



General Assembly

Fifty-second Session

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Official Records

President: Mr. Udovenko..... (Ukraine)

The President: I now call on His Excellency The Honourable Rajkeswur Purryag, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Mauritius.

Mr. Purryag (Mauritius): Mr. President, I have the distinct honour and privilege on behalf of my delegation to extend to you, Sir, our warmest congratulations upon your election as President of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. Your election to this office is a fitting tribute to your personal qualities and recognition of the important role of your great nation in world affairs. We are confident that your wide experience and wisdom will ensure the success of our deliberations. You may rest assured of the fullest support and cooperation of my delegation.

I would also like to thank Ambassador Razali Ismail for his remarkable contribution to the last session. We thank him for his strong leadership and his hands-on approach during the discussions of some of the most difficult and crucial issues concerning the future of our Organization.

The changes taking place throughout the world today present new challenges for the United Nations system and call for a new approach in finding appropriate solutions. It is my firm belief that the success of the United Nations cannot be contemplated without reform and renewal of the Organization. We agree that the United Nations stands at a crossroads today. Its continued role and relevance depend on its ability to adapt to the new world environment.

We now have before us a number of proposals contained in the Secretary-General's report designed to better equip the United Nations to address its tasks in the new era. I thank the Secretary-General for this in-depth and valuable exercise. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to a great son of Africa and to his sterling qualities of leadership. The report not only addresses the strengths and weaknesses of our Organization, but also contains specific proposals to

and future challenges on a sound footing. We subscribe fully to his view that this reform exercise is a process which will have to be carried out over a continuous period of time, given all its complexity and scope. I wish to assure you, Mr. President, that my delegation will extend its fullest cooperation and will actively participate in the deliberations on the report.

We also endorse the Secretary-General's proposals for promoting greater synergy within the United Nations system. We agree that they will advance complementarity and coherence. The effectiveness of the Organization will certainly be enhanced if it operates as an orchestrated unit at Headquarters and at country level, rather than as a group of semi-autonomous players.

Likewise, we welcome the Secretary-General's idea of setting up a development account to be fed by savings from reductions in non-programme costs. We express the sincere hope that sufficient funds will be made available to produce a significant impact on development programme financing. We should ensure that this dividend for development does indeed benefit the developing world, unlike the much-trumpeted "peace dividend" of the post-cold-war era.

We uphold the proposals aimed at enhancing the strategic direction which the General Assembly should provide. However, such proposals should be subjected to the most careful scrutiny, because of all their implications, particularly in respect to the smaller and more vulnerable Member States. The General Assembly, as the Secretary-General rightly points out, is the organ that

"most fully embodies the universal and democratic character of the Organization." (*A/51/950, para. 40*)

While we support the long-standing need for focusing legislative debates and streamlining this

Assembly's agenda, we must ensure that this body does not end up being dominated by the concerns of the strong and powerful members only. Countries — big or small, like mine — should have equal possibilities of articulating any issue they consider important. It is by the way in which this Organization addresses issues most relevant to its smallest members that the international community at large will judge its significance.

The debate on the reform of the Security Council seems to have registered some notable movement recently. However, the distance separating the main positions remains quite daunting. We hope that the wide spectrum of views expressed so far on this subject will eventually converge and that general agreement will be reached. Such agreement should ensure that the composition of the reformed Council is based on greater representation, transparency and equitable geographical distribution, with the inclusion of developing countries as permanent members. In this regard, we reaffirm our support for the position of the Non-Aligned Movement calling for the expansion of the Security Council on the basis of fair and adequate representation.

Africa has also stated its position on this matter at the recent Organization of African Unity (OAU) summit. The current representation of Africa in the Council does not reflect its status as the most sizeable group of the Organization's membership. Reform of this body must, therefore, restore Africa's position to the fullest extent possible.

In the same vein, my delegation would like to reiterate its support for India's claim to a permanent seat in the Security Council.

The globalization of the world economy is adding increasing pressures on the developing countries to embrace trade liberalization as a means to achieve economic growth. During the Uruguay Round negotiations developing countries made significant concessions in the hope of obtaining improved access to international markets. Many of them have still not seen the benefits of the new global trading system. Instead, they are haunted by the spectre of imminent erosion of preferences in their major export markets. Several African countries have made strenuous efforts to adhere faithfully to structural adjustment programmes and have adopted trade liberalization policies. Unfortunately, they have registered but an insignificant, if not declining, percentage of world trade. Africa's trade should become the top priority of the international community; otherwise, the multilateral trading system will

run the risk of becoming fraught with tensions and discrimination.

It is unfortunate to note that foreign direct investment, which plays a central role in the ongoing integration of the world economy, is still highly concentrated in a few countries. The recent findings of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) indicate that Africa received merely \$5 billion out of \$349 billion of foreign direct investment last year. Excluding South Africa, the share of Africa in the total investment for the developing countries figured at only 4 per cent. This is the lowest share since the early 1980s, and is a further indication that the African region is not benefiting from the global foreign direct investment boom. The 33 sub-Saharan countries that are classified among the least developed countries are in fact receiving less than 1 per cent of the total foreign direct investment for Africa. It is vital that these countries be provided with greater assistance and investment and be given special attention by the international community. Otherwise, they will be further marginalized, with the risk of disappearing from the world economic map.

We therefore wish this Assembly to give more attention to the development needs of the African continent. In this context, we welcome the recent special ministerial meeting of the Security Council, which has helped focus the attention of the international community on Africa. After several years of complacency and stagnation, there is now cause for some optimism.

We agree that it is incumbent upon us Africans to put our house in order. But unless we are freed from our debt burden, future generations may never have the opportunity to have access to clean drinking water, health care or proper schooling while scarce resources have to be utilized for debt payments.

For some countries, like Mozambique, which are just emerging from years of civil conflict, the Bretton Woods initiative may have to be implemented in order to reduce debt faster. Indeed, not only do these countries have to reduce their crushing debt load, they also have to free resources to rehabilitate their economic infrastructure and fund social expenditure.

Last week the British Foreign Secretary, Mr. Robin Cook, referred to the Commonwealth Finance Ministers meeting held in Mauritius earlier this month, at which the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, made

specific proposals with respect to debt. These proposals, known as the Mauritius Mandate, are meant to set some of the poorest nations on a path towards sustainable development by the year 2000. We welcome this laudable initiative by the British Government to write off debts totalling 132 million pounds of heavily indebted poor countries of the Commonwealth. We hope that this important measure will encourage major financial institutions and creditor nations to come forward and participate fully in transforming the destiny of debt-ridden poor countries.

We also welcome the various initiatives recently taken by the United States to promote investment and to develop a new trade regime for sub-Saharan Africa.

We equally appreciate the partnership between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, which has, through the successive Lomé Conventions, contributed immensely to the socio-economic development of the ACP countries. We are confident that the successor arrangement to the Fourth Lomé Convention will further consolidate this long-standing economic and trade partnership, and in this context we look forward to the continued support of the international community.

We welcome the communiqué of the Denver Summit, which represents a significant advance over the New Global Partnership for Development adopted at the Lyon Summit. The Declaration "Africa: Partnership for development" focuses attention exclusively on the African continent, with particular emphasis on the least-developed and landlocked countries. However, in the pledge to integrate the poorest countries into this world economy through trade liberalization and investment policies, no specific targets were defined on trade expansion or tariff reduction. If these countries are to be completely weaned from official development assistance, not only should their capacity to produce be strengthened, but they must also be given full access to foreign markets for their products, especially those coming from their nascent and developing industries.

We are fully conscious of the fact that North-South cooperation needs to be complemented by effective South-South cooperation. In this regard, the countries in our region have intensified their efforts to accomplish that goal.

For the Southern African Development Community (SADC), a new promising chapter was opened with the recent admission of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Seychelles. With the inclusion of these two new members,

the regional grouping has become an even more important economic area in the African continent. It has the potential of becoming the driving force in promoting growth and development. There is a strong determination among the SADC members to achieve regional integration through industrial transformation and trade growth. My Government is fully committed to this goal, and I am pleased to inform this Assembly that Mauritius will have the honour and privilege of hosting the SADC summit meeting next year.

My Government is equally committed to the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC), which regroups several countries of the Indian Ocean Rim in a tripartite network of Government, private sector and academia. The IOR-ARC was formally launched at a ministerial meeting in Mauritius in March this year with 14 founding members. It has generated tremendous interest among the countries of the region and internationally.

We remain confident that the international community will lend its support to these regional associations. We welcome the timely initiative announced last week by the United States Secretary of State to enhance dialogue with SADC and encourage investments and trade exchanges.

It is a matter of regret that the special session of the General Assembly held last June to review the progress made in the implementation of Agenda 21 was unable to agree on a frank assessment of the commitments entered into at Rio. Unfortunately, very little has been done on the ground. In some areas, particularly with regard to the level of official development assistance, the overall situation has actually worsened. It is disappointing that the lack of new and additional resources has not allowed the special concerns of the small island developing countries, as expressed in the Barbados Programme of Action, to be adequately addressed.

We also regret that on the question of climatic change, no consensus on limits relating to the emission of greenhouse gases could be reached. We hope that the Kyoto Conference on Climate Change will seriously address this issue and adopt meaningful measures to cut down the production of greenhouse gases.

This year the General Assembly twice had to convene an emergency session to consider the extremely serious situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. Unilateral

actions have negated the Oslo peace process. This impasse must now be broken. The recent diplomatic effort by the United States Secretary of State, Mrs. Madeleine Albright, seems to have averted a total deadlock. It is essential that the protagonists start talking to each other again.

We view with serious concern the recent events in the Islamic Federal Republic of Comoros, which have resulted in the loss of human lives on the Island of Anjouan. We appeal to all the parties to the conflict to show restraint and to strive together towards a peaceful resolution of the crisis. We reaffirm our support to the United Nations stand on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Comoros. We also welcome the constructive role played by the OAU and the League of Arab States in mediating between the various parties. We look forward to an early convening of the proposed international conference in Addis Ababa for the restoration of peace in the Islamic Federal Republic of Comoros.

The situation in Burundi continues to preoccupy the international community. We support the Arusha peace initiative and reiterate our confidence in Mwalimu Nyerere's role as facilitator in the process aimed at finding a lasting solution to the Burundi crisis.

Later this year, we will kick off the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of one of the most important seminal documents adopted by this body—the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. During the year leading to this landmark event, Mauritius will work together with all Member States in promoting and strengthening the human rights situation everywhere, especially in the communities to which we are more closely associated through shared history and culture, namely the Commonwealth and the community of French-speaking countries.

The promotion of human rights has been an article of faith for my Government. It is also an integral part of our foreign policy. In this respect we welcome the setting up of the Indian Ocean Institute of Human Rights and Democracy in Mauritius for the promotion of human rights and democracy. We pledge our full support to this Institute. Human rights for all, including women and children, and democratic values are matters of universal concern.

As a multi-ethnic democracy, Mauritius has always raised its voice strongly against discrimination based on race, religion, culture and otherwise. In this regard, we note with satisfaction the recent developments in Fiji, which has finally decided to amend its Constitution in order to promote

social harmony. We hope that the Government of Fiji will tackle the remaining issues standing in the way of the full enjoyment of fundamental rights and basic economic security by all segments of the population of Fiji.

Mr. Zacharakis (Greece), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Mauritius reaffirms its full commitment to total disarmament and urges the world community to make every effort to rid itself of all weapons of mass destruction. It is in this spirit that Mauritius was among the first countries to ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention and the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty. We also reaffirm our support for the Ottawa initiative for a universal ban on anti-personnel landmines. It is regrettable that some major countries have decided to stay out of this process. We make a strong appeal to all Governments to become part of this unique and historic endeavour to eliminate landmines.

(spoke in French)

Allow me to take this opportunity to reaffirm the fact that my country, Mauritius, a former French island, belongs to the great community of French-speaking countries. This sense of belonging culminated with the holding in 1993 of the sixth summit of the French-speaking countries, whose central theme was “Unity in diversity”, and which celebrated not only the universal values of the French-speaking countries but also made it possible for us to enshrine those same values in our society. Our people, who come from Africa, Asia and Europe, have deep roots in all the great cultures that form the French-speaking community. My compatriots can, in the course of one day, travel through all these cultures, one after another.

It is for that reason that my country attaches such great importance to the Francophone plan of promoting diversity in a world that is increasingly unipolar and uniform. The upcoming summit in Hanoi will mark a very important stage in the future of this French-speaking community, providing it with the effective political means to make its voice heard on major international issues.

(spoke in English)

This Assembly is by now well aware of the just and legitimate claim of Mauritius to the restoration of its territorial integrity through the return of the Chagos

Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, to its national heritage. This Assembly should also note that this issue also has a tragic human dimension. Before Mauritius acceded to its independence, all of the inhabitants of the Chagos were forced to leave the land of their birth, where they had lived for several generations. The plight of those inhabitants must now be comprehensively addressed.

Likewise, we are still awaiting the return of the island of Tromelin to Mauritius. As we pursue our efforts to recover these territories, we call upon the former colonial Powers to expedite this process through dialogue in the spirit of the friendship that characterizes our relationships. My Government looks forward to an early resolution of these disputes.