



UNITED NATIONS

NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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ADDRESS TO THE 2005 WORLD SUMMIT

New York, 14 September 2005

Co- Presidents,

Majesties,

Heads of State and Government,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Two years ago, speaking from this podium, I said that we stood at a fork in the road.

I did not mean that the United Nations, marking its sixtieth anniversary this year, was in existential crisis. The Organization remains fully engaged in conflict resolution, peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, defence of human rights, and development around the world.

No, I meant that deep divisions among Member States, and the underperformance of our collective institutions, were preventing us from coming together to meet the threats we face and seize the opportunities before us.

The clear danger was that States of all kinds might increasingly resort to self-help, leading to a proliferation of ad hoc responses that would be divisive, destabilizing, and dangerous.

To help you, the Member States, chart a more hopeful course, I appointed the High-level Panel, and commissioned the Millennium Project. Their reports set the agenda for reform.

Drawing on these reports and the early reactions of Member States, as well as my own conviction that our work must be based on respect for human rights, I put forward, six months ago, a balanced set of proposals for decisions at this Summit.

Those proposals were ambitious. But I believed they were necessary, given the era of peril and promise in which we live. And I believed they were achievable, if the political will was there.

Since then, under the able leadership of President Ping, your representatives have been negotiating an outcome document for this Summit. They have worked hard, right up to the last minute, and yesterday they produced the document that is now before you.

Even before they finished their work, this Summit served as a trigger for progress on critical issues. In recent months, a Democracy Fund has been created, and a convention against nuclear terrorism has been finalized.

Most important of all, an additional \$50 billion a year has been unleashed to fight poverty by 2015. The 0.7 target has gained new support; innovative sources of financing are now coming to fruition; and there has been progress on debt relief.

By your agreement on the outcome document, these achievements will be locked in. And progress on development will be matched by commitments to good governance and national plans to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

Millions of lives, and the hopes of billions, rest on the implementation of these and other pledges to fight poverty, disease, illiteracy, inequality, and on development remaining at the centre of trade negotiations in the year ahead.

Your adoption of the outcome document will achieve vital breakthroughs in other areas as well.

You will condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, committed by whomever, wherever, for whatever purpose. You will pledge to seek agreement on a comprehensive anti-terrorism convention in the coming year. And you will signal your support for a strategy to make sure that we fight terrorism in a way that makes the international community stronger and terrorists weaker, not the other way around.

For the first time, you will accept, clearly and unambiguously, that you have a collective responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. You will make clear your willingness to take timely and decisive collective action through the Security Council, when peaceful means prove inadequate and national authorities are manifestly failing to protect their own populations. Excellencies, you will be pledged to act if another Rwanda looms.

You will agree to establish a Peacebuilding Commission, backed by a support office and a fund. This will mark a new level of strategic commitment to one of the most important contributions the United Nations makes to international peace and security. You will also agree to create a standing police capacity for the United Nations peacekeeping operations.

You will agree to double the budget of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and strengthen her office. You will also agree that the failures of the Human Rights Commission must be remedied by establishing a new Human Rights Council, the details of which must now be worked out during the 60th General Assembly.

You will strengthen early humanitarian funding, to prevent hidden emergencies remaining forgotten -- as we have seen happen too often, particularly in Africa.

And you will put in place a framework for a far-reaching Secretariat and management reform, which must be followed up and implemented. An independent oversight committee and ethics office, on which I will be giving you more details in the near future, will help ensure accountability and integrity, while the review of old mandates, the overhaul of rules on budget and human resources, and one-time buy-out of staff, will help re-align the Secretariat to the priorities of the Organization in the 21st century.

Taken together, this amounts to a far-reaching package of changes. But let us be frank with each other, and with the peoples of the United Nations. We have not yet achieved the sweeping and fundamental reform that I and many others believe is required. Sharp differences, some of them substantive and legitimate, have played their part in preventing that.

Our biggest challenge, and our biggest failing, is on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. Twice this year -- at the NPT review conference, and now at this Summit -- we have allowed posturing to get in the way of results. This is inexcusable. Weapons of mass destruction pose a grave danger to us all, particularly in a world threatened by terrorists with global ambitions and no inhibitions. We must pick up the pieces in order to renew negotiations on this vital issue, and we should support the efforts Norway has been making to find a basis for doing so.

Likewise, Security Council reform has, for the moment, eluded us, even though everyone broadly agrees that it is long overdue.

The fact that you have not reached agreement on these and other issues does not render them any less urgent.

So this package is a good start. On some issues, we have real breakthroughs. On others, we have narrowed our differences and made progress. On others again, we remain worryingly far apart.

We must now turn to the next stages in the reform process.

First, we must implement what has been agreed. The coming session of the General Assembly will be one of its most important, and we must give our support to President Eliasson as he assumes his duties. We must get the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council up and running, conclude a comprehensive convention on terrorism, and make sure the Democracy Fund starts working effectively. And the coming years will test our resolve to halve extreme poverty by 2015, to act if genocide looms again, and to improve our success rate in building peace in war-torn countries.

These are the tests that really matter.

Second, we must keep working with determination on the tough issues on which progress is urgent but has not yet been achieved. Because one thing has emerged clearly from this process on which we embarked two years ago: whatever our differences, in our interdependent world, we stand or fall together.

Whether our challenge is peacemaking, nation-building, democratization or responding to natural or man-made disasters, we have seen that even the strongest amongst us cannot succeed alone.

At the same time, whether our task is fighting poverty, stemming the spread of disease, or saving innocent lives from mass murder, we have seen that we cannot succeed without the leadership of the strong, and the engagement of all.

And we have been reminded, again and again, that to ignore basic principles – of democracy, of human rights, of rule of law – for the sake of expediency, undermines confidence in our collective institutions, in building a world that is freer, fairer and safer for all.

That is why a healthy, effective United Nations is so vital. If properly utilized, it can be a unique marriage of power and principle, in the service of all the world's peoples.

And that is why this reform process matters, and must continue. No matter how frustrating things are, no matter how difficult agreement is, there is no escaping the fact that the challenges of our time must be met by action – and today, more than ever, action must be collective if it is to be effective.

For my part, I am ready to work with you on the challenges that remain, on implementing what has been agreed, and on continuing to reform the culture and practice of the Secretariat. We must restore confidence in the Organization's integrity, impartiality, and ability to deliver – for the sake of our dedicated staff, and those vulnerable and needy people throughout the world who look to the United Nations for support.

It is for their sake, not yours or mine, that this reform agenda matters. It is to save their lives, to protect their rights, to ensure their safety and freedom, that we simply must find effective collective responses to the challenges of our time.

I urge you, as world leaders, individually and collectively, to keep working on this reform agenda -- to have the patience to persevere, and the vision needed to forge a real consensus.

We must find what President Franklin Roosevelt once called “the courage to fulfill our responsibilities in an admittedly imperfect world”. I am not sure we have done that yet. But I believe all of us now understand that we need to do it. Precisely because our world is imperfect, we need the United Nations.

Thank you very much.