



S L O V A K I A

STATEMENT BY
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OF THE 63rd SESSION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election as President of the 63rd session of the General Assembly. Our profound appreciation also goes to your predecessor for his leadership in addressing the priority areas of the General Assembly in the preceding period.

Mr. President,

The international community is increasingly confronted with old problems coupled with a new set of challenges of a truly global nature. And, as the UN SG Ban Ki-moon said at the opening session, under these circumstances we face another daunting challenge - a challenge of global leadership.

We, the United Nations of the world, must indeed exercise our leadership, authority and responsibility under these increasingly complex circumstances, first of all here, at the United Nations, notably in the SC, but also the General Assembly, ECOSOC and other bodies. Cooperation among our countries and with international organizations must broaden. Real partnerships with private sector and civil society must be pursued more vigorously.

Mr. President,

“The Impact of the global food crises on poverty and hunger in the world“ is the theme of this session of the General Assembly.

We support the work of the Task Force on Global Food Crisis under the leadership of the Secretary General. As part of the European Union efforts, we promote coordinated measures aimed at helping developing countries to increase food supply and to tackle the current crises in a sustainable manner. Furthermore, fairer international trade rules must be adopted to stimulate agriculture production, first of all in developing countries, and allow access to foodstuffs. We must thus redouble

our efforts, based on the results attained so far to expediently reach a compromise agreement at the WTO trade negotiations.

This year, we are at the midpoint of assessing the achievements towards reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. So far, overall progress on the MDGs has been uneven at best. Moreover, rising food prices, record energy costs, climate change, growing scarcity of water resources and the recent meltdown of financial centres that started in the USA - all that threaten to reverse the existing advances toward the MDGs. Most, if not all of the MDG targets can still be reached, but only if we all will work for them with double energy and commitment.

As a former recipient country that has successfully navigated the transition process, Slovakia now itself provides the Official Development Assistance (in 2005 at the level of 0,12 % of GNP) as well as expert knowledge by sharing the experience, expertise, and "best practices" of its transition with other traditional and emerging donors to help fulfilling, among others, the MDGs. In a new midterm strategy of our official development assistance we will place greater focus on the least developed countries and strengthen our partnerships with UN development agencies.

Mr. President,

We welcome that the issue of democratization of the UN is among the key priorities this year. We support democratisation in the sense of increased partnership among the key UN bodies and respect for each-other mandates. Slovakia would like to place renewed emphasis on the advancement of the agreed UN reform measures, including the management reform of the UN Secretariat. We must strengthen the UN's capacity to deliver "as one" in the areas of peace, security and development, humanitarian assistance and environment, while taking into account the cross-cutting areas of gender equality, sustainable development and human rights.

Slovakia remains convinced of the need to reform the UN Security Council. Based on our own recent experience from serving on the Security Council in 2006 and 2007, we emphasize the need to make the Security Council more representative, more open and more transparent. The Council needs to be enlarged in both its categories. Slovakia supports the ambitions of Germany, Japan, Brazil and India to become

permanent members of the Security Council, as well as permanent representation of Africa in the Council. The regional group of Eastern European States needs to be allocated at least one additional non-permanent seat. We thus fully support the launching of inter-governmental negotiations on reform of the Security Council.

Mr. President,

This year we mark the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as cultivation of the culture of inter-religious and inter-ethnic tolerance remain my country's priorities for action in the United Nations. After serving as the Chairman of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers for six months till May 2008, Slovakia was this year elected a member of the Human Rights Council. We will promote universal respect for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind and in a fair and equal manner (as stated in Resolution 62/251).

Also, the notion of human security is a particularly promising concept within the United Nations to further advance the nexus among the three pillars of UN's work: security, development and human rights.

Mr. President,

Justice is a prerequisite for peace, security and development, not in contradiction with them. "Responsibility to protect" should be another leading policy and principle for our joint action - both in relation to genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity and in cases of large-scale natural disasters and catastrophes. All that can be done while respecting the principles of the UN Charter and international law. We cannot any more afford another Rwanda in Darfur or elsewhere.

In this context, we would like to especially commend the African Union for its increasingly active role in putting an end to the most serious crises in Africa, especially for the AU – UN hybrid operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and for the AU operation in Somalia (AMISOM). These are extremely challenging tasks but we believe viable solutions lie in yet closer cooperation between the UN and the AU,

including between the UN Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council. Here I would like to acknowledge a continuously growing cooperation between the EU and the UN currently in some 20 operations and cases.

Mr. President,

Nationally-owned reform of the security sector, particularly in post-conflict environments, is critical to the consolidation of peace and stability, promoting poverty reduction, rule of law and good governance, extending legitimate state authority, and preventing countries from relapsing into conflict.

Since its membership in the Security Council, Slovakia has been actively engaged in SSR-related efforts, in working in support of the recommendations of the Secretary General. We are committed to continuing our work as coordinator of the Group of Friends of SSR, as well as to further promoting regional and sub-regional activities in the area of SSR, after a successful workshop in South Africa, this time in Asia and Latin America.

Mr. President,

New challenges to global security should not divert our attention from old and more traditional threats. The world is unfortunately full of disputes, conflicts and crises. We consistently support their solution by negotiations and peaceful means with a central role of the UN, based on full respect for the principles of international law, notably those of sovereignty and territorial integrity and reject use of force and unilateral action.

That concerns also the recent developments in Georgia or in the Western Balkans, where we underline the importance of the European and transatlantic perspective for all countries as an essential element in promoting peace and stability and economic progress in the region. And one lesson that we have learned is, that frozen conflicts and unresolved disputes, if left aside, tend to move into a dangerously hot stage, spread instability, nurture extremism. The conflict in the Middle East is telling.

We all recognize the importance of supporting the government of Afghanistan in its efforts to ensure stability and development in the country, preventing Afghanistan

from becoming once again a haven for terrorists. Slovakia has this year decided to double the number of its soldiers serving in the South of Afghanistan to 246. But it is obvious, that lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan depends on a solid progress in the living conditions of Afghan citizens and in good governance.

Mr. President,

Slovakia supports enhanced UN cooperation in implementing the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. To be more effective, we need an agreement on the UN Comprehensive Convention against International Terrorism (CCIT) as soon as possible.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their means of delivery continues to pose a serious threat to international peace and security. We are in particular concerned about our inability to close the issue of the Iran nuclear program in a way that would be considered by all to be in conformity with non-proliferation regime.

We welcome the extension of the mandate of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540. Cooperation with regional, sub-regional, other international organizations and functional bodies, as well as among various relevant UN organs remains essential to further facilitate implementation of resolution 1540 by member States.

Mr. President,

As has been stated by many distinguished speakers before me, the tasks confronting us in the year ahead are enormous. They can be accomplished only through our strong and sustained political commitment, working through multilateral mechanisms, with the UN at the centre. It is important that we all stand together united by the common purpose of collectively forging effective responses to all current global problems and challenges.

Thank you Mr. President.