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Finland's EU Presidency

**Written document applies**

**Address by**

**H.E. Tarja Halonen  
President of the Republic of Finland  
on behalf of the European Union**

**at the Sixty-first session  
of the General Assembly**

**United Nations  
New York, 19 September 2006**

Madame President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to address the 61<sup>st</sup> General Assembly of the United Nations on behalf of the European Union, The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia\* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

\*) Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

Let me start by congratulating you, Mme President, upon your assumption of the office of President of the General Assembly. I also wish to express our appreciation to your predecessor, Mr Jan Eliasson, whose input has been crucial to the UN reform process. We are confident that under your wise leadership, Mme President, this session will turn out to be successful.

Madame President,

The European Union is deeply committed to the United Nations and to its comprehensive agenda promoting peace and security, sustainable development, human rights and fundamental freedoms. We want to create a more peaceful, prosperous and democratic world. The EU continues its close and loyal cooperation with the world organisation. Recent events in different parts of the world have proved once again that, 61 years after its establishment, an effective United Nations is needed more than ever.

Madame President,

Contrary to our shared ideals, the realities of war and violence have not become history. Conflicts and terrorism continue to destroy the social and economic progress that we are all striving for.

The recent tragic events that occurred in Lebanon, Israel and the Palestinian territories have again demonstrated the need to achieve a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Sustainable peace in the Middle East and security for the people living there can only be achieved through a commitment to a peace process that leads to a viable independent Palestinian state living in peace with a secure Israel. This remains our goal. The EU is determined to participate actively in the implementation of the Security Council resolution 1701 in order to help consolidate the cease fire and reach a long term solution based on the terms contained in the resolution.

The EU is strongly committed to the respect of international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians and humanitarian personnel during conflict. We therefore condemn the deaths of hundreds of civilians in Lebanon and Israel in the recent conflict.

We welcome the outcome of the Stockholm international donor conferences on the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories as well as on Lebanon. The EU has responded swiftly and generously to both humanitarian appeals.

We have demonstrated in the Middle East our continued, strong commitment to the UN. Peacekeepers from EU-countries are already deployed in the area and will form the backbone of the new UNIFIL operation.

On this occasion, I want to pay tribute to the memory of the UN military observers and other personnel, who recently fell victim to the war in Southern Lebanon.

The European Union will continue active engagement in UN peacekeeping operations also in the future. We see a wide scope for further complementary and combined efforts with the UN as well as with other regional entities.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, many peace agreements have been brokered with the help of the United Nations, the African Union and the European Union. In Democratic Republic of Congo, the European Union remains greatly involved to assist the completion of the electoral process through a major financial contribution and the decisive support of the EU military operation.

Unfortunately, in Darfur, the humanitarian and security situation is deteriorating. The EU welcomes the recent Security Council resolution on the UN-led peacekeeping operation in Sudan and we strongly urge sudanese Government to give its consent to the deployment of the UN operation.

Peace building is an integral part of the wide security concept. The newly established Peacebuilding Commission brings its own and much-needed contribution to the UN work for peace and security. The European Union will work actively to ensure that this new body will have a strong and dynamic role in the UN system. Gender aspect is important in this context. We also welcome the establishment of the Central Emergency Response Fund to enhance the capability of the international community to respond to urgent humanitarian needs.

The events of the past year show that terrorism continues to threaten international peace and security. This threat can be effectively addressed through broadly-based cooperation in the framework of the United Nations. The European Union welcomes the agreement on a global counter terrorism strategy as an important instrument and expression of international solidarity in the fight against terrorism. The EU urges UN Member States to build on this achievement and to intensify their efforts to reach a speedy consensus on the UN Comprehensive Anti-Terrorism Convention. We underline the importance of prevention, and conducting the fight against terrorism in accordance with human rights, refugee law and international humanitarian law.

We see it important that this session of the General Assembly will mark progress in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation. Concrete action is needed on small arms and light weapons at the national, regional and global levels. The European Union will continue to push for a legally-binding treaty on trade in all conventional weapons.

Effective multilateralism is crucial in facing the growing threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The Security Council has a central role in addressing those threats. In this regard, the EU welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 1695 on Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We look forward to its effective implementation and we call strongly upon DPRK to implement fully the requirements of this resolution.

The EU also welcomes the adoption of the Security Council resolution 1696 and calls upon Iran to respond positively and swiftly to the demands of the international community in implementing this resolution, in particular by suspending its enrichment activities in accordance with the resolution. This would pave the way for negotiations on a comprehensive agreement aimed at restoring confidence that Iranian nuclear programme serves exclusively peaceful purposes. We welcome the current exploratory talks aimed to facilitate the opening of the negotiations.

An increasingly important element in the promotion of global peace and security is the need to foster tolerance, mutual understanding and respect. In this regard, the EU has already expressed its strong support for the Alliance of Civilizations initiative.

Madame President,

Development builds peace. The United Nations and its Members States have created effective common goals for economic, social and environmental development. We must fulfil our common commitment to the global partnership for development with all stakeholders and implement all the Millennium Development Goals and other jointly agreed development targets in the time agreed upon by us Member States. In our view every country has primary right and responsibility for her development.

The social dimension of globalization, including the importance of decent work for all, deserves special attention in the work of the UN. Ensuring decent work is not only about economic and social development and individual rights and standards. It is also very much a factor that contributes to the social and political stability of countries and regions.

We have seen positive development also in Africa. However, Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole is not on track to reach the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. Therefore the EU has decided to give 50 per cent of its increase in aid to Africa. We are willing to strengthen the strategic partnership with Africa by developing a Joint Strategy.

We also need to improve aid effectiveness and donor practices. The EU is fully committed to the implementation of Paris declaration on aid effectiveness and calls all other donors to do the same. In addition, the international community must deliver real gains for poor

countries on trade. Trade can be a strong catalyst for economic growth and poverty reduction - thus trade is a key element to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

The negotiations of the Doha Development Agenda must be resumed, as their successful outcome will deliver substantial development benefits to developing countries. We urge a quick implementation of the aid-for-trade commitments of December 2005.

The EU welcomes the outcome of the Review on the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries held in New York this week. We are pleased that from 2001 onwards the economic growth in the LDCs as a group has almost reached the 7 % target. As the biggest net official development aid providers we note with satisfaction the overall increase in ODA from donor countries, especially to LDCs.

Ensuring sustainable development is an urgent task. Environmental sustainability underpins long-term development and the achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals. Addressing climate change and biodiversity loss are integral parts of achieving sustainable development. For this purpose, the Action Plan on Climate Change agreed in Montreal last year, needs to be pushed forward urgently.

The EU recalls its common position in favour of the transformation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) into a specialized agency, the UN Environment Organization (UNEO), which would be based in Nairobi and built on existing structures.

The Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence is about to finalize its work. The European Union looks forward to studying the Panel's recommendations, which could give an urgently needed global response, especially at the country level. This should be done in close cooperation with other multilateral stakeholders and the developing countries themselves.

The EU looks forward to continuing cooperation in the field of migration and development after last week's High Level dialogue. Migration is an integral part of the development agenda and development is an important element in migration policies.

Madame President,

The EU is committed to strengthening and to mainstreaming human rights within the UN system. One of the major accomplishments of the United Nations has been the comprehensive framework of international human rights law. It sets clear standards by which all states are measured. To strengthen this framework, we attach great importance to the adoption of new instruments on enforced disappearances, on rights of indigenous peoples and on rights of persons with disabilities already during this session of General Assembly.

The newly established Human Rights Council has the potential significantly to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights throughout the world. The European Union wants to ensure that it lives up to this potential and quickly builds up a strong and dynamic role in the UN system. The EU has high expectations for the second regular session of the Council, which began yesterday.

The EU is also committed to ending impunity for the most serious crimes of concern to the international community. We strongly support the International Criminal Court and call upon all states that are not yet party to the Rome Statute of the ICC to ratify or accede to it without delay.

The EU will continue to promote rule of law both at the national level and in international relations. In Iraq, upholding the rule of law is a key challenge. The EU is working closely together with the UN and other partners in assisting the Iraqi government in this field.

Madame President,

The EU wishes to see this world organisation function in a more effective, transparent and accountable way. The EU recognises the need to reform the main UN bodies, among them the General Assembly, ECOSOC and the Security Council. Management reform, as well as mandate review, is high on our agenda when starting our work this autumn. We need to continue our collective efforts with consensual decision making. After all, UN reform is to the benefit of the entire membership of the Organisation.

Apart from the reform agenda there are many important issues to be looked at and solved. Among these are the challenging negotiations on the scales of assessment. The EU also attaches greatest importance to the rapid implementation of the Capital Master Plan.

Madame President,

Before finishing, let me pay tribute to our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. During the past nearly ten years, You have shown leadership and vision in your work for the principles of the UN Charter - as well as courage in the much needed transformation of our world organisation. You have given a human face to the United Nations both inside and outside the Organization. Dear Secretary General, Dear Kofi, we are all grateful for your contribution to the United Nations.

Thank you