



IRELAND

STATEMENT

by

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Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ireland

to the 59th Session

of the United Nations General Assembly

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**Address by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ireland, Mr. Brian Cowen,
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Mr. President,

I first addressed this General Assembly in the year 2000. The Millennium year was a time of great hope, reflected in the outcome of Millennium Summit. World leaders committed the peoples of the planet to a new beginning in which the dawn of the twenty-first century would mark a break from the past, with a new sharing of burdens, and a new common dedication to peace and human progress.

Today, the light of that new dawn is obscured by the dark clouds of war, terror, ethnic violence and continuing abuse of human rights.

Twelve months ago, and again this week, the Secretary-General pointed out that this Organisation is at a fork in the road and that we have to decide on the way forward. Much work has been undertaken since the Secretary-General laid down that challenge. The Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change is working on its report and I am pleased to recall the European Union made a detailed submission to the Panel, drawn up during Ireland's recent Presidency of the Union. We also took a decision to mainstream the issue of effective multilateralism in the Union's discussions with other regional groups.

We await the Panel's report and the Secretary-General's recommendations which will follow. In his address on Tuesday, the Secretary-General expressed

the hope that when Heads of State and Government meet next year to review progress on the Millennium Declaration they will be ready to take bold decisions. They must, because the longer we linger at the fork in the road, the more difficult will be the road ahead.

We cannot afford to poone action. More and more citizens of the world are questioning whether the UN has the capacity or even the will to prevent conflict and protect the vulnerable from injustice. They are becoming increasingly disillusioned with an Organisation which either cannot take decisions or whose decisions are ignored with impunity. They see the politics of the lowest common denominator in operation, with strong and sensible draft Resolutions watered down to mere platitudes. They hear the UN being denigrated by those who make a virtue of their determination to put national interests above all other considerations. They fear that the Organisation is no longer driven by the determination and idealism of the founding fathers

My Prime Minister, the Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, made clear last year, when he addressed this General Assembly, where the fault lies. It rests with us – the governments of the Member States. We have a strong and much respected Secretary-General in Kofi Annan. We have brave and dedicated officials. Many have put their lives on the line for this Organisation and what it stands for. Some have made the ultimate sacrifice. UN staff deserve better protection in future.

It is time for the governments of the Member States to act. We need, as the Secretary-General put it, "to seek common solutions to common problems" . This will require political will and effective structures. Neither one on its own will suffice.

The essential requirement is a more effective system of collective security. Such a system requires the unique legitimacy offered by an effective United Nations and its Charter. It is clear that the composition of the Security Council no longer

accurately reflects global geopolitical realities. In Ireland's view, a modest and regionally balanced increase in its membership, both permanent and non-permanent, is justified. Increased representation from the developing world would enhance its legitimacy, and thereby its effectiveness.

But a more effective Security Council will need more than a change in structures. There has to be a change in attitudes. Those States who sit on the Security Council have a responsibility to rise above national or regional interests and act in the wider interests of mankind. This is an obligation which rests on each and every Member of the Council. But those who either assert or aspire to positions of world leadership - and there is no shortage of candidates - bear a particular responsibility to act in the global interest.

Putting national interests first is not an effective answer to the challenges which confront us. It may be a cliché to say that our planet is shrinking, but that does not make it any less true. While most of us continue to wish to organize and govern ourselves primarily within the framework of the nation state, we must recognise that technological development and economic integration is impairing the effectiveness of the nation state as a defensive bastion.

Power and influence must be used in the interests of the international community as a whole, rather than for the pursuit of narrow, short-term interests. States and regions have broad and varied interests, individual and collective. Our system must accommodate and reconcile these interests; otherwise we are doomed to division between those who would impose hegemony, and those who would resist it.

Mr. President,

In his report on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration the Secretary-General has warned that the world is falling short in its performance toward the

achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. In sub-Saharan Africa, especially, many countries are caught in a poverty trap and face the crippling challenges of unsustainable debt and HIV/AIDS, often compounded by instability.

Ireland fully recognises the seriousness of the shortfall in development funding that faces us, estimated at \$50 billion. The best means of bridging this gap is for donor nations to recommit themselves to reaching the United Nations target for Official Development Assistance of 0.7 percent of GNP. The Irish Government remains committed to this goal. Ireland, which has increased its ODA very substantially in recent years, will continue working actively with its developing country partners to build a strong global partnership for development.

Economic and social development is the means by which the world's poorer countries can be lifted out of poverty. An open international trading regime aimed at facilitating investment is an integral part of our multilateral system, and fair market access is an essential part of this. Some developing countries estimate that, in a best-case scenario, a successful outcome to the Doha Round could help raise up to 500 million people out of extreme poverty. Fairer international trading arrangements are imperative if we are to address the problems of under-development.

Ireland and its European Union partners are determined not to be found wanting in the task of bringing the Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations, finally, to a conclusion with an agreement that meets the essential concerns of all sides.

Mr. President,

Over the past year we have once again seen that failure of state institutions is a major source of conflict and human misery. The responsibility for protecting people from conflict and the effects of conflict, and from humanitarian catastrophe, lies primarily with the governments concerned. However, it has

been well demonstrated that events within a particular country can threaten international peace and security, and spread misery far beyond its borders.

Where governments are unable or unwilling to take the necessary steps to prevent catastrophe in their own country, I believe that the international community has the responsibility to protect in those circumstances.

It is increasingly evident that instability very frequently arises from situations where human rights are abused or denied. The abuse of human rights is also at the root of poverty and underdevelopment. Respect for human rights, on the other hand, is an essential element of good governance, and must be at the centre of efforts to prevent conflict, and of post-conflict reconstruction. Presently, 40% of conflicts which appear to have been resolved break out again within five years. We simply must do better in identifying emerging problems sooner. We also need to put in place policies and structures that are effective within a new, enforceable legal framework.

I hope, therefore, that the High Level Panel will address the serious questions involved in international intervention, and put forward recommendations that will act as a basis for consensus. We trust that they will also give full and careful consideration to the policies and structures that we need in order to carry out our responsibilities towards states and societies at risk of instability. Any such structures must facilitate a sustained engagement with these states, to ensure that they receive whatever assistance is needed - political, humanitarian and economic - to avert instability or a return to conflict. In addressing these problems, on the basis of the report of the High Level Panel, let us not sacrifice substance on the altar of process.

Ireland welcomes the increasing role of regional and sub-regional organisations in crisis management, under the overall authority of the Security Council. The European Union is engaged in developing its role in conflict prevention and crisis

management, while fully recognizing the central role and authority of the United Nations. I am pleased to state that, during Ireland's recent EU Presidency, important progress was achieved in implementing the Joint EU-UN Declaration on Cooperation in Crisis Management. It was agreed in June, during our Presidency, that the EU will make a rapid response capability available to the UN. This will take effect on an initial basis in 2005, with the full complement of 1,500 troops being ready and available by 2007.

The efforts of the African Union and ECOWAS in crisis management have been particularly valuable and deserve support. The African Union's involvement in Darfur, where it currently has 120 monitors with a protection force of 300, is an extremely positive development. It is fully supported by the European Union, including through the African Peace Facility established during Ireland's recent EU Presidency. The African Union is planning to augment its contingent in Sudan, where it is estimated that a force of at least 5,000 may be necessary to assure a secure environment for the people of Darfur. The European Union is ready to increase its backing for the AU effort accordingly.

Mr. President,

Whatever political difficulties may have arisen in Darfur, the people of Darfur did not deserve to suffer massacre, rape and famine, or to see their villages and crops destroyed and their livestock driven off. When the depredations of the ruthless militias were unleashed upon them, they looked in vain for the even-handed protection of their government.

I want recognise the efforts of the UN agencies, and the non governmental organisations, including Irish organisations such as GOAL, Concern and Trócaire, that responded so quickly and generously to the humanitarian crisis in Darfur. The dedication of humanitarian aid workers must also be applauded.

The humanitarian needs in Darfur still remain immense and I appeal for continued support from the international community to meet the funding shortfall. Ireland has contributed almost €6 million in government-funded aid so far this year to assist the humanitarian effort, through UN agencies as well as through Irish and international NGOs. The Irish people have been greatly moved by the suffering in Darfur and have been generous in providing additional, non-government financial support for the relief effort.

I also wish to pay tribute to the leadership of the Secretary-General in insisting on an appropriate response from the Security Council. I welcome the recent adoption by the Security Council of Resolution 1564, although it is a matter of regret and bewilderment to many that the Resolution did not receive the unanimous backing of Council members. I hope that the Council will now unite in seeking to assert its will and bring an end to a situation which is an affront to humanity.

I urge the authorities in the Sudan to fulfil with the utmost urgency the obligations that have been imposed on them by the Security Council. They must cooperate closely with the monitors deployed by the African Union; to ensure that the Janjaweed militia are brought under control and disarmed; that persons responsible for crimes and serious violations of human rights are brought to justice; and that secure conditions are restored so that people can return voluntarily to their homes. I also urge all parties in the Abuja talks, including the rebel groups, to show flexibility and goodwill so that the underlying problems of Darfur can be resolved in a peaceful manner.

Mr. President,

Once again we meet in this General Assembly chamber under the shadow of terrorism. The recent appalling images from Beslan provide a further emphatic demonstration of the moral bankruptcy of terrorism. The fact that these attacks

targeted innocent children and the consequent trauma caused to children worldwide who saw the torn bodies of the children of Beslan on their television screens, make them all the more heinous. They reinforce, if reinforcement were needed, the absolute duty of member states of the United Nations to cooperate effectively in identifying and bringing to justice those who plan, direct, finance, facilitate and carry out terrorist acts.

Terrorist acts are always reprehensible, and those who carry them out bear full responsibility for them. This is true, irrespective of any underlying factors that might exist, such as national or civil conflict or oppressive economic or social conditions. We must show determination to confront and face down terrorists when they test our resolve through their involvement in heinous acts of violence designed to terrorise the public into conceding to their distorted view of the world. But we also have to be smart to win.

Terrorism can rarely be defeated by exclusively military or security means, though they are obviously a very necessary component in the fight against terrorism. It is necessary, at the same time, to address the root causes of terrorism. I made this point when I addressed the General Assembly in the aftermath of the atrocities of 9/11. I make no apologies for repeating it today.

Let there be no misunderstanding. I offer no excuses for terrorism. Terrorism is evil. But it is my strong belief that people are not born evil. At a certain point in their life, something – perhaps a particular event or the experience of indoctrination - causes them to embrace evil. To seek to address that root cause is not to be soft on terrorism. It is the intelligent way to attack terrorism.

Terrorism tests the effectiveness of our national and collective security systems, but it also tests the quality of our institutions, including our systems of justice, and the strength of our values. As we seek to protect ourselves, we must ensure that these institutions remain strong, that democratic values are not undermined. that

our systems of justice are not compromised and that our struggle is conducted in full respect for international law and human rights norms. If we fail to do this, any success we achieve over terrorists will be at the expense of the way of life we seek to protect.

Mr. President,

The people of Israel and Palestine continue to suffer from violence that is as futile as it is tragic.

The root of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a struggle over land. The land must be shared by agreement, arrived at through negotiation between the parties to the conflict. The continuing unilateral expansion of settlements and the construction and maintenance of the separation baffle on the West Bank will make the conflict more difficult to resolve. The entire international community – particularly Israel's friends – need to send this clear and unambiguous message to the Israeli government and the people of Israel.

Ireland acknowledges the right, indeed the responsibility, of the Israeli government to protect its people, including, if it so wishes, by a security fence along its recognised borders. However, the building of the fence in the West Bank serves to divide Palestinian communities and creates severe hardship for them. It will also serve to perpetuate the so-called "facts on the ground" and make it more difficult to reach a final settlement. The advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice has given clear guidance on the fence which should be given careful consideration by those whose policies and actions it addresses.

The Palestinian Authority must also assume its responsibilities under the Roadmap, notwithstanding the difficulties it faces. Effective and responsible leadership is required. The Palestinian people can best achieve their sovereignty by restoring national discipline and rejecting the path of violence.

Ireland, in common with its EU partners, continues to believe that the only way to reach a comprehensive settlement of the conflict is through the Quartet Roadmap. In the Tullamore Declaration, issued during Ireland's recent Presidency of the European Union, EU Ministers welcomed the expressed intention of Prime Minister Sharon to withdraw from Gaza, and acknowledged the impetus that such a withdrawal could give to the peace process, as long as it met certain conditions, including that it take place in the context of the implementation of the Roadmap.

I urge Israel and the Palestinian Authority, therefore, to cooperate closely with the Quartet, to ensure that the withdrawal from Gaza is accompanied by the full and effective assumption by the Palestinian Authority of its responsibilities in the territory, and that a momentum towards the full implementation of the Roadmap is developed.

Mr. President,

The passage of Security Council Resolution 1546, and the subsequent establishment of the interim Iraqi Government represented a crucial coming together by the international community on the importance of reconstruction in Iraq. It is vital that this Government should be able to move ahead and establish a full democratic mandate.. However, the security situation in Iraq remains a matter of grave concern to us all, and the challenges facing the new Government are great. An end to the lethal violence which is disrupting the normal development of the country is essential.

Ireland has always seen the role of the United Nations as central to the issue of reconstructing Iraq. We therefore welcome the forthcoming return of the United Nations mission. Ireland and its EU partners will seek to ensure that this mission is provided with the necessary security to allow it to carry out its functions.

Mr. President,

The proliferation of conventional weapons is causing enormous death and destruction. Concerted International action is required to effectively tackle their devastating impact on societies worldwide, particularly in developing countries. It is a sobering statistic that annual global spending on defence is estimated to be in the region of €950 billion. We need to progressively reallocate the world's resources towards more peaceful and developmental purposes.

This year we commemorate the fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention on Landmines. I look forward to the first Review Conference in Nairobi which will not only provide an opportunity to measure progress made but also to consider how to achieve universal respect for the principles and application of this important Treaty. Here at the United Nations, I welcome the progress made towards the negotiation of an Instrument on tracing and marking small arms and light weapons, an instrument which I hope will be legally binding.

Weapons of mass destruction, chemical, biological and nuclear, give rise to a unique fear - a fear of widespread annihilation. This fear is itself a source of instability, and a clear threat to international peace and security. That such weapons might fall into the hands of terrorists is an appalling prospect.

During the period of this General Assembly, we will meet to review again the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Ireland and its partners in the New Agenda Coalition are determined to strengthen the Treaty, and to ensure respect for its provisions, and we call on all States to make this a key priority. The possession of nuclear weapons by States outside the Treaty, and non-compliance with its provisions by States Parties, is a grave concern.

Ireland is convinced that disarmament and non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing and that both must be vigorously pursued. We need therefore to build on the outcome of the 2000 Review Conference, which, in thirteen practical steps, provided a realistic and coherent blueprint for achieving nuclear disarmament. A firm commitment to, and a clear prospect of, nuclear disarmament, combined with a rigorous control regime, would help to strip nuclear weapons of the attraction that they now possess for some States. Let us therefore rededicate ourselves to the task of consigning nuclear weapons, and all weapons of mass destruction, to the dustbin of history. It is an ideal, but one worth striving for.

Mr. President

The Irish and British Governments continue to work in close partnership to consolidate peace and political stability in Northern Ireland. Since the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, considerable progress has been made in improving and normalising life in Northern Ireland. In our view, the complete implementation of the Good Friday Agreement remains definitively the best way forward.

The elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly last November gave leadership mandates to Sinn Féin and the Democratic Unionist Party in their respective nationalist and unionist communities. Since then, both Governments have engaged in intensive discussions with all of the parties to finally resolve the key issues of confidence that have thus far frustrated the full achievement of peace and political stability in Northern Ireland. These key issues include ending paramilitary activity in all its forms; completing the process of IRA arms decommissioning; the implementation by the British Government of the agreed programme of normalisation and demilitarisation; ensuring that the new policing service is supported by all sections of the community and resolving the related issue of the devolution of justice and policing powers; and obtaining

commitments from all parties to fully participate in the institutions of the Agreement.

These were the issues that were addressed in three days of intensive talks which were convened by both Governments in Leeds Castle in England last week. Substantial progress was made in the talks regarding the issues of paramilitarism and arms decommissioning. As Prime Minister Blair said after the talks, the "contours of the paramilitary question" are now in sight of being resolved, to be accompanied by subsequent demilitarisation, as agreed in the Joint Declaration by the British and Irish Governments last October. In addition, significant progress was made in regard to the policing issue and the devolution of those powers to devolved institutions in Northern Ireland.

Regrettably, it was not possible to achieve agreement among the parties on the question of the operation of the political institutions of the Agreement. Talks are continuing in Belfast this week to see if the gaps between the parties on this issue can be resolved. The gaps are narrow and can and must be overcome at the earliest possible date. In this regard, it was noteworthy that the leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, Dr Ian Paisley, made the point immediately after the talks that 'a golden opportunity has been available to realise a stable and entirely peaceful future.' For our part, the Irish Government is open to considering changes which would improve the workings of the institutions, while maintaining compliance with the fundamentals of the Agreement, and we have brought forward proposals in this regard. But, I reiterate, as the Taoiseach emphasised last week-end, such changes must not disturb the fundamental balance of the Good Friday Agreement, in particular its key power-sharing provisions.

The resolution of these institutional questions would allow both Governments to bring forward a comprehensive package providing a template for political stability in Northern Ireland. It would be a tragedy if the failure to bridge the remaining gaps on this institutional matter frustrated the goal of definitively removing the

issue of arms from politics in Northern Ireland. The people, rightly, would not understand why this long awaited prize was denied because of a reluctance to fully embrace the structures of partnership and power-sharing.

If, on the other hand, these institutional issues can be resolved and a comprehensive agreement then brought forward, we can finally liberate partnership politics in Northern Ireland and allow its committed and talented politicians - from all sides of the community - to collectively get on with the job of providing better governance, a prospering economy and a fair society for all of the people.

Mr. President,

I will conclude where I began, on the need to rededicate ourselves to the reinvigoration of this great United Nations Organisation.

Next year will be a year in which important decisions on the future of the United Nations must be taken. We need to rededicate ourselves to the principles and purposes for which this Organisation was founded. We need to restore the sense of ambition and idealism that illuminated the United Nations at its Inception. We need, above all, to build an Organisation which is results-oriented and which can demonstrate that politics is the most effective means of resolving conflict. Let us make 2005 the year in which the United Nations is reborn, strong, effective and respected, as the Founding Fathers intended it to be.