



Statement by

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and
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at the

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. President,

It is with great pleasure that I congratulate you on your election as President of the 59th Session of the General Assembly.

We are living in trying and turbulent times. As we meet, the world continues to be haunted by the spectre of terrorism, as most recently evidenced in Russia and Iraq. The victims are as always the innocent. The objective is global insecurity and instability, leading to increased intolerance and social regression. The hideousness of the means employed by terrorists exposes them for what they are. No just political cause can be served by such acts. The war against terrorism is a struggle against barbarism. The perpetrators of terror must be rooted out and their bases and networks destroyed. This war is inherently a campaign in support of the values the UN seeks to foster and it is in response to a threat which has serious implications for all of the member states of our organization. Our challenge is to actively defend freedom against the forces of tyranny to affect the conditions which help create the spectre of terrorism.

Mr. President,

If anyone thought that the threats to global security which provided the impetus for looking at serious reforms of the United Nations system had receded - then surely the recent terrorist outrage in Southern Russia gives pause for reflection. The great challenges in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as in parts of Africa, and the considerable work still remaining to achieve the Millennium Development Goals testify to the fact that the need for change has not passed. On the contrary.

The High-Level Panel will soon submit its report and next year a Summit is planned for the 60th Anniversary of the UN and in the fifth year since the Millennium Summit. Iceland believes that we now have a historic opportunity to undertake meaningful and long awaited reform. That would in no small way be a reinforcement of the idea of multilateralism and, if genuine and farsighted, will equip the UN to deal more effectively with threats to global security.

It will be our heavy responsibility here next year to hammer out decisions on reform. We will have the opportunity to make changes which will equip the multilateral system to be more effective in preventing conflict, in resolving conflict where it does occur and in building peace following conflict.

Mr. President,

We can of course choose to do nothing – we can linger complacently in the inertia of the status quo. The consequence would, however, be that the UN would become less and less capable of facing those common challenges to our security.

In particular, we must grasp the chance to make the Security Council itself more representative while increasing its efficiency and effectiveness. The discussions of many

years on increasing the number of non-permanent and permanent seats must reach a conclusion.

It is time that certain countries which have long made a considerable contribution to the work of the UN be given permanent seats on the Security Council. I am referring here, for example, to Germany, India, Japan and Brazil. But it is no less important to ensure that Africa also be given a permanent seat on the Council.

Mr. President,

Smaller states make up the vast majority of UN members. Ensuring that smaller states are adequately represented in the various organs of the UN is not only a matter of paying due regard to the principles of sovereignty. It is also a practical matter of ensuring that the particular challenges faced by smaller states, both island states and others, are taken account of in the multilateral system. Iceland knows the problems of being far away from potential markets. We know well the struggle of small economies to diversify, and we have direct experience of the vulnerability of small countries to external economic shocks and natural disasters. I would like to use this opportunity to extend our sympathy to all those Caribbean states which have suffered so much in the recent hurricanes. My Government is considering ways in which it could contribute to disaster relief or reconstruction.

Just as it is fundamental to the legitimacy of the Security Council that there be fair representation from the different regions of the world, it is also important that the many smaller states feel that their issues are understood and taken into account. In this context, I would like to refer to the previously announced candidacy of Iceland for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the period 2009-2010, which was already endorsed by the Nordic States within the Western European and Other States Group in 1998, namely Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden.

Smaller states make a valuable contribution to running the multilateral system. Smaller states provide some of the most innovative thinking on approaches to the challenges we face and, in per capita terms and often absolute terms, are some of the most generous contributors.

Mr. President,

An issue of key concern to small island states, but also to the world at large, is sustainable use of the world's resources. As Iceland completed its term as a member of the Commission on Sustainable Development, my government was very pleased to see the organizational changes on the working methods of the CSD implemented at its 12th session in April. My government looks forward to continuing its active participation in the future work of the CSD to achieve and promote sustainable development of the world's resources. Iceland will also continue to work on alternative energy resources, particularly the possibilities of hydrogen as a clean energy provider.

Iceland is committed to reaching the Millennium Development Goals as they are laid out in the Millennium Declaration. My government will participate actively in the

preparation for the Major Summit in 2005. It is clear that the international community must speed up its efforts in order to achieve before 2015 the goals set by the Millennium Summit. We regard the 2005 summit to be one of the important milestones on the way to achieving them.

Mr. President,

In turning to questions concerning particular regions, Iceland warmly welcomes the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) initiative and its aims to ensure democracy, human rights, good governance and sound economic management. The efforts of the African countries in the management and resolution of conflicts in their own region and the establishment of a Peace and Security Council (PSC) within the African Union is a groundbreaking development, as is the African mediation in a number of conflicts and efforts of the AU and African regional organizations to develop their capabilities for peace supporting operations.

Sub-Saharan Africa continues to be the focus of Icelandic bilateral development cooperation, and we will continue to increase our contribution and involvement in multilateral development cooperation.

Iceland welcomes the recent understanding among WTO members on a framework for the continuation of the Doha development round of negotiations on trade liberalization. The multilateral trading system is a proven vehicle in promoting economic development and growth and is central to the future prosperity of our nations. It is noteworthy that particular attention is paid to the needs of the least developed countries. It is important that they fully reap the benefits the multilateral trading system has to offer. Iceland believes that the framework will give the negotiators in Geneva a new platform for prompt conclusion of the Doha round. We want to do our part in making sure that globalisation benefits all countries - not least through targeted development cooperation. In an effort to assist the African countries in making the most of the Doha round, Iceland is participating with the other Nordic countries in the Nordic Africa Initiative.

Mr. President,

Security Council Resolution 1546 (2004), unanimously adopted on 6 June, provided for the restoration of sovereignty in Iraq. The resolution assigns the United Nations a leading role in assisting in the building of a legitimate representative government and democratic institutions. It equally demonstrated the will of the Council and indeed the international community to resolve past differences and give the political and economic reconstruction of Iraq first priority. My government continues to be ready to lend its support to the difficult work ahead in Iraq. In Iraq as elsewhere, Iceland would like to emphasise the importance of ensuring the safety of UN missions.

Afghanistan will continue to occupy our attention in the coming months. The UN has done valuable work in registering around 10 million voters. The presidential elections on 9 October in Afghanistan will be an important milestone in the process of rebuilding Afghanistan. We must retain an ongoing commitment to Afghanistan, where serious

challenges to the rebuilding of the country continue to be faced. Iceland has demonstrated its support and taken over the leading role in the running of the Kabul International airport under the auspices of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

An area of continuing concern is of course the Middle East. The Icelandic Government continues to call on Israel and the Palestinian Authority to resume negotiations on a political settlement. The Roadmap lays down a realistic way to achieve a two-State solution. Iceland fully supports the efforts of the Quartet. We urge the Quartet and all other well intentioned parties to continue to focus on this issue.

Mr. President,

I concentrated at the start of my address on terrorism. Terrorism is an assault on human rights. I would like to express strong support for the initiative by the Secretary-General urging member states to ratify all those conventions which concern protection of the rights of the ordinary citizen.

In conducting the war against terrorism we must protect the human rights which terrorists themselves flout. We must be sure that human rights and humanitarian law are not sacrificed. I would like to refer here to the key role played by the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the entire Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, in monitoring the application of the Geneva Conventions and at the same time express appreciation of that work.

During this Session of the General Assembly Iceland will continue to work to further the issue of human rights. In this context we look forward to marking the 25th anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) and we urge those states which are not parties to accede to the Convention.

Iceland will also continue to work with others to uproot racism and religious intolerance as central elements in preventing conflict and creating a secure human environment.

Mr. President,

Iceland is totally committed to the multilateral system of which the UN is the fulcrum. Without an effective multilateral system conflict and its causes will be much more difficult to address. But to be effective the system needs change. The Government of Iceland sincerely hopes that we can bring about necessary change during the next year and look forward to working with all member states to that end.