

Mr. President, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The deaths of Sergio Vieira de Mello and his colleagues leave a terrible void. The loss of so many dedicated servants of the United Nations at its headquarters in Baghdad fills us with shock, grief and concern. This atrocity and the other murderous attacks we have seen in the past two years are chilling evidence that terrorists are ruthlessly targeting the civilised world. Terrorism is a direct threat to us all, to humanity as a whole.

Weapons of mass destruction are the other direct threat: an even worse threat if such weapons were to fall into the hands of terrorists.

In addition to these direct threats to peace and security, we are faced with, in the words of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, "soft threats": poverty and hunger, environmental degradation and "diseases of mass destruction" like HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

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What all these threats have in common is that they do not stop at national borders. Their often lethal consequences affect groups of countries, whole continents or even the entire planet. The only way to tackle them is by collective action. Enforcement and implementation are key!

But do we have the capacity to take such action? Is the existing multilateral system, its institutions and rules, capable of responding to the "hard threats" and "soft threats" we are facing? I doubt it. Take the growing danger of the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Can we allow a few countries to reject the rules agreed to by 187 other countries? Can we run the risk of countries turning into suppliers of nuclear arms to terrorist organisations? No, we cannot. And if today's rules cannot avert states putting humanity at risk, we must tighten those rules. And we must be ready to collectively enforce them.

I therefore welcome President Bush's proposal for a binding Security Council resolution, tightening up the non-proliferation rules. I suggest that we build on existing export control regimes and make them universal and legally binding. This approach would be in line with the successful example of UN Security Council Resolution 1373, containing binding obligations for states to take action against terrorism. Other elements in a more forceful multilateral system are: greater attention to conflict prevention, better use of sanctions ("smart sanctions"), an upgrading of the International Atomic Energy Agency's

inspections regime and, as suggested by President Chirac, a permanent instrument for inspections at the disposal of the Security Council.

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More robust multilateral action is also needed in our dealings with "failed states". I am encouraged by the increased willingness of the international community to take more determined action. Liberia is a test case. The Brahimi-report has shown us the right direction. Peacekeeping operations can only be effective if they are based on a strong mandate, fully implemented on the ground and fully backed by the key-players in the Security Council. The P-5 bear a special responsibility for global peace and security: "noblesse oblige".

The UN is now also at the centre of the debate about Iraq. Let us put our past differences on Iraq behind us. It is crucial now that the international community support the Iraqi people in their reconstruction efforts. I trust that the Security Council will reach agreement, as soon as possible, on what we all want. In other words: stabilisation, security and transfer of sovereignty to a legitimate Iraqi government. This will also allow the UN and the other multilateral institutions to make their indispensable contribution to a better future for the Iraqi people.

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A stronger UN is also needed for the effective promotion and protection of human rights. I regret that we do not live up to the expectations of the oppressed. The high dependence of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on voluntary contributions is a major concern. Instead his office should receive a larger allocation from the regular UN budget. The promotion and protection of human rights is UN core business!

And speaking of human rights: there is no doubt that terrorism itself ranks as one of the most serious threats to democracy and the enjoyment of human rights. Terrorists seek to destroy democracy, freedom and tolerance. If we sacrifice those universal values in the struggle against terrorists, we play into their hands. If I may speak for a moment as Chairman-in-Office of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, I can assure you that our experience shows that policies aimed at promoting human rights, the rule of law and good governance can reinforce each other as parts of a more comprehensive security strategy. The International Criminal Court is another example of how to ensure that international norms are upheld in cases where national governments fail to do so.

On the trafficking of human beings, women and children in particular, I share the concerns expressed by President Bush. He was right to draw a comparison with slavery. For the OSCE, the threat posed by the international trafficking of drugs, of small arms and of women and children is a top priority. We have already taken concrete action, adopting the OSCE Action Plan against trafficking as an instrument for protecting our people. This Action Plan could serve as a model for world-wide action.

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Yet another reason why we need a robust multilateral system is that we must break the cycles of poverty and violence we witness in many parts of Africa. This implies restoring stability and order as a pre-condition for reconstruction and development. And it requires an integrated approach. To this end my government will set up a “stability fund” to tackle the twin challenge of development and security. Because development and security are closely linked, the Millennium Development Goals should remain at the centre of our policies. The Netherlands remains committed to allocating 0.8% of our national income to development co-operation and I call on all countries to implement their Monterrey commitments. But development is not just a matter of aid, it will also depend on liberalising trade. I am disappointed that the world trade summit in Cancun failed to produce results.

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The legitimacy of the decisions of the Security Council is questioned, because the composition of the Council no longer reflects today’s geopolitical realities. However, expansion is not a solution in itself. Effectiveness can easily fall victim to the quest for legitimacy. Crucial for restored legitimacy is better interaction between the members of the Council and the UN membership at large. Members of the Council should represent relevant and broad sections of world opinion.

I agree with the Secretary-General: we need to take a hard look at the existing architecture of international institutions. Many other organisations I know well, such as the OSCE, the EU and NATO (and I hope to get to know the last organisation even better in the near future), are in the process of redefining their roles in drastically changed circumstances. The UN cannot be left behind. Interaction between the UN on the one hand and regional organisations on the other hand, such as the OSCE, the EU and NATO, is growing. I feel that there is considerable scope for intensifying that interaction, as is indeed foreseen in the Charter.

As the Italian Presidency of the European Union illustrated in its intervention here some days ago, the UN can count on the European Union in the quest for robust

multilateralism. As a Member State of the Union, the Netherlands fully endorses the Presidency's statement. The European Union's new emphasis on countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in its common foreign and security policy is an example of how we want to be in the vanguard of our common efforts.

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Let me now focus on the General Assembly. Take the example of how the Assembly deals with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Let us connect the GA to reality. Instead of dealing with 23 resolutions, shouldn't we try to find our strength in a more focused central message, supported by all? A message that calls upon both Israel and the Palestinians to put an end to the bloodshed and violence and to immediately implement the Road Map as the only viable way to long-lasting peace. The European Union will continue to do all it can, together with its partners in the Quartet, to help Palestinians and Israelis reach that destination. And I hope that this Assembly can contribute.

The Assembly should be made more effective. I need not repeat what you all know about overlapping or hardly relevant agenda items, about repetitive debates and resolutions and about the prevalence of the lowest common denominator. As a contribution to improvement, my country tabled the Greentree report, the result of a seminar involving representatives from a wide circle of countries. The Greentree report aims at restoring the General Assembly to its rightful place as the centre stage for world wide deliberations on our common problems. We are certain that in that endeavour, we will be able to count on your leadership and wisdom, Mr. President.

My government wholeheartedly supports the decision of the Secretary-General to establish a panel of eminent persons. We look forward to his recommendations for next year's session of the Assembly. Meanwhile we should not sit back and wait. It is upon us, Member States, to engage now in the debate on the pertinent reform questions the Secretary-General has put to us.

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Mr. President,

In order to defuse the threats we face and to leave a better world for future generations, we need to do more than talk. We must act and we must act together. We need clear rules and strong institutions. Institutions that ensure that the rules of the multilateral game are respected, strengthened and enforced. We need a multilateral system with teeth, we need a multilateral system that works.

Thank you, Mr. President.