



SLOVAKIA

STATEMENT BY

H.E. Mr. Ivan Gašparovič

President of the Slovak Republic

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Assembly of the United Nations

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801 Second Avenue, 12th Floor, New York, N.Y. 10017 Phone: (212) 286-8880, Fax: (212) 286-8419

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

at the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to the post of President of the 60th General Assembly of the United Nations. I am confident that your experience in multilateral diplomacy coupled with a positive approach will serve as a guarantee of success for the outcome of your decisions. You will preside over an Assembly that is faced with the difficult task of implementing the reform decisions adopted during the recently held UN Summit and that is expected to finalize a number of additional proposals for reform. I want to assure that you can fully rely on Slovakia's support in this regard.

I also want to convey our solidarity to the U.S. citizens devastated by Hurricane Katrina who are struggling to recover from the trauma of losing their homes and their loved ones and, on behalf of the people and the Government of Slovakia, I want to extend heartfelt sympathy to the survivors of the victims who perished in this natural disaster.

Mr. President,

we are gathered here, at this distinguished forum, because the challenges faced by mankind in the area of global development, security and protection of human rights bring us together in our search for common solutions that call for clear political decisions. There is a general understanding that the UN in its current shape and form will fail to live up to the challenges that lay ahead of it in the 21st century. Accordingly, we have to follow through with the necessary changes so that this organization may continue to fulfil its role efficiently while keeping abreast with the growing needs and expectations of the international community.

The Secretary General tabled his plan which contained a package of bold reform steps laying down ways for the international community to deal with current issues and upgrade the UN system. Slovakia considered the plan to provide an excellent basis for our decision-making from the very day it had been released. We endorse the premise that progress in tackling the most important global problems can only be achieved if issues of development, security and human rights are addressed jointly. In particular, we welcome that human rights are given the same priority as development and security and we appreciate the related proposals to strengthen the international system for the protection of human rights.

The reform of the UN is not only a matter to be dealt with by the Organization alone, since it lies primarily in the hands of the Governments of the countries that will have to reach solid consensus on key issues. Reaching an agreement accomodating the interests of the entire world is no easy task. This year's UN Summit and its outcome document made us look in the mirror. They have shown us the amount of vision, wisdom and courage that we were able and willing to garner in this regard with a view to fundamentally reforming the system of multilateral cooperation in the interest of global development.

The picture we saw reflected in the mirror was not to everyone's liking, but that is the nature of multilateral diplomacy. It is the result of compromise, the art of what is possible, which is both its strong and its weak side.

We also have to bear in mind that, where implementation fails, even the most ambitious and visionary document remains nothing but a piece of paper sitting nicely on the shelves of libraries or, at best, a treaties studied by historians and political analysts. I therefore prefer having a forward-looking approach by saying that the outcome document contains messages and ideas that deserve our support in the General Assembly. I urge you not to make things more difficult by dwelling on the shortcomings of the outcome document. Instead, let us try to go ahead with its implementation as best as we can.

Mr. President,

despite the considerable progress achieved primarily in the fight against poverty and famine in Asia, all reports warn about the extremely alarming and unacceptable downturn in several parts of Africa, in particular the Sub-Saharan Africa, where the number of people living in extreme poverty grew by several dozens of millions over the last decade. Slovakia came to the Summit with the understanding that our first priority was to move along the fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals. In my view, the outcome document provides a solid basis for our future work in this regard.

In spite of its limited economic possibilities, Slovakia is not ignorant in this respect. The amount of public funds appropriated for foreign aid quadrupled since the year 2000, which is a fact that speaks for itself. In addition, having joined the European Union in May 2004, Slovakia also joined the common European development aid system. As a new member of the Union, Slovakia pledged to use its best effort in order to increase its official development aid to 0.17% of GDP by 2010 and to 0.33% of GDP by 2015.

Slovakia is directly funding and implementing more than 70 projects in the poor countries of Europe, Asia and Africa. This gives us the opportunity to directly pass on to the developing countries the unique knowledge that we acquired during the transition of our own country.

Besides favouring an increase in aid, Slovakia also supports further reforms of trade relations as well as debt relief for poor countries. I wish to highlight the serious debt relief measures that Slovakia took earlier this year, forgiving several hundreds of millions of US Dollars in debt owed by the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries.

Slovakia welcomes efforts aimed at liberalizing trade as an instrument to promote economic growth and development. We therefore join the call for an expeditious completion of the WTO Doha Round negotiations. It goes without saying that when we declare "support to self-help" and call for the mobilization of domestic resources, we also have to put in place the necessary conditions, which undoubtedly includes the liberalization of trade.

To this end, I take due pride in Slovakia's achievements. Not only did we come full circle from beneficiary to donor, but as far as the ideas of solidarity and development aid are concerned, Slovak political leaders managed to win over the people of Slovakia. The very people who endured 15 troublesome years of hardship and difficult reforms.

At this point, it is necessary to mention that one of the most serious global threats is the upswing in terrorism. It is positive that the Outcome Document clearly denounces this new plague of our time which endangers the population of rich and poor countries alike.

Slovakia has taken a clear position against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, opposing any violence and expressions of blind fanaticism and hatred. During the summit, in order to demonstrate Slovakia's position, I personally signed the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, the latest in a series of anti-terrorist international treaty instruments.

Slovakia is a signatory to all the 12 international anti-terrorism conventions of the UN. We urge Member States to proceed with the universal implementation of UN SC Resolution 1373 (2001) as well as other important UN SC resolutions in this area. We must fully harness the UN's potential as a framework for developing collective answers to new challenges related to the fight against terrorism and its financing. Slovakia strongly supports the comprehensive strategy to fight terrorism presented by Secretary General Kofi Annan at the Madrid Conference in March 2005. I have to mention that Slovakia expected the summit to formulate a clear definition of terrorism, which is an important prerequisite for adopting a comprehensive anti-terrorism convention. Despite falling short of this objective, it is imperative for us to redouble our effort that we put into the preparation of this Convention so that it can still be adopted during the 60th session of the UN General Assembly. The Outcome Document will serve as a good starting point for this effort.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction continues to represent the most serious threat to global security. It can only be faced by way of a common effort on the part of the entire international community. It is therefore regrettable, that the Outcome Document leaves us with more questions than answers.

Being a member of the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Slovakia attaches great importance to the right to peaceful use of nuclear energy. At the same time, however, we believe that, in order to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, it is crucial to strengthen the supervisory competencies of the IAEA and to control more effectively the stages in the nuclear fuel cycle that involve uranium enrichment and plutonium processing. Such restrictions must, however, take account of the right to obtain energy of those countries that fully satisfy their treaty obligations.

I also want to address a point that I feel very strongly about – the respect for human rights. The UN Millennium Summit clearly brought out the importance of having an international system for the protection of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Slovakia supported the proposal to set up a Human Rights Council as a permanent principal body of the UN. By reason of its mandate, composition and inability to act, the current Human Rights Commission of the UN often finds itself unable to deal with serious violations of human rights around the globe. The Human Rights Council should follow up on all the positive and constructive features of the existing Human Rights Commission. Members of the Human Rights Council should be elected by a two-third majority in the UN General Assembly. The Slovak Republic is in favour of a smaller number of members in order to give the Council the necessary flexibility in responding to emerging problems. Slovakia supported the proposal to elect members of the Council on a regional basis and from countries that demonstrably meet their commitments concerning the protection of human rights. Slovakia also encourages closer interactions among the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Human Rights Council and the UN Security Council.

We were also pleased to see that, for the first time, the Outcome Document contains a broader definition of the "responsibility to protect" principle. Slovakia is looking forward to further work in this regard. We believe that after Cambodia, Rwanda, Sudan or Srebrenica, we are slowly entering a stage where we take on a more direct responsibility for dealing with situations where genocide and war crimes are committed. The sovereignty principle means that the responsibility for the people lies with each sovereign country and its government. However, if a particular government fails to live up to that responsibility, the international community has the obligation to take all necessary steps and use all available and necessary means to prevent a major humanitarian disaster.

Slovakia was very much in favour of the proposal to set up a Peace Building Commission (PBC). Experience tells us that we must not rush to leave a country that has just seen the end of a conflict, simply turning our backs to the whole situation. Our recent history gives us several bad examples. What is called for is an institutional mechanism to cater to the particular needs of countries, accompanying them during the post-conflict period on their way to reconciliation, renewal and reintegration. We must strengthen our efforts with a view to setting up an effective Peace Building Commission in the shortest amount of time possible. The Outcome Document lays down clear parameters and also a timeframe for its coming into existence.

Mr. President,

As I mentioned at the outset, it is essential to realign the United Nations with the reality of our modern era in order to make it capable of responding more effectively to the needs of the international community in the 21st century. The reform of the UN's internal structures has come a long way since 1997 and much of the credit for this goes to Secretary General Kofi Annan. Nevertheless, further changes are required both in the UN's executive and intergovernmental bodies. In this regard, it is inevitable to further revitalise the General Assembly, and to reform the Economic and Social Council so as to make the ECOSOC capable of effectively implementing the development agenda of the United Nations. With respect to reorganizing the Secretariat, we are in favour of increasing the flexibility and strengthening the authority of the Secretary General in his managerial function as the head of the Organisation in order to enable him to keep abreast with the current needs of the UN. To perform this role, he must be given the necessary resources. At the same time, it will be necessary to strengthen the independence and powers of internal supervisory bodies in order to ensure more transparency and accountability inside the Organisation. In closing, all the reforms that we have endorsed at the Summit and for which the General Assembly will give a mandate will require appropriate funding in order to prevent the dissipation of efforts that were necessary to reach the consensus.

Among the reforms that have enjoyed Slovakia's long-standing support is also the reform of the UN Security Council which, according to the UN Charter, is the principal body responsible for maintaining international peace and security in the world and which has a unique position in the system of multilateral relations. This is an issue where, in spite of long-lasting efforts, we were unable to find a balanced agreement. We need a more democratic and a more representative Security Council that would better reflect the new geopolitical situation today. The UN SC should be enlarged in both categories of membership by adding countries that play an important role in the global arena and in the UN framework. It is vital for the enlarged Council to retain its effectiveness as far as decision-making is concerned.

Mr. President,

we intend to actively support the transition process in Iraq with a view to creating a secure, stable, united, prosperous and democratic country in accordance with the UN Security Council resolutions. To make a tangible contribution, Slovakia decided to forgive 1.13 bn US Dollars of the Iraqi debt, as declared at the international conference on Iraq held on 22 June 2005 in Brussels. We are confident that, in October, the Iraqi people will use the referendum to show their support for the new Constitution and that democratic parliamentary elections will follow.

Mr. President,

stabilizing the Western Balkans remains a priority on the foreign policy agenda of my country. So far, Slovakia has supported the UN engagement in the region by way of participating in the peacekeeping and stabilization missions in the Balkans. In our opinion, the pivotal issue with regard to the stabilization of the Western Balkans is the future status of Kosovo, which remains a potential element of instability in the region. We denounce all acts of violence and intolerance inside the province. We believe that the majority of Kosovars have aspirations to peace, democracy and development. In particular, we appreciate the activities by UN Special Envoy to Kosovo Kai Eide. Although the security situation in Kosovo did, in fact, improve under the UN since the unrests in March 2004, the lingering problems with organized crime, corruption, the difficult social situation as well as the security of the people remain matters of concern for us. For the ethnically-divided province that awaits a final decision on its status, the upcoming month will be of particular importance.

Mr. President,

Slovakia was approved as the candidate of the Eastern European Regional Group for the seat of a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in the elections to be held at this year's session of the General Assembly. Slovakia has never been a member of the UN Security Council before, although it has taken an active part in the peacekeeping efforts of the United Nations through its participation in UN peacekeeping operations in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. If elected to this important post, the Slovak Republic will enter the Security Council in a dynamic period characterised by a changing global environment and by the search for a new security consensus. New threats to security represent growing challenges to the ability of the international system to maintain international peace and security. Therefore this development will also be a challenge for our country in its capacity as a member of the UN Security Council, in particular because it will put to a test our readiness to shoulder a greater commitment and the responsibility for stability and security around the globe. I want to assure you, ladies and gentlemen, that the Slovak Republic is ready to take to this important assignment with honour and responsibility.

Thank you for your attention.