



Mr. President, St Lucia supported your unanimous election as President of the Fifty-ninth Session of the United Nations General Assembly, as it shares the view of Member States that you will provide important leadership to this General Assembly. I extend sincere congratulations to you and to the Government and people of your country, Gabon, on behalf of the delegation of St Lucia, and on my own behalf, and pledge to work cooperatively with you in our common endeavour.

There is, Mr. President, a personal note to my pledge of support and cooperation. Just one year ago, this Assembly honoured my country and me by entrusting the leadership of the Fifty-eighth session of this august body to me.

I am fully aware, therefore, of the tremendous responsibility that falls to you as President, and the demands and pressures of leadership of this, the United Nations sole universal organ. In a relay of leadership that began some fifty-nine years ago, I have passed the baton to you, assured that this will be a productive and successful Fifty-ninth session.

Mr. Secretary-General, my year as President of the General Assembly has given me a keener appreciation of the myriad tasks you perform in the service of, and to inspire confidence in, the United Nations. The Government and people of St Lucia support you in your continuing contribution towards our efforts to address the critical issues facing our organization and our world.

Mr. President, the picture of our twenty-first century world is far different from that envisaged in the United Nations Charter. Instead of a world of peace, security and economic and social progress, in which human rights, fundamental freedoms and international law are fully respected, today our world is buffeted by poverty, hunger, the spread of endemic disease, including HIV/AIDS, conflicts, war, terrorism and other grave problems. This is so despite the combined effort of the United Nations system, and the enormous potential of the organization to live up to the ideals, principles and purposes of the Charter.

The United Nations is passing through a period of intense questioning and doubt as to its capacity and relevance. It is my government's view that many of these doubts and questions stem from the continuing challenge posed to the organization to transform the ideals of the Charter into action. These questions and doubts have been intensified by the concern that some of the organization's most influential and powerful member states might turn away from multilateralism – the very foundation of the United Nations – and follow the path of unilateral action.

We can, and we must, stop our unique and indispensable organization from being battered by the tides of these turbulent times. We must better enable it to address the

myriad problems with which peoples and nations are grappling. And we must reaffirm its status as the world's foremost multilateral organization. But we can only do so through our full commitment and resolve to ensure that the organization and its member States live up to the ideals of the Charter.

We know that the Charter charges the United Nations to achieve the solution of economic problems cooperatively. This puts the organization on the front line of what, for many states, particularly those in the developing world, appears to be a very long road to sustainable development. Nowadays, it is a road constructed primarily around globalization and trade liberalization, which have mostly delivered on their promises of economic advancement to developed countries, but have yet to deliver on those promises to many others, mostly developing countries.

It cannot be disputed that current inconsistencies and inequities in the global trading system are widening the gap between rich and poor, haves and have-nots. It is not surprising, therefore, that developing countries, particularly in the framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO), are asserting that globalization and trade liberalization should not undercut their sustainable development prospects, and that there ought to be a fair and equitable global trading system.

Agricultural subsidies, market access, non-tariff barriers to trade, low or falling commodity prices, and special and differential treatment - all these issues beg for constructive dialogue and decisive action, particularly in the interest of the developing world. Specific mandates for trade and development issues may reside in other organizations, including the WTO, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. But the United Nations has a leading role to play in bringing coherence to debate and policy setting on these issues, in line with its Charter mandate. Its efforts in this area have the full support of my Government.

Mr. President, the spate of deadly hurricanes that continue to traverse the Caribbean region, have brought sharply into focus the issues on which Small Island Developing States (SIDS), including St Lucia, have urged this United Nations and the international community to act. We have reiterated, for example, that SIDS are vulnerable, and that special and differential treatment, fair prices for commodities and development financing are essential to their sustainable development.

In just a few short weeks, hurricanes have brought death and destruction throughout the Caribbean region, and, indeed, also to the Bahamas and the United States. There was tragic loss of life in our sister Caribbean countries and territories – 37 in Grenada, 20 in Jamaica; and even now, Haiti is still counting the cost in lives lost. Property and infrastructural damage was immense particularly in Grenada. Hurricane Ivan destroyed 90% of the country's physical infrastructure. I say to this august Assembly that when a Small Island Developing State loses ninety percent of its physical infrastructure in the space of a few hours, the challenge to that country is formidable.



point: both are central to the purposes and principles of the Charter. We must, however, remain vigilant, so that our development agenda is not eclipsed by a single-minded focus on conflict and war, which continue to cast a giant and deadly shadow over our world.

The function given to the United Nations - and particularly to the Security Council — for the maintenance of international peace and security is an exceptional one. How effectively the organization carries out this function is an important determinant of its standing in the eyes of the people who need it most, and of world public opinion. Therefore, we must be consistent in our global strategy for world peace and security. Importantly, this United Nations must not be seen as an organization so mesmerized by crises that it is slow to act decisively to address critical issues of life and death. The action we take, after all, should present our best hope for a more peaceful, more secure world.

Mr. President, we know that conflict and war have costs that are incalculable, particularly in human lives, and can have no happy ending. Today, Iraq remains an unsettled, fractured country. The United Nations has a responsibility to the people of Iraq to work with them to restore peace, security and prosperity to their country. In this, the organization must ultimately take its lead from the people of Iraq — it is only they who can devise uniquely Iraqi solutions to Iraqi problems and determine the kind of future to which they are committed. Regarding another crisis, my government is disappointed that the Road Map to Peace in the Middle East appears to have been put aside, and hopes that new initiatives will be undertaken urgently towards settling this long-standing situation which continues to cause so much grief.

Mr. President: every day news stories and commentaries in the media remind us of the level of violence and perils in our world. The complex and uncertain threat of terrorists and terrorism constitutes a critical factor contributing to the rising tide of violence, death and destruction. Recently, terrorism became a reality for hundreds of victims in the Russian Republic. My Government extends its sympathy to the Government of Russia and to all victims of terrorism and their families worldwide. Even with our best efforts, it is not always possible to know where or when terrorists will strike again. Neither can we say with any certainty that current efforts against terrorism have made the world a less dangerous place. We can say, however, that the root causes of terrorism are symptomatic of problems, some seemingly intractable, around the globe; that it is global in its impact; and that its solution must be global. In addressing the problem of terrorism, we must also look to dealing with the hunger, poverty and inequities spoken of by President Lula da Silva of Brazil and many other concerned leaders, which are giving rise to the hopelessness and despair being experienced by millions and millions of people all over the world. Greater efforts must be made to resolve these critical problems.

Mr. President, as we survey the enormity of the challenges the United Nations and the global community face today, we must ask ourselves: Is our fifty-nine year old organization equipped to confront these challenges? There is a current of reform within the organization. A series of progressive steps have been taken during the Fifty-eighth

session in particular, to advance revitalization of this Assembly. However, the Assembly still has to demonstrate its ability to reconcile the interests of its Member States, and to take action to implement the hard choices revitalization of this important universal forum requires. We must ensure that the gains made are not reversed.

During the Fifty-eighth session, the debate was also opened on Security Council reform, and some progress has been made to lift this matter out of its moribund state. The