



THE PERMANENT MISSION OF  
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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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**STATEMENT  
BY**

**H.E. MR. THABO MBEKI  
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**ON THE  
OCCASION OF THE GENERAL DEBATE  
OF THE  
60<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**NEW YORK  
17 September 2005**

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**ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT OF SOUTH AFRICA, THABO MBEKI, AT  
THE 60<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY: NEW  
YORK, 17 SEPTEMBER 2005.**

Your Excellency, President of the General Assembly,  
Your Excellency, Secretary-General of the United Nations,  
Your Majesties,  
Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

First of all, I would like to salute H.E. Jean Ping, the outgoing President of the General Assembly for the work he did to guide the General Assembly, as the nations of the world considered the immensely important matters that led to the elaboration of the Outcome Document that was adopted last night.

I would also like to congratulate H.E. Jan Eliasson on his election to preside over the 60th Session of the General Assembly. We are confident that you will lead the Assembly well, as it confronts the challenge of the implementation of the decisions of the Millennium Review Summit and remains seized of other important matters that were not adequately addressed in the Outcome Document.

Shortly before we convened here as the Millennium Review Summit, an important meeting of Christian leaders took place in Washington D.C. These leaders issued a communiqué entitled "A Call to Partnership", directed at our Summit Meeting. In part the Call says:

"At the urgent call of Church leaders in the southern hemisphere, we came together at the Washington National Cathedral as Christian leaders from diverse traditions and places, both rich and poor, South and North, united in a common concern for those of us living in poverty. We see their faces; we hear their voices; they are a part of us, and we are a part of them.

"As the United Nations reaches its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we give thanks for its work in peacemaking and global reconciliation, particularly the historic commitment to eradicate poverty in the Millennium Declaration of 2000. Five years have passed, and despite the triumph of principle, there has been a failure in practice. In this communiqué, we offer our partnership to the leaders gathered at the World Summit at the United Nations in building a global movement to make real the promises of the Millennium Development Goals as a crucial step toward a more just world for all God's children.

"We believe that God calls us to place people struggling with poverty at the centre of our concern. Globalisation has brought unprecedented economic growth. At the same time, one-sixth of the world's people still fight daily for survival under the crushing burden of

extreme poverty. The increasing concentration of wealth in our world, while so many suffer, is a scandal that impoverishes us all.

"We believe that the spirit of partnership between rich and poor, exemplified in the MDGs, is a way the world can address poverty in all its dimensions. In particular, we support the Goal of a 'global partnership for development' and believe that the Churches can make a unique contribution to that partnership."

If nothing else, the fact that the religious leaders who issued this Call gathered from many parts of the world to agree on a message to our Summit Meeting must remind us that the masses of the people who elected us entertain high expectations about the United Nations. They see this august Organisation as their eminent partner in the continuing struggle to build a better and humane world.

They challenge us who have the privilege to represent our Member States in the United Nations, to build, strengthen and direct this world Organisation so that it does indeed play its role as an eminent partner of the peoples of the world to construct a better and humane world.

Accordingly, I believe that we must view with the greatest seriousness the conclusion they reached that "five years have passed (since we adopted the Millennium Declaration), and despite this triumph of principle, there has been a failure in practice."

Sixty years ago, in the aftermath of the destructive fury of the Second World War and the villainous genocide committed during this war, the United Nations was formed, in the words of the Charter of this organisation, "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind".

And responding to the universal demand for human and peoples rights, the founders declared that they were forming the United Nations "to reaffirm faith in the fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small"; and to "promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom".

As we gather here, in part to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of an international Organisation established to bring hope to the peoples of the world, we cannot avoid asking some hard questions. This is necessary if we are to live up to our obligation to ensure that the United Nations discharges its responsibilities described by the religious leaders who met at the Washington National Cathedral, as peacemaking, global reconciliation and the eradication of poverty.

We must ask ourselves how well prepared is the United Nations today, 60 years after it was established:

- to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war;
- to protect and advance the fundamental human rights of all;
- to protect and advance the dignity and worth of the humans person;

- to ensure equal rights between men and women;
- to ensure equal rights between nations large and small; and,
- to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

We must ask the question and answer it honestly, whether what we do as the United Nations is properly described as "the triumph of principle (and) a failure in practice", as the religious leaders put it.

Some of the reality we face is that sixty years after the United Nations was formed, appalled at the ghastly results of the commission of the crime of racism, we are still confronted by the cancer of racism. Although the United Nations has adopted important decisions on this matter, and convened the necessary conferences to unite the peoples of the world against racism, those who still fall victim to this crime against humanity would find it difficult to cite the instances when the United Nations came to their aid.

Sixty years after the United Nations was formed, the indecencies of wars and violent conflict continue to consume the lives of innocent people, evidently because we, the United Nations, lack the will to live up to the commitment that was made when this Organisation was established six decades ago.

As Africans, who have been exposed to many violent conflicts since the United Nations was formed, we are particularly keen that this Organisation must live up to its obligation to save succeeding African generations from the scourge of war. Even as we speak, the United Nations is faced with the urgent task to take the necessary action in Cote d'Ivoire to help bring a lasting peace to this important African country, opening the way to its reunification, the holding of democratic elections and the promotion of social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom, to use the words of the UN Charter.

A similar challenge faces this Organisation with regard to the restoration of lasting peace in Darfur in Sudan, building on the historic conclusion and implementation of the Sudanese Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in Nairobi, Kenya, earlier this year.

Only eleven years ago, we experienced a terrible genocide in Rwanda as well as thousands killed in the internecine conflict that took place in the Balkans. Those who were exposed to the savagery would be fully justified to conclude that the United Nations had betrayed its commitment to the peoples of the world.

I am certain that all of us are impatient to see an end to the conflicts in the Middle East, including Iraq, and in particular the restoration of the rights of the people of Palestine, within the context of the successful implementation of the Road Map.

While we welcome recent positive developments in this regard, we must accept the reality that every day that passes without the full implementation of the Road Map only serves to point an accusing finger at us as the United Nations, that we have not done everything we should, to help secure the just and lasting peace that is the right of the Palestinian, the Israeli and the Arab peoples.

We have all recognised the serious and urgent threat posed by international terrorism to all our nations. We have all accepted the reality that we need a multilateral response to this common threat. And yet we have still not succeeded to arrive at a common definition of this threat as well as an identification of its fundamental causes.

The issues of non-proliferation and disarmament of weapons of mass destruction are matters of critical concern to all nations, both large and small. And yet we failed to address these matters in the Outcome Document adopted by the Millennium Review Summit last night, even as the issue of nuclear weapons and their non-proliferation is among the most prominent items in world news and the international agenda. None of us can justly claim that our failure as the United Nations to take specific decisions on these matters served to enhance global security from the threat of weapons of mass destruction.

With regard to the issue of Iran, we firmly believe that negotiations should resume, and the matter settled within the context of the provisions of the NPT and with the full participation of the IAEA.

The gap between the rich and the poor is becoming worse within and between countries as observed by the UNDP Human Development Report 2005, which says that: "...the gap between the average citizen in the richest and in the poorest countries is wide and getting wider. In 1990 the average American was 38 times richer than the average Tanzanian. Today the average American is 61 times richer".

The same Report says: "In 2003, 18 countries with a combined population of 460 million people registered lower scores on the human development index (HDI) than in 1990 – an unprecedented reversal. In the midst of an increasingly prosperous global economy, 10.7 million children every year do not live to see their fifth birthday, and more than 1 billion people survive in abject poverty on less than a \$1 a day."

Accordingly, if we pause and scan the road traversed to judge whether we have succeeded to save the world from the scourge of war; whether we have built a world that has reaffirmed faith in fundamental human rights; whether we have created a world that has restored the dignity and worth of the human person; a world that has entrenched equal rights of men and women and of nations, large and small, the answer from the majority of the people of the world may very well be a resounding no!

The United Nations has adopted many decisions intended to help address the various global challenges that have persisted over the sixty years of the existence of the UN. Accordingly, we have the necessary policies to address the social, economic, political and other problems facing humanity. We have also adopted comprehensive and clear programmes to give effect to these policies, and have identified the required resources for their implementation.

The questions we must answer is why have we not implemented these programmes, and what must be done to correct this situation?

The process of globalisation means that our common world is more integrated today than it was when the United Nations was formed 60 years ago. Similarly, the interconnectedness of the issues of peace, security, development and human rights has never been more pronounced than it is today.

All this means that the imperatives that made it necessary and correct to establish the UN as part of a desirable system of global governance are that more compelling today, and that the necessary reform of the Organisation must take place, to ensure that it reflects the new global realities since it was formed, and that it is empowered to respond effectively to the urgent challenges that face all humanity.

And yet the painful paradox we face is that it seems obvious that over the years, there has been a continuous erosion of the authority and prestige of the United Nations and a sustained drift towards its marginalisation in terms of playing its rightful role as so clearly defined in the UN Charter.

The 60<sup>th</sup> General Assembly has the heavy responsibility to reassert the critical necessity of the United Nations to discharge its responsibilities as spelt out in that Charter. Experience over the last 60 years has shown that to address the criticism levelled against this Organisation by the religious leaders, of a triumph of principle and a failure in practice, we must be ready to engage in a sustained struggle to ensure that the vision contained in the UN Charter is actually translated into reality.

As we engage in this struggle, we too, like the religious leaders who met at the Washington National Cathedral, should say we are "united in a common concern for those of us living in poverty. We see their faces; we hear their voices; they are a part of us, and we are a part of them."

Let me close by reiterating our deepest sympathies and condolences to the government and people of the United States in the wake of the death and destruction wrought by Hurricane Katrina.

Thank you.