



General Assembly

Fifty-first Session

6th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 24 September 1996, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Razali Ismail (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Address by Mr. William Jefferson Clinton, President of the United States of America

The President: The Assembly will first hear an address by the President of the United States of America.

Mr. William Jefferson Clinton, President of the United States of America, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the United States of America, His Excellency Mr. William Jefferson Clinton, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Clinton: Three years ago I had the honour of being the first American President born after the founding of the United Nations to address the General Assembly. In its fifty-first year, the United Nations has not yet realized all its founders' aspirations. But the ideals of the United Nations Charter — peace, freedom, tolerance and prosperity — now touch more people in more nations than ever before.

Now we find ourselves at a turning point in history when the blocs and barriers that long defined the world are giving way to an age of remarkable possibility — a time when more of our children and more nations will be able to live out their dreams than ever before. But this is also an age of new threats — threats from terrorists, from rogue

States that support them, threats from ethnic, religious, racial and tribal hatreds, threats from international criminals and drug traffickers — all of whom will be more dangerous if they gain access to weapons of mass destruction.

The challenge before us, plainly, is twofold: to seize the new opportunities for more people to enjoy peace and freedom, security and prosperity and to move strongly and swiftly against the dangers that change has produced.

This week and in this place, we take a giant step forward. By overwhelming global consensus, we will make a solemn commitment to end all nuclear tests for all time.

Before entering this Hall, I had the great honour to be the first leader to sign the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). I did so, with some pride, with this pen, for this pen is the very one that President Kennedy used to help bring the limited test-ban Treaty to life 33 years ago.

This Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty will help prevent the nuclear Powers from developing more advanced and more dangerous weapons. It will limit the ability of other States to acquire such devices themselves. It points us towards a century in which the roles and risks of nuclear weapons can be further reduced and ultimately eliminated.

I want to thank all those who helped bring us to this day, especially the Chairman of the comprehensive test-

ban negotiating Committee, Netherlands Ambassador Ramaker, and the Government of Australia, which took the lead at the United Nations.

I thank the Secretary-General for the remarks he made this morning in establishing the criteria and standards in support of the United Nations as the depository of the Treaty.

The signatures of the world's declared nuclear Powers — the United States, China, France, Russia and the United Kingdom — along with those of the vast majority of its nations, will immediately create an international norm against nuclear testing even before the Treaty formally enters into force.

The CTBT is the shared work of hard negotiation. Some have complained that it does not mandate total nuclear disarmament by a date certain. I would say to them: "Do not forsake the benefits of this achievement by ignoring the tremendous progress we have already made towards that goal." Today there are no Russian missiles pointed at America and no American missiles pointed at Russia.

Through the START Treaties we are cutting our nuclear arsenals by two thirds. Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan are giving up the nuclear weapons left on their land after the Soviet Union dissolved.

We are working with the newly independent States to improve security at nuclear facilities and to convert nuclear weapons to peaceful uses.

The United States and other nuclear-weapon States have embraced the South Pacific and African nuclear-free zones. Now half the world's land area is nuclear free by international agreement. And the world community extended indefinitely the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Yet some of the very changes that had made this progress possible have also created new risks. The breakup of the Soviet Union left nuclear materials dispersed throughout the newly independent States. As barriers have come down around the world the danger of nuclear smuggling has gone up. So even as we reduce the global stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction, we must also reduce the danger that lethal materials could wind up in the wrong hands, while developing effective defences for our people if that should happen.

The United States has six priority goals to further lift the threat of nuclear weapons destruction and the threat of weapons of mass destruction, and to limit their dangerous spread.

First, we must protect our people from chemical attack and make it harder for rogue States and terrorists to brandish poison gas by bringing the chemical weapons Convention into force as soon as possible. I thank the nations here that have ratified the chemical weapons Convention. I deeply regret that the United States Senate has not yet voted on the Convention, but I want to assure you and people throughout the world that I will not let this treaty die, and we will join the ranks of nation determined to prevent the spread of chemical weapons.

Secondly, we must reduce the risk that an outlaw State or organization could build a nuclear device by negotiating a treaty to freeze the production of fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons. The Conference on Disarmament should take up this challenge immediately. The United States, Russia, France and the United Kingdom already have halted production of fissile materials for weapons. I urge other nations to end the unsafeguarded production of these materials pending completion of the treaty.

Thirdly, we must continue to reduce our nuclear arsenals. When Russia ratifies START II, President Yeltsin and I are all ready to discuss the possibilities of further cuts, as well as limiting and monitoring nuclear warheads and materials. This will help make deep reductions irreversible.

Fourthly, we must reinforce our efforts against the spread of nuclear weapons by strengthening the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We should give the International Atomic Energy Agency a stronger role and sharper tools for conducting worldwide inspections. Our law enforcement and customs officials should cooperate more in the fight against nuclear smuggling. And I urge all nations that have not signed the NPT to do so without delay.

Fifthly, we must better protect our people from those who would use disease as a weapon of war, by giving the biological weapons Convention the means to strengthen compliance, including on-site investigations when we believe such weapons may have been used or when suspicious outbreaks of disease occur. We should aim to complete this task by 1998.

Finally, we must end the carnage caused by anti-personnel landmines, the hidden killers that murder and maim more than 25,000 people a year. In May, I announced a series of actions the United States would take towards this goal. Today, I renew my appeal for the swift negotiation of a worldwide ban on the use, stockpiling, production, and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. Our children deserve to walk the Earth in safety.

Thirty-three years ago, at the height of the cold war, President Kennedy spoke at American University in Washington. Peace was the topic of his address, but not an abstract ideal of peace. Instead, he urged us to focus on

“a more practical, attainable peace — based not on a sudden revolution in human nature but on a gradual evolution in human institutions — on a series of concrete actions and effective agreements which are in the interests of all concerned.”

It was in that same speech that he announced that talks would shortly begin in Moscow on a comprehensive test-ban treaty.

President Kennedy’s vision exceeded the possibilities of his time, but his words speak to us still. As we sign our names to the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty — the longest-sought, hardest-fought prize in arms control history — let us summon the confidence of earlier pioneers and set our sights on the challenges of the new century.

Over the past three years we have moved in the right direction in meeting those challenges. In Bosnia, where the war is over and where just 10 days ago its people went to the polls in peace, we have moved in the right direction. Now we must help Bosnia build a unified, democratic, and peaceful future.

In Haiti, where the dictators are gone, democracy is back and the exodus of refugees has ended, we have moved in the right direction. Now we must help the Haitian people seize the full benefits of freedom and forge a more prosperous future. In the Middle East and in Northern Ireland, there is progress towards lasting peace, and we are moving in the right direction. Now we must support continued progress between Israel and Palestinians, and we must broaden the circle of peace to include more of Israel’s neighbours. We must help to give the children of Belfast the chance to live out normal lives.

In the fact that democracy, open markets and peace are taking hold around the world, we are moving in the

right direction. Here in the Americas, every nation but one has raised freedom’s flag. In Central Europe, in Russia, Ukraine and the other new independent States, the forces of reform have earned all our respect and will continue to have the support of the United States. Now we must begin to welcome Europe’s new democracies into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), strengthen NATO’s partnership with Russia and build a secure and undivided Europe.

In Asia, South Korea, Japan, China and America working together persuaded North Korea to freeze its nuclear programme under international monitoring. Now, in the wake of provocative actions by North Korea, we must pursue a permanent peace for all the Korean people. Our planet is safer because of our common efforts to close Chernobyl, to address the challenges of climate change, to protect the world’s forests and oceans. Now we must uphold our duty as custodians of our environment so that our children will inherit an even healthier planet.

All of us must continue our historic efforts to build a better, more global trading system for the twenty-first century. We have made remarkable progress, but there is more to do in opening markets, in creating millions of new jobs for all our people.

In this time of challenge and change, the United Nations is more important than ever before, because our world is more interdependent than ever before. Most Americans know this. Unfortunately, some Americans, in their longing to be free of the world’s problems, and perhaps to focus more on our own problems, ignore what the United Nations has done, ignore the benefits of cooperation. They ignore our own interdependence with all of you in charting a better future. They ignore all that the United Nations is doing to lift the lives of millions by preserving the peace, vaccinating children, caring for refugees, sharing the blessings of progress around the world. They have made it difficult for the United States to meet its obligations to the United Nations. But let me reassure all of you: the vast majority of Americans support the United Nations, not only because it reflects our own ideals, but because it reinforces our interests. We must continue to work to manifest the support that our people feel. For the fifty-first year in a row, the United States will be the largest financial contributor to the United Nations. We are paying our dues, and I am committed to paying off our accumulated obligations. However, we also support the process of reform, which has done great work in reforming and streamlining the

bureaucracy and reining in the budget, and it should continue.

We also believe that all of us — the nations of the world working together — must do more to fight terrorism. Last year I asked the nations assembled here to commit to a goal of zero tolerance for aggression, terrorism and lawless behaviour. Frankly, we have not done that yet. Real zero tolerance means giving no aid and no quarter to terrorists who slaughter the innocent and drug traffickers who poison our children, and doing everything we can to prevent weapons of mass destruction from falling into the wrong hands. Real zero tolerance requires us to isolate States that refuse to play by the rules we have all accepted for civilized behaviour. As long as Iraq threatens its neighbours and its people, as long as Iran supports and protects terrorists, as long as Libya refuses to give up the people who blew up Pan Am 103, they should not become full members of the family of nations.

The United States is pursuing a three-part strategy against terrorists: abroad, by working more closely than ever with like-minded nations; at home by giving our law enforcement the toughest counter-terrorism tools available, and by doing all we can to make our airports and the aeroplanes that link us all together even safer. I have requested more than \$1 billion from our Congress to meet these commitments, and we are implementing the United States Vice President's aviation security plan to make those travelling to, from and within the United States more secure.

There are other steps we must take together. Last year, I urged that together we crack down on money laundering and front companies, shut down gray markets for guns, explosives and false documents, open more law enforcement centres around the world and strengthen safeguards on lethal materials. In each of these areas we have made progress, through the United Nations, at the Summit of Peacemakers in Sharm el-Sheikh, at the Paris terrorism conference and individually.

Now we should adopt the declaration on crime and public security I proposed last year. It includes a no-sanctuary pledge, so that we can say with one voice to the terrorists, criminals and drug traffickers: "You have no place to run, no place to hide." I call on every Member to ratify 11 international conventions that would help prevent and punish terrorism and to criminalize the use of explosives in terrorist attacks.

To every nation whose children fall prey to drugs and every nation that makes those drugs: we must do more to reduce demand and to take illegal drugs off the market and off the streets. The United States will do its part. Next week, I will target more than \$100-million worth of defence equipment, services and training to Mexico, Colombia and other South American and Caribbean countries.

These resources will help our friends stop the flow of drugs at the source. Now I ask every nation that exports the chemicals needed to make illicit drugs to create an informal group whose members will work to deny these chemicals to drug producers. We must not let more drugs darken the dawn of the next century.

Our duty to fight all these forces of destruction is directly linked to our efforts to reduce the threat of weapons of mass destruction. We all know we are not immune from this. We saw it when our friends in Japan were subject to the murderous power of a small vial of sarin gas unleashed in the Tokyo subway. We know a small lump of plutonium is enough to build a nuclear bomb. We know that more dangerous people have access to materials of mass destruction because of the rapid movement and open borders of this age. The quest to eliminate these problems from the world's arsenals and to stop them from spreading has taken on a new and powerful urgency for all of us.

So let us strengthen our determination to fight the rogue States, the terrorists and the criminals who menace our safety, our way of life and the potential of our children in the twenty-first century. Let us recommit ourselves to prevent them from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. Let us work harder than ever to lift the nuclear backdrop that has darkened the world's stage for too long now. Let us make these solemn tasks our common obligation, our common commitment; if we do, then together we will enter the twenty-first century marching towards a better, safer world — the very better, safer world the United Nations has sought to build for 51 years.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the United States of America for the statement he has just made.

Mr. William Jefferson Clinton, President of the United States of America, was escorted from the rostrum.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

**Address by His Excellency Mr. Andris Šķēle,
Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia**

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia.

Mr. Andris Šķēle, Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia, His Excellency Mr. Andris Šķēle, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Šķēle (Latvia): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election and to wish you success in carrying out your duties during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. I wish all of us a productive and fruitful session of the General Assembly and assure members of the full cooperation of the delegation of Latvia in ensuring the success of their work.

“Reform” was a much-used word during the previous session of this body. The word “crisis” may become just as prevalent during the fifty-first session. In this connection, I should like to recall the words of United States President John Fitzgerald Kennedy:

“When written in Chinese, the word ‘crisis’ is composed of two characters. One represents danger and the other represents opportunity.”

Since joining the United Nations five years ago, Latvia has consistently supported reforms so as to avoid crises. Our 50-year absence from the international community makes us especially appreciate the fact that this rostrum is the one place in the world from which all nations can speak with an equal voice about matters of global importance.

A statement from this rostrum is a means rather than an end. It can be but the first of many steps to a level of human development that Immanuel Kant characterized as eternal peace. Too often the closest we come to attaining the ideal of a world without wars and the United Nations as the maintainer of international peace and security is the establishment of the mechanisms needed to halt armed conflict. In this connection, may I recall that the joint Estonian-Latvian-Lithuanian peacekeeping battalion, whose

training period will conclude next year, will be a contribution of the Baltic States to the strengthening of the mechanisms for peacekeeping and peacemaking established by the United Nations.

The current world situation forces us to question how often we have been too late, how often we have been found lacking in wisdom, foresight and effective diplomacy in our attempts to resolve disputes peacefully. Somalia, former Yugoslavia, Chechnya, Rwanda — these are not the only areas that have suffered recently. These are problems for the entire global community, not only the United Nations. It makes us think how far we are from the ideal of eternal world peace, which few believe possible, but whose realization is one of the fundamental purposes of the United Nations. We all agree that peace is a fundamental value and that war means catastrophe and destruction. Still, we live in a world in which armed conflicts constantly arise; where some profit from war; and where relationships of dominance, the rules of the game, and differing values do not exclude war as a mechanism for pursuing national interests.

Reducing the possibility of local conflicts is an important aspect of global security. Any local armed conflict affects the global society as a whole, especially in our rapidly changing and shrinking world, in which the notions of distance, speed and information change rapidly. International terrorism, the illegal trade in weapons and narcotics, people fleeing their homes and other consequences accompany local conflicts, but do not limit themselves to the conflict zone alone. Political instability and racial, religious and ethnic discord, combined with low standards of living, breed armed conflicts. As preventive measures, the United Nations must continue to promote actively a respect for human rights, tolerance, the universality of the United Nations, disarmament and the implementation of arms-control agreements, and support the economies of States that may need assistance.

We hail the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which has opened for signature and ratification after a long and difficult search for compromise. I intend to sign the CTBT today. We are convinced that this Treaty can move the world closer to peace. Latvia considers it imperative that work be continued on the control of conventional weapons. We support the chemical weapons Convention, even though we are concerned that the two largest producers of chemical weapons have not yet ratified the Convention.

Latvia believes that universal respect for human rights should continue to be a priority of the United Nations and its Members. Taking into account the ever-increasing tasks of the United Nations human rights system, increased allocation of resources devoted to United Nations human rights activities is an absolute necessity. Double standards on human rights are intolerable, and Latvia devotes particular attention to this. The guidelines for the global protection of human rights are the documents adopted at the World Conference on Human Rights. Countries should implement these guidelines and share with others their experience in doing so.

In Latvia these guidelines have been applied to a unique demographic situation caused by 50 years of occupation. In accordance with a recommendation of the World Conference on Human Rights, Latvia has established an independent institution for the protection of human rights: the State Human Rights Office. This office has a mandate to hear and investigate complaints from Latvia's residents, inform members of society about human rights, and make recommendations to the Government and Parliament on legislation affecting human rights. In establishing the State Human Rights Office, Latvia received invaluable assistance from the United Nations Development Programme, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights.

The United Nations must continue to protect those values that engender a respect for human rights, tolerance, the rejection of violence and the promotion of peace. It is not weapons or physical force that protect homes, people and countries. Rather, true security depends, *inter alia*, on good relations with all neighbours and on a strong economy. Latvia is successfully implementing such a policy. Our aim is to achieve rapid economic growth and to attract foreign investment in Latvia. Already this year, Latvia has one of the lowest rates of inflation in Eastern Europe, along with a stable currency and rapidly rising indexes of development. We have a well developed port system, including the world's second largest potassium-salts-loading harbour and one of Europe's largest harbours for the transit of petroleum products.

Latvia is the geographical centre of the Baltic States and is a natural economic bridge between East and West. Our country belongs to the European family of democratic States, sharing common values and cooperating for their protection. Integration in the European and transatlantic structures is the highest priority for Latvia. We are actively working for the integration of Latvia into the European and global economic systems, as well as for a close partnership

in the European continent, on both the governmental and non-governmental levels.

Latvia is also participating in efforts to improve the work of the United Nations so that the Organization can react more effectively to the challenges of our time. In support of the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields, and in recognition of the desirability of frequent rotation of Member States represented on important United Nations bodies, Latvia has for the first time ever presented its candidature for a seat on the Economic and Social Council beginning in 1997.

A year has passed since the United Nations celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, when much was heard about the urgency of reform of the Organization. Yet during the last year Member States have been unable to agree on these long-awaited reforms. If Member States continue not to make decisions, the United Nations will slowly but inevitably lose its ability to pursue its global goals effectively. As part of the reform efforts, it is important that the United Nations periodically enunciate and evaluate priorities to be pursued, in particular in times when resources are limited but the demand for them is growing.

One cause of the crisis facing the United Nations is the financial situation. Each Member State's financial contribution to the Organization must reflect its capacity to pay. Contributions can be a great burden for developing countries and countries with economies in transition that are overassessed. A future system of contributions must be fair, transparent and elastic in order that it may readily adapt to economic changes.

Latvia would like to repeat its view that new and innovative financing mechanisms are a necessity. It supports the current effort of the Economic and Social Council to study such mechanisms for the purpose of financing development that is sustainable. The introduction of new financing mechanisms and other financial management tools can only improve the currently weak financial discipline of Member States.

Latvia supports reforms that would result in the reduction of the number of subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly and the number of administrative structures in the Secretariat, as well as a full introduction of methods of modern management.

With regard to the reform of the Security Council, a priority should be to adjust its membership in order to achieve equitable geographic representation and to respond to the increase in the membership of the United Nations in recent decades. The effectiveness of the work of the Security Council must be increased further by making its working methods even more transparent and the exchange of information with non-members more intense than at present.

Latvia is a country that is attached to the ideals of peace, democracy and human rights. It identifies itself with the efforts of the global society to maintain and realize these ideals. It is an active member of the community of nations. This, we are convinced, is the genuine road to security and social and economic prosperity for our country and for the world.

The President: I now call on Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland, His Excellency Mr. Dick Spring, who will speak on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Spring (Ireland): Allow me, Sir, to offer you my warm congratulations on your election as President of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. I am very confident that, with your skill and experience, you will provide the leadership and direction we require to ensure a successful outcome to the work of the forthcoming session. You have the assurance of our full support.

I have the honour to address this Assembly on behalf of the European Union.

Last year we gathered here on the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. The speeches we heard then reflected a dual message: a conviction that the United Nations remained more than ever indispensable in a world of increasing interdependence among nations; and concern that the Organization adapt and renew itself to serve the needs of a new century. There was a clear call that the non-payment of dues owed to the United Nations — this poison in the system — should cease.

The Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations rightly anticipated

“a sharp increase in the level of expectations of the United Nations” (*resolution 50/6*).

It called for the occasion to be seized

“to redirect it to greater service to humankind, especially to those who are suffering and are deeply deprived”.

We have no need at the outset of the fifty-first session to seek a new agenda. Cooperation through the United Nations continues to offer the world the irreplaceable means necessary for advancing peace, economic and social progress, human rights, democracy and caring humanitarian action. To retain the Organization’s effectiveness, we need, together with adequate resources, a continuing modernization of the structures and working methods of the institutions of the United Nations. What we must do now is sharpen the focus on common priorities to achieve this and get on with the decisions to give them effect.

Globalization is one of the defining characteristics of our age. With it has come the realization that our peace and prosperity cannot be assured by States, or even regions, acting in isolation. The European Union itself embodies the principles of cooperation, interdependence, human rights and democracy. The spirit of cooperation is also the starting point for the contribution that the Union is making at the global level, where the enormous benefits that can be achieved by working together constitute the greatest, and potentially the most rewarding, challenge that faces mankind today.

The very interdependence of our peoples, nations and regions that leads us to assemble here as the United Nations should serve to underscore the unique role and potential of this Organization, the sole such universal body of global outreach. Has it done so? Have we strengthened the potential of the United Nations, or yet sufficiently exerted the energy and imagination necessary to use the opportunities it offers us?

We were able last year to reflect with justifiable pride on 50 years of substantial success by the United Nations. Our celebration was tempered, however, by a sobering awareness that the level of conflict, economic disparities and humanitarian crisis in our world was increasing, not diminishing. We had witnessed a series of open and bloody intra-State conflicts and the resurgence of old antagonisms in many regions of the world, resulting in death and injury to millions of innocent civilians, many of them women and children; an increase in the already high number of refugees; gross and flagrant violations of human rights on a massive scale; and the widespread incidence of hunger, disease and homelessness. At the same time, threats to the

environment and the scourges of drugs and terrorism were among a new range of risks and challenges that required concerted international action.

The urgency and complexity of these and other problems facing the United Nations at a time of great political, economic and technological change led us to a common call for a United Nations revitalized and more effective in dealing with these new needs. Some progress has been made in the past year in rationalizing United Nations activities in the economic and social fields and in enhancing efficiency and better management. This deserves to be recognized. But we are still far from the overall results needed. Serious new efforts are required from Member States and the Organization. The multilateral approach which the United Nations embodies is under threat if we cannot respond to the challenges before us. We need a renewed commitment to collective action, with strong vision and leadership sustained by the political will of each Member State. The European Union renews again today its commitment to the United Nations. We are determined to equip it for the tasks of a new century.

Recent experience has taught us that we need a more encompassing strategy for conflict prevention and crisis management. This strategy has to address both the causes and the consequences of conflict. The Agenda for Peace was a well-considered and timely initiative of the Secretary-General which points the way forward. Substantial lessons from the United Nations experience of peacekeeping have indeed been learned. They should be applied in developing this new strategy.

To secure peace, the root causes of conflict have to be tackled. Too often the United Nations is called upon to react to the appalling aftermath of conflict. Prevention is a far better strategy. Improved early warning through more effective and internationally coordinated efforts which also take account of economic and social factors can do much to improve the quality of the response. There needs to be an increased emphasis on preventive diplomacy and on a more informed, better-planned and rapid response to crises, including improved procedures for consultation with troop-contributing countries. Existing mechanisms for mediation, conciliation and good offices could be more vigorously and imaginatively exploited. Post-conflict rehabilitation has to be more comprehensive and coordinated to address the wider issues of humanitarian assistance, economic and social reconstruction and respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Mr. Çeleem (Turkey), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Even with an improved approach to early warning and conflict prevention, peacekeeping operations will still be necessary. The experience of some recent difficult operations should not detract from the record of successes in United Nations peacekeeping. The support of the European Union for the peacekeeping role of the United Nations is undiminished. The member States of the Union, my own included, have consistently provided resources and personnel to United Nations peacekeeping. The Union today provides the majority of personnel for current operations and contributes some 37 per cent of the United Nations peacekeeping budget. This has involved sacrifices, including at times the ultimate sacrifice. On behalf of the European Union, I pay tribute to the memory of United Nations peacekeepers who have laid down their lives in the cause of peace and to the over 25,000 peacekeepers currently serving in 17 United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Too often, the United Nations has been called upon to intervene in conflict situations without a clear mandate, adequate resources or the consistent political support required to have any prospect of success. Too often, the United Nations has been confined to policing indefinitely a fragile and hostile peace between parties that, even after decades, show no real inclination to assume responsibility for securing a resolution of the conflict. This wastes much-needed United Nations resources. But more seriously, it undermines confidence in the United Nations. If we apply our energies to developing new strategies for conflict prevention and crisis management, we will have done much to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations in this core area. The European Union, for its part, will work to strengthen and reinforce this vital role of the Organization.

The United Nations cannot be expected to stand alone in conflict prevention and the maintenance of world peace. The European Union welcomes the trend towards closer cooperation and mutual support between the United Nations and regional organizations. In Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has been designated as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. The United Nations and the OSCE are already cooperating closely and coordinating their efforts. Within the OSCE area, the European Union is working with all the OSCE participating States to develop further the concept of mutually reinforcing institutions so as to enhance European security and stability. The Union encourages and supports the similar efforts being made in other regions. It is important that the United Nations benefit

from, and build on, these initiatives. The meetings of regional organizations that the Secretary-General has convened in recent years are an important innovation in this regard. Since its inception, the United Nations has played a central role in the longer-term strategies for conflict prevention, in particular in the fields of disarmament and arms control, human rights and equitable economic and social development.

The European Union attaches the highest priority to progress in the fields of arms control and disarmament. If we mean to invest in peace, then we must all become advocates of disarmament. Today was a particularly good day for disarmament and for the United Nations. It was my privilege this morning to join with other colleagues in the European Union in signing, on behalf of our respective States, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The European Union would urge all States to sign and ratify this important Treaty.

We must respond to the clear wish of all our peoples to live in a world in which the threats posed by nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction can be reduced and ultimately removed. We have made a start with Conventions banning chemical and biological weapons. The next step is the start of negotiations for a cut-off treaty.

The European Union will also give priority at this session to measures to deal with the menace of the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines. Today, there are over 110 million landmines in our earth, mostly in developing countries. They kill, indiscriminately, 26,000 people every year, mostly civilians, many of them women and children. Anti-personnel landmines have disabled a quarter of a million people.

It is an incredible and obscene irony that at a time when the United Nations, with the active support of the European Union and other States, is continuing its vital work of mine clearance, further millions of anti-personnel landmines are still deployed annually. The European Union has endorsed the appeal made by the Security Council to all States to contribute to the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance. We call upon all Member States of the United Nations to join with the European Union, in a spirit of common humanity, to put an end to indiscriminate killing and maiming by anti-personnel landmines.

Conventional arms control, at both a global and regional level, also requires our attention. We now have the opportunity to overcome the mistrust and insecurity that

previously predominated in arms-control negotiations and to create a climate of transparency and cooperation leading to arms reduction. This process is under way in Europe. We would hope to see it develop in other regions of the world.

Failure to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms is a major cause of conflict today. Many intra-State conflicts arise from the denial of basic human rights to minorities and in some cases to whole populations. The democratic right of all citizens to participate freely and openly in the governance of their societies continues to be under threat or denied. The battle for the economic and social emancipation and empowerment of women has begun. This is an issue of special importance for the European Union.

The United Nations has since its inception been in the vanguard in the promotion and defence of human rights and democratic freedoms. Its record is indeed a proud one. The European Union will continue its support, both material and political, for the vital ongoing work of the United Nations in this area. The Union believes it is essential to secure adequate financing from the regular budget for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights. The European Union fully supports the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted by the recent World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. This is a timely initiative in tackling this appalling abuse, which affects all regions in the world.

Despite decades of effort and resources, the poverty gap has widened, not narrowed. For many of the least-developed nations, their development is regressing rather than advancing. The time is long overdue to mount a new global offensive against poverty, a major cause of instability and conflict. We will give major priority to the war against poverty and the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s initiative.

A more vigorous effort is needed to carry through major programmes for the economic and social advancement of women, as are more emphasis and action on the gender perspective across the whole spectrum of development.

The European Union recognizes the central role which the United Nations system, through its specialized agencies and programmes, has played and will continue to play in the humanitarian, economic and social fields. We need to reform and revitalize the United Nations

system in this area to ensure a real and lasting impact on sustainable development.

Our aim is reform, not the retrenchment of resources. The discussions on "An Agenda for Development" have begun this process. A sense of urgency is required to give impetus to our work during this session of the General Assembly and to build upon recent progress. The European Union will pay particular attention to the follow-up to resolution 50/227 concerning the revitalization of the system.

Effective follow-up to the conclusions of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) substantive session on humanitarian assistance will be vital to achieve a stronger and more coordinated strategy within the United Nations system to deliver effective programmes where they are most needed. We must also see progress in coordinating the outcome of recent United Nations conferences, including the Habitat II Conference in June.

The European Union welcomes the renewed emphasis of ECOSOC on the global threat posed by narcotic drugs. The Union is giving high priority to measures which will improve the coordination of efforts to fight this threat, which undermines the very fabric of all our societies.

The success of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) conference in Midrand is welcome in that it underlines that reform and progress in renewing the system are possible.

The forthcoming special session on Agenda 21 and the follow-up to the Rio Conference will allow us to give fresh impetus to action on development and environmental issues and renewed support to the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

The European Union invites all Member States to join in a new global partnership for development. It is in the common interest of the peoples we represent to forge a global alliance against poverty, hunger, disease, ignorance and deprivation. This is a key challenge for the United Nations and its Member States.

Our endeavour to revitalize and reform the United Nations system is taking place against the backdrop of a serious financial crisis. This continuing crisis undermines the necessary climate of partnership and the capacity to implement current programmes in many areas. It distracts efforts and attention from the real tasks of the moment.

The European Union has repeatedly stated that all Member States have an obligation under the Charter to discharge their arrears and pay their assessed contributions to the regular and peacekeeping budgets promptly, in full and without conditions. The States members of the European Union, which contribute over 35 per cent of the regular and over 37 per cent of the peacekeeping budgets have consistently honoured this obligation. They believe that to resolve this crisis, all States Members of the United Nations must do likewise.

The Union recognizes the need for financial reform to secure the long-term financial stability of the United Nations. It has therefore put forward a set of proposals aimed at achieving comprehensive financial reform, including adaptation of the scale of assessments to make it more genuinely reflective of the capacity to pay.

This session should see resolute efforts to negotiate solutions.

The conflicts and tensions in today's world are reflected in the memorandum distributed as part of this speech, in which the European Union outlines its position on issues facing the world community. I would like to draw attention at this point to some critical areas of major concern to the European Union: the former Yugoslavia, Cyprus, the Middle East peace process and the Great Lakes region of Africa.

Europe has not been spared the tragic ethnic conflict witnessed in other regions. The progress we have made in bringing an end to the savage war in the former Yugoslavia has required the combined efforts of the international community and a variety of international and regional bodies, including the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union.

However, we still need to address the massive humanitarian and reconstruction needs left in its wake, as well as the more difficult and long-term task of rebuilding trust, security and peace among the peoples of the region and ensuring full respect for the territorial integrity of the various sovereign States.

The European Union and its member States remain committed to full implementation of the provisions of the peace Agreement for Bosnia and Herzegovina and to making a very substantial contribution to the concerted effort being made to assist the parties who have primary responsibility for this implementation in living up to their obligations.

There are daunting tasks ahead. The immediate focus is on the follow-up to the elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina which took place on 14 September 1996 under the supervision of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. On this occasion, I would acknowledge in particular the very important contribution that was made by the Implementation Force and the United Nations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the International Police Task Force, in ensuring that the elections were conducted peacefully.

The Union fully supports the strategy of the High Representative, Mr. Carl Bildt, in regard to establishing the common institutions of the State after the elections. He has the full assurance of our support for his leading role in the implementation process. We do not underestimate the enormity of this task. If we are to succeed in maintaining peace, it is essential that the international community closely coordinate its activities and that all parties cooperate fully in the process. The European Union will work closely with the United Nations and the international community to achieve an effective long-term strategy to secure peace and self-sustaining stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this context, the Union notes that parties have agreed to hold further elections in September 1998. An important focus during the intervening period will be assisting the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in facilitating the return of the many thousands of refugees and displaced persons who have not yet been able to go back to their homes. Ultimately, our aim must be a return by all the former Yugoslav republics to the community of peaceful and democratic nations.

The basic agreement for Eastern Slavonia must be implemented in full and the return of refugees and displaced persons to this region completed. Such persons must be ensured of full protection for their human rights. The Union acknowledges the important work of the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium, which enjoys our full support in its efforts.

The Union continues to attach great importance to full cooperation with the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. This work reflects the resolve of the international community to bring to justice those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity. It is vital to efforts to develop justice, confidence and democracy in the region that all parties fulfil the commitments they have made to hand over indicted persons.

The European Union stresses once again that the current status quo in Cyprus is not acceptable. It reaffirms its strong support for the efforts of the Secretary-General of the United Nations aimed at a negotiated and lasting solution to the Cyprus question which will respect the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and unity of the country in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. The European Union welcomes the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Han Sung-Joo. The Presidency of the European Union has also nominated a Special Representative on Cyprus.

The Middle East peace process, based on the principles already accepted by all parties under the Madrid and Oslo frameworks, is the only path to security and peace for Israel, the Palestinians and the neighbouring States. The Florence European Council of June 1996 reaffirmed the approach of the European Union. It further stated that peace in the Middle East was a fundamental interest of the European Union. The Union is therefore concentrating its efforts on encouraging all parties to re-engage themselves in this process and to respect and implement fully all the agreements already reached.

We wish to make an active contribution to promote this process in both the political and economic fields and to build upon the important work which has been done over the years by the United Nations in the interests of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East.

We would invite all Member States to do their utmost to nurture this process and give encouragement to all parties to move forward.

The Union is deeply concerned that the current lack of progress in negotiations should not undermine the prospects for peace. The progress already achieved should be advanced by further agreement on concrete issues. We hope that the recent meeting between the Israeli Prime Minister and the Palestinian President will have positive results for the peace process. We call upon the Israeli Government not to pursue the extension of settlements. Continued expansion of settlements does more than any other issue to erode Palestinian confidence in the peace process. It undermines the ability of both the Palestinian Authority and society at large to deter extremists and trouble-makers. As the largest donor, the Union remains committed to providing assistance to the Palestinian people and urges all parties concerned to contribute to the economic revival of the West Bank and Gaza. This endeavour will hopefully be rendered more effective by

the recent relaxation of the border closures, and we hope that this encouraging trend will continue.

It is important that all tracks of the peace process move forward. We favour an early resumption of negotiations between Syria and Israel, and have reaffirmed our support for the independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Lebanon and for early negotiations involving that country.

The creation of the Middle East peace process has been a historic breakthrough in the long-standing search to bring to the peoples of the region the lasting and just peace which they clearly want and, indeed, they deserve. The European Union will intensify its efforts to ensure its success.

The European Union shares the heightened concern of the international community at the grave threat to peace and stability in the Great Lakes region posed by the current situation in Burundi. The United Nations and the European Union are already involved in an international effort to cope with the aftermath of the Rwanda tragedy — the major humanitarian crisis, the serious refugee problem, and the ongoing process of regional reconstruction. But at the same time the area is again facing the prospect of bloody civil war and genocide, in Burundi. We cannot allow this to happen. The European Union strongly supports the efforts of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity to restore dialogue and democracy in Burundi. It acknowledges in particular the pivotal role being played in this endeavour by former President Nyerere, supported by other regional leaders. Their efforts are assisted by the special envoys of the European Union and the United Nations, and other parties.

The international community, through Security Council resolution 1072 (1996), has sent a clear message to the parties involved that there must be an end to all violence and an early beginning of unconditional and all-inclusive national dialogue in Burundi. This is the only constructive path to a solution which is lasting and based on a negotiated, democratic and institutional consensus which ensures security for all. The European Union remains willing to support the necessary recovery process in Burundi once the path of dialogue is embarked upon by all parties with the resolve necessary to ensure a solution. It therefore calls on all parties to forsake violence and to engage in this process of dialogue.

The European Union continues to be the major donor to the humanitarian and reconstruction needs of the region.

It welcomes the progress in rehabilitation in Rwanda, to which it contributes substantially, and it pays tribute to the work of the United Nations in various sectors in Rwanda.

The return of refugees and national reconciliation in Rwanda will remain a priority for the Union. We will also continue to support the International Criminal Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Genocide and Other Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of Rwanda and Rwandan Citizens Responsible for Genocide and Other Such Violations Committed in the Territory of Neighbouring States between 1 January and 31 December 1994, to underscore our belief that the international community must pursue and bring to justice those who have perpetrated gross crimes against humanity.

We have begun this fifty-first session with a signal of hope. The signature at the United Nations today of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty shows this Organization in its rightful place — seized of the deepest concerns of humanity. This is the place which the founders sought for the United Nations. This is the place which it is our responsibility to ensure that it firmly holds for today's world and for the generations to come.

Lastly, and speaking solely in my capacity as Foreign Minister of Ireland, I would like to inform the Assembly of developments in the Northern Ireland situation over the past year. The search for a lasting peace and a comprehensive political settlement continues. Substantial advances have been recorded in the past 12 months, despite serious setbacks and despite the uncertainty and suspicion which still hamper the development of true reconciliation between the communities in Northern Ireland and between the main traditions which share the island of Ireland.

Negotiations involving the Governments and the parties began in June and resumed earlier this month. The stated purpose of these negotiations is to achieve a new beginning for relationships within Northern Ireland, within the island of Ireland and between the peoples of these islands, and to agree new institutions and structures to take account of the totality of relationships.

The Irish Government continues to base its approach to the negotiations on the fundamental principles set out in the 1993 Joint Declaration published with the British Government. As I indicated last year, A New Framework for Agreement, published in 1995, represents the shared

assessment of the two Governments of a balanced and honourable accommodation which might be envisaged across all the key relationships. We shall in negotiations make the case for a fair accommodation along these lines, believing as we do in the necessity of radical and ambitious change on all sides. At the same time, agreement requires the support of the political representatives in both communities, and must also command majority popular support in both parts of Ireland.

We continue to be firmly of the view that wholly inclusive negotiations, involving the representatives of both communities in their totality, offer the best prospect of achieving a durable settlement founded on a recognition of the rights and aspirations of all. The Irish Republican Army (IRA), by terminating its cease-fire last February, not only perpetrated renewed death and destruction and flouted the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the people in both Britain and Ireland. It also obliged the two Governments to cease ministerial dialogue with Sinn Fein, which, because of the collapse of the cease-fire, is currently not a participant in the negotiations.

This is a matter of both regret and frustration. Sinn Fein has a potentially valuable and constructive role to play in contributing to a stable and far-reaching settlement. But political dialogue is sustainable and productive only on the basis of the principles of democracy and non-violence. That is why there must be an unequivocal restoration of the IRA cease-fire before Sinn Fein can enter the negotiations, which would be enhanced by their presence, as they are by the continuing presence of the loyalist parties.

Likewise, however, all of those truly committed to finding an accommodation must impartially reject sectarianism and oppose disorder from whatever source if they wish to create an atmosphere in which reconciliation can flourish and agreement take root. The confrontation and polarization which occurred during the past summer in the "marching season", the consequences of which still vibrate, highlight the absolute necessity of compromise and mutual understanding.

The instrument for progress is to hand in the Talks process under way, if we can persuade all the parties to use the Talks process constructively. That requires the earliest possible transition to substantive negotiations. The Irish Government is working with the British Government to persuade the representatives of the unionist community to embark on this step without delay, secure in the knowledge that the process already contains multiple safeguards, including the guarantee of popular referendum, to ensure

that the interests of their community must be respected in any agreed outcome.

The continuing support of the international community is an invaluable asset on which we can draw in the search for a settlement. Most directly, the negotiations benefit from the independent chairmanship of Senator Mitchell of the United States, former Prime Minister Holkeri of Finland, and General de Chastelain of Canada, whose skill and authority command the respect and confidence of all participants. In addition, I would like to express my Government's gratitude for the generosity and support of all of our many friends in this Assembly, in particular the Governments of the United States and of our European Union partners.

The wounds of conflict are still deep and unhealed in Ireland. We can be under no illusion but that the process of reconciliation and the crafting of an agreement will be slow and painstaking. But we have continued to make progress on that journey, and we are committed to continuing in our quest for peace.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Yevgeny Primakov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Primakov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The agenda of the General Assembly at the current session reflects all the complexity of the stage mankind is now going through, the essence of which is the transition from bloc confrontation to multipolarity, economic interdependence and the democratization of international relations.

I would like to emphasize that during the past year Russia made its contribution to the consolidation of this very trend. At the domestic level, this means an uncompromising continuation of the process of reforming society. The results of the recent presidential elections in our country have convincingly proved that Russia has decisively embarked on the road to the future. The majority of Russians voted for the continuation of economic reform, for a State of law and for a policy of openness and cooperation.

In our relations with the other Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries, we resolutely oppose both the idea of restoring the Soviet Union, an idea based on the denial of the sovereignty of the Commonwealth States, and narrow-minded national isolationism. We stand for the voluntary integration and unification of the

members of the Commonwealth and hold that it should not be isolated from the rest of the world. We wish to ensure, and we shall ensure, that the CIS will become an important centre of world economic development and international stability.

On a wider international plane, Russia is pursuing a policy aimed at establishing a new world order firmly based on the equality of all States, justice and universal security. However, the establishment of such a world order is a slow process, influenced by both objective and subjective factors. It is only natural that the end of the cold war provided a starting point for the transition to achieving a stable and predictable peace at the global level.

But zones of regional conflict have expanded drastically. The upsurge of terrorism has caused universal shock, and the threat of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is emerging. The rejection of ideological, military-force confrontation, brought about by the end of the cold war, clearly proved insufficient to neutralize all these dangers and risks.

Let us confess, at least to ourselves, that we will not succeed here unless, first and foremost, we overcome the inertia of the political mentality. Unfortunately, the stereotypes that took root in the minds of several generations of statesmen during the 40 years of the cold war have not yet disappeared along with the dismantling of strategic missiles and the destruction of thousands of tanks. In this connection, I would like to single out three conditions for the transformation of international relations during the post-cold-war period.

First, we should see to it that the old fronts of bloc confrontation are not replaced with new lines of division. That is precisely why we accept neither the idea of the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) military infrastructure to the area of the now defunct Warsaw Treaty nor the efforts to make that alliance the axis of a new European system. The enormous possibilities for economic cooperation and the spiritual enrichment of all the peoples of the continent can be realized only through the creation of a genuinely all-European system of international relations. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Lisbon summit must be an important stage in the construction of such a Europe.

It is important to stress in general that the logic of a multipolar world in the twenty-first century should differ qualitatively from the schemes outlined by Metternich and

Bismarck. The way towards the establishment of a system of comprehensive security is through learning the skills of equal partnership between the various "poles", rather than through the revival of reflexes of rivalry and of balance of power.

The threat of new lines of division is appearing not only in Europe, but elsewhere. The understandable intolerance of the extremism of certain Islamic groups and factions must not develop into a categorization of the Muslim world at large as an enemy of modern civilization. This is probably one of the pressing requirements of our day.

Russia advocates resolute opposition to extremist and terrorist forces. They are especially dangerous when they enjoy State support, and no effort should be spared to prevent any State from rendering such support. This cannot be justified. I believe it is time a universal convention, covering all States without exception, were elaborated within the United Nations, denying political asylum anywhere to persons engaged in terrorist activities. However, no sanctions should be used as a means to punish peoples or as an instrument to overthrow Governments. It is far more effective to offer prospects for a better future to those who renounce extremism and accept the norms of conduct by the world community.

The second condition for achieving a durable peace is the emancipation from a mentality based on concepts of leaders and followers. Such a mentality is fuelled by illusions that some countries emerged from the cold war as victors, and others as the vanquished. But this is not the case. Peoples on both sides of the Iron Curtain jointly strove to rid themselves of the policy of confrontation. Meanwhile, the mentality based on leaders and followers paves the way directly towards the establishment of a unipolar world. Such a world-order model is unacceptable today to the overwhelming majority of the international community.

Finally, the third condition for the successful movement towards stable peace lies in the coordinated activities of the international community. Today, one of the most important tasks is the settlement of regional and local conflicts. In this regard, significant progress has been achieved recently. Peace agreements are being implemented in Bosnia. Initial important agreements have been achieved for a durable peace in the Middle East. We have managed to secure ceasefires in Transdniestria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorny Karabakh. The situation has improved somewhat in the conflict zones on

the African continent and in Latin America. But as yet no breakthrough to a durable peace has been achieved in any of these hotbeds of tension.

The future of the Middle East is a cause for grave concern. Russia — one of the sponsors of the peace process — cannot accept the sacrifice to tactical considerations and internal political manoeuvres of the first fruits of the peace negotiations, which were won at such a great cost. The implementation of the Agreements reached is the only realistic basis for maintaining the peace process. The only possible way forward is to advance through negotiation on the basis of the principle of “land for peace”, Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as resolution 425 (1978), which deals with Lebanon. It should be clear that the danger of reverting to confrontation becomes greater as the artificial pause in the peace process continues. When negotiators are silent, lethal weapons begin to awake.

We appreciate the peacemaking efforts of the United States of America, the European Union, France, Egypt and other members of the international community and we support an even closer partnership in peacemaking. That is the most effective way to promote peace-building in the Middle East.

The Bosnian settlement has entered a new and crucial stage since the elections of 14 September. The prospects for a lasting peace have become greater, but the risk of slipping into a new spiral of hostility and confrontation remains. I call upon all the Bosnian parties to take full advantage of the chance for peace created by the international community. At the same time, the United Nations, the OSCE, members of the Contact Group and the High Representative should immediately take a just and balanced approach to resolving outstanding problems. Assistance for the social and economic reconstruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina should be intensified considerably and conditions created for the return of refugees.

The time has also come to look beyond the horizon of the Paris agreements. There would seem to be a need for a large-scale and prolonged civilian peacemaking operation in which the United Nations and its specialized agencies will play an important role. The international military and police presence, to which Russia contributes, should remain a factor in the peace process for a given period after December 1996.

The lifting of sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) and the Bosnian

Serbs is an indispensable condition for a successful peace in the former Yugoslavia. I hope that, in the near future, a Yugoslav delegation will take its place in this Hall, as it has at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The programme of disarmament, security and stability for the twenty-first century should become one of the major axes of transition period strategy. The adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is one huge step in this direction. Russia has just signed the Treaty and we believe that it is of fundamental importance for all countries with nuclear capability to accede to it. However, it should clearly be understood that testing by any country of a nuclear explosive device before the Treaty enters into force will radically change the international situation and greatly prejudice the Treaty itself, and may compel many countries to revise their attitude to it.

I should like to draw the attention of the Treaty's opponents to the fact that it will not only contribute to the promotion of nuclear non-proliferation, but will objectively stimulate a gradual transition to nuclear disarmament on a multilateral basis. That is the purpose of President Yeltsin's proposal to conclude a treaty on nuclear security and stability with the participation of all the nuclear Powers. We invite interested States to begin exchanging views on the issue. Our suggestion that nuclear arsenals be located only on the territories of the nuclear Powers in question remains current.

The strengthening of the non-proliferation regime for weapons of mass destruction depends directly upon reliable prevention of the illicit traffic in fissile materials. The Moscow Summit of the Eight on Nuclear Safety and Security, convened as a result of a Russian initiative, contributed significantly to a solution of this problem. I call on all United Nations Member States to become involved in the implementation of the Moscow agreements.

The rights of an individual should occupy a central place in any new concept of international security. Strengthening the international human-rights protection mechanism could ensure the observance of these rights. Its oversight and preventive functions should be consolidated and made more practical. However, legitimate efforts to ensure respect for human rights cannot serve political purposes. It is too delicate an area to be invaded by political speculation and objectives.

My comments apply fully to the protection of the rights of national minorities. The relevance of this problem is evident in today's world. The complexity of the situation — let us be frank — requires a link between the protection of the rights of national minorities and observance of the principle of the territorial integrity of States. Russia is directing its policy at precisely such a link. My comments also apply to the Baltic States. While recognizing the sovereignty of those countries and their territorial integrity, Russia cannot remain indifferent to the discriminatory practices pursued against the Russian-speaking populations in Estonia and Latvia. While acknowledging measures that have already been taken to improve the situation, we believe that the United Nations and other international organizations should intensify and systematize their work for the protection of the rights of national minorities.

How do we implement this strategy for creating a new world order? Despite the importance of bilateral relations and successful regional organizations, the United Nations remains the principal mechanism capable of ensuring the transition from a bipolar and confrontational world to a multipolar and democratic one. In such circumstances, the significance of the United Nations as a centre for coordinating the actions of States is increasing. During the formation of a multipolar system, the United Nations is called upon to serve as a kind of safety net, minimizing the destructive effects of the changes and directing them towards democratic evolution.

The major task of the United Nations remains the maintenance of international peace and security. Furthermore, the principal tools available to the Organization must be political and diplomatic. I remind the Assembly of this fact because, during the past few years within the United Nations, a "sanctions syndrome" has begun to emerge: a desire to apply sanctions and other coercive measures more broadly and actively, sometimes ignoring existing political and diplomatic avenues. We are convinced that the United Nations should take such measures only in exceptional cases, after all other means have been genuinely exhausted.

On the whole, there is a need to modernize the United Nations sanctions mechanisms. Today, for example, no specific procedure is provided for lifting sanctions, and, as experience has demonstrated, this is extremely important. The humanitarian damage caused by sanctions and the damage to third countries should be minimized.

It is extremely important to emphasize that the United Nations must be maintained as the sole Organization that can authorize the use of force. Any actions of that nature taken in circumvention of the Security Council must be totally precluded.

The United Nations can and must work purposefully towards establishing a new global legal framework. To give impetus to such work Russia has proposed the holding in 1999 of a third peace conference. This idea already has the support of a significant number of States. I believe that the time has come to discuss this initiative in a constructive and substantive manner.

Past experience shows the need for new approaches by the United Nations to peacekeeping operations. We can already discern a pyramid regulating the relations of the United Nations with regional organizations. Without the development of such relations the United Nations may not be able to withstand the burden of peacemaking actions. I refer specifically to a pyramid, because it is of fundamental importance to do no harm to the Security Council, which bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace.

We are counting on significantly more attention being paid by the United Nations to conflicts in the area of the Commonwealth of Independent States. So far, the major role in this respect has been played by Russia and its Commonwealth partners.

In view of present circumstances, Russia calls on the United Nations to address the Afghan conflict. In that multinational and long-suffering country, a truly critical situation has arisen, and we have to do everything possible to prevent the country from disintegrating. The Afghan tragedy, like the endless series of internal conflicts in Rwanda and Liberia, is the most convincing argument for the development of a United Nations policy of national reconciliation diplomacy.

To cope with all these tasks, the United Nations itself must be updated and adapted to these new conditions. Reform is long overdue, and it is not a single measure that is required but a process that encompasses the entire United Nations system. Reform of the United Nations requires clearly defined goals: first, that it carry out its activities in a timely manner; and secondly, that its structure be optimized in order to enhance the effectiveness of the Organization.

A great deal has already been done to implement reform. The Secretary-General has made a considerable contribution to these efforts, and Russia supports the continuation of this difficult and protracted effort.

It is a well-established tradition to conclude statements before this Assembly by saying that the current session must play a special role in strengthening peace and that peoples are expecting us to make decisions. I am confident that this session of the General Assembly will live up to the expectations of Governments and the hopes of peoples: that all of us will take a new step in humankind's difficult transition towards a world united in its diversity, a world that is open to universal economic and spiritual development, a world that promises security and stability — a world in which States cooperate on an equal footing. Let us work together for the sake of this goal.

The Acting President: I now call on the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, His Excellency the Right Honourable Malcolm Rifkind.

Mr. Rifkind (United Kingdom): May I begin by congratulating Ambassador Razali of Malaysia on his assumption of office as our General Assembly's new President and offer our thanks to his predecessor, Ambassador Freitas do Amaral, for all his valuable work during the fiftieth session.

The late twentieth century is an exciting time. For the fortunate among us, the world has never offered more: travel with unheard-of ease, a tantalizing cornucopia of consumer goods, 100 or more television stations in our homes, the Internet. But these fruits are denied the vast majority of the planet's population. The number of people who live in absolute poverty is still growing. Their misery is a challenge to all our consciences, and I want today to talk about what we all, the developed countries as well as the developing, can do for those trapped in poverty — what we can do together to open the door to development.

But first of all I would like to say a few brief words about four other issues of particular importance at this moment in time.

First of all, Hong Kong. The year 1997 will be a special one for Hong Kong. Less than 300 days from now the world will witness history. The peaceful transfer of sovereignty over a territory of 6 million free and prosperous people is an event unparalleled in modern times. A transfer on the basis of an international Treaty, registered here at

the United Nations — a Treaty between two members of the Security Council, which guarantees that for 50 years after 1997 there will be “one country, two systems” and that “Hong Kong people will rule Hong Kong”. Let there be no doubt of Britain's continuing commitment to the future of Hong Kong and its people, well into the next century.

Thanks to the efforts of the Hong Kong people themselves, the development of Hong Kong is one of the world's great success stories. The Chinese Government has made clear its determination to preserve Hong Kong's prosperity, its stability and its way of life as a free and open society based on the rule of law. For Britain, a successful transfer will be the closing of a chapter, but also a new beginning to our relations with both Hong Kong and with China.

I suggest that all Members of the United Nations have a stake in this historic exercise. As long as the promises of the joint Declaration are turned into reality, Hong Kong has a bright future, as part of China and as one of the world's leading cities, contributing enormously to growth and prosperity throughout the Asia-Pacific region. And I am sure that all here will join me in welcoming that prospect.

I want also to take this opportunity to commend the International Court of Justice in its fiftieth anniversary year. The International Court has performed groundbreaking work in settling disputes between States, and I am proud that the United Kingdom has always been among the States that accept its compulsory jurisdiction. I hope that others will join us in pledging both moral and material support to the International Court. The more who accept that international law must be the foundation of international relations, the safer we shall all be.

The world is safer today too with the historic signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Earlier this morning I had the privilege of signing the Treaty for the United Kingdom. It shows that we can, by acting with determination and by making sacrifices, reap the benefits of the end of the cold war, and I firmly believe that the Treaty can make an important contribution to preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and in promoting international security. The Treaty was the product of a multilateral negotiation and was adopted here in the General Assembly. But that alone is not enough. If it is to be fully effective, it must command universal support, and the United Kingdom will now put in hand the steps to allow us to ratify the Treaty.

It is the sovereign right of every State to decide whether or not to be bound by international agreements. But it is our firm conviction that this Treaty is in the interests of all, and I urge all States to give it their full support.

Meanwhile, other threats still loom large. The insidious spectre of terrorism is a concern to all of us here, and it is right that the United Nations should be the forum for debate on this worldwide menace. The United Kingdom is proposing for adoption at this session a United Nations declaration which will spell out unequivocally that acts of terrorism, and the financing, planning and incitement of these acts, are contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. People who do these evil things and who seek asylum under the United Nations refugee Convention do not deserve to benefit from it.

The United Nations faces a critical year. It remains the hope of people across the world in search of peace and development. But the changes required to adapt and strengthen the United Nations to meet the challenges of the future have not yet been completed. This year must see a solution to the financial crisis. Reform must be part of the solution, including a thorough updating of the system of assessing contributions to the United Nations, so that contributions match real ability to pay. But all Members must pay what they owe, both their assessments and their arrears, and promptly; and the European Union's proposals are a good basis for negotiation. It will also be important to achieve over the coming year a resolution to the long-standing discussions of Security Council enlargement. In short, the United Nations must be made fit for the new millennium.

I turn now to my main theme. Three months ago, at Lyons, the Group of Seven countries committed themselves to a partnership for the economic development of the world. This is not just a catchy slogan; it is a fresh approach to the challenge of development, and what it means is that the developing countries and the developed together would share responsibility for creating the conditions that will allow economies to grow, a shared agenda of measures that we need to take to promote development.

For the countries of the developing world, this means pursuing policies to enable economies to grow: taxes need to be kept low, subsidies cannot be allowed to distort markets, exports should not be impeded by heavy tariffs. Domestic markets must be allowed to operate with as little interference as possible. The goal must be to establish an environment where the private sector can flourish, for the private sector is the engine of growth.

In 1755, Adam Smith famously remarked that for prosperity

“Little else is requisite ... but peace, easy taxes, and tolerable administration of justice”.

This is still a valid recipe today — not easy to achieve, but with the sound foundations of good government and sensible macroeconomic policies, enterprise can flourish anywhere. This is the challenge to the Governments of the developing world.

What of the developed world's side of the bargain? — countries such as my own. Our responsibility is to remove the shackles which hinder developing economies as they try to enter the global market. Many of the poorest countries are still caught in a mire of debt they are unlikely ever to be able to pay off. This benefits no one. The United Kingdom has long argued that, when combined with macroeconomic reform of the kind I have described, deep debt relief can kick-start the development of the poorest economies. Some time ago, Britain helped to identify steps that could be taken to lift the debt burden from the poorest, most indebted countries: more debt relief from bilateral creditors and getting the multilateral agencies themselves to share more of the burden. Since then the Paris Club of creditors has made an important contribution by increasing debt forgiveness as agreed following British proposals at the Naples Summit in 1994. The multilateral agencies too have come up with some useful proposals, such as the World Bank's Trust Fund to provide debt relief. I also welcome the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) commitment to continue providing concessional finance through the enhanced structural adjustment facility.

These measures to relieve debt need to be implemented both flexibly and soon. The countries in greatest need should be granted maximum relief as swiftly as possible. I look forward to final agreement at the annual meetings of the IMF and the World Bank next week.

The private sector is the motor of development. Private investment flows to the developing world are now at record levels. The United Kingdom is the third largest source of private investment. But these flows are still not reaching the poorest countries. There is therefore a continuing need for concessional aid to prime the pump of homegrown development. We need to focus our efforts on those countries where help is needed most and which can make the best use of it. Help must primarily be

targeted at creating growth with equity, at developing human resources to their full potential, at giving priority to the needs of the poor: to health and education, to clean water and small enterprises.

Increasingly this partnership in development amongst us all has to deal with the growing problems of planet survival: climate change, the environment, the future of the world's oceans and forests, and pandemic diseases. Development which ignores these will not be sustainable. The United Nations is a central forum for focusing the attention and action of Governments and civil society on these challenges as we enter the next century. Next year's General Assembly special session to review the Rio summit on environment and development is one example.

But the best help that we in the developed world can give to the developing is to buy what they produce, and to do that we in the developed world must demolish the barriers that we still maintain against imports from the poorer countries of the developing world. When I look around the world, I see many developing countries bursting with exports that they have to sell: textiles, food, manufactured goods. But tragically, the markets of the richer countries of the developed world are often closed to these exports. Last week's report from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) predicted that poor countries could triple their exports to the North over the next 10 years if import quotas were phased out — an extra \$175 billion a year in income. Protectionism is starving the developing economies of their oxygen, the oxygen of growth.

The European Union's record is better than most. We already have a wide-ranging scheme to allow duty-free imports from developing countries. But even so, the European Union obstructs, for example, imports of Palestinian cut flowers; it obstructs fruit juices from South Africa, strawberry jam from Bulgaria. Other developed countries are even less generous. The United States targets imports of Mexican tomatoes; Japan restricts imports of rice from South-East Asia. The list could go on.

We all know the difficulty of resisting powerful domestic lobbies. They exist in Britain as elsewhere. But this sort of protectionism is not simply selfish; it is also short-sighted. Growth and prosperity in the developing world will over time increase, not diminish, the wealth of the industrialized world. Trade is not a zero-sum game. It is a process which is mutually beneficial, mutually enriching; and with prosperity comes stability and greater security for us all.

This is not some fashionable nostrum dreamt up in an ivory tower. It is a prescription which has already been seen to work. Since 1945, under the auspices of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the world economy has moved steadily towards more open markets. And the result is clear: five decades of unprecedented economic growth and prosperity. It is incumbent upon us to spread this benefit more widely.

That is why I so warmly welcome the proposal put forward by the Director-General of the World Trade Organization. Mr. Ruggiero has proposed that the least-developed countries be granted tariff-free access to the markets of the developed world. I wholeheartedly welcome this initiative. I hope that others will see its compelling logic: the best hope the poor have for sustained economic development is to be given the freedom to export, the freedom to sell.

That freedom enables countries to grow. But free trade is not just helpful to developing countries, it is a global good, its benefits are spread wide, to the producers and consumers in the developed and the developing world alike, who can profit from the greater efficiency that free trade engenders, and who can buy the best and cheapest products available on the world markets. In short, free trade benefits us all. That is why Britain is so firmly committed to bringing the vision of global free trade to reality by the year 2020.

Free trade begins at home. Cutting tariffs and other import restrictions helps developing countries by cutting the costs of production, boosting efficiency and thus helping exports and growth. Combine these benefits with the freedom to export granted by open markets in the developed world, and developing countries and their economies can enjoy a virtuous circle of development. Free trade is therefore the catalyst for growth. This is not just good economic theory. Greater efficiency and higher growth mean more resources available for new hospitals and new schools, better housing and cleaner water. Free trade means real benefits for poor people.

I have described today a challenge for every one of us here. Poverty is something we can all do something about. In May, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development proposed that the developed and developing worlds together should try to cut the number of people living in absolute poverty by half by 2015. Britain commits itself to that goal. It is achievable.

At home, we must liberalize our economies, minimize the burden of government and lift all restrictions on the free operation of the market. In the global economy, we must remove barriers to trade to allow the developing countries to sell. We must help lift the millstone of debt from those who can least bear it. We cannot allow the poorest members of the world community to become marginalized. We must do our utmost to enable all Members of the United Nations to enjoy the fruits of integration into the global economy. A revitalized United Nations has an essential part to play.

I do not underestimate the difficulty of the tasks that I have described. We can only confront them in partnership, rich and poor together. If we all play our part, prosperity can be placed within the grasp of even the poorest countries.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium, His Excellency Mr. Erik Derycke.

Mr. Derycke (Belgium) (*interpretation from French*): The opening of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, under the presidency of Ambassador Razili, takes place at the very moment a large number of States have entered into new commitments on the long road to nuclear disarmament. Our signature, this very morning, of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is another opportunity for Belgium to reiterate its determination to contribute to the fight against nuclear proliferation. I am very happy that this important step was taken today. It should inspire us to continue our common effort towards universal acceptance of this new international instrument, as well as an effective implementation of the international verification measures it provides.

My Irish colleague, Minister Dick Spring, has spoken on behalf of the European Union, whose objectives and concerns my country shares. Belgium endeavours to contribute substantially to the definition and implementation of the policies and plans of action which the European Union intends to carry out throughout the world.

Our intentions before this Assembly should aim to go beyond formalities. Diplomatic language all too often hides our inability to act or our lack of real compassion.

The citizens of the world are fearful as we come to the end of the century. Whatever their country, people are confronted with a new anxiety, a fear of tomorrow, without even realizing that these feelings are shared by the entire

world. In numerous regions of the world, this is a fear of physical danger. It is a fear of external threats, aggression and civil war. People die in the same way in Africa, Asia, America and Europe. People are killed for the same dreams and mutilated in body and spirit by the barbarism of modern weaponry and criminal madness born of hatred.

Yes, our world is fearful in the face of all these violations of fundamental human rights which persist notwithstanding the major conferences proclaiming our hope and belief in a world where the rights of men, women and children are respected. In such a world respect for humanitarian law need no longer be questioned.

The crises felt by rich countries cannot possibly compare with the tragic consequences of war and underdevelopment. Yet the crises in Europe, in our prosperous societies, also constitute a humanitarian deficit. They are also the symptoms — albeit of a different nature — of the same ills of modern times. These include contempt for the human person as a subject of law and his reduction to mere merchandise. Today, society everywhere is in crisis. The logic of the market seems to be an exclusionary mechanism which segregates society. As the Mexican poet Octavio Paz once wrote,

“The society of consumption has chilled human life with its glacial waters of selfish calculation.”

This dehumanization of mankind for financial profit is the primary cause of many scourges which affect our planet, irrespective of the traditions and political systems that characterize each and every region of the world.

In this respect the inertia of individuals transformed into consumers rather than dynamic actors comes to mind, as do the problems of unemployment, the scourges of trade in human beings, child prostitution, organ trading, drugs and all other international criminal activities. These calamities of modern times require the international community to put in place effective mechanisms by which we can combat them together.

As I said during the World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, which was held in Stockholm last August, we must join efforts, wills, means and resources to eliminate and prevent the proliferation of these activities on our planet. The behaviour of those who profit from such cruel treatment

of human beings must be punished by the international community.

Belgium strongly believes that the provisions of the Stockholm declaration and programme of action to criminalize the sexual exploitation of children should be translated into new treaty obligations for all States. The ongoing negotiations on the adoption of the optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child seem to me the appropriate forum to reach this goal.

The protection of children in this field should equally inspire us to a creative and courageous approach in other United Nations forums where the question of international criminalization of the trade in human beings is dealt with. The Stockholm declaration and programme of action should therefore be reflected in the texts we adopt during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly in order to strengthen the protection of the rights of the child and to condemn strongly the exploitation of children.

This year, the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, 2 December 1996, will be devoted to the trade in human beings. The whole world should endeavour to bring this horrendous scandal to an end.

Although we must tackle these social problems, our action should first be introspective in order for it to be credible and efficient. How can modern society be reconciled with the globalization of cultures and trade? How can the balance between the resources of rich countries and the needs of poor countries be restored?

The freedom of the market cannot be absolute, lest it become an absurdity. Our societies can only be viable if they result from a balance between the freedom of the individual and the fundamental rights of the other. The unfortunate evolution of our consumer society and the abandonment of humanist values could lead us — as the events of this summer in my country have shown — to a society where murder and rape become commonplace for some and where abuse is tolerated for too long. We must therefore reconstruct our list of moral priorities and create a new international moral code based on simple, readily implemented priorities.

Peace, non-violence and acceptance of the other head the list, followed by sharing and social solidarity. Man needs to be reconciled with modern times, reclaiming his central role as subject and actor rather than object and merchandise. These values also should determine the relations between rich and poor countries. Finally, our

children should be trained to be involved, responsible citizens, conscious of the consequences of their actions on society. I believe that the formulation of a new international moral code is necessary if we are to overcome our fears and rediscover our will to act — to fulfil our moral duty to take an optimistic approach to international cooperation.

This is why preventive diplomacy must be one of our top priorities. Belgium neither can nor wants to ignore the need to turn its attention to the South, to Africa in particular. We must overcome the desperation of certain situations and do everything within our means to finally allow the development of justice, social progress and democracy in Africa. The situation is extremely troublesome and warrants our basing our political action on the essential priorities, which are, in fact, challenges to be overcome. What are these challenges? to avoid new fratricidal wars and genocide; to ensure that in existing conflicts international humanitarian law is respected; and to guarantee the reconstruction and sustainable development of the continent with full respect for human rights and the rule of law. We should develop our policies while keeping in mind the fundamental relationships that must be constructed between these complementary objectives.

In particular, I am thinking of former President Nyerere's work in Central Africa. Our support for this work shows our willingness to cooperate with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the countries of the region in trying, together, to find solutions to the present crisis and to prevent hatred, death and the ravages of destruction from overrunning Africa, which is dear to us. Belgium supports the convening of a conference on security and stability in the Great Lakes region.

The appointment of Mr. Ajello as Special Envoy of the European Union and of Ambassador Haesendonck as Belgian Special Envoy to the region shows the willingness of the European Union and Belgium to address these concerns. For 1996 and 1997, the Belgian Government has made financial resources available to support the efforts under way. The survival of the populations of Burundi and Rwanda and of the Kivu people in Zaire is at stake, as well as the security and prosperity of Central Africa as a whole.

Within the framework of a policy of conflict prevention which the European Union, in cooperation with the OAU, is trying to elaborate, the Western European Union (WEU), of which Belgium currently

holds the chairmanship, is also prepared to offer logistical support to African peacekeeping operations. The WEU's fact-finding mission to Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya returned with strong conclusions, and we intend to pursue the recommended course of action during our chairmanship. My country, which for years has participated in stand-by agreements, must review the mechanisms that might be established to improve the functioning of these agreements.

In this context, I wish to recall our willingness to support logistically and financially any possible contingency planning for Burundi. Possibly in a revised form, the agreements reached in Arusha last 25 June and 31 July should allow support for the normalization efforts in Burundi. This option would clearly be preferred to any other possible solution. The Belgian Government would like to confirm here its political will to be associated with this possible assistance to the security of Burundi, taking into account the modalities that are yet to be defined. However, it is my deepest wish that the Burundi authorities and all active parties in that country will find the road to national reconciliation and peace, to a system of government which guarantees equitable representation and real protection of minorities. I wish to recall that Security Council resolution 1072 (1996) of 30 August demands that these negotiations be initiated before 31 October.

Belgium's preventive diplomacy efforts should also be seen in the framework of European Union initiatives to promote the development of these new societies. The presidential, legislative, regional and local elections to be held in Zaire in 1997 are an opportunity for the Belgian Government and the European Union to show their active solidarity within the framework of collective electoral assistance, which must be coordinated by the United Nations. In order to organize this electoral assistance, I would hope that a representative of the Secretary-General could be appointed as soon as possible. Zaire's people have the right to participate knowledgeably in free and fair elections. The international community has the obligation to facilitate the democratic process in Zaire.

The Belgian Government is aware of the difficulty of arriving at a global approach to the problems of the South, and of Central Africa in particular. We do not believe that we should impose upon other countries any system of government or dictate the way to achieve this. But we must insist on the concept of good governance. That is, there should be systems of government with checks and balances, which guarantee the free exercise of the civil, political, social and cultural rights of the people, and which enhance

the development of a free and dynamic society — the only way to ensure harmonious and sustainable development.

Preventive diplomacy is meaningless if weapons remain available to extremist groups who seek, by the suppression of others and by "ethnic cleansing", solutions to problems which should only be found in dialogue, consensus and political negotiation. The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is an essential element in making the arms trade transparent, a goal which my country and others support. Since its inception, Belgium has provided the arms Register with the information requested. The extension of the Register to other categories of arms is extremely desirable. The Belgian Government believes nevertheless that, for now, the main priority should be making the Register universal. We, together with our partners of the European Union, will continue to concentrate our efforts on this aspect.

Anti-personnel mines are particularly inhumane weapons. Belgium is tirelessly pursuing, in every international forum, its objective of total and universal prohibition of anti-personnel mines. The Belgian Government regrets that very little progress has been made to date. Next October we will participate in the Ottawa conference which, I hope, will be able to give a significant boost to the achievement of our objectives.

When preventive diplomacy and arms control cannot keep peace, peacekeeping missions become necessary. In our view, these peacekeeping and peace-restoration missions remain one of the primary responsibilities of the United Nations. The Belgian Government has taken part in various peacekeeping operations and is assuming military leadership of the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES). I am convinced that the success of UNTAES will contribute significantly to the re-establishment of a society which we hope will be pluralist, tolerant and peaceful. Last year, the General Framework Agreement, negotiated in Dayton and signed in Paris led to the establishment, under United Nations auspices, of the NATO-led implementation force (IFOR). My country is, with its partners, part of this peacekeeping operation whose role is to be a force for solidarity, reconstruction and hope for a new Europe. The recent elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina allow us to look toward the future with a degree of optimism.

The increase in number and size of peacekeeping operations that has characterized the recent history of our

Organization has allowed the development of political concepts and given a new dimension to international military cooperation. It has also allowed for positive and necessary developments in the field of international humanitarian law. The Belgian Government hopes that the recent agreement between the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Secretariat on the applicability of humanitarian law to peacekeeping operations will permit a swift adoption of the lines of conduct to this effect. This is indispensable and should be welcomed unreservedly by all troop-contributing countries.

For peacekeeping operations to succeed they must be followed up by rehabilitation programmes. Obviously, these programmes, which are meant to eliminate the potential causes of new conflicts, must be developed in a climate of peace that ensures respect for human rights.

This *fin de siècle* is characterized by the size and urgency of rehabilitation operations and by humanitarian intervention and aid. Despite exceptional crises situations, we must not forget the importance of implementing global and sustainable development. The major thematic conferences of the United Nations were designed to establish a strategy for the growth of the human being. I believe that the effective implementation of the moral and political decisions taken at these major conferences is fully in keeping with the new moral code that I hope to see emerge.

In this context, I would like to mention the efforts to reform United Nations institutions and, in particular, the quest for efficiency and sound financial management that should be the watchword of the functioning of our organizations.

I began my statement today by denouncing fear and with a plea for a new international moral code. I would like to conclude an observation that I made at the outset: that words are hollow if they are mere figures of speech and diplomatic formulas. Our words must be alive, and they must spring from peace, silence and complete transparency. Only then will we be able to understand the language of the many children, women and men afflicted by underdevelopment, war and indifference.

The Acting President: I now call on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Croatia, His Excellency Mr. Mate Granić.

Mr. Granić (Croatia): At the outset, allow me to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the President on his

election to the high office from which he will guide the work of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. I am confident that his diplomatic experience and commitment to the noble principles of the Charter will impress upon this session new commitment, determination and vigour. I would also like to express our gratitude to his predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, for the skilful manner in which he presided over the work of the fiftieth session.

After having been the focus of the international community's attention for a long time, due to its being exposed to aggression and to its being part of the most serious regional crisis since the Second World War, Croatia has now entered a new era of its history as a free, sovereign and fully independent State. Croatia is now in a position to deal with and resolve almost all its external and internal affairs with its own resources, and through close cooperation with the international community as an equal partner.

It gives me great pleasure, therefore, to be able to lead the Croatian delegation at the fifty-first session of the General Assembly with the strong conviction that the time of war is finally behind us and that in the region of south-east Europe, Croatia is no longer a part of a larger crisis, but rather an active and decisive agent of introducing the final solution to the crisis and the emerging international order. In this connection, our external and internal policies are becoming increasingly peace-oriented and development-focused.

So far Croatia has been successful in dealing with the question of its statehood and the right of small nations to full self-determination, as well as in defending these rights within the framework of and through the United Nations. We are enormously grateful to this noble institution and its associated agencies, and especially to those Member States whose sons and daughters are exposed to risk, in some cases giving their lives, in a noble endeavour to assist us in ending the horrific war of aggression against our country and in the wider region. Croatia has played host to one of the largest, most expensive and complex peacekeeping operations in the history of the United Nations. Croatia's Government and people, the hundreds of thousands of displaced persons and refugees in particular, have on many occasions been critical of the ineffectiveness and ambiguity of peacekeeping mandates. Today, however, the war has ended, and we are finally coming to terms with all of the political, economic and procedural constraints which the international community had to overcome in order to

properly react to the aggression, the calamity of war and the diplomatic uncertainty resulting from the breakup of the communist federation of Yugoslavia and the security vacuum resulting from the closure of the cold-war era.

Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina indeed paid a high price for their struggle to ensure their survival, alongside the progressive efforts of the international community to develop a new concept of the United Nations and other international mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of conflicts. However, we believe that our experience has given a very positive impetus to the intrinsic need to reform the general concept of peacekeeping operations, the work of the Security Council and the changes in the regional, political and security systems in Europe as well.

Even though the mandate of the joint peacekeeping forces in Croatia has not yet ended — 5,000 peacekeepers are still working in the Croatian Danubian area — I wish to convey to the Assembly the optimism of my Government for the successful completion of the mandate of the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES) there. This operation just may become the most successful peacekeeping operation in recent history, and perhaps rightfully so, given our own and international frustrations with the unsuccessful attempt at peacekeeping and peacemaking in the region so far.

The successful completion of the UNTAES operation is becoming ever more likely given the recent signing of an agreement on normalization of relations between the Republic of Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the establishment of a new balance in the region, the same balance that helped the international community forge the Dayton Peace Agreement.

We are grateful to all Member States that supported our appeals and calls in the General Assembly for universal respect of international law — as reflected, for instance, in General Assembly resolution 49/43, which created the political conditions and legal framework for the peaceful reintegration of Eastern Slavonia. We are also grateful to Member States whose diplomats and soldiers are more directly involved in the successful implementation of the UNTAES mandate.

Thanks in part to General Assembly support for the universal principles enshrined in the Charter and in part to the intervention of United Nations peacekeeping forces, the countries which emerged following the dissolution of the

former Yugoslavia are now increasingly heading towards the objective of peacefully resolving mutual problems on a bilateral basis and through regular multilateral contacts, thereby lessening the need for international involvement and mediation. Those problems include the succession to the former State; regional security arrangements and arms control; the search for missing persons; reciprocal minority rights; and the reestablishment of bilateral economic, cultural and other forms of cooperation. The successful expansion of bilateral neighbourly relations based on internationally accepted principles cannot be replaced by the imposition of superfluous and ambitious regional associations.

Taking account of this new reality, in which Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia are prepared to resolve all their outstanding problems on a bilateral basis as two equal and sovereign States, the need for the continued presence of peacekeeping forces in Croatia has come to an end.

Any further extension of the UNTAES mandate in Croatia can only encourage delays in its implementation and place at risk the most critical aspect of the mandate: the return of 80,000 Croatian and non-Serb refugees and displaced persons to the region. The continued lack of tangible progress in this area could induce internal and external instability; this is a matter which my Government and the international community should seek to avoid at all costs. For this reason, the clear stance of my Government is that the peaceful integration of the region under the present UNTAES mandate should be completed on schedule.

With the signature of the normalization agreement between Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the small United Nations Mission of Observers in Prevlaka, Croatia, will also become obsolete in the foreseeable future. Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia have agreed that the issue of Prevlaka is to be dealt with and fully resolved as a security matter, in accordance with the United Nations Charter and the policy of good-neighbourliness. Therefore, there shall be no further raising of the question of territorial adjustments between Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on the Prevlaka peninsula, the five-century-old boundary line between Croatia and Montenegro. However, there is a need to establish a security regime there through peaceful negotiations with a view to the mutual benefit of cross-border economic cooperation.

On the basis of the new reality, Croatia's foreign and internal policy priorities will now aim at compatibility with and timely integration into European regional organizations. At the same time, we remain cognizant of our responsibilities in respect of the peaceful and successful stabilization of neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina, in which Croats are one of the three constituent peoples. The process of the internal stabilization of Bosnia and Herzegovina will take years and, in this regard, Croatia is fully open to cooperation and collaboration with the international community. The community's presence and assistance there has been significantly less costly to it thanks to Croatia's resources and contributions. Following the initial reconstruction assistance for Bosnia and Herzegovina, an economically viable Croatian State can make the greatest contribution to the viability of the Bosnian Federation and to Bosnia and Herzegovina as a whole.

Croatia is prepared to recognize the results of every democratic political process between the three constituent nations and the two entities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and will continue to give its full support to the successful implementation of the Federation Agreements.

Croatia, fully supportive of a properly balanced Federation as defined at Dayton — the 1—2—3 formula: one State, two entities, three constituent peoples — seeks not only to ensure the survival of the Bosnian Croats as a constituent people in all respects, but also to avoid any situation that could lead to a threatening instability in the region as a whole. In that sense, any attempts to change the constitutional definition of the Federation or to achieve the same results through institutional or power-sharing arrangements are unacceptable to the Republic of Croatia as a party to the relevant Agreements. The same applies to any attempts to change the present entities settlement through an over-centralization of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Any territorial adjustment at the expense of Bosnia and Herzegovina or its two entities shall be viewed as highly detrimental to the stability of the region in general and considered a threat to Croatia's security.

As Croatia continues to move to reestablish its European way of life, while at the same time bringing its young democracy and its governance into conformity with the new European democratic reality, constructive criticism of its actions and attitudes will continue to be taken in good faith. By now, we have accepted the fact that, owing to the needs of the multilateral crisis-management process in the region, the standards set for Croatia in many areas of democratic development are much higher than for other

countries in transition. Croatia's extraordinary openness to the innumerable institutions that monitor developments on our soil, especially in the field of human rights, attests to the transparency of our policy and to our deep commitment to democratic values, tolerance and individual rights.

In renewing our expressions of gratitude to the United Nations for its contribution to the successful resolution of an act of aggression against a Member State, we should like to express the readiness of our country, which now has a wealth of experience in peace-mediation efforts behind it, to contribute actively to similar United Nations efforts outside our region. We should now like to become active in the other regular activities of the United Nations and regional mechanisms, to which we offer our experience and experts, to further the common interests and ideals of the Charter of the United Nations.

Croatia is actively following the reform process of the United Nations system, and actively participates in some aspects of reform. We fully recognize the need to reorganize the system and adapt it to the changing international system. New objectives are already clearly defined in the socio-economic sphere, and the area of human rights in particular. The United Nations is faced with new realities and problems centred around its goal of promoting the rights of the individual while preserving the identity of groups and nations and respecting the sovereignty of Member States.

We are following with particular interest the process of resolving the financial crisis of the United Nations. As a small State that has experienced exceptional financial needs and shortfalls over the past five years, Croatia supports efforts to find a more equitable scale of assessment for Member States that are experiencing extraordinary situations and whose capacity to pay has, accordingly, changed significantly.

Croatia has already spoken in favour of reforming and strengthening the United Nations system, and especially the Security Council. Our position takes into account new realities in which economic powers such as Germany and Japan, but also individual regions and States — and their views — must be more justly represented. Therefore, Croatia firmly supports the expansion of the Council to 25 members in both categories of membership. Greater transparency in the work of the Council is also essential, and should be achieved through the adoption of new rules of procedure. The Organization will also be strengthened by the present

discussions on changes in general procedures, that will, *inter alia*, reduce and rationalize the costs of overlapping activities of various United Nations institutions. We especially support efforts to rationalize and restructure the socio-economic sector of the United Nations so that it can continue to achieve its rightly ambitious goals around the world.

In its post-war foreign policy and economic activities, Croatia will firstly associate with countries on its continent, but will also strive towards diversification of its relations. Croatia wishes actively to contribute to the promotion of the common interests of small and, especially, new States.

We are pleased to note that apart from the trend towards institutionalizing regional development and functional cooperation, we are entering an era in which States are increasing their level of cooperation, through multilateral diplomacy, on basic development questions, such as: the environment; developing the laws of the sea; enforcing international humanitarian law; protecting human

and minority rights; protecting the rights of women and children; promoting disarmament and non-proliferation; and sharing knowledge and resources to help the development of the Third World. We are, therefore, passing over old ideologies, religious or regional affiliation and loyalties. One area in which Croatia will be especially active is the establishment of the international criminal court. We will be one of the sponsors of a draft resolution calling for the timely establishment of this institution.

The world we live in is entering a stage of national individualization but also of ever-closer functional cooperation between States in creating a stable and interdependent new order. Croatia, as a young State that still harbours painfully fresh memories of its struggle for its identity, freedom and right to economic development, sincerely wishes to contribute to the establishment of this new order by actively helping to find solutions to other crisis points, development problems, and disproportions in contemporary societies around the world.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.