



General Assembly

Fifty-second Session

11th plenary meeting
Thursday, 25 September 1997, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Udovenko (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 9 (continued)

General debate

The President: The first speaker is Her Excellency Ms. Zdenka Kramplová, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovakia. I give her the floor.

Ms. Kramplová (Slovakia): Mr. President, at the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. I also wish to thank your predecessor, Mr. Razali Ismail, for his excellent work during the last session of the General Assembly.

The ongoing session of the General Assembly is crucial in terms of showing the capability of the United Nations to react adequately to changes in the global scene after the end of the cold war, mainly in connection with problems humankind faces on the eve of the new millennium. We all know that if the United Nations is to meet the expectations and needs of the new era, it must go through a process of reform. The Slovak Republic welcomes the Secretary-General's report (A/51/950) entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform" and supports his endeavours to streamline the work of the Organization in order to achieve greater unity of purpose, strategic deployment of resources, coherence of efforts and flexibility in response.

The suggestions included in the Secretary-General's report reveal a firm determination to transform the United Nations into a centre which takes an active part in governing international relations, in accordance with its main principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Though one of the basic goals of the reform is to streamline the work of the Organization, along with cost-saving, the latter should not be the final goal of the reform, since this approach itself does not lead to the strengthening of the United Nations system. Any reform of the Organization which would lead to a weakening of its position is not acceptable.

The financing of the United Nations is necessarily an integral part of its reform, since continuation of the current financial crisis has a grave impact on the performance of the Organization. We believe the principle of honouring legal obligations — in this case, the payment of assessed contributions — should be a basis for any solution to be adopted, although we understand that a number of countries are in arrears to the Organization because their rates of assessment do not reflect their capacity to pay.

Slovakia belongs to a small group of countries — so-called good contributors — having paid its regular budget contributions in full and on time this year. With regard to our peacekeeping- budget assessment, the General Assembly decided to allocate Slovakia to group C of Member States for the period 1993 to 1996.

Republic of Yugoslavia with regard to the security of the Boka Kotorska Bay, while being concerned for its own security in the Dubrovnik hinterland. In this regard, UNMOP has played an important role, but it will not be possible to deal with the outstanding problems through endless prolongations of the United Nations mandate.

With relief and satisfaction, Croatia welcomes the easing of the crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and remains firmly committed to the principles and implementation of the Washington and Dayton Accords. My Government gives its active support to preserving the integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as to the consolidation of the federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a foothold and framework for the survival and well-being of the Croatian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The role of the international community, especially that of the United Nations and the countries participating in SFOR, in the creation of peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina is irreplaceable at this stage of the peace process. Too much effort, resources and prestige have been invested in peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and too much suffering has been experienced by the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to allow any risk which may undermine what has been achieved in Dayton and in its wake. Croatia will persist and persevere in its role as an active peace agent in the region, expecting other parties involved in the peace process to fulfil their obligations.

Those standing in the way of the Dayton Accords and continuing to defy the integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a community of two equal entities and three constituent peoples have to be confronted with the same uncompromising determination of the international community, and, if required, with the same measures as were earlier applied in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which proved to be entirely necessary and productive. The economic reconstruction of the country — in which the international community should play an even more vital role — is also of special importance.

The agenda of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly is extensive, and a great deal of work lies ahead of us. There is also an opportunity before us to have this session of the General Assembly recorded in the annals of the Organization as a landmark in the Organization's development. Croatia will be only too glad to help make this come true.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*):
The next speaker on my list is the Minister for Foreign

Affairs of Italy, His Excellency Mr. Lamberto Dini, on whom I now call.

Mr. Dini (Italy): I warmly congratulate Minister Udovenko on his election to the helm of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. His profound experience in international affairs is the best guarantee for the success of his mandate. Allow me also to thank his predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, who led the fifty-first session of the General Assembly with great distinction.

On all the broad issues confronting the General Assembly, Italy supports the statement made on Tuesday by the Foreign Minister of Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union.

Today we have a historic opportunity to connect principles and reality, give life to our ideals and shape this Organization for decades to come. The ideologies that divided humankind in this century have crumbled. Meanwhile, the system engineered with such foresight by the founding Members amidst the horrors of the most devastating war the world has ever seen has maintained and increased its significance.

We no longer live in a world of purely national interests. More and more, policy-making is informed by global concerns such as human rights, solidarity and social justice. At the threshold of the twenty-first century, let us pledge to settle religious and ethnic conflicts through dialogue, tolerance and cultural exchange, and to find collective answers to international terrorism, organized crime, drug trafficking and the degradation of the environment. We can join forces to eradicate poverty, which is a major cause of social injustice and political turmoil in the world, and guarantee dignity, respect and better living standards for every human being.

The goals of a new world order, founded on mutual trust and the rejection of the threat and use of force, are peace, security, sustainable development and respect for the fundamental freedoms of the individual. But these values cannot be dictated by an elite group of States. The future of humankind is the responsibility of the international community as a whole.

As the United Nations prepares to meet the challenges of the third millennium, the General Assembly has a role of paramount importance to play.

At the opening of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly there was unanimous consensus on the need for a far-reaching reform of the United Nations system. In my address I stated that if the United Nations was to respond effectively to the growing concerns that had emerged, reform could no longer be postponed. The international community requires higher standards of security, development and democracy, and it needs them now.

On that occasion, I listed 10 specific proposals to make United Nations peacekeeping operations more effective, and I am glad to see that progress has been made on some of them. Procedures for periodic meetings between the Security Council and troop-contributing countries have been consolidated. To help the Organization respond to crises where and when they arise, Italy recently became the sixth country to formalize its participation in standby arrangements for United Nations peacekeeping operations.

President Clinton said in his speech on Monday that the first task of the United Nations must remain the pursuit of peace and security. When a situation of serious instability developed in Albania last March, the Security Council — with the full support of the Secretary-General — acted promptly, authorizing a coalition of the countries, led by Italy, willing to form a Multinational Protection Force. During the four months of its mandate, Operation Alba enabled the safe delivery of humanitarian assistance, created a secure environment for the missions of international organizations, and made democratic elections possible. In short, it helped put the country back on its feet. One of the keys to its success was an innovative approach to peacekeeping, involving the rapid planning and deployment of the Force, and close coordination among the participating countries and the host country, under the constant monitoring of the United Nations.

To consolidate the gains that have been made and lay the foundations for Albania's growth and prosperity, the next step is to rehabilitate the State institutions and economy. With this in mind, the Italian Government has convened a ministerial conference for October, in Rome, with the participation of the Albanian Government and all the relevant international organizations to assess needs and decide on a common course of action.

For over half a century, the United Nations has been seeking to establish a permanent international criminal court to prosecute and punish genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, wherever and by whomever they are committed. This is a test of our collective responsibility, made even more pressing by the terrible massacres that

have characterized recent ethnic conflicts, and Italy confirms its strong support, pledges its active contribution to this endeavour, and is prepared to host in Rome the diplomatic conference to adopt the statute for the international criminal court.

A second major challenge is arms control. Before dealing with the security requirements of tomorrow, we must stop living by the fears of yesterday. New standards of security can be produced only through international cooperation under the leadership of the United Nations.

Italy has some of the world's strictest and most advanced legislation on the export of arms. I am proud to report that this past June the Italian Government unilaterally decided to renounce the production, export, stockpiling and use of anti-personnel landmines, and enabling legislation to this effect has already been passed by one branch of our Parliament. But the full value of this commitment can only be realized if it is shared by all countries, whether or not they are parties to the Ottawa process. The recent Oslo conference, to be sure, made remarkable accomplishments, but they are not yet universal. To achieve this goal, our efforts should be complemented by the continuing involvement of the Conference on Disarmament.

Two months ago, Secretary-General Kofi Annan presented a package of ground-breaking proposals to improve the effectiveness of the Organization and enhance its ability to meet the new challenges. Those proposals deserve our full support.

One important goal of the Secretary General's reform plan is to energize the strategic direction provided by the General Assembly. To this end, we need to streamline the agenda and identify priorities for consideration in the short- and medium-term. Since the time available for plenary debates is limited, we should focus on matters of general interest.

The reform of the Organization is a question of the highest priority for the current session of the General Assembly, as the Secretary-General himself has underlined. In the coming months, two other major subjects also command our attention: the financial situation of the Organization, and the structure and composition of the Security Council.

To function properly, the Organization has to be able to rely on adequate resources. Assessed contributions must be paid in full, on time and without conditions by

Member States. Italy, for its part, has always complied with this fundamental rule. Nevertheless, we believe that the time has come to agree on a realistic new scale of assessments, based on Member States' capacity to pay and making the Organization less dependent on the contributions of a single country.

However, let there be no confusion about our support for a review of the scale of assessments. There can be absolutely no link between Members' contributions and Security Council reform, lest the impression be created that permanent seats are up for sale.

This brings me to the reform of the Security Council. There is broad agreement that reform is needed to bring the Council more in line with the new realities of the world in which we live. The reform must be inspired by the principles of democracy, equitable geographical representation and transparency. These are the very principles guiding the proposal presented by Italy. While we are prepared to look constructively at other proposals, we must guard against those advocating a system that would divide Member States into four categories: first-class countries — the five current permanent members of the Security Council, with veto power; second-class countries — the new permanent members from industrialized nations, without veto power; third-class countries — “pseudo-permanent” rotating members, without veto power, from developing nations in different regions; and fourth-class countries — the overwhelming majority of United Nations Member States, with fewer chances than ever of serving on the Security Council.

Such stratification of membership, reminiscent of the caste system in ancient empires, would defy the fundamental principles of logic and democracy, and marginalize some of the countries most active in the Organization. How could any of us accept relegation to the last of these categories and go back to our people and Parliaments and tell them that we actually voted in favour of our country's demotion to fourth-class status? Let me stress that this type of problem would not be generated by the Italian proposal, which calls for an increase only in non-permanent members, to be democratically elected by the General Assembly.

Another aspect of reform is the question of the veto. This cannot and should not be discussed independently of the issue of enlarging the Council. The two issues are inseparable. Indeed, every aspect of Security Council reform should be addressed at the same time and in the same context. Before determining the future size of the

Council and the names of new members, we must define the criteria that should govern the reform. Ad hoc approaches will not work. Ultimately, no solution can be adopted unless there is broad consensus. And a lasting and equitable outcome cannot be reached through hasty and partial solutions. Forcing the issue would deepen divisions and jeopardize the larger and more urgent question before the General Assembly: approving the Secretary-General's reform package.

In a longer-term perspective, I would like to add that a fact-finding inquiry recently conducted by the Italian Parliament envisaged a permanent seat on the Security Council for the European Union, as a natural evolution of its common foreign and security policy.

Almost 55 years ago, on November 13 1942, President Roosevelt said that the future of the United Nations association

“should not be restricted to the 28 signatories of the Atlantic Charter, but should be one which all nations could join.”

President Roosevelt believed that the purpose of the United Nations should not be the defence of the status quo and that its strength did not lie in sheer numbers, but in the way that Member States engaged in collective deliberations and action. This vision should guide our pursuit of a more promising future for all the people of this world. History will not be lenient with us if we fail.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Romania, His Excellency Mr. Adrian Severin.

Mr. Severin (Romania) (*interpretation from French*): At the outset, I would like to extend to Mr. Udovenko our most sincere congratulations on his election to the high office of President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, as a representative both of a neighbourly and friendly country and of a region that has significantly increased its presence in the United Nations family in recent years. At such a decisive moment for the future of our Organization, he has a mandate of high responsibility and I offer him our full support.

It is a great honour for me to address, for the first time, this prestigious forum, with its wide participation and global vocation, in my capacity as the representative