



SLOVENIA

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Statement by

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GENERAL DEBATE

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Madame President,

Let me first congratulate you for your election to the presidency of the General Assembly. We believe that under your guidance, we will continue the reform process as laid out in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document.

Our warm appreciation also goes to the President of the 60th Session Jan Eliasson and his inspiring leadership. Let me use this opportunity to thank Secretary General Kofi Annan for his brilliant opening speech a few days ago, and for the decade of dedicated work for the UN. Slovenia has appreciated the role of the Secretary-General in helping to expand our understanding of pressing issues, such as the protection of civilians and our responsibility to protect. The commitment of the Secretary-General to mainstream Human Rights in the work of the Organization and his emphasis on the Rule of Law in international relations and nationally will remain a permanent legacy. The report "In Larger Freedom" contains a fair vision of the global responsibility that we share and reminds us of the inevitable challenges that lie ahead.

(Small countries)

Madame President,

We live in a tightly interconnected, interdependent and transparent world. It is logical and it is right that nations should support and help each other. What place in the world is more appropriate for such a recommendation than the United Nations? All nations and all people should be asking themselves how they can help each other. I guess that assistance and contributions of affluent and strong countries are more effective. *It seems easier for the large nations to be great nations.* Unfortunately, not all nations are large. This is true of most nations of the world. And this is, of course, true of *my country, Slovenia.*

The implementation of the Global Partnership for Development is a priority to which Slovenia is fully committed. The new financial instruments for external action of the EU as well as the 10th European Development Fund open a new chapter in the relations of the EU with developing countries and strengthen Europe's role as a global partner in development. This is a promising sign for fulfillment of our commitments from the Millennium Declaration.

To contribute in an important way, the small countries have to make a special effort. In fact, our chances to be effective are not bad at all. The smaller countries rarely threaten or endanger other countries. They have knowledge of *small systems and minorities* in large systems. They can perform special tasks that demand special qualities and particular capabilities like flexibility, adaptability, spirit of empathy and cooperation. They can serve as honest brokers. There are a number of successful small and medium-size countries. They can help each other to assume creative and relevant positions in the international community.

(Sovereignty, nationalism, integration)

Madame President,

In the UN we should continue to review the concept of sovereignty. Many fear that the erosion of sovereignty provides grounds for interfering in state internal affairs. Indeed, the potential for misuse is real. History teaches us that checks and balances are necessary to shield right against might. At the same time, the sovereignty of states must be understood in the context of contemporary reality. National borders are no longer an excuse for the international community to turn a blind eye to genocide, crimes against humanity and other gross human rights violations.

Last year, world leaders for the first time formally and universally affirmed the concept of the Responsibility to Protect. The 2005 World Summit Outcome Document provides a detailed framework for this individual and collective responsibility, ranging from prevention and protection to rebuilding. We regard this as a conceptual breakthrough and wish to stress the need for all members of the international community, and the Security Council in particular, to deliver on the implementation of this responsibility in practice.

Many crises are evolving as we speak. Of these, some receive more attention and remedy from the international community while others receive less. The suffering of the civilian population in Darfur, calls for our immediate resolve. We should not allow the repetition of the tragedy of Rwanda or Bosnia and Herzegovina in the case of Darfur or anywhere else.

Attention to the Western Balkans must not diminish. We are committed to standing by our partners in the region in their endeavors to expand their relationship with the EU and facilitate prosperity for their citizens. Kosovo is now approaching an important stage in the peace process. Kosovo Albanians have come to identify - understandably so - independence as an existential security interest. For Serbia, Kosovo remains a psychological and mythological issue. Finding a common point between these positions and striking a political deal will be extremely difficult. We are confident, however, that all involved will summon sufficient courage to make a critical step forward and thus enable peaceful coexistence and cooperation among all ethnic groups in that region. We hope that the integration process in Europe will provide the appropriate vehicle for stabilization of the region.

The disintegration of rigid systems like Soviet Union and Yugoslavia has produced a number of new states (and new members of the UN). The process has sometimes been called *balkanization*. But a closer look will reveal that many of these newborn countries, contrary to expectations, have not regressed. Quite the opposite, a lot of them have progressed, democratized and reintegrated, or have expressed the desire to integrate in a different way and positioned themselves on a new level. So, many former republics of Soviet Union and Yugoslavia have become, or tend to become members of new multinational systems. One of them is the European Union.

Occasionally, we still hear expressions of hesitation and fear: *We should not sacrifice our national interests for the sake of integration!* One of the problems of the international community today is *complex relations within multinational, multiethnic and multicultural*

*systems. The question is, how to facilitate productive coexistence of national, ethnic, religious and other minorities. In the past, in Europe and elsewhere, individual mighty dynasties or nations, driven by the ambition to rule over weaker nations and minorities, practiced imposed integration. Modern integration no longer rests on subordination, but on solidarity and cooperation. Modern nations cultivate complementarity. In the future, the UN should encourage new projects and provide efficient framework for the *management of religious diversity and dialogue between cultures*. Here, we could learn from countries with experience in successful transition from central and autocratic systems to decentralized and democratic systems. *Essentially, we are discussing sustained assistance in transition to democracy and coexistence in multiethnic/multicultural systems.**

I support the idea behind the dialogue of cultures. However, we should be careful not to develop it into a clearing house for one set of standards. If so, failure is a certainty. A dialogue between two sides each convinced in the absolute truth of its existence is impossible. When dealing with subjective concepts like faith, respect and individual dignity, we can only hope to encourage debate within individual systems, not between them. In the later case, it becomes an issue of imposing one's truth on the value chain of another.

A dialogue of cultures should be a venue for cross-cultural discussion on objective matters like economic growth, sustainable development, security, energy, and so on.

Promotion of intercivilization, intercultural and interfaith dialogue is an indispensable tool to create bridges between different cultures. Any sort of division between "us" and "them" is unacceptable. Initiatives, such as the Alliance of Civilizations and the Tripartite interfaith dialogue must help reverse these perceptions on a global level.

Is there a general *clash of civilizations*? My own answer would be in negative; it is the extremisms perpetuating the misperception of the clash of civilizations for furthering their extremist agendas. On the other hand, we should not underestimate local and temporary clashes that may serve purposes far away from genuine cultural or religious issues. There is one welcome and necessary clash: clash of our common and global civilization against illegitimate radical groups that strive for power by means of terror and that abuse religious beliefs and ethnic bonds for their own particular agendas. We have to be aware of this in dealing with these issues in our own countries and stand ready to assist each other internationally if we are to preserve the universal values of civilization.

(Agenda)

Madame President,

Last year, Slovenia chaired the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Today, we shall start our year at the helm of the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and a little more than a year from now, we shall assume the Presidency of the European Union. As a member and current Chair of the Human Security Network (HSN), a group of nations with diverse regional affiliations, we are looking forward to deepening the

understanding of the concept of human security in order to be better equipped for overcoming the complex problems of the modern world.

One of the items on the agenda of the Slovenian EU Presidency will certainly be *energy security*. To facilitate insight into regional energy and stability issues, the International Conference entitled "Caspian Outlook 2008", organized recently in Slovenia under the auspices of Bled Strategic Forum, offered an interesting experience of how such issues can be addressed at the regional level by the parties that share the same concern but look at it from different viewpoints. By the end of the day all interested partners have much to gain from political stability, a reliable flow of energy and a stronger partnership.

The Middle East crisis in general once again calls for focused attention of the international community. Attempts to address this problem, in all its complexity and with the involvement of many countries, should continue with renewed energy. Slovenia is playing its part in contributing to the immediate relief of the situation in Lebanon by deciding to contribute troops to the UN peacekeeping force.

Slovenia welcomes the progress made towards implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction. However, there are some parts of the Mine Action that should remain in our focus dealing with universality of the Convention, clearing of mine fields and mine victims assistance. Through the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance, Slovenia is striving to alleviate the humanitarian threat that anti-personnel landmines still pose to the safety, health and lives of local civilian populations.

Thank you, Madame President, for the opportunity to highlight, in front of this distinguished audience, the importance of the role of small countries; their orientations, activities and possibilities can contribute importantly to multilateralism.