

Statement

By

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Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius

At

The 56th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

Sunday 11 November 2001

Mr President,

It gives me great pleasure to address this August Assembly under your able and distinguished leadership. May I, on behalf of my delegation, take this opportunity to extend to your Excellency our warmest congratulations on your election as President of the Fifty-Sixth Session of the General Assembly. You may rest assured, Mr President, of the fullest support and co-operation of my delegation in the daunting tasks that you will be called upon to confront during your tenure.

I also avail myself of this opportunity to thank His Excellency, Mr Harri Holkeri, for the excellent manner in which he steered the work of the last session of the General Assembly.

May I also congratulate a distinguished son of Africa, our Secretary-General, H.E. Mr Kofi Annan for his unopposed election for a second term. The award of the Nobel Peace Prize to him and to the United Nations confirms the high esteem in which he and our organisation are held.

Mr President,

As we gather in New York the atrocities of September 11th remain fresh in our collective memory.

Allow me to pay a special tribute to the memory of the thousands of innocent victims of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre, the Pentagon and in Pennsylvania.

We condemn the attempts of the terrorists to justify their acts as being in conformity with the tenets of Islam. We do so because neither Islam nor any other religion condones the killing of innocent civilians.

In order to preserve the lives of our citizens and their way of life we are bound to focus on the sequels of those heinous terrorist attacks.

International terrorism must be fought with all the means at our disposal. Terrorists know only one thing and that is destruction. While Mauritius is fully committed to the global coalition against terrorism, we urge the international community to take a long-term view on and about international terrorism. Terrorism is the greatest threat to international peace, security and development.

We also believe that the war on terrorism must be fought on the basis of principles and standards which are accepted by every single state. Terrorism remains terrorism and there can be no justification for it at any time or under any circumstances. We also consider that cross-border terrorism has caused and is continuing to cause immeasurable damage in many parts of the Indian Subcontinent and in Africa. We are convinced that there must be no double or multiple standards in the war against terrorism.

In this context we believe that the International Criminal Court must be operational at the earliest and countries which rejected it in the past must review their stand.

We shall work closely with the Security Council and the international community at large in order to fully implement the Security Council Resolutions 1368 and 1373.

Mr President,

Together with the war on terrorism, we need to wage many other wars, particularly in the light of the Millennium Declaration adopted last year. We need, Mr President, to pursue wars against Poverty, Ignorance, Hunger and Underdevelopment.

The scourge of HIV/AIDS is a war that we cannot afford to lose.

It is our belief that the international community must remain focused on these issues as they are very often the breeding grounds for dissent, crises, wars and terrorism.

Mr President,

Peace and Security will be in danger as long as nuclear arsenals and weapons of mass destruction continue to exist and proliferate. Now that terrorists may get hold of or may already have in their possession such weapons, it becomes extremely urgent for the nuclear powers to start meaningful discussions on the elimination of these weapons within a specified time frame.

With the conclusion of the recent UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects, we need to move towards an early implementation of the measures contained in the Programme of Action. For Africa this is a top priority. We are convinced that Disarmament cannot remain a slogan: it must be effectively addressed.

Mr President,

Conflicts, wars and crises still persist in many parts of the African continent and elsewhere, particularly in the Balkans. Although we are encouraged by the latest developments in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and by the direct talks between Rwanda and Uganda to defuse situations before they become explosive, we consider that peace and security in Africa deserve a closer involvement of the international community, particularly in making available adequate financial resources. We expect an early and full deployment of the third phase of MONUC in keeping with the Security Council resolutions and support the Inter-Congolese Dialogue.

We are grateful to African leaders like Nelson Mandela, President Moi and former President Masire for their commitment to rid Africa of conflicts and to pave the way for an African economic takeoff.

Mr President,

Mauritius is committed to a major reform of the composition of the Security Council. We are convinced that we should amend the Charter in a way that would reflect the emergence of new power structures justifying an expansion of the membership.

Whatever be the criteria for an expanded membership, we believe that India ought to become a permanent member at the earliest.

The expansion of the Security Council as well as a reassessment of the absolutist veto cannot be delayed any longer.

Mr President

The birth of the African Union coincides with its role as the engine to drive forward the process of the New Partnership for African Development.

The New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) is a road map for Africa to eradicate poverty, to achieve sustainable growth and development of the continent so that it finds its place in the world economy. It is a call for a new relationship between Africa and its partners.

We are mindful of the setback which the events of September 11 have caused to the major economies but we are also hopeful that the G-8 will remain committed to providing to Africa all assistance for the effective implementation of NEPAD.

Mr President,

Mauritius supports the liberalisation of international trade under WTO Rules. We are however disappointed at the lack of progress with regard to implementation issues and the undertakings of the major trading countries under previous Uruguay Round Agreements.

The terms of trade as well as non-trade concerns are tilted too much in favour of the developed countries which are still denying market access. Africa which today accounts for less than two per cent of global trade could, with the removal in the developed countries of tariff and non-tariff barriers, significantly increase its share of global trade and thus improve the standard of living of its people. An increase in trade for Africa will also mean a lesser dependence on aid.

While globalisation throws up opportunities as well as challenges we have to be conscious also about its negative aspects. We appeal that there will be no double dealing in trade with poor countries.

Mr President,

The Small Island Developing States experience a variety of inherent disadvantages. In their efforts to achieve sustainable development and the need to enhance their capacities to function effectively within the new globalised trading arrangements, my delegation calls for the urgent and effective implementation of the Programme of Action for Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

Mr President,

We welcome the statement of the United States that it supports the creation of a Palestinian State. We consider this to be a major step in the right direction for the unravelling of the Middle East crisis.

We urge the United States to be even-handed in its relations both with Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

We also believe that the unilateral imposition of conditions prior to the resumption of peace talks is unhelpful.

With the support of the international community we are confident that Israel and Palestine can, within the framework of the Mitchell Report and the Tenet Plan, work out a just and durable peace where the States of Israel and Palestine can live side-by-side, secure within their respective boundaries.

Mr President,

In our region SADC and COMESA are emerging as important institutions integrating our economies. These initiatives are helping the member-states to better confront the challenges of globalisation.

COMESA is the first regional institution to have set up a Free Trade Area.

These regional institutions also address issues of good governance as well as security and peace.

We take an interest in the domestic situation of our fellow members in as much as whatever happens in one member state inevitably impacts, negatively or otherwise, on all member States.

Mr President

We urge all parties to the Framework Agreement for National Reconciliation to take all measures to expedite the process towards the Referendum which will usher in a new constitution. The Framework Agreement remains the only viable mechanism to sustain the normalisation process and the territorial integrity of the Comoros.

Under the aegis of the African Union, Mauritius is proposing to host a Donors' Meeting as soon as the Framework agreement is implemented.

Mr President,

We continue to claim our sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago which was excised by the UK from the then Colony of Mauritius in violation of International Law and UN General Assembly Resolution 1514. We are convinced that the time for the UK to engage in talks for the early retrocession of the Archipelago to Mauritian sovereignty is long overdue inasmuch as problems left over from colonial days cannot remain unresolved.

We are also concerned by the plight of all those Mauritians, commonly known as the Ilois, who were forcibly and in outright violation of their fundamental rights, removed from the islands forming the Archipelago by the then colonial power. We support their legitimate claim for all appropriate remedies.

Mr President,

With regard to Tromelin, I reiterate the position of my delegation as expressed in the General Assembly last year and once again call on the French Government to enter into constructive negotiations for the settlement of this issue.

Mr President,

As I speak here, bombs are still falling over Afghanistan. We are aware that the living conditions for the civilian population are difficult. We deplore the loss of civilian lives. We are confident, however, that the international community will rise to the occasion in providing all humanitarian assistance to the needy in Afghanistan.

We are hopeful that the efforts under way to install a broad-based Government in Afghanistan will be successful.

Climate change in Morocco, the World Food Conference in Rome, Trade issues in Doha, and a host of other meetings in recent days demonstrate the close dependence that we have on each other. No country can afford to go it alone and the many problems that we face today must be faced by us all in a spirit of solidarity, co-operation and mutual accommodation.

We need to be continually engaged and to collaborate so that never again does humanity live the extremely painful moments that it lived after September 11.

Mr President,

The UN is the forum to address all our concerns and we are sure that all countries, regardless of their might, understand that there can be no substitute for the Rule of Law, Good Governance, Democracy and respect for the dignity and rights of the individual.

We do recognise the threats posed by international terrorism and we are all prepared to do whatever has to be done to combat it. It is our hope that this togetherness should not fritter away when the threat and the danger have disappeared. The world has walked away on too many occasions in the past. From now on we have to walk together and pave the way for a better world.

I thank you for your attention.