

Meeting: General Assembly

Date: 25 September 2009

Duration: 0:08:01

Speaker: Representative of Malta

Level: 1

Keywords: UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Convention on the Law of the Sea, Copenhagen Summit

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Mr. President,

Malta would like to take this opportunity to salute and thank the U.N. Secretary General for his unstinting efforts in guiding our Organization in the maintenance of international peace and stability worldwide. Under his leadership the U.N. has made important strides in raising awareness and in many instances to respond effectively to the critical situation of the poor and more vulnerable.

It is therefore with great satisfaction for my Government and that of the Maltese People for having had the honor and the privilege to welcome the Secretary General in Malta last April.

Mr. President,

This year Malta is marking three important anniversaries. The first is the Forty-fifth Anniversary of Malta's Independence on 21<sup>st</sup> of September 1964, the second is the Fifteenth Anniversary of the entry into force of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change on 21<sup>st</sup> of March 1994 and the third anniversary is the Fifteenth Anniversary of the entry into force of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on 16<sup>th</sup> of November 1994.

Over the last 45 years, Malta has made good on its pledge when it joined this Organization. In this regard, I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to renew today, on this 45<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Malta's U.N. membership, our pledge and our unwavering faith and trust in the ideals and purposes enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

One of the issues which in the coming weeks will be on top of the international agenda is the Copenhagen Summit. Two days ago, this Assembly Hall witnessed one of the largest ever gathering of Heads of State and Heads of Government to debate the future of our planet Earth. During this unique Summit we all agreed that the challenges posed by climate change have become the most urgent and critical faced by humankind.

It will be recalled that when in 1988, Malta took the initiative to formally table the issue of climate change as a political item on the agenda of the Forty-Third Session of the UN General Assembly, few of us would have thought at that time that this issue of climate change would become in the span of two decades one of the principal critical issues dominating the international environmental concerns of this new century. Malta has throughout these twenty years been in the forefront to ensure that climate change continues to become one of the top priority issues of our times. Malta's commitment of 20 years ago remains steadfast and as strong as ever.

As we have heard during the past few days, the outcome of the Copenhagen Summit must signal a turning point. Malta strongly believes that it is the duty of all countries, large and small, rich and poor, to contribute their fair share in this concerted effort which must be global if it is to succeed.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of November of this year, Member states will be commemorating the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the entry into force of the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea, which has been described as the Constitution for regulating humankind's activities of the Oceans. It was forty-two years ago that, in this Assembly Hall, Malta once again had called on UN Member States to undertake a reform of the Law of the Sea which eventually culminated in the adoption of the Convention on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December 1982. It is also necessary to see the 1982 Convention in the light of some pressing contemporary urgent problems which are either addressed inadequately, or not addressed at all.

Among these deficiencies are the provisions dealing with piracy, for example, illicit traffic in narcotic drugs or psychotropic substance, the rules relating to the protection and preservation of the marine environment, and the rules dealing with submarine cables and pipelines. Examples of omissions are the trafficking of human beings, the safety and security of navigation, the transportation of weapons of mass destruction, and climate change.

So in the light of issues I have just mentioned, Malta feels that the time has come for the U.N. General Assembly to examine possible approaches to a review of the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention. In this context, Malta would like to propose that the UN General Assembly, through its relevant bodies, undertakes appropriate consultations among its Member States to revise the Convention in the view of the passage of time and the emergence of new and critical issues over the years. My delegation will be ready to enter into consultations with other interested Member States to advance further this proposal.

Mr. President,

Just as it was necessary in 1948 to recognize the need for a universal declaration of human rights, as a fundamental condition for the enjoyment of freedom, justice and peace for all men and women around the world, so it has become vital now, today, to have a concomitant declaration on human duties of the present generation as well as our responsibilities towards future generations.

We have the overall task of conserving the human species in the sacredness of its life and in its continuity, as well as of preserving the environment, in all its manifestations. We believe that such a declaration emanates naturally from that doctrine of the common heritage of mankind which my country, in 1967, first mooted to this Assembly, eventually leading to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Meeting: Security Council on Afghanistan

Date: 6 January 2010

Duration: 0:07:49

Speaker : Representative of Sweden

Level: 2

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Mr. President,

Let me begin by expressing our appreciation for the opportunity to participate in today's debate. As other speakers before me, I would like to thank especially Mr. Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his comprehensive briefing, and Mr. Eide for your excellent, excellent work in the past and ongoing work in leading the UNAMA mission. We also want to wish you all the best for your future endeavors.

Mr. President,

The European Union welcomes the conclusion of the presidential electoral process and congratulates President Hâmid Karzai on assuming office for a second consecutive term. The EU wishes to underline its readiness to support President Karzai and the future Afghan Government in the implementation of the commitments made to the Afghan people in his inauguration speech, namely, in the five key areas of peace and reconciliation, security, good governance, economic development and regional cooperation. This will require close and strategic coordination of the international efforts under the lead of UNAMA. The European Union takes note of the announcement of the Independent Election Commission (IEC) that the parliamentary elections will take place in May 2010. It also underlines the need for an urgent reform of the electoral system, including a review of the appointment mechanism of IEC commissioners to ensure its impartiality, as recommended in the final reports and findings of the EU Election Observation Mission and other observation groups on the presidential and provincial council elections. The security situation in Afghanistan remains extremely challenging. As highlighted in the Secretary General's report, the security situation has worsened over the reporting period, with a 65 per cent increase in the number of incidents from 2008, including the tragic attack of 28 October 2009, that has highlighted the increased level of risk exposure for UN personnel. In this context, the European Union wishes to reiterate its condolences to the families of the victims. The European Union concurs with the Secretary General that to reverse this downward trend, the new Government will have to show resolve in implementing a political reform that addresses the root causes of the insurgency, including through efforts aimed at improving governance and an Afghan-led political process to re-establish peace. Also, everything possible must be done to avoid civilian casualties. The European Union actively supports the improvement of good governance, the rule of law, the fight against corruption and impunity, as well as respect for

human rights in Afghanistan. Building Afghan capacity and ownership in the police and civil sectors remains at the core of the European Union's engagement in Afghanistan, as reaffirmed in our recent plan of action. The European Union Police Mission (EUPOL) in Afghanistan is clear proof of such an active and continued engagement. Equally, the European Union urges the new Afghan Government to give the utmost priority to the achievement of significant progress in those areas, especially at the sub-national level. Stability, security and development in Afghanistan are closely linked to the overall situation in the region. The European Union strongly supports the development of a coordinated approach at the regional level and enhanced cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbors, especially Pakistan. The EU has initiated decisive steps to strengthen and achieve a more coherent and concerted approach to EU action in Afghanistan and Pakistan through its plan of action for the region.

Mr. President,

The European Union strongly supports UNAMA in its important role as the coordinator of international efforts, while recognizing Member States' responsibility to provide UNAMA with the necessary resources to perform this task. The European Union concurs with the Secretary-General that a more focused and better coordinated international civilian effort, under a UN umbrella and within the framework of a strategy of transition, is urgently required. In this regard, the European Union is ready to further explore initiatives such as the establishment of a reinforced and dedicated civilian coordination structure ensuring strong Afghan ownership and the involvement of all major stakeholders, and the appointment of a senior civilian official within ISAF. These and other initiatives, including the improvement of existing coordination mechanisms, need careful analysis. The European Union also looks forward to the upcoming London Conference, on 28 January, and the subsequent Kabul conference, that will offer an opportunity for the new Afghan Government to lay out its priorities, plans and commitments. The United Nations will have a prominent role in both conferences. For the international community it will be an occasion to review and reaffirm its engagement in Afghanistan. We should agree on new goals, benchmarks and timelines in order to renew a common framework for our work towards the shared goal of a peaceful and secure Afghanistan. These conferences also represent an important step towards the formulation and subsequent implementation of a transition strategy, with the emphasis on building up the Afghan National Security Forces and the gradual handover of responsibility for security to Afghanistan's own authorities.

Mr. President,

The European Union reiterates its full recognition that the primary responsibility for the development of the country lies with the Afghan Government and people themselves. But I would like to assure you that the European Union will continue to play an active role in assisting Afghanistan on its road to security, stability and prosperity, in close cooperation and coordination with UNAMA and other international actors.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and my thanks once again to this distinguished Committee for the opportunity to provide an update on the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory from an UNRWA perspective. While the main focus of my remarks will be on humanitarian conditions, as is natural from our mandate, I will also briefly sketch the current context in which we work, including concerns that we share with others relating to protection of the almost 2 million registered Palestinian refugees whom we serve in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip.

Mr. Chairman,

The newly appointed Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Mr. Filippo Grandi, has just completed his first visit to UN Headquarters. He regrets very much that he did not have an opportunity, due to scheduling reasons, to be able to brief this Committee in person. However, he will be back in June in New York and he hopes very much on that occasion to have the opportunity to be able to address this Committee.

In the coming days there will be 2 high-level visits to Gaza. The first will be by Lady Ashton, the European Union's High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy, and then, as has been announced, by the Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki Moon. The fact that the Government of Israel has agreed to their entry into Gaza has led to some cautious hopes, and I must emphasize the word cautious, of a slight easing of the blockade that has been in force now for almost 2 years, to at least allow building materials into the Territory that will allow the resumption of construction on stalled UN projects; it's a very modest start, but a start nevertheless that's needed. UNRWA alone has 93 million dollars' worth of projects that have been suspended. In recent weeks a few consignments of glass have entered for windows, but regrettably not the metal window-frames that are needed to be able to accompany them. Notwithstanding the ex-gratia payment of 10.5 million dollars received recently from the Government of Israel in compensation for damage to UN buildings in Gaza during Operation Cast Lead some 14-15 months ago, we've been unable to repair even our own premises. We've also been unable to be able to return to generous Arab donors who have been offering support to us, who pledged support to the reconstruction of Gaza until we can demonstrate progress in completing those old projects, some of which started almost 5 years ago and have been halted for almost 3 due to the blockade.

In the meantime, I regret to say that the illegal tunnel economy in Gaza continues to thrive. This creates an unhealthy situation which has been undermining the legitimate established business class of the territory, and a new breed of entrepreneurs, who owe their success in part at least to links to the ruling party and have created what some are calling a gangster economy, has emerged. Hamas meanwhile continues to strengthen its controls over the political and economic space in Gaza for local society but has left UNRWA alone to be able to conduct its own business. Despite the availability of many consumer goods which are being smuggled in from Egypt, the

problem remains that of deepening poverty because of a lack of employment opportunities beyond the three main sources of income who are the Palestinian public sector employees, Hamas and UNRWA itself. We may not have a humanitarian crisis today in Gaza, but certainly there is a political, social and economic crisis in the territory. Meanwhile shortages of electrical power and cooking gas remain a serious problem. Most of Gaza continues to experience power cuts of up to 12 hours a day, forcing reliance on small generators; sometimes these have been hazardous, causing accidents leading to injuries and deaths. Cooking gas also is in short supply; less than 60% of weekly requirements are being imported at the present time.

Meanwhile, Mr. Chairman, discussion continues between the United Nations and the Government of Israel on restarting badly needed water and sanitation projects which we hope will see some progress in the coming days on the occasion of the Secretary-General's visit.

On the security front, there has been relative calm in the recent period. Minor skirmishes have taken place in Gaza during the limited military incursions the Israeli forces have mounted, but casualties are continuing, albeit at a slower pace than in the past. So far in 2010 10 Palestinians, 4 of them civilians, have been killed, and 21 injured. Hamas for its part continues to enforce a crackdown on those more radical groups attempting to break the de facto ceasefire by firing home-made rockets into Israel. It's also exerting its authority on more fundamentalist Islamist groups which have been challenging its authority in Gaza.

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me now to turn to the main preoccupation of the United Nations and the international community more broadly at the present time, and that is of course the situation in Jerusalem, particularly East Jerusalem. There have been a number of worrying developments which have raised questions about the status of East Jerusalem as occupied territory and of course the intended future capital of a Palestinian State. I shall not repeat this familiar list of developments which has been eloquently described by the distinguished Chargé of the Palestinian Observer Mission. However, I should recall that UNRWA has a significant presence in East Jerusalem, through its West Bank field office and the relocation of many of its Headquarters functions to the city. It's the largest UN presence in Jerusalem. Access to East Jerusalem however is a growing problem for our local area staff. I should point out though that the new Commissioner-General has taken the decision to live and work out of Jerusalem while maintaining the Agency's headquarters in Amman and Gaza.

There are 70 000 registered refugees inside Jerusalem, for whom we have responsibility for their social and economic wellbeing. Some of them, notably those living in the Shofat camp, live in very difficult conditions. UNRWA will continue to pay close attention to this issue.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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