



**PERMANENT MISSION OF  
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TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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**STATEMENT BY**

**H.E. Dr. Jan Peter Balkenende**

**Prime Minister  
of the Kingdom of the Netherlands**

**62<sup>nd</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly**

**NEW YORK, 27 September 2007**

Mr President, distinguished delegates,

I would like to begin by congratulating you, Mr Kerim, on your election as President of the General Assembly.

I would also like to wish our Secretary-General, Mr Ban Ki-moon, every success at his first full General Assembly since taking office. You have been very active in your first nine months. The Netherlands fully supports your efforts to promote peace and development in the world and to make the United Nations more effective.

Mr President,

I am convinced that the success or failure of the United Nations depends on three fundamental factors.

The first is how much inspiration we draw from our common values: respect for human rights, for the rule of law and for our planet.

The second is how much we shoulder our responsibility as members of the international community.

And the third is how successful we are in making the United Nations more relevant, and increasing the impact of the international community.

I will deal with each of these three themes in turn – respect, responsibility and relevance.

## **Respect**

Next year it will be sixty years since we adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the General Assembly. The values contained in this Declaration, and in the conventions based on it, are our source of inspiration.

The Declaration sets out our mission: ‘the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want’. For the last sixty years, these values have been our moral compass – our common standard of achievement.

Whatever our differences of opinion, we must never lose sight of that common ideal. We all agree that every human being deserves a chance to build a good life.

Respect for human rights and the rule of law is our deepest motive and our highest aspiration. Our diversity rests on this unity. We should not hesitate to hold one another to account.

As we speak, the situation in one country in particular, calls for urgent action by the international community. In Birma, the military are shooting at monks and civilians, who are demonstrating peacefully. We strongly condemn this brutal use of force. Together with the European Union and the United States, we call on the Security Council to discuss the situation urgently and to consider further steps including sanctions.

Should the Security Council not reach agreement, we will take our responsibility. In that case, I am convinced the European Union and the United States will decide on further measures, together with other well-intentioned countries.

When it comes to human rights and rule of law, I am not talking about abstractions. Every child that can go to school, every family that can live in peace and freedom with its neighbours, every country that enjoys prosperity and tolerance – each of these is a step towards fulfilling our dream.

Values connect us, across our cultures and religions. We must not allow cultural or religious differences to create barriers to open dialogue. Asma Jahangir, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Freedom of Religion, tells us that religious freedom is under threat in many parts of the world. So we have a lot to do.

The Netherlands wants to join forces with all those who want to promote tolerance and dialogue between civilisations. But we must not allow this dialogue to put the universal validity of our common values in question.

We know from experience how fundamental our shared values are. The Netherlands is one country in the world. But in a sense, we are also the world in one country. Our capital, Amsterdam, is home to one hundred and seventy-seven nationalities.

We have learnt that only through unity in diversity can we make progress. Locally, nationally and internationally. This means that the rule of law must be strictly enforced, so that people can feel safe. It also means that we need to be more tolerant and willing to take a critical look at ourselves. Stressing our differences leads to polarisation and solves nothing.

We owe respect not only to one another, but also to our planet. It gives us everything we need. Provided we treat its natural resources wisely and do not upset its natural balance. That is why sustainability is one of our most important values.

A value is not something that we possess. It is not an achievement we can boast about. A value is a task, an incentive to action. Cherishing values automatically means: accepting responsibility.

## **Responsibility**

Mr President,

Membership of the United Nations goes hand in hand with moral responsibility. It means more than attending meetings and even paying our dues. It also means keeping our commitments. The treaties we sign must not remain a dead letter. Human rights must be respected.

The Netherlands is proud to contribute – for example as a member and vice-president of the Human Rights Council.

In 2005 the United Nations adopted the principle of ‘responsibility to protect’. In doing so, we sided with all those suffering from genocide or crimes against humanity. It is now time to put that principle into practice.

The United Nations has a key responsibility as a protector of peace and security. Each of us shares this responsibility. In this age of rapid communications and global linkage, nothing is ‘far away’ anymore. What happens elsewhere affects us all.

We can only secure lasting peace in areas of conflict if we combine defence with development and diplomacy. We are putting that concept into practice in the Afghan province of Uruzgan, together with our Australian partners and other allies. It is a difficult and demanding mission under UN mandate. The international community must not abandon Afghanistan to its fate. The hopes of millions of Afghans rest with us. The UN needs to broaden and intensify its role in Afghanistan.

The Peacebuilding Commission has a vital role to play in bridging the gap between conflict and development. In the past year, it has worked hard to help several African countries on the difficult road of reconstruction, after being torn apart by conflict. The Netherlands is actively supporting this very promising approach, which focuses on prevention.

Mr President,

You have drawn attention to another responsibility we all share: the need for prompt action to tackle the problem of climate change. The industrialised countries – and that means all of them – should take the lead. But the countries that are now enjoying rapid economic growth are also being asked to develop more sustainably.

The future lies with those countries that excel in energy conservation and the use of cleaner technologies. We are not yet making sufficient use of the scope that innovation offers us.

The Netherlands wants to be a frontrunner. Not only in our ambition to sharply reduce greenhouse gas emissions. But also in developing new strategies to deal with the negative effects of climate change. It is important to take the climate and nature into account in all our investments. The most vulnerable developing countries deserve more support in tackling the problems they face.

In December in Bali, the United Nations has a unique opportunity to take charge of the situation and create a united global framework for addressing the climate problem. European government leaders would like to see negotiations on a follow-up to Kyoto start in Bali. The Netherlands and its European partners will do all they can to accomplish this.

## **Relevance**

Mr President,

Responsibility also means ongoing efforts to make the UN more relevant. The UN is the platform for seeking global solutions to global problems. The world needs an effective UN. How can we be more effective, efficient and credible?

We need to strengthen the rule of law and put an end to impunity. We are not yet making full use of the instruments we have. I say this as Prime Minister of a country that is proud to have the legal capital of the world – The Hague – within its borders. Without justice, there can be no lasting peace and no reconciliation.

We would like to see the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court accepted more widely.

We stress the need for cooperation by both Member and non-Member States with the International Criminal Court in general and with regard to the execution of arrest warrants in particular.

The Netherlands will continue to make a special effort to promote the international legal order. That is why we have responded positively to the Secretary-General's request to host the Lebanon tribunal in the Netherlands. Preparations for this tribunal are in full swing.

Enforcing the rule of law is not enough to make the UN more relevant. We also need to keep a critical eye on how we work.

Let us resist the temptation to invest too much energy in resolutions we adopt every year. It is better to invest in strengthening confidence between North and South, West and East. People and resources are scarce. We can only spend each euro once. If we want to achieve our common aims, like the Millennium Development Goals, we need to coordinate our efforts.

Several dozen UN agencies are active around the world. We have planted a forest of UN flags in various countries. We need a more unified approach in order to help the poorest developing countries more.

We can work far more efficiently if we pool our resources in a single programme in each country. This makes demands on donors. Several countries – including the Netherlands – now fund various UN organisations on the basis of multiyear plans. I hope that others will follow suit.

The Netherlands supports the Secretary-General's efforts to reform the UN system and the Security Council. Reforms are never easy, but they are essential. In a world that is changing at breakneck speed, we need multilateral institutions that can respond to new developments. A relevant UN means a dynamic UN with dynamic institutions.

Mr President,

Reforms are sometimes seen as giving up certainties. I am convinced that we need to reform in order to safeguard what we all hold dear: respect for human rights; enforcement of the rule of law; and sustainable development for all nations. These values are the lifeblood of the UN.

Respect for our values means taking joint responsibility. Responsibility means a constant effort to make the United Nations more relevant.

We want our values to take concrete form in the twenty-first century. In people's lives and in international relations. This demands unity of purpose, courage and resolution of us all. Above all it requires ambition. The ambition to make a determined effort - while respecting our differences - to realise our common ideals. What we need in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is: united values, united ideals, a united world and the United Nations.

Thank you.