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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

STATEMENT TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

New York, 21 March 2005

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Mr. President,  
Excellencies,

Thank you for allowing me to present to you, in person, the five-year progress report that you requested from me, on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration.

The main message of that report is that the aims of the Declaration can be achieved, but only if you, the member states, are willing to adopt a package of specific, concrete decisions this year.

Some of those decisions are so important that they need to be taken at the level of heads of state and government. It is therefore very fortunate that your heads of state and government have agreed to come here for a summit meeting in September. I am giving you my report six months ahead of that meeting, so that your governments have ample time to consider it. My hope is that world leaders, when they arrive here in September, will be ready to take the decisions that are needed.

And I hope they will adopt them as a package.

In any such list of proposals, there are items which seem more important to some than to others, and items about which some have reservations, while others consider them essential. The temptation is to treat the list as an *à la carte* menu, and select only those that you especially fancy.

In this case, that approach will not work. What I am proposing amounts to a comprehensive strategy. It gives equal weight and attention to the three great purposes of this Organization: development, security and human rights, all of which must be underpinned by the rule of law. Some states may think that we should give priority to one of those purposes over the others; and within each of them, many states will have their particular preferences.

But I do not need to remind you that this is an Organization of 191 member states. We all know that global problems can best be solved if all states work together. We must also accept that that will only happen if, within the common strategy, all states see their specific concerns addressed.

I argue in the report, and I am profoundly convinced, that the threats which face us are of equal concern to all. I have called the report “In Larger Freedom”, because I believe those words from our Charter convey the idea that development, security and human rights go hand in hand. In a world of inter-connected threats and opportunities, it is in each country's self-interest that all of these challenges are addressed effectively. The cause of larger freedom can only be advanced if nations work together; and the United Nations can only help if it is remoulded as an effective instrument of their common purpose.

You may or may not find my argument convincing. But please remember, in any event, that if you need the help of other states to achieve your objectives, you must also be willing to help them achieve their objectives. That is why I urge you to treat my proposals as a single package.

Excellencies,

Let me now briefly describe what I propose.

The report is divided into four main sections. The first three set out priorities for action in the fields of development, security and human rights, respectively, while the last deals with global institutions – mainly the United Nations itself, which must be, as the Millennium Declaration says, “a more effective instrument” for pursuing those priorities.

The first part, entitled “Freedom from Want”, proposes specific decisions for implementing the bargain struck three years ago, in Monterrey, between developed and developing countries.

I ask every developing country to adopt and begin to implement, by next year, a comprehensive national strategy bold enough to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015; and to mobilise all its resources behind that strategy.

Specifically, I ask developing countries to improve their governance, uphold the rule of law, combat corruption and adopt an inclusive approach to development, making space for civil society and the private sector to play

their full part. The challenge of development is too big for governments to face it alone.

And I ask every developed country to support these strategies, by increasing the amount it spends on development and debt relief, and doing whatever it can to level the playing-field for world trade.

Specifically, I ask developed countries to commit themselves, this year, to complete the Doha round of trade negotiations no later than 2006, and as a first step to give immediate duty-free and quota-free market access to all exports from the Least Developed Countries.

I also ask them to commit themselves to reach, by 2015, the target of spending 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product on official development assistance. This increase must be “front-loaded” through an international finance facility, since if we are to reach the Goals by 2015 we need the increased spending right away. For the longer term, other innovative sources of finance must be considered.

All governments must be accountable for fulfilling their part of this bargain, both to their own peoples and to each other.

I stress that development must be sustainable. All our efforts will be in vain if their results are reversed by continued degradation of the environment and depletion of our natural resources.

I am glad that the Kyoto Protocol has now entered into force, albeit three years after the deadline set by the Millennium Declaration, but I also note that it extends only until 2012, and that some major emitters of carbon remain outside it. I ask all states to agree that scientific advances and technological innovation must be mobilised now to develop tools for mitigating climate change, and that a more inclusive international framework must be developed for stabilising greenhouse gas emissions beyond 2012, with broader participation by all major emitters and both developed and developing countries.

And I recommend that member states consider building on one of this Organization’s clear strengths, by setting up a \$1 billion voluntary fund to allow us to bring rapid and effective relief to the victims of sudden disasters, whether natural or man-made. We were able to do this after the recent tsunami thanks to the rapid response from donors, but we should be ready to do it whenever and wherever an emergency occurs.

In the second part of the report, entitled “Freedom from Fear”, I ask all states to agree on a new security consensus, by which they commit

themselves to treat any threat to one of them as a threat to all, and to work together to prevent catastrophic terrorism, stop the proliferation of deadly weapons, end civil wars, and build lasting peace in war-torn countries.

Among my specific proposals in this area, I ask all states to complete, sign and implement the comprehensive convention on terrorism, based on a clear and agreed definition, as well as the convention on nuclear terrorism, and the fissile material cut-off treaty. I also ask member states to agree to establish a Peacebuilding Commission, within the United Nations, to help countries make the transition from war to lasting peace.

In the third part of the report, entitled “Freedom to Live in Dignity”, I urge all states to agree to strengthen the rule of law, human rights and democracy in concrete ways.

In particular, I ask them to embrace the principle of the “Responsibility to Protect”, as a basis for collective action against genocide, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity – recognising that this responsibility lies first and foremost with each individual state, but also that, if national authorities are unable or unwilling to protect their citizens, the responsibility then shifts to the international community; and that, in the last resort, the United Nations Security Council may take enforcement action according to the Charter.

Among other measures, I also ask all states to ratify, and implement, all treaties relating to the protection of civilians; and to agree to, and within their means contribute to, a Democracy Fund at the United Nations, which would provide funding and technical assistance to countries seeking to establish or strengthen their democracy.

In the final part of the report, on “Strengthening the United Nations”, I set out proposals for making this Organization the instrument through which all its member states can agree on the strategies outlined in the first three parts, and help each other to implement them. This reflects my long-held view that, in order to do its job, the United Nations must be brought fully into line with today’s realities. It can and must be a representative and efficient world organization, open and accountable to the public as well as to governments.

I start with proposals for the revitalisation of this Assembly – to which the Millennium Declaration rightly assigned a central position as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations, but which in recent times has suffered from declining prestige, and has not made the contribution that it should to our activities. I am asking your heads

of state and government to reverse this by instructing you to adopt, at your 60<sup>th</sup> session, a comprehensive package of reforms; by resolving to focus your agenda on major substantive issues of the day; and by establishing mechanisms through which you can engage fully and systematically with civil society, as recommended in the Cardoso Report.

I then recommend a system of three Councils, covering respectively, (a) international peace and security, (b) economic and social issues, and (c) human rights. This reflects the priorities set out in the earlier parts of the report, on which I believe there is broad consensus.

The first two of these Councils already exist, of course, but need to be strengthened. The third requires a far-reaching overhaul and upgrading of our human rights machinery.

First, I urge member states to make the Security Council more broadly representative of the international community as a whole, as well as of the geopolitical realities of today.

This important issue has been discussed for too long. I believe member states should agree to take a decision on it – preferably by consensus, but in any case before the summit – making use of one or other of the options presented in the report of the High-Level Panel.

And I suggest that the renewed Security Council should make clear, in a resolution, the principles by which it intends to be guided when deciding whether to authorize or mandate the use of force.

Secondly, I make proposals for enabling the Economic and Social Council, whose functions are clearly relevant to our all-important development agenda, to play the leading role that should be expected of it, in making and implementing coherent United Nations policies for development.

And thirdly, I ask member states to create a new Council to fulfil one of the primary purposes of the Organization, which clearly now requires more effective operational structures – the promotion of human rights. This would replace the present Commission on Human Rights, whose capacity to perform its tasks has been undermined by its declining credibility and professionalism. The Human Rights Council, I suggest, should be smaller than the Commission, and elected directly by a two-thirds majority of this Assembly.

I also make far-reaching proposals for the reform of the Secretariat, which must be more flexible, transparent and accountable in serving the

priorities of member states, and the interests of the world's peoples; and for introducing greater coherence into the work of the United Nations system as a whole, especially its response to humanitarian emergencies and its handling of environmental issues.

Excellencies,

I make no apology for the detailed, matter-of-fact nature of this presentation. As far as detail goes, I assure you it is merely the tip of the iceberg. I trust that you will read my report in full. You will find in it many more proposals than I have had time to describe here.

As for being matter-of-fact, I have deliberately spared you any flights of rhetoric. This hall has heard enough high-sounding declarations to last us for some decades to come. We all know what the problems are, and we all know what we have promised to achieve. What is needed now is not more declarations or promises, but action to fulfil the promises already made.

I believe my report provides a clear programme of actions that are fully within the power of your governments to take. I urge you once again to study it. And I urge your heads of state and government to be ready to take those decisions when they come here in September.

Thank you very much.