



**STATEMENT BY
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**BEFORE THE GENERAL DEBATE
OF
61ST SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE UNITED NATIONS**

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HRH Prince Saud Al – Faisal
Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia
statement to the 61st Session of the U.N. General Assembly
22 September 2006

Madam President:

I would like to begin by extending my most sincere congratulations to you and your country on your election as president of the Sixty First Session of the U.N. General Assembly. I am confident that your diplomatic expertise and your thorough knowledge of international affairs will be a guarantee for the success of this session. I would like to express my appreciation to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson, Foreign Minister of Sweden, who presided over the previous session with wisdom and expertise.

The constant efforts of His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations, were essential for maintaining the role played by the United Nations and upholding its principles, despite these difficult times and crucial challenges we face. He has our full support and deepest gratitude.

The world today faces a host of global problems that cannot be successfully addressed except within a context of multilateral

cooperation under the umbrella of the United Nations. Combating and alleviating the humanitarian suffering caused by poverty, hunger, malnutrition, the spread of diseases and epidemics, or natural disasters requires all the efforts of the international community. Invariably, it is the neediest who suffer the worst from these humanitarian threats and developmental challenges, making it all the more urgent for the international community to assume its collective responsibility in giving priority to and exerting its full and concerted efforts towards effectively addressing these issues.

Madam President:

The Middle East is in the midst of a very dangerous phase, with the emergence of new crises, the worsening of old crises, and their overlap. The urgent situations which we are currently facing include the continued Israeli occupation of Arab lands in Palestine, Syria and Lebanon; the volatile situation on the Lebanese–Israeli border, which resulted this summer in a brutal and destructive Israeli attack and invasion of Lebanon; the challenges posed by continued instability and sectarian violence in Iraq; and the as-yet unresolved issue of Iran’s nuclear program. The accumulation of crises and tensions in the region can only encourage an environment in which extremism and terrorism will thrive, with all the dangerous and undesired consequences which this holds. It is imperative therefore

that we exert all our efforts to achieve comprehensive and fair solutions to these crises, in accordance with the principles of international law and the letter of international resolutions, rejecting any form of bias or double standards. We certainly cannot afford a continued slackening of international efforts or a dangerous complacency with stopgap crisis management.

The key to resolving these multiple crises will be to invigorate the peace process and to achieve a just and durable settlement of the Palestinian–Israeli conflict. This conflict is the most enduring international conflict today, and its continuation affects negatively the chances of concluding effective solutions to other crises. The ongoing Israeli occupation of Palestine is in contravention to international law, it constitutes a grave violation of the principle of refraining from forcible seizure of other nations' territories, and it represents an affront to the decisions reached by this very body. It most certainly lies at the core of the Middle Eastern problem. The international community should no longer tolerate any procrastination or repeated failures in resolving this situation. The international community, and especially its major powers, must set aside their divisions and face up to the vital task of rapidly reaching a peaceful, just and lasting solution, in accordance with the principles of international legitimacy.

Resolving the Palestinian–Israeli conflict must be placed into its appropriate context by reconciling the rights of the Palestinian and the Israeli people and establishing two neighboring states enjoying security as a natural outcome of peace. It is peace that assures security, and not the other way around. The basis for a solution are clear to all of us, and it was expressed by the president of the United States in his two–state vision, which is in harmony with previous UN resolutions and with the Arab Peace Initiative, adopted unanimously by 22 Arab states. What is missing and urgently needed today is to link this vision with a clear agenda bound to a specific time frame.

Regrettably, the problem was portrayed as inextricably complicated and not amenable to customary solutions. Using security considerations as a pretext, exceptional provisions allowed one of the parties involved in the conflict to specify unilaterally the basis and conditions for negotiations, to choose his negotiating partner, to violate previously concluded agreements, and to impose unilateral measures. Our purpose here is not to enter into futile debates, but it is important to recognize that the peace process has suffered greatly from these exceptions that create double standards and imbalanced obligations.

Reviving the peace process requires serious international cooperation. Recent events have again proven that military solutions can achieve nothing but the undermining of the interests and security of all parties; it is therefore essential that we learn the lessons of our previous failures in the pursuit of peace. These failures resulted from an exaggerated emphasis on procedural and provisional issues. The establishment of interim security arrangements proved complicated and exhausting, while the procedures for building mutual trust practically enabled enemies of peace to undermine the peace process in its entirety. What is required from us today is a fundamental change in our approach towards achieving a just and comprehensive peace in the area. It is absolutely essential that we go to the root of the conflict and the heart of the problem, by establishing an effective mechanism to ensure immediate peaceful negotiations that will address all final status issues, including Jerusalem, borders, refugees and mutual security arrangements. The required breakthrough can only be achieved through a historic and comprehensive deal.

A clear outline of the solution has been apparent ever since the adoption of U.N. General Assembly Resolution 181 in 1947. This resolution set out the partition of Palestine, which was then under a British Mandate, into an Arab and an Israeli state. It also proposed

clearly defined borders for these two states. Since then, the Security Council and the General Assembly have issued hundreds of resolutions, including Security Council Resolution 242 in 1967, which emphasized the principle of refraining from forcible seizure of other nations' lands, and called on Israel to withdraw from all territories occupied in 1967. It also reiterated the need to find a just solution to the issue of the Palestinian refugees. Thirty-nine years after the adoption of this resolution, Palestinians are still deprived of their inherent rights of self determination and the entitlement to live in an independent state with Arab Jerusalem as its capital.

Madam President:

Two months ago Israel launched a brutal aggression against Lebanon, resulting in the destruction of Lebanon's infrastructure, the displacement of one third of its population, and the killing and wounding of thousands of civilians, including women, children and the elderly. This senseless war of course did not make Israel any safer. The only thing achieved by Israel in Lebanon was vast destruction and the devastation, provoking yet more hatred and enmity as a result. It is both heartbreaking and exasperating to see that this endless sequence of tragedies and loss of life has still not convinced some that military solutions will not succeed.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reaffirms its full support to the Lebanese government as it seeks to extend its authority over its entire territory. The Kingdom also calls on the people of Lebanon to stand united so that their country may once again enjoy security and prosperity. We reiterate the need for all parties to remain committed to Security Council Resolution 1701, and call for a rapid Israeli withdrawal from the Shebaa Farms area, recognized by Israel as an occupied territory. We also call for a return to the Armistice Agreement signed between Lebanon and Israel in 1949, as this is the only means to guarantee security and avoid a return to the status quo ante. As part of our commitment to reconstruction efforts in Lebanon, we call on the international community to hold Israel responsible for providing fair compensation for the destruction and losses inflicted upon Lebanon as a result of this aggression. One of the reasons that Lebanon is a victim of repeated Israeli invasions, totaling seven so far, is that we did not hold the aggressor accountable.

Madam President:

We are profoundly concerned and extremely saddened by the deteriorating security situation in Iraq, marked by daily confrontation, acts of violence and bombings. Absence of security and stability in Iraq continues to hamper the efforts of all countries

committed to assisting Iraq in overcoming its ordeal, rehabilitating its economy, and helping it to rebuild. The Kingdom has always reaffirmed the importance of consolidating Iraq's unity, respecting its independence and sovereignty, and refraining from interfering in its internal affairs. We call on the international community to support the program adopted by the Iraqi government, presided by Mr. Nouri Al -Maliki, to achieve comprehensive national reconciliation, invigorating government security, military, political and economic institutions, and disarming the militias.

Madam President:

It has long been acknowledged that the proliferation of nuclear weapons seriously undermines the security of all countries. Over time, a number of international treaties and conventions have produced bilateral and multilateral obligations, but such obligations are of no use if they are not fully observed and fully applied. We cannot ignore the serious threat to global peace and security which these weapons continue to pose--whether they are used in wars between states or they fall in the hands of terror groups.

Effectively preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction requires abandoning double standards and emphasizing the importance of making the whole Middle East, including the Gulf

region, free from nuclear weapons. Israel is the only country in the region which is known to possess weapons of mass destruction but is not subjected to any form of monitoring.

While we support the rights of all countries to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, including acquiring knowledge and nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, we call on all parties to adhere to the path of negotiations and peaceful solutions regarding the Iranian nuclear issue. The repeated statements by Iran that its nuclear program is restricted to the peaceful use of nuclear energy provide a strong basis for negotiations that has not yet been exhausted.

In view of the eagerness of the Kingdom and other members of the Gulf Cooperation Council to sustain and develop their relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, we hope that the government of Iran responds positively to the repeated calls by the United Arab Emirates to peacefully resolve the issue of the occupied islands belonging to the UAE.

Madam President:

The phenomenon of global terrorism is a threat to us all. The ongoing atrocities perpetrated by terrorists continue to test our determination to combat and counter it. There is no justification for

any form of terrorism, but we cannot ignore that terrorism does have roots and causes which make it thrive. Achieving decisive victory against terrorism requires not only denying terrorists all financial support, but also addressing the origins of extremist thought and the environment in which they prosper. Addressing the feelings of despair, anger and frustration which peoples feel when they are denied their legitimate rights will deprive extremists of their causes and rallying cries.

As one of the main targets of terrorism, the Kingdom has repeatedly denounced all forms of terrorism and achieved tangible successes in combating it. The Kingdom joined most of the international counter-terrorism agreements, as well as the Arab Agreement and the OIC Counter-Terrorism Agreement. The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdelaziz also proposed the establishment of an international counter-terrorism center, under the auspices of the UN. The only way to preempt terrorist plans is to exchange intelligence and up-to-the-minute information between countries and agencies. Innovative solutions can be found to address adequately reservations regarding the sensitivity of the information and its sources.

As we renew our commitment to the international campaign against terrorism, we need to draw some attention to the increasing concerns expressed across the world about its adverse use by extremist forces and advocates of the clash of civilizations and cultures. We must regularly evaluate the effectiveness of our methods of combating terrorism and extremism. It must be repeated at this point that there is no true religion which advocates the use of terrorism. The great religions of the world all promote noble and peaceful values, and we should not hold the vast majority of true believers responsible for the deviant behaviour of a very small minority in any religion. Saudi Arabia strongly rejects the characterization of Islam as a violent religion that supports terrorism in any way. Saudi Arabia calls on anyone who wants to learn more about Islam and its attitude towards terrorism to consult reliable sources or papers such as the 10-year Work Plan adopted unanimously by the members of the Organization of Islamic Conference at its recent extraordinary summit in Saudi Arabia. The success of the global campaign against terrorism is contingent upon our strict adherence to the rules of international law and respect of human and religious rights.

Madam President: