



SLOVAKIA

STATEMENT BY

H.E. Mr. Robert Fico

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in the General Debate of the 61st session
of the United Nations General Assembly

(CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY)

NEW YORK

21 SEPTEMBER 2006

Permanent Mission of the Slovak Republic to the United Nations

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Madam President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

It is my pleasure and honour to welcome you in your new role as the President of the General Assembly. I wish you success and assure you of unwavering support of the Slovak Republic during your tenure.

Allow me to express my sincere gratitude to your predecessor, H. E. Jan Eliasson, under whose competent and effective guidance this Assembly was able to make the first significant achievements in the reform process.

I would like to express my deepest appreciation and most sincere gratitude to the Secretary-General, H. E. Kofi Annan, for his invaluable work and tireless dedication, with which he led this Organization into the 21st century. Mr. Secretary-General, you have led the UN well and you will be remembered with praise for it. May I use this opportunity also to state our full support to your successor who will have to deal with difficult challenges the UN is going to face.

Before proceeding to my remarks, I would like to point out that Slovakia fully associates itself with the statement delivered earlier by the President of Finland on behalf of the European Union.

Madam President,

It gives me great pleasure to address the General Assembly today, even more so as it is for the first time I am speaking from this rostrum as the Prime Minister of Slovakia. My government - formed only three months ago - is committed to foreign policy that emphasizes effective multilateralism and promotes democracy, international peace and security, greater respect for human rights, including rights of persons belonging to national and other minorities, rule of law, social equity and environmental protection. We are focused on building social state where economic growth goes along with growth of employment, social cohesion, solidarity and improving the quality of life for all along with the protection of minorities in compliance with European norms. The principles of global responsibility; international solidarity and social balance will guide our foreign policy.

We are committed to work hard towards implementation of the Millennium Development Goals as stressed in the World Summit Outcome Document. We will be gradually increasing our official development assistance and debt relief as well as direct bilateral assistance to developing countries. As a country which went through complex political, economic and social reforms we understand those who are undergoing similar transformation and need international assistance to succeed. The fact that Slovakia moved from being a development aid recipient to becoming a donor is a practical confirmation of the Secretary-General's conclusions in the report "*In Larger Freedom*", where he stated that development, security and human rights were mutually interconnected and inter-dependable. There is no doubt that the increase of the official development aid must be paired with the strengthening of democratic governance, rule of law and fight against corruption.

Madam President,

All of us know that the UN is once again on the crossroads as we face the historic test of multilateralism. The humanitarian disaster in Sudan, recent conflict in Lebanon, continuing dispute over the Iranian nuclear program, upsurge of violence in East Timor, increasing military activity in Afghanistan and Somalia along with negative developments in other conflicting regions, remind us very vividly that we live in a world of new evolving threats and challenges. I have no hesitation to state that we live in a world, which is far from achieving a harmonious global arrangement. Unfortunately, we are very far from reaching "the end of history" and from the day when the UN Charter becomes effective, universally accepted and democratically enforced as some scholars and politicians envisaged just a few years ago.

Modern threats could not have been anticipated when the UN was founded in 1945. In fact, the UN is challenged as never before to deal with ethnic and other interstate conflicts, weak and failed states, genocide and ethnic cleansing, complex humanitarian disasters and poverty, along with threats of nuclear terrorism, trans-national organized crime, infectious diseases and environmental degradation. In the present-day world, no country can cope with them in isolation nor ensure its development and security on its own. In the complex system of global relations with a growing number of players, including non-state actors with multiple interests, we all have to balance our own interests with those of others. The major challenges of today cannot be managed by sovereign states acting alone. They are a shared responsibility of the entire world and demand solutions that, like problems themselves, also cross national boundaries. Solutions

that divide us into winners and losers are not sustainable. Hence, the key challenge for all of us is to learn how to collectively manage complexity of the current world and how to ensure UN's relevance and leadership in this process.

Slovakia is a strong believer in multilateralism. Being a smaller country we view an effective multilateralism not just as a fashionable term, but as a guarantee of security, equality and justice. Our present experience of an elected member of the Security Council fully proves that only through an effective multilateral action the world community can successfully address modern threats and resolve current conflicts. We do not have to be uncritical fans of the UN to be persuaded that the strengthened multilateral system with the UN playing a central role is a necessity. It is telling to see that while the talk about the UN crisis has intensified, the demand for UN field operations and its involvement in crisis management has sharply increased.

Therefore, Slovakia is a strong supporter of the UN reform. We must continue building on what has been achieved so far, including the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, adoption of the counter-terrorism strategy along with some achievements of the management reform. We need to focus on reducing tensions between developed and developing countries and on building consensus regarding the future direction of reforms. It is unrealistic to expect that all states would share and promote a single version of the UN reform. But we have to overcome the zero-sum mentality and continue in a reform debate with a view to achieving mutual concessions and compromises on specific issues.

I am convinced that all of us have a collective interest in preventing wars within states and between them, as well as in addressing current threats and challenges. And all of us know that in order to meet these interests we need a stronger UN. We all need the United Nations that sets the global agenda for the world and focuses the attention of the international community on pressing problems. We all need the United Nations that legitimizes actions of the international community and remains accepted as an embodiment of world opinion. We all need the United Nations that is the place where all of us can help but also can ask for help.

In this context, we particularly welcome the creation of the Human Rights Council as a step towards realizing the idea of three equal Councils embodying three equal pillars of the UN. But we have to be cautious and avoid slipping back to the old habits that made its predecessor so dysfunctional. Revitalization of the General Assembly, enhancement of the role of ECOSOC and

reforms of the Security Council remain unfinished business. The reform of the Council should be first and foremost about increasing its capacity to act preventively and to take decisive actions early enough to prevent conflicts. The Security Council has to become more representative, more effective and more transparent. We need to recognize that enlarged composition and enhanced working methods remain of critical importance both for legitimacy and effectiveness of the Council's future work. On its part, Slovakia is ready to engage constructively in meaningful negotiations to achieve these goals. Slovakia, as the co-Chair of the ad hoc committee for mandate review in the Security Council is working hard together with our US partners to achieve tangible results in the near future. We hope that visible progress of this process within the Security Council can inspire other UN bodies.

Madam President,

Slovakia is concerned about the current situation in the Middle East, in particular in Lebanon and the Palestinian territories. We firmly believe that there is no military solution to the Middle East conflict. The only way to achieve a comprehensive and lasting settlement is through peaceful negotiations and full implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions as well as the principles defined by the Quartet. Also, only through negotiations and further diplomatic efforts we can fulfil the vision of two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, living side-by-side in peace and security. We condemn all terrorist actions and provocations that have repeatedly led to resumptions of hostilities or further escalations of the conflicts. In this respect, we call on all parties to denounce violence and terrorism and refrain from them. Violence can only cause further violence and suffering of innocent people. New efforts must be undertaken to revive the peace process based on full respect of principles defined by the Quartet in the adapted Road Map. We are of the opinion that a window of opportunity for a comprehensive peace settlement exists, and we will work for it using our Security Council and EU membership.

Another source of our deep concern is the security and alarming humanitarian situation in Darfur, which continues to deteriorate in spite of numerous efforts of the Security Council, the African Union, the UN Secretary-General and the international community at large. We are talking here, without exaggeration, about a humanitarian disaster of large scale: hundreds of thousands of people have been killed and millions of people directly affected by the crisis. Therefore, we urgently need to intensify our efforts and break the long-lasting cycle of

violence. In particular, we need to make sure that the Government of National Unity of Sudan finally gives its consent to the planned transition into a UN-led operation in Darfur. The concept of “responsibility to protect” adopted at last year’s World Summit applies to all Member States and to all governments. When peaceful means prove inadequate and national authorities are failing to protect their own citizens, the international community has the responsibility to act collectively through the Security Council and prevent another Rwanda or Srebrenica. It is our shared responsibility to protect tens of thousands suffering in Darfur.

As a matter of priority, Slovakia has been closely following the developments in the Western Balkans. Our involvement there is based on the principles of transparency and impartiality. Our priority is to strengthen stability of the region and support processes of democratization and integration. As for the issue of the future of Kosovo, we continue to believe that it is important to seek a settlement through direct talks, dialogue and compromise, from both Belgrade and Pristina. Only a solution that will reflect concerns of all parties involved and provide for rights of members of all communities, notably the Kosovo Serbs, can ensure a lasting security and stability of the region. The Kosovo issue is truly a *sui generis* case. It goes without saying that we must strive for a solution that will be fully compatible with international standards of human rights, democracy and international law.

We are also deeply concerned about the nuclear program of Iran and the proliferation risk it presents to the international peace and security. We urge Iranian authorities to respond positively to the proposed package of incentives and to suspend its uranium-enrichment activities. On our part, we are ready to continue the dialogue with Iran in a constructive and open fashion. However, Iran, like any other member of the UN, must comply with the Security Council resolutions and all relevant decisions of the IAEA and fully co-operate with them. In case Iran will not do so, the Security Council will have to adopt appropriate measures under Article 41 of Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

Madam President,

Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and related technology of means of transportation continue to threaten global security. It is a serious challenge and we must face it with all responsibility. It requires joint multilateral effort with common and effective response.

Secretary-General Kofi Annan in May this year told us that the NPT regime “faces a twin crisis - of compliance and of confidence”. With regrets we have to acknowledge that he was right.

Twice last year, Governments had a chance to support and strengthen tools and instruments available in this field. However, despite substantial developments, the 2005 NPT Review Conference did not provide the necessary guidance on how to address challenges to the non-proliferation regime. The outcome of the Review Conference showed lack of political will and confirmed continuing crisis in the area of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. The World Summit was yet another opportunity to remedy this unfortunate situation but it only confirmed the failure of international community and deepened the crisis.

We should work together to overcome deadly links like the one between disarmament and non-proliferation and create a progress-friendly atmosphere. We need to restore confidence through compliance with all relevant obligations and commitments made. As the Chair of the Security Council Committee 1540 Slovakia tries to facilitate the process of full implementation of all measures preventing the nexus between WMD proliferation and terrorism. We hope that the agreement on the programme of work of the Committee will be reached as soon as possible. Presiding also the Conference on Disarmament, we try to intensify efforts to revert the process of paralysis and several failures of the recent period into a constructive dialogue, which would bring about the long-expected results. Our aim is to help revitalize the Conference and give this single multilateral disarmament-negotiating forum of the international community a new breath.

Madam President,

In conclusion, I would like to draw attention to an issue which is increasingly important in shaping international programmes for development assistance, democracy promotion, security co-operation and post-conflict peace-building. I am referring to the security sector reform (SSR). Slovakia tries to stimulate a broad discussion on the role of the SSR in the UN context with a view of increasing the understanding of the topic and suggesting possible options for the development of a comprehensive and coherent approach. Our wish is to give an impetus to developing a comprehensive policy framework that would guide UN SSR programs and projects in a coherent, consistent and sustainable way. Victims of conflicts suffering from the

misery of bad governance, corruption, abuse of power, weak institutions and lack of accountability deserve that the international community is more efficient in carrying out SSR programs and rebuilding functioning states that emerged from conflicts. We should not spare any efforts in meeting their expectations. Above all, the Outcome Document commits us to help states build capacity to protect their own population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crime against humanity and to assist those who are under stress before and after conflicts break out. Developing and implementing a comprehensive SSR framework, as a precondition for effective and sustainable peace-building is the right step in increasing our collective capacity to honour this obligation.

Madam President, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

As Mr. Jan Eliasson stressed in his remarkable speech at the conclusion of the 60th session of the General Assembly, the test of re-establishing the United Nations and international cooperation with a view of better managing our global affairs was not in the past year but it will come in the years ahead.

I wish to all of us that we pass the test successfully and create the United Nations that can live up to the expectations and aspirations of our peoples.

I thank you, Madam President.