



OPENING STATEMENT BY

HIS EXCELLENCY MR. GORAN PERSSON  
PRIME MINISTER OF SWEDEN

CO-CHAIR OF THE HIGH LEVEL PLENARY  
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Excellencies,  
Mr. Secretary-General,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

A little more than two months ago terrorism struck again – Sharm-el Sheik was added to the list of places hit by ruthless acts of violence.

A little more than two weeks ago, Hurricane Katrina swept across Southern United States – ending lives, forcing many to flee their homes and causing immense damage.

Two days ago – and it could have been any day - a famished boy sat on dusty ground in a small village in Niger, waiting for aid to come. A small boy lacking the most vital necessities of life – food, water and medicine. A child – one of millions of malnourished children in the world today.

Sharm-el-Sheik, New Orleans and Niger are painful examples of the challenges facing us today.

Most of these challenges respect no borders. Most of them are linked. And most of them can only be met if we work together.

In this age of globalisation, we should regard international co-operation as part of our national interest.

The United Nations, and the way we approach collective security, must be adapted to changing circumstances. The United Nations is our prime instrument for effective multilateral solutions and a rule-based international order.

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Excellencies,

At this summit, we have an opportunity to take decisions that may shape international co-operation for years to come.

We have come here, because we know that the challenges facing us in the era of globalisation can not be met in isolation.

Poverty must be eradicated, the resources of our planet used sustainably, human rights respected, equality between men and women strengthened, HIV/AIDS and other diseases prevented, terrorism stopped and disarmament and non-proliferation secured.

We, the Heads of State and Government, owe this to coming generations. We cannot afford to fail. We need to find collective solutions based on the rule of law. And for this, we need a stronger United Nations.

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Five years ago, at the outset of the new millennium, we met here to address key challenges for the future of mankind.

Our response included a set of ambitious, yet realistic, goals for development.

We committed ourselves to concrete action, within specific time frames.

Now we have reached a moment of truth. It is time to take stock and evaluate. What have we achieved? Where have we failed?

There has been good progress in several areas. That tells us something very important: eliminating global poverty is not a forlorn hope. It can be done. Development works.

But the challenge is to make it work everywhere, for everyone.

In critical areas, such as environmental sustainability or child and maternal mortality, there has been very little progress. On current trends, there is a real risk that many of the poorest countries will fall far short of achieving the Millennium Goals.

If we allow this to happen, millions of lives will be lost, and we will pass on a more unfair and unsafe world to the next generation. So this Summit must focus on how to get the fight against world poverty back on track.

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A peaceful world requires collective measures for the prevention of war, international cooperation to solve economic and social problems, and respect for human rights.

These are the pillars of the United Nations Charter and the agenda for our efforts to free future generations from war, poverty and life without dignity.

The Secretary-General's report "In Larger Freedom" describes the close links between peace and security, development and human rights.

It maps the direction for the United Nations of the future.

It reminds of us what we must seek to accomplish in the areas of development, freedom and peace. Only when every human being can live a life in "freedom from want" and in "freedom from fear", is that task complete.

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Excellencies,

We need a relevant and efficient United Nations.  
We need a strong United Nations that upholds our collective security system.

Greater emphasis must be put on prevention of conflict and early action. Our responsibility to protect our populations from genocide, ethnic cleansing and violations of human rights must be at the forefront.

We also need better tools to support states in post-conflict situations, and help them avoid renewed tension and secure a sustainable development. Establishing a new institution, a Peace-building Commission, is of key significance in this regard.

Most of us agree that reform of the United Nations will not be complete without a change of the composition of the Security Council. In that agreement, we have an important basis for further progress. Our different views today must not prevent us from continuing the search for a solution tomorrow.

These are some of the issues that we will be addressing at this High-Level Meeting. Yesterday, a substantive Outcome Document — prepared skilfully by Jean Ping, the President of the 59<sup>th</sup> General Assembly — was endorsed. During the next three days of debate, I look forward to hearing a diversity of views and constructive ideas for the future.

Excellencies,

We do not lack great words or declarations.  
Nor do we lack the capacity to act.

But declarations and real actions must be brought much closer together. And it is we, the political leaders, who must show the way.

As Dag Hammarskjold said to this assembly in 1957 when he was reappointed Secretary-General of the United Nations: "The many who, together, form this organisation — peoples, governments and individuals — share one great responsibility. Future generations may come to say of

us that we never achieved what we set out to do. May they never be entitled to say that we failed because we lacked faith or permitted narrow self-interest to distort our efforts."

Today we must rise above short-term interests, and invest in the future for generations to come. It is a matter of solidarity — not just between peoples, nations and continents — but with our children and grandchildren.

Let us take advantage of this great opportunity, and our presence here, to live up to our commitments in the Millennium Declaration and the Development Goals.

Let us change the life of the boy from Niger, change the lives of the many.

Let each and every one of us do whatever we can to contribute to the great enterprise of building a better United Nations for the benefit of all -mankind.

Thank you.