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Statement

By

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Of the

Syrian Arab Republic To

The United Nations

At the

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Mr. President,

It is my pleasure to congratulate you on your election to the presidency of the 60th session of the UNGA. Your renowned experience in international affairs, particularly in the UN system, will undoubtedly guarantee success for our deliberations. I cannot fail to seize this opportunity to express to your predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, Minister for foreign affairs of Gabon, our thanks and appreciation for his efforts towards the successful conduct of the deliberations of the 59th session of the GA.

It also gives me pleasure to express to the SG of the UN, Mr. Kofi Annan, our appreciation for the efforts he makes to implement the resolutions of the organization and fulfill the objectives of its Charter.

Mr. President,

During the sixty years of its existence, the United Nations has witnessed heated debates and bitter differences. Yet this organization remains a forum for dialogue among nations on the means of building a secure world. While we agree with others on the need to reform the UN and take new international developments into account, we stress that such a process should be constructive and take into account lessons learned and the positive experiences that the UN has acquired. We also believe that such a process should unite and not divide us. It is through broad agreement that we may enhance the authority and legitimacy of the UN as well as its ability to effectively respond to the challenges of the 21st century.

We should not forget that this organization belongs to all of us, and not merely to some of us. We should therefore find the wisdom to preserve it for future generations.

Mr. President,

Five years ago, we adopted a declaration in which we set out the international community's vision for the new Millennium. Regrettably, both facts and figures show that the results did not rise up to our expectations. The objectives defined remain unfulfilled. Poverty, hunger and epidemics remain prevalent throughout the world. Tension and foreign occupation continue to threaten international peace and security and hamper development for those living under foreign occupation. Failure to eliminate

weapons of mass destruction, foremost among which are nuclear weapons, haunts us and threatens peace. It is no longer feasible to delay the reform of the world economic order. Moreover, reform should not be confined to this organization. It must encompass all international economic and financial institutions, particularly those which contribute to economic decision making. Through fairness, equality and democratic participation, we can pave the road ahead towards progress. The Britton Woods institutions whose decisions bear directly on life in our countries should be the prime candidates for the overdue reform. We deem it fit to recall the recommendation of several Summits both in the North and the South supporting the Developing Countries' right to join the WTO and not to face the hurdles or politicization in the process. Speaking of development, we welcome the important outcomes of the three Summits held during the past five months on development, namely, the Asian - African Summit, the South American - Arab Countries Summit, and the Second South-South Summit which rejected the imposition of unilateral sanctions, considered such a policy to be in violation of the principles of the Charter and international law, and deemed it adversarial to development plans and reform processes in the targeted countries.

Mr. President,

The main focus of discussions in the high-level event was the reform of the United Nations. We believe that the reform process will not be complete if it does not take into consideration the United Nations' inability to implement its resolutions pertaining to the Arab-Israeli conflict for reasons that are known to all. These reasons are primarily embodied in the generous support and unlimited protection offered by some to the Israeli aggression on the Arab states and to Israel's continued occupation of the Syrian Golan, Palestinian territories, and what is left of southern Lebanon.

Syria has declared that the withdrawal of settlers and Israeli forces from Gaza is undoubtedly a first step, but it is not enough for peace. What is required is the implementation of all UN resolutions, the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, the return of the occupied Golan, and the return of refugees. Relentless attempts are being made, especially by the Israeli side and those who support it, to portray this withdrawal as an accomplishment that is both great and painful at the same time. However, they are forgetting; rather, they are neglecting the fact that the painful Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip lasted for over 38 years, during which

our brothers in the Gaza Strip in particular suffered from the horrors of occupation and its inhumane practices.

Moreover, this abominable occupation persists in the West Bank, including Jerusalem, as well as in the occupied Syrian territories in the Golan. As affirmed by many delegations in their statements this session, the international community is required to be wary and must demand that the withdrawal from Gaza be a full withdrawal from land, sea, and air in order for it to be considered complete. Moreover, this withdrawal cannot be accepted as a cover for the continued Israeli occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, nor can it be a cover for the continued existence of settlements and the Separation Wall in these territories, especially since our General Assembly expressed its support for the International Court of Justice's legal opinion on this wall's illegitimate nature. Israel has rejected this opinion.

The Security Council passed resolution 497 in 1981, considering the Israeli decision to annex the Golan null and void. The General Assembly has passed dozens of resolutions condemning all the measures and actions taken by Israel -- the occupying power -- to change the nature of the occupied Syrian Golan and its legal status and considering such measures null and void as well as a blatant violation of international law and the Geneva conventions.

In defiance of international legitimacy resolutions, Israel evicted almost half a million Syrians from their land and continues to detain dozens of Syrians, some of whom have been imprisoned for over 30 years. Israel still calls for the construction of more settlements in the occupied Syrian territories. The question posed is: If Israel claims that withdrawing its settlers is painful and if it is genuine in its desire for peace in the region, then why does its government continue to build settlements and bring in settlers to the occupied Syrian and Palestinian Arab territories?

Syria has exerted every effort possible to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the region. It continued to declare its readiness to resume the peace process unconditionally, keeping in mind that the implementation of international legitimacy resolutions is not a precondition. However, all these efforts have gone to waste because of Israel's greed and its defiance of international legitimacy.

Therefore, we would like to affirm that the peace the international community aspires for in the Middle East cannot be achieved unless Israel abides by international legitimacy resolutions, especially UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, the principle of land-for-peace, and the Madrid Peace Conference terms of reference, and unless it accepts the initiative put forth by the Arab states in the 2002 Beirut Summit, which was reaffirmed in the Tunis and Algiers Summits as well.

Mr. President,

The international community is following the tragic conditions unfolding sisterly Iraq because of its occupation and the attempts to fragment the unity of its land and people. We are now confronting a tragic situation that has led to the death of thousands of innocent Iraqis and to the destruction of the infrastructure of that sisterly country. Proceeding from our desire to stem the bloodshed, we have taken many measures which have been a burden on our resources.

Syria has deployed thousands of its soldiers along the Iraqi-Syrian border. We have intercepted many of those attempting to infiltrate the border into Iraq. In return, those who ceaselessly hurl accusations against Syria have failed to shoulder their responsibility to ensure effective control on the borders from the other side. The responsibility is shared between the two neighboring countries. Although some did promise to assist us and provide technical equipment for border control, they have failed to come through on their promises.

Syria condemns acts of terrorism that have been and continue to be perpetrated in all parts of Iraq, causing many casualties among innocent civilians.

Syria stresses that the preservation of the unity of Iraq's territory and people in these critical times requires full commitment to national unity by all segments and groups of the Iraqi people. Syria further condemns all pronouncements that aim at instigating discord and infighting among the members of the Iraqi people. They are driven by ill-intentioned circles that wish to spread chaos, extinguish hope, and exacerbate suffering. Syria shall continue to support the political process in Iraq until Iraq and its people overcome their plight and are able to exercise their right to self-determination in a unified, secure, and prosperous Iraq.

Mr. President,

Syria expresses its satisfaction at the interest that is shown by our international organization and its Member States in combating and eradicating terrorism. I find it necessary to affirm that Syria was one of the first countries to suffer terrorism and that it has fought to eradicate and end it. From this rostrum, Syria reaffirms its continuing cooperation with all states towards the eradication of terrorism and the implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions.

Furthermore, Syria has signed and ratified international conventions on terrorism, the latest being the Convention on the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, which Syria signed on the first day it was opened for signature on 14 September 2005. Syria underlines the utmost importance of avoiding confusing terrorism, which we are combating and sincerely cooperating to eradicate, and the just struggle of peoples for liberation, independence, and an end to foreign occupation. That is a right guaranteed by the Charter of the United Nations, which most Member States of our international organization hold dear.

Syria was also the first to initiate the proposal in 1986 for the convening of an international conference under UN auspices to define terrorism and consider its root causes.

Mr. President,

The outcome of the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference held several months ago has shown the need to refocus international efforts on nuclear disarmament and the need to ensure universality for the treaty. The facts clearly show the importance of returning to the principle of multilateralism and operationalizing the various multilateral international conventions governing the issues of disarmament. At any rate, the Middle East region continues to experience a unique reality which is a source of both concern and censure. Israel alone runs a dangerous military nuclear program outside any international framework and refuses to adhere to the NPT while all the other states of the region are party to the treaty and respect it in letter and spirit.

I am duty bound to recall once again Syria's initiative, proposed on behalf of all the Arab states, before the Security Council on 29 December 2003 to eliminate all weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, from the Middle East region as a step towards declaring it a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction and nuclear weapons and preventing their proliferation.

Mr. President,

My country, Syria, is undergoing a serious process of comprehensive reforms in the economic and social fields. The Syrian Human Development Plan has been built on the Millennium Development Goals, thus making its objectives a stepping stone toward the ultimate achievement of the MDG's.

The Syrian Government's strategy is based on the principles of participation in development as reflected in the concept of an effective partnership between the state, the private sector, and civil society for development. Syria is therefore striving to develop domestic investment, encourage foreign investment, and improve the infrastructure and the performance of our institutions while eliminating waste and fighting corruption.

Important reports have recently been prepared in cooperation with the UN Development Program, including an analysis of the macroeconomic situation, a report on poverty, a report on national development, a report on the Millennium Goals, and the Human Development Report on education. Syria assigns due importance and care to empowering women and promoting their rights so that they may fulfill their role. In addition, Syria assigns full importance to children, persons with special needs, and the disabled so as to secure their future.

Mr. President,

Syria supports a reform of the Security Council which is aimed at improving its methods of work, including increasing its transparency. As I have previously stressed, we believe in the importance of a just representation of all regions in the Security Council through the expansion of both permanent and nonpermanent categories of membership, as well as the need for representation of the Arab states through a permanent seat in any expansion of the Security Council.

Africa remains at the center of Syria's concerns. Without stability in Africa, there will never be genuine development in the world. The Summit Declaration calls for sufficient efforts to satisfy the special needs of Africa. We believe that to be necessary and correct. We do not believe that the Security Council can resolve Africa's problems through holding more meetings on the continent. It would be more important to achieve concrete results in response to Africa's demands and to respect its view points as well as take account of its concerns. In this regard, we should like to pay tribute to the efforts of the African Union reflected in mediations and good offices to resolve crises in Africa.

Mr. President,

The contemporary world and multilateral diplomacy represented in the United Nations stand at the threshold of a new era. Let us all rise to the challenges confronting us, so that we may guarantee mankind a future of security, peace, and stability.

Thank you