



For a reform of the United Nations system

Address

**by Joschka Fischer,
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of the Federal Republic of Germany,
to the General Assembly
of the United Nations**

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Mr President,

Let me first of all congratulate you, President Ping, on your election and wish you every success in your responsible office. I would also like to express my sincere thanks to the outgoing President for his dedicated work. I endorse the statement of the Netherlands EU Presidency.

Mr President,

At the dawn of the 21st century, the world is changing at dramatic speed. In just a few decades, humanity will have reached the 8 billion mark. With the networking of world trade, with global communication technologies, we are growing ever closer. We are going to become increasingly interdependent in economic and technical terms.

At the same time, we all face a host of new challenges, new dangers which threaten us all - the South and the North, the developing and the developed world alike.

On the one hand, there are threats to national and global security such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the nuclear threat, the danger posed by failed states or, as we all painfully remember in this city, by terrorism.

On the other hand, there are also so-called "soft" threats such as far-reaching environmental and climatic changes, poverty, major shortfalls in education and training and the negative aspects of globalization, refugee flows, disease and epidemics such as HIV/AIDS and malaria. They are a threat to security and stability and take a heavy toll.

The two, "hard" and "soft" threats, are closely connected. After all, we know the causes of war and violence, poverty, need and suppression are multi-faceted and deep-rooted. We also know crises are the fruit of poverty and a sense of hopelessness and vice versa. We will have no peace without development, nor indeed development without peace. So we have to comprehensively secure peace and stability - above all through economic and social development.

Mr President,

The states of the world have to shape economic, technological and ecological globalization together and rise to the resulting challenges. They will not be able to do so without close cooperation. This is now beyond the tools of traditional diplomacy alone. Their ability to

secure and stabilize the international system on their own will in the future prove less and less adequate.

What we need is a far-reaching reform of the international system and its institutions that takes due account of these changes. And this is a reform we need urgently because we have to create an effective multilateral system which enables us to prevent crises together and, where this does not work, find long-term solutions.

There have already been promising developments at regional level.

Very much with their history in mind, the states of Europe have joined together in the European Union and thus reached a new level of multilateralism. This political and economic community now embracing 25 states has become an anchor of stability for Europe and beyond.

Since its foundation, the African Union has been impressively shouldering its shared responsibility for preventing humanitarian disasters and resolving major regional conflicts. This is a key step forward. This breakthrough of multilateralism on the African continent will develop an ever more pronounced dynamism.

Given global interdependencies and connections, we need a world organization that has close links to these regional structures and can thus boost the efficiency of joint action. The United Nations is the most important forum for setting global rules. Its might is the might of the right, as the Secretary-General highlighted in his impressive speech at the opening of this General Assembly. With its legitimacy, we have a unique and universal competence for solving problems together. Since the breaking of the internal blockade caused by the Cold War, it has been playing an increasingly significant role.

The international community is making more and more use of the United Nations as a forum for tackling the major challenges facing humanity. For millions of people today, the blue flag means quite tangible help often on essential issues and hope of a better future. For this we are all very much indebted to the organization and its staff. They are on the ground in many crisis regions in Latin America, Europe, Africa and Asia. It is becoming ever clearer that different approaches have to be found to prevent or resolve each individual crisis.

The commitment of the United Nations in all crisis areas is the proof: in Afghanistan and in the Balkans, in Haiti and in the Great Lakes region.

In all these areas, the United Nations is already making a considerable contribution. But we have to realize that there are not going to be any fewer conflicts in the future and the demands made of the organization are going to grow.

Against this backdrop the question arises whether the structures given to the United Nations on its foundation almost sixty years ago are still suited to this mandate, whether its work enjoys the international acceptance it needs. In particular the disputes concerning the Iraq crisis highlighted this problem once again.

We are convinced there is no alternative to a world acting multilaterally. And to make this multilateral cooperation sustainable and capable, we need a courageous and comprehensive reform of the UN.

Mr President,

It was the Secretary-General himself who took the initiative and for this we extend our thanks. To this end, he appointed a panel of high-level international experts who are to present him with reform proposals at the end of the year. We look forward to this report and the ensuing debate with great interest.

What is at stake is a new, shared understanding of the Charter system. How can we shape prevention more effectively and peacebuilding more sustainably? How can we further implement the proposals on the reform of peacekeeping? What exactly do we understand by the right of self-defence? And how do we define terrorism? The answer to this question in particular seems clear, yet real agreement would take us a step forward.

A number of very concrete proposals on the reform of the UN institutions has already been presented. Let me therefore outline some thoughts on this matter.

I want to start with the General Assembly. It is the central organ of the United Nations, the only one with universal membership.

For this very reason, the General Assembly has to be more than an annual forum where we just go through the motions. What we need to do firstly is focus our topics more carefully. We

have to discuss the truly crucial issues - otherwise essential questions will be dealt with in other fora. Secondly we need more efficient working methods.

Mr President,

The Economic and Social Council has to finally become the central organ in the UN system for consultation and decision-making on economic and social issues.

We believe that ECOSOC has at two levels vast potential which has yet to be fully tapped.

On the one hand, this body maintains a network of expertise unequalled in the world. We have to make better and more targeted use of it.

On the other hand, we see ECOSOC as a partner for the Security Council for peacekeeping as laid down in Article 65 of the Charter. When it comes to fighting the causes of conflicts and to post-crisis rehabilitation, ECOSOC has an important role to play that can support Security Council efforts for conflict prevention and peacebuilding. We should grant ECOSOC more competences in the operative sphere.

After all, the efforts we make in peace missions will only be successful if the military commitment is followed by a longer phase of stabilization. The ECOSOC advisory groups on post-crisis rehabilitation in Africa are a step in the right direction. That is what the decisive link between conflict management and development cooperation could look like.

Such an all-embracing approach needs appropriate financial resources. The instrument of voluntary contributions has proven insufficient. I therefore propose earmarking a certain share of the UN peacekeeping budget for post-crisis rehabilitation. This means we could achieve what we have long been trying. A "prevention share" which, let us remember Haiti, could help us save the costs of conflicts flaring up again.

Mr President,

Many criticize the proliferation of subsidiary and subordinate organizations of the United Nations. Of course, a reduction cannot be an end in itself. But we ought to exercise enough self-criticism to ask ourselves whether it would not be better to pool competences in some cases.

However, there are also spheres which need to be better equipped. I am thinking here, for example, of the handling of environmental issues in the UN system. We thus support the proposal made by the French President Jacques Chirac last year to upgrade UNEP into a specialized agency with universal membership. This could considerably strengthen UNEP's contribution to sustainable development.

Mr President,

At the heart of the reform of the United Nations is the organ shouldering the central responsibility for international peace: the Security Council. Conflicts are on the increase. They stretch across all continents. They are growing in complexity. In turn, the responsibility and competences of the Council have expanded constantly. Crisis prevention will play an increasingly important role. And for peacebuilding ever more comprehensive strategies, closer cooperation and additional resources will be needed. This will mean more and more decisions that entail long-term obligations, create new international law and make major inroads into state sovereignty.

If we really want its decisions to be accepted as legitimate and effectively implemented, we have to reform the Council. It has to more broadly represent a world organization today embracing more than 191 countries. This is inconceivable without increasing the number of seats - for permanent and non-permanent members alike.

The reasons behind such a move speak for themselves. A Council with more members would enjoy greater acceptance internationally as a basis for greater authority.

The more balanced and comprehensive representation of all continents, also amongst the permanent members, would lead to a better sense of ownership of the Security Council for all states.

Similarly, an enlargement would considerably bolster the motivation of the new Security Council members to make a long-term contribution to realizing the goals of the United Nations.

The enlargement must adequately reflect sea changes such as decolonization, the end of the Cold War and globalization. The composition of the Council must ultimately mirror the current geopolitical reality. This means all major regions of the South must be represented by permanent members in the Security Council.

At the same time, account has to be taken of members who can and want to make a particularly meaningful and sustainable contribution to maintaining world peace and international security and to realizing the purposes of the organization.

This twofold approach would increase the Council's efficiency and its ability to act and assert itself.

Mr President,

For 40 years, the composition of the Security Council has remained unchanged. I believe it is high time to adapt it to the new global reality. Half-baked or interim solutions are neither necessary nor helpful.

Just like Brazil, India and Japan, also Germany is ready to take on the responsibility associated with a permanent seat in the Security Council. But it is especially important that the African continent be represented amongst the new permanent members.

But a second aspect also has to be taken into account in Security Council reform. All in all, a greater number of member states who are engaging for the United Nations should be able to get more involved in the work of the Security Council. For this to happen, additional non-permanent seats also have to be created. This means the balance between permanent and non-permanent members can be retained.

Mr President,

As I said before, UN reform will be the central and defining theme of this General Assembly. I thus call upon the member states: Let us use this 59th Session right up until the next General Assembly in 2005 to launch the overdue reforms and achieve tangible results.

We, the member states, have to muster the political insight, the will and the creativity to adapt the organization to the global reality. Germany is ready to make a committed contribution.

Thank you.