



General Assembly

Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

12th plenary meeting

Wednesday, 13 September 2000, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Holkeri (Finland)

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

Agenda item 122 (continued)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/55/345/Add.3)

The President: In a letter contained in document A/55/345/Add.3, the Secretary-General informs me that, since the issuance of his communications contained in document A/55/345 and addenda 1 and 2, Cape Verde has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in that document?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 9 (continued)

General debate

The President: I give the floor to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saint Kitts and Nevis, His Excellency The Honourable Sam Condor.

Mr. Condor (Saint Kitts and Nevis): The delegation of Saint Kitts and Nevis congratulates you, Sir, on your election to the presidency the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session. We pledge our full support and our assistance in the work ahead. Permit

me also to pay tribute to the work of your predecessor, who took us through a challenging fifty-fourth session.

As the new Foreign Minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis, I am deeply honoured to be addressing the Assembly at this historic moment of increasing expectations at the national level. At the same time, we salute the dawn of this millennium with consternation in the face of the unprecedented challenges that confront us.

The United Nations has matured in the past five decades, but we recognize that this is an institution where maturity cannot be measured in days or decades. The maturity of which I speak should be measured by the quality of our commitment and the depth of our vision.

The phenomenon of globalization has been characterized by growth in the level of trade, increased flows of capital, and advanced technology. Although we do not question this reality, we are cognizant of the inherent challenges and inequalities of globalization resulting from our varied levels of development. Small island developing States such as Saint Kitts and Nevis have yet to access a significant share of the vaunted benefits that globalization has brought in its wake. We continue to bear a disproportionate share of its costs while experiencing continuous marginalization due to our small size and to the volatility of financial flows.

We urge the United Nations to influence developed countries to improve market conditions for exports from small developing States, which are

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principle of peaceful reunification and one country, two systems in resolving the Taiwan question will serve the development of the two sides on either side of the straits, contribute to amity and unity among compatriots on both sides, and facilitate peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. The Chinese Government and people have committed themselves more strongly than anyone else to a peaceful reunification. They have demonstrated the utmost sincerity and made the greatest efforts to this end. We are convinced that — with the concerted efforts of the entire Chinese people, including those living in Taiwan — China will be able to realize its complete reunification at an earlier date.

We are entrusted with the important task of charting a course for mankind for the coming century. Let us join hands and work together to build a more secure, prosperous and progressive world in the new century.

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy, His Excellency The Honourable Lamberto Dini.

Mr. Dini (Italy): I wish to congratulate the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Namibia, Theo-Ben Gurirab, on his wise leadership of the fifty-fourth General Assembly and his able preparation of the Millennium Summit. I would also like to offer the incoming President, Harri Holkeri, my best wishes upon your assumption of this high office. Your commitment and experience will be invaluable in ensuring the success of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

Italy fully supports the statement made on behalf of the European Union by the current President, French Foreign Minister Hubert Védrine, and will make a decided contribution to the objectives he has indicated. Allow me to add that it is also in order to step up our commitment to achieving common goals that Italy is presenting its candidature for the Security Council for the next biennium.

The year 2001 will be the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. By unanimously adopting the relevant resolution in its fifty-third session, the General Assembly demonstrated its great sensitivity and attention to the profound structural changes under way in our national societies. It thereby sent a strong signal on a number of themes that the Secretary-General has put forth in his report on the role

of the Organization in the twenty-first century. These themes cannot fail to include the new face of international migration, whose gravest aspects include illegal immigration and the trampling of human dignity.

Dialogue among civilizations should not be addressed in the abstract, academically. It demands real contact and a bond between individuals and peoples. To ensure that these contacts and this bond do not mutate into tensions and strife, the community of States must try to understand and manage migratory phenomena. We must work together to prevent migration flows from plunging into chaos, a chaos for which the human person ultimately has to pay the highest price.

Migration needs to be governed by fixed, transparent rules. The source, the rationale of these rules is the United Nations, to which the San Francisco Charter in Article I, paragraph 3, entrusts the fundamental role:

“To achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character.”

I submit to you that today migration between or within continents has become an international problem with an economic, social, cultural and humanitarian character.

Any solution to the problems connected with migration must come to terms with the globalization process. Globalization has reduced distance and time. To an unprecedented degree it has linked countries at opposite ends of the earth. There are even those who speak, perhaps not wrongly, of “the end of geography”.

The paradox facing us stems from the real difficulties of globalization extending not only to the economy, finance and information but also to the movements of peoples. Most of these difficulties can be ascribed to the complex transition of many advanced countries to multi-ethnic and multicultural societies.

Human beings are not commodities. When individuals move, they preserve their roots, their specificity and their experience, even when they come into permanent contact with societies different from their own. Hence the need for mutual tolerance, to safeguard our respective customs and traditions.

The growing dimensions of migration have widened the gap between individual government's management capabilities and the individual person's ability to move, which is heavily influenced by progress in communications. All too often this gap is filled by organized crime, by ruthless criminals who, in some cases, traffic in human beings, in what amounts to a modern form of slavery.

We need to ask how we can safeguard freedom while impeding slavery; how we can prevent global economic development from sparking social tensions; how we can ensure that the growing contact between different civilizations will produce dialogue rather than intolerance. It will take a strong, determined commitment from all of us to draft rules that, if applied, can have a positive impact on international migration flows, to the benefit of both home and host countries.

Improving millions of human lives is the fundamental challenge of development: we need a clear, explicit and effective commitment to eradicate poverty. We must realize that in a globalized world, migration can gradually impoverish areas that are already economically and socially disadvantaged.

Development assistance initiatives from industrialized countries and non-governmental organizations alike cannot defeat misery and poverty, unless they are accompanied by an awareness that foreign debt is a huge burden for Governments, families and individuals. Generous remission of the poorest countries' debt is not just an option: I feel it is a must. This is why the Italian Parliament recently approved a law to reduce foreign debt owed to Italy by a total of \$6 billion over the next three years.

Italy will also play a pro-active role in urging the leading actors in the field of development assistance to show determination in preparing the conference on less-developed countries scheduled to take place in Brussels next May. Moreover, my country confirms its support for the needs and aspirations of the small-island States and the landlocked countries, as it has emphasized in the Economic and Social Council and other forums.

But debt reduction is not enough. It should be coupled with sound government policies in the beneficiary countries, as part of an integrated strategy underlying a new international social contract. In other words, we must promote a package that combines

responsible political, economic and social reforms with an opening-up of international markets. The 2001 high-level intergovernmental meeting on financing for development will provide us with a close opportunity to finalize a strategy.

The fears that immigration sometimes generates should not lead industrialized countries to build new walls and fences. Such fears reject contact with diversity and make some feel as if they were strangers in their own country. A Europe built on fear, for example, would ultimately cast immigrants as the imaginary enemy, as a race apart. Any effort to overcome such negative stereotyping should be applauded, such as the Conference against Racism, scheduled for 2001 in Pretoria.

The European Union has a great capacity to take in people, and already has large immigrant communities. But only now is it developing a common approach to immigration. The European Union's strategy relies on cooperation with other countries, since the issue cannot be addressed solely through border patrols and tougher repression of illegal immigration, regardless of the cost.

For many years Europe did not have to worry about the long-term consequences of immigration. But today, with a declining birth rate and an ageing population, Europe needs a strategy that embraces the complex process of integrating people from different regions of the world.

Then, there is the tragic, heinous trafficking in human beings. As the United States Secretary of State Madeleine Albright stated in this Assembly, we must put a stop to this trafficking, a stop to boats being cast into the sea, filled with sadness and desperation, driven by hopes in a promised land. The pictures of these illegal crossings have become unbearable. They epitomize a state of affairs governed by the black market, where there is an over-abundance of illegal labour. This new form of piracy would be impossible if those involved knew that they could not count on collusion, safe havens and, all too often, impunity.

For example, the Mediterranean Sea, around which great civilizations have prospered, is being crossed by people who pay ruthless exploiters and sometimes become their victims. In many cases, illegal immigrants find it hard to gain access to the rule-of-law society, and end up being treated as commodities.

As we know, immigration has various causes: poverty, ethnic and religious strife, the repression of totalitarian regimes, and the demands of more affluent economies. Today, as never before, immigration is driven by broadcast images that often distort honest hopes for a better life. Moreover, it has reached unprecedented proportions. In fact, since the early eighties the number of countries that receive immigrants has risen from 39 to 67, while the number of countries of emigration has risen from 29 to 55. We would be fooling ourselves to think that a phenomenon of such proportions could be brought under control solely through bilateral agreements.

The European Union has made cooperation between national Governments a priority since the European Council meeting of October 1999. But recent experience points to the need for an approach in which only the United Nations can confer the indispensable character of universality.

Italy has much to share in this regard. Until a few decades ago, large sections of our population were forced to seek work in distant lands with different languages and traditions. Their lives were often marked by hardship, want and family separation. This chapter of social history had points of light and of darkness, but on the whole it was a source of great moral and spiritual wealth.

Starting in the early 1970s, Italy became a land of immigration, although it could not yet provide full employment for all its people. As a land of both emigration and immigration, Italy is well situated to address in a constructive manner global migration today. Italian domestic law is based on the principle of "soft integration", designed to provide permanent residents with an opportunity that does not force them to renounce the rich heritage of their native cultures.

It is on these grounds that, here before the General Assembly, I urge the United Nations to raise the awareness of the community of States and introduce appropriate instruments. Three instruments, in my view, deserve to be coordinated and integrated. First is assistance to the developing countries; assistance in preventing and quelling the tensions that, at least in part, give rise to migration flows, as well as assistance in easing the integration of their economies with those of the more advanced countries. As we all know, this is a priority that the United Nations is pursuing through various committees and through the

enhanced role of the United Nations Development Programme. We must strive to improve the instruments already available to us, responding to the visionary proposals of Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

Secondly, as a deterrent to illegal entry, we need stricter and more consistent law enforcement. Success depends on effective cooperation between the countries of origin, the countries of transit and the countries of arrival. Such efforts should also aim to prevent the spread of pockets of illegality and organized crime by promoting greater stability, moral authority and control in fledgling democracies. This would be invaluable to securing the support of public opinion in industrialized countries for cooperation policies.

Thirdly, we need to manage migration so that it is a source of stability and wealth, to the benefit of all. For this to happen, migration must take place legally. If everyone complies with the law, immigrants will be welcomed in their host countries and become fully integrated into society.

These three guidelines must be set within a global framework. There are plenty of organizations that deal with migration at the international level. Yet while they provide praiseworthy services, their sectorial nature means that they cannot have the kind of overall vision that only effective coordination can guarantee.

A solidarity pact, therefore, is needed to find the best and most effective way of balancing the supply of and demand for labour, while fully respecting the diversity of the people concerned. The greatest challenge in the age of globalization is to design new forms of cooperation between Governments that will enable each to see that its interests are reflected in international policy decisions. The United Nations continues to be the most natural forum for adopting such decisions and ensuring their implementation.

I want to conclude my message today by recalling the words of a great American President, John Fitzgerald Kennedy. Almost 40 years ago he said,

"Now the trumpet summons us again ... to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle ... against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease and war itself.

"Can we forge against these enemies a grand and global alliance, North and South, East and West, that can ensure a more fruitful life for

all mankind? Will you join in that historic effort?" (*Inaugural Address, 20 January 1961*)

That is what he said, and this is the wish that I should like to make here: that the United Nations, through its indispensable role, may strengthen its contribution to creating a better and more just world with the unflinching support of its membership.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kuwait.

Sheikh Al-Sabah (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the delegation of the State of Kuwait, it gives me pleasure to extend to you, Mr. President, warm congratulations on your unanimous election as President of the fifty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly. We wish you success in steering the deliberations of this landmark session. Let me assure you of my delegation's commitment to work constructively with you towards meeting the common goals and aspirations of the international community.

I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the remarkable efforts made and prudence shown by your predecessor during his presidency of the last session of the Assembly.

In the same vein, let me once again place on record our great admiration of and appreciation for the crucial role played by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, since he assumed the helm at the United Nations. Mr. Annan has been working tirelessly to improve the performance of the Organization's system in the interest of global peace, security and development and to bring it more in line with the ongoing transformations in international relations.

On a membership note, let me now extend a warm welcome to the Republic of Tuvalu, which has joined our ranks as the newest Member of the United Nations. Tuvalu's admission to membership enhances the universal character of the Organization.

Just a few days ago, United Nations Headquarters hosted an unprecedented, historic gathering of a very large number of heads of State or Government, who come together to renew their commitments to the Charter of the United Nations and to reiterate their unwavering belief in the importance and relevance of the United Nations in developing a better world,

structured on the values of justice, equality, coexistence and cooperation.

The Millennium Summit was a momentous occasion to review and appraise the achievements and failures of the past. It was an occasion to sketch out a vision to face the challenges of the future. The Declaration adopted by the Summit, together with the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century, are a blueprint for addressing the pressing problems and challenges that will confront mankind in key areas. Chief among those daunting challenges that hamper the fulfilment of peoples' aspirations around the globe to achieve adequate levels of freedom, dignity and peace are the arms race, increasing national and racial conflicts, poverty, ignorance, development, human rights abuses, terrorism, environmental degradation and the spread of lethal infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS and malaria. The list can indeed go on ad infinitum. The effects and dangers of those problems cut across national borders and transcend any artificial barriers. If anything, this fact confirms the need for consolidated international efforts and a reinforced United Nations role system-wide.

Here, we note with some measure of satisfaction the ongoing attempts being made at the global level to cope with those problems. Numerous world conferences and special sessions of the General Assembly held in the last few years have facilitated the conclusion of several international agreements and treaties covering a range of subjects. In those meetings, it was reaffirmed that resolve would rid humanity of the risks of nuclear weapons and the alarming dangers posed to international peace and security by their proliferation. In another important area, the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action were entrenched to enhance the status of women and to ensure their full rights. The Copenhagen Summit, with its focus on universal human development, was also the subject of a follow-up conference held recently.

In that regard, the State of Kuwait takes pride in the fact that the United Nations Development Programme's *Human Development Report 2000* states that Kuwait has maintained its rank of first among Arab countries, and number 36 in the world, in the field of human development. Kuwait is now determined to pursue its efforts to do even better in the future. A key component of our efforts is our