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Statement
by
His Excellency Dr. Heinz FISCHER
Federal President of the Republic of Austria
at the
2005 World Summit
of the United Nations

New York, 15 September 2005

Mr. President,

I still vividly recall my last visit to the United Nations on the occasion of the Millennium conference of the IPU in 2000, where I participated in my former function as President of the Austrian National Assembly. It is a pleasure and honour for me to participate now at this World Summit 2005 which I address as Federal President of the Republic of Austria. In three months, in December 2005, Austria will celebrate fifty years of our membership in the United Nations. Austria joined the UN in 1955 during a crucial period of her history and right after regaining her independence.

During its 60 years of existence the UN has been lauded as well as criticized. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has constantly worked towards improving our organisation to deal better with the challenges of the 21st century. With his report "In larger freedom" he initiated another ambitious reform process. The large number of heads-of-state and government gathered here proves the importance of this common effort. We strongly believe that the UN will emerge from this summit reinvigorated and with an enhanced capacity to deal with today's threats and tomorrow's challenges.

The summit declaration contains valuable commitments in the field of development, as well as new common understandings on peace and security, human rights, rule of law and strengthening of the UN Secretariat. As the Secretary General has pointed out, we are concerned about the lack of agreement on disarmament and non-proliferation. However, the package as a whole is a good start. I would like to use this opportunity to thank the President of the General Assembly, Jean Ping, and his able facilitators for their great efforts.

Allow me to highlight some issues of particular importance for Austria:

One of the most important results of this summit is the decision to establish a Peacebuilding Commission. It will provide valuable support for countries emerging from conflict situations and ensure a coordinated and coherent response from the international community. The European Union, a major global donor with a strong record for worldwide and sustained efforts in the field of peacebuilding must be able to contribute to the work in the Commission.

Austria welcomes the agreement on a Human Rights Council. The new body should improve the efficiency and credibility of the United Nations in the field of human rights. We must now find the perfect structures and procedures for this Council. Austria deems it important that the Council is a standing body, which must have the ability to address serious human rights violations and ensure opportunities for the participation of observer states and civil society.

The adherence to the rule of law is a fundamental prerequisite for peaceful international relations as well as for democracy and stability within states. It is my strong conviction that it was a long and difficult but rewarding process for many of our societies that the principle of the rule of law has prevailed in the framework of democratic national states. It will be a task of the coming years and decades to fully implement this principle also in the field of international relations. This will significantly contribute to a wider adherence to justice and the peaceful solution of international conflicts. We believe that strengthening the rule of law should be a centrepiece of our efforts to achieve sustainable security and prosperity in the world.

I welcome that the principle of adherence to and implementation of the rule of law is anchored in the summit declaration and that a mechanism to help states realize the rule of law domestically and internationally is envisaged.

Mr. President,

This summit is a test for our collective political will to give sufficient impetus to the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. Of course the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is first and foremost the responsibility of the countries concerned. But the international community can and must support national endeavours. Support is required in particular in three areas. The MDGs will only be attained,

- if the quantity and quality of official development assistance is increased,
- if the development dimension of the Doha Round is fully secured, and
- if conflict prevention, reconstruction and reconciliation processes after conflicts are given more prominence in international cooperation.

Violence is deadly for development.

In the context of development, let me now turn to one specific subject: Energy. Sufficient attention needs to be given to energy as a tool to reach the Millennium Development Goals. Consumption of energy services by the poor falls far short of needs and potential. Today roughly two billion people are without access to electricity and modern cooking fuels. This, as “UN-Energy” points out “entrenches poverty, constrains the delivery of social services, limits opportunities for women and erodes environmental sustainability at the local, national and global levels”. I invite my colleagues to join hands to make access to modern and environmentally-responsible energy a reality for so many poor households and thereby to move closer to the realization of peace and development for all, as envisioned by the Millennium Declaration.

Mr. President,

In the last 50 years the United Nations and the principles of the Charter have been at the heart of Austria’s foreign policy. A modern, efficient and strengthened United Nations is of particular importance for Austria. We feel privileged to host one of the UN headquarters in Vienna and appreciate the valuable and important work and activities of the Vienna-based institutions.

We are committed to continue our active and constructive contribution in the various fora and organs of the United Nations. In this context we would very much appreciate if Member States put their confidence in Austria and support Austria’s candidature for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the term 2009/2010.

In conclusion I would like to reiterate my conviction that this reform summit will strengthen the United Nations and make it fit for the threats to peace and security of today’s world. The commitments contained in our declaration will still need to be implemented; deadlines will have to be met. Let us make good use of the political momentum created by this declaration in order to ensure the lasting success of this World Summit.

I thank you, Mr. President.