

**REMARKS OF H.E. ANAND PANYARACHUN TO THE IRISH
INSTITUTE OF EUROPEAN AFFAIRS**

SEMINAR ON “UN REFORM: THREATS, CHALLENGES AND CHANGE”

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Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends,

It is a great pleasure to join you for this conference. I wish to thank the Institute for this opportunity. I would also like to thank the Government of Ireland and Minister Ahern for generous support to the work of the Secretary-General’s High-level Panel, and for unflinching commitment to the reform efforts underway.

Today, I would like to share some thoughts about current efforts in New York and in capitals to address our most pressing challenges to development, security and human rights, and how to mould the United Nations to address most effectively those challenges in the 21st century.

As you know, in September 2003, the Secretary-General told the General Assembly that we had reached a “fork in the road.” He argued that divisions over the war in Iraq, and before that, the terrorist attacks of 11 September, had generated deep divisions over the threats we face and the ways in which we must confront them. In that same address, the Secretary-General announced the creation of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change.

The Panel, despite its 16 members’ wide range of views and backgrounds managed to come to agreement on a wide panoply of challenges. In that agreement, I believe that the Secretary-General saw what I saw: If colleagues from former U.S. National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft to Secretary-General of the Arab League Amr Moussa to former UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata could all come to such wide-ranging consensus on both the threats we face and how to renew collective responses, why not member states?

So with his eyes on September 2005 and the five-year review of the Millennium Declaration, the Secretary-General in March issued his own report entitled “In Larger Freedom.” Drawing on the Panel report as well as the Millennium Project report on development, the Secretary-General convincingly knitted together the strands of security, development and human rights. He argued that one will not be durable without the others. That report has now been the object of intense discussion in the UN General Assembly, and in civil society at large, and it was the basis for the summit Draft Outcome document prepared by General Assembly President Ping just debated recently in New York.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The stage is set for historic decisions; the summit in September will convene nearly 180 heads of state and government – more than any event ever before. And the opportunity truly is historic; as the Secretary-General has argued, we have it in our power to pass on to our children a brighter inheritance than that bequeathed to any previous generation. We can, and we must, take bold and concrete decisions at the summit that will strengthen the work of the United Nations for development, security and human rights, and we must improve the functioning of the Organization’s decision-making bodies to ensure that we are equipped to do so.

We live in a world unforeseen in 1945, when the United Nations was formed. Collective security was then considered a question of States, borders and battalions.

Today, that understanding must be broadened in light of a new constellation of threats, interdependence and expectations of states’ responsibilities. Today’s leading threats – terrorism, organized crime, extreme poverty, environmental degradation, the spread of disease, the risk of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction – transcend

borders and require that all states are able to function and exercise sovereignty responsibly.

The proposals being debated now in the General Assembly are meant to help all states and their United Nations address those challenges more effectively and more equitably. I hope the final outcome offers an ambitious but pragmatic roadmap for fulfilling this responsibility.

In the way, there are still striking differences when it comes to determining which threats should be our priority – and as troubling, an insistence that we can address some threats but not others.

But in today's world, it is at our collective peril that we emphasize socio-economic threats, while giving secondary attention to weapons of mass destruction. Our efforts to build durable peace after civil wars may be futile if we neglect the urgency of human rights.

Terrorism, throughout the Panel's deliberations, proved a powerful example of the interconnections between threats. Today the developing world is just as affected by terrorism as any other region. From Kenya to Indonesia to Peru, developing countries know terrorism all too well. But not only that: According to estimates of the World Bank, millions of people in the developing world were thrown into extreme poverty as a consequence of the economic shocks following the 11 September terrorist attacks. Catastrophic terrorism involving a nuclear device would be far more devastating the world over.

At the same time, the industrialized world has just as much interest in addressing all the threats that face us. SARS showed us how rapidly a newly emerging infectious disease can traverse oceans and continents, and expose the flaws of even modern health systems. SARS spread to dozens of countries within weeks, killing hundreds and

infecting thousands. And if we are to believe what experts tell us about avian influenza, which is now afflicting my own region, SARS may have been merely a harbinger.

We simply cannot afford to choose among the threats we face. In an interdependent world, threats increasingly have a system-wide impact. We must be serious about adapting our international mechanisms, including the United Nations, to cope with the world of the 21st century.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

If the reports of the High-level Panel and the Secretary-General have exposed one glaring weakness of the UN system, it has been an all-too-frequent paralysis in the face of the sustained but devastating effects of ongoing violent conflict and persistent, extreme poverty. The lethargy with which we have come to acknowledge the prospect of catastrophic terrorism ominously follows this pattern. But as our interdependence increases, and threats become ever more interrelated, we must act early, decisively and collectively against threats from HIV/AIDS to nuclear terrorism before they have their most devastating effect.

The three basic freedoms outlined in the Secretary-General's report – freedom from want, freedom from fear, freedom to live in dignity – hang in the balance.

If we are successful this September, the opportunities are astounding. We could:

- reverse the onslaught of HIV/AIDS and other deadly diseases that now devastate societies and undermine State capacity;

- help to build states' capacity to provide basic services to their people, and reduce vulnerability to state collapse, mass violence and humanitarian disasters;

- with unity of purpose combat terrorism in all its forms;

-- no longer allow half of all countries emerging from conflict to lapse back into violence within five years;

-- stave off paralysis in the face of genocide or mass slaughter of civilians;

-- reenergize consensus to staunch proliferation and advance disarmament; and

-- restore the central role of the UN in the international system.

Ambitious as it seems, this vision should be within reach. I would like to highlight those actions that will be particularly indispensable if we are to find ourselves in such a world.

First, the reports of the Panel, the Millennium Project and the Secretary-General, and now GA President Ping's outcome document, have all placed a very strong emphasis on development. This is not only because development is vital in its own right, but also because it is the most effective means of addressing so many of the threats we face. Building states' capacity to exercise their sovereignty responsibly is a foremost challenge.

Fortunately, Member States are showing signs of progress in this area. There is an unprecedented consensus around the Millennium Development Goals. More and more countries are adopting specific time-tables for reaching the 0.7 per cent target for official development assistance (ODA). G-7 Finance Ministers have agreed to cancel ponderous debt burdens. And in a few days, we can look to the G-8 summit in Gleneagles for more positive developments. The summit in September should give impetus to vital progress in the area of trade negotiations and affirm all of these positive steps.

Second, we must act collectively and decisively to prevent the proliferation of biological, chemical and nuclear weapons – particularly to keep them out of the hands of

terrorists. In the deliberations of the Panel, members were quite struck by the rate at which globalization and technological advancement have outstripped our multilateral instruments. The recent failure of the Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to face up to these challenges makes bold action in September all the more imperative. The Panel has warned of a potential cascade of proliferation if the NPT-based regime begins to erode, and I hope that Heads of State and Government quickly grapple with this prospect. Time is running short.

The Panel also drew attention to what has increasingly been termed our “biological security” – security from disease naturally emerging or deliberately perpetrated. SARS, as I mentioned, was a harbinger. Today, the growing risks from avian flu loom ominously, and a chorus of experts and leaders is warning that we are ill-prepared for a large-scale epidemic. In the short-term, we must fortify the World Health Organization’s Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network. But the long-term challenge is to build up public health systems in developing countries. First and foremost, we must address HIV/AIDS, which has spread so rapidly and with such devastation that life expectancies in some African countries have plunged to levels not seen since the black plague struck Europe in the 14th century. But viable health systems are also essential to address naturally occurring outbreaks of disease, and to counter the risk of biological terrorism.

Third, the UN has been too slow to mobilize a united front against terrorism in all its forms. All states must speak loudly, clearly and in unison in denouncing terrorism. And they must make the UN an effective international forum for combating it. This will require implementation of the new comprehensive strategy along the lines recommended by the Secretary-General in Madrid earlier this year. It will also require consensus on a common definition of terrorism. Regardless of one’s cause, killing or maiming of innocent civilians and non-combatants can not be justified. Period. That is terrorism, pure and simple. Such moral clarity is imperative if the UN is to fulfill its potential in combating terrorism.

Fourth, it is imperative to build consensus around the concept of a responsibility to protect. Many countries maintain understandable anxieties that this concept could be used as a fig leaf for unwarranted interventions. But I am heartened to see that Member States are earnestly trying to bridge their differences; we all share the fundamental goal of preventing genocide, ethnic cleansing and mass killing. Most striking to me in the Panel's and other debates on this question is that few excuse the United Nations failure to intervene amidst the Rwandan genocide. And yet the principle of a responsibility to protect quickly induces reservations. No doubt, recent failures of the international community to protect the vulnerable have been a product of complacency on the part of those who would endorse a responsibility to protect. But there is nevertheless essential value in sending an unequivocal message that all States must be united in the face of any future atrocities.

Finally, the UN must renovate its architecture to exploit a new consensus on development, security and human rights for the 21st century.

We must first restore human rights to its rightful place. The Secretary-General has shared the diagnosis of the Panel regarding the serious shortcomings of the current Commission on Human Rights. That Commission has squandered much of its credibility, and the reputation of the UN has suffered for it. The Panel did recommend universalizing the Commission but it also recommended, in the longer term, the establishment of a Human Rights Council. I welcome the Secretary-General's boldness in seizing this opportunity now. Human rights must be given the central place they deserve in the institutional structure of the UN.

Leaders at the summit will also have the opportunity to establish a new intergovernmental Peacebuilding Commission, which would play a central role in helping States emerging from violent conflict. As the Panel saw it, and the Secretary-General agreed, The Commission would fill a real institutional gap by ensuring that all key players in future peacebuilding endeavours share an understanding of the challenges, needs and required actions.

The Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, donors must work in a more integrated fashion to ensure that states and societies emerging from conflict are not betrayed by the failure of well-intentioned but disparate actors across the international system. It is particularly imperative that the Bretton Woods Institutions and regional banks closely coordinate their vital contributions to peacebuilding under the new commission.

Discussions in New York and in capitals reflect strong support. I hope there will be agreement to establish the Peacebuilding Commission during the summit itself.

Member states must also agree to meaningful reform of the UN Secretariat. While there have been enormous strides over the past few years in operational areas, challenges in oversight, management accountability, budgeting, financial disclosure and general performance have become quite clear. The Secretary-General is undertaking important measures on all of these fronts, but to fully realize the Secretariat's potential, member states must in September give him the authority he needs to effectively manage Turtle Bay's labyrinth of departments, personnel and mandates with the authority of a chief executive officer. They must also ensure that mandates given to the Secretariat remain relevant, and that if they do, the Secretariat is adequately resourced to execute them.

Last but not least, the moment one either dreads or has been impatiently waiting for: Security Council reform (or so goes the sentiment these days in the august General Assembly). I am aware of the flurry of activity in New York and capitals in the last few weeks, and of anticipated action in the coming weeks. Ultimately, however, I believe that the approach to this question should be rather simple:

There is no escaping that the present make-up of the Council reflects the world of 1945, not that of the 21st century. We must accept that the Council's effectiveness well into that century will depend on its legitimacy in the eyes of the member states obligated

to comply with its resolutions. So we must reform the Council to include Member States which contribute the most financially, militarily and diplomatically, and also allow a broader, more representative membership so that the Council is seen to be more democratic. This important issue has been before Member States for over a decade, and has been discussed extensively. I sincerely hope that a decision will be taken this time around.

But – and I cannot underscore this caveat enough – reform of the Council may ultimately undermine its effectiveness if Member States do not forge a new consensus on security, development and human rights. That consensus must be the guiding constitution of a reformed Council.

The agenda before the September summit gives us hope for such a new consensus – a consensus in which the concerns of North, South, East, West, powerful and poor can all be addressed effectively and equitably. No doubt, one document will not solve all our problems. But it could herald real progress toward a new future.

The Secretary-General, my former colleagues on the High-level Panel and I have been around for quite some time – all of us, in fact, longer than the United Nations. If I may call upon that well of wisdom, I believe that it will be many years before we are again presented with such a promising confluence of ideas, proposals and engagement.

The opportunity is within reach; we must seize it.