

Statement of the European Union

accompanying the speech of

The Rt. Hon. Jack Straw MP

Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

to the

General Debate of the 60th Session of the General Assembly

17 September 2005

United Nations, New York



In his speech, the Foreign Secretary will refer to progress made at the World Summit, but will address his comments particularly to the Summit's recognition of the responsibility to protect and need for further engagement between the Middle East and the rest of the world.

The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey and Croatia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

* Croatia continues to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

Introduction

1. At the Summit, which ended yesterday, world leaders took up the challenge of making the UN more efficient, effective and relevant. The European Union (EU) believes that the Summit Outcome is a clear milestone along the road of reform. It is a clear mandate for change, addressing challenges that the world has long faced - and others that the world is facing for the first time.

2. The EU knows that a stronger and more effective United Nations is the only way to secure global stability and prosperity. Events in the five years since the Millennium Summit have strengthened this conviction. Without a shared effort to accelerate progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, rich and poor countries alike face a future of increased instability. Failure in UN-led efforts to tackle the threats of terrorism and proliferation would endanger the prosperity of the developing world as much as the developed. The United Nations should not be a forum for countries to push individual agendas, but one in which the international community can agree common action for the benefit of all the world's citizens.

3. The EU's support for the United Nations does not make us blind to its faults. It makes us more determined to build a United Nations that can act quickly and effectively. The EU's deep commitment to the ideals of the United Nations and to the vital work it carries out around the world can be seen as well as heard. EU member states pay about half of all voluntary donations to humanitarian and development activities as well as nearly 40 per cent of the cost of the UN's regular budget and UN peacekeeping operations.

Summit Outcome

4. The EU welcomes the Outcome as a whole, but is particularly pleased with progress in a number of areas: the Summit's headline on the need for more and better aid, and for development efforts to focus on meeting the Millennium Development Goals and promoting sustainable development; the condemnation of terrorism; the detailed mandate for the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission; the doubling of resources for OHCHR and the decision to create the Human Rights Council; the unprecedented recognition of the responsibility to protect; and crucial first steps towards a reformed UN Secretariat.

5. Like the Secretary-General, the EU had hoped for greater progress in some areas: a more substantial terms of reference for the new Human Rights Council; agreement to give the Secretary-General more flexibility and authority as Chief Administrative Officer of his Secretariat, in return for greater accountability; and backing for further measures on non-proliferation and disarmament.

6. Nevertheless, the EU believes that where action has been agreed, it is vital that the international community now takes it. Where the urgent need to discuss and implement has been recognised, the international community must now heed it. Words and promises must be made reality.

Development

7. The need for such action is most vividly illustrated by the agenda on development. The Summit provided the foundation for strengthening the global partnership between developed and developing countries set out at Monterrey. Earlier this year, the EU set a timetable to reach new levels of Official Development Assistance. By 2010, this assistance will account for 0.56 per cent of the EU's collective Gross National Income – resulting in an annual additional 20 billion Euros. By 2015 this proportion will reach 0.7 per cent. And EU member states recently agreed to support the G8 agreement to write off debt. In addition, the Summit recognised the value of developing innovative sources of financing.

8. Sub-Saharan Africa is not on target to reach many of the goals for over 100 years and on some goals – including hunger and sanitation – the situation is actually going backwards. At least 50 per cent of the agreed increase in EU aid resources, therefore, will go to Africa; in plain terms this means a doubling of EU aid to Africa over the next five years.

9. More aid on its own will not be enough. The real engines for making poverty history will be developing countries themselves. The EU believes that, as important as increasing aid, is making sure that it is used better and more effectively, in order to drive up standards of governance and help the poorest people for whom it is intended. This means developing countries adopting ambitious national development strategies, creating and reinforcing good governance structures, fostering a positive environment for economic growth and helping the private sector flourish. We welcome the strong and comprehensive commitments made in this regard by the African countries through the African Union, and its NEPAD initiative, and reflected in the Summit Outcome.

10. Some would say that we did not make enough progress on trade at the Summit. The EU believes that, through the Doha Round, the international community must deliver real gains for poor countries by reducing market barriers, abolishing export subsidies and significantly reducing trade-distorting domestic support, so that these countries can trade their way to higher growth and more jobs.

11. The international community of today owes it to future generations to ensure that development, in rich and poor countries alike, is sustainable in economic, social and environmental terms. The EU welcomes the Summit's recognition of the need to meet the

commitments and obligations undertaken in the UNFCCC, and remains fully convinced that the UNFCCC is the appropriate forum for negotiating future action on climate change. The EU is firmly committed to urgent global action to mitigate climate change - a serious, long-term challenge for every part of the world.

Peace and Security

12. The EU is taking a leading role across the development agenda. But this agenda cannot be advanced in isolation. Individual countries can only develop in a secure global environment. Just as development is not a preoccupation only for the developing world, so security is not only in the interests of the developed world. We have seen time and time again how conflict and instability in developing countries have destroyed fragile social and economic progress. The threats of terrorism and proliferation endanger the stable global environment within which trade flourishes and economies grow. Security is of direct relevance to the whole international community.

13. Progress was made at the Summit. The agreement to establish a Peacebuilding Commission will make a major contribution to a more coherent and better co-ordinated international response to the needs of countries emerging from conflict. It will help prevent conflicts from restarting and encourage countries to make the transition from violent instability to peaceful, sustained development. The EU is committed to seeing the Commission established by the end of the year.

14. Increasingly, conflict and violence takes place beyond the boundaries of conventional war. In July, the EU again suffered the horror of a major terrorist atrocity. This time, the target was London. But no continent is safe from the threat of terror. International terrorism requires an international response; we pay the price for each others' vulnerabilities.

15. The United Nations has already done much to set international standards against terrorism and to encourage and help States to meet them. The EU welcomes the Summit Outcome's clear condemnation of terrorism and the undertaking to conclude a comprehensive convention on international terrorism during the 60th session of the General Assembly. But the EU believes we must go further and affirm that the targeting and deliberate killing of civilians and non-combatants cannot be justified or legitimised by any cause or grievance.

16. Despite the Summit's failure to reach agreement on measures for non-proliferation and disarmament, work to make progress on these issues must go on. In his speech to the NPT Review conference, the Secretary General gave stark warning of the catastrophic global impact of any such use. We should heed his words. At the conference the international community made clear its continued commitment to the non-proliferation regime and to disarmament.

Human Rights

17. The Secretary General has said that we will achieve neither development nor security

without respect for human rights. Over fifty years the UN has had remarkable success. It has built a framework of international human rights law that sets clear standards by which all states are judged. As has long been recognised, however, when those standards are breached, we have not always done enough. The EU welcomes the unprecedented recognition of the international community's responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing or crimes against humanity.

18. The EU also welcomes the Summit's commitment to reinforcing the role and doubling the resources of the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights. Together with the decision to establish a Human Rights Council, the Summit has thus taken two other notable steps towards creating more effective human rights machinery at the UN. Protection and promotion of human rights has been reinforced as the third pillar of the UN's work, alongside development and peace and security. The EU is fully committed to work with the President of the GA and all interested delegations to complete, as soon as possible during the 60th session of the GA, negotiations on the mandate, modalities, functions, size, composition, membership, working methods and procedures of the new Council.

Strengthening the United Nations

19. In his report "In Larger Freedom", the Secretary-General set member states a challenge. He called on all member states to reshape the United Nations "in ways not previously imagined, and with a boldness and speed not previously shown". The EU welcomes endorsement at the Summit of the need to reform the main UN bodies, among them the General Assembly, ECOSOC and the Security Council, with a view to enhancing the representativeness, transparency and efficiency of the system. The EU will play its part in ongoing efforts to improve the effectiveness of the General Assembly and ECOSOC. In this regard, the EU welcomes the Outcome document's provisions on ECOSOC, reinforcing the role of the Council as the principal body of UN for co-ordination, policy review and policy dialogue on issues related to development and, in particular, on the implementation of the MDGs.

20. More widely, the EU welcomes the decisions on management reform taken at the Summit and will pursue their implementation vigorously in this session of the General Assembly. There needs to be a modernised approach to management in the UN that is based on strengthened accountability, greater transparency and more efficient working practices. It is vital that the UN's resources are channelled to the areas of greatest need and impact, and in this respect the EU welcomes the Summit decision on the review of mandates. The EU further believes that the Secretary-General needs the authority and flexibility to carry out his managerial responsibility and to re-deploy posts and resources from lower to higher priority areas.

21. At an operational level, the EU is determined to see through improvements to the predictability of humanitarian funding and capacity and to standby arrangements. The current reforms which will bring the various UN agencies and programmes working in one country together under a single leader and common management are good ones. We look forward to the results of the Secretary-General's further work on strengthening the management and co-ordination of operational activities.

22. The EU is committed to ensuring the availability of adequate resources for the UN, while adhering to our long-standing principle of budgetary discipline. We will therefore seek to adopt an appropriate budget for 2006-07 that will enable the UN to deliver meaningful results in all its activities, including new mandates agreed by the Summit. Given the need for urgent renovation work to make the UN Headquarters in New York safe, the EU believes that agreement on a comprehensive and coherent Capital Master Plan should be taken during the current session.