



ITALY

STATEMENT BY
THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF ITALY

THE HONORABLE
ROMANO PRODI

TO THE 61ST GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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Madame President,

I wish to offer my congratulations on your election as President of the 61st General Assembly. Your experience in international affairs is the best guarantee of the success of your term. At the same time, allow me to express to your predecessor, Jan Eliasson, our sincere thanks for his effective and balanced leadership of the 60th General Assembly.

My special appreciation also to Kofi Annan, for having dedicated his life to this Organization, particularly in the past ten years as the Secretary-General, led it through difficult challenges, and laying the groundwork for its reform. Thank you, Kofi!

In taking the floor at this 61st General Assembly, Italy fully shares the statement made by the President of the Republic of Finland on behalf of the European Union.

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It was in this city, on the 11th of September five years ago, that the dramatic realization was forced upon us of just how dangerous the world has become. On that day we knew that the new Millennium would hold unpredictable and complex threats—extending beyond national borders—against which notions of protection inside national borders are illusory. Asymmetrical threats that are difficult to counter effectively with the instruments previously used to settle conflicts.

Terrorism and weapons of mass destruction have changed traditional society and its values. They have rendered obsolete systems of collective defense and security based on deterrence. The old solutions to the world's problems—the logic of balance and hegemony—are no longer enough to guarantee stability and security.

These new threats add a new element to a list that includes regional conflicts in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa, pandemics, problems of development and the gap between North and South, human rights abuses, mass migrations, and issues concerning energy and the environment: Phenomena that are also impossible to resolve without a collective assumption of responsibility.

If we wish to govern these phenomena, we need to be equal to their dimensions. No country, however strong and powerful it may be, can take on such complex challenges single-handedly. Global threats demand a global response. In the final analysis, this means collective partnership.

To have chosen as the theme of the 61st General Assembly "Implementing a global partnership for development" was thus particularly appropriate. Without collective action by the countries in the northern and southern hemispheres, international organizations and institutions, the public and the private sector, and civil society, it will be impossible to achieve the goals we have set.

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First and foremost we need to reinvigorate multilateralism, by which I mean restoring the central, fundamental role of the United Nations.

The recent experience in Lebanon and the strengthening of the UNIFIL mission are one example of how the United Nations can regain its crucial importance in the resolution of international controversies. Above all it demonstrates—and this is the key point — that if the stakeholders are willing to confer upon the UN a strong, central role, the Organization is well able to fulfill it.

In Lebanon we are still at square one, and much remains to be done. To underestimate the risks of this mission would be a serious mistake. We must, however, be pleased with how the United Nations, its member States, and—allow me to add—the European Union have addressed a situation that only two months ago risked getting out of hand and that today presents a series of opportunities for the Middle East as a whole.

We should be pleased to have set up a mission that represents the entire international community, a tangible expression of the very *global partnership* that we are discussing today. For while it is true that Europe provides the backbone of UNIFIL, it cannot carry out its mission effectively without the contributions of China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Russia, Turkey, and the many other non-European countries participating.

The question we must ask at this point is this: What do we need to do in order to continue the work just begun in Lebanon? More in general, and in view of the crises and emergencies that surround us: What does the United Nations need in order to fulfill the principles of the Charter?

The United Nations needs two things:

- To quickly complete the reforms needed to make it more effective;
- The strong and unconditional support of its members.

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On the issue of reform, last year, after an intense series of negotiations, a moment of summary allowed us to lay the groundwork for giving the United Nations a more incisive role, to the benefit of the international community.

The Peace-building Commission is the first major result because it highlights the indestructible bond between development, security, and human rights. A priority commitment to human rights and to safeguarding human rights should be the goal of any country that wishes to lend greater ethical authority to its foreign policy. The results achieved by the reform on this point, through the establishment of the new Human Rights

Council, are still being examined. The other significant outcome is the affirmation of the principle of the responsibility to protect, so that the international community will no longer be indifferent before acts of genocide.

But it is on the General Assembly and the Security Council that we must focus our attention:

By restoring the central role of the General Assembly as the main decision-making, representative, and policy-making body of the United Nations;

By renewing efforts to reform the Security Council, both in terms of its working methods and its composition.

In the current situation, the member States thus need to send a strong political signal that can help us to begin a new chapter and open the way to an innovative approach. In other words, we need to enter a period of negotiation, which has thus far eluded us. A period in which, rather than seek to impose positions and models, we can undertake a true comparison of positions, for the purpose of achieving solutions that are not divisive but rather enable the widest possible consensus. With a word of caution: everything is negotiable except for the ownership of this Organization by the member States, by all of us. This is the true pillar on which UN multilateralism must rest.

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The other way for the United Nations to regain the forcefulness and credibility it needs to fulfill its mission is by strengthening the role of its great regional stakeholders. I am thinking first of the European Union, because if Europe is stronger, the United Nations will be stronger. The world and the United Nations do not need a Europe that hesitates, but rather a Europe that is able to do its part in the challenges that await us. Europe, in turn, must become more aware that only by contributing to the resolution of global tensions can it give greater security and prosperity to its citizens.

The conditions for performing this role are there. The numbers alone make the European Union a global actor: 25 Countries with a total population of more than 450 million representing one-fourth of the world's GDP and that every month allocate 500 million euros to third countries. Yet these numbers do not correspond to a comparable ability for the EU to make a difference outside of its own borders.

In the works of this Assembly and its various committees, the European Union is becoming a key actor. At every debate and on every resolution, its position represents a point of reference in shaping the attitudes of the other regional groups. Our goal should be to acquire a similar ability within the Security Council. It may be a slow process, which will have to take into account points of resistance and stubborn legacies, but it should be pursued with determination. Only if Europe wields a more incisive influence on the issues of peace and security can it be considered a true global actor.

The Balkan tragedies in the early 1990s were the result of an absent Europe. But when it is present and when it is united, Europe can make the difference. This is what we

are seeing in the Lebanese crisis. During the 61st General Assembly and in the course of its biennium in the Security Council, Italy will make a special effort to increase the commitment and the role of the European Union at the United Nations.

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Our aim is to make the Organization more effective in the areas and on the issues in which, by history and vocation, it can provide the most added value. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, has to be seen today in the context above all of the negotiation underway with Iran. But it is our duty to look further ahead and to strive—all together—to consolidate the general non-proliferation system. This is a principle that shall inspire the action of Italy when it enters the Security Council. With regard to the Iranian nuclear dossier, we are ready to make our contribution to a negotiated solution that promotes regional security and stability.

In the Middle East, as I mentioned earlier, we need to seize the opportunities and openings conveyed to us, in the awareness that there will be no peace until the Palestinian question has been resolved: an independent, sovereign, vital and contiguous Palestinian State next to the state of Israel, and both within secure and internationally-recognized borders.

The grave regional crises should not lead us to forget Africa. Long-suffering, prey to ongoing crises, and even poorer than it was two decades ago. The situation in Darfur is critical. We cannot stand by and watch, for the simple reason that time has run out. We need to act quickly and strive for a gradual assumption of responsibility by the United Nations, in compliance with the decisions of the Security Council. The situation in the Horn of Africa is also a source of concern. Here a strong commitment is required from the Security Council, where starting on January 1, 2007, Italy will make its contribution also on the basis of our experience in the region.

When I say Africa I mean primarily the gap between the northern and southern hemispheres, the phenomenon at the root of almost all the ills afflicting our era. It is this gap, above all, that causes the massive migratory flows that we cannot ignore and that we must address with realism, responsibility, equanimity, and especially solidarity.

In the Mediterranean we are working with our partners to address immigration on the basis of these principles, and seeking to facilitate legal flows and counter both the illegal flows and the parties that profit from them. Seeking to facilitate the integration into our countries of those who have immigrated regularly, filled with hope and the desire to work.

But there is another dangerous gap that risks leaving an even deeper gash in the world. I am referring to what until a few years ago was called a clash of civilizations and religions between the Christian and Islamic worlds. I refuse to believe that such a clash exists. Extremists and fanatics do exist. Civilizations and religions were made for the sake of dialogue, exchange, and mutual enrichment.

We can promote and we want to promote this relationship by building new policies to bring us closer to the countries on the southern shores of the Mediterranean, with the goal of making this sea a basin of peace and harmonious coexistence among diverse civilizations and religions.

Let me return to the central issue of this session, the global partnership for development, to clarify one point. The reinvigoration of multilateralism, United Nations reform, and a collective commitment to the various theaters of crisis risk producing no lasting effect unless development issues are treated as priorities. It is up to the United Nations, as the driving force and the glue of solidarity among peoples and the fullest expression of multilateralism, to keep development at the top of the international agenda. For it is in the connection between security, solidarity, and development that the added value of the UN lies, in the full awareness that there can be no peace without development and no development without peace.

It is not enough to enunciate at this podium, as speakers have been doing for six years now, the words "Millennium Development Goals." We have to get to work and carry them out. Starting with the adoption of the financial, trade, technological, and environmental steps required. Aiming for a very specific, ambitious goal that responds above all to a moral duty: to guarantee a dignified life to every human being.

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I wish to conclude with a few consideration on the fundamental principles and values that inspire our action when we deal with multilateralism, the search for peace, security, development, and North-South relations. All these issues coalesce in the defense of life and the struggle against all forms of hatred, violence, discrimination, and marginalization: undeniable values that, together with democratic principles, are at the foundations of coexistence among peoples and should inspire the action of the world's nations.

Today, sadly, these values are still denied and trampled upon. As if we had learned nothing from the horrors of the past. But we cannot sit by watching, indifferently, in the face of barbarous acts. We are for peace and solidarity. We are against the death penalty, injustice, and human suffering. This is something we must always remember, especially on the eve of major decisions. This is what is expected of us from those who sacrificed their lives for peace, for a righteous cause, for an ideal, to defend freedom. The same freedom that we enjoy every day in a democracy.

There are our ideals, this our absolute, unyielding choice.