

PRESS RELEASE



DJIBOUTI

STATEMENT BY

HIS EXCELLENCY MR. ISMAIL OMAR GUELLEN

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF DJIBOUTI
AND
HEAD OF DELEGATION

BEFORE THE

HIGH-LEVEL PLENARY MEETING
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY 15 SEPTEMBER 2005

CK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. President,

At the outset, I wish to express the profound sympathy as well as sadness of my government and people of Djibouti to the Government and people of the United States for the enormous tragedy, devastation and despair sustained by the Gulf Coast as a result of Hurricane Katrina. Watching that fast developing horror and its aftermath left us all stunned, and with great pain.

Mr. President,

Let me congratulate you both for presiding over this High-level Summit, by far the most since the creation of this Organization sixty years ago. The mere fact that two Heads of Government are on the podium demonstrates the crucial nature of this undertaking. What we achieve, or fail to achieve, therefore, in these three days shall have a profound impact on humanity.

I would be remiss in my duty if I did not recognize the catalytic leadership, vision and tenacity of the Secretary General for stimulating and nudging us to enact a series of reforms to ensure this organization remains relevant in the coming generations. He has also done his part. As leaders, we are not here only to give political backing and impetus; rather we are here to enact major, overdue changes. I should also equally recognize the remarkable personal commitment and integrity displayed by the outgoing President of the General Assembly, Mr. Jean Ping. With grace, hard work, modesty, openness, sensitivity and flexibility, he earned the confidence of every member. That in essence was his hidden weapon for success in what otherwise was almost an impossible undertaking.

Mr. President,

This High-level Summit has not, therefore, come about easily; nor is it a single, isolated, or separate event. Rather, it is the culmination of bold and comprehensive efforts launched at the Millennium Summit of 2000; emphasizing the most challenging development questions of our generation; highlighting the common fate the world truly shares, and the extreme poverty so unacceptable -- an anachronism in this age and era. The Millennium Declaration we adopted in 2000 committed our nations to a global partnership to reduce poverty, improve health, promote peace and human rights, gender equality, and environmental sustainability. The Declaration also reaffirmed our faith in the Organization; our commitment to the Principles and Purposes of the United Nations Charter, and respect for international law so as to maintain international peace and security.

In the intervening period since 2000, the world has experienced many crises --- witnessed horror, anger, sadness and revulsions; wars, global political and economic turmoil, and a disturbing decline in international peace, understanding and cooperation. Regrettably, the central role of the United Nations in ensuring collective responses to global problems has suffered, while its effectiveness and relevance have come under scrutiny. Ominously, the imminent collapse of the United Nations has become the subject of some serious speculation. Against this disturbing and worrisome backdrop, the Secretary-General, with great insight and determination, initiated a thorough review of the United Nations system --- advancing a sequence of the above-mentioned bold, much-needed reform proposals.

Mr. President,

We have now before us the Secretary-General's synthesis of all these reports and recommendations, under the rubric, "In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All." It urges member states "to use this Summit to strengthen the world's system of collective security, to forge genuinely global and multisectoral strategy for development, and to intensify efforts to secure human rights and democracy for all peoples." A changing world needs a changing United Nations system that is:

- Readily susceptible to a collective response
 - Working toward poverty eradication and sustainable development
 - Advancing human rights, promoting democracy and strengthening good governance
- Countering terrorism, and
Equipped with the necessary technical and management expertise and resources to effectively perform its duties at all levels.

Our intergovernmental negotiating machinery has been intensely involved in the last few months seeking to agree on a comprehensive yet realistic and achievable reform agenda for the United Nations in the 21st century. Our ambitions may have suffered a bit of a setback. Our search for a common ground continues, relentlessly, however; thanks to our tenacity and indomitable will to succeed. Surely, we are not in disagreement as to whether reform is necessary. The challenge is to get our acts together; to rise above narrow national interests toward forging a consensus; and to retied upon the many benefits this body has brought us since its creation six decades ago. Let us remember, what one writer clearly depicted: "The UN has very little independent existence of its own, and can only ever be as strong as the commitment it gets from its members".

Mr. President,

The new International Development Agenda is scaling up to address multiple challenges. The MDGs, the Millennium Project, the G-8, NEPAD and The African Commission recommendations and initiatives all promote multisectoral approaches to development. The Secretary-General, Professor Jeffrey Sachs and Prime Minister Tony Blair have together provided the impetus for global ambitions to end extreme poverty by 2015. We have witnessed an extraordinary display of human courage and compassion to make this happen. These are noble and worthy efforts. We are not sure though whether the political will is yet there to succeed to "make poverty history" -- to rescue hundreds of millions that live in desperate, dilapidated and deplorable conditions; mired in extreme poverty, hunger, diseases and chaotic infrastructure. Nor can we lightly dismiss the impact of climate for achieving the Millennium Development targets. Climate variability dominates rural food production and strongly influences hunger, health, access to water, and hence poverty in so many countries that have long remained at the mercy of an unforgiving climate --- as in Niger, which is crying for help as its people grapple with a devastating array of challenges. Severe hunger and widespread food insecurity are now gripping many regions of Africa. Before the suffering escalates we need to address this looming crisis with the urgency it deserves. Accordingly, let us give full backing to the Secretary-General's realistic proposal to increase the Emergency Fund of the United Nations, to enable United Nations agencies to mount critical timely responses.

Mr. President,

The last decade witnessed the holding of major conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields, geared toward shaping a broad development vision; and identifying commonly agreed objectives that contributed to improving human life in all parts of the world. We recognize the serious efforts that went to ensure timely and full realization of development goals and objectives, including those contained in the Monterrey Consensus and the Millennium Development Goals, that have galvanized an unprecedented coming-together toward helping the world's poorest to overcome poverty. We also recognize that each developing country must take primary responsibility for its own economic and social development, consistent with national policy and development strategies; including promotion of governance and fighting corruption at all levels; and emphasizing accountability and transparency in public sector management. No doubt, 2005 has been a year filled with great hope and optimism following the G-8 Meeting that pledged a substantial increase of aid to poor nations, in particular to African countries. This move represents probably the most significant change in attitude; in a sense, translating into action the lofty goals of the MDGs, and the compact between rich and poor nations, forged at the 2002 Summit in Monterrey, Mexico. We are encouraged by the commitments, together with the establishment of timetables by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of GNP for ODA by no later than

2015, and to reach at least 0.5 per cent by 2010. We welcome also any initiative that augments the resource flows to developing countries, such as the International Finance Facility intended to raise aid money now by issuing bonds against future development budgets; and a tax on airline tickets to finance development projects, in particular in the health sector, including the fight against HIV/AIDS and other pandemics. Equally, the recent decision by the G-8 countries to cancel 100% of outstanding debts of eligible highly indebted countries to international institutions goes a long way to release additional resources that can be directed towards activities consistent with attaining sustainable growth and development. But a brighter future for poor developing countries will require more than just increased aid and debt relief. A fair, non-discriminatory, equitable, and multilateral trading system that promotes economic growth is essential. Hence, the need to successfully complete by 2006, the WTO round of multilateral negotiations that will fairly address issues such as agriculture, market access, services and trade facilitation, to name just a few. Attention and money must also be directed toward strengthening peace agreements and preventing conflicts before they erupt. Finally, the developed countries need to use their influence to enable the wider participation of developing countries in global financial decision-making, particularly through agreeing to changes at the World Bank and IMF. Mere, symbolic presence of representatives from developing countries on the boards of these institutions without the necessary weight or influence in decision-making does not augur well.

Mr. President,

Many developing countries have special needs and challenges that need to be addressed through the full, timely and effective implementation of goals and targets adopted at conferences such as the Brussels Programme of Action for LDCs. Most LDCs are African countries which also have special needs. Africa, as the only continent not on track to meet any of the goals of the Millennium Declaration by 2015, needs urgent priority assistance in all areas, including its integration in the international trading system. Through the New Partnership on African Development (NEPAD), Africa is addressing its challenges and realizing its opportunities. Strengthening cooperation with NEPAD is, therefore, crucial.

In the preparations leading up to this Summit it was too obvious that many past promises, commitments, and targets are not going to be met, and millions would continue to languish in hunger, squalid conditions, and grinding poverty. But what makes 2005 somewhat special is the growing recognition among most of the developed countries that implementation of the global development agenda has been slow, unpredictable, and uneven. More leadership, more determination, and more consistency are sine qua non for achieving development goals. More donors still have to take the necessary domestic steps. The ODA is not solely to cope with the consequences of poverty, but it

should be targeted toward creating conditions in which private investment can flourish. The ultimate goal is self-sustainability. With the hope that the WTO round of multilateral trade negotiations will be satisfactorily completed by 2006; with the expected positive outcome in this Summit on allocating more resources for combating the growing devastation of HIV/AIDS; the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women; diversification of agricultural commodities; increasing availability of science and technology; and vastly improving health systems in developing countries, we shall surely be on the path of economic growth and renewal. The Millennium Development Goals are, therefore, too important to fail. It is not enough to initiate strategies to "accelerate progress toward the goals"; we need strategies to "achieve the goals". Many leaders in recent years have rightly stressed poverty reduction and global security ---- so we must gear international efforts to end violent conflict; instability; and terrorism. Poverty increases the risks of instability through multiple paths. We need to address effectively global insecurity ---- wars, internal violence, terror and other evidence of profound instability ---- which will require success in the battle against poverty as well.

Mr. President,

My country, as a matter of principle and major policy objective has pursued and supported since independence an inclusive egalitarian society, in particular equal opportunity for boys and girls; ensuring universal primary education for all. We have substantially invested in education, ensuring that each child, boy or girl, completes basic schooling of good quality, that is free for all, up to secondary and university levels. With our meager resources, this undertaking presents to us a mammoth of challenge; particularly against background of a population trend that is on the rise.

Mr. President,

Many issues that have been under intense, often contentious, negotiations by member states underscore our desire to overhaul this Organization, in order to make it more relevant, more credible, more effective and more efficient in its work throughout the world.

We have been looking at important proposals that include: securing a dangerous world; expanding the Security Council, to make it more representative; creating a new Peace-building Commission to assist countries emerging from conflict; to establish a new Human Rights Council to replace the Human Rights Commission; seeking consensus on actions to reduce extreme poverty; and to meet other MDGs on health, education, environment, water and women's rights; and finally, management and secretariat reforms --- to institute

significant changes; to enhance transparency, accountability, and improving codes of conduct and ethics for all staff members.

The Outcome Document by far represents an agreement of the least common denominator. Quite a number of promising proposals are accepted only in principle, leaving the details to be worked out in the 60th Session of the General Assembly. It is demonstrably clear that we shied away from taking practical actions that are needed right now.

Thus, in essence, we have accepted our limitations to agree on the wide-ranging proposals for now. We have squandered a rare opportunity, no doubt. Our hope is that we will not give up; we shall continue our efforts to achieve a meaningful and lasting consensus on all crucial issues impacting on our lives.

Thank you Mr. President