



PERMANENT MISSION OF PORTUGAL TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Intervention of His Excellency the Prime Minister of
Portugal
Pedro Santana Lopes

59th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

New York

22 September 2004

Portugal wishes the United Nations to fulfil the central role it rightly deserves in the community of nations. The United Nations is the indispensable international organization. Without this project, of which we are all a part, the world would be more unstable, less predictable, and a place where the universal dream of peace and freedom would be no more than a mirage on a far-off horizon.

The United Nations were established in a distant historical context, but its ideas and basic values remain contemporary. Portugal has a habit of recalling them, on occasions such as this, because we feel that this common undertaking is based on solid foundations. "We the peoples of the United Nations" believe in the dignity and the value of the human being, in fundamental freedoms and in the equality between men and women. We defend the primacy of International Law and tolerance in the relations between peoples.

But we also believe that one should not distinguish between large and small nations, as we all have a common interest in social advancement and in the maintenance of international peace and security. These are the objectives of this Organization which need to be preserved and strengthened. This is, in good truth, our common cause – the cause of humankind.

Mr. President,

The month of September, in this city of New York, inevitably brings back memories of the honor of three years ago. It forces us to look at the challenges to peace that this Organization faces today. The tragic events in Madrid, in Beslan, in Baghdad, in Jakarta and in other places show us that terrorism has entered the deepest and darkest of shadows.

No cause, no idea, justifies acts of pure barbarism and the spilling of innocent's blood. Terrorism is an enemy of humankind.

Portugal believes that it is up to the United Nations to contribute also decisively to the establishment of a global strategy against terrorism. A strategy that takes into account not only the obvious security-related responses, but also other elements that may have the potential to generate violence.

Let us be unyielding in the fight against terrorism. But let us also engage ourselves in doing it collectively. Let us take into account the laws and the values in the name of which we are fighting this evil.

Hunger and poverty generate despair and may goad people into choosing a path of violence. I would thus like to congratulate the meeting of World Leaders Against Hunger and Poverty, promoted by President Lula da Silva, which I had the honour of attending. We believe that this meeting is a fundamental step towards changing cases of extreme poverty, that are ethical and politically unsustainable.

Fighting poverty is an intelligent way to counteract some of the factors that feed violence. Peace and development are inseparably intertwined.

Nations is, after all, the expression of our collective will. This Organization cannot be seen as a distant reflection on which we project our individual expectations, often beyond the mandates and the means that we make available to it.

It is in this regard that we support the work of the High Level Panel established last year by the Secretary-General to examine the current challenges to peace and security. The strategies for the reinforcement of the Organization, which the Panel will recommend, aim at preserving what is best in the United Nations. As well as ensuring that it is equipped with the means necessary to promote development, prevent conflicts and protect human rights.

Portugal unequivocally supports the reform of the Security Council. We support its enlargement so as to better reflect the world of today, through a rebalance of its representativeness. We have already stated before this forum, and I reiterate it today, our support for the enlargement in the number of permanent and non-permanent members. Portugal's support to Brazil, Germany and Japan has been known to this General Assembly since 1993.

We have already expressed our sympathy for - and I take the opportunity to express Portugal's commitment, in this regard — having the African continent represented by a permanent seat in the Security

Portugal has been with the United Nations in many of its peacekeeping operations around the globe. I would like to pay tribute here to my compatriots and to all others who have served on peacekeeping missions, in particular to those who have given their lives for our collective ideals.

It is our wish that this Organization may better develop its work in the field of conflict prevention. However, we are still lacking an efficient instrument for the development of this policy. This is why Portugal proposed, at the last session of the General Assembly, the creation of a commission to promote peace and development, under the mandate of, and in collaboration with, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. Its objectives would be to monitor closely countries in crisis, or at risk, and ensuring the cooperation of regional and international institutions.

We believe that our proposal remains

understand clearly that the international presence in Iraq, approved by the Security Council and by the Iraqi Interim Government, is by its own nature provisional.

It is time for the international community to unite in its efforts to ensure that the Iraqi people again find the path towards peace and development. We cannot change the past, but we must assume that the future can still be influenced in a positive way. Thus, we must quickly find our unity, or we run the risk of turning this Organization into a permanent collateral damage of the Iraqi crisis.

In order for democracy to succeed in Iraq and for that country to maintain its unity, it is indispensable that its people have a saying, through elections, on the way they wish to be governed. It is also important that the agreed political calendar is honoured, or we may seriously compromise the rightful expectations of the Iraqi people and Government.

We cannot allow those who generate instability through unthinkable acts of terrorism the power to veto the establishment of a democratic regime in Iraq.

Elections are the only way to allow the Iraqi people to meet their destiny of democracy and freedom, to which they are entitled to.

But peace, freedom and democracy are also at stake in other parts of this planet we inhabit. We cannot look away from the tragedy unfolding in Darfur. Our collective security also implies an effective international control of the production of nuclear, chemical and bacteriological weapons, and the means to deploy them.

For the maintenance of international security it is also essential that this Organization continues to push for the resumption of the Middle East peace process. The existing status quo is unacceptable. Israel and Palestine will need to learn to coexist in peace and security, within the internationally recognised borders and without artificial partitions.

Mr. President,

The world has already entered a new time. "The peoples of the whole world" as mentioned in the Charter of the United Nations, demand a new contract between the governed and those who govern.

The three classic powers of Montesquieu are no longer alone in the government of the peoples. Those who still believe so are lost in time. There is nothing worse than erring in our perceptions of reality. There are powers that are not as they were and others that Montesquieu, Locke and the drafters of liberal revolutions could not know of – because they did not exist or because, meanwhile, they have changed configuration. It is enough to think of the power that the media has on the life of the people.

Mister President,

Our peoples want to feel strength in the present and faith in the future.

For that very reason I end this intervention the same way I started it: stressing the indispensability and the centrality of the United Nations in our daily lives as free and sovereign nations. We belong to an Organization that has restored hope to many peoples and human beings, by bringing the light of freedom to those who lived in oppression. Timor-Leste is an excellent example of the ability of the United Nations to do good.

But one should also stress the attention the United Nations has given to those who are vulnerable, to children, to those who are disabled, and to the promotion of gender equality. For this Organization, Humankind is not an abstract entity. The dialogue between cultures, civilizations and religions, which Portugal upholds, is an inherent part of the daily work of the United Nations.

Mister President,