

STATEMENT BY
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Mr. President,

This meeting is not only an occasion for celebration but also an occasion for reflecting on and renewing our commitment to the values which unite us.

The year 1945 remains indelibly fixed in the minds of peoples and individuals. While the most tragic and most devastating of global conflicts was ending and while the dawn of a new hope was breaking over the world, at the same time the atomic era was beginning: a fact whose immense significance it is difficult, from a distance of 40 years, to calculate exactly, but which nevertheless has introduced into international life, besides fantastic possibilities of peaceful progress, disquieting shadows over the future of the earth.

Against this background the United Nations was born. The idea of a universal organization which should replace the League of Nations was born amid the ruins of war; it was therefore logical that its primary purpose should be to avoid a third and even more disastrous conflict by establishing a system of collective peace and security. These objectives are

clearly stated in the preamble of the Charter of San Francisco, which affirms the determination of the peoples of the United Nations "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war".

The founders of the United Nations did not confine themselves to the enunciation of ideals and principles. They also laid down a practical and articulated system of norms of behaviour, of means of promoting the search for peaceful solutions and of measures aimed at preventing conflicts and re-establishing peace. This system - it is well to recall - involves a commitment by all Members of the Organization without distinction to refrain from the threat or use of force in their international relations.

The Charter of San Francisco also introduced - and this was an innovation of profound historical significance - the following principles: the equality and self-determination of peoples, the respect for human rights, the fundamental freedoms and international solidarity in economic, social, cultural and humanitarian development. This series of principles form a whole that cannot be divided arbitrarily or considered in a selective manner.

These principles have been carried out in practice by the United Nations and by its related Agencies which in fact cover every aspect of human activity that can be organized on an international level.

Forty years after the foundation of the United Nations it is appropriate to ask ourselves if and how the Organization has fulfilled the historic tasks assigned to it.

Today we hear, from different quarters, criticisms - some harsh - of the United Nations system. In some cases we may feel a real sense of disillusionment as regards the machinery, the limitations and even the values of multilateralism.

In spite of all this, the United Nations has been a constant, irreplaceable meeting point, a highway along which we may direct our vast international energies towards peace, cooperation and progress.

Notwithstanding the undeniable deficiencies, the role of the United Nations in the defence of peace and security, in the preservation of areas of stability, in the search for negotiated solutions, has been, in the last forty years, fundamental. When the United Nations has not succeeded in its mission, it has not been through lack of will, but rather because the action of its organs has been impeded by the clash of political views, because its recommendations have been disregarded and because selfish interests have prevailed over the interests of peace, security and cooperation.

While it is proper to refer to these failures, it is also fair to admit that, in many other cases, the organs of the United Nations have been able to make full use of the powers conferred upon them by the Charter and have shown themselves capable of effective and long-term interventions.

In this connection, we must recall firstly the peace-keeping operations, some of which are still going on and in which Italy is proud to have played an active role.

Secondly, the United Nations has hosted or encouraged negotiations on the main controversies which inflict mankind, negotiations which still represent the surest and most reliable reference point for the parties concerned.

Finally, we remember with admiration and respect the initiatives taken by the Secretaries-General from 1945 onwards as splendid examples of wisdom and dedication to peace.

Besides these peace-keeping operations, the United Nations deserves our gratitude for the vast and important range of activities it has undertaken on behalf of decolonization, economic, social and cultural progress, and human rights.

The historical process which has conferred independence on so many peoples has found in the United Nations a political reference point that has proved quite irreplaceable. Within the United Nations the newly independent countries have encountered not only a forum for meetings and debates but the surest means of presenting their views to an international audience.

In this context the effects of the work of the United Nations and its related agencies have been and remain impressive. How can we forget the eradication of formerly invincible diseases, the improvement of child health, the assistance given to some countries so as to involve farmers in the production of drugs - substituting crops, the economic and social rehabilitation of depressed territories, the work done in remedying the terrible scourges of drought and hunger in Africa and other regions of the globe, the defence of human rights and freedoms that have been violated.

Just as impressive has been the work done in the field of legislation. This has resulted in a very important series of documents such as the Declaration and Convention on Human Rights, the Convention on the Law of the Sea and the major agreements on the control and limitation of armaments, which have become part of our collective conscience and an essential component of our modern civilization.

Rather than ask ourselves what the United Nations has failed to do, we should ask ourselves today what the world be like if the United Nations had never existed. We should do so, not in order to contemplate

with sterile complacency the results achieved, not in order to close our eyes to the defects and failures of the collective system, but in order to find the inspiration for a renewed commitment to the values which the United Nations embodies and defends.

The world has certainly become smaller and more dangerous, but also richer in possibilities.

In these tumultuous forty years there have occurred irreversible examples of freedom and of national and individual progress. And here also lies the merit of those who, in 1945, launched us on our great adventure. Their aim was certainly to prevent war but also to open up before the world the hope of improving the human conditions. In this new situation we are perceiving ever more clearly the interdependence which now binds, in good and evil, all the countries of the world, brought closer together by the simultaneity of communications, the unprecedented increase in human cultural and commercial exchanges and the global nature of world security.

The question of economic cooperation arises here as elsewhere in the world. We are all well aware of this. Many statements made before this Assembly during the present session have dealt with economic problems and with indebtedness.

The idea of the interdependence of actions taken in the economic field has also been put forward. It has had the advantage of posing the problem of well-being as a problem whose solution depends on international cooperation.

Nowhere more than in the economic field must we be wary of misleading perspectives. The economic health of each presupposes above all that the wealth is produced. In a world open to cooperation, this may be obtained in conformity with the principle of the optimum distribution of the factors of production. However, costly they may be in political, economic and social terms, the processes of positive and negative adjustments must go forward.

It is here - it seems to me - that interdependence lies. The political action of Governments, that of the international financial institutions and the banking system must be coherent with this objective. We look to international trade as a vehicle of well-being. No one can think, without deceiving themselves, that they can shift their difficulties on to others. The path of protectionism is the easiest, but it is also the path of nationalism which is first economic, and second political.

No State, however great, can escape this requirement. No one, however rich, can act alone on the world stage.

Ours is an imperfect community like all communities made by men not always capable of banishing egoism and violence from their own hearts. In its organized form, which finds in the United Nations its universal expression, our community has been endowed with a wealth of idealism. People with different backgrounds, different histories, different political, cultural and

religious formations, are called upon to get to know each other and to debate in this great arena common principles and common norms of behaviour.

Our Organization can be improved in ways suggested by experience. We perceive that the real problem is one of political will.

The maintenance of peace can be pursued by applying faithfully the principles which are ours, by using our machinery. The powers which the Charter confers on the organs of the United Nations - and I am thinking in particular of the Security Council and the Secretary-General - are extensive. Effective action by the Security Council is essential.

The General Assembly which, according to the Charter, is a truly sovereign organ, bearing within itself the potentialities derived from its being an equal and democratic forum, must direct its debates and its resolutions towards more precise and more productive objectives.

If everyone displays this necessary political will and with the appropriate procedural amendments now under study, it will certainly be possible to make of this Organization the highest and most significant point of international cooperation.

Mr. President,

Italy firmly believes in multilateral cooperation and its own conduct is strictly inspired by this belief.

From its foundation, the Italian Republic, born of resistance to domination and tyranny, has endorsed - also in its Constitution - the great ideals which inspire the Charter of San Francisco. Today, Italy is an open, democratic country, advancing progressively and strongly inspired by the ideals of international solidarity. In Italy, human rights and basic freedoms play a fundamental role both in respect of our own citizens as well as of people of any other nationality. In our relations with our neighbours, we

have strictly followed the path of peaceful negotiations, obtaining results of which we are proud and which constitute a positive contribution to the maintenance of conditions of peace and stability. We have based our action in the world context on our ideals of solidarity and international cooperation.

Based on the same principles is our participation in the Atlantic Alliance, an example of that regional security association which is fully recognized in the Charter, and our wholehearted participation in the European Community; a strong Community composed of countries which have rediscovered their identity and their history , overcoming old jealousies and profiting from their common heritage; an open Community which does not retreat within itself but which strives, through the development of its relations with the third countries, to strengthen conditions for generalized well-being and world peace.

Mr. President,

Our Organization today must face terrible and sometimes agonizing challenges. I am thinking of the struggle against terrorism, which must be conducted with determination; I am thinking of the struggle against the scourge of drugs, which threatens our youngest generations and which cannot be relaxed; I am thinking, finally, of the struggle against hunger which must be won, if we wish to eliminate forever the main causes of the uncertainty and insecurity threatening our future prospects.

I would like to conclude by quoting the words spoken in 1945, in the first Parliamentary Assembly of the reborn Italian democracy by Alcide De Gasperi.

Commenting on the moral testament of President Roosevelt, he said:

"Italy recognizes that a just and fruitful peace can be founded only on the principles and purposes for the achievement of which the United Nations has fought against war; and, in particular, on respect for

international law, on faith in the dignity, worth and rights of the human person and on the assurance that all nations enjoy the essential human freedoms: freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from want, which generates a healthy and peaceful life to the inhabitants of every country in every part of the world, and freedom from the fear of any act of aggression by any country against any other.

The four freedoms!

This is not the vision of a distant utopia. Let us work to ensure that nobody can doubt it."

Thank you, Mr. President.