



IRELAND

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Address by

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Minister for Foreign Affairs

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Mr. President

Let me begin by warmly congratulating you on your election and extending the best wishes of the Irish Government for a successful term in office.

Mr. President

We gather this year against the backdrop of grave challenges which confront the global community.

Foremost among these is the continuing crisis of global hunger and poverty. We recognise the obligation upon us to fulfil the commitments made to the world's most vulnerable people when this Assembly adopted the Millennium Development Goals in 2000. Our Governments have to contend with the most severe global recession in many decades but we must limit the impact of the crisis on those in greatest need. And we must maintain our commitment to halve the proportion of people living in extreme poverty and hunger by 2015.

Firmer action is also called for in responding to the threat posed by climate change. If the global community fails to act now on climate change, we will face a steadily escalating threat to our planet and to human survival. In recent months, we have also seen the devastating consequences which natural catastrophes such as those which have afflicted Pakistan and Haiti can unleash on vulnerable populations.

As with so many of the challenges and threats to our common security, it is to this great Organisation, the United Nations, that we instinctively turn in searching for effective collective responses. The universality of its membership gives the United Nations a unique legitimacy and authority. It brings the nations of the world together under a common roof. It provides an invaluable framework for common reflection and decision-making. With the necessary political will, the Member States can use the authority and reach of the UN to fashion a more peaceful, a more equitable and a more secure world.

UN Reform

One area requiring our close attention is reform of the United Nations itself. To improve the effectiveness of this Organization, we need to ensure that its structures are fit for purpose and adjusted to twenty-first century realities. Ireland has actively championed the reform agenda at the UN in recent years and we will continue to do so.

In that regard, I warmly welcome the establishment of UN Women. Ireland is committed to supporting this important new body within the UN system, as it promotes greater gender equality and works to enhance the rights and well-being of women worldwide. The benefits to be had from the "Delivering as One" programme - greater coherence in UN development activities and improved delivery of services at the country level - are clear and tangible. The valuable work done in these areas shows that reform can be achieved when it is clearly shown to be in our collective interest.

We need to do more, however. There is a pressing need for a UN Security Council which is more properly reflective of twenty-first century realities and which can function better and with increased transparency. The constructive deliberations within the informal Plenary of the

General Assembly considering this issue should be intensified, with a view to identifying whether there is a model for reform which can command broad consensus.

The system for apportioning the expenses of the Organisation should reflect better the principle of capacity to pay. This is an issue which Ireland and its EU partners have highlighted in recent years and which we will continue to follow closely. I look forward to positive results emerging from the review of the existing Scale methodology which the General Assembly has been mandated to carry out.

Poverty and Hunger

Mr. President

Perhaps the greatest challenge which we face as a global community is to take effective action to eliminate poverty and hunger. We set ourselves clear targets in adopting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) ten years ago. We have reviewed progress here in New York over the past week. We welcomed the remarkable progress which has been generated through our collective action in areas such as education, child health and the treatment of HIV and AIDS. But the reality remains that the actual numbers of people living in poverty and hunger in our world continue to increase.

In recent times, economic crisis and uncertainty have devastated the lives of communities already facing extreme poverty – at the same time as imposing pressure on development budgets worldwide. It is therefore imperative that developed and developing countries, in partnership, now examine rigorously what actions have worked in the fight to end poverty and what actions can be pursued more effectively. We also need to focus more clearly on key sectors.

Since the publication of our Hunger Task Force report two years ago, Ireland has been arguing that a more concerted, comprehensive approach is required to end the continuing crisis of world hunger. The number of chronically hungry people has risen to almost one billion. One in four children in the developing world is under-nourished. Failure to address this crisis is undermining progress across the full range of development goals. And yet the means are available, at an affordable cost, to end this scandal. We need to mobilise the political will to do so.

Last week, with the US Secretary of State, I hosted a meeting of international leaders to build a partnership focusing on nutrition in the first 1,000 days of life, from pregnancy to conception. We recognised and will give our full support to the Scaling Up Nutrition Initiative of the UN Secretary General. Our determination to maintain international attention on this issue is driven by the conviction that it is possible in the five years remaining to deliver measurable progress on our commitment to halve the proportion of people suffering from extreme poverty and hunger by 2015.

Peace and Security

Mr President

One of the core tasks of this Organization is to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security. War and conflict are not merely profoundly destabilising for the regions in

which they occur but also threaten the collective security of mankind. Mobilising effective international responses to armed conflict, as and when this occurs, and providing peacekeeping and peacebuilding support in this context are high on the UN's agenda. In this vitally important area, the UN's record of accomplishment speaks for itself, as explicitly acknowledged through the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2001.

Middle East Peace Process

There is one conflict which, more than most, requires the sustained engagement of the international community at the present time. The direct talks underway between Israeli and Palestinian leaders present a historic opportunity to make progress towards a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. I am in no doubt that progress towards a comprehensive settlement based on the two-State solution would contribute more to improving global security than any other single peace-building effort.

I want to salute the leadership and commitment demonstrated by President Obama, Secretary of State Clinton and Special Envoy Mitchell in persuading Israel and the Palestinian Authority to resume direct negotiations. While there have been many critical junctures in the Middle East peace process in the past, there can be no doubting the significance of the initiative which is underway at present. It represents possibly the final opportunity to achieve a just settlement based on two states living side by side in peace and security.

President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu are also to be commended for their personal commitment to this process. I encourage both sides to stay the course and not to be deterred by those who seek to derail the process. In particular, I urge all parties to refrain from any actions which could endanger the negotiation process. It is vital that every effort is made to keep the process intact. Our own experience in the Northern Ireland peace process has shown that political progress can only be achieved through dialogue. Maximum restraint for the duration of these talks, which are intended to be -- and should be -- completed within twelve months, would be a small price for lasting peace. In this regard, I echo the statement made earlier today by the EU High Representative, Catherine Ashton, regretting the Israeli decision not to extend the moratorium on settlements. There could be no greater single confidence building measure and practical demonstration of commitment to peace than a decision to desist from all settlement construction in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Gaza

Mr. President

We must not forget Gaza at this critical time. I witnessed for myself the appalling humanitarian plight of the people of Gaza when I visited the region last February. Eighty percent of them live below the poverty line. The deprivations and hardship which they are suffering because of the blockade are painfully obvious. Yet the people of Gaza show a remarkable dignity and resilience in the face of living conditions which are quite simply unacceptable.

I welcome the steps taken so far to improve the delivery of humanitarian and consumer goods to Gaza. However, the reality remains that much more needs to be done in terms of rebuilding Gaza and allowing normal commercial activity to resume. In particular, exports must be allowed to resume from Gaza; the vital work of recovery and reconstruction, which has

effectively been on hold for almost two years, must be facilitated; and key infrastructural projects identified by the UN must be allowed to proceed.

I would also urge greater support for the invaluable work performed by UNRWA, and its brave and dedicated staff, on behalf of the Palestinian people. I and others who have visited Gaza in recent months, such as Secretary-General Ban and EU High Representative Ashton, can testify to the importance of what UNRWA is doing to support the welfare of Gaza's inhabitants and to provide them with some basis for confidence in a better future.

Iran

The lack of progress in resolving the differences between the international community and Iran over that country's nuclear programme is a source of great concern. I urge the Iranian authorities to engage constructively on this issue and to comply with the clear requirements set out in numerous Security Council and IAEA Resolutions, most recently in Resolution 1929. There is a sincere wish on the part of all of us to negotiate seriously and constructively with Iran on these and other important international issues. I look forward to such a dialogue resuming in the near future.

Any discussion with Iran would also need to encompass the human rights situation there, about which there continue to be the gravest concerns. Iran must do considerably more than it has done up to now to respect and fulfil the international obligations it has undertaken in the field of human rights. Recent cases of human rights abuses are profoundly disturbing and Iran must be held fully accountable for these.

Disarmament/Non-Proliferation

Mr. President

The global security which we all wish to achieve depends crucially on the eradication of the means of conflict. Efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament and to prevent the further proliferation of nuclear weapons have been key objectives for the United Nations since its inception.

They have also been a major foreign policy priority for successive Irish Governments. Ireland was the first country to sign and ratify the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The successful outcome to last May's NPT Review Conference has reinvigorated the Treaty and is an important milestone on the road towards the eventual elimination of all nuclear weapons. A key priority for Ireland is implementation of the action plan on nuclear disarmament agreed there. I am pleased that Ireland made an important contribution at the Review Conference. In particular, we were able to facilitate progress in relation to implementation of the 1995 resolution on a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. I hope that the strong spirit of compromise evident at the Review Conference will be maintained and built upon in the preparations for the 2012 conference on the Middle East resolution.

Ireland is equally satisfied with the progress made over the past couple of years on the issue of cluster munitions. The Convention on Cluster Munitions, which was negotiated in Dublin in May 2008, has entered into force as of 1 August this year. This landmark development brings closer the prospect of the elimination of all cluster munitions and the unacceptable harm to civilians which they cause. We must now move ahead with implementation of the Convention

and promotion of the widest possible adherence to its provisions. Ireland is actively supporting preparations for the first meeting of States Parties of the Convention in Vientiane in November. We will continue to show leadership on this issue and to do all we can to ensure the worldwide elimination of these atrocious weapons.

Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding

Mr. President

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the first deployment of Irish troops under the UN flag. In 1960, just five years after we joined this Organization, Ireland decided to participate in a peacekeeping mission to what was then the newly independent Congo. This began a long and distinguished tradition of service in UN peacekeeping operations in a wide variety of conflict situations around the globe. We will continue to contribute personnel to these missions and to play our part, accordingly, in the maintenance of international peace and security. I welcome the constructive discussions which have taken place within the Committee of 34 on ways of improving the future conduct and management of UN peacekeeping missions, following on from Secretary General Ban's recent "New Horizon" paper.

This year, Ireland was honoured when our Permanent Representative took on the role of co-facilitator, along with South Africa and Mexico, of a major review of the UN's peacebuilding architecture. We were very pleased to be able to make our contribution to this important and wide-ranging reflection on the work of the Peacebuilding Commission, five years after its establishment. The three co-facilitators have submitted a report which aims to revitalise the Commission and to give it renewed focus and impact. I look forward to positive consideration by Member States of this report and the recommendations it makes.

Ireland has also been active in relation to another set of issues which have a significant bearing on conflict resolution and peacebuilding. This year marks the tenth anniversary of the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 which, for the first time, explicitly acknowledged the key role of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. We have been working hard to raise international awareness of this Resolution and to encourage greater implementation of its provisions by UN Member States. As part of our focus on Resolution 1325, we have been pleased to work with Liberia and Timor Leste in conducting important "lessons learned" exercises. A report will be presented to the Secretary General shortly on the key findings made in this process. We are also working to finalise our national action plan on women, peace and security in the very near future.

Human Rights/International Justice

Ireland strongly supports the vital role played by the UN in upholding and defending human rights around the world. Next year's review of the Human Rights Council provides an opportunity to assess the Council's performance to date and to consider how it might be improved and strengthened. As a candidate for election in 2012, we look forward to making our own contribution to the work of enhancing the Council's performance.

Ireland is also deeply supportive of the work of the International Criminal Court and of the International Tribunals in promoting justice and combating impunity. I welcome the successful outcome to the recent Kampala Conference of ICC States Parties, including in relation to

defining the crime of aggression, and I urge the fullest cooperation on the part of all Member States with both the ICC and the International Tribunals.

Sudan/Darfur

Mr President

The appalling human tragedy of Darfur continues to challenge the international community. I applaud the courageous efforts of the UN personnel and all others on the ground in Darfur who are working to provide vital humanitarian services.

We hope that all sides in Sudan will continue to engage in the fullest cooperation in support of the UN/African Union mediation efforts in Darfur and also in the preparations for the historic referendum in southern Sudan early next year. Full implementation of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement still remains fundamental to securing peace and stability in Sudan as a whole and in the region.

Burma/Myanmar

The continuing unjust detention of Aung San Suu Kyi in Burma epitomises the fate of prisoners of conscience everywhere who seek to uphold the values of democracy and free speech. I call for her immediate and unconditional release. I also call for the release of all other political prisoners in Burma and for the launching of a genuine, inclusive national dialogue. And I very much endorse Secretary General Ban's call on Burma's leaders to create the conditions in which free and fair elections can take place.

Northern Ireland

In a world where we continue to face enormous peacebuilding challenges, the Northern Ireland peace process is an example of what can be achieved with patience, imagination and strong international support.

This year saw a hugely significant step forward in Northern Ireland with the devolution of policing and justice powers to a locally elected Minister accountable to the Assembly. This is a major step towards fulfilling the vision of the Good Friday Agreement which was signed 12 years ago.

That Agreement provides a genuine possibility for political inclusion for all who reject violence. It is the framework within which the Irish Government, working in partnership and full cooperation with the British Government and the Northern Ireland Executive, is helping to build economic prosperity, to assist communities to move beyond conflict and to sow the seeds for a shared future for all.

Conclusion

Mr. President,

The EU and its twenty-seven member States are firmly committed to effective multilateralism with a strong UN at its core. We look forward to further consultations with the member States of this Organization on proposed changes to the status of the EU in the General Assembly. These modest adjustments will help the Union to make a more effective contribution to the work of the Assembly and of the UN. A European Union speaking with a clear and coherent voice on the great global challenges which this Organization must address will, I believe, strengthen the impact and effectiveness of the UN as a whole. This is something to which Ireland and its EU partners attach the utmost importance.

Mr President,

We live in times of profound and unsettling change and of daunting global challenges.

As we struggle to deal with these challenges, and to chart ways forward in an insecure world, the United Nations is an increasingly valuable resource. It remains the international organization with the greatest potential for international consensus-building and for the framing of collective strategies and solutions. At its heart are the fundamental principles embodied in the UN Charter, principles which have underpinned the conduct of international relations over the past sixty-five years and whose strength and validity is more apparent today than ever before.

Ireland is steadfastly committed to this Organization and the principles and values on which it rests. I very much welcome, Mr President, your emphasis on the need for a strong, inclusive and open UN and we look forward to taking part in the consultations which you will be convening. We look to the United Nations as the indispensable forum for developing effective multilateralism and for leading international endeavours towards the creation of a more peaceful, prosperous and secure world.

Thank you.