



Address
of
H.E. Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit
Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Arab Republic of Egypt
before
the 64th Session of the General Assembly

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Mr. President,

Allow me at the outset to congratulate your sisterly country, Libya, and congratulate you personally, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly, on behalf of the African continent, and to express our confidence that your leadership will lead to achieving the success we aspire. I would also like to reaffirm the full support of Egypt and the Non-Aligned Movement for you in fulfilling your mission.

Our session this year convenes against the backdrop of international unprecedented crises in their nature and scope. The list of global challenges we are facing, such as climate change, the food crisis, and the crisis the international peace is supplemented by, additional emerging global challenges that make it essential for us to increase our work in a coordinated and collective spirit. The global financial crisis and the spread of diseases, such as the A (H1N1) virus, threaten public health worldwide. This requires a high degree of conscious collective work, and a common awareness of the effect of such a crisis on economic and social, even political, and perhaps security stability in many of our countries.

While talking about international collective work, it is difficult to overlook the fact that the current international structures designed to manage the realities of the global economy should reflect balances of the present and future. Therefore, they have to be subject to change, so as to be more compatible with the current reality. The change I mean here is a gradual and strategic one which would make the membership of such structures accessible to a larger number of developing countries, and would grant them a stronger voice and participation in determining the course of the world economic order and its future.

A few days ago, we all took part in the Climate Change Summit, convened upon the initiative of the Secretary-General, and listened to all the pledges made and the concerns expressed. While Egypt is aware of the seriousness of the situation and the gravity of the challenges Climate Change is posing on all of us, we believe in the possibility that collective work could provide new opportunities for advancing development in developing societies, in a manner that would allow the agreed upon sustainable development principles to materialize.

As put forward by President Mubarak in the L'Aquila Summit last July, we look forward to arriving at a fair and balanced deal at the upcoming Copenhagen Conference in December, that would take into consideration the aspirations and rights of developing countries, and at the same time address all crucial issues including mitigation, adaptation, financing and technology transfer. It should further ensure the fulfillment of commitments by developed countries, and enable our countries to implement its voluntary commitments within the framework of honest application of the principle of common but differentiated responsibility.

Mr. President,

The world financial crisis did not originate nor was it caused by developing countries. However, they all suffer from its consequences in different forms and at different levels, as a result of the decrease in the volume of international trade, the tightening of international credit terms and the decline in tourist inflows and remittances. The current international economic recession has, no doubt, negatively affected most States. However, those of the South remain the most affected, due to the negative repercussions of this recession on public spending in healthcare, education and sustainable development at large.

The parallel economic and financial crisis and food crisis, which we are still enduring, undoubtedly compound the hardships faced by the countries of the South in particular, and place enormous challenges on us in preserving economic and social security in our countries. To confront such challenges, serious and genuine international support and solidarity are required, based on the enhancement of agricultural development to increase production and productivity. Furthermore, there is an urgent need to launch an international dialogue between the exporting and importing countries in the developing and developed worlds, in order to agree on an international strategy to confront the crisis, and formulate an "international code of conduct" to review the policies that govern the use of bio-fuels, in addition to reaching agreement under the umbrella of the World Trade Organization (WTO) to eliminate the phenomenon of agricultural subsidies pursued by developed countries.

To confront the energy crisis, it is important to have a real and broad dialogue between the relevant parties to identify the optimal options available to address this matter. The situation requires securing additional developmental assistance and the influx of further investments to the markets of energy-producing developing countries, as well as confronting irresponsible speculations in global markets.

In this context, Egypt hopes that the World Summit on the follow-up on the implementation of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), to be held in 2010, would expedite the renewal of the international commitment and solidarity towards achieving these goals. Egypt deems it necessary to carry out a comprehensive assessment of what has been achieved in its implementation thus far, and to establish a mechanism to follow up on the implementation, which would lead to achieving its full implementation by 2015, particularly in Africa which is witnessing low implementation rates that need to be effectively addressed.

Undoubtedly, all these challenges make it indispensable for the countries of the South to intensify cooperation among themselves. Egypt, as the current chair of the Non-Aligned Movement, will work to enhance South-South Cooperation, in coordination with the Group of G77 and China. We look forward to a successful UN meeting in Kenya later this year to further strengthen this cooperation.

Mr. President,

Having tackled the interlinked crises faced by our world today, I would like to address an important issue related to human rights architecture within the United Nations system. Despite the fundamental reform ushered in by the establishment of the Human Rights Council, Egypt is still unsatisfied with the politicization of human rights issues. This politicization hinders the potential to reach consensus on several issues that should not be subject to controversy, as they are of concern to all of us and affect the credibility of the work of the United Nations in this vital field. Hence, Egypt is determined to exert utmost efforts to engage with various states, in order to bring divergent views closer and establish common grounds that would restore the international consensus that binds us all together in this important area as the basis of our action, both in the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly.

In this context, we look forward to a greater role for the Council, and for each one of us, to address the incitement to religious hatred and racism under the pretext of freedom of expression. We look forward to, in fact we have already started, to seek a commonly agreed language for the draft resolution on freedom of expression, that would underscore the importance of the freedom of expression as an indispensable cornerstone for any democratic society, while avoiding the depiction of acts of incitement to religious, racial and other forms of hatred as legitimate acts of freedom of expression.

In the same context, I would like to point out to Egypt's satisfaction with the adoption by the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime of the Egyptian draft resolution on the establishment of an intergovernmental working group on Human Trafficking, and the commencement of work in the United Nations General Assembly to prepare a global action plan to coordinate international efforts to combat Human Trafficking, as one of the issues to which Egypt attaches great importance, especially in light of the resolutions adopted by the successive Summits of the African Union and the Non-Aligned Movement to support this active endeavor.

Mr. President,

In addressing security issues, I will begin with disarmament. Egypt attaches great importance to successful conclusion of the 2010 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), in the hope of putting nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime back on the right track. This will depend on dealing effectively with the decisions and the resolution of the 1995 and 2000 Review Conferences, especially the resolution on the Middle East. It is crucial that the international community as a whole supports the active dynamism currently witnessed on the international arena with regard to disarmament issues, especially in light of the development in the positions of main Nuclear Weapon States, foremost of which comes the United States. We hope that these evolving positions would serve as an opportune portal through which historic progress could be achieved in this regard.

In the same context, it is necessary to effectively deal with the issues of regional stability and security, mainly through eliminating the inexplicable and unjustified latitude in dealing with the issue of Israeli nuclear capabilities and the persistent threat it poses to security and stability in the Middle East, particularly as, endeavors are intensified to expand the commitments of the non-nuclear States Party to NPT, without due regard to the need to achieve its universality and to subject all nuclear facilities in the Middle East to the IAEA Comprehensive Safeguards. Egypt will continue its diligent work to address this situation, highlighting its risks, with the aim of changing it in all relevant international fora.

Mr. President,

The situation in the Middle East region is still dominated by considerable tension, a tendency towards confrontation and lack of actual stability. Notwithstanding the relentless efforts exerted to stabilize the situation, many parties still see it beneficial for it to exacerbate that tension.

The question of Palestine is still visibly far from being resolved, despite the international concern and the serious efforts, pressures, contacts, visits and meetings. Since I questioned here at this Assembly last year the existence of genuine Israeli determination to achieve a just peace with the Palestinians, events thus far has proven our suspicion. Throughout this year, Israel has shown lack of the necessary political will to engage in serious and credible negotiations that aim at reaching a final settlement to the conflict, a settlement which includes all its aspects, issues and tracks, and leads to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on the entire Palestinian national land, occupied since 1967, and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

In this respect, I would like to sum up the Egyptian view of the situation in the following elements:

First: Intensive work during the period to come is a must to resume the negotiating process as soon as possible. The international community should put forward the formula for the final settlement to the conflict (the "END GAME"), cognizant of the need not to waste more time in examining details that everyone knows will not help realizing the aspired settlement.

Second: The necessity to ensure Israel's commitment to complete freeze of settlement activity in all Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, not only because it is contrary to international law and should be halted, but also in order to build a climate of trust between the two parties, hence allowing negotiations on the Final Status to bear fruit. Such Israeli commitment would pave the way to reinstate lost credibility in the efforts to achieve peace. On the other hand, any regression from that commitment would inflict severe harm on the peace prospects in the period to come.

Third: The freeze of Israeli settlement activity should go simultaneously and in parallel with the negotiating track, in order to reinforce the Palestinian confidence in Israeli intentions.

Fourth: If an agreement is reached on the final borders of the State to be established on the Palestinian national soil occupied in 1967, on the understanding that the State's borders are essentially those of 1967, as had been agreed by both parties during the 2008 negotiations with the participation of the United States, this agreement could be gradually implemented, at a pace to be agreed upon by both parties, and within a time bound framework.

Fifth: East Jerusalem is an integral part of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. It is one of the final status negotiations, and thus should not, at any rate, be excluded from any future negotiations.

Sixth: Israel's engagement in a serious, credible, clear and time-bound negotiating process would restore the situation on many other issues to the same way they had been in the nineties in terms of the Arab interaction with Israel, with a view to enhancing mutual trust, and thus boosting the negotiating efforts as a whole.

With the same high interest, Egypt is closely following the situation in sisterly Sudan, not only in light of the historical bonds between our two peoples and nations, but also out of concern for Sudan's future, stability and territorial integrity, and our awareness of the numerous threats facing it. Egypt is working earnestly with all Sudanese parties, foremost of which the Sudanese Government, and in coordination with regional and international stakeholders, so as to resolve existing problems. Our sons take part in the UN forces in Southern Sudan and in Darfur, and we contribute portions of our limited resources to support development and to provide healthcare to our brothers and sisters in the South and the West

of Sudan. We hope that the Sudanese, with their wisdom and the support they receive from their neighbors and international partners, will be able overcome the upcoming critical phase, so that the Sudan's unity stands firm against all tests of the future, and that unity becomes the first and the most attractive option for all Sudanese. This is an important objective that Egypt is diligently working to achieve.

In the Arab Mashreq, Egypt is following with concern the latest political developments in Lebanon. It has further followed with great appreciation the relentless efforts exerted by the President designate to form the Government, Mr. Saad El-Hariri, which so far have not resulted in the finalization of the cabinet formation, due to domestic and regional impediments that blocked his way, these impediments aim at undermining the very core of the Lebanese political regime that had been agreed upon in Taif 20 years ago, in a matter that raises real question marks concerning the positions of all parties that obstruct the formation of the Lebanese Government on the basis of the results of the parliamentary elections that took place on June 7th this year. Egypt will continue its tireless efforts in support of the Lebanese State and in enhancing its institutional capabilities to ensure the preservation of unity, sovereignty, independence and stability of this sisterly Arab country.

In Iraq, Egypt has followed with concern the deterioration of the security situation in the country and the ensuing repercussions that we have to contain. Egypt will continue to help the Iraqis achieve their aspirations for security, stability and development. It will also strive, through its diplomatic presence in Iraq, to engage with the Iraqi brothers and sisters, so as to realize the interests of the two peoples, nations and the region, in a manner that would preserve Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and restore its Arab and regional posture.

I cannot conclude this part about the Middle East region without referring to the importance Egypt attaches to the security of the Arab Gulf region, which is among Egypt's main interests and on top of its foreign policy priorities. This importance is not only based on the strong bonds that connect us with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Member States, but also on our firm conviction that Egypt represents the strategic depth for its Arab brothers. For this reason, Egypt will work with the GCC countries to ensure Arab regional security and to ascertain

that any security arrangements that are being sought by some international or regional parties will correspond to the needs and concerns of the Gulf Arab states.

Mr. President,

The XV Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), held in Sharm El Sheikh on 15 and 16 July 2009, adopted four main declarations. The first is “ the Sharm El Shiekh Declaration”, which contains a clear vision of the NAM Members on the most critical current issues that constitute a priority for our work within the United Nations, particularly the issues of disarmament and international security, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, human rights and democracy, the right of peoples to self-determination, the situation in the Middle East and the Palestinian question, reform of the United Nations, unilateral sanctions, the global financial and economic crisis, the internationally agreed development goals, food security, Africa’s special needs, diseases and pandemics, the role of civil society, climate change, energy, trafficking in persons, international terrorism and the dialogue among civilizations. The second declaration is on “the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba”, the third is on “marking 18 July of each year as the Nelson Mandela international day” and the fourth is “the Declaration on Palestine”. These declarations will be issued as official documents of the United Nations.

As Egypt assumed the Chairmanship of NAM last July for the next three years, we are determined to implement the provisions of the final document of the Summit, according to the priorities set out in these declarations, and will be presenting the necessary draft resolutions and decisions to implement these documents. The Delegation of Egypt will be pleased to work with all delegations with all openness and keenness to make this session a success, and we will be ready to extend our hands to all States with open mind and resolve to achieve success to the international agenda before us.

Thank you, Mr. President