

MEXICO



Statement by the Minister of
Foreign Affairs of Mexico,
Dr. Luis Ernesto Derbez,
in the general debate of the
fifty-ninth Session of the
United Nations
General Assembly

New York, September 24, 2004

(Check against delivery)

**STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF MEXICO, DR. LUIS
ERNESTO DERBEZ,
FOREIGN MINISTER OF MEXICO, IN THE
GENERAL DEBATE OF THE FIFTY NINTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL
ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

Your Excellency Mr. Jean Ping,
President of the General Assembly,

The session of the General Assembly that you preside, will be one of the most important in the history of the United Nations. It is a session that will bear the mark of the much needed renovation of the Organization. 2005 will be a decisive year for the future of multilateralism and of our Organization.

The debate on Iraq, and the expanding wave of international terrorism, have raised several questions about the future of our collective security system. In this General Debate, the Assembly has the task of engaging in an unprecedented reflection about the changes that our societies demand from multilateral diplomacy. Our efforts must crystallize in new tools that will help the United Nations find effective solutions to fulfill its high responsibility of reactivating its endeavors for development, the maintenance of world peace and security, the promotion of human rights and democracy, and the preservation of the environment, all under the rule of international law.

As a result of recent debates, some voices have claimed that the international community is fractured, divided and even confronted. It is rather odd that this is happening at a time when it is more evident that the threats and challenges are common to all nations. The main tasks that should unite us are mainly the combat against extreme poverty, international terrorism, organized crime, widespread contagious diseases, the stockpiling and development of weapons of mass destruction, and the deterioration of the environment. In order to put an end to these modern threats, a concerted action by all States and their firm commitment is needed.

The reason is clear. The most complex threats we face are precisely those that do not stem from a specific national origin, but which nevertheless affect us all, and have undoubtedly deteriorated the quality of life of humankind, damaging the peace and wellbeing of our citizens.

The United Nations was essentially designed to eliminate the scourge of interstate wars and to promote economic and social development. Today, we face events of such magnitude and complexity, that the delegates that participated in the San Francisco Conference could not have foreseen, notwithstanding their outstanding talent and vision. Diplomats of this generation have now the obligation to envision a second phase, a new chapter on collective action so as to eradicate these modern threats.

In Mexico's view, our guiding purpose should not be to rebuild the Organization from scratch. Nor should it be to discard the United Nations Charter, with its rich heritage of agreements and deep rooted concepts. It would not be responsible to abandon altogether fundamental concepts such as the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense, as set out in Article 51 of the Charter or for that matter the notion of a collective security system. The only feasible, realistic and necessary approach is to bring up to date this multilateral system of cooperation and understanding that we have collectively built.

Mr. President,

It was on the basis of these considerations, that President Vicente Fox made a strong call for a comprehensive reform of the United Nations when he addressed the General Assembly last year. Furthermore, in numerous meetings he has held since then with other Heads of State and Government, he identified a deep rooted interest in making headway, with urgency, in the strengthening and revitalization of the United Nations.

We have thus embarked in an effort of active consultations to reform the Organization and to strengthen multilateralism. Mexico, along with 14 other countries, initiated a collective reflection to analyze the different components of the reform, and to devise a diplomatic strategy to enhance the possibilities of successfully carrying it out.

We foresee a reform that contains an evolutionary approach; one that will allow the United Nations to tackle the critical challenges and threats of each historic cycle, with the sufficient leverage to pull the resources and the strength of all Member States in order to overcome the most pressing international phenomena. This endeavor should bear its initial fruits in the coming 18 months.

Clearly, 2005 is a suitable year to further this ambitious project. Indeed, in the coming year, there is a convergence of events that will allow the revitalization of multilateral dialogue and interaction. Next December, we will receive the report and the recommendations of the High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, which will be a valuable input and will help guide our deliberations regarding the reform of the system. It will be very important that the General Assembly examines the recommendations very closely, and acts as a privileged forum to discuss and implement the new mandates and adaptations that should be instrumented at the various levels of the Organization.

Likewise, next year we will assess the progress made in the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, as well as the next steps to follow the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development.

This set of events will make it possible for us to have an updated view of the state of the multilateral system and of the issues that the reform should address. Having this broad vision in mind and with the aim of living up to the commitment and the interest of all Member States, it will be necessary to strike a proper balance between the security and development agendas, and their respective institutions within the United Nations System.

The General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council must work as part of a functional system, and not as entities which are disconnected and sometimes even contradictory in their tasks, priorities, and methods of work.

The predominance that the Security Council has attained, has rendered in a growing disregard and inefficacy of the work of other principal organs. Therefore, issues that have been marginalized but reach certain levels of crisis, automatically become matters under the responsibility of the Security Council itself. We must acknowledge that the process of reform as a whole, has been dominated and in fact paralyzed, as a result of the debate about Security Council reform.

Mexico believes that any process of reform of the Security Council shall be governed by a set of common objectives and criteria applicable to all. After more than a decade of work, we should ask ourselves why it is that the Security Council reform has not succeeded. The debate has focused on the number of seats, how they should be allocated to each region, and whether they should have permanent status or not. Paradoxically, the fundamental questions that have largely been ignored are what kind of collective security system is needed by today's international community; and what mechanisms should be used in order to face the new challenges and to prevent conflict

It should be stressed that the Security Council must develop a better capacity to prevent the emergence of conflicts, particularly through building and consolidating national institutions and upholding the rule of law and the respect for Human Rights. The Council should also enhance its capacity as an early warning system to identify situations likely to endanger peace and security. As a logical consequence of this analysis, we will identify the modifications that the Security Council needs.

Mexico acknowledges the contributions of different Member States to the cause of peace: all of them are necessary. Our organization, based on the legal equality of States, requires the commitment and support of all its members, through their involvement in decision making. The creation of new permanent seats, would lead to an even greater concentration in the international decision making process. We cannot ignore that Permanent Members already have more influence in this regard than the rest of the membership. This should be restricted and not further encouraged.

Mexico supports collective decision making, as the source of the legitimacy and efficacy of our actions in favor of peace and security. For this reason, we are for an equitable and balanced regional enlargement of the number of elected members, based on modalities determined within the regional groups. This will stimulate a wider participation in the process of decision making, in order for more countries — not less — to contribute with their views in this body.

Thus, Mexico would support an increase in the number of elected members, and an extension of their term, with the option of immediate reelection for those States that have demonstrated through their performance, a strong commitment with the purposes of the Organization. This

would entail a genuine mechanism for the accountability of the Members of the Security Council, based on Article 24 of the Charter.

As a part of this integral vision of the reform, it is critical to strengthen the role of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), to allow it to support the Security Council and the General Assembly in the decision making process. Conflict prevention depends upon timely attention and action to problems resulting from the lack of development. It is undeniable that peace and security are anchored on the wellbeing of our peoples. Therefore, we believe that the ECOSOC could work as a coordinating body that is able to steer the financing of development, and the effective follow up of the commitments stemming from the United Nations Summits and Conferences on social and economic development.

It is essential to have a more committed involvement of the international financial institutions in the development process. In this regard, ECOSOC should have a pivotal role linking the efforts of the Bretton Woods Institutions, the WTO, the private sector and civil society.

Another issue that should be among our priorities is the Human Rights Commission, which has essential responsibilities in the universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Mexico considers that the work of the Commission is vital, although its weakness to advance its objectives is quite noticeable. For this reason, its methods must be urgently revised and reformulated. Mexico is fostering the dialogue on this issue within our region.

Mr. President,

The ongoing effort in favor of the UN reform requires a vision of the collective wellbeing, as well as an enhanced political understanding, in order to prevent that the so called "non passport threats" dive the world into a spiral of confrontation, violence and despair.

In this regard, we should recognize that the UN has already taken some actions as first steps in the right direction. This has been done particularly in the fight against terrorism and the non proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It will be necessary to take these actions further.

In this context, Mexico is ready to continue working with the institutional structures of the Organization, particularly the Counter Terrorism Committee and the newly established Committee on non proliferation. We will continue to promote the protection of Human Rights and fundamental freedoms in the fight against terrorism, as the only way to guarantee the legitimacy and efficacy of that fight. We will also follow closely the cooperation initiatives and regimes that are geared to control the supply of nuclear materials; and we will insist in gathering new momentum on the efforts in the urgent cause of disarmament.

Other positive steps have been taken in recent years in the face of challenges resulting from humanitarian crises and genocide.

In this context, Mexico concurs with the essence of the concept of "The responsibility to protect", in the sense that sovereignty entails an obligation for the States towards their population, and, when it fails to fulfill it, the international community has the duty to collectively assist on the protection of individuals from grave violations to Human Rights. In

the light of the recent and most regretful humanitarian tragedies, it is of the utmost importance for the General Assembly to discuss this concept thoroughly, in order to elaborate guidelines for its practical application within the Organization.

Mr. President,

In the light of the scope of the challenge of the reform that we have ahead, Mexico would favor calling for a general conference with the aim of updating and strengthening our Organization. In contrast to the consideration that has been given to other issues of international relevance, such as commerce, population, or the environment; we have not held any broad rounds of negotiation in the last six decades on issues pertaining to international politics and the development of diplomacy. The changes that have taken place in the World in that period, demand a comprehensive exercise that should encompass the renewal of our commitments, and the review of the structure and the performance of the collective security and development system.

Throughout President Fox's Administration, Mexico has clearly shown its commitment to the strengthening of multilateralism. We have done so as an elected Member of the Security Council; as a promoter of international conventions on topics such as corruption, persons with disabilities, and migrant workers; by furthering initiatives to foster the equitable and sustainable development of the global commons; or by hosting high level conferences such as the Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development, the Summit of the Americas, the Summit of the Latin American and Caribbean Group with the European Union, and the APEC Summit.

Furthermore, as an unequivocal sign of our interest, our concerns and our commitment, Mexico decisively promotes the renovation of the multilateral system, through the Group of Friends of the United Nations Reform.

Mexico participates in this session of the General Assembly in keeping with this constructive spirit. We are certain that under your able leadership, Mr. Chairman, this session will be remembered as the catalyst of one of the most important and transcendental chapters in the life of the Organization .

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.