means.

Our peoples demand security. We must join forces to strengthen international cooperation and to confront the common threat of terrorist organizations. The false prophets of terror are able to spread their message of death as a result of ignorance among cultures. To counter their distortions, we should mobilize people's consciences and strengthen dialogue among civilizations with different histories but shared values and a common belief in human dignity.

Peace and development — the agenda of security and human promotion — are related goals that require a coordinated approach carried out through multilateral institutions and in a spirit of equal partnership with developing countries. In that regard, I would like to stress the fundamental importance of a major event that will take place in 2005. That initiative will be a unique opportunity for a comprehensive review of progress towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

In our globalized, interdependent world, international organizations are expected to provide leadership not only through abstract formulations of general principles, but also through effective, shared initiatives supported by broad consensus. Our priority is to strengthen the multilateral system and to reinvigorate the role of the United Nations. That is the responsibility that the Secretary-General set out for us

at the last session of the General Assembly. There are two conditions for success: a sounder understanding of the threats we face and a broad consensus on the policies aimed at confronting them. Effective multilateralism depends much more on political will and shared goals than on structures and procedures.

The multilateral system — which demands responsibility and commitment — is judged by the results it enables us to achieve. That is why the whole international community must be involved, starting with the States that command greater resources and capabilities. Multilateral decisions can be difficult, but that is no excuse for inaction.

The starting point for United Nations reform is a review of the Organization's policies. Italy welcomes the reform of United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding, which we — as the sixth largest contributor to the United Nations budget and one of the top contributors of troops to peacekeeping operations over the past 10 years — support. Strengthening that critical sector will help to prevent the recurrence of conflicts, to consolidate the gains of peace, to re-establish the rule of law and to guarantee freedom for all. Italy will also continue to support the growing financial, operational and training demands of new missions, particularly in Africa — here, I am also thinking about the New Partnership for Africa's Development — and elsewhere.

Crisis management is a United Nations priority that demands greater coordination of its components and a stronger commitment on the part of Member States to protect human beings and to uphold their dignity. We thus look forward to the report of the Panel of Eminent Personalities appointed by the Secretary-General. The membership will have to examine it and discuss its recommendations thoroughly and openly.

A firm agreement on the policies of the United Nations must be upheld by institutions that enjoy the consensus and participation of the membership. We are encouraged by the results achieved so far with regard to improving the functioning of the General Assembly.

On Security Council reform, we have not yet been able to find an agreement that reconciles the various approaches on the table. That should not deter us from seeking solutions that are not divisive. Any decision imposed upon Member States would seriously undermine the credibility of the Council and the legitimacy of its action. Confronted with global challenges of great

magnitude, the international community cannot afford profound divisions within its ranks.

Italy is in favour of a Security Council reform inspired by the principles of greater inclusiveness, effectiveness, democratic participation and geographic representation, starting with the developing countries. We are firmly convinced that the best way to pursue such a reform is to establish new non-permanent seats. Since States would occupy those seats on the basis of periodic elections, they would be accountable to the general membership.

Some Member States, however, have advocated the addition of new permanent seats — for themselves. We do not believe the Council's difficulties can be resolved through new permanent, irrevocable appointments and national mandates. Such a move would sow division, frustration, and perhaps disengagement, among the membership. Important areas of the world would be left without representation. For one, there would be no seat at the Council table for the Arab and Islamic world. Can the international community really afford this at a time when we are trying to broaden the dialogue among different faiths and cultures?

On the other hand, if a broad consensus emerges with full respect for the sovereign equality of all Member States, we are willing to contemplate more frequent rotation or longer terms for countries that make a greater contribution to the objectives of the United Nations. Should reflections of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change be driven by such a bold and innovative approach, we would strongly support their endeavour. I am convinced that many other countries would also be ready to accept it.

In addition, a closer relationship should be built between elected members and their regional groups. That would enhance the accountability of elected members and would make the Council more representative and its deliberations more legitimate.

Already in San Francisco in 1945 the founding fathers recognized the importance of regional organizations, whose relations with the United Nations are governed by Chapter VIII of the Charter, and whose role has grown steadily in the years that followed. Increasingly, States belonging to the same region have felt a sense of common responsibility for crises affecting them all. Moreover, regional

arrangements provide small to mid-size States with a greater say in the decisions of international forums.

More should be done to express those realities at the United Nations and in the Security Council. As a founding member of the European Union, the depositary of its treaties and the host for the solemn signature of the new European Constitution, Italy believes that today's 25-member European Union has a fundamental contribution to make to the objectives of the United Nations. We have always worked to allow the European Union to speak with a single, more influential, voice. We realize, of course, that we are dealing with a gradual process. Nevertheless, we must stay the course and not jeopardize the achievement of our goal in the interests of all Europeans.

Let me conclude with a final, strong appeal to States Members. Let us join forces, abandon national ambitions and seek the least divisive ways to enhance multilateralism. That is the only way the international community can meet the global challenges of the new millennium. In deciding between the satisfaction of the few and the inclusion of the many, the wrong choice is a luxury that the United Nations — at the very heart of the international system — can ill afford to make.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Michel Barnier, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of France.

Mr. Barnier (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election. We are pleased that a man of your ability, a Francophone representative of a friendly country, is directing our proceedings.

I also wish to warmly applaud our Secretary-General. We have heard his message on respect for the rule of law. And through the Secretary-General, I wish to commend the entire staff of this institution, here and everywhere in the world: their courage and commitment are a credit to our ideals and to the organizations they serve — sadly, sometimes at the cost of their own lives.

How are we to meet the challenges facing the world? That is the question we all keep asking ourselves, one after another, from this rostrum. And how are we to meet the world's expectations unless we all mobilize? More than ever, the United Nations remains the one irreplaceable, legitimate framework

for harnessing that mobilization and translating it into collective action.

We have much to do: conflicts remain unresolved, while others are breaking out; poverty is declining all too slowly; people are destroyed by wars; refugees are torn from their land; and the threat of terrorism is not fading. Yes, we have much to do. Yes, we have a duty to act, and an obligation never to give up.

The United Nations is acting — on all fronts, on the front line. To resolve conflicts and prevent them from flaring up again, it is present everywhere, on all continents, in Haiti, Kosovo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in Côte d'Ivoire, Afghanistan and many other fronts, deploying over 50,000 Blue Helmets. It provides assistance to 17 million people protected by the High Commissioner for Refugees. Through the World Food Programme, it feeds more than 100 million individuals. And it helps, especially through the United Nations Development Programme, 170 States or territories to develop.

United Nations activities — our activities — continue to expand. Thus, the Organization is called upon to be at the centre of the counter-terrorism measures that the international community is putting in place. The threat of terrorism, now a global one, calling for a global response. That is why France committed itself here to the fight, and did so again recently by supporting the strengthening of the Counter-Terrorism Committee.

The tragedy of 11 September, which I refer to with feeling here in New York City, was an attack on us all. Since then, terrorism has continued to strike: in Europe, in Madrid, six months ago; and in Asia, in Bali and Jakarta. Cowardly attacks are mounted against the weakest. How can we not be appalled at the tragedy of the school in Beslan where children — the symbol of innocence — were violently massacred?

We are waging a merciless fight against terrorism. Let us at the same time address its roots. That means putting an end to situations that terrorists exploit; giving the world's excluded hope again; restoring dignity to those peoples deprived of it; and ensuring that dialogue and cooperation among civilizations, cultures and religions prevail, rather than conflict and intolerance.

Global threats require a strong, and always collective, response. The threat of proliferation, which