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Statement by

**H.E. Mr. Valdis Zatlers
President of the Republic of Latvia**

at

the 63rd Session of the General Assembly

**United Nations, New York
24 September 2008**

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen!

I wish to begin by congratulating you, Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann, on assuming the post of President of the current session of the General Assembly.

Today I will start by addressing the security situation in the world. During the past year the international community has witnessed a rise in understanding of frozen conflicts. Frozen does not mean solved. It means these conflicts can reemerge. Therefore I am particularly glad that of significant improvements in solving long-lasting conflicts in some regions.

First, I would like to mention **Kosovo**. Strong involvement of the UN, the EU and the United States has brought a solution to a protracted conflict in the Balkans. Now we need to focus our efforts on the development of Kosovo's statehood- political stability, economic prosperity, security and good relations with its neighbors.

I welcome the decision of the UN Secretary General to reconfigure the UN Mission in Kosovo. It is necessary to continue the constructive cooperation between the UN and the EU in order for Kosovo mission to be fully deployed. This is important both for Kosovo and for the whole Western Balkans region.

Mr. President,

The international community has also put remarkable efforts to help **Afghanistan** in building democratic, prosperous and secure state. Big and small countries, civilian and military organizations from all over the world work together to achieve our common aspiration for peace and stability.

We must not undermine this immense effort by being too impatient. The war ravaged Afghanistan for 20 years. It will take at least as much time to rebuild peaceful society. The international community must strive ahead until the long-term aim is achieved.

Latvia is increasing our commitment to Afghan people in terms of development and security assistance. We are focusing our civil engagement on good governance and strong judiciary, as well as provision of basic needs to the Afghan people.

Mr. President,

Prospects of peace and stability in the **Middle East** affect the whole world. Latvia hopes that the peace negotiations between the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority will bring results. We hope that the parties will use the window of opportunity to conclude the Peace Agreement by the end of 2008.

The indirect talks that have resumed between Israel and Syria is another positive signal.

Latvia welcomes the stabilization process in Lebanon. We hope that the Doha agreement will be fully implemented and will serve as a sound foundation for renewal of political stability, national unity and sustainable economic development of the country.

Mr. President,

Not all developments during the past year have been positive. We have witnessed new challenges to the law based international system.

We should ask ourselves whether we as international community can accept that peacekeeping troops protect only one side involved in the conflict. Can we accept that peacekeeping forces occupy territories clearly outside the conflict zones? Can we accept that “protection of nationals abroad” is used as a pretext for a large-scale use of force in another state without the sanction of the UN Security Council?

All these questions are stemming from the international response to the very recent war in Georgia. If these questions matter to us, we should have a clear plan to solve the Georgian crisis.

The most important task now is the adherence and implementation of the Six Point Ceasefire agreement by the Russian Federation. The first, the foreign troops must be removed from all of the Georgian soil. Equally important is the establishment of EU Monitoring mission for normalization of situation in Georgia.

The United Nations has already for 15 years mandated United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia. We must ensure that there will be no obstacles to continue this effort.

I call upon the world leaders to come together not only in providing humanitarian aid to Georgia, but also in ensuring massive international effort to help rebuild the economy and infrastructure of the country.

Mr. President,

It is about time that we should seriously examine our development commitments. The year 2015 may seem to be far, but it is less than the time that we have already used since the adoption of MDGs in 2000. Two days ago I participated in High Level Meeting on Africa’s Development Needs and tomorrow I will participate in the High Level Event on the Millenium Development Goals.

These are important efforts at raising the issue to the top priority where it belongs. We must significantly accelerate the processes to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. A clearer picture of what we have to achieve in interim in each of the main clusters of MDGs – health, education, growth, and climate change is what the UN needs immediately.

We also need a clearer picture of division of labor among different actors and to build a shared sense of progress. A clear plan of action- that's what's extremely necessary. Therefore, Latvia strongly supports the EU initiative of the **MDGs Call for Action**.

Climate change will have major negative bearing on meeting the MDGs. Latvia supports broader use of renewable energy resources to reduce CO² emissions. However, climate change cannot be seen exclusively as an environmental challenge. We need a more integrated approach.

Changes to energy consumption patterns must be taken into account on the way to sustainable development, food security and worldwide trade. Innovative technologies as well as sustainable production and consumption would deliver both the mid-term and long-term results.

CO² cannot be cut just in some regions, while others do nothing. While each of our countries has to commit to cutting CO² emissions, success is possible only if there is a truly global agreement to do that and how to do that. The United Nations as the only truly global organization has to play a decisive role.

Liberalization of trade is an important contributor towards achieving MDGs. Although the recent efforts for trade liberalization at World Trade Organization have not been successful, this process must be continued at the multilateral level.

Globalization has brought both- increased prosperity and increased risks. We need to find the way how to ensure that tomorrow's globalization will offer growing prosperity to all the people. Globalization will bring benefits on a truly global scale only if trade is liberalized across the board. Every country, every region has to pitch in fairly in this process.

Mr. President,

I would like to congratulate the new UN High Commissioner for Human Rights - Ms. Pillay - with the assumption of her duties and wish her the best success in this highly important post. I would also like to thank Ms. Arbour for her invaluable contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights.

Symbolically the **60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights** this year coincides with the **90th anniversary of the Republic of Latvia**. The Act of Proclamation of the Republic of Latvia already in 1918 declared: *“...all citizens, irrespective of ethnicity, are asked to help, for the rights of all people will be guaranteed in Latvia. It will be a democratic and just state where oppression and injustice will not exist...”* I am very proud of this statement.

30 years before the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Republic of Latvia declared adherence to its the same core values and principles and fully implemented them in the newly established state.

Unfortunately by the time the Human Rights Declaration was adopted Latvia was under foreign occupation and the people of Latvia were deprived of their right to freely determine their political status, were subject to oppression and injustice. Only in 1991 Latvia restored its statehood and the continuity of its commitment to fundamental human rights, inherent human dignity, equality, and universality of these values.

The creation of the **Human Rights Council** and the beginning of the Universal Periodic Review are important steps for promoting the values of this universal declaration. Special procedures of the Human Rights Council play a particular role in this regard. Latvia expresses full support to them and urges all UN members to cooperate fully with the special procedures, including through issuing “standing invitations” to them.

Latvia is ready to share our experience in promoting human rights with the international community. Latvia has put forward its candidacy for the Human Rights Council for the year 2014.

Mr. President,

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute establishing the **International Criminal Court**. We welcome the progress the Court has achieved in its analyses, investigations and judicial proceedings. We call upon all States to ensure full co-operation with the Court. The ICC is not an instrument that can be activated or deactivated according to political expediency. We are convinced that universality of justice is a prerequisite for a sustainable peace.

Mr. President,

Effective multilateralism requires combining greater awareness of the nature of risks we face with contemporary understanding of how international politics are forged today. International organizations are only one part of our global system – and often this part is most resistant to change. It is regrettable that enthusiasm and momentum generated during the World Summit 2005 in reforming this universal international body has somewhat faded.

Reform of the Security Council is long overdue. We must move out from the discussion of procedure into discussion of substance. We welcome the recent decision by the GA to continue immediately within the Open-ended Working Group to prepare intergovernmental negotiations on the question of the Security Council's expansion. While recognizing the need for structural reforms of the United Nations, we should not lose our sight on more effective use of the existing capacity.

Management reform is the central core in all these efforts. We support further measures aimed at ensuring greater transparency, enhanced accountability and strict budget discipline. There is some progress, but not enough by far.

Mr President,

We live in a world with a deteriorating security, growing population, consequences of climate change, and market turbulences, aggravated by the high energy and food prices.

We need a deeper engagement with the risks we face globally. This requires a new commitment to our values and willingness to work for an international system that has a vision of the future at its heart. I wish this to become the driving force for all the work of this 63rd session of the General Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. President.