

United Nations Nations Unies

THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

LE PRESIDENT DE L'ASSEMBLEE GENERALE

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Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to address the UN-US Symposium. I believe that it is extremely important to have a dialogue about how we may cooperate to advance a more effective and mutually supportive relationship between the United Nations and the United States. The nature and quality of this relationship is of immense significance for all of us as the United Nations is the only legitimate institution in the world to which all nations have subscribed and in which we all have a stake. This discussion is more pertinent today than ever, at a time when the United Nations is confronted with one of the most serious debates about its role in future international relations.

Recently, the Iraqi crisis has seized - and rightly so - our attention as the most outstanding issue before the United Nations. The Security Council did not reach an agreement on how to proceed further in Iraq. The inability of the Security Council to produce a workable multilateral solution frustrated most UN Member States. We all would have preferred if a consensus solution had been found. But it was not the case. Did it make, however, the Security Council or even the United Nations less relevant? I believe not. The lack of consensus definitely showed how difficult and complicated the situation in Iraq had been. It demonstrated how differently the Member States understood and evaluated the situation in Iraq based on their diverse perspectives, historical experience and cultural backgrounds. It is also true that this crisis, once again, revealed some weaknesses and shortcomings in our multilateral intergovernmental processes that must be addressed in the future reform efforts.

In this connection, I would caution, however, against the hasty and often-quoted comparison with the fate of the League of Nations and the frequently heard obituaries to the United Nations. Contrary to the League of Nations that failed to prevent the World War II and ceased to exist after only 20 years, the United Nations has been much more successful. In the course of its existence, there has been no global or major regional war as it happened twice in the first half of the 20th century. Over the past 57 years, the UN has been engaged in all major issues of peace and security, massive decolonization in the 50's, development assistance and economic cooperation, disarmament, large democratization, pursuance of human rights and many other tasks. Its role in designing and maintaining international order has always been indispensable and irreplaceable. In brief, the 57 years history of the United Nations has been marked by many "success stories" but also by a great deal of inefficiency in many areas which calls for fundamental reforms.

The United Nations has always had a special relationship with the United States. The United States' support to the United Nations has been crucial from the very inception of the Organization. The United States has played a major role not solely because of its being the host country and the largest single contributor but also, and even more importantly, because of its conceptual input in designing the Organization. It was President Roosevelt and his vision of a peaceful "Post War World" that largely influenced the conception of the United Nations. It was mostly American values, values of a democratic and liberal society that shaped the UN Charter. And last but not least, it was US leadership that united the world in its endeavour to maintain peace and security, to respect equal rights and promote the economic and social advancement of all peoples. The global community needs similar determination for democracy and international order today also since all nations want to have a voice in decision-making processes on global issues.

The US participation in the UN continues to be fundamental - not only to the UN itself but also to America's global leadership. The United States needs the legitimacy and existence of a world order that the United Nations does provide. On the other hand, the absence of the United States in the Organization's activities would substantially hold back the entire institution. The question before us is how to make the relationship more constructive and beneficial for both the UN and the US.

Now, we live in a different, highly globalized, world. There still prevails the need for peace and security, respect for equal rights, as well as economic and social advancement. But besides these goals that were set in the UN Charter, we face a number of new challenges that relate to the fact that we live in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world. For instance some decisions and actions taken by large countries or transnational corporations usually have consequences on other countries. Due to the progress of technology, it is easier than ever to accumulate power that can destroy our environment or civilization. Threat of terrorism, invisible and unidentifiable enemy, contributes substantially to the growing feeling of global insecurity.

The global community needs, more than ever before, to work together intensively and courageously, in order to build more secure and rule-based world, in which human freedom and dignity as well as private enterprise can flourish. It is generally acknowledged that the global community has become interdependent, be it for trade and investments, or for solving the problems related to climate change, or eradicating poverty and terrorism. Each nation, even the United States, the sole superpower with its economic, financial, military and technological dominance, is also interconnected with and interdependent on others. The quality of the international order, the good will and responsibility of all the nations, particularly the most powerful ones are essential. We all have to work together to transfer global insecurity into global responsibility. The United Nations can and must be instrumental in this endeavour.

In conclusion, let me re-iterate that in the inter-linked world, no nation can pursue its aspirations towards economic prosperity and sustainable development, towards human dignity, towards a safe and secure environment in an isolated way and without the cooperation and sound relations with other countries. The only way to ensure global peace and security is to win the war against

poverty. That is why, our commitments for international development cooperation are so important. Let me quote here what was recently stated by John Snow, Secretary of the US Treasury, at the meeting of the Development Committee: "The United States is committed to helping the developing world - particularly the poorest countries - increase economic growth, raise living standards, and eliminate poverty. Developed and developing countries, together with the international financial institutions, must redouble their efforts toward achieving these goals." This is, in my view, the best way to go.

I hope that the outcome from this symposium will increase mutual understanding and enhance closer collaboration between this universal Organization and the United States. Let me wish you a very productive discussion.

Thank you.