



EGYPT

مصر

The Permanent Mission of Egypt
to the United Nations
New York

بعثة مصر الدائمة
لدى الأمم المتحدة
نيويورك

Statement by

H.E. Ahmed Aboul Gheit

Minister of Foreign Affairs

of the Arab Republic of Egypt

Before the 62nd Session of the General Assembly

Check against delivery

September 28th, 2007

Mr. President,

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you upon your election as president of the Sixty Second session of the General Assembly. I wish you all success in the conduct of its business. I assure you of our full support in the pursuit of our common objectives. I would also like to express my thanks and appreciation to your predecessor, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa for all her efforts and contributions to the success of our last session.

Mr. President

Six years ago, we, the representatives of the international community, stood united and in solidarity with one another in the face of international terrorism. In all our languages, faiths, and cultures, we expressed our condemnation of any terrorist acts that targets innocent civilians. We deplored such acts then resolved to work seriously to combat this grave and alarming phenomenon. We agreed to work seriously, not only to deal with terrorism from a security perspective, but also to achieve long-awaited breakthroughs in the old crises and conflicts, and due to their complexity and longevity, they have become incubators for the desperate and the hopeless in our region in particular. Those conflicts feed their sense of injustice and despair and through them into the ranks of those who hold dark extremist ideas that know violence as the only means, and even sometimes as an end in itself.

We all prepared ourselves for action....there was a widespread belief in the Middle East that major breakthroughs were imminent....that the successful containment and eradication of international terrorism will take place not only through security operations, but also in parallel through the equally important draining of its intellectual sources and the freezing of its financial assets.

However, we seem to have gone astray during those six years.

Our objectives were fragmented and so our energies were spread thin. We failed as an international community to maintain the huge momentum generated in this very hall in September 2001... that momentum which found expression in our resolve to work together to defuse the tension in our region as a step towards the settlement of its chronic political conflicts.

Narrow -minded, domestic political agendas have been imposed by some, and unwise objectives have replaced the lofty ones for which we had planned to achieve. Instead of focusing on the eradication of the hotbeds of international terrorism, which were not numerous six years ago, we lost sight of our main objective. The eradication of international terrorism was no longer the objective, but rather turned into a loose slogan. There was oppression, torture and humiliation, and, on the other end, despicable violence and more vicious acts of terror.

This came as no surprise to us... since the objective was lost.

We all stood stunned and flabbergasted. What is going on in this region and in this world?

How have we lost our objective?

How could it be that our world was dragged to a point that borders on the clash between civilizations, cultures and religions?

Why are some attempting to thrust the holy Islamic faith into the labyrinth of a limitless clash with the West? A clash that serves no ones interests and causes all grievous harm.

What can we, the wise men and women of this world, do to go back to the right track?

Mr. President,

In all honesty, I must tell you that this last question is our main concern. Despite the importance of the other questions, and being fully aware of the answer thereto, we prefer to leave them to historians and scholars to scrutinize them, detect errors and assign historical responsibility to each party.

But in truth, the more urgent task, in our view, is how to address the deviation from our path and how to find a way out of the dark tunnel we have been forced into. In our opinion, the correct way out must be the point from which we should have started our real struggle, in the first place...by addressing directly and effectively the chronic conflicts. Foremost among those conflicts is the Arab-Israeli conflict, and its crux; the Palestinian Question.

Any attempt to achieve stability and spread peace and security in the world without a serious settlement of the Palestinian question and the Arab-Israeli conflict will not meet with success and is doomed to fail. The opposite is also true. Serious and sustained action for the achievement of a just and comprehensive settlement of that conflict directly serves international peace and security and contributes to the stabilization of the Middle East. All are aware of the importance of Middle East stability for the stability of the world at large. Furthermore we also have a duty to continue to work to defuse tensions in Iraq, Lebanon and to stabilize and improve the situation in Darfur.

Mr. President,

Sixteen years have passed since the convening of the historic Madrid peace conference between the Arabs and Israel.

Fourteen years have elapsed since the signing of the first Palestinian Israeli accord in Oslo.

Eleven years ago, Arab states declared peace to be their strategic choice as an end to their conflict with Israel.

Five full years have passed since the declaration by the Arab States of their historic initiative of their readiness to establish normal peace relations with Israel in return for Israel's withdrawal from the territories it occupied by force in 1967 and for the just settlement of the Palestinian Question.

It has also been five years since the Palestinians and the Israelis have reached a number of agreed points that come very close to the final settlement of this question.

After all this, one would scarcely believe that peace today still seems further away than it was in the early nineties. It is hard to believe that there is now talk that goes around in vicious circles about the basis and principles of the settlement, which are known to one and all. It is also hard to believe that strenuous efforts are made to resume negotiations to agree yet again on mechanisms and formulations. Rehashing those old and worn-out subjects is an exercise in futility.

Egypt realizes that the persistence of this conflict inflames passions and thoughts in the region. You all know the efforts and sacrifices made by Egypt in order to put a just and comprehensive end to this old conflict in a manner that serves the interests of all parties.

But this issue requires leadership. It requires courage from all parties. It also requires a clear and correct vision that the lack of a peaceful settlement of this conflict not only denies the right of a whole people to freedom and dignity, but it also feeds directly the calls for violence, extremism and the relinquishing of peaceful and political negotiation as means to achieve the objective. Thus, the conflict will continue to rage for years to come. Peoples will continue to suffer. The world will continue to face the current state of sharp instability and polarization.

Egypt has displayed and continues to display its constant readiness to work with all parties: Palestinians, Israelis, Americans, Europeans and all those who take to heart the interests of the Palestinian people, the interests of the peoples of the region and the interest of world peace and stability. Our purpose is to achieve the resumption of serious political dialogue which would lead to a settlement within a specified timeframe. We will spare no effort to achieve that objective. We will not despair in the face of problems and obstacles. We will work in all sincerity because we are committed to the cause of our Palestinian brothers and to the establishment of the independent, sovereign Palestinian State on the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967, with *Al Quds Al Sharif* as its capital. We will continue to work because we are committed to the liberation of the rest of the occupied Arab territories in Syria and Lebanon and because we are committed to the objective of achieving just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. In this respect, the meeting called for by President Bush this fall may, if well prepared, provide an important opportunity to achieve long awaited progress.

Mr. President,

Brotherly Iraq continues to bleed. Thousands of its citizens continue to be killed. Thousands more continue to flee it in view of the difficulty of life there. The state of today's Iraq breaks the heart of one and all.

In spite of the political process in Iraq... which we understood and encouraged ... events on the ground with their extremely negative repercussions are the ones that shape today's Iraq and its image before the international community. Iraq today sorely needs leaders that are keen on preserving the unity of this major Arab country.

It needs leaders who seek consensus and steer away from sectarianism.

It needs leaders who extend the hand of dialogue to each other not point guns at one another.

It needs leaders who close ranks to combat the illegal armed factions and militias that take the lives of dozens of Iraqis everyday.

It needs leaders who would sit together to agree on the shape and future of the state of Iraq in the constitution, which we believe should express the hopes and dreams of all Iraqis without exclusion or marginalization. It should build a modern developed state that is enriched by its diversity and that does not divide its posts on the basis of sect or ethnic background in a manner that causes tension and increases discord.

Egypt reiterates the importance of the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq in the manner that enjoys the consensus of all Iraqis. We also reiterate the need for foreign interventions to cease their influence on the development of the situation in that sisterly country. Egypt reaffirms its full support for any regional or international effort that assists Iraqis to overcome this difficult situation. Egypt will continue to consistently call upon Iraqis to show unity and engage in dialogue in order to restore and strengthen confidence among them.

Mr. President,

Sisterly Lebanon is also going through a sensitive crisis. The prospects of the settlement of that crisis seem remote and difficult in view of the internal differences and the regional tug-of-war. The situation in Lebanon is delicate. It must not be burdened by the weight of the strife raging in the region. Therefore, Egypt has consistently called for Lebanon to be left to its people to determine what they wish for themselves. We continue to encourage Lebanon's politicians to engage in dialogue. It is our hope that they will be able to deal with the upcoming developments, first and foremost and most important among which is the presidential elections, in a manner consistent with the Lebanese constitution and that would enable them to preserve the Lebanese constitutional institutions and the proud achievements of the Lebanese democracy. The Lebanese model of co-existence is an important one. It should not be allowed to suffer a set back similar

to the one that it suffered in the past. Egypt will work with all parties for the achievement of this objective.

Mr. President,

Since the onset of its crisis, the Darfur region of Sudan has witnessed difficult conditions. This has required time, effort and hard work from all of us to defuse it and to reach a settlement that would ensure for the whole population of the region the right to a decent life and to a positive, effective contribution to the building of the new Sudanese state. Egypt welcomed the broad concern of the international community over those difficult conditions and sought, in cooperation with the concerned international and regional parties, to bring the parties of the crises closer to each other. As concrete proof of its concern for the stabilization of the situation in Darfur, Egypt has offered a generous contribution of nearly 3500 troops in the UN hybrid peacekeeping force in the region. That offer still stands. In addition, Egypt has contributed to the development of the region by drilling forty boreholes that would make available water resources for larger numbers of people in Darfur.

Mr. President,

Egypt profoundly believes in the three main pillars of international disarmament treaties namely; non-proliferation, disarmament, and the inherent right of every state to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. In 1995, Egypt accepted the indefinite extension of the NPT within an integrated package that included a resolution calling upon all states of the region without exception to accede to the Treaty, and obliging those states responsible for the maintenance of international security to discharge their responsibilities. However, this objective is yet to be achieved in view of the fact that Israel has not yet acceded to the treaty despite all the international and regional calls on it to do so.

Today's world is witnessing an imbalance and double standards in dealing with the various parties that have the ambition, the potential or the expertise in the field of nuclear uses. Egypt believes that the international disarmament and non-proliferation system will be strengthened and that regional security in the Middle East will be reinforced only when a single standard is applied equally to all the states of the region without exception.

Mr. President,

The previous session witnessed many serious efforts and consultations concerning the question of the reform and the expansion of the Security Council. Despite the plethora of consultations, meetings and endeavors, this objective remains elusive. As a member of the African Group, Egypt reiterates its full commitment to the unified African position. It remains a fair and balanced position that would, if implemented, achieve the legitimate African aspirations. I cannot fail to refer to the fact that the reform of the working methods of the Security Council is a genuine objective that must not fade or be obscured by the attempts of some to expand the Council. Making the Council more representative

of major cultures and civilizations, as well as more representative of the current international realities is a guarantee of its ability to play its primary role in the maintenance of international peace and security as enshrined in the charter.

Mr. President,

A few days ago we concluded the High Level Segment on Climate Change. Its deliberations made it abundantly clear that the states of the world, despite their divergent orientations or different levels of development, must unite in the face of major challenges that do not recognize political boundaries nor to military might. The only way to face those challenges is to reach consensus on common objectives. This constitutes the main advantage of work in a multilateral setting. The problem is too large to be managed unilaterally. In order to face the dangers, we must make concerted efforts under the auspices of the United Nations.

I would like to point out that Egypt is one of the countries most vulnerable to the negative effects of Climate Change. Therefore, the Egyptian government is implementing projects to adapt to climate change, to reduce the emissions of green-house gases, and to increase the use of renewable energy. In this regard, I must reiterate that we, the developing countries, have a full right to economic development and to the use of natural resources to achieve the MDG's. The developed countries that have long exploited those resources bear a responsibility towards developing countries to help them achieve growth while minimizing the negative effects on the environment. The question of climate change embodies the concept of interdependence among states. The consequences of the actions of states can no longer be confined within their borders, as they affect the international community as a whole. In addition, the effective treatment of this question necessitates the recognition by the international community of the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities which is the basis of collective global action in this regard.

Mr. President,

The question of Financing for Development is at the forefront of the development challenges that we face. The achievement of sustainable development in developing countries will remain difficult as long as the gulf between the ODA flows and the level of indebtedness of these countries remains as wide as it is.

Egypt hopes that the high Level Dialogue on Financing for Development, to be held in New York next month, would make possible the restoration of some of the trust lost between the developing and the developed countries. Thus, positive results could be achieved and a new momentum would be given to the Monterrey Consensus. At another level, Egypt believes in the importance of achieving a world partnership for development which is the eighth goal of the MDG's. In this regard, it is our hope that the system of international economic relations would be able to respond to the development needs of the developing countries.

Mr. President,

Egypt welcomes the United Nations endeavors to support the regional peacekeeping efforts in Africa. We reiterate the need for this to be achieved within the framework of complete cooperation and coordination among the United Nations, the African Union and the state concerned. In this regard, the government of Egypt is considering making the necessary arrangements to join the standing African force through the battalion of the North African sub-region.

On another front, Egypt has seriously participated in all the stages of the formulation of NEPAD in cooperation with the other founding states of this initiative so as to have it express a purely African vision of the problems of the Continent and put forward practical solutions to them. Egypt participates effectively in the activities of the initiative. It is responsible for the coordination of the agriculture, trade and market access pillars. It discharges this responsibility in a manner that contributes to the achievement of development for the benefit of the peoples of our continent. In this regard, Egypt looks forward to the United Nations lending more support to the African efforts to achieve the MDG's. We urge the development partners and the international and regional institutions and organizations to translate their commitments into concrete programmes of action that deal with the priorities and work plans of NEPAD with a sense of responsibility and commitment.

Mr. President,

The state of our world today is no cause for rejoicing. Rather it is a cause for alarm.

This requires us to work together with open minds in order to change it to the better, and in order to meet the aspirations of our peoples to freedom, justice, dignified life, security and peace.

During this session, Egypt will raise and defend the priorities and ideas I put forward in this statement along with a host of other subjects that time did not allow me to raise.

It is our hope that we will all join hands to respond to the challenges facing us. The responsibility belongs to all of us. The consequences of failure will befall all of us.

Thank you, Mr. President.