



General Assembly

Fifty-third Session

11th plenary meeting
 Wednesday, 23 September 1998, 10 a.m.
 New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Operti (Uruguay)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Hurricane in the Dominican Republic

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I wish to inform representatives that owing to reasons of *force majeure*, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic will speak today at the end of this afternoon's meeting, as his country has just been struck by a strong hurricane that has caused tremendous human and material losses. The hurricane has also affected other countries of the region, such as Haiti and possibly even Cuba. The reason for this schedule change is of a humanitarian nature and explains the situation as well as the Minister's need to return to his country as soon as possible.

I appeal to members for understanding in this respect, and I trust that we can express our solidarity in this way. We will also be conveying, through the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic, our sympathy and our wish to cooperate with that country.

Address by Mr. Andrés Pastrana Arango, President of the Republic of Colombia

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Colombia.

Mr. Andrés Pastrana Arango, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Colombia, His Excellency Mr. Andrés Pastrana Arango, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Pastrana Arango (*interpretation from Spanish*): Mr. President, as I address the Assembly for the first time as President of Colombia, I should like to offer you, on behalf of my Government, our warmest congratulations on being elected to guide our debates during this session.

A few weeks ago, the most important democratic elections in Colombia's recent history took place. Despite the problems that have besieged our nation in the last few years, our institutional structure has faced one of the sternest tests ever and has again shown that it is solid. In June, more than 12 million people — one of the highest electoral turnouts in the history of the Republic — expressed their free, spontaneous and conscious choice.

Today, Colombia is looking towards new horizons. We have restored confidence in our country. We have started the changes which will enable us to face our internal problems with determination and which will win us a more positive and dynamic place in the international community.

Our most urgent task will be to build for peace. That is the unshakable commitment of my Government and the

since it is finalizing the introduction of its single currency, the euro, and we are anticipating the benefits.

From this period we are living through, which is so full of contrasts, consisting of unprecedented progress and of crises threatening to wipe out our efforts, in particular those made under the aegis of the United Nations, additional progress must be forthcoming in building a more just and more peaceful world, because this is what we all want.

Today's world needs rules. The United Nations must remain the unifying framework, and the Charter must remain the reference point. Preserving what has proved its worth, adapting when necessary, inventing new forms of regulation — these are three main areas for our work.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy, His Excellency Mr. Lamberto Dini, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Dini (Italy): I congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly, a sure guarantee of the success of the fifty-third session. At the same time, I wish to thank your predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, for his fine job in handling the difficult issues that arose last year.

On the broader issues facing the General Assembly in the year to come, Italy associates itself with and supports the statement made on Tuesday by the Foreign Minister of Austria on behalf of the European Union.

Fewer than 10 years have gone by since the euphoric days that surrounded the fall of the Berlin Wall. As our decade began, "a new world order" was on everyone's lips. Many believed that we were at the threshold of a new age of stability, freedom and prosperity. In the ensuing years, we have indeed witnessed rapid growth in the world economy, but we have also seen an outbreak of new forms of nationalism, ethnic hostilities and acts of aggression.

Our peoples have grown apprehensive about the future as they watch the performance of the stock market, internal instability in various regions of the world, the failure of financial institutions, the rise and unpredictability of terrorism, unchecked waves of immigration, the constant flow of refugees and the resurgence of misplaced nuclear ambitions. In some countries, a few short months of crisis was all it took to wipe out the gains of an entire generation.

Such crises shed light on an improper balance between the power of the market and the power of institutions. Globalization and liberalization certainly have great merits. They have forced the national political classes to set public finances in order and to promote economic efficiency. But a global market requires some measure of global government built on the knowledge that the wealth of single States cannot be separated from the welfare of the international community, a government whose strength rests on the democracy of institutions. As Secretary-General Kofi Annan underlined in his speech, globalization requires good government.

This is why we urgently need to strengthen international leadership. The institutions are still not strong enough to provide such leadership, restore confidence, introduce change, stabilize the global economy, guarantee growth and protect the most vulnerable of us in the race towards development. Technology, communications and the market are progressing at a much faster pace than politics and institutions, thus creating a widening gap.

In the final years of this century, our challenge is to strengthen institutions and their capacity to coordinate the action of Governments. Globalization has impacts on ideologies and behaviour, societies and institutions. The opening of markets to competition must be accompanied by reaffirmed cooperation among the largest possible number of States. The burden of responsibility falls on the shoulders of the stronger nations, particularly those of the G-7. They have a duty to show solidarity, transforming their privileges into benefits for all humanity.

The system of international institutions has the United Nations as its paramount and most authoritative benchmark. The United Nations must be the driving force behind a review of the network of interdependence. Like industrialization in its early days, globalization produces both great progress and dangerous imbalances. Thus, it requires governance. No one country can govern it, however great its political, economic and military power. Our century is drawing to a close with a revitalization of institutions upon which we can build the three pillars of stability: prosperity, security and respect for fundamental freedoms.

The first pillar of stability is governance of the economy to prevent crises from degenerating into catastrophes. The time has come to perfect the rules of conduct that guide the development of the global market.

While these rules are imperfect and not always respected, we must assert the conviction that it is important and appropriate to observe them. This is the secret of their success. It is up to the economically stronger countries to guarantee continuity in the development of the market. They must be buyers, lenders and the final guarantors if we are to instil confidence and forestall the threat of a global recession. The forces that drive the global economy are the same as those that uphold the fundamental freedoms: the circulation of information and ideas; open borders and societies; the rule of law and individual rights. The challenges facing the economy are the same as those facing freedom.

At times, the markets are driven by a short-term logic that privileges the earnings of today over the growth of tomorrow. They conduct constant but instant referendums. The stock market does not always move at the same pace as the economy and society. Relentless technological progress can lead to the exclusion of many from the world of employment. Recent major economic and financial crises show that the market does not always grow when the State shrinks. Rather than enhancing freedom, sometimes it only increases the power of the strongest. It is a dangerous illusion to think the economic sphere can be unhinged from the political system, the social context and the history of nations. There can be no healthy economy without a strong State, without the rule of law, without social cohesiveness and protections — in other words, without respect for peoples or awareness of their history.

The market's supporters should not turn into the standard bearers for a new fundamentalism. The international financial institutions must know how to couple theory and practice, how to avoid strategies that damage society and destabilize the political system for the sake of defending the market. They must initiate policies and reforms that minimize moral hazards in their rescue operations. They must look at society as a whole and not just at its financial dimensions. Otherwise, some will rebel against or flee the market.

The United Nations and the international community can rely on the new cohesiveness of the European Union. The European currency, the Euro, demands new responsibilities at the international level as a repository of value and as an investment and reserve currency. It will allow the Union to project abroad standards that it would not otherwise be able to preserve, such as stability, competition and social solidarity. The European Union has no intention of hiding behind the shield of its currency. It

has no illusions of being an oasis of prosperity sheltered from the tempests of the world.

The politicians of Europe are the first to have rethought the limits of national sovereignty. Today, the European Union, in the wake of the single currency, is about to become a political subject, and to participate as such in world leadership, to correct the fragility of the complex systems that govern the world. It is not enough to have strong national powers. For the European Union, too, the time has come to be a "leading nation". The time has come to further enhance the rules that have allowed us to unite the continent, banishing war within our borders.

To the South, Europe is facing massive waves of immigration. Europe is well aware of the needs that drive to its shores so many people trying to escape from suffocating demographic trends. Europe knows that the only solution is an ambitious policy of solidarity and development. Otherwise, like King Canute, it would be trying to hold back the sea with a wave of its hand.

Our cooperation policies must be revitalized to help close the gap between North and South. The Economic and Social Council, whose presidency will be assumed by Italy at the start of the coming year, can be instrumental in eradicating poverty and harmonizing the differences between and the needs of the two hemispheres.

Renewed institutions will also have to manage the second pillar of stability: security. Here, too, the United Nations must play a central role. I refer not only to its traditional role of direct involvement in peacekeeping operations. Italy, I would underline, continues to provide a strong logistic base, as well as men and resources, for such missions and has long proposed ways to make these operations more efficient and effective.

I refer also to the novelty of the future: growing relations with other institutions, including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), to which the transatlantic community entrusts its defence. The Atlantic Alliance is redefining its strategies, missions and membership, but it is also rethinking its relations with the United Nations in a new spirit. It is looking to the United Nations for additional legitimacy to broaden the scope of its mission. This is another crucial aspect of the system of institutions that can guarantee peace and stability and on which we must build our future.

Peace is also jeopardized by resurgent temptations to brandish nuclear weapons in an effort to restore regional balances, enhance national prestige and consolidate national unity. While such goals can be in themselves legitimate, they become totally illusory if entrusted to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, instruments that threaten the very right to life. In the framework of institutional strengthening, we must, as a matter of priority, root out senseless ambitions that rely on lethal weapons. We must aim instead to complete the non-proliferation regime and make it more effective and more universal.

Security is jeopardized by a breed of terrorism that has become more and more irrational, threatening fragile peace processes, privatizing terror and directing its hatred mostly, but not exclusively, against the Western world and the values it represents. We must therefore redouble our common efforts to fight this scourge.

Individual rights are the third component of institutional strengthening, along with prosperity and security. The market and fundamental freedoms, as we increasingly discover, are two sides of the same coin. But human rights are likely to remain abstract or illusory if the United Nations cannot enforce them to the benefit of all individuals and, if necessary, also against their Governments.

The international community, and all of us individually, must deepen our commitment to safeguard these rights. The measure of our civilization is the protection we afford to the weakest and most vulnerable social groups. I am thinking first of children who are victims of atrocities whose true dimensions the media is only now beginning to expose.

The Rome Statute to establish the International Criminal Court represents what is probably the greatest institutional advancement since the San Francisco Charter. In this field, on the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights, it confers certainty and universality on the Charter's system of values. But here, too, we must complete our journey. Therefore, I urge those countries that have not yet done so — and they are the majority — to sign the Statute and to start to move towards prompt ratification.

The core of every reform touches on the Security Council. It is not enough to strengthen institutions: we must make them more democratic and representative. And it is on the concepts of democracy and representation that the debate over the future of the Security Council pivots.

Significant progress has been made in recent months in identifying measures aimed at improving the transparency and the working methods of the Security Council: greater openness of informal consultations; more involvement of countries that contribute troops to peacekeeping operations and multilateral forces; more prompt and detailed briefings on the Council's activities by the President-in-office; and ready availability of texts and documents being examined by the Council.

But the stalemate continues on the issue of enlarging the Council. The Italian Government will be willing to support any reasonable formula, provided that it does not prejudice the eventual establishment of a common European seat on the Council, distance Italy from the other principal industrial countries or increase the number of countries that are "more equal" than others, transforming the majority of Member States from protagonists into mere spectators.

The essential problem is one of principles and criteria. Italy has made and will continue to make an active contribution to this question that is of fundamental importance to international peace and stability. It will continue to fight for a more democratic, efficient and geographically representative Security Council. No one should feel excluded. Every country, no matter how large or small, has a contribution to make, an experience to share.

Given the current stalemate over increasing the number of permanent members, we wonder whether it would not make more sense to concentrate for the time being only on an increase in non-permanent seats. The solution of increasing the number of elective seats for every regional group would make it easier for all Member States to have access to the Security Council. After all, this is the same solution that was adopted in 1963, when the only previous enlargement of the Council took place.

As to the method we should follow to get there, we believe that on a matter of such crucial importance it is essential that any decision with Charter amendment implications should be adopted by a majority of two thirds of all Member States, as prescribed by Article 108 of the Charter.

These are some of our suggestions for the "quiet revolution" of the United Nations, to which Secretary-General Kofi Annan has dedicated such passion. We are grateful to him for his efforts.

The century that is about to end has taught that there are no definitive and total solutions. Although the institutions are imperfect, they are flexible instruments. It is our high duty to improve them so that they can become the visible hand of stability, together with the invisible hand of the market. Institutions are the only truly indispensable power.

Mr. Ba-Jammal (Yemen), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates, His Excellency The Honourable Rashid Abdullah Al-Noaimi.

Mr. Al-Noaimi (United Arab Emirates): I have the honour to extend to the President the congratulations of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. We are confident that his wise leadership and vast diplomatic experience in international affairs will contribute to strengthening the role of the Organization in the world today.

I also wish to pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, for the distinguished manner in which he directed the work of the previous session. We also wish to express our deep appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his endeavours to maintain peace, security and stability in the world.

As we stand at the threshold of a new millennium, the international community is witnessing radical changes in international relations, the implications of which are reflected in the lives of peoples. The various aspects of openness and globalization embodied in some of those changes have not been comprehensive in their positive aspects, but have resulted in widely divergent levels of economic and social development among States and have promoted the emergence of new patterns of problems that require radical joint international solutions to contain and deal with them.

There is now an increased awareness in the world of the inevitability of renewing and developing the United Nations as the essential international tool for dealing with current world problems and achieving balance, transparency and justice in international relations.

Consequently, we support the positions of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 regarding these vital issues, particularly the questions within the purview of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, and the reform of the Security Council and enlargement of its membership. We also call for strengthening coordination, cooperation and dialogue between the United Nations and regional organizations in order to mobilize and complement joint international efforts to deal with many issues on the agenda.

The world has seen positive efforts in the area of international law, the most important of which were reflected in the conclusion of a number of international conventions. The latest of these efforts was the establishment in Rome of an International Criminal Court, which we regard as an important step that will contribute to supporting the principles of human rights worldwide. We also call for reactivating the role of the International Court of Justice, which is the essential legal instrument for settling disputes between States.

Political events in the world, and particularly in the Arab Gulf region, have proved that radical solutions to regional disputes can only be achieved through peaceful means and methods based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Proceeding from this belief, and true to those principles, the United Arab Emirates has adopted a wise policy in its quest for a peaceful solution to the question of the occupation by the Islamic Republic of Iran of its three islands — Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa — which form an integral part of our national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The continued consolidation by Iran of its illegal occupation of those islands and the imposition of a policy of *fait accompli* through numerous military and civilian measures designed to change their historical, demographic and legal characteristics are a source of grave tension and concern in the region. This runs counter to good-neighbourly relations, peaceful coexistence and confidence-building, as well as to the Charters of both the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Such actions are also incompatible with the approaches taken by the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, which call for the settlement of existing disputes by peaceful means in order to achieve permanent security and stability in the region and strengthen relations and common interests between the States members of the Gulf Cooperation Council and Iran.