

9 October 2003

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Julian Robert Hunte,
President of the 58th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Conclusion of the Joint Debate on Item 10 (Report of the
Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization) and Item 60
(Follow-up to the Outcome of the Millennium Summit)**

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

Our joint debate on Items 10 - Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organisation, and Items 60 - Follow-up of the outcome of the Millennium Summit has been both interesting and wide ranging. The sixty-eight (68) representatives participating in the debate, including those speaking on behalf of groups of states and regional organisations, indicate that the views of a wide cross section of member states and organisations were reflected in the debate.

It was clear from the debate that the information provided by the Secretary-General in his reports on the Organisation's work and on Millennium Summit follow-up, and his address of 23 September, 2003 focussed on the work of the Organisation, were carefully reviewed and evaluated, so that comments on these two priority issues were succinct and cogent. I know that I speak for us all in thanking the Secretary-General for his reports and for his statement, which gave important orientation to our debate.

United Nations reform has come centre stage as one of the critical issues that the organisation must address, and understandably was among the issues given particular focus in the debate. Many commented on the reform issue in the context of the war in Iraq, contending that it severely tested the principle of collective security and the resilience of the United Nations. The organisation has, indeed, been sorely tested over the past year. Reform that can better position it to respond to serious challenges is an imperative, and was given widespread support.

Substantial comments were made on the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a High-level Panel to make recommendations on United Nations reform. Already, member states are giving consideration to the terms of reference of the Panel, and to what they expect from it. The case was made that the Panel's report should be a conceptual one, reflecting on the nature of changes occurring in the international system, and possible responses to those changes. Security risks related to globalization, development gaps, international solidarity and good governance were among the issues speakers expected the Panel to take up.

A number of ideas were put forward on the matter of Security Council reform, indicating that this remains a priority issue, notwithstanding that no comprehensive agreement has been reached over the past ten (10) years. It was contended by some that given the strategic importance of the Security Council, its reform should outweigh the single political agenda of any United Nations

member state. The view was also expressed that restarting the stalled reform process would prove that the United Nations is ready to adapt and adjust, and thereby, to uphold its authority in world affairs.

Among the opinions expressed on the specific issue of Security Council membership, it was contended that member states that wanted to, and could, shoulder global responsibility as permanent member of the Council should be considered for such membership. It was also emphasised that new geopolitical realities and better geographical representation on the Council were key issues for resolution.

Regarding revitalisation of the General Assembly, there was broad agreement that further streamlining and consolidating of its agenda was critical, and a number of proposals were made in respect of approaches that might be taken. Our approach to resolutions of the Assembly was also the subject of some thought-provoking commentary. We were, in particular, invited to reflect on whether the way we traditionally introduce resolutions, sometimes with very few changes from year to year, serve their intended purpose or reflect the current situation, and whether the best way to influence the situation is to routinely request another report of the Secretary-General. It was proposed that we further consider bi- and tri-annualising resolutions, discontinue some of our initiatives, or change their focus.

The importance of the General Assembly as the main decision and policy-making organ of the United Nations compel us to give careful consideration to proposals such as those put forward in the debate. This is particularly important for me as President of the Assembly, since, as you know, revitalisation of the Assembly is among my priorities, and is also essential to our critical tasks of implementation and follow-up of decisions.

The debate also provided the opportunity for many to share perspectives on the need for an appropriate response to new and existing threats to international peace and security, such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. While there was broad support for the General Assembly being actively involved in addressing these grave issues, it was emphasised that its initiatives in this area must take fully into account respect for human rights and for international law.

In the current global environment, it was to be expected that particular attention would be given to mobilising global action against terrorism, and this was reflected in the debate of items 10 and 60. Multilateralism was cited as the most efficient weapon in the fight against terrorism. As with the approach to new and existing threats to international peace and security, it was generally held view that the development of a long-term anti-terrorism strategy must be in strict conformity with the basic principles of the United Nations, including full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and international law. It was also stressed by many delegations that there could be no justification for linking any particular religion with terrorism. In that regard, the opinion was expressed that recent incidents in different parts of the world show that no religion is immune to terrorist attacks.

Attention was drawn to the illicit trade and transfer of small arms and light weapons, as matters of grave concern to developing countries, especially in Africa. Many delegations called for renewed commitment and action to prevent and control the movement of these weapons, because they exacerbate conflicts and political instability and have a serious impact on violent crime and criminality.

A broad approach to United Nations peacekeeping operations received support, with some making proposals for the improvement of the work done by the United Nations as part of these operations. The coordination of assistance and protection of civilians in armed conflict, provision of humanitarian assistance, disarmament and various aspects of development were among the issues addressed in this context.

Turning to the Millennium Summit, and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), a majority stressed that there was much work to be done to achieve the objectives of the MDG. Implementing the goals and meeting the targets agreed to in the Millennium Declaration was considered to be the shared responsibility of developed and developing countries alike. It was also the generally held view that a common effort had to be made to ensure that the MDGs are the focus of national as well as global action.

Incessant calls were made for developed countries to meet the commitments they have made, particularly in the area of official development assistance (ODA) and for them to support a more equitable trading system. It was also emphasised that developing countries have a stake, and must participate in, international economic decision-making.

Before us for urgent consideration and action is the suggestion that donor countries work toward an agreement among themselves on a set of deadlines for more equitable trade, debt relief and to meet their ODA commitments, in order to achieve the eighth MDG. It is also before us for consideration that a universal reporting system be established for donor countries on progress made in achieving this objective.

It was suggested that developing countries give direction to processes set out in the MDGs by assigning their own priorities, elaborating appropriate strategies and focussing on the effective implementation of poverty reduction policies. The opinion was expressed that good governance is an important underpinning for initiatives in this area.

The Monterrey Consensus, adopted by the International Conference on Financing for Development, supports a framework of mutual obligations and mutual accountability, to which all states are committed. The High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development, scheduled for 29-30 October 2003, is an important event for refocusing attention on the commitments made at Monterrey and maintaining the impetus in this area. We have an obligation - member states and international agencies alike - to ensure that the High-level dialogue proceeds as envisaged by Heads of State and Government at Monterrey, and in the resolution of the General Assembly on the convening of the Dialogue. Therefore, support expressed for the dialogue should translate into the high-level participation from capitals and agencies.

The debate pointed to some joint efforts that are being made that would enhance prospects for achieving real progress in realising the objectives of the MDGs. It has been noted, in that respect, that the G-77 and China has established a multi-year program of work (2004-2017) in order to maintain the momentum of commitments made last year in the World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. This emphasises the priority given to the Johannesburg outcome as a blueprint for the achievement of the sustainable development goals. Initiatives such as this are essential for translating the provisions of the General Assembly's resolution on the integrated follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits into reality.

The Group of 77's initiative should also buttress our efforts to ensure that the 2005 major event will be lead to the timely achievement of development goals. Support has been expressed for this major event, in the hope that it will provide new political impetus to achieve the goals set in the Millennium Declaration and at major United Nations Summits and conferences. The hope was expressed, as well, that the event would also give impetus to the reform of the United Nations.

We have had a full and fruitful discussion, and I have taken this opportunity to share my views with you on the salient issues raised in our deliberations. But we cannot leave it here. I would urge you all to reflect on the comments and proposals made, and where these require further consideration and action that would enhance our shared endeavours, to act accordingly.

I thank you.