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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS -NEW YORK

Statement

**By His Royal Highness
PRINCE SAUD AL FAISAL**

**MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA**

Before

**The 64th Regular Session of The
United Nations General Assembly**

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Mr. President,

I have pleasure in congratulating you on your election as President of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. I am confident that your personal talents, as well as the international standing enjoyed by your country Libya, will be highly conducive to the success of this session.

On this occasion I wish to express my gratitude and appreciation to your predecessor, H.E. Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann of Nicaragua, for his wise direction of our previous session. I would also like to take this opportunity to emphasize our support and appreciation for the endeavours that H.E. the Secretary-General of the United Nations is making to strengthen the role of the International Organization in today's world where there is a dire need to uphold the principles of international legitimacy and promote the values of international cooperation and full commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. President,

Although it is customary for us to meet here every year in the General Assembly of the United Nations to deliver statements detailing the issues of concern to our countries, as well as the endeavours that our Governments have made and their positions on new developments, I hope that you will allow me to depart somewhat from this firmly established tradition.

The multitude of issues, the plethora of dangers and the successive crises that are facing every member of the United Nations should not obscure the fact that we are all in the same boat and the extent of our interrelationship, interdependence and mutual influence is greater than ever before. The time has come, therefore, for us to pause, ponder and reflect. The time has come for us to recall and renew our commitment to the basic purposes underlying the establishment of the United Nations and its Charter. You may recall that the basic purpose of that Charter was to spare humanity the destructive and tragic consequences of wars, and to provide prosperity to all through cooperation within the frame of legitimacy and the supremacy of international law.

The crises, perils, conflicts and issues with which mankind everywhere is currently faced can be solved effectively only on the basis

of international legitimacy, international law and multilateral cooperation in meeting the requirements of universal justice. Any other provisional arrangements and partial solutions, which some refer to as « contrived » or « compromise" or "creative" solutions, will lead only to further perils and crises, aggravation of conflicts and failure to resolve issues and meet challenges in a collective and effective manner.

In any issue with which we are confronted, in any conflict that threatens us, and in any crisis that could have fearful consequences and implications for international peace and security, or for global sustainable growth and prosperity, regardless of the complexity of its details and the intricacy of conflicting interests and differing positions, proposed solutions and initiatives must be evaluated, positively or negatively, in the light of a single standard criterion, namely international legitimacy, international law and universal justice. Any deviation from this comprehensive and imperative criterion, regardless of the pretexts put forward to justify it, and regardless of the deceptive promotional halo of publicity with which it is surrounded, would be likely to exacerbate rather than solve the problem, and would seriously undermine our collective ability to effectively address the other problems and crises with which we are all confronted.

Mr. President,

Adherence to this criterion offers the easiest, best and most effective way to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict, which is rightly deemed to pose the most serious threat to peace and security in the Middle East, a strategic region the conflicts and problems of which have an impact on the world as a whole. The fact that this conflict has lasted for more than seven decades and is continuing to have disastrous effects on the entire region is attributable solely to a blatant deviation from the principles of international legitimacy, the rules of international law and the requirements of universal justice.

The Arab World, including the state of Palestine, has done its utmost to achieve a real and lasting peace. The Arab Peace Initiative, which is still on the table, constitutes a collective comprehensive proposal to end the conflict with Israel and conclude a peace agreement that would ensure security, recognition and normalization of relations for all the States of the region. The components of the Arab Peace Initiative are fully consistent with the above mentioned criterion on which they are based and centred, thereby embodying the Arab commitment to peace as a strategic option, and in accordance with the Charter.

Everyone is aware not only of the general outline of the desired solution but also of the reasons why peace has not yet been achieved. Peace cannot, and will not, be achieved as long as Israel continues its massacres and random bombardments of the Palestinian people. Peace will never be achieved through the holding of sham, protracted and fruitless bilateral or multilateral negotiations that discuss everything except the core issues of the conflict. The peace that is being sought will never be achieved by imposing sanctions and preconditions on a people suffering under occupation while, at the same time, exempting Israel from any consequences of its violation of the most fundamental rules and principles of international law. The desired peace will never be achieved by attempting to impose normalization of relations on the Arabs before the completion of withdrawal and the establishment of peace, as though we are expected to reward the aggressor for his aggression in a reverse logic that totally lacks any form of serious credibility.

All the initiatives, proposed solutions and international endeavours in this regard have invariably run up against a wall of rejection, obstruction, bad faith and procrastination on the part of Israel, which is continuing to take unilateral measures that are incompatible with international law and Security Council resolutions. Instead of an honest endeavour to achieve peace, we find that Israel is persisting in its daily humiliation of the Palestinian people and in its construction of settlements, walls and bypass roads, all of which violate international legitimacy, with a view to creating new facts on the ground. These settlements are changing the geographic and demographic nature of the Palestinian territories, especially in and around the city of Jerusalem, in flagrant violation of international law and of all the relevant Security Council resolutions, the commitments provided for in the Road Map and the undertakings made at Annapolis. The settlements that encircle most of the main Palestinian towns in the West Bank also usurp more than half of their water resources.

I had hoped that, at the beginning of this session of the General Assembly, we would be able to express satisfaction, hope and optimism at the achievement of tangible results. Unfortunately, no real results or notable signs of progress have been achieved in spite of the commendable endeavours of the United States of America, the evident personal desire of President Barack Obama and his team to further the peace process, and the ongoing efforts of the International Quartet. If all this international concern, all this international consensus and all these international endeavours have so far failed to induce Israel to honour the commitments

to which it previously bound itself under the Road Map, how can we be optimistic?

Mr. President,

Departure from the principles of international legitimacy, the rules of international law and the requirements of universal justice remains the root cause of the risks of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction that are overshadowing the Middle East, including the Gulf region. This is attributable to the fact that, for decades, a blind eye was turned to the Israeli nuclear programme which, far from even being ostensibly designed to generate electric power, produces nothing but weapons of mass destruction. This original sin has motivated some states to push ahead with the development of nuclear capabilities, using the pretext of double standards to justify non-compliance with international resolutions in this regard.

Once again, we find that the easiest, most expeditious and most effective solution lies in declaring the entire Middle East, including the Gulf region, a zone free from all nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. President,

Protection of human rights, the rule of law, dissemination of a culture of peace and initiatives to promote dialogue among cultures and peoples should constitute basic components of any effective strategy to combat terrorism and extremism. Needless to say, respect for United Nations resolutions and the rules of international law is the only way to resolve chronic international conflicts and defuse focal points of tension, thus preventing terrorists from exploiting feelings of despair and frustration brought about by subjection to injustice, aggression and occupation.

With a view to contributing to the furtherance of international cooperation in the field of counter-terrorism, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia convened an International Counter-Terrorism Conference in February 2005 which was attended by experts and specialists from more than 60 States and international and regional organizations. The "Riyadh Declaration", which was issued by the Conference, affirmed the unanimous international resolve to oppose terrorism and extremism and made practical recommendations to combat terrorism, cut off its sources of funding, and achieve closer multilateral cooperation in this field.

The tremendous developments that have taken place in the transport, communications and information technology sectors have helped to facilitate and expand contact and interaction among all the peoples of the world with their various religions, beliefs, cultures and languages. As a result, there is no part of the human family, in all its rich diversity and fertile pluralism, which is now living in isolation without affecting or being affected by others. Although these developments have generally improved human life, extremist minorities within every religious and cultural community are seeking to exploit these tremendous technological developments to propagate notions of intolerance, exclusion, racism and hatred. Therefore, we all need to work together in an earnest manner under the auspices of the United Nations in order to create an environment conducive to promotion of the values of dialogue, tolerance and moderation and the furtherance of relations of cooperation and peace among cultures, peoples and States.

For these noble purposes, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques launched his sincere universal appeal for the pursuit of dialogue among all the followers of the religions and cultures constituting the heritage of mankind. This initiative adopted a political, as well as socio-cultural, twin-track approach. On the political track, the Extraordinary Islamic Summit convened in Makkah by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques reaffirmed the consensus of all the Islamic in rejecting violence, extremism and terrorism, and promoting the values of dialogue, tolerance and mutual respect. The General Assembly of the United Nations subsequently held a high-level meeting during its last session in 2008 with a view to securing the broadest possible political support at the highest level for all initiatives seeking to promote dialogue, mutual understanding and a culture of peace.

On the socio-cultural track, Muslim religious scholars representing all Islamic denominations and schools of thought also met at Makkah where they affirmed the true nature of the Islamic religion and its message based on tolerance, dialogue and peace. This was followed, on 16-18 July 2008, by the World Conference on Dialogue at Madrid which was attended by representatives of all the major religions. Diligent endeavours are currently being made to establish a global centre for dialogue, comprising representatives of all the main religions, which will operate in an independent manner totally free from any political interference.

Mr. President,

It has become evident that the environmental, economic, social and financial issues affect us all and no State can face them alone or single-handedly avoid the dangers and challenges that they pose. No region anywhere in the world has been unaffected by the implications of the US credit crisis, which has had an impact on the international financial system, thereby undermining the world economy and confronting it with serious challenges that have entailed a slow-down in global real growth rates.

As we have seen, concerted international efforts and the adoption of a serious and credible approach to multilateral action have begun to produce fruitful results in which we can discern the first signs of improvement and a return to stability and growth in the world economy. My country has approved the largest governmental budget in its history in which US\$ 400 billion have been allocated for investment in development projects over a five-year period with a view to the adoption of an expansionist financial policy aimed at closing the deflationary gap and stimulating demand to counter the repercussions of the global financial crisis.

The best lesson to be learnt from this experience is the overriding importance of making every possible effort to remedy the flaws in the international financial system and reach international agreement on ways to remedy the flaws in the world economy in such a way as to secure a financial system that offers equal opportunities to all the parties while, at the same time, providing appropriate liquidity for the developing countries and safeguarding their monetary reserves from the collapse of any of the major international currencies.

I do not think that it would be an exaggeration for me to say that my country, which is a developing country and, at the same time, a member of the G20 whose leaders recently held an important meeting, is not uttering empty words in this regard since the record clearly shows that its course of action is fully consistent with what it has advocated, and is continuing to advocate, in all international forums.

Notwithstanding the fact that it is a developing country experiencing rapid demographic growth that implies a need for steadily increasing financial resources to cover the costs of human development, infrastructure and indigenous capacity building, the Kingdom has made considerable endeavours to assist other more needy countries to an extent that far exceeds the target set for international development assistance.

The report issued by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs confirms that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia headed the list of donor countries funding humanitarian relief operations in 2008.

The Kingdom donated US\$ 1 billion to the Fund to Combat Poverty in the Islamic World, in addition to its contributions to the capital of 18 international financial bodies and institutions. The non-recoverable aid and soft loans provided by the Kingdom during the last three decades amounts to US\$ 100 billion, from which 95 developing countries benefited. This amount represents 4 % of the Kingdom's GNP, which is far higher than the target set by the United Nations.

In keeping with the concern that the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques is showing for the large-scale promotion of education in the developing countries, the Kingdom announced its allocation of US\$ 500 million for education projects in those countries.

With regard to debt relief, the Kingdom has waived more than US\$ 6 billion in debts due to it from developing countries and has contributed its full quota to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative of the International Monetary Fund. The Kingdom is renewing its appeal to the industrialized developed countries to honour their commitments in regard to direct aid quotas, debt relief in favour of the most needy countries and market access, without unjustifiable restrictions, for the exports of developing countries.

Mr. President,

The urgent issues with which the world is faced, such as climate change, food security and rising prices of basic commodities, necessitate cooperation by all components of the international community in order to devise equitable solutions that take into account the interests of all in conformity with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities between the developed and the developing countries, as provided for in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. It would be unfair to burden some beyond their capacities while showing indulgence to others who have been more instrumental in exacerbating the problem and are more capable of bearing the burdens entailed by solutions thereto.

Shouldering its international responsibilities, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia announced, during the last OPEC Summit in Riyadh, its donation of an amount of US\$ 300 million for the establishment of a special fund

for research on energy, the environment and climate change. My country has also contributed US\$ 500 million to the World Food Programme to meet the rising costs of food, thereby assisting 62 developing countries in all parts of the world. The Kingdom will also be covering the costs of holding the Food and Agriculture Organization's World Food Summit, which is due to be held on 16 November 2009.

In view of the importance of international cooperation in the energy sector, the Kingdom has diligently sought to build bridges of dialogue between producers and consumers by hosting the secretariat of the International Energy Forum in Riyadh. At the Jeddah Conference of Petroleum Producing and Consuming Countries, held under his patronage, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques launched his initiative known as "Energy for the Poor" for the purpose of helping the developing countries to meet the costs of obtaining energy.

In this context, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia also announced its allocation of US\$ 500 million to be made available, in the form of soft loans from the Saudi Fund for Development, for the funding of energy projects in developing countries.

Mr. President,

The far-reaching international changes and the magnitude of the challenges currently facing the international community necessitate a review not only of the working methods of the United Nations but also of the structure and functions of its existing organs, as well as enhancement of its ability to prevent and resolve conflicts and maintain international peace and security. The Kingdom supports the call for reforms to secure broader membership of the Security Council in such a way as to improve geographical representation and promote transparency in its work in a manner consistent with the need to maintain due credibility, avoid double standards and ensure respect for, and compliance with, its resolutions.

The important reforms in this field should include restriction of the use of the right of veto by requiring the Permanent Members to undertake not to avail themselves of this right in order to veto measures designed to ensure the implementation of resolutions previously adopted by the Security Council. There is also a need to achieve an optimal balance between the General Assembly and the Security Council, strengthen the role of the Economic and Social Council, and ensure closer coordination among United Nations funds, programmes and activities. We reaffirm our commitment to the United Nations and the multilateral international

order, since our international community direly needs to take a unified and mutually supportive stand in order to devise equitable solutions to worsening global problems through diligent respect for the values, traditions and principles enshrined in the conscience of mankind which are conducive to the promotion of constructive cooperation and the achievement of security, peace and prosperity for all nations.