

Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Bahrain

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البعثة الدائمة لمملكة البحرين

لدى الأمم المتحدة – نيويورك

Statement

By

His Excellency Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed bin Mohamed Al Khalifa

Minister of Foreign Affairs

At the

64th session

of the

United Nations General Assembly

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Mr. President,

It is with great pleasure that I extend my heartfelt congratulations to my brother, H.E. Dr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, Minister of African Union Affairs of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, upon his unanimous election to the high office of President of the 64th session of the General Assembly. His extensive diplomatic experience and intimate knowledge of the United Nations will, undoubtedly, enable him to conduct the work of this session with great efficiency.

I also wish to put on record my appreciation for the work of the former President of the General Assembly, Father Miguel d' Escoto Brockmann of Nicaragua, for his able stewardship of the 63rd session of the Assembly and the many brilliant proposals he made during his tenure to enhance and develop the Organization.

My highest appreciation also goes to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his relentless efforts to enhance the principles and objectives enshrined in the Charter and to promote the role of the Organization and further its efficiency in coping with new developments as they occur and responding to the emerging needs of our peoples.

Mr. President,

The Sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly convenes at a time of rapid universal change, placing international relations at a critical juncture. The challenges facing us today as human beings are greater and more daunting than those we face as nations, races or religious groups, for, as individuals, we are constantly threatened by disease, hunger and climate change, while the world sinks into endless wars and conflicts.

Our deeply held belief in open-mindedness, tolerance, diversity, non-violence and rejection of extremism requires us first to free our minds of egoism and prejudice, with a view to replacing conflict with dialogue, disagreements with consensus and violence with persuasion; and to broadening our alliances and outreach efforts. We need to exert greater efforts to show tolerance towards those who do not necessarily share our values and ideas. Indeed, there are issues of such a philosophical and dialectical nature that they can only be tackled and resolved if each party is open to the other, and willing to resist preconceived ideas. Common grounds of mutual understanding can help make the world more progressive and creative, and hence more secure, standing on firm bases of tolerance, constructive dialogue and coexistence.

The world has become a small village within which distances have been effectively abolished, thanks to technological advances in the field of communication which have erased barriers and frontiers. However, we realize that as much as this world is interconnected, it is still dominated by political antagonisms as states continue to pursue conflicting individual interests. This state of affairs enjoins us all to design pragmatic strategies for the future that preserve everyone's interest. For that, we need mentalities capable of assimilating such transformations and processing them in the service of humanity and the consolidation of international security

and stability. It is clear that world security cannot be achieved through the sole effort of superpowers.

The challenges we face are more serious and daunting than ever before and hence require a broader global alliance of Member States of the United Nations as well as the support of the entire UN system in the interest of the international community. At the same time, they require national strategies designed to address such challenges through close and sustained coordination among nations. Our task today consists in joining efforts to create an environment in which it is possible to discuss the threats and issues confronting our planet, taking into account the historical background and specific values of our respective societies. It is therefore incumbent on each party to appreciate and understand the position of the other in all its specificity and hence to contribute to the collective fight against hatred and prejudice.

Mr. President,

Throughout its history, the Kingdom of Bahrain has been, and still is, a melting pot of civilizations, cultures, religions and races. No wonder, therefore, that its policy has always been one of tolerance and openness to the other. My country firmly believes in the necessity of finding common grounds between universal civilizations and cultures, and building a culture of peace among peoples.

In this perspective, the settlement of conflicts through peaceful means is deeply rooted in our values and the principles of our Islamic faith. No other protracted conflict has impacted on the life of our generation as has the Arab-Israeli conflict over the last six decades. Its sad legacy of misery and human suffering envenoms international and regional relations and periodically aggravates tensions, violence and armed conflicts in the Middle East. We did try repeatedly, but in vain, to find a solution to this chronic conflict. Conferences succeeded conferences, and initiatives followed other initiatives but we never attempted to deliver our message to the minds, hearts and homes of the peoples of the region. This, in essence, is the angle from which His Highness Shaikh Salman Bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Bahrain, approached the issue in an article in the Washington Post of 16 July 2009, which represents a meaningful contribution to the adoption of a pragmatic approach to this conflict. He notably argues, and I quote, that:

“Our biggest mistake has been to assume that you can simply switch peace on like a light bulb. The reality is that peace is a process, contingent on a good idea but also requiring a great deal of campaigning -- patiently and repeatedly targeting all relevant Parties.”

End of quote.

Mr. President,

A careful examination of this argument reveals the right approach to follow in addressing this particular conflict, namely directly and expeditiously communicating our initiatives to

the Israeli people, through its own information media. By so doing, we will be in a better position to explore the path to peace.

We would be well advised to utilize, judiciously and with clarity of vision, all available means of information and communication to open these new channels. In the same vein, we need to establish the structures necessary to enable leaders, governments and civil society to create an environment conducive to advancing towards the long-aspired peace.

Mr. President,

To-day, the concept of dialogue has become an omnipresent international issue on the agenda of the United Nations and other international fora, as is evidenced by the multiplicity of ongoing dialogue processes: dialogue among civilizations, dialogue among cultures and inter-faith dialogue. All these processes aim at enhancing peaceful co-existence between nations and peoples and represent the principal course of action to eliminate the causes of conflict, tensions and disunity.

Mr. President,

The Middle East peace process commands us all to exert greater political and diplomatic efforts with a view to achieving the two-state solution, Israel and Palestine, as part of a comprehensive and just settlement, based on equal security for all the nations of the region.

It is our considered opinion that failure in ending this conflict is due, basically, to the lack of a methodology based on a just and balanced peace, and the conspicuous absence of a binding mechanism for implementation. We are all aware of the fact that the Arab side went to great lengths to make clear its position that peace is a strategic and irreversible option. The Arab Peace Initiative unequivocally confirmed this position. We therefore expect the international community, and particularly the most influential leading powers, to exert effective pressure on Israel for a freeze, and eventually dismantlement, of all settlements established in the territories occupied in 1967, for the delimitation of the boundaries of the Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, peacefully co-existing with Israel and for withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories, including the occupied Syrian Golan and Lebanese territory, in conformity with the relevant resolutions of the international community and the requirements of the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative.

In this respect, I would like to commend the speech of the Honorable President Barack Obama delivered from this same podium, which we consider as a term of reference for the resumption of the Middle East peace process, and where he explicitly confirms the need to recommence negotiations on the question of the final status, notably security for both Israelis and Palestinians, boundaries, refugees, Jerusalem and the settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories to which he clearly objects as being illegal, and calls for the creation of a contiguous and viable Palestinian state.

Among the other challenges confronting our region and causing concern to all of us is the question of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East and the Gulf region. The Iranian nuclear programme is undoubtedly among the causes for this common concern. Nevertheless, addressing it should be undertaken in such a manner as to spare our region the threat of confrontation. This could best be achieved by giving precedence to diplomacy.

It is in this spirit that the Kingdom of Bahrain, and in pursuant to the Security Council resolution 1887 (2009), reiterates its appeal to the international community to seriously endeavour to make the Middle East, including the Gulf region, a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, thus ensuring the security and wellbeing of the nations of the region and the world at large and call upon Israel to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons with a view to enhancing its universality. All nuclear institutions and activities in Middle Eastern states should be placed under the IAEA safeguards system, without prejudice to the legitimate right of states to possess nuclear technology for peaceful uses in the various areas where it has become vital for development and the diversification of energy sources, in conformity with the relevant international agreements.

Mr. President,

Other important issues also preoccupy us. Foremost among these is the situation in Iraq and the need to preserve its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and to condemn all terrorist activities perpetrated against it with a view to destabilizing its security and rekindling sectarian hatred. Further, to enhance confidence building between the Member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Iran, it is imperative to reach a settlement to the question of the occupied islands belonging to the United Arab Emirates, either through direct negotiations between the two parties or by referral to the International Court of Justice. We also reaffirm the need for international and regional efforts to assist Yemen, under the supervision of the United Nations, in meeting the heavy burden of the refugee problem and focusing on its development efforts and the restoration of security and stability. Similarly, we stress the importance of preserving peace, stability and unity in the Sudan and we look forward to the cooperation of all relevant parties to resolve the Darfur issue and to achieve peace.

We urge the international community to assume its responsibilities towards security in Somalia, whose internal problems and fragile government have led to the spread of maritime piracy in the Gulf of Aden and the el-Mandeb strait to the detriment of international navigation and trade. The Kingdom of Bahrain once again reaffirms its consistent position concerning the sovereignty of Morocco over the totality of its national territory and calls on the international community to support the negotiation process initiated by the Security Council and to maintain its momentum.

Mr. President,

As peace and security are the twin concerns of our world, it is only natural to feel

frustrated as a result of the prevailing environmental degradation, pandemics, desertification, poverty, water scarcity, ozone depletion, climate change and the world financial crisis. These challenges represent an imminent threat to our present life and future generations alike. It is no overstatement therefore to say that our destinies in this twenty-first century are intertwined, and that we need to redouble our collective efforts to address these universal hazards threatening humanity, on a daily basis, in its health, food and security.

In this respect, the Kingdom of Bahrain hosted last May, in cooperation with the United Nations and in the presence of its Secretary-General, the launch of The 2009 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction. The Report dealt with issues pertaining to the protection of lives and property in natural disaster situations involving earthquakes, global warming, floods and sea-level rise. As part of this process, we urge the major industrial countries to play a major role in the Copenhagen Climate Change conference to be held this December with a view to 'sealing the deal' on a new agreement on curbing harmful greenhouse gas emissions, and preserving our planet for future generations to enjoy in all security and in a sustainable fashion. It is our hope that Copenhagen will succeed in mustering enough political will to respond to the threats on human survival and to make our world safer and more sustainable.

In this context, the Kingdom of Bahrain, in its capacity as a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), wishes to express great concern at the evident causal relation between climate change and sea-level rise which poses serious threats to our planet. Bahrain shares the position of the other members of the SIDS group concerning the adverse impact of the increase in the global average temperature that could be acceptable.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, the determination that characterizes our present session, as exemplified by the mature discussions in the first week, notably at the Climate Change and Security Council Summit meetings reconfirms the return to the spirit of the Charter: the United Nations is the principal forum for multilateral cooperation to address a wide range of contemporary issues. The mandate of the United Nations as an international institution is not limited exclusively to the maintenance of international peace and security. Rather, it is the principal organ for the coordination of positions and efforts aimed at addressing the challenges threatening man and his biosphere, alleviating poverty, controlling pandemics and settling conflicts through dialogue and negotiations in a world guided by tolerance, peaceful coexistence and security for current and future generations.

I thank you for your attention.