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A D D R E S S

of the

President of the Republic of Poland

H.E. Mr. Lech KACZYŃSKI

during the General Debate of the sixty-third Session
of the UN General Assembly

September 24, 2008
United Nations, New York

Secretary General,
President of the General Assembly,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by expressing my respect and gratitude for the President of the former - 62nd session of the United Nations General Assembly, Mr. Srgjan Kerim, whose active involvement and initiatives have contributed to a broader General Assembly agenda and facilitated its work. I wish to extend my congratulations to his successor - Mr. Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann on his appointment to the function of the President of the 63rd session of the General Assembly and wish him fruitful work.

Last year has seen the rise of numerous new challenges and problems which need to be dealt with by the international community. In our attempts to respond to these problems and to search for best solutions to them we have recognized yet again that overcoming different crises cannot be successful without referring to such universal values as democracy, freedom and solidarity.

One of the biggest global challenges nowadays is the food crisis and its consequences. The decision to make this issue the central theme of this year's session of the United Nations General Assembly proves a special role assigned to the United Nations as a forum of debate focused on major global challenges.

Poland appreciates the initiative to combine the debate on the food crisis with discussions about the need to democratize the United Nations. As it is only democratic and effectively functioning United Nations that is able to face up to the global challenges of eliminating hunger and poverty or ensuring stable development of the poorest countries. That is why we are confident that the reform process of the United Nations should be continued.

One of the fundamental principles governing the democratic management within the United Nations is expressed in the following words: "one state one vote". Each state should be granted the possibility to decide in which direction the United Nations will be heading. The General Assembly still remains the most important forum for holding such democratic debate. In this context, facilitation of the decision making mechanism takes on pivotal importance.

We advocate a quicker pace of works on the reform of the Security Council. The number of non-permanent members of the Council should be increased so as to reflect the true image of today`s world.

“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services (...)” – these are the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which celebrates its 60th anniversary this year. As an international community we bear responsibility for their fulfillment.

Fighting hunger and poverty constitutes one of eight Millennium Development Goals. It has been almost 8 years since the international community set them. Despite numerous declarations made and commitments undertaken we are still short of achieving them within the predefined time frame. Overcoming the current crisis in the implementation of the development policy will not be possible unless every country adopts individual responsibility, takes concrete steps and takes stock of the progress in implementing the promises and commitments made so far.

We should make joint efforts aimed at boosting global development agenda with the Millennium Development Goals as its base. It was in this vein that Poland joined the Call to Action Declaration announced on the initiative of the British Prime Minister - Gordon Brown. We hope that the Declaration, reflecting a broad understanding reached by the countries and business representatives, NGOs and faith groups, will contribute to comprehensive implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. We believe that the High-level Event on Millennium Development Goals taking place on 25th September will result in concrete solutions to be implemented in a timely manner.

While analysing reasons behind the food crisis and trying to find effective recipes for combating poverty and hunger, we have taken notice of an immense impact of the aggravating climate change upon these phenomena. And although consequences of the climate change will be felt globally, it is the poorest who will bear the brunt. Without the sense of solidarity, responsibility and enhanced mutual cooperation, the developing countries will not be able to fulfill their commitments as regards reducing greenhouse gas emissions and will fail to successfully adapt to climate change.

Poland wants to be an active partner in the activities undertaken by the international community in this respect. With this in mind - in December this year in Poznań - we will host the 14th session of the Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change as well as the 4th session of Parties to the Kyoto Protocol.

One of the key challenges facing this year`s conference in Poznań consists in working out such solutions and supporting such mechanisms which will bring about true systemic changes in the developing countries. It is vital to ensure financing

of investments conducive to modernization of the economies of these countries, CO₂ reduction and adaptation to climate change.

We hope that the conference in Poznań will lay strong foundations for reaching a new agreement in Copenhagen, next December. Poland in its capacity as the COP14 Presidency will strive for bringing as close as possible the positions among major groups of states so as to ensure maximum progress at the Conference. In this regard we count on cooperation and support from our international partners and friends.

Along with the Poznań Conference we are going to organize meetings of ministers of economy, industry and trade as well as the ministers of finance. They will discuss the possibilities of launching new financing mechanisms in support of actions aimed at climate protection in the developing countries. For sheer political will, indispensable as it is, does not suffice to effectively face the challenges.

Introducing new more climate-friendly technologies should be coupled with enhanced energy security and diversification of energy supplies. Due to the fact that mechanisms guaranteeing solidarity of all member states of the European Union in case of energy crisis are not yet in place, the issue of energy security is our priority.

It is with concern that Poland is following developments in Georgia. We hold the position that conducting dialogue, as well as acting in the spirit of solidarity and consistency in pursuing energy policy should become a priority for all European states. In the context of ensuring energy security for Europe the issue of unpredictable actions of the current suppliers becomes a major one. Poland's concern arises from the fact that certain states use energy supplies in order to achieve political goals in relations with our neighbours.

Hence, it is pivotal to: establish diversified sources of supply, to introduce transparent rules regulating trade in fuels and to extend transport infrastructure, especially to create alternative routes and sources of supplying the European Union with fuels mainly from the Caspian Sea basin and from Central Asia.

I have already referred to Georgia in the context of energy security. However, the situation in this country is much more serious. We witnessed illegal military aggression and division of the country. Fundamental principles of international law i.e. inviolability of borders and territorial integrity were infringed. We may not allow for relativisation of the principles of international law and for their free interpretation by some countries. It particularly refers to the principle of "responsibility to protect" which should serve the interests of the international community and not the interests of individual states.

International order should be based upon strict interpretation of the provisions enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations by all subjects of international law and upon joint responsibility for the fate of those countries which are not able to ensure

their own security. These were the principles that underpinned my actions during the Georgian conflict. I wish to underline that an absolute fulfillment of commitments included in the peace plan constitutes a prerequisite for conducting further discussions about the Caucasus, which will be held in Geneva this October, as well as for discussions on the future of the European Union - Russia relations. The relations between the European Union and Russia should be complementary to those maintained between the entire free world and our big neighbour.

Poland's involvement in international security is visible through our participation in an anti-terrorist coalition in numerous volatile regions of the world. Currently more than 3500 Polish troops and police officers are stationed as a part of global peace-keeping and stabilization forces - from Africa, through the Balkans, through the Middle East and Asia. Iraq was one of such places. Through its 5-year long presence in Iraq, Poland has made efforts to help our Iraqi friends and allies to ensure external and internal security. Our mission whose major stage comes to an end this year, has clearly been a success. Iraq of today is safer and more stable than a few years ago. What remains to be a challenge however is the situation in Afghanistan, where international forces, including Polish ones, are aiming at providing Afghan citizens with conditions for unhampered economic and social development, and most of all, for peace and stability. This mission, thanks to joint allied efforts of many countries, must come to a successful end.

Continuing lack of stability in the Middle East arouses our concern. The long-term process of building an independent Palestinian State should be completed as soon as possible - for the sake of Palestinians and Israelis alike - the two nations who are Poland's friends. Hope is being restored in Lebanon, where following a difficult period in history, stability is on its way back. It will surely have a positive impact on the Middle East peace process.

The issues mentioned above cannot be solved by a single state or a group of states. Today we clearly see that we need a joint action by all countries: poor and rich, Eastern and Western, Northern and Southern. In order to live up to the challenges facing the world today, we should act jointly in the spirit of solidarity, and via effectively operating international structures such as the United Nation, to achieve best results. What is essential however, is guaranteeing respect for core principles of international law, human rights and fundamental freedoms. I hope that when we meet next year on the occasion of the 64th session of the United Nations General Assembly, the world will be a safer and a more stable place - and that it will come precisely as a result of our joint efforts.

Thank you