



**THE HON JOHN HOWARD MP
THE PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA**

ADDRESS

**UNITED NATIONS HIGH-LEVEL PLENARY MEETING
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As one of the 51 original countries to sign the UN Charter, Australia has had a long and active involvement with the United Nations. In this, the 60th anniversary year of the UN, Australia can look back on a strong record of involvement in a multitude of UN-sponsored processes and active membership of the organisation. We have supplied personnel for peacekeeping operations around the world since 1947, and have been at the forefront of efforts to reform the operations of the organisation.

We should not think that the United Nations can solve all the world's problems, nor that it should attempt to do so. And the type of multilateralism embodied in organisations such as the UN can only be one element of a comprehensive approach to foreign policy.

The nation state remains the focus of legitimate action for order and justice in our world. As nation states, our collective challenge and responsibility is to identify those things that the UN can do and ensure it is equipped to do them.

It is a grim but inescapable fact that our world lives under the shadow of global terrorism. I have this week signed the Nuclear Terrorism Convention on behalf of Australia. We support the counter terrorism outcomes of this Summit, including the momentum to conclude the Comprehensive Terrorism Convention. More could have been achieved. And there has been understandable disappointment and criticism at the lack of language on disarmament and non proliferation, particularly given the risk of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to terrorists.

The Summit has seen much discussion about aid levels and I was pleased to announce earlier this week my government's goal to double its overseas aid allocation from 2004 levels to around \$4 billion by 2010.

But we should not merely be focusing on the quantum of such aid, important though that is. What is just as important, if not more so, is the effectiveness of aid.

Genuine and sustained poverty alleviation will only occur in an environment of good governance and private sector growth. With aid comes a reciprocal responsibility on recipient governments to tackle corruption, strengthen governance and promote institutional reform.

These will remain key objectives of Australia's aid programme, not least as it rises to meet the challenges posed by HIV/AIDS, and the re emerging threat of avian influenza, which will require global political leadership in which Australia will play its part.

There has been strong emphasis in recent days on the fact that trade barriers in the developed world cost poor countries more than twice the amount of the official aid they receive. There could be no better gift to the developing world than lower trade barriers and an end to subsidies. I warmly welcome President Bush's pledge and challenge to us all on Wednesday, that the US is ready to eliminate all tariffs, subsidies and other barriers to the free flow of goods and services if other nations do the same.

We must also recognise the high cost of ignoring fragile states. Responding to their challenges requires new ways of acting which recognise the links between security and economic development. Our leadership of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands speaks for our experience in this area, which we look forward to sharing. In this context, Australia welcomes the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, and I am pleased to announce a contribution of \$3 million over 3 years to its new standing fund.

On human rights and the rule of law, leaders' endorsement of the concept of a 'Responsibility to Protect' is a significant step forward. But we are concerned at the limited outcome on the Human Rights Council. Australia supports a strong Council that is capable of responding to serious human rights abuses effectively and with credibility. Member states must work assiduously during this session to inject substance into the agreed negotiations on the Council's modalities.

We welcome the resolve to strengthen the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and will make our own additional contribution to its operations.

I was also pleased to announce here this week a contribution of \$10m to the Democracy Fund. History has shown that the most stable and prosperous nations over time have responsive political institutions as their common link.

We could have hoped for more progress on management reforms for the organisation, particularly in light of the findings of the Volcker inquiry and support the ongoing need for reform. We remain hopeful that a formula for Security Council expansion that will better reflect today's geopolitical realities, including through the permanent membership of Japan, can be worked out.

In summary we welcome the outcomes document as a reasonable balance of issues overall. The challenge for the United Nations now is to re-define its authority and responsibility in the global environment in which we find ourselves. Australia, as always, will be an active player in these deliberations.

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