Fifty-eighth General Assembly
Plenary
23rd & 24th Meeting (AM & PM)

GA/10167
6 October 2003

REFORM OF UNITED NATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL SYSTEM CRUCIAL TO ACHIEVING MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS, GENERAL ASSEMBLY TOLD

Assembly Also Extends Term of High Commissioner For Refugees Ruud Lubbers until 31 December 2005

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Background

The General Assembly met this morning to take up matters related to the election of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. It was also expected to review Secretary-General Kofi Annan's annual report, and begin its joint debate on follow-up to the 2000 Millennium Summit and implementation of its outcome.

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The Secretary-General's report on the work of the Organization (document A/58/1) takes stock of United Nations activities in the past year and emphasizes the ever-increasing number and scope of its tasks. Covering action in such areas of achieving peace and security, meeting humanitarian commitments, cooperating for development, international order and human rights, and enhancing management and partnerships, the report acknowledges that it has been a trying year for the United Nations in the area of peace and security. Despite its imperfections, the United Nations still embodies the hopes of the peoples of the world for a peaceful and just world.

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Also within the scope of peace and security, the report draws attention to the emergence this year of the Quartet's Road Map for peace in the Middle East, as well as to Security Council resolution 1497 (2003), by which it authorized Member States to establish a multinational force in Liberia, and declared its readiness to establish a follow-on, longer-term United Nations stabilization force to relieve that Multinational Force.

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IFTEKHAR AHMED CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh) expressed support for strengthening the universal multilateral institutions through reform, and highlighted the serious threat to international peace and security which the war in Iraq had brought to the forefront. Given the challenge Iraq had come to represent to the credibility of the United Nations and the principle of collective security, the Organization must play an effective role in facilitating the post-war economic and political reconstruction. Moreover, the United Nations and the international community must address, in a credible, effective and collective manner, the resolution of the Middle East conflict and the war on terrorism.

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HAKEEM ABDULMAGEED (Saudi Arabia) said many of the challenges confronting the international community today were due to some States' lack of respect for international law, and the fact that others wished to turn to unilateral action. There was no room for unilateralism, whether to deal with terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, or even in cases of self defense, he said. Unilateral action only served to undermine the Charter. He went on to say that Israel continued to flout international law, and because the international community remained silent, it continued to subject the Palestinian people and other Arab peoples in the occupied territories to daily violence, aggression and oppression.

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RASTAM MOHD ISA (Malaysia) advocated change to the United Nations, but not at the expense of its principles. No country could act alone to resolve problems concerning the international community, as the situation in Iraq had showed. The proliferation of dangerous weapons must be curtailed, and eventually eliminated, if the goal was a peaceful and secure world. The Middle East remained an important issue for international peace and security. He encouraged continuous efforts to revive the peace process. Concerted and coordinated action by the international community was essential to ensuring the prevention of terrorism. Equally important was the need to understand the conditions that generated it. On human rights, it was necessary for the Commission on Human Rights to continue reconsidering its working methods to reduce the level of politicization in its work.

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MANSOUR AYYAD A. AL-OTAIBI (<u>Kuwait</u>) said he agreed with the international community that the war against Iraq had been a challenge to collective security. Its fallout had reaffirmed that there was no alternative to the authority and legitimacy of the United Nations. But, he continued, that was not the first challenge to international legitimacy. Others included Israel's continued occupation of Arab territories, the previous Iraqi regime's persistent flouting of international law, and the divisions within the global community on how to deter those challenges.

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