



**PERMANENT MISSION OF  
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**ADDRESS BY**

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**“PROTECTING TOLERANCE FROM INTOLERANCE”**

**60<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 20, 2005**

*Mr President, distinguished delegates,*

1. It is my firm opinion that we achieved important results at our Summit. We created a Peacebuilding Commission and agreed to establish a Human Rights Council. We have good language on development, including unanimous agreement on the Millennium Development Goals, and we agreed on the responsibility to protect. We made progress towards consensus on the fight against terrorism and agreed on some essential management and reform issues.
2. Some have expressed disappointment about the results of this Summit. Indeed, not all of our ambitions were achieved. Does that imply that it is wrong to be ambitious? Of course not. In a world society of 191 member states we must accept that the end result of negotiations will always reflect a compromise between different ambitions, and that we have to be tolerant of each other's diverse views and interests.
3. As regards my own country's expectations, it concerns me that we did not agree on any measures to counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction – one of the greatest threats to mankind. We had also hoped for more specific agreement on the modalities for the Human Rights Council, and would have preferred clear parameters for the use of force, as well as solid language on the International Criminal Court. And the Netherlands would have liked to give the Secretary-General more scope to carry out his management responsibilities.
4. But all in all, we have made clear progress. So let us now agree to remain ambitious, to move forward with implementing the programme we have agreed, and to allow the United Nations to deliver on our promises. I look forward to the outline of work the President of this Assembly has announced. And I fully support the Accountability Pact with which the Secretary-General has challenged us.

(Protecting tolerance from intolerance)

*Mr President,*

5. We have also achieved something else, something less apparent but equally important. We have reaffirmed our political and moral support for a fundamental underlying principle, namely that we need to build bridges through dialogue and cooperation, and that we have to promote respect and tolerance. And we all share the conviction that in promoting respect and tolerance across the globe, the United Nations has a central role to play.
6. According to a well-known saying, there is only one thing we cannot tolerate, and that is intolerance. Indeed, the struggle to protect tolerance from intolerance is one of the great challenges of our time.

7. It is in the interest of all states to take up the fight against radical ideologies that turn people into terrorists. Terrorism, as we all know, is a cross-border threat. People of all persuasions and beliefs are its innocent victims. And so we must respond collectively, both to terrorism and to the radical ideologies that feed and breed it.
8. Rwanda and the wars in the former Yugoslavia are sharp reminders of how the political use of intolerant and racist rhetoric can even lead to genocide or ethnic cleansing.
9. Still, I do not believe there is, or will be, a clash of civilisations. But there is a clash between the tolerant and the intolerant within and across our societies, within and across our civilisations.
10. That is why it is now so important to take on the radical ideologies that foster violent extremism. Security Council Resolution 1624, calling on all states to prohibit, by law, incitement to commit a terrorist act or acts, sends an important message to the hatemongers.
11. To fight an effective battle against violent extremism and terrorism, we must strike a careful balance between judicial and police measures on the one hand and meaningful dialogue on the other. Let us learn from each other in this respect. I believe that peer review in the Human Rights Council could in future help us all to maintain that careful balance.
12. Let us invest in a global culture of tolerance and mutual respect. We must not look at cultural, religious and ideological differences as unbridgeable divides, separating adversaries. Instead, we should join forces for a global society in which the quest for greater unity goes hand in hand with respect for diversity.
13. The best way for societies to protect tolerance is for them to treasure their identity and at the same time dare to reassess the validity of their prevailing norms and standards. Recent events in the Netherlands, for example, have confronted our society with the question of how to protect our centuries-old tradition of tolerance from those who would abuse it to sow hatred and division. This process of reflection is an ongoing one, but part of the answer is to constantly remind ourselves that it is wrong to hold an entire community accountable for the deeds of individuals.
14. Let us all vow to protect tolerance from intolerance. Let us invest in mutual respect and try to change the mindset of those who propagate intolerance and violent extremism. This will require permanent dialogue, with a central role for the United Nations, the only truly global platform we possess.

(Secularism)

15. Serious dialogue can also help to clear up misunderstandings.
16. One of the most striking misunderstandings concerns the nature of secularism, by which I mean the separation of state and religious institutions. This

separation protects the freedom of all citizens of all religious backgrounds, as well as people who do not practice any religion. In the Netherlands, as elsewhere, politicians and political parties may be inspired by religion, as long as the institutions remain separate.

17. This is precisely why, in my country and across the European continent, there is a place for Islam, just as there is a place for other religions. There is a place for any form of Islam that allows believers to be both Muslims and citizens of a democratic society.
18. Citizenship means more than just holding a passport. True citizenship calls for an active contribution to the society of which you are a part. It also calls for a society that is open to the many and varied contributions of all its citizens.
19. Radical ideologies that push people to isolate themselves from the rest of society, to reject or even attack the spirit of democracy – such ideologies will run up against our determined refusal to give even one inch, in my country and, I hope, everywhere.
20. For intolerance is a global, cross-border phenomenon, which is why we so urgently need the United Nations at our side.
21. UN reform will mean making good on our promises. It will require determined implementation of the plans and proposals we have agreed on.
22. If we are serious about our effort to build a more humane, dignified and just world, UN reform must also strengthen the protection of tolerance from intolerance.

*Mr President,*

23. In our fast-changing world, people long for safety and certainty, and that is understandable. But leaders all over the world have a duty to explain that narrow worldviews, with no place for differences, can offer no genuine protection. Without respect for diversity, there can be no unity.
24. If we want to protect tolerance from intolerance, we should look critically at what we teach our children. How do we expect them to become tolerant adults if they learn in school to despise people of other faiths and ethnicities? It is not enough for governments to do polite business with other governments if they allow hotbeds of intolerance to exist in their societies.
25. There is an old saying that we reap what we sow. If we wish to reap a harvest of tolerance and mutual respect, and foster a sense of common purpose, then we must set to work now. Let's begin sowing the seeds of tolerance and mutual respect here at the United Nations, the world's main crossroads of civilisations.

*Thank you.*