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STATEMENT

by

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## THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

### MAKING MULTILATERALISM WORK

Mr President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

If there were no United Nations and the world were left to its own devices, would we be any safer? Would we be any healthier? Would the world be a better, fairer place?

At the Council of Europe, we believe that the answer is NO!

In fact, in today's interdependent world, armed conflicts, global pandemics and natural disasters, compounded by so many other threats and challenges such as international terrorism, organised crime and climate change, can only be addressed if we join forces and set aside national or regional interests.

In other words, "multilateralism" is the only way to protect ourselves and our values, cultures and traditions which would otherwise risk being swept away in anarchy and tyranny as so often in the past.

Mr President, multilateralism does work, but it would work still better if we all lived up to the pledges and commitments made in this hall.

I stand before you today as Secretary General of the Council of Europe, our continent's largest multilateral intergovernmental organisation encompassing more than 800 million people. We have been working with the United Nations for more than half a century as partners in promoting peace and justice.

The United Nations and the Council of Europe share the same goals. Our ideals, our values and our principles are those enshrined in the founding Charter of the United Nations.

Like the United Nations, the Council of Europe was born out of war.

Reconciliation, reconstruction and prevention of new conflicts are the hallmark of the Council of Europe. Our mission is to foster ever greater unity among our member States, on an equal footing, through the widest possible cooperation and joint standard setting.

That is why the Heads of State or Government of the 46 Member States of the Council of Europe, at our Summit in May, encouraged "the Council of Europe to step up cooperation with the United Nations and its specialised agencies, in order both to promote the universal values shared by the member states of the Council of Europe in the human rights field and to achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals in Europe, including, in particular, everyone's entitlement to live in a balanced, healthy environment."

Human rights, democracy and the rule of law which figure prominently in the draft outcome document of this High-Level Plenary Meeting are also at the heart of the Council of Europe's mission, and our European Convention on Human Rights which is directly and expressly derived from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations and remains one of the foremost examples of the implementation of the Universal Declaration's values on a regional level.

And the relationship between the Council of Europe and the United Nations is not restricted to words. There is also on-going practical cooperation in numerous other areas involving human rights including the battles against terrorism, torture and trafficking in human beings, racism and violence against children and women.

Mr President, one of the gravest threats to human rights today is terrorism as the people of New York know only too well. Europe too has suffered with appalling atrocities perpetrated over the last two years in Russia, Turkey, Spain and in the United Kingdom.

Terrorism seeks to destroy our way of life and to undermine freedom, democracy and the rule of law. It is unjustifiable under any circumstances and in any culture.

We must resolutely defend those values on which both the United Nations and the Council of Europe were founded, but at the same time we must also make sure that measures taken by Governments do not curtail those same values and rights.

That is why we must redouble our efforts to ensure the prevention of torture, the preservation of freedom of expression and information and the eradication of racism and discrimination.

If we condoned any erosion of civil liberties or human rights for the sake of the fight against terrorism, it would be a major victory for the terrorists.

I welcome the efforts of the Counter Terrorism Committee of the Security Council to work with regional organisations in the struggle against terrorism.

For our part, at the Council of Europe, we have adopted a threefold approach based on increased legal cooperation, respect for human rights and promotion of intercultural and inter-religious dialogue.

The Council of Europe has adopted special Guidelines on Human Rights and the Fight against Terrorism specifying the limits to state action in fighting terrorism. These guidelines represent the first ever, international legal instrument on this issue. They were complemented this year with a second set of Guidelines on the Protection of Victims of Terrorist Acts, and this year the Council of Europe has also adopted two new agreements on the prevention and financing of terrorism.

The new conventions bridge gaps in existing international law, making it a crime to incite terrorist acts, recruit and train people to carry out terrorist acts, or collect money to finance them. The Convention on the financing of terrorism helps to track and seize assets and investigate suspicious transactions.

But we need to do much more to come to terms with factors which may encourage terrorism. We must break down cultural and religious barriers and talk with each other, regardless of geography or religion, to foster mutual understanding, reduce prejudice and promote universal commitment to our fundamental values. In this context, at the Council of Europe we are strengthening our cooperation with the League of Arab States and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference.

I should like to make three other points.

First, the Council of Europe attaches great importance to the International Criminal Court. It is our firm position that the Court must have global jurisdiction, and that no country should be exempt from it. Since the creation of the Court, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has constantly encouraged our member States and observer States to ratify the Statute of the Court. I am glad to report that the vast majority of them have already done so.

Second, another area in which the Council of Europe is taking the lead is the abolition of the death penalty. We are proud that none of our 46 member States now use capital punishment.

Third, we welcome the decision to establish a Human Rights Council. We hope that it will retain the positive features of the current system including the country and thematic special procedures, which have been instrumental in advancing the UN's human rights agenda. We are pleased to see the emphasis placed on close cooperation between the Human Rights Council and regional organisations, and I particularly welcome the decision to strengthen the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights as well as its action plan.

In the course of our work at the Council of Europe, we have developed excellent cooperation with the offices of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the High Commissioner for Refugees on issues such as the status of refugees and the treatment of asylum seekers and displaced persons in Europe.

Like the United Nations the Council of Europe also believes that there is a link between respect for human rights and social cohesion. That is why promoting access to social rights and overcoming obstacles to their realisation in order to protect vulnerable groups was identified as a priority at our Summit

Preparations for this UN Summit and the reform process in general have been followed with great interest by our Parliamentary Assembly. As regards the Security Council it favours a more representative composition to increase its legitimacy, a more effective decision-making process and the introduction of appropriate mechanisms for more effective implementation of its decisions. Our parliamentarians are also fervent advocates of the introduction of a parliamentary dimension to the work of the General Assembly. They have also held several debates on issues relating to the Millennium Development Goals and called on national parliaments to help maintain the political momentum on the Millennium Development Goals to make sure that European governments live up to their commitments.

Similarly, the Council of Europe stands ready to play its part in the proposed Peace building Commission in our areas of competence and to participate actively in the on-going work between the United Nations and the regional and other intergovernmental organisations.

Winston Churchill put it well in his visionary speech at the Congress of Europe in The Hague in 1948 when referring to a future Council of Europe and its relationship with the United Nations. He called for "several regional councils, august but subordinate" which "should form massive pillars upon which the world organisation would be founded in majesty and calm."

Nearly 60 years later, I am not sure the Council of Europe can be described as august or that the UN can be described as majestic and calm, but I do believe that the strengthened relationship between the United Nations and regional and sub-regional organisations advocated in the draft outcome document is a step in the direction advocated by Winston Churchill.

That is why relations with the UN will remain one of my priorities as they have been ever since taking office a year ago. During these twelve months the Council of Europe has been much more present both in Geneva and New York, and I was pleased to initiate the first desk to desk meetings between our two organisations to give added political content to our relationship.

Mr President, the Council of Europe and the United Nations are partners. We are working together to make a better, safer, fairer world for future generations. Together we can make multilateralism work.

Thank you for your attention.