



**MALTA**

**STATEMENT BY**

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PRIME MINISTER**

**GENERAL DEBATE**

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**Mr President**

**I would first like to congratulate you on your election to the Presidency of the fifty-ninth Session of the General Assembly. You have an important and challenging task ahead. In executing your duties, you can be assured of my full support and that of the Maltese delegation.**

**I take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the outgoing President of the fifty-eighth Session, His Excellency Mr Julian Hunte. Over the last twelve months he has successfully guided the work of the General Assembly with exemplary dedication and initiative.**

**It is a source of particular satisfaction for me to address this Assembly for the first time as Prime Minister of Malta, and also in Malta's new role as member of the European Union. The President of the Union's Council of Ministers, the Foreign Minister of the Netherlands, has already laid before you the objectives and priorities of the twenty five members of the Union for the coming months.**

**The upholding and development of international law and effective multilateralism are central to the European Union's external actions. The role of the United Nations is vital in this regard.**

**Malta has consistently supported the view that the international community needs this universal forum within which it can collectively deliberate and act upon the many problems that confront it. Our membership of the European Union gives renewed scope and added dimension to our commitment towards the United Nations and its role in international affairs.**

**Recent events have raised urgent questions about the extent to which the United Nations is fulfilling the role envisaged for it under the Charter. Inevitably this leads to some serious concerns about the effectiveness of our Organization. Nevertheless, the questions which have been raised do not diminish the case not only for its continued existence but also for its strengthening as a world body.**

**As we survey the latest developments in crises spots around the globe the realization intensifies that solutions to the major problems of our age are beyond the grasp and control of any single nation or particular group of nations, however powerful and determined.**

**The international system is itself frequently overwhelmed by the immensity and complexity of many of the problems it faces. The United Nations is indeed at the forefront of action in the most critical areas - furthering development, relieving suffering, safeguarding human rights, combating terrorism, fighting environmental degradation, fostering sustainability, resolving conflicts, promoting peace and disarmament and upholding the rule of international law.**

**Each year we derive a measure of comfort from the knowledge that some progress is being recorded in certain areas. In this year's report the Secretary General mentions last July's framework agreement which put the Doha round of trade negotiations back on track; he refers to the contribution that United Nations peace missions are making towards the gradual improvement of the situation in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia and the Central African Republic, as well as in Afghanistan, Papua New Guinea, Guatemala and Haiti; he records the launching of an important new programme in the fight against HIV/AIDS; he notes that for the second consecutive year the global refugee figure has decreased by nearly 1 million; and he augurs that**

the prospects for meeting the Millennium Development Goals by the target date of 2015 remain achievable.

At the same time the Secretary General highlights a bewildering array of areas on which no visible progress can be registered. This in spite of the fact that, as the Secretary General reminds us, there are at present more than 56,000 uniformed personnel and some 11,000 civilian staff from 97 countries serving in 16 UN missions worldwide. This also in spite of the fact that the whole United Nations system, including the specialized agencies, is wholeheartedly engaged in the work of promoting economic and social progress and development.

The humanitarian crisis in Darfur in western Sudan is one stark manifestation of an apparently unbridgeable gap between intention and execution. The daily visions on television screens throughout the world of thousands of refugees suffering and dying, overwhelm the impact which a steady but slow diplomacy may be making in its own right. In Iraq, in Palestine and in Israel, the fact that in these difficult realities, hardly a single day passes without the news of people dying violently as a result of armed action, contrasts sharply with the limited reports on continuing efforts towards peaceful and viable solutions. Silently, across our globe of plenty with its advanced technology, the clear awareness remains that, in spite of our collective efforts, millions of individuals, many of them children, continue to suffer and die in conditions of absolute poverty, malnutrition and disease.

Over the next twelve months two events will provide a special opportunity for the United Nations membership to focus on the key issues that challenge the vitality and effectiveness of our organization. The High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change appointed by the Secretary General last year will soon produce its report. The Secretary General expects that this panel, after examining the threats we face, and evaluating our existing policies, processes and institutions, will make bold and practicable recommendations. It will be up to us as member states of this Organization, collectively and individually, to be equally bold and practicable in responding to these recommendations.

This report will be followed in 2005 by the High Level Meeting on the five-year review of the Millennium Declaration and the commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations. Five years after what was expected to be the dawn of a new era, the time will be ripe for some dramatic results to emerge, not least at the institutional level.

High on the agenda in this context is the reform of the Security Council. As currently constituted, the Council suffers from three noticeable weaknesses. It has limited means of assigning the necessary dimension to development issues in matters of security. Secondly the regional distribution of authority in the Council is severely lop-sided. And thirdly the great majority of UN member states, especially the smaller ones, are under-represented in the deliberations of the Council.

Urgent remedies need to be found for all these weaknesses in order that the Council may be able to continue to play its expected relevant role in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

In its turn, the General Assembly needs to greatly intensify its current efforts to revitalize the strengths inherent in its universality while discarding the debilitating accretions of time-consuming procedures and working methods that have accompanied this universality.

The major organs and specialized agencies of the United Nations system need to devise improved ways of harmonizing, through the Economic and Social Committee (ECOSOC), their many impressive but disparate operations in the process towards sustainable social and economic development.

Mr President

One of the underlying strengths of the United Nations system lies in the manner in which it permits action at the regional level to insert itself into global efforts towards peace, security and cooperation. The progressive strengthening of the African Union has, in recent years, added a welcome partner to the regional framework, in what is unfortunately the region of greater need.

The recently enlarged European Union has also been progressively enhancing its cooperation with the United Nations at both the regional and the wider levels. The Secretary General refers in his report to the significant progress that has been registered in EU/UN cooperation on conflict prevention, peace building and post-conflict reconstruction, as well as in crisis management activities.

One area in which the EU and the UN are active and important partners concerns the question of Palestine. As members of the Quartet, the EU and the UN play a significant role in injecting the much needed balance and objectivity in an issue tormented by violence and passion.

Both the EU and the UN are, by right, major stakeholders in the issue. History and geographical proximity underlie the special interest of all EU member states in the prosperity and well-being of both Israelis and Palestinians. The creation and peaceful co-existence of two neighbouring states, Israel and Palestine, was one of the UN's very first, and still unfulfilled, recommendations.

After decades of bitterness and wrong turns, this issue remains jeopardised by the forces of extremism and intransigence.

Extremism and intransigence, as manifested in the perpetrators of Palestinian suicide bombings and in the advocates of continuing and forceful Israeli military occupation of Palestinian territories, do, however, have their counterbalance on both sides as manifested by the Geneva Initiative of late last year, and by many other examples.

The EU and the UN need to continuously exert their influence and pressure on both sides to persuade them to give greater heed and credibility to the voices of reason which lie in their midst.

The path to legality and reconciliation has been defined in the Road Map, in the many resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, and most recently in the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. Even in the face of constant setbacks on the ground, the EU and UN Quartet partners need to remain steadfast in their insistence that the road to peace can only be set within these parameters.

Malta looks at this problem both from its tragic humanitarian dimension as well as from its far-reaching implications on peace and security. One important concern for us in this regard is the impact which it has on issues of peace and security in the Middle East in general and the Mediterranean area in particular.

One of the primary objectives of the European Union is to promote the development, through partnership, of a common zone of peace, prosperity and progress in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. In recent months the Union has elaborated a policy agenda for this strategic partnership linking together a number of instruments and mechanisms that have been put in place over the years. The Barcelona EuroMed process and the European Neighbourhood Policy are the frameworks of this policy.

**A key element in this approach is the parallel importance it assigns to the processes of security building and cooperation in the social, economic, cultural and humanitarian fields. In this way it ensures that the evolving relationships in the Euro Mediterranean area are tailored to specific concerns and needs of individual countries and regions.**

**For the Balkan region, the framework provided by the European Neighbourhood policy, and the prospect of consolidating relationships with the European Union which it implies, constitute an important contributory factor towards growth and stability. With the exception of the situation in Kosovo, which remains pre-occupying, and some other examples, progress in the Balkan region is encouraging.**

**The almost decade long EuroMed process has gradually but steadily put into place a useful structure for the strengthening and consolidation of relationships among the countries of the Mediterranean. It not only contributes to the economic and social development of individual countries but also provides a stable background in which some of the wider problems may be tackled, taking account of the strong linkage that exists between security and cooperation in Europe and in the Mediterranean. It needs strengthening and widening, and in this context, the participation of Libya in the Barcelona EuroMed process would be particularly welcome.**

**One such issue concerns the question of migration from the southern to the northern shores of the Mediterranean. As in other parts of the world, this issue needs to be tackled from the economic, social and political, as well as the humanitarian perspective. Because of its geographical location, and small size, Malta has a special sensitivity to the many problems and complexities of the issue. We are hopeful that the spirit of cooperation and understanding provided by the EuroMed process can help countries in our region to successfully tackle the challenges involved.**

**Over the last months an important development took place in our region in the context of disarmament. Libya's decision to renounce its programme on weapons of mass destruction has been welcomed by all. As a long standing friend and close neighbour of Libya, Malta has particular reasons to welcome this development and the increased opportunities it now creates for Libya to play a significant role in the process of Euro Mediterranean security and cooperation.**

**It is reasonable to argue that the framework of regional stability and cooperation provided by the EuroMed process was one contributory factor towards Libya's decision to renounce its programme. Nevertheless, problems relating to the development of weapons of mass destruction still exist in other regions of the world. The role which initiatives encouraging regional stability and economic and social development can play in the resolution of these problems should not be underestimated.**

**It is also necessary to look at the problems raised by the threat of new weapons of mass destruction as part of the wider issue of disarmament in its many aspects. The continuing commitment to the major multilateral treaties and increased efforts to intensify measures of verification and compliance are of paramount importance in this regard. Equally important is the need to bring the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty into force without further delay.**

**The problem of proliferation of weapons, especially weapons of mass destruction, has in our day assumed a new and frightening dimension in its possible linkage with terrorism. In this regard, as the Secretary General points out, the effective implementation of Security Council Resolution 1540 adopted earlier this year should complement ongoing efforts to strengthen existing multilateral and non-proliferation regimes.**

**The fight against terrorism involves all of us and needs to be pursued with firmness and tenacity. At the same time the struggle must take place on our, not the terrorists' terms. As the Secretary General takes every opportunity to remind us, this struggle must not take place at the expense of the fundamental freedoms and the basic dignity of individuals. Neither must we allow the legitimate concern to eradicate terrorism in all its aspects to distract the commitment of the global community in its endeavour towards the economic and social development of the less advantaged regions of the world.**

**Our concerns for the safety of our people, must be counter-balanced by the assurances that those responsible for these threats will be dealt with by a coherent and effective system of trans-frontier justice that reflects respect for the rule of law. The international community's endeavours in recent years have found fruition in the establishment of the International Criminal Court, a functioning institution which increases its effectiveness the wider it is subscribed to by the members of all the family of nations.**

**In encouraging reflection on these topical issues, I feel confident in the credentials offered by my country, whose level of commitment to the UN project certainly makes up for any physical limitations we may have. Malta has been instrumental in developing the concept of Common Heritage, both in relation to the High Seas as well as Climate Change, and we have emphasized the importance of inter-generational solidarity as evidenced not only by our initiatives on Ageing, but also as the Host Country for the International Institute on Ageing.**

**Mr President**

**As in previous years, the issues in front of the General Assembly are many and complex. The density and variety of the agenda we have before us are both a challenge and an opportunity for our Organization. I trust that under your able guidance we will find the energy and wisdom to meet these challenges and exploit these opportunities. Humanity is counting on all of us.**