



Statement by
H.E. Mr. Sameh Shoukry
Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Arab Republic of Egypt
at the

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Your Excellencies, honourable heads of delegations

Your Excellency, Dennis Francis, President of the General Assembly

Your Excellency, Antonio Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations

I have the honour of speaking as the representative of the Arab Republic of Egypt, a nation whose civilizational contributions to humanity speak for themselves, and whose role in promulgating regional and international peace and stability requires no introduction.

Egypt was at the forefront of states to join the UN as a founding member of the organization. As such, it was fundamental in establishing its goals and values.... Goals and values we have strictly adhered to throughout the previous decades in order to promote international peace and security, and to achieve sustainable development.

By contrast, questions arise regarding the efficacy of multilateral action, and the multilateral system in general, in surmounting modern-day challenges.

Much has been said and discussed regarding reforming the international system. Much of this discourse comes in the aftermath of a “perfect storm” of crises facing the developing world, including my country, Egypt. We had no hand in igniting these crises, nor did we receive adequate support to address them from the same international institutions whose *raison d’etre* was to aid our developmental aspirations.

I would like to use this as our point of departure to present to this august assembly Egypt’s vision regarding priorities intended to restore trust in multilateralism.

First: In a world whose main attribute is interdependence and globalization, no one is secure unless *everyone* is secure. Simply put, the success of collective security is contingent upon the success of collective efforts and the effective application of principles inherent in the UN charter, and *not* on the selective application of these principles and practicing dual standards.

The challenges facing our world are numerous, intractable, and interrelated, and the international community is far from effective solutions to the scourges of armed conflict, food insecurity and terrorism, to name a few.

Furthermore, these challenges indicate that reaching the goals inherent in the Charter remains a distant goal.

The serious implications of the conflict in Ukraine have clearly illustrated that the security and stability of one party to the conflict cannot be addressed to the exclusion of another and that the responsibility of conflict resolution is indeed incumbent upon all of us, not only those directly affected. With that in mind, Egypt has rapidly moved - in concert with its Arab and African milieu- to establish the Arab Contact Group and to participate in the African Leaders Initiative to stop the bloodshed and pursue a peaceful settlement to the Russian-Ukrainian crisis.

Second: Events since the end of World War II have revealed a structural deficiency vis-à-vis the international system's ability to deal with political, security, and socio-economic crises. The hallmark of this era has been a marked tendency by the great powers to attempt to usurp or monopolize the international community's decision-making process while paying scant heed to the rights, ambitions, and legitimate interests of hundreds of millions of world citizens. This untenable situation indicated the dire need for the immediate and drastic reform of international governance mechanisms.

Within that context, and in order to address the historic injustice that has befallen the African continent, Egypt was and will remain an adamant proponent of both the Ezulweni consensus and the Sirte Declaration as the bases of Security Council expansion. Only the granting of two permanent seats for Africa, with full rights and privileges, is sufficient to correct this injustice done to our continent.

Additionally, we have supported mechanisms that bolster cooperation between developing nations and have been at the forefront of these mechanism's endeavors. Within that context, Egypt aspires to contribute effectively to BRICS, in advocating for the interests and ambitions of the global south, which currently composes no less than 30% of the global economy.

Third: It is absolutely imperative to rebuild trust in the economic tools of the global order. This is necessary if it is to meet the developmental aspirations of nations. There is no better way to prevent conflict than comprehensive and sustainable development. It logically follows that we buttress the role of

international institutions in support of developing countries efforts to build the resilience necessary to cope with crises.

Therein lies the importance of international solidarity in taking the necessary constructive steps to reform the international financial architecture, and develop international finance with a view to empowering developing countries to unlock their full potential and achieve sustainable development goals. As a prerequisite for this, new innovative and effective financing tools are required, as well as a revamp of the existing ones, especially with regard to IMF special drawing rights. Multilateral development banks' practices also need to be re-examined, with a view to increasing the amount of disbursed funding, finance mobilization from multiple sources, and guaranteeing greater access to funding for developing countries. Now is also the opportune time to reform the World Trade Organization and amplify its instrumental role in maximizing the benefits of the rule-based multilateral trading system.

Obviously, it would be futile to discuss accelerating the achievement of the sustainable development goals if no immediate steps are taken to forestall an impending international debt crisis. This crisis would not only wreak havoc on the economies of developing countries but would also aggravate an already fragile global economy. Therefore, any potential debt crisis has to be immediately and firmly dealt with by establishing mechanisms to ameliorate the debt situation in low and middle-income states. Here, several facets of the debt challenge need to be addressed, including, inter-alia, the increasing burden of debt, its complex structure, the shift in debt patterns, and the need to increase cooperation with partners regarding debt swaps, which have the potential to transform the debt challenge into a promising opportunity to transition towards a green economy.

Fourth: We face an existential threat represented by climate change. Climate disasters have become a tragic daily occurrence, whether manifested in devastating floods, or deadly hurricanes, or persistent drought. Most reports indicate that we are clearly not on the right track to deal with the challenge of climate change, especially with regard to providing adequate climate financing for the developing world's national commitments in that regard.

Stemming from a firm belief in the need for an action-oriented approach, Egypt succeeded in COP27, held in Sharm El Sheikh, to mobilize international consensus in favour of climate justice. Balanced decisions were taken to build on the principles and objectives agreed on under the UNFCCC and its Paris Agreement. In Sharm El Sheikh, the international community arrived at a historic achievement by agreeing on funding arrangements for developing countries, enabling them to address climate-related loss and damage. A course for just transition was launched. We also succeeded in advocating for increased renewable energy use in our energy mix.

We have witnessed attempts by some to abandon their responsibilities regarding climate action, especially with regard to financing commitments. Some have even gone as far as attempting to disguise unfair protectionist measures as climate action. Arising from our responsibility as president of COP, and in order to ensure the success of COP28 in the UAE, I would like to reiterate that success hinges on implementing existing commitments and agreements, especially the establishment of the loss and damage fund, and the provision of adequate funding to ensure that the 1.5 is kept alive.

Fifth: Our vision has to encompass emerging threats such as dwindling natural resources. Freshwater resources, on which 1 billion humans subsided at the turn of the last century, now have to support in excess of 8 billion people. In this regard, we welcome the outcomes of the historic UN Water Conference of 2023, and call for their implementation.

The issue of water resources is an especially sensitive topic for my country, Egypt, which faces extreme water scarcity. Egypt is at the forefront of what are classified as arid countries; it receives the least rainfall worldwide, while on the other its population has surpassed 105 million. These factors have resulted in an extremely limited per capita share of water resources: basically, an extreme water shortage amounting to more than 50% of our needs. Egypt in fact has to recycle every drop of water it uses several times. Egypt is also forced to “virtually” import water through food purchases from abroad valued at over 15 billion USD annually.

Egypt relies on the river Nile for 98% of its water needs. Hence, we are extremely vulnerable to any unsustainable uses of its waters. Egypt’s position

regarding this matter is both long-standing and well-grounded on the principles of international law: We reject any unilateral measures pertaining to the management of cross-boundary water resources. A prime example of these measures is the Ethiopian dam, whose construction commenced without prior consultations or sufficient studies of any kind regarding its effects on riparian states. Ethiopia even went as far as to continue to fill and operate the dam unilaterally, in direct contravention of international law, the 2015 Declaration of Principles, and the 2021 Presidential Statement of the Security Council.

Despite the continued unilateral actions of our brothers in Ethiopia, Egypt remains keen to earnestly participate in the ongoing negotiation process, which has continued for more than a decade, with the aim of reaching a binding agreement on the filling and operation of the dam, thereby guaranteeing our common rights and interests. We remain in anticipation of our goodwill being reciprocated with a commitment from Ethiopia to arrive at an agreement that will safeguard the interests of Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia. It would be a mistake to assume we can accept a *fait accompli* when it comes to the very lives of more than 100 million Egyptian citizens.

Sixth: One of the cornerstones of reforming the international system is increasing its ability to promote human rights in their political, economic, social, and cultural aspects, away from politicization, double standards, or attempts to impose concepts disregarding cultural and social specificities; by which authority have some come to believe that their value system is superior to another?

We also caution against the hazards of racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, and their increasingly violent consequences against Muslim communities, the most recent of which were several incidents involving burning copies of the Holy Quran. These abominable incidents represent a blatant assault on freedom of belief and religion. In response, the necessary legislation and policies must be promulgated to prevent these attacks from recurring. We commend the initiative taken by Denmark in that regard.

We firmly believe that the state and its institutions have the primary responsibility of upholding human rights. Emanating from that belief, Egypt has taken significant strides at the national level to promote the human rights of its citizens. At the forefront of these efforts was the launch of the National Strategy

for Human Rights, the Strategy to Empower Egyptian Women, and the Strategy to Combat Violence Against Women. We have also exerted substantial efforts to empower youth and to support those with special needs. Egypt has likewise prioritized combatting all forms of discrimination and protecting religious freedoms.

Seventh: The United Nations was established to save the world from the scourge of war and to build a world founded upon noble principles. In spite of this, the previous 78 years have witnessed conflicts that have reaped tens of millions of innocent lives. This, however, must not dissuade us from subscribing to these principles. Rather, we must admit that there have been errors in applying their practical application and that often, certain policies have even blatantly contravened them.

Egypt has sought over the past fifty years to remain a bulwark of stability and a beacon of security and development. Egypt was the pioneer peacemaker in its region. Still, we continue to be alarmed at the deteriorating conditions in the Palestinian territories due to the practices of the occupying forces. The current situation endangers efforts to contain the situation after the Aqaba and Sharm El Sheikh meetings. Egypt reiterates its position in support of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and to establish an independent Palestinian state on the lines of the 4th of June 1967 with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant international legitimacy resolutions.

Egypt has also fervently sought to bring peace to Sudan, Libya, Syria, and Yemen in accordance with international law. We continue to lend our robust support to counter-terrorism efforts in our African continent through a comprehensive approach in accordance with the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. We fully intend to continue these efforts throughout our co-chairmanship of the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum.

In the same vein, Cairo launched a summit-level process involving Sudan's neighbouring countries, aimed at coordinating the efforts of those states most affected by the situation there. This mechanism aims to resolve the conflict and ameliorate its dire humanitarian consequences. Our efforts fully respect Sudan's sovereignty while seeking to preserve national state institutions. We shall persevere in attempting a durable political solution involving all Sudanese

parties without exception. Follow-up ministerial meetings have continued after the Cairo summit, with a meeting having taken place in N'djamena last month, and during the current week here in New York.

Egypt also fully supports a political solution in Libya based on the principle of full national ownership. It is imperative to end the transitional period in Libya by convening concurrent presidential and parliamentary elections at the earliest possible date. All foreign forces, fighters, and mercenaries must unconditionally withdraw from Libya within a set time frame. We also reiterate our adamant refusal of attempts to circumvent the legislative role of the House of Representatives. Likewise, we voice our strong reservations regarding calls to replace Libyan legislators with imposed entities. Rather, we stress that the legislative branch of the Libyan government's mandate to lead a Libyan dialogue, intended to conclude the transitional period, must and should be strictly upheld.

Excellencies,

This is our vision to salvage confidence in the multilateral system through operationalizing the aims and principles of the UN Charter and international law.

I thank you.