

**STATEMENT
BY THE RT. HONORABLE SIR ANEROOD JUGNAUTH,
P.C.,K.C.M.G., Q.C
PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS
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Mr. President

Let me first extend to you, Sir, on behalf of my delegation and in my own name, our sincere congratulations on your election as President of the General Assembly at this session. Indeed, it is a matter of pride for all small island States, and Mauritius in particular, to see you presiding over the Assembly. My delegation wishes to assure you of its full support and cooperation during your tenure of office.

Let me also express my Government.s deepest appreciation to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jan Kavan of the Czech Republic, for the remarkable manner in which he presided over the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session and to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, for his dedicated leadership of our Organization. I wish to assure him of our full support in his appeal for radical reforms of our Organization and the setting up of a high-level panel to address the issues of peace and security, and institutional reform.

GLOBAL PEACE AND SECURITY

Since we were here last autumn, many events of global importance have occurred. The war against Iraq was waged and hostilities were declared at an end, but peace and stability in Iraq have yet to be restored.

Terrorism has continued relentlessly on its path of ghastly attacks and indiscriminate killing of innocent civilians. The geographical shift, however, in the terrorist attacks is becoming increasingly a disturbing development.

Multilateralism, which was almost condemned to a premature burial, is being re-energized. Unfortunately, the recurring problems of HIV/AIDS, malaria, poverty, lack of development, conflicts and the ready supply of small arms and light weapons have continued to inflict death and suffering on an unprecedented scale, particularly in Africa.

The attack against the United Nations compound in Baghdad contains countless messages. The most significant of them is that our Organization is in urgent need of major overhaul and reform, as rightly stated by the Secretary-General.

The premature deaths of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to Iraq, the late Sergio Vieira de Mello, and other dedicated staff members of the United Nations, whom we deeply mourn, should make us reflect on the dangers behind foreign policy initiatives that undermine or ignore the United Nations.

The international community is deeply attached to the legitimacy the United Nations confers on its actions. It is our collective duty to refrain from taking any measures likely to weaken it.

TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

These horrendous terrorist acts have demonstrated anew the crucial need for the international community to tackle the root causes of terrorism.

As all small islands, we in Mauritius remain highly vulnerable in respect of our security and terrorist threats. With limited means at our disposal, coupled with the multiple demands on our scanty resources, we find that it is only through international efforts and cooperation that we can win the war against terrorism.

We are particularly anxious that there should be concerted and sustained action and a commitment to cooperation at the international level with a view to eradicating the scourge of terrorism. All countries must cooperate to stem the flow of cross-border infiltration. The financing of terrorism and the proceeds of transnational organized crime need to be closely monitored.

Not winning the war against terrorism as well as that against transnational organized crime is not an option for the world today.

DISARMAMENT

Mauritius views with concern that, despite the stated commitment of the international community to the cause of disarmament, the actions of many countries do not match their rhetoric.

The new challenges to security and disarmament should compel us to look anew at the potential threat posed by nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction and to pursue more vigorously efforts towards their total elimination.

We reiterate our appeal to the nuclear Powers for the early convening of a conference on nuclear disarmament as a first step towards complete disarmament, keeping in mind that such a regime must be comprehensive and non-discriminatory.

MIDDLE EAST

Over the last year the international community's ability to tackle political conflicts and find lasting solutions has been dismal.

The situation in the Middle East continues to preoccupy us. Despite the various initiatives, including the latest Road Map, violence remains unabated and we fear that recent developments in the region will unleash further killings and destruction.

No solution will be possible there unless all the protagonists are taken on board. Exclusion as a policy is destined to fail. We continue to believe that President Arafat is an essential part of the solution, and any attempt to sideline him will be detrimental to any peace initiative.

We call on both Israel and the Palestinian Authority to exercise utmost restraint and to pursue their efforts for the implementation of the Road Map with a view to putting an end to the occupation and the succeeding generations of Palestinians in refugee camps.

The establishment of a Palestinian State at the earliest should be the priority of the international community.

The situation in Iraq is disquieting. It is important that the Iraqis regain as soon as possible total sovereignty and assume control over their own destiny through a democratic process.

The United Nations has, in the view of my delegation, a leading role to play in this process and must be empowered to do so.

CONFLICTS IN AFRICA

The African continent has been plagued for too long by conflicts and wars, which have led to the loss of thousands of innocent lives and the squandering of enormous wealth and resources.

Small arms and light weapons have in fact become the weapons of mass destruction on the African continent. These weapons drain African resources and we appeal to those countries that manufacture and market those weapons of destruction to ensure that Africa does not continue to be their killing field.

Nonetheless, during the past two years, the African continent has demonstrated an unprecedented momentum in its efforts to seriously address these conflicts and to search for lasting solutions. There is, however, some good news out of Africa and everything is not gloomy.

The transformation of the Organization of African Unity into the African Union, the coming into operation of the various commissions of the Union and the election of commissioners on a gender-equal basis at the Maputo Summit in July last are clear indications that Africa has chosen a new path and is confident that it will be able to meet the challenges ahead.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that peace is now slowly returning to the troubled areas on the continent. The conflicts in Sierra Leone and Angola have ended. A government of national unity is in office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Efforts under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) for a comprehensive and lasting resolution to the conflict in Somalia have been crowned with success. We do recognize that years of conflict will not be easily forgotten, but what is reassuring is that African leaders are maintaining a hands-on approach to these situations.

The recent developments in Liberia and the restoration of the constitutional order in Sao Tome and Principe confirm the ability of African leaders to effectively address issues affecting their continent.

There is fresh confidence in the African leaders' ability to deal with flashpoints. The implementation of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union will go a long way towards preventive action being taken. We recognize that we will have to bear primary responsibility for the peace and security of our continent.

NEPAD

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is our basic instrument of empowerment. Having decided to take our destiny in our own hands, we are not going to engage in the blame game, but we will take action to reverse poverty and to promote good governance. We will do whatever is necessary to attract investment. The establishment of the African Peer Review Mechanism within NEPAD will ensure that economic development takes place in the spirit of good governance, democracy, transparency and accountability.

It is comforting, therefore, that this homegrown African initiative has received global recognition. The assistance of the Group of Eight and countries like India in the implementation of the objectives of NEPAD is much appreciated.

We noted with regret that the rate of official development assistance to developing countries is decreasing, contrary to the commitment made in Monterrey.

We therefore call on the developed countries and other key specialized institutions in the monetary, financial and development fields to deliver on their implementation plans for the Monterrey Consensus during the October high-level dialogue.

HIV/AIDS

Monday's high-level segment on HIV/AIDS, in which more than a hundred delegations took part, demonstrates the extent of the concern of the United Nations membership to the pandemic of

HIV/AIDS. We welcome the initiative of the General Assembly to maintain global awareness of the problem and to ensure that effective action is taken urgently to stop the spread of the pandemic.

REFORM OF THE UN

I mentioned earlier the need for reform of our Organization. It is imperative that the necessary reforms of the United Nations be undertaken to reflect in a more realistic manner the political realities in the world today.

The United Nations Charter must be amended to provide for a Security Council that is more democratic and more representative of today's world. Should permanent membership of the Security Council with veto power be retained, we consider that India should be admitted with such a membership at the earliest. Likewise we believe that the African continent should be adequately represented at the same level.

We would also urge a review of the veto power, which has been used in the past and continues to be used for purposes outside the letter and spirit of the Charter. May I welcome the decision of the Security Council to lift the sanctions on the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

The situation of small island developing States (SIDS) will be the focus of attention in September 2004, when Mauritius hosts an international meeting for the 10-year review of the Barbados Programme of Action. This Barbados +10 meeting will allow us to make a full assessment of the Programme of Action and evaluate its success and shortcomings.

We need to constantly remind the international community about the fragility and vulnerability of SIDS where ecology and geography combine to inflict irreparable damage.

Mauritius and all other small island developing States attach great importance to this international meeting and hope that it will harness more efforts on the part of the international community to provide the required assistance to the small island developing States.

I call on this Assembly to lend the necessary support to make this international meeting a success.

In this regard, let me express my appreciation to the Commonwealth and La Francophonie for their active interest in supporting the cause of small island States.

As the current Chairman of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), may I inform the Assembly that the 44 Alliance Member States and Observers consider the International Meeting to be a very important occasion for reaffirming the partnership for sustainable development that grew out of the Rio Conference. In Mauritius next year we expect to establish an appropriate framework for partnership and cooperation. The time has come to enshrine the special case of Small Island Developing States as an important component of focus and attention on the part of the international community.

We appeal to the international community to support this process and ensure the full and effective participation of all SIDS at the meeting and to ensure, as well, its own participation in it.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

Access to information and communication technologies remains a fundamental concern in Africa. While such technologies are often promoted as an instrument that will allow countries to leapfrog

stages in development, there is a real fear that the digital divide could very well prove to be yet another handicap that adds to Africa's marginalization.

We therefore urge that particular attention be paid to issues of access and infrastructure. My delegation wishes to underscore that Mauritius, like many other small island States, has high hopes that the Plan of Action of the World Summit on the Information Society will provide concrete action in favour of small island developing States, whose geographical isolation, remoteness and other inherent constraints warrant special attention.

POST CANCUN

The failure of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference at Cancún has dealt a blow to the multilateral trading system. That is very unfortunate, as there are no winners but only losers. For small developing countries in particular, a strong rules-based global trading system provides protection against the unilateralism of powerful trading countries or blocs. The serious imbalances in the WTO system, coupled with the lack of effective and operational rules and disciplines to address their development concerns, resulted in the failure of Cancún. We should pick up the pieces from Cancún and try to construct a trading system that guarantees equity and fairness for developing countries. Only such an approach will provide the legitimacy that the WTO system so badly needs to deliver on the Doha Development Agenda.

INTERNATIONAL ORDER

In order to successfully respond to the multifaceted challenges we are facing in the world today, we are convinced that the international community should rededicate itself to the values of solidarity, tolerance, mutual respect and cooperation.

The belief that countries can be immune from what other countries do is no longer tenable. The need for international cooperation, rather than confrontation, is critical. A new international order is essential if we are to avoid a collision of cultures and religious beliefs.

FAREWELL

This is the last occasion on which I will address the General Assembly in my capacity as Prime Minister. In six days' time, I will relinquish my current post and accede to the presidency, while my Deputy Prime Minister will be sworn in as Prime Minister.

I am confident that he will be accorded the same collaboration and friendship that I have enjoyed during my tenure in office.

Before I conclude, however, I renew my appeal to the United Kingdom to take all measures to complete the process of the decolonization of Mauritius. For years, Mauritius has consistently reaffirmed its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, here and in all international fora.

As I leave today, I have a sincere regret that this issue has not been resolved. I therefore reiterate our appeal to the United Kingdom, as a country known for its fair play and for championing human rights, and to our friends in the United States, to engage in a serious dialogue with Mauritius over the issue of the Chagos Archipelago so that an early solution may be found.

The removal of the Chagossians under false pretences resulted in gross violations of human rights. Hopefully this aspect of the matter will be resolved through the British courts shortly.

Je fais aussi appel a la Republique Francaise avec laquelle nous entretenons d'excellentes relations, pour qu'elle reprenne le dialogue menant au retour de l'île Tromelin a la souverainete Mauricienne.

With those words, I bid the Assembly goodbye. Thank you all for your attention