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**Statement of H.E. Mr. Julian Robert Hunte,
President of the 58th Session of the General Assembly,
at the London School of Economics and the United Nations
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Intra-state conflict and war feature prominently in any assessment of the serious challenges facing the United Nations in recent years. While it is true that Europe has not escaped the ruinous consequences of intra-state conflict and war, a majority of these tragic occurrences continue to take place in the developing world. The number and severity may ebb and flow but together with the ongoing situation in the Middle East, the impression is that parts of the world, and particularly the developing world, are in a constant state of crisis. Consequently, the maintenance of international peace and security appears to be at center stage on the global agenda.

Poverty also features prominently on the global agenda - eradicating extreme poverty and hunger finds expression in the Millennium Declaration, and is goal number one of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Sometimes statistics are so overwhelming that they become almost incomprehensible. Poverty statistics are among those we regularly see, without actually seeing. But if we focus on the fact that about 1.2 billion people live on less than one dollar a day, and on the converse, that the net worth of ten billionaires (ten individuals) is greater than the combined national income of the forty-eight poorest countries, giving priority to poverty alleviation simply follows logically.

I believe I am not oversimplifying matters when I say that today, we are more attuned to conflict and war than we are to poverty. In fact, I would venture to say that people around the world are probably more familiar with the Security Council Chamber than they are with the General Assembly Hall or the Economic and Social Council. Indeed, media reports of the tragedies of war and conflict often overshadow the tragedies of poverty and hunger and give higher visibility to Security Council.

The Security Council is given further prominence now that it is dealing with a range of issues that it would have been difficult to contemplate a little more than a decade and a half ago - internal conflicts, ethnic clashes, terrorism, humanitarian emergencies and human rights abuses. By casting such a broad net, some contend, the Council may at times be outside the scope of its responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. The examination of human rights issues, for example, is considered best left to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. Further, it has been asserted that the Security Council takes up some wars and conflict, but not others.

It has been argued - I believe persuasively - that conditions of poverty and underdevelopment can lead to violence and conflict. This sets up a direct correlation between poverty on the one hand

and peace and security on the other. No matter what conclusion is drawn, I hold the view that conflict prevention and peace-building do not begin when a conflict is inevitable. My experience as Representative of the Prime Minister of St Lucia responsible for CARICOM initiatives on the situation in Haiti, has borne this out.

It is also my view that the international community has everything to gain by taking action to alleviate poverty, where such action may lead to the prevention of conflict and war. We need only look at escalating United Nations peacekeeping budgets to appreciate that indeed making, building and keeping the peace is a costly proposition. Add to this the costs of bringing perpetrators who breach national and international law to justice and it becomes clear: it costs less to prevent fires than to put them out. Global poverty is a raging fire, which we must put out in the interest not only of conventional security, but human security as well. Moreover, poverty alleviation can yield dividends.

It is opportune, I believe to point out that for an increasing number of countries, including developing countries, security has come to have a broader meaning. It does, indeed, encompass protection of national borders, military, political and other conventional forms of security. And of course it includes action required in respect of terrorism. However, if we go beyond the conventional concept and view security as an elaborate set of inter-connected issues impacting human security, the picture becomes clearer.

For those with this broader view of security, which include the countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), security is multidimensional, having military, political, economic and social development and other dimensions. As Barbados Prime Minister Owen Arthur puts it, "It would be a fundamental error on our part to limit security concerns to any one area while the scourge of HIV/AIDS, illegal arms and drug trafficking, transnational crime, ecological disasters and poverty continue to stare us in the face".

The seeds of a more secure world, therefore, must best be sown in the space we make for growth and development, particularly for the countries of the developing world; they must be sown in our efforts to alleviate poverty and promote sustainable development; they must be sown in our efforts to make globalization and trade liberalization deliver on the promises to create new opportunities for growth and development, foreign direct investment, increased market access and other undertakings; they must be sown in greater accommodation in setting the rules of trade in the World Trade Organization; they must be sown in efforts to bring debt relief to heavily indebted developing countries; and they must be sown in our efforts to close the gap between rich and poor.

Coherence is one of those words that makes good sense, but which could be taken for granted because it could quickly become commonplace. Let me use it to say that the more realistic view of security should help us bring coherence to the initiatives we undertake within the United Nations system for development. This includes the enhancing a functional relationship between the United Nations, the Bretton Woods Institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

Coherence should also direct our initiatives during the Sixtieth Anniversary of the United Nations in 2005, when a High-level Plenary will determine how well we have responded to the challenges we took up, and commitments we have made, to implement the outcomes of more than a decade of United Nations summits and conferences in the economic and social fields, including the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals. This is an essential next step on our deliberate, and well considered road to promoting development, an important aspect of which is to alleviate poverty.

I hope that 2005 will be the occasion when commitments are reaffirmed at the highest level to active and continuing support that would turn such commitments into concrete action, and with deliberate speed. The developing countries, and indeed the United Nations development agenda needs this commitment, to ensure a balance between the organization's responsibilities for international peace and security and for development.

The Secretary-General's report on the recommendations of his High-level Plenary on Threats, Challenge and Change is also to feature in the 2005 event. It is certainly my hope that this report would shed light on the broad range of issues that constitute challenges and threats, particularly to the countries of the developing world, which will help us to review afresh poverty and security and the critical decisions we need to take to address them.

When we speak in the United Nations we speak in the names of the peoples of the world. The people therefore have the right to look to the United Nations to deliver on the Charter promise, not only of peace and security, but also to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. Whatever we do, we do in the best interest of the people. Getting it right puts us in a win-win situation: ending poverty and ending conflict.