



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE KINGDOM OF NEPAL TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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ADDRESS BY
HONOURABLE DR. PRAKASH SHARAN MAHAT,
MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF
THE KINGDOM OF NEPAL

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AT

THE 59TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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NEW YORK
28 SEPTEMBER 2004

**Address by
Honourable Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat,
Minister of State for Foreign Affairs
and Head of the Delegation of the Kingdom of Nepal
at the 59th Session of the United Nations General Assembly
(New York, 28 September 2004)**

Mr. President,

Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your well-deserved election to preside over the 59th session of the United Nations General Assembly. I assure you of my delegation's full cooperation in the discharge of your important duties.

Let me also pay tribute to your predecessor His Excellency Julian R. Hunte, Minister of External Affairs of St. Lucia, for his outstanding leadership in the last session of this August Assembly.

Our full appreciation goes to Secretary-General Mr. Kofi Annan for his invaluable and wise stewardship of the United Nations.

I also wish to express, on behalf of His Majesty's Government and people of Nepal and on my own, our sincere condolences to the governments, countries and peoples that have suffered the consequences of hurricane and terrorist attacks in recent weeks and months.

Mr. President,

We are passing through one of the most convulsive periods after the Second World War. The end of the cold war unleashed forces of democracy and economic openness and revolution in science and technology has converted the world into a global village by shrinking distances and increasing connectivity.

In tandem came the many negative consequences as well. Internal conflicts have proliferated and populations have been displaced; international terrorism has increased; globalisation has widened the gaps between the rich and poor; and poverty, ignorance, disease, and injustice have persisted and even worsened for the majority of humanity; and transnational crimes have spread their wings.

No country is immune from the impacts of these huge problems humanity faces today. Addressing these problems is a challenge that requires collective action by the international community in a spirit of multilateralism. And the United Nations has the legitimacy and mandate to promote multilateral solutions to shared problems of our time.

Indeed, the United Nations embodies the shared dream and hope of the entire humanity for peace, security and development. Nepal has abiding faith in the principles and objectives enshrined in the United Nations Charter. And we recognize the central role of the United Nations in pursuit of those shared dreams.

Mr, President,

The emerging international situation is fraught with multitude of challenges. Internal conflicts have afflicted countries from Iraq to Burundi and from Haiti and Sudan. Terrorism has become a global menace casting a dark shadow over the lives of millions of peoples around the globe. Deadly weapons pose a constant threat to the safety of human beings and the existence of human civilization.

By all accounts, the situation in Iraq is highly volatile and extremely dangerous. The Nepalese people have yet to overcome the revulsion of brutal killing of their 12 innocent Nepalese hostages on August 31 in that country. We strongly condemn the dastardly crime committed by the terrorists. It is our fervent hope that Iraqi people will be able to improve their security environment, hold the scheduled elections in time and live in a free, secure and democratic and prosperous Iraq.

The Middle East is caught in a cycle of violence. To break this cycle, both Israel and Palestine will have to exercise maximum restraint and engage in fruitful dialogue to build mutual confidence critical for implementing the Quartet-endorsed Road Map that offers a viable and durable two state solution. Nepal supports the Road Map and views the Israeli plan to pull out of Gaza as a positive step.

Though the security situation has improved over time, Afghanistan is far from secure and its reconstruction far from satisfactory. The world community must do more to provide security to the entire country, to hold free and fair elections, and to accelerate the speed of its reconstruction and development.

Nepal supports United Nations efforts to bring peace and normalcy in Haiti, Burundi, Liberia, Cote d'ivore, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan. We are proud to be part of United Nations efforts in our own humble ways, in those countries by deploying our troops. The world community ought to sustain those efforts and help those countries in their rebuilding and reconstruction endeavors.

Mr. President,

Nepal's track records is a testimony to its unflinching commitment to UN peacekeeping operations. So far, over 45 thousand Nepalese peacekeepers have served in various missions in an outstanding manner and 47 of them have already sacrificed their precious lives in the service of peace and humanity. At the moment, nearly 2500 Nepalese blue helmets are deployed in 12 peacekeeping missions around the world.

Nepal appreciates the United Nations for its help in bridging the equipment-gaps for our deployment. We urge the United Nations to enrich and widen the scope of consultations with troop contributing countries, including in the areas of mission planning and pre-deployment preparations. We urge the United Nations to give greater opportunity to Nepalese nationals in management positions at the Secretariat and field missions.

Pledged to peacekeeping and willing to bring our experience to the table, Nepal has sought the non-permanent membership of the Security Council for the period 2007-08, after a gap of 19 years. I take this opportunity to appeal to member states to give us the privilege of member states' support in the election to be held in 2006.

Mr. President,

It is our firm belief that the international community should look beyond the immediate conflicts and seek to build a strong foundation for durable peace by pursuing disarmament, development and the rule of law.

Nepal is deeply concerned by the set back in the disarmament realm. Of course, the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is very important to keep such weapons from rouge elements, no durable peace will be possible without concerted efforts to disarmament, particularly of nuclear weapons, as they are the greatest threat to human civilization.

It is sad that the Conference on Disarmament has no program of work for the last several years. The body must be allowed to work on a coherent strategy leading to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons in a time bound manner.

We reiterate our support to nuclear weapons free zones and keeping the outer space free of such weapons. The international community should also work together to strengthen controls over the small arms and light weapons to prevent their abuse by non-state actors.

Regional centers for peace and disarmament are instrumental in building confidence among nations. Nepal is eager to relocate to Kathmandu the Regional Center for Peace and Disarmament for Asia and the Pacific at the earliest. We are prepared to sign the necessary agreements consistent with the prevailing diplomatic practices and provisions of the other two regional Centers. We also want the Kathmandu Process revived without delay.

Mr. President,

International peace and security will continue to elude us until we address the root causes of conflicts: namely, poverty, ignorance, disease, exclusion and injustice. Most of the conflicts around the world now, which have regional and global consequences, are rooted in those sad human conditions. It is imperative that we address these conditions collectively for the shared benefits of human beings as a whole.

Today, over a billion people live in absolute poverty. Millions of people remain illiterate. Preventable diseases are taking a huge toll of children, and HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis are decimating the entire societies, particularly in Africa. Growing populations have caused environmental degradation.

Racial, cultural and wealth divides have often been the sources of exclusion, intolerance and injustice. Poverty has forced many to migrate. And crimes have flourished in these sad conditions.

No doubt, developing countries have the primary responsibility for their own economic development and social progress. They need to take measures to reform their policies and institutions and create a climate in which enterprise, innovation and development could flourish. Most of these countries have been trying to do that on their own initiative and to keep their part of the pledge undertaken in various global compacts.

But their development partners have their obligations to meet under various global compacts. Because, developing countries, given the mammoth challenges they face, would not be able to grapple with them and meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) without enhanced assistance from their development partners.

The development partners should rise to meet the agreed official development assistance (ODA) targets and to provide greater debt relief to indebted countries. Indeed, ODA flows have increased since 2002 but remain way below the additional 50 billion US dollars per year that is required to achieve MDGs. Debt repayment is eating a large chunk of developing country resources and the Highly Indebted Developing Countries initiative is yet to cover all least developed countries.

In the long run, fair globalisation built on a level-playing field and open markets will help reduce poverty, increase employment, and lift the standards of living in developing nations. The development partners, therefore, should dismantle their agricultural subsidies and open their markets for goods and labor from the South. They should also offer assistance to build capacities to attract and absorb foreign direct investment and to remove supply-side constraints specially in least developed nations.

Least developed countries, the most marginalized as they are, need more generous assistance and market access, as agreed to in the Brussels Program of Action, to break the vicious cycle of poverty and join the global economy. Our studies have shown that Nepal would not be able to meet most MDGs without such targeted measures from its development partners.

Their geographical bottleneck and distance from the main corridors of commerce handicap landlocked developing countries. We urge the transit and development partners to implement the Almaty Program of Action and to overcome their difficulties.

Though Nepal has joined WTO last year, most LDCs remain outside the multilateral trade framework. We call on members of WTO to facilitate quick and concessionary memberships for these countries. Nepal also urges the international community to change the international financial architecture to give voice to the small and weak.

Mr. President,

Nepal believes democracy, human rights, and rule of law will have to go hand in hand with peace and development for overall progress of a country. It is heartening that more people in the world enjoy democracy and freedom today than ever before.

Sadly, however, conflicts and poverty have driven millions of people from their homes and countries. Conflicts, together with criminal gangs, have also violated the rule of law and people's human rights.

New democracies should learn from each other's experiences in consolidating democratic institutions and values and the world community should join hands to fight transnational crimes. Rule of law should not only apply in domestic situations but also throughout the international community.

There are 17 million refugees around the world. Besides this staggering number, there are many more millions internally displaced persons. In many places, those people have to live in fear and under appalling conditions. Children are deprived of decent education and adults lack jobs and economic opportunities. In some cases, a whole generation has grown up in refugee camps struggling to find their identity.

The world community has an obligation to provide humanitarian assistance to such needy people and to help them resettle once they have returned home.

Nearly 100,000 Bhutanese refugees are living in camps in eastern Nepal for over a decade. Our bilateral efforts to find a negotiated settlement with Bhutan have been slow and halting. Even the refugees who have been verified by a joint team are yet to go back home. Other refugees are waiting for joint verification.

For generations, Nepal and Bhutan have remained close friends and have respected each other. The existence of Bhutanese refugees on our soil is an avoidable irritant. Therefore, we earnestly hope the process of verification could be expedited, the verified refugees could be repatriated in a time bound manner and the returnees would be able to enjoy their human rights to live in safety, dignity and honor in their own country.

Obviously, Nepal does not have the capacity to take care of these refugees, though we have let them stay on humanitarian grounds. Hence, we call on the international community, including UNHCR, to continue its support until the refugees are able to go back home and fully resettle there.

Mr. President,

Our situation has become even more difficult due to the armed violence launched in 1996 by the so-called Maoists. The violent movement began just when democracy was taking root and the economic growth was accelerating owing to policy reforms.

The Maoists have brutalized people and destroyed private homes and public infrastructure worth billions of rupees. They have been abducting children and recruiting them as child soldiers. They have continued to defy our call to respects schools as zones of peace. They are engaged in extortion, intimidation and killing of innocent civilians.

Notwithstanding this, His Majesty's Government has been sincerely seeking a result-oriented dialogue to find a political settlement. At the same time, the Government has the obligation to protect the lives of people and to safeguard private property and public infrastructure, by strengthening security. The Government highly appreciates the moral and material support our friends have been providing us in the fight against the Maoist violence.

In this context, we sincerely appreciate the interest expressed by the Secretary-General in the situation in Nepal and his readiness to help the Government 's efforts towards peace. The four- party coalition government, with its broad mandate, is working seriously to initiate the peace process. We are confident that we would be able to resolve the problem of ourselves. When we find it to be useful in the process, we will indeed avail of UN support.

Even in the midst of this difficulty, His Majesty's Government is committed to protecting the freedoms and human rights of citizens. The National Human Rights Commission (NRHC) watches over the human rights situation in the country and a three-year National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP) has been launched to implement our human rights commitments.

We have been seeking technical assistance from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights for the capacity building of NHRC. The Human Rights Promotion Center has been established to ensure inter-departmental coordination and supervision of human rights issues.

Mr. President,

The United Nations is the pivot of multilateralism that is imperative to address the complex challenges of our time. Nepal supports the ongoing efforts for United Nations reform including to revitalize the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. Priority should be accorded to enhancing the UN's role in the area of economic and social development.

Security Council reform has become an important issue for the international community. Nepal has consistently supported the expansion of the Council and to reform its methods of work to make its more representative, transparent and democratic.

In this context, the aspirations of some member states, including India, Japan, Germany and Brazil, merit serious consideration for the permanent membership of the Security Council. At the same time, there is an urgent imperative to expand the non-permanent membership to ensure greater participation of small member states.

Nepal hopes the high-level panel appointed by the Secretary-General to examine the threats and challenges will come up with recommendations that could culminate into tangible reforms consistent with present day realities of the world. The high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly at the 60th anniversary will be a landmark event to make a big leap forward on a number of outstanding issues and to expedite the implementation of MDGs.

Mr. President,

This fall, Nepal is organizing the Second World Summit of Buddhists in Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha and a world heritage site in Nepal. We need support from member states our friends to make the Conference a success and to revive the International Committee for the Development of Lumbini in New York, which we are planing to revive soon.

To conclude, Mr. President, the dawn of the new millennium offers us with both opportunities and challenges to revitalize the United Nations and strengthen multilateralism. As an active UN member, Nepal will contribute its level best to the efforts of the United Nations in attaining the shared goals of peace and prosperity for all.

I thank you all for your attention.