



BELGIUM

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Karel De Gucht,
Minister for Foreign Affairs
of the Kingdom of Belgium**

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Mr. President,

We live in an increasingly complex world, facing increasingly diverse challenges. Actions taken in isolation are no longer sufficient. Faced with this complexity, the UN should not only be a stronghold against arbitrariness in international relations. It should be the instrument of an efficient reaction. I'm pleased to see that consensus is growing on this matter.

Climate change was the topic of a recent high-level event. A Security Council Summit has just examined the situation in Africa. In addition to peace and international security, the UN has to deal with a wide array of issues. The fight against terrorism, pandemics, human rights, disarmament, migrations, environment, these are all examples of the diversity of domains requesting a multilateral approach.

Multilateralism has regained strength especially in peacekeeping and security. The current 18 peacekeeping missions and the hundred thousand blue helmets presently in the field demonstrate it clearly. Belgium has witnessed this evolution firsthand since its accession to the Security Council in January 2007 and it will continue to consolidate it in this body.

In Africa, through the UN, the international community is actively involved in the search for a solution in Darfur, Chad, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Côte d'Ivoire.

The action of MONUC in DRC was crucial in reestablishing the peace and in setting-up democratic institutions. This is not the time to reduce our efforts. The fragile situation in Eastern DRC and the resumption of the fighting in Northern Kivu create serious risks for the process of stabilization of this country and have severe humanitarian consequences. The recruitment of child soldiers goes unabated, as pointed out by the Secretary General. We urgently need a global solution, including a regional dimension, that will also allow us to make better use of MONUC's input. The Congolese authorities are preparing for the local elections which will strengthen the democratic culture across the country. They need our full support. Belgium will continue to mobilize the attention of the international community on this important matter.

In Sudan, we imperatively have to make progress in our search for a political solution for Darfur. I encourage all parties to take advantage of the Tripoli Conference in order to identify the elements of the conflict such as wealth distribution and power sharing and to establish the foundation for a lasting settlement. We have to speed up the deployment of the peace keeping forces.

This will request the full cooperation of the Sudanese government. Moreover, we will have to continue to consolidate the reconciliation between North and South Sudan.

Furthermore, the role of the regional organizations in managing crises has significantly increased over the past year. The African Union has invested many efforts both in Somalia and in Darfur, where new ways of cooperation with the UN are developing. The hybrid force is an example of this new form of cooperation. As for the European Union, it has supported MONUC in DRC. It will also contribute to curb the humanitarian crisis in Chad and the Central African Republic by sending a military force to support the UN missions in the region. Belgium will participate in this mission. The European Union has also developed a close cooperation with the African Union by supporting its efforts in crisis management, while paying close attention to its effectiveness. On the whole, we welcome this regional input and the increasing synergy between the United Nations, the African Union and the European Union.

Regarding Kosovo, it is regrettable that, in June, the Security Council was unable to assume its responsibility on this matter. A solution is essential for peace and stability in Europe. I urge both parties to seize the present opportunity to come to a compromise. It is a matter of urgency. Status quo is not an option, as we are all aware. Without an agreement between the parties, Europe will have to take up its responsibilities.

In the Middle East, the international community has mobilized in order to contribute to a solution to the crisis in Lebanon. By extending for one year the mandate of UNIFIL in which Belgium participates with close to 400 troops, it has recognized UNIFIL's role in the solution of the crisis. But the current political stalemate is alarming. All parties should demonstrate a sense of responsibility. The institutions should be allowed to function normally again, beginning with the election of the president in accordance with the constitutional process, without foreign interference. The attack that claimed the lives of MP Antoine Ghanem and 9 other people shows how impunity threatens the stability of the country. The installation of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon is a clear evidence of the support that the multilateral system is willing to provide to fight this impunity.

In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, neither the continuation of firing rockets at the Israeli population, nor the deterioration of the living conditions of the Palestinians in the Gaza strip, are acceptable. This situation is paradoxical. On the one hand the international community lead by Europe injects vast amounts of money in the region in order to avoid a humanitarian crisis. On the other hand, the Gaza strip is artificially prevented to function economically because of

the closing of the border crossings such as Karni and Rafah. We share the concerns of the Secretary-General as expressed after the announcement of the measures that could hit the population of the Gaza strip. The regular meetings between the Palestinian and Israeli leaders are encouraging after so many years of misunderstanding and lack of a real dialogue. I hope that tangible advances will be registered at the international meeting planned for the end of this year. Belgium will actively support any progress of the peace process.

The Security Council has recently reinforced the mandate of the United Nations in Iraq. The United Nations can play an important role in humanitarian emergency matters, in regional cooperation and in national reconciliation. But its action will depend on the security conditions and will have to be able to rely on the support of the international community, the Iraqi government and the neighboring countries as expressed at the September 22 meeting.

In dealing with the nuclear issue in Iran, Belgium has always supported a multilateral approach. We have to use resolutely the multilateral mechanisms such as the IAEA and the Security Council, in order to obtain tangible results. In the past, Iran has not fulfilled its obligations regarding the transparency of its nuclear activities. In order to restore confidence and to make the best use of the objective verifications capacities of the IAEA, Iran will have to fully respect the regulations of the agreement on the safeguards and of the additional protocol. The measures prescribed in the resolutions of the Security Council go beyond the regulations and aim to create the conditions for re-establishing the international confidence in the Iranian nuclear program. A complete and immediate respect for these resolutions by Iran is a condition to resume the dialogue, which had to be interrupted in 2005. The credibility of the Security Council is also at stake.

In Asia, the missions of good *offices* of the Secretary-General made it possible to follow closely the situation in Myanmar. The recent demonstrations show the degree of impatience of the population. These demonstrations should finally incite the government to initiate an inclusive dialogue with a view to restore democracy in Myanmar. Use of violence will not be tolerated.

Mr. President,

Beyond crises resolution, progress has also been made in the field of peace building. The international community must remain vigilant. The cost of leaving a country too quickly is always higher than investing in peace building. The success of the Peace Building Commission will be judged by the long term stability of the countries currently on its agenda, Burundi and Sierra Leone. The recent adoption of concrete recommendations following the deterioration of the political situation in Burundi illustrates the increasing capacity of the PBC to

react quickly to events that could jeopardize the stabilization of countries with which it is dealing. In Burundi, the dialogue must absolutely be pursued in order to solve the political stalemate, which impedes the normal functioning of the state's institutions. All efforts must be made in order to bring the FNL back to constructive negotiations with the Government.

Mr. President,

Three of the most recent and expensive peacekeeping operations have been deployed in countries where conflicts were fuelled by the illegal exploitation of natural resources - DRC, Liberia and Sierra Leone. This illustrates the urgent need to develop mechanisms that break the link between conflicts and the illegal exploitation of natural resources. This issue was the central theme of our presidency of the Security Council, last June. We then identified several courses of action. We must for example reinforce the capacity of the Secretariat to deal with such issues. We must define more precisely the mandates of Peacekeeping operations. The sanctions committees must operate in a more targeted manner. Finally, we need to improve the work of experts groups. In the coming months, it is our intention to pursue our efforts in these matters that relate to both security and development. We hope we can rely on your support.

Our attention for crisis management and peace consolidation must not diminish the importance of preventive diplomacy. I welcome the initiatives of the Secretary-General in this matter such as the improvement of the mediation capacities of the UN and the upgrading of the mandates concerning the prevention of genocides and mass atrocities, as well as the responsibility to protect. It is also necessary to make this concept more operational.

Crisis prevention also lies in development. Everyone should have the opportunity to choose his life with dignity. The alternative is frustration that leads to violence. The Millennium Development Goals and the Fight against Poverty remain therefore a major challenge. In this context, Belgium pays special attention to good governance. Last March, in cooperation with the World Bank and the OECD, we organized in Brussels an international conference on Good Governance and the Fight against Corruption. This conference illustrated the potential of triangular partnerships between donor countries, recipient countries and the private sector. This type of partnership should be further explored, including within the UN.

Poverty also forces many migrants, having no other choice, to leave their country. In July 2007, Belgium organized, in the presence of the Secretary-General of the UN, the first Global Forum on Migration and Development, a new opportunity to demonstrate our firm multilateral commitment. It emerged that

legal migration can be an opportunity for the country of origin as well as for the country of destination. Besides, with the good cooperation between the countries involved, development can also foster migration by choice rather than by necessity. Belgium will contribute to the follow-up of this initiative with the Philippines, which will organize the second Global Forum in 2008.

Mr. President,

Human rights are one of the pillars of our collective security. We must ensure the respect of those rights under any circumstances. This is why we emphasized in 2005 the need for an in-depth reform of the former Commission on Human Rights. Unfortunately, at this stage, the new Human Rights Council does not meet our expectations. The institutional agreement that was reached between the members of the Council in Geneva last June, came at the expense of a difficult compromise. This will affect the capacity of the Council to react quickly to Human Rights violations.

Mr. President,

Multilateralism is back. Nevertheless, it is only a method, rather than an end in itself. This method can be disappointing if it does not bring results. We therefore need an instrument that will allow to give shape to multilateralism, and we must adapt the United Nations to the current environment. Achieving our common objectives depends on developing a modern organization that is well adapted, well equipped and well managed. We will therefore need to consolidate the basis for a responsible and professional Secretariat.

System Wide Coherence is also indispensable. This current reform effort is meant to foster the coherence of development activities by the UN in the field. Its main objective is to reinforce the efficiency at the benefit of developing countries.

After years of discussion, it is unfortunate that no progress has been made on the indispensable reform of the Security Council. We probably need a new working method which allows us to deal with the question away from the technical level in New York, where it is bogged down. Countries' capitals and the political level must be involved. I therefore suggest the designation of a High Level Special Envoy for the reform of the Security Council who would be responsible for leading these consultations and for presenting us with a proposal.

As far as I am concerned, my preference goes to a formula which would consist at first in the addition of new semi-permanent seats, without modifying the current balance between Permanent and Non-Permanent Members. Later on, Permanent Members would accept to give up their right of veto.

The United Nations must serve the general interest of the community of member states, as well as of their populations. The United Nations will only succeed if those states manage to transcend the mere sum of their particular interests. It is our shared responsibility to display the necessary vision in order to put our organization at the service of the common good.

Thank you Mr. President.