

Speech  
by President  
Zine El Abidine Ben Ali  
*President of the Republic of Tunisia*  
at the United Nations  
General Assembly  
*Delivered on his behalf by*  
Mr. Habib Ben Yahia  
*Minister of Foreign Affairs*

New York, September 28, 2004

**In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate**

Mr. President,

I have great pleasure, in the beginning, to express to you my sincere congratulations for your election as chairman of the 59th session of the United Nations General Assembly, wishing you all success in this important mission.

It is now my distinct honor to read to you the speech of His Excellency President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, President of the Republic of Tunisia and chairman of the 16th session of the Arab Summit, who wanted to attend this session but could not do so due to urgent commitments.

Here is the text of His Excellency's speech :

## **In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate**

Mr. President,

It is my distinct pleasure to express to Your Excellency and to your sisterly country, the Republic of Gabon, my sincere congratulations on your election as chairman of this session, wishing you all success. I also wish to express to your predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunt, my high consideration for his excellent management of the proceedings of the previous session.

I avail myself of this opportunity to express my thanks and consideration to His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, the United Nations Secretary General, for the commendable efforts he exerts to promote the role of the Organization and materialize its objectives, so that security and peace prevail all over the world.

Tunisia, which renews its commitment to the principles spelled out in the United Nations Charter, reaffirms its firm determination to pursue its contribution to all efforts aimed at reforming this prestigious Organization and developing its structures, particularly the General Assembly and the Security Council, so that it remains the guarantor of the implementation of international legality and the establishment of justice, stability and development in the world.

Faced with the spreading hotbeds of tension in many regions of the world, the widening development gap between countries, and the serious challenges confronting humanity,

the international community is called upon to act in order to re-organize international relations in accordance with a new vision based on cooperation, solidarity and co-existence among all peoples.

Such is the orientation we worked to materialize in the Arab Summit which our country hosted on May 22-23, 2004, and whose current session we have the honor of chairing.

In addition to the results of the Arab Summit which has constituted a quantum leap in the system of joint Arab action, the Arab States sent a clear message to the international community wherein they renewed their commitment to a just, comprehensive and durable peace as a strategic choice to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict, on the basis of the Arab peace initiative, international legality, the relevant Security Council resolutions, and the implementation of the Roadmap.

The community of Arab States is keen on intensifying action on the international scene in order to reactivate the Arab peace initiative and to rally international support for it.

The serious escalation of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, and Israel's persistence in imposing the policy of *fait accompli* and unilateral measures, call upon the international community to promptly act in order to put an end to the violence to which the brotherly Palestinian people is subjected, to provide an international protection to this people, to lift the siege imposed on its legitimate leadership, to put an end to settlements, and to recognize the consultative opinion handed down by the International Court of Justice, which has declared illegal the building of the wall of separation and called for its demolition.

This, in our view, will provide propitious conditions for the establishment of a new period of confidence and entente among all the parties in the region, so as to resume the peace process, to allow the brotherly Palestinian people to recover its

legitimate rights and establish its independent state, and also to enable sisterly Syria and Lebanon to recover all their occupied territories.

While renewing its commitment to supporting Iraq's national unity and the respect of its sovereignty and independence, the community of Arab States stresses the necessity for the United Nations Organization to assume its vital role in this sisterly country.

We will continue, as part of the League of Arab States, supporting the international efforts aimed at materializing the Arab countries' solidarity with the Iraqi people, in order to contribute to establishing security and stability in Iraq and provide appropriate conditions for its reconstruction.

On the other hand, the Arab countries support the efforts exerted at the UN and regional levels, and particularly by the African Union, to achieve unity, peace and development in sisterly Sudan. They also welcome the steps taken by the Sudanese government to honor its commitments by virtue of its agreement signed on July 3, 2004 with the United Nations Secretary General, concerning the reestablishment of security and stability in Darfur.

Mr. President,

The Arab Summit constituted a historic occasion during which the Arab States reaffirmed that finding just solutions to the fundamental problems of the region, which have adversely affected world peace and security, would reinforce in its peoples the feelings of security and peace, enhance its process of development, modernization and the consolidation of the principles of human rights and democracy, and foster women's role and status in society, in conformity with each country's cultural specificities, conditions and capacities, and based on its free will and its commitment to common universal values.

Given the Arab States' conviction as to the importance of the economic and social dimensions in reinforcing the process

of building the pan-Arab system, our Arab Summit has decided to establish a common strategy for economic and social action, and a plan to fight poverty and reinforce the development efforts. In so doing, it has illustrated its will to contribute to implementing the decisions of the Millennium Summit.

The Arab States' renewed call for the definition of a new concept of cooperation and solidarity-based partnership with all the countries of the world does, in fact, consecrate the path of dialogue among cultures and anchor the values of tolerance, entente and complementarity among them.

States and peoples, we hope that the international community and all the influential parties intensify their endeavors to settle the pending issues in the region, and support the efforts of the countries to upgrade their economies and promote their development and social programs, within a context of cooperation and coordination between the United Nations Organization and the League of Arab States.

Mr. President,

Tunisia, which is keen on contributing to the promotion of joint Arab action, does also endeavor to give a fresh impetus to the relations of cooperation established within its regional environment.

It is within this context that we are endeavoring, with our brothers the Leaders of Maghreb States, to reactivate the Maghreb Union, which remains an irreversible strategic choice and a legitimate aspiration shared by all the peoples of the region towards further complementarity and solidarity.

Our country is also keen on continuing its contribution to establishing the structures of the African Union, reinforcing the foundations of security and stability in our African continent, and establishing economic and social cooperation

among African countries, which will help them actively achieve integration within the process of prosperity and progress, and - establish an effective partnership with all regional groupings in the world.

At the Mediterranean level, the 5+5 Dialogue Summit involving the Maghreb countries and the European countries of the southern Mediterranean, held in Tunis in December 2003, has constituted a fresh start for cooperation and solidarity-based partnership among them, concerning the establishment of security and stability as well as the achievement of economic complementarity, cultural and social communication and constructive political dialogue.

Tunisia, which assumes the task of coordination among the community of Arab States within the Euro-Mediterranean process, strives to confer more efficiency and dynamism on this process, in order to consolidate the foundations of security, stability and development within the Euro-Mediterranean area.

Mr. President,

The establishment of the world fund for solidarity and poverty eradication, on the basis of the proposal which we made in 1999 and which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 20, 2002, reflects Tunisia's constant commitment to anchor the principles of justice, solidarity and sustainable development in the world, premised upon an avant-garde national experience we have been successfully conducting in this field for many years.

We believe that this Fund, which has become a UN mechanism, requires that all the members of the international community, including governments, civil societies and private sectors, join their efforts so as to promptly mobilize the financial resources necessary for the stimulation of its action.

In this context, we suggest the proclamation of December 20th of each year a "World Day for the Fight against Poverty", in order to commemorate the date of the General Assembly's adoption of a resolution concerning the Fund's establishment, and to consecrate the concept of solidarity as a constant universal value in international relations.

We also welcome all initiatives offering an additional support for the activation of the World Solidarity Fund. In this regard, particular mention can be made of the initiative of His Excellency President Luis Ignacio Lulla, President of the Federal Republic of Brazil.

The sustained efforts exerted by Tunisia to provide optimum conditions for the hosting of the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, on November 16-18, 2005, are taking place in the same context. In 1998, we called for the convening of such a summit, based on our conviction that our world needs, today and more than ever before, to establish a solidarity-based digital partnership allowing all countries to achieve integration within the international knowledge society. This, we hope, will be more just and more balanced, will constitute a strong development and cultural bridge between the countries of the world, and will materialize the objectives and principles spelled out in the Millennium Summit Declaration.

I take this opportunity to renew the invitation I already addressed, during the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society held in Geneva in December 2003, to the Heads of State and Government, to the representatives of the civil society and the private sector, and to all international partners, to actively participate in the Tunis Summit, in order to ensure its success and achieve the prosperity and well-being we all wish for all humanity.

On the other hand, the General Assembly's adoption of the Tunisian proposal to proclaim 2005 an international year for sports and physical education, constitutes a recognition of the importance of these two factors in strengthening the bonds of friendship, cooperation and rapprochement among peoples, and in further disseminating peace and stability in the world.

We are convinced that all countries are aware of the noble dimensions of this proclamation and will spare no effort to consecrate it within their national programs during the next year.

Mr. President,

The increasing danger of the phenomenon of terrorism in our times requires further optimizing international coordination in order to stand against this scourge and ward off its dangers, by treating its root causes, finding just solutions to a number of pending international problems, and curbing the phenomena of poverty, exclusion and marginalization in the world.

Tunisia is convinced that international relations can prosper and develop only in a climate of dialogue, entente and solidarity, away from fanaticism, extremism and the dangers of discord and wars, and within a context of justice, mutual respect and equitable cooperation among individuals, groups and peoples, so that security, peace and stability prevail in the world, and so that humanity can look to the future with a maximum of confidence, optimism and ambition.

Thank you for your attention.