



# MALTA

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STATEMENT BY

THE HON. DR. MICHAEL FRENDU  
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

GENERAL DEBATE

SIXTIETH SESSION OF THE  
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

UNITED NATIONS — NEW YORK

21<sup>ST</sup> SEPTEMBER 2005

*(Please check against delivery)*

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SIXTIETH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I would first like to congratulate you on your election to the Presidency of the sixtieth Session of the General Assembly. You have an important and challenging task ahead. In carrying out your duties, you can be assured of my full support and that of the Maltese delegation.

2. I take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the outgoing President of the fifty-ninth Session, His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping. The last twelve months have demanded exceptional leadership and commitment from the Presidency of the General Assembly. I wish to join others in congratulating President Ping for the firm and successful way in which he has guided this Assembly in the preparations leading to the just concluded Summit.

3. This summit has passed on to us significant tasks in the continuing endeavour to sustain and reinforce the processes of multilateral cooperation. It is right that we should take as the central theme of our discussions the follow-up and implementation of the Summit conclusions.

4. In the light of the discussions our leaders had last week, we approach these responsibilities all the more inspired by the imperatives for collective action. Such action is incumbent on the international community as much in dealing with the short term challenges it has to overcome, as in defining the long term objectives which it seeks to achieve.

5. Among the most immediate and visible challenges which confront us is the way we respond to natural disasters, which at one time or another engulf peoples and societies around the world. The past twelve months have produced awesome evidence of the way in which humanity remains subject to the forces of nature.

6. The Tsunami late last year and Hurricane Katrina only a few weeks ago, are only the most prominent among recent major catastrophes which intensify both our sense of vulnerability and our sense of solidarity. In extending our expression of grief and sympathy to the Governments and people afflicted by such disasters the Maltese people have also extended their offers of succour and relief.

7. While times like these remind us that nature could be unpredictable in its ferocity, they also teach us that it must always be treated with respect. If handled responsibly, nature's resources can improve our lives considerably. If however these resources are exploited ruthlessly humanity will be the ultimate loser.

8. It is an unfortunate but true reflection that the blind forces of nature are not the only cause of extensive suffering by fellow human beings. Political and economic developments over which governments, individually or collectively, have at least some element of control, are also factors at play. Nowhere can the combination of natural and man-made causes become more dramatic than in those instances of unregulated and often tragic migration flows.

9. Over the last few years Malta, like a number of other countries, has been caught in the worrying increase of unregulated human trafficking across the Mediterranean. In our case, as a small island with a very high population density, the problem quickly assumed crisis proportions.

10. Malta has a strong and long-standing commitment to help those who need humanitarian assistance. We shall stand by that. We are deeply conscious that long-term action in this area needs to be premised on the profound respect for human dignity and the strict adherence to the rule of law, including international humanitarian law.

11. However the international community must not allow the rights of refugees and persons requiring humanitarian status in accordance with international law to be undermined and prejudiced by criminal international organisations specializing in human trafficking criminal activity. In our case, our ability to respond to the genuine cases is fast being overwhelmed by a huge increase of illegal immigrants who are the object of an international criminal network of human traffickers.

12. Illegal immigration represents a collapse of the international legal order and must be unequivocally addressed by the world community as such in order to ensure that the rule of international law is restored in this regard. Countries of origin and transit need to bear their responsibilities to uphold the rule of law in the vigorous pursuit of clamping down on international criminal activity in human trafficking. The United Nations and its agencies, particularly UNHCR, are called to address this issue which, if unaddressed, can prove prejudicial to the rights of genuine refugees and persons qualifying for humanitarian status in accordance with international law.

13. At the same time, the spirit of solidarity inspiring action in this area needs also to address the roots of illegal economic migration, a phenomenon which is harmful not only to the individuals themselves who fall victim to callous criminal organisations often paying with their own lives, but also to economic and social development in the countries of origin.

14. For this reason, we welcome the Summit statement reaffirming the principle of solidarity and burden sharing with regard to assistance of genuine refugee populations and their host communities. In this spirit we look forward to the General Assembly high-level dialogue on international migration and development which will take place in 2006. This will offer us an important further opportunity to discuss the multidimensional aspects of this problem and to identify appropriate ways of dealing with them. Malta will take an active and constructive part in this dialogue.

15. Last week's summit has provided important new guidelines in many of the critical areas calling for collective action. In the area of development cooperation there has been a rededication to the objectives first defined in the Millennium development goals. Malta joins its partners in the European Union in strengthening the commitments towards increased and more effective development assistance in the coming years. We have set ambitious aims for the successful completion by next year of the World Trade Organisation Doha round of multilateral trade negotiations.

16. Malta's national contribution will be commensurate to our possibilities and level of economic development. Nevertheless it will be inspired by our constant endeavour to strengthen and enlarge the areas of peace, prosperity and security for all peoples of the world. We will have a renewed opportunity to reaffirm these commitments this coming November, when Malta will host the next Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and assume the chairmanship of the Commonwealth for the next two years.

17. Peace and prosperity must be rooted in human dignity. Our leaders devoted a significant part of their discussions last week to the question of human rights. The Summit decisions on this subject may not have gone as far as some of us would have wished. Nevertheless they have provided an important step toward the objective of equipping the United Nations system with a more effective institutional structure to deal with the defense and promotion of human rights world wide. During the current session

of the General assembly it will be our aim to bring to fruition the decisions taken at the Summit on the issue of Human rights, and especially the establishment of the Human Rights Council.

18. Another area where questions of human dignity are of paramount consideration is that relating to the principle of the responsibility to protect. Our leaders have made a brave step in reconciling the different strands of this principle which seeks to encapsulate an important moral duty in the development of the law of nations. The respect of state sovereignty, the strict parameters to the use of force and the overarching commitment to the respect and defense of the dignity and right to life due to all individual human beings, are all vital aspects of the decisions taken by the summit in this regard. Further work in this area needs to remain inspired by the sense of solidarity which is shared by people around the globe and a common worldwide ethical responsibility to act to defend innocent victims.

19. Effective post-conflict peace-building constitutes an important dimension through which the international community can give practical expression to the notion of collective responsibility. We strongly welcome the agreement to establish the Peace-building Commission, an agreement which underlines and reinforces the capacity of the United Nations in the area of peace-keeping and peace-building. This is an area of international cooperation where the inter-face between action at the regional and the global levels is critical. The task entrusted to us by the Summit to finalize the modalities of the Peace-building commission by December this year is among the most far-reaching responsibilities of the current session of the General Assembly.

20. Another area where international cooperation is especially important concerns the fight against terrorism. Notwithstanding the differences which may still remain on the precise interpretation and scope to be attached to this concept, there is widespread commitment to resist and eliminate this outrageous and horrific attack on the everyday order and serenity of life in our societies and the right of ordinary citizens to a secure and peaceful life.. On the basis of this recognition, we urge immediate steps to further intensify and expand those concrete actions which respond to the immediate concerns of all our citizens. The elements of a counter-terrorism strategy as announced by the Secretary General earlier this year provide a useful pointer in the right direction.

21. We need to take further our collective action against terrorism. Malta believes that no terrorist action is ever excusable and our action against terrorism must be unequivocal, firm and decisive at all times and in all instances. However we must deeply analyse and examine the roots of this problem. In particular we must not be passive when viewing situations around the world where States have been unable to provide a social welfare net to their peoples and where, as a consequence, the poor and the desperate conglomerate around extremist organisations which may also practice terror while simultaneously providing welfare assistance to strengthen their popular base. The social responsibility for the provision of welfare best lies with the State representing society in its diversity. In my view, it is imperative that international development programmes should also have this particular focus.

22. The ultimate objective of the current session of the General Assembly should remain progress towards the conclusion of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism.

23. Apart from agreeing on a new set of tasks and measures for reform, our leaders at last week's summit reaffirmed and further developed the concepts and principles which lie at the heart of the United Nations. These concepts and principles will inspire the deliberations of this session of the General Assembly in its consideration of the many specific issues under its current agenda.

24. Issues of peace and security form a major aspect of this agenda. They are particularly poignant today, the International Day of Peace.

25. Malta welcomes the recent evolution of the situation in Palestine which is marked by the disengagement by Israel from occupied territories in Gaza and parts of the West Bank. We urge the parties involved to maintain the momentum for peace that has been created. We recognize and salute the bold and tough decisions by both the Israeli and Palestinian leadership which are making this development possible. We have a clear sense of the complexities and sensitivities involved for both sides in pursuing their respective actions.

26. Together with our partners in the European Union, Malta wishes to encourage this latest development as a path towards a full resumption of the Middle East Peace Process. This calls for a continuing determination by both sides not to allow obstacles to stand in the way of their fulfilling the next set of actions called for under the quartet Road map - Israel's freezing of all settlement activity, and the cessation of all violent attacks by Palestinians against Israelis everywhere. We are convinced that the ultimate objective, the existence of two neighbouring, viable, sovereign states, living in peace and security, is within grasp and certainly worth the effort and sacrifice involved at this stage.

27. In the Mediterranean, regional cooperation continues to strengthen through the Barcelona process and other initiatives for sub-regional consultation. Within the broader framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy, countries to the north and south of the Mediterranean are working together on a wide range of actions to further peace, prosperity and progress in their region.

28. These actions include areas of primary interest for Malta and its immediate neighbours, such as management of migration flows, promotion of human rights, democratisation, counter-proliferation and counter-terrorism efforts, the acceleration of increased market integration and the objective of improving the social and economic living conditions of all peoples in the region, especially the most vulnerable amongst them. The further economic, social and political integration of the Euro-Mediterranean region is a prime challenge of the countries belonging to it with beneficial consequences to the international community as a whole.

29. Malta is particularly interested in developments relating to the future enlargement of the European Union. Following the entry of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007, the next stages of this process could encompass a number of countries in our region such as Croatia and Turkey. Malta views the further enlargement of the Union as an impetus for positive reform in European countries in general and the creation of a wider European area of peace, stability, democracy and human rights dedicated to the prosperity of its peoples in a spirit of solidarity.

30. Malta welcomes the fact that the European Union is increasingly acting as promoter of peace and cooperation in regions beyond its immediate vicinity. This is the case with regards to the framework for wider cooperation provided by the strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

31. The expansion of political rights and political participation is an essential dimension of the broader strategy to combat extremism in its different manifestations throughout the world. Malta welcomes the intensifying transatlantic engagement in this regard which, especially in the Middle East, seeks to foster a wider partnership in support of home-grown economic, political, and educational reform efforts for societies in the region.

32. The European Union is also increasingly cooperating with the African Union in the implementation of actions and decisions agreed within the framework of the United Nations. We hope that this encouraging development will further reinforce the many peace-keeping, humanitarian relief and reconciliation efforts under way in many parts of the African continent - in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in Eritrea and Ethiopia, in Western Africa, in Niger, in Somalia and in Sudan, and especially Darfur.

Mr. President

33. The UN institutional set-up, and its functioning, have been the subject of intense scrutiny in recent months. This has laid bare some of the weaknesses of our organization. At the same time it has also highlighted the many areas in which our organization is playing a unique and indispensable role in the process of multilateral cooperation.

34. Regrettable instances of human and institutional failures have been brought to light. At the same time the much larger number of instances where the institutions are working well, and where individuals are acting with admirable commitment and dedication, have also been given prominence. In particular, the developments of recent months have placed in a sharper focus the commitment and dedication of Secretary General Kofi Annan in the fulfillment of his exceptionally complex and demanding task.

35. I wish to take this opportunity to express our deepest admiration and support to the Secretary General for the major contribution he has been making towards effective multilateralism and respect for the international rule of law.

Mr. President,

36. Our challenges have never been as global as they are today. Recent natural disasters have emphasized to all of us our vulnerability as a human race. Globalisation, in all its aspects, including global communication, has not only brought home to us the immediacy of events and information but also further accelerated dynamic change in all aspects, political, economic and social in all societies on earth. This situation of constant flux and dynamic change further increases the need to have the United Nations Organisation as a reformed effective focal point for the international community ready to respond to, and to proactively work to meet , the challenges of peace, security and development. .

37. On this year which marks the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations, it is useful for us to approach this exercise of reform keeping in mind the words of the Secretary General in his report "In larger Freedom", where he states "that the principles and purposes of the United Nations, as set out in the Charter, remain as valid and relevant today as they were in 1945, and that the present moment is a precious opportunity to put them into practice."

Thank you.