



Address

Delivered by

H.E. Mr. Farouk Al-Shara'

Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the
Syrian Arab Republic

At the 59th Session of the General Assembly
of the United Nations

New York
27 September 2004

Check against delivery

Mr. President,

I would like to congratulate you on your election as president of the 59th session of the United Nations General Assembly. I am confident that your wisdom, which is drawn from the positions of your friendly country, Gabon, will be the asset that you will use to promote dialogue among the peoples and countries of the world, invigorate the role of the United Nations and preserve its Charter. I would also like to express my appreciation to your predecessor, Julian Hunte, for the efforts he made to bring the previous session to a successful conclusion.

The
International
Situation

I would also like to avail myself of this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Secretary General of the United Nations for his patience and efforts to make the voice of the United Nations heard amidst precarious international circumstances and volatile regional conditions. We have lived through an era in which force was given precedence over law, wrong was given precedence over right and war was given precedence over peace.

Our world has been going through extremely difficult times since 11 September. This is particularly true for America and the Middle East. The United Nations may have very well met the same fate of the League of Nations in the 1930's although very little thought was given to the dire consequences that such a development may have entailed given the absence of any other alternative.

It is no exaggeration to argue that the major challenges to the questions of peace, security and development today do not stem from ignoring the UN Charter only, but rather from manipulating some of its articles to drastically disrupt and derail international relations and deliberately upset the international equilibrium that we inherited from the cold war era.

It therefore becomes evident that the surge in extremism, the diversity of its sources and manifestations and the spread of poverty and hunger over large parts of the world are not a source of concern to one country, one people or one religion, but rather to all peoples, countries and religions in the world.

It has also become clear that the international community's acknowledgement of this deteriorating situation, and failure to seriously seek to improve it will not serve the interests of anyone. There is more truth to this at this point since the justifications of the cold war and the enormous expenses on armaments could no longer be invoked, and since pre-emptive wars- and the big losses in life and property they entail- were also proven useless. The mistakes committed during the world war on terror, whether committed in good faith or in bad faith, became a call to promote and practice terrorism embraced by an enemy, whose whereabouts we do not know. This enemy is striking back through acts that are so horrific they remind us of scenes from the Middle Ages.

The peoples of the developing countries are wondering why would hundreds of fighter jets and thousands of soldiers be hauled across the continents, and why would billions of dollars be spent to bring about a regime-change in a given country when these resources, could be otherwise channeled, even partially to finance education or development projects in these countries? When reform becomes an international and a national demand, how can we justify to those seeking reform that the movers and the shakers of the world chose to impose sanctions instead of investing in peace and prosperity, and chose to spend billions on war instead of opting for the road that would surely lead to reform and progress?

Was it possible to prove through out history that military, and not political or economic solutions are more effective tools for reform and progress, and for saving the lives of millions of people who are plagued by injustice, poverty and disease? At any rate, while political solutions may not necessarily guarantee success, military solutions are definitely a recipe for failure.

Moreover, while such an argument may sound idealistic, there can be no alternative to political solutions. The dilemma we are currently facing on the international scene is exacerbated by military solutions. There are many examples to prove this argument for those who have eyes to see. Left alone, this dilemma will not be solved. It can only be solved if the leaders of the world work in earnest and evince the necessary political will to restore to the United Nation its credibility, guarantee respect for international legitimacy, and

commitment to its resolutions that are based on the principles and purposes of the charter. Justice and equality, it must be recalled, was the core of the Charter of this organization.

The peoples of the world were optimistic about the great strides in science and technology and the collective and individual achievements that spanned all fields of human endeavors in the past two decades. They aspired to a globalization with a human face based on a dialogue among civilizations and synergies with other cultures that would keep the specter of cold and hot wars at bay. However, some power circles attempted to exploit these great human achievements to further their own narrow interests. They devised new colonialist policies that disappointed the people of the world and turned back the hands of the clock.

In the speed of light, the world forgot about the surge in optimism that overwhelmed many of the world's leaders as they addressed this august Assembly four years ago when they celebrated the third Millennium. Today however, a wave of pessimism had taken over the world because of extremist and intolerant policies advanced by some strategic think-tanks that were determined to find a new enemy, under any pretext, after the fall of the Soviet Union.

**The Role
of Israel**

Israel has contributed to the making of many of these flimsy pretexts. It packaged them with great care, breathed life into many of them, and distributed them among the think-tanks that owe their allegiance to it. It was hoping to achieve the following:

- **FIRST:** To incite the Americans first, and then the West to wage endless wars in the Middle East, to underscore the old-new theory of Israel that the Arab-Israeli conflict is not the core of the problems of the region. To prove our point we refer to the arguments promoted by Israel that the situation in Iraq and its repercussions is more dangerous and complicated than that prevailing in the Occupied Arab Territories. Sharon, it must be noted here is trying to mislead the world public opinion into believing that he is standing up to the Jewish settlers before being able to withdraw from Gaza. He does not refer to any withdrawal from the West Bank or to any recommitment to the peace process.

- SECOND: To divert the attention of the world and camouflage the settlement activities in the Occupied Arab Territories that have continued unabated, while continuing to build the racist segregation wall, and diminishing the importance of the state terror perpetrated by Israel on a daily basis. As such, Israel repackages its policies as "an act of self-defense" that does not warrant condemnation and denunciation although it targets innocent civilians.

But Israel did not fully succeed in realizing its goals, and even if it did, this success will be short lived because:

- Israel has transformed its regular army into gangs bent on systematic killings and war crimes against Palestinian civilians all perpetrated in their territories that it occupies in the West Bank and Gaza. Killing the Palestinians is often associated with house demolitions that terrified their wretched occupants who often looked death in the eye. All this notwithstanding, the defenseless Palestinians stood the course, and refused to surrender or leave.
- Israel bears an important share of the responsibility for intensifying and worsening the American predicament in Iraq by avoiding the resumption of the peace process despite the hand extended in peace by the Palestinians, Syrians, and Lebanese. This Israeli course of action may come back to haunt it in the future because its continued occupation of the Arab Lands is a major cause of the rejection of the American policies in the broader Middle East. This is also true in Europe where polls conducted a year ago showed that most of the citizens of the European Union believe that Israel poses a threat to international peace.
- Among the strategic mistakes committed by the think-tanks that owe their allegiance to Israel is misleading the Israelis into believing that the "new Iraq" will hasten to conclude peace agreements with Israel and establish diplomatic relations with it before it withdraws from the occupied Arab territories. They ignored the fact that Iraqis refused to adopt the new flag that was designed for their country after the war simply because its colors bear resemblance to the Israeli flag.

Mr. President,



The deteriorating situation in Iraq remains a source of great concern for my country and other countries in the region and the world. This state of affairs should prompt us to mobilize all efforts to win the battle for peace in post-war Iraq. Syria, a neighboring country directly concerned with what is going on in Iraq given our historic and geographic ties as well as our common national bonds with the Iraqi people, has spared no effort to guarantee Iraq's stability, security, independence, territorial integrity and the unity of its people. We stand ready to cooperate with the neighboring countries and all the parties concerned including the United Nations to enable the Iraqi people to govern themselves, manage their resources and establish the optimal relations with their neighbors.



Syria has repeatedly declared its commitment to a just and comprehensive peace. We continue to call for the withdrawal of Israel from all the Arab territories occupied in 1967, for guaranteeing the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to establish their independent state, and its capital Jerusalem in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy, namely, SC Resolutions 242(1967) and 338(1973), the Madrid terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative endorsed by the Beirut Summit of 2002. That was the basis of Syria's serious engagement in the peace negotiations for over a decade. The literature published on the subject recently in the United States and Israel bears witness to the seriousness with which Syria approached these negotiations. What the peace process lacks today is a strategic Israeli decision, comparable to the Syrian decision to achieve peace in the region.

It is therefore rather offensive that the Foreign Minister of Israel uses this rostrum of international legitimacy to over-ride the facts and selectively commends a resolution recently adopted by the SC on Lebanon. Lebanon is the country whose airspace, territorial waters and land as well as its sovereignty Israel violates on a daily basis. Moreover, Israel continues to occupy parts of the Lebanese land.

The representative of the Israel tried, in vain, to misguide the international community. The world community today bears witness to Israel's persistent non-compliance with forty resolutions adopted by the Security Council and six hundred others adopted by the General Assembly. All these resolutions call upon Israel to withdraw from the occupied Arab territories so that a just and comprehensive peace can be established in the region. Furthermore, soon after the adoption of every resolution Israel used to voice its rejection, leveling accusations and heaping insults at our organization. It would refuse to allow entry to members of fact-finding missions, harass others and even assassinate affiliated UN staff.

All this notwithstanding, do some have the right to ask whether the statements by the representative of Israel mark the beginning of a radical change in the positions of his government, perhaps indicating the pursuit of a policy that respects international legitimacy and commits to compliance with its resolutions?

Mr. President,

**Weapons
Of Mass
Destruction**

For centuries, our region has endured more foreign threats and onslaughts, more acts of aggression, misrepresentations of facts, and use of force against our people than any other region in the world. Its potentials are wasted, and its material and intellectual resources are squandered thus preventing it from attaining its development goals and advancing its capacities. The Middle East suffers an explosive situation brought about by the Israeli expansionist policies, continued occupation and the virtual sabotage of any chance for peace in the region. Furthermore, Israel's acquisition of a nuclear arsenal constitutes a major destabilizing factor in the Middle East region that threatens the future of its peoples.

Syria was among the first countries of region to call for declaring the ME a region a zone free from all weapons of mass destruction, primarily nuclear weapons. We have seriously worked for the attainment of this objective. We joined the NPT and concluded a comprehensive safeguards regime agreement with the IAEA. We also contributed to the numerous initiatives to realize this goal. The most recent among those initiatives was the draft resolution we submitted on behalf of the Arab Group to the SC on 29 December 2003. The

draft called for the establishment of zone free from all weapons of mass destruction in the ME region, foremost among them nuclear weapons, in the context of a collective international monitoring regime, and under the supervision of the UN which will complement the role of multilateral international conventions regulating disarmament questions.

Mr. President,

International
Terrorism

International terrorism is a real cause for concern for us all. Together we should work to eradicate this dangerous phenomenon by addressing its real root causes. It is on this ground that Syria condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We condemn kidnapping and killing innocent people and targeting civilians, government institutions, humanitarian agencies, religious establishments, international organizations and diplomatic missions. In this context, we reiterate our condemnation of the heinous terrorist act that killed innocent children in a school in Beslan, Russia. We also call on the international community to condemn the systematic state terror perpetrated by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories against the defenseless Palestinian people as well as the many massacres perpetrated by the Israeli occupation forces in which innocent children, women and elderly men are killed.

During its tenure in the SC, Syria strived to support the efforts of the international community in combating international terrorism. It acceded to most of the counter terrorism international conventions as well as to the Arab and the OIC conventions to combat terrorism. The two latter conventions define the terrorist crime, and distinguish between terrorism and the legitimate right of people lingering under foreign occupation to resist occupation in accordance with international law and the United Nations' Charter.

Mr. President,

Sudan

My country follows with great concern the developments in fraternal Sudan. This concern stems primarily from our commitment to the unity among the brotherly people of Sudan and its territorial integrity. We view with satisfaction the positions and measures adopted by the Government of the Sudan to address the humanitarian

crisis in Darfour. We believe that the League of Arab States and the African Union can play an important role in the settlement of this crisis.

Africa

Syria welcomes the increased role of the African Union in pursuit of viable solutions to the major issues facing the countries and peoples of Africa. We believe that the African Union's conflict settlement mechanisms, including the African Peace and Security Council will give impetus to the role of the continent and its ability to face the challenges of peace and development.

In the Millennium Declaration, the leaders of the world underscored the need to find an environment favorable for development and to eradicate poverty at the national and global levels. Have we acted upon this commitment? How far have we gone on the road to the implementation of the MDG's? Have we taken the necessary steps and cooperated far enough to give the necessary impetus to the efforts made towards progress in the developing world?

Development

Development is a human right to which every human being is entitled. It is not an exclusive privilege available to one side to the detriment of the other regardless of the disparities between them. This right should be accorded a priority status on our agenda, and it must not be manipulated for political gains.

It is heartening to note that some enlightened leaders took it upon themselves to shed light on one of the most critical problems of our world, that of hunger and poverty. They proposed practical collective solutions to preserve man's dignity. Syria welcomes the Declaration issued by the world leaders to discuss this question in response to the initiative of the Brazilian president.

**UN
Reform**

Syria has effectively contributed to the debate on the reform of the UN system, the revitalization of the General Assembly and the reform of the Security Council and increase of its membership. Syria hopes that this session will continue to address the urgent questions namely peace and development so that a wide consensus will emerge and coordinated measures will be adopted to that end.

The prime objective of the reform of the United Nations is enhancing its ability to stand up to the new threats and challenges. However, the principle on which reform should be built is the commitment to the principles and purposes of the Charter. Syria follows with keen interest the work of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change appointed by the Secretary General to review current and future threats to international peace and security, the current state of affairs of the main organs of the United Nations and submit proposals on enhancing their role. Syria will be participating in the deliberations among member states on the proposals and suggestions of the Panel.

We have previously made it clear that Syria supports the reform of the Security Council and the increase in its membership. In our view, this reform should depend on the principles of universality, effectiveness, democratic participation and geographic representation particularly of developing countries. Syria has been continuously stressing the importance of assigning a permanent seat to the Arab states in the Security Council allocated by rotation among the member states in accordance with the procedures of the League of Arab states. Mr. President'

Since its establishment, our international organization succeeded in overcoming many acute regional and international crises. Its Charter survived some of these crises. At times, it has overcome some of them and managed them successfully, and at times, it has skirted them without actually coming to grips with them. A case in point is the fact that Palestinian Question is as old as the UN itself. All this notwithstanding, the Arab-Israeli conflict is still raging despite the adoption of over six hundred resolutions on the subject. Israel, however, did not implement a single one of them, and continues to find protection inside and outside the United Nations.

A lot has been said about the Broader Middle East. We are convinced that success in this endeavor will remain elusive unless these resolutions are implemented and peace is restored in accordance with the aspirations of the people of the region and the world.

Thank You