



ITALY

Statement by

the Deputy Prime Minister
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Hon. Gianfranco Fini

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Mr. President,

Allow me to express first of all my warm congratulations on your election as President of this General Assembly. Your considerable experience in international affairs is the best guarantee of the success of your mandate. My sincere thanks also to your predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, who presided over the 59th session so ably and effectively.

The deliberations of the High-Level Plenary Meeting mark a significant step toward making the United Nations better equipped to address the global challenges before it. The results achieved in the effort to update the UN, its principles, and its organs are the highest common denominator on which the international community could reach a consensus. To reach any higher would in all probability have jeopardized unity, which is an absolute, indispensable value. These results should thus be saluted with great appreciation and considered a call to action.

The Heads of State and Government have, in fact, indicated the road to follow. It is now up to the General Assembly, the UN's other bodies and specialized agencies, and the Secretariat to work—wherever possible—toward fully implementing, and—wherever opportune—toward studying and developing the initiatives agreed upon in the final declaration.

Mr. President,

Recent events have reminded us, at times dramatically, of our need for a solid multilateral system that can respond quickly and effectively to a variety of challenges: challenges that single members of the international community, acting individually, would be hard put to overcome. Of this Italy is convinced; indeed, the vocation for multilateralism is a fundamental feature of our foreign policy.

Italy's support for the action of international organizations does not derive solely from abstract ideals. We support the principle but especially the practice of multilateralism because we are convinced that the pooling of resources, instruments, responsibilities, and benefits is justified by shared principles as well as shared interests. Common action is inconceivable unless it is linked to a shared perception of interests, goals, and their order of priority.

Therefore, one of the most significant achievements of the High-Level Plenary Meeting is the fostering of consensus on a comprehensive, innovative vision of collective security, and its emphasis on the main phenomena that threaten this security. Terrorism, the lack of development and fundamentalism are priority threats; they require a response that is equal to the challenge, a response that can only come from a strong, credible multilateral system.

To address the emergence of fundamentalist terrorism, recourse to force alone—though sometimes inevitable—is not enough. It is through political means—not

weapons—that we create the conditions for a fruitful dialogue among cultures, civilizations, and religions; it through political means that we develop the solidarity within society and among nations that prevents terrorism from executing its criminal proselytism.

International solidarity is also the most appropriate response to the scandal of global poverty, the fruit of persistent, massive inequities in the distribution of wealth that violate not only every standard of equity, but also the most elementary criteria of logic and efficiency. To defeat poverty, we need to promote an energetic solidarity that generates effective, lasting benefits by combining the political and economic action of donor countries with the enhanced sense of responsibility and autonomy gaining ground in emerging countries that yearn to shake free of a culture of dependency.

The link between poverty and terrorism—which multiplies their destabilizing potential—is fundamentalism, ideological fanaticism, the sworn enemy of the universal values of peace, freedom, and equality: values considered a grave threat by those who seek to dominate and delegitimize our social systems.

Mr. President,

We firmly believe in the need for the international community to unite in the fight against terrorism, poverty, and fundamentalism. The task of this General Assembly will be to identify concrete initiatives and actions for this fight.

Italy has made an unwavering commitment to peace, also at the cost of significant sacrifices, in key crisis areas such as the Middle East, the Balkans, and more recently Darfur. We have come to the aid of countries that for decades have sought to rid themselves of obscurantist oppression, such as Afghanistan and Iraq. We have dedicated our efforts to spreading a culture of freedom and dialogue among cultures, and made a front-line commitment to fighting the scourge of poverty, also through innovative methods such as debt cancellation and participation in the Global Fund against major epidemics. These actions are eloquent and I believe sufficient testimony to the seriousness of our intent. In this regard, I wish to make specific mention of our action to promote the development of the African continent: an action carried out not only through concrete initiatives in the fight against poverty, but also by strengthening Africa's capacity in the prevention, management, and resolution of conflicts.

We are ready to shoulder the responsibilities that are incumbent upon us and that are commensurate to Italy's contribution of human and material resources to the functioning of the United Nations.

It would be inconsistent with Italy's multilateralist vocation if I did not add that our efforts would be doomed to failure if they were conducted in isolation. Instead they have a much more effective probability of success as part and parcel of a multilateral framework. This is another reason why we are determined to strengthen it.

The reform proposals that have emerged during the past year and been submitted to the consideration of the Heads of State and Government provide us with new potentially valuable instruments that we must utilize thoroughly. I am thinking, for example, of the possibility of increasing significantly the international community's capacity to prevent crisis situations, manage conflicts, and modernize the modalities and contents of the traditional development aid programmes so that they can promote lasting stability.

This is why Italy can only look with great favor on the prospect of increasing and innovating the Organization's instruments for action in this area through the establishment of new bodies such as the Commission for Peace Consolidation and the Human Rights Council. These new bodies will make it possible to give operative, concrete substance to the much augured integrated approach to crisis- and peacekeeping operation- management, which can better prevent the recurrence of conflicts, consolidate peace processes, and foster the restoration of the rule of law.

Mr. President,

The reform process underway can and must invest both the composition and the working methods of the United Nations institutions, in order to strengthen their effectiveness and efficiency. At the same time, it must assure the coherence of the Organization as a whole and the relative balances within it. Italy is fully cognizant and persuaded of this, and of the need, especially in this area, to proceed with due attention to the sensitivities of each, in the framework of a process that assures full transparency and inclusiveness.

At the Summit it was not possible to reach an agreement on the controversial issue of Security Council reform. The terms of the matter, which were widely debated in the preparatory phase, are well known. Equally known is the position of Italy and of countries that, like Italy, belong to the "Uniting for Consensus" movement: We have presented a proposal that seeks to prioritize the maximum inclusiveness, greater effectiveness and democratic participation, as well as broad geographic and regional representation, but it has been drafted in a constructive and flexible spirit.

We are well aware of the differing priorities of other countries, whose positions we obviously respect, although we do not necessarily share them. It is our fervent hope that everyone will be instilled with the conviction that Security Council reform cannot be the result of shows of force, unacceptable conditions, or artificial accelerations aimed at creating new positions of privilege. The awareness of the need to reform the Council is a heritage shared by the full membership. It can hardly be considered the exclusive prerogative of those who espouse one reform option rather than another. Recent events have shown that no one proposal currently on the table has the votes required for approval. Clearly, none of them has the broad consensus that is indispensable to assuring that the future shape of the Security Council will contribute to uniting rather than dividing the international community. This is why we are convinced that the time has

come to open a new page and to unite our efforts in the search for new formulas that are consensual in both substance and method.

Needless to say, this search cannot be protracted indefinitely: to travel this road together with trust and perseverance is the only guarantee of effective and lasting results. Italy is ready to study, with a constructive spirit, every possible solution on which the maximum consensus can be formed, but it will continue to oppose—in line with the principles shared by a growing number of Member States—any formula that might lead to new divisions and marginalization.

Mr. President,

To face the challenges before it, the international community must have unity of intent.

I realize that in statements of this type, the adjective "historic" is evoked with a frequency that strips it of much of its meaning. Nevertheless, when I think of the deadlines, risks, and opportunities on the horizon, it does not seem exaggerated to call this juncture of the General Assembly historic. As we all know, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." History teaches us that a united international community, grounded in the recognition of shared principles and fundamental interests, is the absolute prerequisite to guarantee the peace, development, and progress of our peoples.

Thank you, Mr. President.