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Déclaration

de

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President
de la Confédération suisse

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Statement

by

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**Mr President of the General Assembly,
Mr Secretary-General
Ladies and Gentlemen, the heads of State and of Government,
Ladies and Gentlemen, the Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen, the Delegates,**

Two years ago I had the great satisfaction of personally witnessing in this room the act of Switzerland joining the United Nations. I will never forget the whole-hearted and open-armed welcome that Switzerland received on this occasion.

Switzerland's accession to the UN took place at a time when the fight against terrorism dominated international discussion, and the divergences in opinion on how to proceed against Iraq were widening. Dissension has arisen again within the Security Council. In hindsight, experience shows that actions taken without a mandate which has been clearly defined in a Security Council resolution are doomed to failure. Such actions result in endless differences of opinion which only reduce the efficiency of the international community's decision-making efforts and, ultimately, jeopardise international security.

When all is said and done, however, the Iraq crisis has shown us that the international community remains attached to a multilateral system for maintaining international peace and security, but that the structures currently in place are no longer appropriate.

There is now a clear need for reform and for strengthening the means of joint action.

The High-Level Panel appointed by the Secretary-General to make recommendations for ensuring effective joint action is a first step on the road to reform. Switzerland actively supports this initiative. This spring, we invited a group of experts to discuss the subject of the right of self-defence, and in this context, the role of the Security Council. Their conclusion was that it is neither necessary nor desirable to extend or reinterpret the right of individual self-defence as recognised and set out in the Charter of the United Nations. Strengthening joint action is what is needed, and it is on this issue that we must focus our efforts.

From this perspective, prevention is essential.

By this I mean:

- fighting poverty, and
- that multilateral institutions must respond more rapidly to nascent crises.

A more rapid response does not necessarily mean military intervention. Switzerland has always held the view that force must remain the instrument of last resort. Besides situations of self-defence, force may only be used with the approval of the Security Council and when other methods of persuasion or pressure have been completely exhausted.

A more rapid response also means that the Security Council fully exercise its primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security, which is conferred upon it in the Charter of the United Nations.

At this point we come to the issue of the legitimacy of action of the Security Council and, in particular, the question of its composition. After 10 years of deliberations on these issues, it is time to act:

- The composition of the Security Council must better reflect the changes that have taken place in the international context since it was first established, and more say must be given to the countries in the process of development;
- The financial and material contributions of specific Member States must be taken more closely into account.

On the other hand, Switzerland is opposed to the creation of new seats with the right of veto, because the right of veto in its current form is undemocratic and hampers the capacity of the Security Council to act.

In order to gain greater legitimacy, it is also necessary that those countries which are not members of the Security Council have more opportunities to participate in the decision-making process. In particular, it is important to strengthen the mechanisms of consultation with countries directly involved in particular situations of tension.

Reforming the institutions may be an arduous and unrewarding task, but it is indispensable for raising the efficiency of the UN and of peace promotion. I would like to thank the Secretary-General for the work he has already done and to encourage him to continue along the same path.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Perfect institutions alone are not enough to achieve efficiency at the UN. The real commitment of its Member States towards its aims is also necessary.

To remain credible in its role as keeper of the peace, the UN and its member States must, above all, be unshakeable guarantors of international law and, in particular, international humanitarian law. Switzerland will not cease to say and say again that respect for the law is the only feasible way, and it will continue to say that in the absence of a political solution to the conflict in Darfur, attacks on civilians are serious violations of international humanitarian law – violations which must be sanctioned by the responsible national, or if need be, international bodies. This is also why, following resolution ES-10/15 of the General Assembly on the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice - which found that the construction of the separation barrier in the Occupied Palestinian Territory by Israel is contrary to international law - Switzerland accepts, in its capacity as Depositary of the Geneva Conventions, the mandate to conduct consultations on means and ways to achieve greater respect for international humanitarian law by the parties concerned.

To be strong, the UN must be able to rely on those States with the necessary resources to help the UN carry out its tasks. We, that is all of us, including my country, who are called upon to provide the personnel and materials needed by the peacekeeping missions.

The appalling attack on the UN headquarters in Baghdad underscores the necessity to give special thought to the security of the UN and its staff.

Fortunately, additional security measures are now in place. Other measures must follow. It is our common duty to see to it that the United Nations Secretary-General has the appropriate resources at his disposal.

Earlier on, I mentioned fighting poverty as a form of prevention. In autumn next year, we are due to make a first assessment of progress on the Millennium Development Goals. Already we must admit that our efforts have been inadequate. Of course, every country has its budgetary constraints. But we also have a duty to keep the promises we made at the dawn of the Millennium. In this context, I find it encouraging to note that trade liberalisation within the framework of the Doha Round regained momentum this summer in Geneva.

Difficult negotiations still lie ahead of us which must meet expectations that are at times contradictory. Switzerland intends to play a constructive role, and I call on all our partners to commit themselves to the early success of this development round.

To prevent is both to detect and to defuse today the problems of tomorrow. In my opinion, our peace promotion efforts must be rapidly fleshed out in two areas.

The first is conflicts associated with religion. Killing is unacceptable. It is even more unacceptable if it is carried out for religious reasons. Religion is becoming more and more frequently the only frame of reference for analysing political and social problems.

We run the risk of heightening tensions through this extreme simplification of reality. The international community must find a solution, and the UN is the ideal forum for finding it.

The second area is environmental preservation. The increasing scarcity of resources is sowing the seeds of conflict over appropriation and distribution. Sustainable development must not be allowed to become an empty concept. Our actions to date within the context of the UN have not been enough to ensure our responsibilities towards future generations. Devoting more time to finding agreement on the Kyoto Protocol than the founding fathers took to draft the Charter of the United Nations seems to be beneath our dignity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The UN will be judged by its success in meeting the challenges of the 21st century. The institutional reforms under way are going in the right direction. It is up to us, the Member States, to commit ourselves resolutely to promote peace and to make the UN the instrument for carrying out this essential task.