



TUNISIA

**Speech by His Excellency Abdelwaheb Abdallah,
Minister of Foreign Affairs,
at the 61st Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations
(New York, September 26th, 2006)**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Madam President

On the occasion of your election as President of the 61st Session of the General Assembly, I am pleased to convey to You and to the Brotherly country Bahrain my most sincere congratulations. We are convinced that your experience and competence will enrich the works of this session and contribute to its success.

I also would like to take this opportunity to commend the efforts made by your predecessor Mr Jan Eliasson, most particularly his constant action to implement a number of recommendations of the 2005 Summit related to the reform of this Organization and the adoption of the two Resolutions creating the Human Rights Council and the Peace-Building Commission.

I avail myself of this opportunity to convey my special thanks to His Excellency Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations, for the valuable efforts he has been tirelessly making for the sake of enhancing the Organization's role and advancing its work, having thus proved his capacity to materialize the notion of consensus in several complex issues and to advance in the reform of the Organization.

Madam President

We take note with satisfaction of the important steps achieved since the 2005 Summit aimed at developing the Organization's role and work for the sake of further efficiency in its action, which will contribute to anchoring the values of justice and moderation in international relations.

While insisting on the necessity of conferring more transparency on the Security Council and pursuing the efforts in order to reach consensus on its enlargement, which will ensure an equitable representation of all international parties and allow the Council to perform its main functions in an environment of dialogue and consensus, we call for strengthening the General Assembly's prerogatives, revitalizing its role, and conferring more efficiency on its work.

Tunisia, which had the honor to join the first composition of the Human Rights Council, reiterates its determination to pursue its active participation in the work of this new UN institution, thus contributing to the realization of the noble objectives for which it was created, especially those related to the respect of Human Rights in their global meaning as agreed at the international level.

Madam President

Our world witnesses, today, numerous rapid changes and developments at the security, political, economic, and social levels while at the same time many international issues remain unresolved.

Tunisia, which has supported the Middle East Process since its inception, and has always called for dialogue, negotiation, and recourse to international legality, stresses again the necessity to find a just, lasting, and comprehensive settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict, which will allow all the peoples of the region to live in peace and security.

Taking into account the hardships that the Brotherly Palestinian People is going through, such as the siege and the sufferings, Tunisia calls upon the international community to provide it with urgent international protection. Tunisia also renews its call for active parties, and primarily the Quartet, to ensure the appropriate conditions to revive the Peace Process on all tracks in accordance with the constant Arab efforts, which will help the Palestinian People regain its legitimate rights, including in particular, the establishment of its independent State, and allow Sister States Syria and Lebanon to recover their occupied territories.

Tunisia reiterates its solidarity with Lebanon, following the Israeli aggression which has caused destruction and huge loss of life and property, and renews its call upon the international community to contribute to the reconstruction of Lebanon and, in its regard, commends the results reached at the recent Stockholm Donor Summit.

Tunisia also expresses the hope that the Brotherly Iraqi people will find the appropriate solutions to its national causes in the framework of the political process in order to maintain national unity and guarantee security and stability, which will allow Iraqis to devote themselves to reconstruction.

Madam President

To face the challenges posed on the international scene, in particular the phenomenon of fundamentalism and terrorism, the international community is required to enhance its efforts and cooperation. Tunisia, which was among the first to warn against the dangers of this phenomenon, renews, today, its call to convene an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations to elaborate an international Code of Conduct to combat terrorism to which all Parties would be committed.

Tunisia has also called for tackling all root causes of terrorism, mainly injustice, the policy of double standards, economic and social conditions which generate frustration and marginalization, within the framework of a comprehensive approach.

To materialize this approach, the international community adopted the Tunisian initiative to set up a World Solidarity Fund to fight poverty and exclusion and to lay the foundations for a more equitable and solidarity-based vision for development. We hope that all relevant Sides will increase their efforts to provide the necessary financing for the operationalization of this mechanism.

Madam President

Spreading the culture of tolerance, dialogue, and respect for beliefs and religious symbols in all countries has, today, become among the urgent necessities to reinforce rapprochement, understanding, and solidarity between peoples and to establish constructive international relations based on moderation and respect for peoples' specificities and civilizations and rejection of violence, extremism, and intolerance.

In this regard, based on its firm belief in these principles, Tunisia proposed several initiatives, such as the adoption of the Carthage Charter for Tolerance in 1995, the appeal of His Excellency the President of the Republic Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in favor of the pedagogy of tolerance, the Proclamation of the 2001 Tunis Declaration on Dialogue between Civilizations, and the establishment of the Ben Ali Chair for Dialogue among Civilizations and Religions.

Madam President

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals faces, in spite of all efforts made, difficulties that require all components of the international community, especially economically strong and developed countries, to exert collective efforts, particularly in the field of financing the development and speeding up the transfer of technology to the countries of the South.

With regards to efforts aimed at reinforcing resources for development, Tunisia reiterates its appeal for further action in order to relieve the debt burden of Least Developed Countries and to recycle those of middle income countries by transforming them into investments in projects considered as a priority by those countries.

Madam President

Convinced that the digital gap constitutes one of the main challenges to development, Tunisia initiated the call to organize a world summit on information society under the auspices of the United Nations. It was honored to host the second phase of this summit in November 2005 that produced important results, laying the foundations for a new world vision aimed at reducing the digital gap between countries and establishing the bases of the society of knowledge by adopting the “Tunis Agenda” and the “Tunis Declaration”.

We are confident that the results of this summit will benefit from an appropriate consideration and follow up by the United Nations Organization and its specialized institutions as well as all stakeholders.

Madam President

Tunisia has directed all its energy to elevate itself to the level of an advanced country within a future-oriented vision, the foundations of which were laid down by President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. This vision includes all political, economic, social, and development domains. It was materialized in a set of deep reforms that led to the reinforcement of democracy, the promotion of the culture of Human Rights both at the conceptual and concrete levels, concretizing public freedoms, and participation of all segments of the Tunisian people in the political life of the country, in the framework of the rule of law and the State of institutions.

Furthermore, the economic and social achievements made allowed Tunisia to attain a high rank among the group of countries with the highest human development index, which was appreciated by international financial institutions and specialized UN agencies. Tunisia pursues this work of reforms and achievements with determination.

Madam President

Within its Maghrebian, Arab, and Mediterranean environment, Tunisia endeavors to strengthen relations of cooperation and solidarity and to strengthen dialogue and concentration between all parties, in order to reinforce security and stability, achieve the aspirations of the peoples of the region for an integral development and encourage economic complementary.

For Tunisia, the construction of the Arab Maghreb remains a constant strategic choice and a civilizational gain for peoples of the region laying the foundations for increased integration and complementarity between the Maghrebian countries. Tunisia works along with its sister States of the region for further revitalizing the march of the Union in the interest of its peoples.

Our country is also keen on enhancing its strong relations with the European Union and on developing them towards the establishment of a solidarity-based partnership which, we hope, will develop in a context of mutual respect and dialogue, thus serving the interest of all parties.

Being part of the African continent, Tunisia pursues relentlessly its support for the efforts of the African Union aimed at finalizing the establishment of its structures and reinvigorating them, as well as enhancing its role in achieving solidarity-based development, security, and stability all over the Continent.

In this regard, Tunisia has actively participated in UN peace-keeping operations, especially in Africa, convinced, as it has always been, of the necessity to join efforts at the international level to strengthen the foundations of peace and security.

Although we believe that the future of the Continent remains in the hands of Africans and that development can only be achieved by relying on their own capabilities, Africa is in need for more support and assistance from the international community to enable to face the challenges and achieve its peoples' aspirations.

Madam President

The strong relationship and interaction between peace, security, development, and social stability in today's world confirm the necessity for all nations to join efforts on a multilateral level on the basis of the values of dialogue, consensus, and solidarity. This will help find the appropriate solutions to the challenges posed.

We believe that the United Nations Organization remains the ideal forum to deal with these urgent issues, based on the values and principles of its Charter.

I thank you for your attention and wish our session all success.