

**Speech by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Aziz Pahad at the South African Institute of International Affairs – Western Cape Branch
20 February 2007
South Africa in the UN Security Council**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As all of us know, South Africa was overwhelmingly endorsed by the international community to serve on the Security Council from 2007 to 2008. We have just finished one month of our participation. I must thank the Western Cape Branch of SAIIA for inviting me to speak to you today on South Africa's participation in the UN Security Council.

South Africa's role in the SC has to be seen in the context of our overall foreign policy objectives. Since our democratic changes in 1994, our foreign policy has been driven by the strategic objective of creating "a better SA, a better Africa and a better world", we seek to achieve these objectives in a fundamentally changed international relations environment which is, inter alia, characterised by the end of the Cold War and the emergence of a super power with unparalleled economic, military and cultural hegemony.

As the world, including SA, sought to grapple with the impact of these developments on international relations we were confronted by the terrorist attack against targets in the USA on 9/11, 2002. These attacks had a further profound impact on international relations:

- In the wake of 9/11, the USA national strategic document (2003) – gave warning that the USA will use its political, economic and military strength to fight any challenge to its hegemony. Also that it will act unilaterally against any terrorist organisation, against any state that harbours terrorist organisations and against any individuals that they declare to be assisting terrorism.

We have entered the period of preventative action, and conceptions such as –

- "axis of evil"
- "clash of civilisations"
- "rogue states"
- Islamic fascism

drives the foreign policy perspectives of many powerful countries.

Some characteristics of the international environment today are:

- weakening of multilateralism
- no common vision of global security
- disregard of the UN Charter and international law
- unilateral rejection of international protocols
- unparalleled anti-americanism and the consequent rise of terrorism, and a militaristic approach to fighting terrorism

It is in this very volatile, dangerous and unpredictable environment that democratic SA has sought to carry out our foreign policy objectives.

We have identified 3 main challenges:

1. Eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable economic growth and improving the quality of lives of peoples in SA, Africa and the world. In this context we have to deal with:
 - 1.1 Globalisation and the marginalisation and growing impoverisation of many countries of the south, especially sub-saharan Africa, and the growing reality that many of these countries will not achieve the UN's MDGs target for 2015.
 - 1.2 Africa's response to globalisation
 - 1.2.1 NEPAD
 - 1.2.2 Institutional changes
 - 1.2.3 Transformation from OAU to AU
 - 1.2.4 Improving the institutional capacity of the AU
 - 1.3 SADC
 - 1.3.1 South-South cooperation
 - 1.3.2 New Asia-Africa strategic partnership
 - 1.3.3 China-Africa Forum
 - 1.3.4 TICAD
 - 1.3.5 IBSA
 - 1.3.6 Growing economic power of China and India
 - 1.4 Economic Diplomacy has become a major aspect of our international work, this, inter alia, demands that we seek to get:
 - Foreign Direct Investment
 - Market opportunities
 - Tourism
 - 1.5 North-South Cooperation
As we strengthen our South-south Cooperation we must seek to intensify North-South Cooperation. However, even in the interests of the North it is essential that such cooperation is mutually advantageous.
2. The second major challenge we have identified is peace and security. We believe that there can be no development without security, no security without development and no democracy, human rights, good governance without security and development.
In this context, inter alia, we deal with conflicts in:
DRC; Burundi; Somalia; Sudan; Cote d'Ivoire; Ethiopia and Western Sahara;
Middle East – Palestine – Israel – Lebanon;
West Africa – Afghanistan – Iran – Iraq;
Balkans - Kosovo

We also have to deal with the Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction –

- North Korea
- Iran

Other priority issues are:

- Terrorism
- International criminal and drug syndicates
- Climate change

3. The third challenge we have identified is the fundamental transformation of global governance, political and economical:

The founding fathers of the United Nations identified a set of fundamental Purposes and Principles, I quote

- "..... to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and
- to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and
- to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom "

These are exactly the enduring values and principles for which South Africa stands. They are enshrined in our Constitution. Our membership and participation within the United Nations is therefore premised on reaffirming our critical support for the work of the UN system as a whole. Mindful of course of the current global context, of the pressing need to enhance the authority and efficiency of the UN, as well as its capacity to effectively address the pressing needs.

Our tenure as a non-permanent seat of the UN Security Council affords us the opportunity to make a direct contribution to the transformation of global governance and maintenance of international peace and security.

Under the Charter, the functions and powers of the Security Council are:

- to maintain international peace and security in accordance with the principles and purposes of the UN;
- to investigate any dispute or situation which might lead to international friction;
- to recommend methods of adjusting such disputes or the terms of settlement;
- to formulate plans for the establishment of a system to regulate armaments;
- to determine the existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression and to recommend what action should be taken;
- to call on Members to apply economic sanctions and other measures not involving the use of force to prevent or stop aggression;
- to take military action against an aggressor;
- to recommend the admission of new Members;
- to exercise the trusteeship functions of the UN's in "strategic areas";

- to recommend to the General Assembly the appointment of the Secretary-General and, together with the Assembly, to elect the Judges of the International Court of Justice.

We are serving in the Security Council during challenging times in global politics, a time of extraordinary problems and challenges. The need to improve global governance is therefore paramount. Extreme poverty, global warming, the protection of basic human rights, and the resolution of conflicts through effective peacekeeping, the need to protect the environment, to deal effectively with terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction – are some of the urgent challenges. Lately, there has been an increasing tendency on the part of some powerful and dominant countries to have determined that the fight against terrorism should be the global agenda's priority. While South Africa supports the fight against terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, we are concerned at the unilateralist and militarist tendencies in the name of the global war on terror.

We are also concerned that the fight against terrorism must not be at the expense of the respect for international law and the protection of human rights and civil liberties.

As I have indicated, our approach to the issues on the agenda of the Council, is informed by our own foreign policy, which is based on a vision of SA, an Africa and a world that is prosperous, peaceful, democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and united and a world that is just and equitable.

Sixty percent (60%) of the agenda of the Security Council regards African conflict and post conflict issues. We will be serving in the Security Council at a time when it is seized issues which include Western Sahara, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia and Eritrea. We see our membership of the Security Council therefore allowing us to enhance the role that we are already playing in conflict resolution and peace-building on the African continent. In this work we have been responding to the strong resolve of African leaders, and indeed the people of Africa, who would like to see our continent achieve peace as a prerequisite for sustainable development.

We intend to work closely with the AU and all members of the SC, including the permanent five.

Other major issues on the SC agenda are the Middle East:

- Palestine – Israel conflict
- Lebanon

West Asia

- Iraq

Balkans

- Kosovo

Nuclear Non-proliferation

- North Korea

➤ Iran

Counter-terrorism

As you will recall, these are some of the key issues we identified in the context of our second challenge, and are issues that we have been seized with since 1994.

Given these challenges, the importance of maintaining multilateralism, has never been so pertinent. The United Nations Security Council cannot work in isolation. Harmonisation and synergies between Regional Organizations and the United Nations becomes paramount. The work and contributions of the regional organizations can significantly reinforce the work of the United Nations. If the Security Council is to make a lasting impact on the African continent we also believe that we should seek to build synergies between its work and that of the African Union, in particular its Peace and Security Council

Chairperson

The reform and expansion of the Security Council remains one of the key areas that remain outstanding in the reform process. When the former UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, launched the process, he said and I quote:

" ... we have come to a fork in the road. This may be a moment no less decisive than 1945 itself, when the UN was founded. At that time, a group of far-sighted leaders, led and inspired by Franklin D Roosevelt, were determined to make the second half of the 20th Century different from the first half. They saw that the human race had only one world to live in, and that unless it managed its affairs prudently, all human beings may perish. So they drew up the rules to govern international behaviour, and founded a network of institutions, with the UN at its centre, in which the peoples of the world could work together for the common good. Now we must decide whether it is possible to continue on the basis agreed then, or whether radical changes are needed ".

As we seek to transform the UN, it is also important that we consider the importance that the drafters of the UN Charter attached in designing a system of checks and balances, as they gave different powers and functions to its different organs. Today, however, we see the increasing empowerment of the Security Council at the expense especially of the General Assembly and other organs. The Security Council has tended to encroach on the competencies of the other principal organs of the UN. It has also increasingly assumed for itself a legislative and treaty interpreting or amending role.

There is no doubt that this approach also weakens multilateralism in the sense that other organs and bodies can lose their specialised mandates to the Security Council. For example, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is the sole and legitimate body for the verification of nuclear safeguards agreements and its role must not be undermined or subsumed by the Security Council.

It is in this context that I want to deal with SA's vote on the UN Security Council resolution on Myanmar.

Let me say at the outset, we are deeply concerned at the situation in Myanmar. We will continue to call for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and all other prisoners and to fight for the restoration of democracy, human rights and freedom in Myanmar.

The Non-Aligned Countries and the G77 and China have consistently voiced concern at the tendency of the Security Council to encroach on the mandate of the other UN's entities. Overall the resolution contains issues that would be best left to the Human Rights Council. Ironically, should the Security Council adopt this resolution it would mean that the Human Rights Council would not be able to address the situation in Myanmar while the SC remains seized with the matter.

The most fundamental reason why we voted against this resolution, is that does not fit with the Charter mandate conferred upon the SC which is to deal with matters that are a threat to regional and international peace and security.

The Association of South Asian Nations (ASEAN) whom we consult regularly, have consistently stated that Myanmar is not a threat to regional or international peace and stability.

This matter would have created a precedence that will be very difficult to sustain and create challenges for the UN SC in the long run.

The Myanmar issue indicates that we must interact more rigorously and timeously with Parliament, with political parties, and with civil society on all the issues on the agenda of the SC, and the Human Rights Council.

Chairperson

Many people in the world today still live in abject poverty even at the time when there are enough resources in the world to eliminate it. Whole societies are not on track to meet the Millennium Development Goals. Estimates show that at current rates the continent of Africa will fail to achieve these goals unless urgent action is taken to support the efforts of African governments towards this end. The UN Secretary General, Mr Kofi Annan, reminded us recently that globalisation has not been the rising tide that lifts all boats.

Many people are still denied the basic human rights. Some live under the constant threat of random acts of terrorism. The proliferation of small arms and other weapons continues to undermine peace efforts around the world. There is also concern about the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

We therefore need a renewed commitment to the strengthening of a rules-based multilateral system of global governance based on the democratic ideal. Multilateralism remains the most effective and efficient system for addressing global problems. In history no other form of inter-State cooperation has delivered the same results as multilateralism. Coalitions of the willing on issues that require collective action have also proved to be short-term solutions that also lack credibility.

South Africa as part of a group of the majority of countries will continue to strive inside and outside the Security Council, to ensure that the UN lives up to its name and has a future as a strong and effective multilateral organisation, enjoying the confidence of the peoples of the world, and capable of addressing the matters that are of concern to all humanity. I believe that failure to achieve these objectives will make our world a very dangerous place indeed.

Despite its weaknesses I believe that we are better off with the United Nations than we would be without it. But there are also areas where the United Nations has come short in serving humanity.

These are the areas that will need to be addressed if the United Nations is to be stronger and more relevant at sixty and beyond.

As we reflect on the issue of relevance of the UN we will need to address the power imbalances within the governance of the United Nations. When the United Nations was created veto power was given to the permanent five who were also the victors of the Second World War as well as the Security Council so that it could preserve international peace and security. This has been one of the major factors that have defined the nature of the work that the United Nations does and the way it reacts to crises facing the world.

While the Security Council is mandated by the Charter to act on behalf of all member states in most cases the special privileges have been used to advance self-interest. The imbalance in the UN's architecture and power relations that I have referred to remains one of the central obstacles in its ability to meet contemporary challenges and the expectations of the peoples of this world.

Therefore the United Nations, especially its Security Council, needs to be reformed in order that it can be in a position to address a broad range of challenges that face humanity.

When accepting SA's election to the non-permanent seat in the UNSC, Minister Zuma said: "we do so conscious and convinced that the multilateral system of global governance remains the only hope for challenges facing humanity today.

Kofi Annan, the previous SG of the UN demanded that we strive for "a world order in which right is might and not might is right". The fundamental transformation of the UN institutions especially the SC and a genuine commitment to the ideals of the Charter, is the only way we can respond to Annan's challenge.

SA within the SC and outside of the Security Council will endeavour to meet this challenge.

Thank you.

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