

REMARKS

H.E. President Mikheil Saakashvili

High Level Plenary Meeting - 60th Session of the UN General Assembly
September 15, 2005

Mr. Secretary General, Mr. President, distinguished Heads of State, honored guests, it is my privilege to address this institution today and to share with you how we, *as an* international community of responsible nations can do more to advance development, eradicate poverty, and establish greater security and stability — both at home in Georgia, and around the world.

For the past sixty years, the UN has been the leading international body, responsible for advancing these ideals. And the establishment of the UN Millennium Development goals represents a major step forward in this effort. Today — sixty years after the founding of the UN, sixty years after Yalta, we must change the UN in order to solve our most pressing problems, that include poverty, a healthy environment and most of all, lasting security.

Our mandate is not an easy one. And for countries like Georgia — these issues, and in particular the need to reform, strengthen and improve the United Nations is of particular importance. Since our Rose Revolution two years ago, Georgia has made great strides in reducing social inequality, strengthening human rights, caring for the sick and vulnerable, and promoting sustainable development. All important elements of the MDG's. In fact, during the short time that we have been in power, we have made progress on nearly every goal. And the economy is improving. Indeed, a recent World Bank survey put Georgia among the top three world leaders in terms of speed and efficiency of the reform process and positive business climate. Those results are a tribute to the strength of our people — and a direct result of what a democracy can achieve when it is responsible, transparent and accountable.

And yet, despite our notable progress, the situation in Georgia today is not ideal. We have more work to do if we hope to meet the Millennium Development goals. Georgia's democratic and economic development is constrained today due to unresolved conflicts on our territory.

Hundreds of thousands of refugees from Abkhazia and from South Ossetia remain unable to return to their homes — and enjoy the elemental right of freedom and safe movement. In Abkhazia, hundreds of thousands of people were forcibly evicted from their homes, kicked out in a mass expulsion and ethnic cleansing.

Georgia will never accept the results of ethnic cleansing and any arguments legitimizing its results are immoral and set dangerous precedents for the future.

In fact, just now, in front of the eyes of the world, in front of the eyes of the UN monitors, the very homes from which they were kicked out are being sold out from under them. And what is most shocking is that in many cases, they are being bought by high government officials from a nearby country — and yet the world says and does nothing.

Not only is Georgia's development affected by these lawless territories that have become dangerous black holes, havens that provide shelter to criminals, human traffickers, drug smugglers, terrorists, and other sources of criminal threat, but in fact, these areas endanger international stability. And these threats can no longer be ignored or wished away.

The government of Georgia is firmly committed to peacefully settling these conflicts and to the peaceful establishment of full control over our internationally recognized territorial integrity. We believe that the 19th century logic of territorial seizures and acquisitions no longer applies today. Rather the message of ethnic inclusiveness and integration, strong safeguards of human rights, is much stronger than tanks, war planes other forms of military might.

We are committed to improving the lives of all of our citizens, regardless of religion or ethnic origin or where they might reside. In short, we are committed to the establishment of a Georgia that is peaceful, democratic, free and whole. And we are pushing for peace by advancing comprehensive peace plans — in South Ossetia and in Abkhazia.

And we hope that the Russian Federation cooperates with us in a constructive and positive way to leave behind the conflicts we inherited from the imperial past. But in order to combat the threats posed by instability — we need an international community and a UN that can do more than just talk about solutions — we need a UN that can help bring them about. That means a UN that can solve conflicts.

And that means a UN that will not simply look on as international law is being violated — but instead will put an end to ongoing annexation of Abkhazia. That is why Georgia is so committed to the idea of making the UN a stronger institution — to reforming it, so that it can meet the challenges of the 21st century.

The issue of conflict resolution — in my country and around the world, must take higher priority at the United Nations. Through institutions such as the Security Council, the Economic and Social Commission, the Human Rights Commission

and other UN agencies, more needs to be done — and more boldness shown — if we hope to defeat one of greatest sources of human poverty.

Specifically, we must support more transparent decision making and wider membership at the Security Council.

We must support the strengthening and transformation of the Human Rights Commission so that it can more effectively monitor and act on human rights abuses.

We must support a greater role for intervention in support of peace building, especially in areas affected by unresolved conflicts. And we must support the establishment of a Peace Building Commission with a mandate to focus on conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation, including economic assistance.

The stakes today could not be higher — one need only look around the world and see the tremendous destruction and violence that conflict breeds on a daily basis. We can also see the devastation and destruction that natural disasters create, and our heart goes out to the people of the Gulf coast and New Orleans.

If there is one single priority that can unite the international community, it must be a global commitment to peace and security. Far from being the singular concern of Georgia — it is the singular responsibility that all leaders share to present and future generations.

Looking to the future, I want to sound a note of optimism. Optimism because I believe in the power of this great institution. Optimism because I come from a region with tremendous potential, with dynamic leaders, and where so much change and development is taking place today.

Democracy is on the rise in our region — so too is development and prosperity — but both need security and stability in order to be permanent.

And for that, we need a stronger and more effective and more involved United Nations.

Thank you