



REPUBLIC OF BELARUS

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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PRESS RELEASE

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STATEMENT

by

His Excellency Sergei Martynov

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of the Republic of Belarus**

**59th Session
of the United Nations General Assembly
(general debate)**

New York, 29 September 2004

Distinguished Mr. President,
Distinguished Mr. Secretary - General,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Alarming questions "Where is our world heading to?" and "Where does the United Nations go?" have for decades been asked from this high rostrum. At the turn of the millennium these questions have been getting ever more urgent.

The world has changed. The pendulum of history has swung towards new violence. A wave of terror, local wars, ethnic conflicts which lead to increased poverty and bigger disparity in the levels of development of countries. These are not the 'problems of the other guy'. These are common global challenges for all of us.

What do we want our common home to look like? Above all, I think, secure - where children would not die in terrorist attacks, of hunger, diseases, land mines, "smart" bombs and missiles.

What should we do to achieve this? The answer is obvious: to create a comprehensive system of international security – in all its aspects: military, economic, environmental, social and informational. The system based on the rule of law at home and in international affairs. The answer is obvious indeed, but the goal is hard to achieve.

In its statement at the last session of the General Assembly the Republic of Belarus put a primary stress on the need to ensure the rule of law in international affairs. The fact that this idea in our current debate has become so much recurring gives hope that this goal can be achieved.

Today no sane person can be indifferent to the abominable acts of terror by which the beginning of this century was marked. We will not be able to do away with this evil if we stick to the 'business as usual' mentality based on selfishness and seeking unilateral advantages. We need unconventional, long-term and comprehensive solutions. Who and how can ensure them? The United Nations and its key role alone. The Counterterrorism Committee of the UN Security Council should become a practical instrument of restraining the expansion of international terrorism, strengthening the anti-terrorism coalition under the aegis of the United Nations, overseeing the implementation of requirements of the resolution 1373 and parting with the practice of double standards in fighting terrorists and terror.

In a practical aspect the global war on terrorism under the UN flag might be significantly assisted by the establishment of direct communication of the Committee with regional organizations and the wider practice of the Security Council open-ended ministerial meetings.

Yet this struggle will be a success only if its objective, shared by all, is the creation of a just and humane world order. Belarus seeks to make its comprehensive contribution to this struggle.

On March 1, 2004 the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction entered into force for our country. We have the world's seventh largest arsenal of such mines which we inherited from the former Soviet Union. We do not produce, export or use antipersonnel land mines. Yet, guided by common interests, we have ratified the Ottawa Convention and count on the assistance of the international community in destroying this mine stockpile.

In a day we will deposit our instruments of ratification and accession of the Republic of Belarus to such important international instruments in the sphere of security as the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism and the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

Today, illegal migration, transnational crime, trafficking in drugs and in persons, as well as ensuring the security of energy supply infrastructure are among the most serious challenges. By dealing with these problems, Belarus, which controls a major European crossroad, acts as an important guarantor of stability in Europe.

Our country also plays a major role in the Eurasian transit of energy resources. From this rostrum, we propose to all our neighbors, to the NATO and to the European Union to engage in regional cooperation to secure critical infrastructure installations: oil and gas pipelines, electrical and nuclear power stations. Besides, there is such an important sphere of cooperation as prevention of emergencies, including those caused by terrorists. Belarus has already declared its readiness to detail to international structures appropriate staff and resources.

The contribution of the Republic of Belarus to regional and international security – starting with the nuclear and conventional disarmament in the early 90s – continues to be sizeable and real. We appreciate the assistance of international organizations and individual countries in improving our border and customs installations. The effect of strengthening of this infrastructure could be felt throughout the entire European region.

Double standards have become an ever-increasing problem not just in relation to terrorism. This unsightly instrument is used, first and foremost, against the states, which have the courage to conduct independent foreign policy and not to succumb to the pressure of the world centers of power. For the time being this practice is primarily characteristic of the Euroatlantic partnership but it is being forcefully introduced in the United Nations as well. These efforts endanger the stability and effectiveness of the UN system. Belarus calls on all states, which are not indifferent to the role and independence of the United Nations, to prevent this from happening.

Economic security is a crucial condition for sustainable development of states. Yet this condition is far beyond the horizon for most of the countries.

As the only European state in the Non-Aligned Movement, the Republic of Belarus would like to stress the following: the “center-periphery” concept based on opposing industrially developed countries to the developing states is obviously in crisis. This concept hampers the search of a way out of the economic development gap.

Only 7 out of 50 least developed countries have reached the level of 7 per cent annual economic growth that is a precondition for reducing by half the number of people living in absolute poverty by the year 2015. Every four seconds one human being in the world dies of hunger. This figure has become trite. Its triteness tells much about how awful the problem is and how awful is the world’s indifference. The difficulty of the task must not prevent us from seeking new ways of solving the problem of poverty. This is why Belarus supports the initiative of the President of Brazil Luis Inacio Lula da Silva on fighting hunger and poverty in the world. Despite the transition period and the collapse of the integral economy on the vast territory of the former USSR, our country was the first in this region to solve the

problem of malnutrition. According to the FAO statistics, the number of undernourished people amounts to 2 per cent of the total Belarusian population. We wage a resolute struggle to overcome poverty. The share of people in need in Belarus has decreased twofold as compared to 1995 and amounted to about 20 per cent in 2004.

Notwithstanding its current difficulties of economic transformation, Belarus undertakes economic stimulation measures with regard to the developing countries. To the majority of them Belarus has unilaterally extended trade preferences.

At the same time we are concerned with the possible lessening of attention within the United Nations to the problems of the countries with economies in transition. Belarus considers that the UN programs and funds play an important role in assisting the countries with economies in transition. Yet in today's conditions when some states of the region are a part of the G8 and others by their economic indicators are not much ahead of the least developed countries this assistance should be more targeted. In planning and implementation by the UN bodies of country programs this means taking into account the level of socio-economic development of countries and the degree of their integration with international trade and financial institutions. We intend to lay this approach in basis of the appropriate draft resolution of the UN General Assembly. We count on the support of the Member States of this resolution.

The problems of financing for development are extremely topical for developing countries and countries with economies in transition. A two-day high-level dialogue in the framework of the General Assembly is not enough to ensure continuous monitoring of the progress in the fulfillment of the Monterrey Consensus. For this it is necessary to establish a separate functional ECOSOC committee.

Belarus is convinced that the review of fulfillment of the Millennium Goals at the 2005 Summit in New York will give a serious impetus to all initiatives aimed at stimulating economic growth in the developing countries and the countries with economies in transition.

Bridging of the technological and informational gap between the developed and developing nations should become our common concern.

At the World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva in 2003 President of the Republic of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko persistently advocated the creation under the aegis of the United Nations of a special fund to compensate expenses of the software producers for supplying their products to the developing countries at reduced prices. Formulation of the format and the mechanism of work of such fund should be taken up by the task group in the course of preparatory work for the follow-up summit.

Affected and still experiencing the effects of the Chernobyl disaster, Belarus acutely realizes that mankind should not ignore the problem of radiation safety. The aftermath of radiological disasters is out of proportion – in its scale and duration – if compared to a human life span. The UN should by all means preserve its focus on the problem of overcoming the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. It is necessary to develop further international Chernobyl cooperation, to provide UN support to the national initiatives and to improve coordination mechanisms of Chernobyl cooperation.

We support the activity of the International Agency on Atomic Energy aimed at maintaining nuclear non-proliferation regime, strengthening of nuclear and radiation safety. A look into the future and a search for ways of providing people living in the contaminated areas with normal living conditions will be the main subject of the international conference

planned to be held in Minsk in 2006 on the eve of a tragic anniversary of Chernobyl disaster. We invite all interested states and international organizations to take part in preparation and proceedings of this conference.

Distinguished Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Not once the United Nations has been a subject of criticism. There have been a lot of pessimistic assessments of its activities and potential. Many of them have been fair enough. But let us simply face the truth: in the world there is still no alternative to the UN as the most important collective problem-solving mechanism – on a regional and global scale. Just as there is no alternative to multilateral approaches. The reality convinces us of that every day.

In view of this Belarus expects with a great interest the outcome of deliberations of the High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change.

As a Non-Aligned Movement member-state Belarus thinks it necessary that the consolidated position of the Non-Aligned Movement is duly noted and taken into account by the High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change while drafting the proposals on the ways of increasing the efficiency of the UN reform.

Elimination of misbalance between the Security Council membership and membership of the United Nations as a whole, observance of the principle of equitable geographical distribution of seats must form the basis of this process.

We find it expedient to expand the category of non-permanent members with due regard for the interests of all regional groups. Additional seats in the category of permanent members of the UN Security Council should be allocated to the countries of three developing regions – Asia, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean – as well as to two developed nations of Europe and Asia which have made the most significant contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I return to the anxious questions of "Where is our world heading to?" and "Where does the United Nations go?"

The answer to the question 'where the world will arrive' should depend on the United Nations. For the time being it is not so. It is sad but true. To change this situation is within our powers and in our common interests – of small and big states, of rich and developing countries. It is in the interests of the united nations.