

EGYPT



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Statement by

H.E. Ahmed Aboul Gheit

Minster of Foreign Affairs

of the Arab Republic of Egypt

Before the 61st Session of the General Assembly

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Mme President,

At the outset, it gives me great pleasure to congratulate you upon your assumption of the Presidency of the 61st session of the General Assembly. My pleasure is all the greater since you are the first Arab woman to occupy this high post since the establishment of the organization. We are fully confident that under your leadership the GA will be able to achieve its desired objectives.

It is also a source of pleasure for me to express my sincere congratulations to Mr. Jan Eliasson, president of the 60th session of the GA on the wisdom, efficiency and resolve that were the hallmark of his Presidency and on the numerous achievements made under his watch.

Today I would like to pay a special tribute to Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary General of our organization for the important role he has played over the last ten years to uphold the lofty principles and values on which this organization was founded. During the same period, Mr. Anan dealt with many trying international situations with profound wisdom and clear vision. It is our hope that the candidate elected for this post during this session will display the same wisdom and vision.

Mme President,

The sixty first session meets against the backdrop of a complex international situation. It comes in the wake of unfortunate international events that have uncovered many contradictions in the work of this organization. These contradictions require us to study in-depth the extent to which the UN has succeeded in strengthening international understanding and consensus on dealing with the threats and challenges that face humanity. They make it incumbent upon us to draw on past experience to strengthen the role of the organization in the achievement of the noble purposes and objectives for which it was founded.

The negotiations preceding the adoption of the 2005 Summit Outcome Document, and the subsequent negotiations on its implementation, have made it clear that the views of the North and the South on the future of the UN and on the nature of its role in the current and coming phases have become more divergent. This was manifested in a number of attitudes that have left visible marks on the international environment.

There is a widening gap. It is a gap between those who pay the larger share of the budget of the organization and believe that their contributions entitle them to a larger say in the conduct of its work and those developing countries that pay their fair share established by the methodology adopted by the General Assembly. They believe that the organization must remain the international forum of democracy, equality and good governance on the international level as embodied in the principle of "one state, one vote".

Some, with increasing insistence, believe that the Security Council must hold the fate of the organization in its hands, take precedence over the other main organs of the organization, rob them of most of their competences and deal with them in the way it sees fit without accountability. Even if this leads to the failure by the council to discharge its responsibilities to prevent the killing of the innocent and the perpetration of the crime of genocide and other crimes against humanity. This insistence runs counter the view of the majority of the member states. They believe that the General Assembly is the inclusive democratic forum that brings the members of the Organization together. It is the Assembly that mandated the council to bear the

responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The Assembly alone has the right of oversight over the work of all the organs of the Organization. The Assembly indeed has the right to withdraw the prerogatives of the Security Council should it fail to discharge its charter mandated responsibilities or if the narrow political interests of one of the parties to a conflict prevent it from fulfilling its task.

The international arena has witnessed a growing tendency to misuse the development assistance by imposing conditionalities on the national priorities of developing countries without any regard to the agreements reached in the relevant UN conferences and Summits. At the same time the overwhelming majority continues to believe that development is a human right and that development assistance, along with the transfer of technology, are an obligation for the developed countries.

Last year was the sixtieth anniversary of the tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Astonishingly, some continue to believe that their might and dominance are based on their, and their allies' continued possession of nuclear arsenals. They believe in the need to exercise strict control and supervision on other states and to apply restrictions on the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. At the same time, the great majority of the members of the organization believe that their commitment under the NPT not to produce nuclear weapons was made on the basis of a corresponding commitment by the nuclear weapons states to eliminate those weapons under international supervision within a specific time frame and the achievement of the universality of the Treaty. Not only does the maintenance of the existing nuclear arsenals jeopardize the credibility of the NPT, it also threatens humanity with total annihilation.

Mme President,

Our peoples have a keen interest in the achievement of a larger measure of democracy, human rights and political reform. However, we now see that some seek to impose these concepts by military force. They proceed from the assumption that their principles, values and culture are superior and thus worthy of being imposed on others. At the same time, the overwhelming majority believe that democracy and human rights are based on culture-specific values that emanate from the respective societies. They simply can not be imposed from outside.

Notwithstanding the increase in the number of the victims of terrorist operations, there is an increased tendency to deal with terrorism with military force alone, while ignoring its root causes. Some have made it their mission to rid the world of the evils of terrorism as they define it. They ignore the international collective work to conclude a comprehensive convention on terrorism and to implement effectively the General Assembly Counter Terrorism Strategy in a manner that strikes a balance between the respective roles of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Last but not least the negotiations on the reform of the Organization have proven that some believe that the collective security regime was established to enable those who possess the military might to impose political settlements under international protection. While the great majority believes that the lessons of history, most recently in Lebanon, have proven that military might can not and will not be able to impose a political settlement. Such settlements must be reached through negotiations alone.

Mme President,

The above are some of the main elements that made our positions farther apart during the past year. In listing them, It was not my intention to create an atmosphere of pessimism on our vision of the work of the organization in the future. Rather, I list them as a way to determine the premise of our work during this session in order to overcome some of these differences on the one hand and to achieve further progress on the other.

We must develop a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the performance of the organization. Together we chart the course towards the upholding of the values of democracy, justice and the rule of law in international relations. We must move resolutely towards the consolidation of these values in the international community in view of the fact that they constitute the real solid foundations of international peace and security.

With the same constructive spirit that prevailed in our work last year, together with a balanced mixture of realism and legitimate ambition and without the imposition of impracticable timeframes or acceptance of temporary measures, we must proceed towards the achievement of further reform and the strengthening of the effectiveness of the United Nations. We must be committed to preserve both our consensus and the intergovernmental character of the organization.

Together we must work to increase the ability of the collective security regime to swiftly deal with international problems. We must stand up to the arrogance of power of some in order to protect the rights and future of other countries and peoples. We must also face resolutely any attempts to impose temporary solutions through unilateral actions or military solutions that might result in transient victories that lack justice and comprehensive vision. Such actions only scratch the surface of problems without delving into the root causes. They lead to the exacerbation of problems through fanning the flames of hatred and the rejection of other. This in turn feeds terrorism and extremism and leads those who despair of the justice of the international system to rebel against the will of the international community.

Madam President,

In the effort to improve the balance between rights and duties, we must work together to develop the work of the Human Rights Council. We must stand firm against any attempt to politicize its work or to use it as a pretext for the interference in the internal affairs of states. We must be careful not to fall in the trap of selectivity and double standards that allowed tragedy to befall the Lebanese and Palestinian peoples. Without any accountability, the Security Council contributed to the exacerbation of the humanitarian consequences of this tragedy.

We must all uphold the right of all peoples without exception to self determination and ending foreign occupation of their land. This is an alienable right enshrined in the UN charter.

We must accelerate the implementation of the Comprehensive Counter - terrorism Strategy which we adopted at a high level meeting the day before yesterday. We must focus on strengthening the General Assembly which has been and will continue to be the larger forum to deal effectively with the root causes of terrorism. In doing so, we must be fully aware that democracy in international relations, the observance of the concepts of justice, equality and ending occupation, as well as the upholding the right of self determination, are the most effective means to face the extremist thought that lies behind the dastardly acts of terrorism.

In our consideration of the development of international efforts to combat the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, we must not overlook its link, among other things, the illegal exploitation of the natural resources and its role in fueling regional conflicts in various parts of the world.

It is also our duty to keep the question of weapons of mass destruction and their proliferation at the top of the international agenda. We must work to achieve the universality of the NPT taking into account that, nearly thirty years after the establishment of the non-proliferation regime, and eleven years after the indefinite extension of the treaty, the international community is still far from implementing the international obligations assumed in it. We are still far from achieving the Treaty's universality and from reaching the desired balance between the three main pillars adopted by the international community with regards to nuclear disarmament, non proliferation and the right of all states, without exception to benefit from the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Mme President,

Our region has witnessed recently tragic developments as a result of a devastating war imposed on the Lebanese state. Despite Egypt's repeated warnings against the resort to confrontation and escalation, the situation between Israel and Lebanon has resulted in unimaginable human and material losses that have exceeded all limits Lebanon has suffered the total destruction of its infrastructure and the discriminate killing of hundreds of innocent civilians in a manner that contravenes the United Nations Charter and the relevant rules of the international law and the international humanitarian law.

The Israeli war against Lebanon has caused untold devastation. However it has proven that military might, however great, will never be able to impose a political solution. It has also proven that the solution lies in ending the occupation and in negotiating a just political settlement that will eliminate the feelings of enmity and replace them with relations of cooperation and peaceful co-existence.

Undoubtedly, resolution 1701, after being amended to take into consideration the Arabs point of view, constitutes a step in the right direction. However this step will remain incomplete and will not enjoy success without dealing with the core of the conflict in the region; namely the Arab Israeli conflict.

The Arab Israeli conflict has squandered the resources and disrupted the lives of the people of the Middle East for many decades. In it, political, historical and religious dimensions ferment in a combustible mix that carries the seeds of a conflagration that could go beyond the region and reflect negatively on stability and the relations between various cultures and faiths in the world. Hence the importance for all of us, citizens of the region and members of the international community, to act in concert to reach an immediate, just and comprehensive solution to this conflict.

In its endeavors to achieve comprehensive peace between the Arab world and Israel, Egypt precedes from a realistic vision of the events around it. In this context, Egypt is exerting efforts to improve the security situation between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Egypt does so through direct engagement with both parties with the aim of calming the situation and the cessation of all acts of violence, killing and destruction and to take confidence building measures between the Palestinians and the Israelis to resume their dialogue and negotiations. At the same time, Egypt is seeking to resume progress on the three tracks of the settlement of the Arab Israeli conflict. This is the main objective of the peace process that has been stalled for years. The deterioration in the

security situation must not make us lose sight of that objective. Experience has proven time and time again that the success of security efforts will remain limited and fragile if it is not part of a wider political framework that ensures the basic rights of the parties and encourages them to make the difficult decisions necessary for the improvement of the security situation.

The Quartet has drawn up a Roadmap for peace. It was accepted by the parties and the states of the region. It was also endorsed by the Security Council in its resolution 1515. It was hoped that it would constitute the political framework that I referred to earlier. However this did not happen for reasons that I will not list here. Yet the Roadmap remains a corner stone in the achievement of peace in the region since it establishes the principles of peaceful co-existence between Israel and Palestine and determines the general parameters of the final settlement between Israel, Palestine, Syria and Lebanon. Namely; ending the occupation that started in 1967, the implementation of the international resolutions on the Arab Israeli conflict, and the implementation of the Arab peace initiative that ensures for Israel security, peace and recognition by its Arab neighbors in return for ending its occupation of the occupied Arab territories and reaching acceptable solutions for the other pending issues. There is a need now to build upon this corner stone in order to create a political framework that would move the parties towards the objective desired by the international community as a whole, namely the establishment of a comprehensive peace that would put an end to occupation and strife in this part of the world.

We assure the Israeli people that there is a path other than that of violence and counter violence, and that the Arab world is ready to accept them as neighbors and a part of the region, within a comprehensive peace agreement that transcends the suffering of the past, preserves the interests of the peoples of the region and assures Arabs and Israelis of a life in safety, security and cooperation.

Mme President,

Egypt has followed closely the developments of the Darfur crisis since its inception. It is one of the troop contributing countries to the African Union Mission in Darfur. Egypt also participated actively in the Abuja talks and has provided humanitarian assistance to the people of Darfur throughout the crisis and after the signing of the peace agreement.

There is no doubt that the international community bears a major share of the responsibility for reaching a swift and just solution. In our opinion, efforts must focus on creating the conditions for the success of the Darfur Peace Agreement as the political framework agreed upon by the main parties. This makes it necessary to initiate and strengthen the Darfur/Darfur dialogue in order to create a consensus on the peace agreement and to convince the parties that have not yet signed it to do so. In addition there is a need to encourage the Sudanese government to carry out its commitments on the development and reconstruction of the Darfur region.

To this end, the AU needs to continue its current mission for peace keeping and stabilization in Darfur until the end of this year in order to create an opportunity for a meeting of the minds between the UN and the Sudanese government on the optimal way to implement Security Council resolution 1706, without prejudice to the sovereignty of Sudan. This calls for a positive dialogue that steers the UN away from the language of threat or confrontation. A dialogue that aims at reaching a swift solution through negotiation and cooperation and contributes to the restoration of stability and security and to the launching of development and reconstruction projects at the earliest possible opportunity.

Mme President,

The tremendous challenges facing the African continent must instill in the international community a sense of responsibility to move swiftly to create a plan that would change the current reality and put an end to the political, economic and social marginalization of Africa on the international arena. Therefore there is a need to give special priority to the needs of states emerging from conflicts and to help them in the reconstruction and in their efforts to achieve sustainable development.

In this connection, the role of the Peace building commission must be activated as an essential step towards the reformulation of the UN role in dealing with the situation of such states in a manner that goes beyond the conventional, political, security and humanitarian approach to peace making and peace building. This role should seek to achieve a balance between the needs of the post conflict situation and those of reconstruction and sustainable development within a context that strengthens the concept of national ownership, takes into account the priorities and specificities of different societies and helps achieve the aspirations of their peoples.

Mme President,

For the United Nations to continue to play the role entrusted to it, we must display a sense of collective responsibility based on a strong will to make the organization an inclusive framework for common international efforts to deal promptly and effectively with regional and global issues and problems.

The call for spreading democratic practices and good governance in the states of the world can only be valid if it is coupled with a clear commitment by all states to apply these very concepts among them in the multilateral setting. It can be valid only with the reaffirmation of the principles of partnership, sharing of burdens and responsibilities, equality of rights and duties and above all participation on an equal footing in decision making at the international level.

Let us work together to strengthen the principles of democracy in the international multilateral setting. Let us make dialogue and mutual respect the language of our discourse. Let us give the lofty human ideals and the common good precedence over narrow selfish interests. Let us cast aside our differences and be real partners.

Thank you, Mme President.