

**Statement by**  
**His Excellency**  
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**Deputy Prime Minister**  
**United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**

**To the General Debate of the 65TH Session**  
**of the United Nations General Assembly**

[Check against delivery]

The nations represented here know how deeply the world has changed in the six and a half decades since the UN was formed; since the spirit of international citizenship, of peoples and nations combining their energies to solve our shared problems, gave birth to the United Nations. Today that spirit is needed more than ever.

All of us have to respond to a world that is profoundly altered. As a community of nations we face three profound challenges:

- a redrawing of the map of power, including a big shift in economic power
- the globalisation of problems, not least terrorism and climate change
- increasingly fluid forms of identity, and the rapid circulation and potency of new ideas

Taken together these mean that we are in a new world. All three demand matching responses.

So we must; reform and renew our multilateral institutions in line with the changing map of power; strengthen our actions on international peacebuilding, climate change and development; promote liberal values and human rights to win the conflict of ideas

The truth is that in all three of these areas, we are not doing anything like as well as we must. The effectiveness of multilateral approaches is in question in the wake of the financial crisis, the failure of the climate change talks in Copenhagen and the stalling of the Doha trade round. And too many nations and international institutions have been too reticent about promoting enlightened, human values. We need to inject new life into our institutions, and new confidence into the expression of our ideals.

Turning, first, to the altered geography of power.

It is an often-stated fact that the old economic order is being transformed. That what were once labelled 'emerging economies' are now, in many cases, global economic players. The distribution of military power, too, is altering. So power is being wielded in different places, and in different ways. This power shift requires us to reform our international institutions; to reinforce the rule of international law; and to free up international trade.

In recent years, our multi-national institutions have sometimes struggled to adapt to the new circumstances. Reform is essential. A good place to start is right here – the United Nations. The UN Security Council must be reformed to reflect the new geography of power. The UK is clear and unambiguous in our support for permanent seats for Brazil, India, Germany and Japan, and for African representation. Put simply, the UN cannot speak for the many if it only hears the voices of the few.

And we welcome, Mr President, the priority which you have promised to give to the Assembly's continuing negotiations on this.

Closer co-operation on counter-terrorism is also vital, and we welcome this Assembly's affirmation of the UN's Global Counter Terrorism Strategy. We must stand shoulder to shoulder in the struggle against terrorism.

The UK will always champion the UN. If it did not exist, we would have to invent it. But let us be frank. Without a radical overhaul, the UN will not provide the leadership the world seeks from it, and needs from it. It is also important that the vital role of the European Union in promoting development and prosperity can be adequately represented in this Assembly.

The redrawing of the power map also makes it even more important that the writ of international law extends across the globe. Laws are the solid representation of our collective values. That is why it is so important we uphold and reinforce the instruments of international justice including the International Criminal Court, and specific Tribunals, such as for Rwanda and the Former Yugoslavia. I strongly welcome the comments by President Obama yesterday on the vital importance of the Middle East Peace Process, and can assure the Assembly the UK will play a full role in working towards the end of hostilities that have been so profoundly damaging for all sides.

The prevention of nuclear weapons proliferation is another huge priority for the international community. The UK welcomes the success of the NPT Review Conference this May and I can assure the Assembly that we will continue to play our part in making the world safer from the threat of nuclear weapons.

I was ready today to welcome the progress made in this week's meeting of the E3+3 group on Iran.

I was ready to also straightforwardly reiterate our concerns about Iran's nuclear programme. But instead, once again, an issue of grave global concern has been overshadowed by the bizarre, offensive and attention-grabbing pronouncements by President Ahmedinejad from this podium yesterday. His remarks were intended to distract attention from Iran's obligations and to generate media headlines. They deserve to do neither.

The reshaped map of power also increases the need to open our borders to free trade. A trading world is a safer world. A world trade deal, which is within reach, would be worth \$170bn annually to the world economy. Two years ago we were very close, but we failed to seal the deal. We simply cannot afford protectionism. Today, we have to recognise that we will need an even

more ambitious deal than we envisaged then if we are to get agreement. Greater access to markets, particularly for least developed countries' exports of agriculture, supports growth and reduces poverty.

The second of the three big shifts we have to adapt to is the globalisation of many of our problems – and of many of the solutions to those problems.

Our economies are of course tied ever more closely together, as recent events have dramatically proven; prosperity and poverty in one part of the world impact on economic activity and security elsewhere. Diseases can span the globe in a matter of days. Terrorism is conducted by international networks across the world. Environmental threats do not respect borders.

We are used to thinking about stateless people. We have to get used to the idea of stateless problems too. Conflict takes place between, across and within national boundaries. But wherever it takes place, it can threaten the interests of all nations.

Conflict undermines our collective prosperity and destroys development. We must work harder to prevent conflict by tackling the sources of violence.

And, where conflict does break out, we must be ready to help resolve it. Let me take this opportunity to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of UN peacekeepers to laying the foundations for sustainable peace around the world. We owe them all, and the governments who provide them, a great debt of gratitude. The UK, along with France and other partners, has been at the forefront of supporting and encouraging UN efforts to deliver more strategic and effective peacekeeping. We will continue to provide that support.

But peacekeeping alone is not the answer. We need peacebuilding, too.

The UN is uniquely placed not only to keep the peace, but also to make it last. Effective peacebuilding can address the underlying causes of conflict and strengthen local, regional and national capacity to contribute to long-term stability in fragile States.

The coming year will see some significant challenges to the UN's efforts to promote international peace, justice and security:

- in Sudan, where we will see a referendum on the future of southern Sudan, while continuing to look for progress on justice in Darfur and more widely;
- in Somalia, where the African Union peacekeeping mission is playing a brave and crucial role, and where the leadership of the United Nations could be decisive;
- and in the Democratic Republic of Congo where much progress has been made, but where we have seen again in recent weeks how much more remains to be done to achieve real security and stability for many of its hard-pressed people.

The UK remains fully committed to the mission to bring peace and prosperity to Afghanistan. Afghans are increasingly taking responsibility for their own affairs. This year's Kabul Conference and, most recently, parliamentary elections have demonstrated Afghan commitment. Challenges remain but progress is being made. The UK will continue to work with its international partners to support Afghans to build a better Afghanistan.

The UK is wholehearted in our support for international development. Like many nations, we are having to take tough action to reduce our financial deficits. But we are not budging a millimetre from our commitment to development. We are standing by our promise to devote 0.7% of GNI to international development assistance from 2013, and we will enshrine this commitment in law.

And when disaster strikes, we must respond quickly and generously. Right now, Pakistan faces a humanitarian disaster of unimaginable proportions. As the Secretary-General has said, this is the largest disaster in the UN's 65-year history. So we must ensure that the UN's appeal is properly funded to cover both humanitarian relief and reconstruction. And we must ensure that there is enough support over the long-term, not least in helping Pakistan achieve the levels of economic growth that will allow the country to re-build itself. I am very proud, as the representative of an EU member state, that the EU has recently shown real leadership in promising to look at improving trade access for Pakistan in response to the disaster. I very much hope that others can follow suit.

So, economic power has shifted; and problems have globalised. But at the same time, the power of ideas has grown enormously. Identities have become more fluid: it is not possible to put people into neatly-labelled national boxes any more. This means that winning the battle of ideas is as important as military prowess.

The work of international institutions must continue to be guided by the values on which those institutions were founded: the rule of law – both domestic and international; the right to freedom of expression and belief; democracy; and equality before the law.

These values are sometimes described as 'Western' values – but only by people who do not know their history. Four centuries ago, the great Mughal emperor Akbar was legislating for religious freedom and equality in what is now India, while in parts of Europe 'heretics' were being burned at the stake.

The truth is that these liberal ideals of equality, law and self-determination cannot be claimed by any nation, or hemisphere. They are global values with global force. They are also the values at the heart of the UN Charter.

We should never apologise for promoting the idea that women and men are equal; never flinch from insisting that governments chosen by their people are better; never shy away from our insistence that nobody should be silenced because of their religion or beliefs.

The UK will therefore continue to push for human rights across the world. Since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the UN has developed a global legal framework of human rights standards. We want to see the Human Rights Council do more to ensure that states implement their obligations and use the 2011 Review to improve the Council's ability to respond effectively to situations of concern, such as the outrageous abuse of democracy and human rights in Burma.

UK foreign policy will be shaped by the three big challenges I have set out today: a power shift, globalisation of problems, and the rapid circulation and potency of ideas. The UK Government will fearlessly promote our ideals and interests, while remaining realistic in our approach.

This is the spirit in which the UK government is conducting a root-and-branch review of our own Strategic Defence and Security policy. Our last review took place in 1998, but the world has changed, along with the character of the threats we face. This is not to say that we did not face grave threats before. But they were more fixed, more visible, more predictable. Today the threats to our security are not rooted in specific states; are more fluid, and often less visible: terrorism, organised crime, or attacks from cyberspace. We must judge our security not by our ability to deal with what we know, but how able we are to respond to unpredictable threats.

The United Kingdom will also show leadership by example. As fierce advocates of the international rule of law, we will practice what we preach. No nation can insist on the law, and then act as though it is above it.

But our approach will also be hard-headed and realistic. In recent years we have learned – in some cases the hard way – that democracy cannot be created by diktat. Freedom cannot be commanded into existence.

The new coalition government, now five months old, will restore Britain's international reputation by pursuing a hard-headed foreign policy based on liberal values.

The world has changed. But the values that should guide us have not. We have to renew our international institutions in line with the new realities of world power and influence, and fearlessly project the ideals of democracy, equality and freedom.

Great things are demanded of us. Great things are necessary from us. It falls to our generation of leaders to meet these challenges – together.