

UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 63RD SESSION
GENERAL DEBATE

ADDRESS

BY

H.E. MS. RITA KIEBER-BECK
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. President
Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen

Since we gathered here a year ago, the world has experienced many serious challenges. Natural disasters, climate change, violent conflicts, terrorism, human rights violations, rising food and energy prices and financial turmoil have affected the lives of people worldwide. Dealing with crisis after crisis is a daunting task. Without the United Nations, it would in many respects be a hopeless one.

Indeed, it is the United Nations that gives hope to people around the globe; and it is the United Nations that gives political leaders a unique tool to solve problems and to settle conflicts. It was created more than sixty years ago, under the still fresh impression of the horrors of World War II and with a strong focus on matters of peace and security. Today, the world is a different place. And yet, we must keep turning to the United Nations to solve our problems together and to protect those most in need and danger. We applaud the Secretary-General and the dedicated UN personnel for their hard work. Nevertheless: The organization is sometimes marred in bureaucracy, inefficiency and political infighting. But the blame falls mainly on us, the Member States. It is *our* responsibility to adapt the United Nations to today's challenges and to make it the best possible organization to this end. We must equip the organization with the resources it needs and make the necessary adjustments to its structure.

Mr. President

Over the last years, the regular budget of the organization has grown in a completely lopsided way. Core activities, such as conflict prevention, the promotion of human rights and the rule of law, humanitarian assistance and support for economic and social development, are subject to an artificial policy of zero budget growth and must be largely financed through voluntary contributions. At the same

time, States have come to routinely accept massive increases in peacekeeping bills. It is high time that we shift our focus from fighting the fires to preventing their outbreak. We therefore fully support the efforts of the Secretary-General to enhance the conflict prevention and mediation capacities of the UN Secretariat.

The session just concluded has brought about a sobering realization that some of the reform processes initiated at the 2005 Summit have effectively come to a halt. Others are yet to go through extremely difficult negotiations. We believe that quick progress is necessary on a number of management reform issues, from human resource management to accountability and internal justice. We will also continue our work for a more legitimate and more effective Security Council. To this end, we will step up our efforts to enhance the involvement and access of those who are not members of the Council.

Mr. President

Liechtenstein is a strong believer in multilateralism and in a rule-based international system. Our national sovereignty is grounded in international law and its observance, and we are therefore strongly committed to the rule of law. These principles were chief among our motivations to join the United Nations eighteen years ago, and they have been high among our priorities as a member ever since. The rule of law has gained much prominence in the work of the United Nations over the past few years. But it has yet to take the central place that it is due. The most precious asset of this organization remains the legitimacy it lends to decisions of the international community. In fact, the United Nations symbolizes the rule of law in international relations. We must preserve this strength and therefore promote the rule of law also within the UN organs and their decision-making, including in the Security Council. Together with other countries, we have expressed long-standing concerns about the current practice of the Security Council on the sanctions listing and delisting, in particular in the area of counter-terrorism. There should be no doubt that we fully support these sanctions regimes, which constitute

powerful tools for the maintenance of international peace and security. But we also believe that the procedures applied must be in accordance with basic international standards of due process. Recent court decisions indicate that our reservations are well-founded, and we hope that our proposals will contribute to the improvement of the system. We must avoid the impression that decisions of the Security Council might be in violation of human rights standards.

Mr. President

All of our countries and the Security Council in particular are also called to task in the fight against impunity. Since the 1990's, the Council has adopted a number of landmark decisions to enforce international criminal law, including the establishment of international and mixed tribunals. The Council also has an important role to play in connection with the International Criminal Court, which deals with the most serious crimes under international law. The Council has done so in adopting resolution 1593, and it is essential that it continue exercising its powers under the Rome Statute responsibly. The ICC is the most important achievement in international law in decades. Now, we must make it work in practice and give it the necessary political support. The success of the ICC will be the yardstick in the fight against impunity. If we want to win that fight, we must show resolve by supporting the Court.

Mr. President

60 years ago, this Assembly adopted the Genocide Convention – a crime over which the International Criminal Court was given jurisdiction fifty years later. The Convention was born out of the desire to prevent the recurrence of genocide, yet it failed to achieve this purpose on several occasions thereafter. The rallying cry “Never Again!” can only be used so often before it loses credibility. In that spirit, all of us agreed to the concept of Responsibility to Protect (“R2P”) when we met at Summit level three years ago. For us and many others, this was one of the most significant gains in the Summit Outcome, which was otherwise a mixed bag. Still,

we are struggling with the challenge to make the concept widely understood and to apply it in practice. R2P is a narrow concept that is limited to clearly defined cases of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. And it is based on the sovereign responsibility of States to protect their own populations as well as the United Nations Charter. We must maintain this conceptual clarity and provide for consistent implementation of the Summit decision.

Mr. President

In spite of the lofty aspirations expressed at the World Summit, we are still far from a common approach to the development agenda. And the challenges are growing rapidly: Climate change, the food crisis, the energy crisis and the faltering international financial system are just a few examples. All those challenges hit those particularly hard who already live in poverty, and they also threaten to undermine the effectiveness of our development cooperation. We therefore need a consensus on Financing for Development that builds on the Monterrey Consensus. Such an agreement will require significant sacrifices and compromises on all ends. But it is sorely needed to strengthen the development pillar of multilateral cooperation.

Mr. President

Let me say in conclusion that we have always stood and fought for a strong General Assembly. By that, we do not mean an Assembly that develops an antagonistic relationship with other organs of the United Nations. We want an Assembly that is a forum for meaningful and focused discussions on topics of high relevance, followed by clear decisions and their implementation. We hope this session will allow us to make a step in this direction.

I thank you.

