

SWEDEN



STATEMENT

by

His Excellency Mr. Göran Persson
Prime Minister of Sweden

In the General Debate of the 59th Regular Session
of the General Assembly of the United Nations

New York

21 September 2004

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

Mr. President,

A few weeks ago, two hundred innocent children were killed by terrorists in Beslan.

Only today, 1700 children will be born, marked by death from hiv/aids from their first breath.

Also today, hundreds of children will die from starvation, bullets or mines in numerous parts of the world.

Has this world become a better place than it was a generation ago?

I believe it has. Democracy is more widespread than ever before. The cold war has come to an end. Fewer people are suffering from famine.

Better, but still, this world is not a good place.

As long as children die from famine, as long as war and violence end lives that have barely started, the world is not good.

As long as children die from curable diseases such as Malaria and TB, we - the political leaders of our countries - have not done enough.

We need a stronger commitment, a stronger link from words to deeds. We must pull together more determined than ever. Each individual

Last year, the Secretary-General called upon us all to take decisive

We are all abhorred by the barbaric acts of terrorism around the world, from Beslan to Jakarta. Nothing can be crueler than the violent, senseless and tragic loss of innocent lives.

All states must work together to preserve a democratic, secure and open society. That is how we will defeat terrorism.

But we must also admit; we will never be successful if we fail to defeat the causes of terrorism.

For me, it is clear: fanaticism and fundamentalism exploit people's sense of injustice and lack of hope. Poverty, oppression, insecurity, intolerance, absence of democratic structures and lack of political freedom – they are all part of the breeding ground.

The fight against terrorism must be carried out with determination. There are no short cuts; human rights must be respected, international law must be followed.

Our global human rights instruments aim at protecting the individual. But just like human beings are equal, so are states – big and small. International law is the ultimate guarantee that all states, no matter their size or power, are treated equally. For the sake of all nations, we need a strong multilateral system.

Mr. President,

The conflict between Israelis and Palestinians continues to take innocent lives, causing unending human tragedy.

Commitment from the parties to a peaceful solution and an end to occupation is crucial. On the Israeli side, excessive violence, extra-judicial killings, settlement activity and destruction of property must end. Israel's right and obligation to protect its people must be exercised within the context of international law. On the Palestinian side, areas of particular concern remain corruption, and security and political reform. The indiscriminate and horrendous terrorist attacks must stop, and the Palestinian Authority do more to achieve that.

To realize the vision of two states – a viable and democratic Palestine living in peace and security side by side with an Israel within secure and recognized borders on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 – the parties need to meet their obligations. The Road Map of the

Quartet is the tool to achieve this, but both sides must demonstrate a will to use it.

In Iraq, a united international community should give the Iraqi people all necessary support for the building of an independent and democratic Iraq. To this end, the role of the UN is vital. What Iraq and the whole region need is not a new war, but a new peace.

In Afghanistan, the security situation remains worrying. The attacks against national and international assistance workers are unacceptable. The international community should standby Afghanistan in building a stable, secure and democratic society.

Mr. President,

The size and scope of UN peace-keeping operations have expanded dramatically. I welcome the trend towards peace-keeping operations with broad and comprehensive tasks, including the protection of vulnerable civilian populations.

Children continue to be victims of war and conflict. Nothing can be more important than the life and health of children. The late Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme used to say: it is not meaningful to talk about "*my* children and *your* children", it is all about *our* children – the only tangible connection to the future that we have. Their protection should be paramount to all of us.

Four years ago, the resolution 1325 on women, peace and security was passed. It was a groundbreaking achievement. But now we need to do more to translate the common objectives into concrete improvements for women around the world.

An increasing number of UN and other peace-keeping missions are set up in Africa. While hardship is the plight of countless men, women and children on the continent, Africa today brings hope of a more vigorous leadership to confront its challenges. President Thabo Mbeki showed the way with his bold NEPAD-initiative. From that has followed the creation of the African Union. It is now establishing itself as a decisive body to address violent conflicts.

Mr. President,

International law should guide us in all our collective efforts – to attain freedom from weapons of mass destruction and terrorism, sustainable development and the respect for human rights.

Our finest achievement in international law in recent years is the creation of the International Criminal Court. I call on the Security Council to consider the possibility of referring matters to the Court.

Sovereignty entails responsibility. Prevention of atrocities demands international action if governments fail to assume their responsibility.

At the Stockholm International Forum on prevention of genocide last January, we pledged to shoulder our responsibility to protect potential victims of genocide, mass murder and ethnic cleansing. We pledged to ensure that perpetrators of genocidal acts are brought to justice. And we pledged to cooperate in the United Nations on these efforts. Discussions on the definition on genocide should never stop us from taking action when it is called for.

The recent Security Council resolution on the terrible tragedy in Darfur is a necessary step in this direction. I particularly welcome the request to establish an international commission of inquiry. My government stands ready to give the Secretary-General every support in this task.

I also welcome the appointment by the Secretary-General of Professor Juan Mendez as his Special Adviser on Prevention of Genocide. This will serve to making clear the link between massive and systematic violations of human rights and threats to international peace and security.

Another issue of serious concern is the use of the death penalty.

For me, as a democrat and humanist, it can never be accepted.

I want us to make every effort to seek the abolishment of the death penalty.

Mr. President,

The Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals are at the core of the world's efforts to put an end to hunger and poverty. The collective political will to give priority to sustainable

global development, ahead of short-term national interests, will be decisive to turn promise into reality.

Rich countries must fulfill their commitments. I am proud to tell you that Sweden will reach its national goal of one percent of GNI for official development assistance in 2006.

But development assistance alone will not provide the results needed. Both the developed and the developing world must move forward on a number of other issues. And Sweden will do its part.

We have translated the international agenda into national policy, giving the entire range of government activities one single objective: to contribute to an equitable and sustainable global development. We will act in a coherent way with this single objective in all fields, be it trade, environment or agricultural policy.

But this is not enough. Other decisive areas are good governance and transparency. Democracy and human rights. Women and workers rights.

Let us end the blame-game. Let us focus on getting the job done.

Mr. President,

Next year, we will gather in this hall for a Summit meeting to review progress on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. By then, we will also have reflected on the findings of the High-Level Panel and the recommendations of the Secretary-General.

It will be a decisive moment for the United Nations. It will be a chance for us, the members of the UN, to show that we believe in collective action. That we take our responsibility to make our international institutions stronger and more effective.

Let us not fail the United Nations at this most critical juncture. Let us not resign from our responsibilities in the face of complex new realities. Let us choose a secure and prosperous future for all.

Thank you.