



**BELGIUM**

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Karel De Gucht,  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Belgium  
At the 61<sup>st</sup> General Assembly of the United Nations Organization  
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Madam President,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me, first of all, to congratulate you on your election to the Presidency of this 61<sup>st</sup> General Assembly.

One year ago, our heads of State and Government, gathered in this Assembly, reaffirmed how much peace, security, development and human rights are interlinked. The mandate they entrusted us with is being progressively implemented. We have set up the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council and have adopted the Counter-terrorism Strategy. We hope that their results will meet the high expectations.

During the past year we have witnessed, I am happy to say, a rebirth of multilateralism. What we, Member States of the United Nations, do together in a multilateral way will enjoy by definition a greater legitimacy. I have in mind in particular the recent conflict between Israel and Lebanon, a conflict in which the Security Council fully assumed its responsibilities. A conflict also in which the good offices of the Secretary General must eventually guarantee a lasting political settlement. Likewise it is worth noting that international dialogue, rather than the use of force, is again in the foreground of multilateral diplomacy. Take the case of Iran: we must make every effort to resolve the difficult nuclear issue while fully respecting the principles of the UN Charter and the NPT.

This being said, as far as I am concerned, multilateralism is neither a dogma nor a simple profession of faith. Multilateralism is an instrument that shall be judged on its impact on world issues. In order to be effective, it must deliver results. Only by actions shall it legitimize its *raison d'être*.

Madam President,

Yesterday morning the president of Finland addressed the GA on behalf of the European Union. I entirely subscribe to her intervention. I will now address a few issues which are of particular importance to Belgium.

The Middle East has just experienced one of the worst crises to occur in the recent years. The military logic has led to unacceptable sacrifices by civilians both in Lebanon and Israel. In the face of such a crisis, Belgium and its European partners have clearly demonstrated their willingness to act and have answered to the successive appeals of the Secretary General. Belgium, for its part, has contributed to the Emergency Fund to support the reconstruction projects of the Lebanese government. But most of all, Belgium has decided to participate in the reinforcement of UNIFIL, requested by resolution 1701 of the Security Council. In the coming weeks, 400 Belgian blue helmets will be deployed in South Lebanon. But the international community must do more. All elements of the Security Council Resolution must be urgently implemented. I salute the efforts of the Secretary General and of the States involved that have brought an end to the

blockade. The two kidnapped Israeli soldiers must also be immediately released. Likewise we have to work on a solution for the release of the Lebanese prisoners in Israel. And above all, the arms embargo should immediately and effectively be implemented. Finally, the Lebanese Government must fully exercise its sovereignty and its control throughout its territory. It has our full support in this process.

The implementation of Resolution 1701 shows that the European Union is becoming more actively involved in the quest for a lasting peace in the Middle East. This is a welcome development. We all agree that this lasting peace will be predicated on a settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Therefore we must work on all measures which may rapidly open a way to the resumption of the dialogue; an end to the hostilities and security guarantees for both parties, the liberation of the abducted Israeli soldier, the release of the political leaders arrested during the crisis, humanitarian access and the re-establishment of basic services, kicking off the reconstruction, and restitution of tax and customs income due to the Palestinian authorities. We support the efforts of the President of the Palestinian Authority to form a government of national unity. Nevertheless we will observe attentively the contents of its platform and the answers it provides to the three conditions of the Quartet.

I share the assessment by the Secretary General: in the already tense environment of the Middle East, this region can in no case afford a new major crisis. Given the general, and justified, suspicion arising from the Iranian nuclear programme, I appeal to the sense of responsibility of the authorities in Tehran to answer positively to the offers made to them. Iran is a great country, of ancient and prestigious civilization. This heritage, as well as its role in the region, must encourage it to promote peace and security and to rebuild confidence with its regional partners rather than isolating itself by useless provocations. Iran must take again its place in the community of nations and comply with the rules that are governing international relations. Iran has to comply with Resolution 1696.

Madam President,

The first round of the presidential and legislative elections was held in the Democratic Republic of Congo just recently, thanks to a combined effort of the Congolese authorities, civil society and the international community. It was quite a challenge. The Congolese people voted in an orderly fashion and in great numbers, and demonstrated hereby their sense of public responsibility and their wish to exercise their democratic rights. I pay tribute to MONUC for the positive role it played, assisted by the European Force EUFOR, in controlling the skirmishes that occurred at the end of the first round. The electoral process now has to be completed, there is no other option. Calm must return and the protagonists must commit themselves, in good faith, to apply the rules of democracy. The international community has to continue to support this process. These elections are of course but a first step. Next, DRC has to establish solid and reliable institutions that are capable and willing to use their responsibilities to the benefit of the people. The potential resources of Congo are enormous, but so are the

challenges ahead in the reconstruction of the country. It is crucial that the new authorities prove, without any ambiguity, their commitment to good governance, both political and economic. The international community has been a reliable partner for Congo during this transition. Its support and accompaniment, particularly by MONUC, will remain paramount all along the establishment of those new institutions. I hope that the international community will be able to continue a constructive dialogue with the new authorities in Congo and this to the benefit of peace, stability and development of Congo and the region.

The democratic elections have ended the transition period in Burundi. The people of Burundi and the international community had high hopes for prospects of stability and development of the country. That is why we saluted the recent cease-fire obtained with the FNL movement. I fear however, that these hopes are at risk. The reactions of the government towards the press and the opposition and its management of public affairs cast a shadow over the evolution of the democratic process. The Secretary-General himself expressed his concerns very clearly about the situation in Burundi. The development partners and the regional partners share these concerns. All possible means have to be used to consolidate the democratic evolution and to reinforce its development potential. The media and a responsible civil society are necessary elements of a democracy that has to fully assert itself. The rule of law has to be strengthened in the interest of all and with the participation of all. A dialogue with the national political partners is, from this point of view, indispensable. The new government has a crucial role in this. The new Peace-Building Commission will provide us with opportunities to have a frank and open dialogue about all these questions.

As you have noticed, our organization these days pays more attention to states emerging from conflict and engaging a period of transition. The danger of new tensions in these states that remain fragile is real. Free and democratic elections are important, but they are just one part of the process of rebuilding the rule of law. We cannot lose sight of the way power asserts itself in reality. We have to rebuild states, capable to assume their responsibilities towards their neighbours and their populations; states capable of defending their sovereignty and borders without threatening the stability of their partners; states that have professional and loyal armies at their disposal; states where power is asserted not to the benefit a few, but to respond to the aspirations of the people. Good governance should be at the centre of this.

Madam President,

Since the beginning of this year Belgium exercises the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), a regional organization under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. Its principles and values are the same as those of the United Nations. Its fields of actions are very similar and complementary, be it the promotion of human rights, democratization, protection of minorities, conflict prevention, crisis management, or protection of the environment. I should also mention the dialogue of civilizations, the fight

against the proliferation of small arms and electoral monitoring. The OSCE has played an essential role in maintaining the relation between the two parties in Cold War divided Europe. Since then the Organization has developed a number of norms, principles and commitments that unites all its members and that contributes to the reinforcement of their collective security. One of the objectives of our chairmanship was reinforcing the balance between the three dimensions of the OSCE, political and military, economic and humanitarian. We have tried to establish in those domains synergies with the United Nations where possible such as the problems of landlocked countries, the fight against organized crime and terrorism. During its chairmanship, Belgium actively tries to contribute to a path towards a solution for the so-called "frozen" conflicts. But these solutions will not be possible if we can't count on the will of all parties concerned to move forward.

Madam President,

Some of the criticisms addressed at the United Nations are justified and we must pursue the reform process which must above all strengthen its legitimacy, its effectiveness and its credibility. These criticisms should not diminish the successes the UN can credit itself with. I am referring to the dramatic increase in peace keeping operations. On the other hand, poverty is decreasing worldwide, thanks in particular to the dramatic progress in Asia. And while the increase of poverty has not been turned around in Sub-Saharan Africa yet, the 2006 report on the Millennium Development Goals stresses that several African countries are now showing a long term growth potential that could improve the standard of living of its people.

Madam President,

I take this opportunity to pay a very sincere tribute to the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan. Tirelessly, he puts his political talents and negotiating skills to the service of peace, development and human rights. I want to express my deep gratitude for the dedication he has shown at the helm of our organization.

I thank you.