



A Speech by

**His Excellency Mr John Dauth LVO
Australian Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United
Nations**

to the

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Mr President

Let me begin by congratulating you on your election as President of the 59th Session of the General Assembly.

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... but it must strengthen its capacity to deal effectively with the problems we now face ...

... or risk sliding into irrelevance.

The Secretary-General recognised this last year when he said 'we have come to a fork in the road...a moment no less decisive than 1945 itself when the UN was founded'.

And again this year when he st

But Governments and regional organisations must also ensure their resources and infrastructure can respond to the current environment.

This is a responsibility Australia has taken seriously.

... for the bonds between us cannot be split by terrorists, but only strengthened.

Security in the Pacific

Australia's commitment to a stable and secure region is also reflected in our efforts in the Pacific.

Since September 11, we have come to appreciate more acutely the dangers weak and failing states can pose to security.

Of course, not all such states are home to terrorists.

But where instability and vulnerabilities exist, so too do opportunities for crime and the potential for human suffering.

When Australia's Foreign Minister, the Honourable Alexander Downer MP, addressed this forum last year, he noted Australia was developing regional approaches to confront the dangers of state failure ...

... and that with our Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) partners – we were restoring hope to the people of Solomon Islands.

In just one year, the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) has made excellent progress in restoring stability and law and consolidating government finances...

...and is now moving into long-term governance reform.

Australia is also working with other states in our region, notably Papua New Guinea and Nauru, to address economic management and governance issues ...

... and regional cooperation is being strengthened through the Pacific Plan, an initiative of the recent Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Meeting in Apia, which seeks to enhance collaboration in areas of governance.

We would encourage the High-Level Panel to outline ambitious proposals for effective collective action to address failed and failing states – including more explicit provision for action by regional and other plurilateral arrangements, as set out in Chapter VIII of the Charter.

Iraq

Mr President

Iraq is at a critical moment in its political evolution.

A small minority is bent on destruction and murder and wants to deny the Iraqi people their opportunity to express their political will in elections.

This minority also attacks those who work to rebuild Iraq's economy and improve Iraqi lives.

Increasingly, Iraqis themselves will be responsible for doing that work ...

... but success will depend on the resolute support of the international community.

We cannot allow terrorists to disrupt the democratic process in Iraq.

Prime Minister Allawi has emphasised his Government's determination to hold elections in January 2005 ...

... and the Special Representative in Iraq has told the Security Council that maintaining the election schedule is his greatest priority.

While the difficult security conditions in Iraq cannot be denied, it is imperative that the UN fulfil its role under UNSCR 1546 and work with Iraqis to complete arrangements for the elections on time.

The size of the UN's presence in Iraq must be commensurate with the importance and urgency of its task4344 Tm(p)Tj13.98 0 0 13r113.98 90 290.2438 TmnBD

Australia is committed to supporting urgent international efforts to end

Transfer and Unauthorised Access to and Use of Man-Portable Air Defence Systems (MANPADS)”.

We hope for consensus adoption of this resolution, which encourages states to take concrete steps to prevent MANPADS falling into the hands of non-state end-users.

High-Level Panel

Mr President

During this address I have referred several times to the High-Level Panel.

Australia welcomes the direction of panel discussions – as far as we understand them – with respect to both doctrinal and institutional reform.

Australia has contributed actively to the panel’s work ...

...and we encourage the panel, in its remaining deliberations, to work towards ambitious recommendations on all its work programme – including Security Council reform, addressing threats from WMD and terrorism, humanitarian intervention and effective collective action.

We note here, on structural reform, that Australia has advocated expanding the permanent membership of the Security Council to make it more compatible with geographical realities ...

... through the addition of Japan, India, Brazil, an African country and possibly Indonesia.

Whatever the final shape of the panel’s report, one thing is clear – high-level political commitment will be crucial to bringing bold reform recommendations to fruition.

And we would encourage all member states to give the Secretary-General their full support in consideration of the panel’s recommendations.

One opportunity to do this will be the 2005 UN Heads of Government Summit.

The Summit provides an excellent forum not only to review implementation of the Millennium Development Goals ...

... but also to endorse a reformed UN, better equipped to deal with the challenges it faces.

Conclusion

Mr President

Australia has long advocated the need for UN reform.

Back in 2000 Mr Downer warned that

- ‘in the absence of change and adaptation, the organisation will wither as the nations of the world bypass it in favour of ... mechanisms that are more relevant to their needs.’

Of course, this warning was ...

... before September 11 ...

... before coalition action in Afghanistan and Iraq ...

... and before the terrorist bombings in Bali, Jakarta, Madrid, Istanbul and many other locations.

If the need for reform was pressing then, it is critical now.

The High-Level Panel provides the best prospect for repositioning the UN system to meet contemporary challenges.

This is an opportunity we cannot waste if the UN – our organisation – is to retain a substantial role in maintaining international peace and security in the 21st century.

Thank you.