

UN reform - Plenary meeting - Address by the French Permanent Representative H. Exc. Mr. Jean-Marc de La Sablière (06/22/2005)

Mr. President,

I – We have been collectively engaged since last autumn in a great undertaking. This is nothing less than to recast multilateralism at this beginning of the 21st century, having at its center a modernized, more efficient United Nations organization that provides better responses to the challenges of our time.

We have covered a great part of the way. We are reaching the end or at least we can see that the end is near, that it is within our grasp.

What reasons do we have for believing in success?

1. First, thanks to you and the facilitators, detailed work has been done, rigorous work to develop the Secretary-General's proposals, long patient work involving discussions and consultations to produce the elements of consensus.

Today, these elements on a global agreement are unquestionably on the table. Admittedly, there is still work to be done. However, the document you submitted on June 3, in structure and content, closely prefigures what the conclusions of our heads of state and government could be: whether in regard to development, with the increase in ODA, national strategies and innovative sources in particular; to security, in particular through the global strategy to fight terrorism and the Peacebuilding Commission; to human rights, with a needed breakthrough on the responsibility to protect and on a Human Rights Council attached to the General Assembly; or lastly, reforming our structures— ECOSOC, the General Assembly, UN agencies--and also the administrative and budget reforms to be made.

We welcome, for our part, a proposal sufficiently ambitious to redefine the given of collective security at the beginning of this century, and sufficiently balanced to reflect the various sensitivities which are legitimately expressed within this world body.

2. Secondly, we have always said that parallel to the work we do here, a dynamic should be developed in other bodies to converge at a given point with our own discussions with a view to the summit.

This is particularly true with regard to development since a better strategy and increased resources for achieving the Millennium goals are in many respects the key to the success of our undertaking.

We welcome, in this regard, the major decisions that have been taken by the European Union concerning the planned increase in official development assistance: 0.39% of GNP in 2000; 0.56% in 2010; 0.7 % by 2015. France, for its part, will achieve the target of 0.7% in 2012. We hope that these decisions will prompt other developed countries to

follow suit.

We also welcome the decisions that have already been taken in the G8 on debt cancellation for the poorest countries. This is a first positive element. We are convinced that the Gleneagles summit, under Britain's presidency, will produce other gains.

The high-level meeting to discuss financing for development, to be held in New York in a few days, will enable us to assess the mobilization of the international community. France will take this opportunity to outline in more detail a pilot project which already has a great deal of support and which may have a decisive role in producing new stable and predictable resources: this project is a tax on airline tickets to be allocated to financing the fight against AIDS.

Mr. President,

3 - Among the parallel paths to the work which brings us here today is the process that has been started for enlarging the Security Council. In accordance with the positions it has advocated since the start of this debate, France supports the démarche by Germany, Brazil, India and Japan. The G4 draft resolution, which emerged after detailed consultations, seems to us to correspond to our organization's needs. We support it and are ready, as things stand, to co-sponsor it.

Mr. President,

II - I said that your draft outcome document seems to present solid bases for a consensus. I also suggested that there was room for further discussions among us to improve certain aspects even more.

My delegation supports, in this regard, the proposals made by the Ambassador of Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union.

As a complement to Ambassador Hoscheit's comments, I will briefly mention our suggestions in three areas:

1 - On certain points, while we fully support the basic direction of your draft document, it may be opportune, we think, to strive for further clarification:

This is the case concerning:

- the language on the responsibility to protect where we should, in our view, highlight the international community's duty to step in, through the Security Council, when a state fails to act;

- the language concerning the High Commissioner for Human Rights, which must encompass the whole range of his functions and the need to increase his resources under the regular budget;

- the paragraph concerning the definition of terrorism; we think it preferable to indicate that it is indeed acts of terrorism that we intend to address.

2 - Secondly: on certain subjects, the draft document deserves to be fuller and more detailed to take into account in particular the gains that will have been achieved in other forums.

I also think—and hope—that the final text could go further in the section on development and in particular be more concrete in light of decisions that will be taken at the G8 and elsewhere on financing for development; I believe, too, that it could address in more detail core objectives such as health and the fight against AIDS.

We are convinced, furthermore, that there should be greater emphasis on the indispensable priority to be given to Africa, and enhancement of this chapter with the addition of a whole series of concrete commitments.

3 – Thirdly, we must, I think, pay particular attention to the section on institutions:

- on the Peacebuilding Commission, your text of June 3 perfectly reflects the state of our discussions by carefully taking into account all the concerns that have been expressed; the mandate and main lines of the commission are firmly established; perhaps we should move on to the question of composition;

- similarly, with regard to the Human Rights Council, the intensive consultations by the facilitators resulted in a gradual narrowing of differences in points of view; your text of June 3 presents a balanced formula; it offers our organization the possibility of achieving the veritable breakthrough necessary in this area; let us concentrate now on the few remaining parameters to be defined, especially with regard to size;

- in another area, we believe it is very important, as indicated in your draft, to move forward on improving the efficiency and coherence of agencies; it is essential to aim for greater efficiency and coherence in agencies in the three areas: development, humanitarian action and the environment. I call your attention, in this regard, to the conclusions of the last European Council which support, inter alia, the idea of establishing a United Nations Environment Organization;

- lastly, with regard to institutions, we must not hide the fact that reforming our administrative and budget mechanisms is essential.

This is an area, Mr. President, where, like the European Union, my country recommends that the draft document you have submitted go further. The heads of state and government must resolutely commit to managing our organization more tightly, with more flexibility, more control, more professionalism, and with greater authority given to the Secretary-General.

I am not saying this just to be fashionable but because it really is in the interest of all that UN bodies, the Secretariat first of all, are more able to deal with the enormous tasks that we expect of them.

Mr. President,

Allow me to sum up my comments in a few words. We support the draft document you propose; we think it brings us considerably closer to the goal; we have no doubt, for our part, that this goal is attainable by September if three conditions are met: if there really is the political resolve to achieve the result our organization needs; if you yourself continue to adopt the transparent, consensual, flexible and yet ambitious approach you have shown so far; if, finally, without bringing into question your text, we are all prepared in the weeks ahead to make the few necessary efforts to refine it where it must still be improved.

Thank you.