



Speech by

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(Check Against Delivery)

Mr President, Secretary General, Distinguished delegates.

This great body has been in existence for two thirds of a century. Three times longer than its predecessor body – the League of Nations. And longer than previous attempts to fashion a continuing collective approach to the common problems of nation states.

The question we must ask ourselves today is whether the United Nations remains effective in confronting the challenges of our time. The UN was established in the grim aftermath of the two deadliest conflicts in human history. With close to 80 million people killed. Entire families and almost entire generations lost for all time. Towns, cities and countries utterly destroyed. The world came together out of necessity.

There had to be a better way. And in the decades since we first met at San Francisco, we have managed to avoid another world war, although at times that seemed less than certain.

Today, we are faced with a different set of challenges and in different strategic, political and economic circumstances. We now live in a world that is more multi-polar and more interconnected than ever before. We are confronted with the double-edged sword of globalisation. The transformation of the global economy has increased living standards and lifted many hundreds of millions out of poverty. At the same time, the increased interdependency of global financial markets ensured that no country connected to the world economy was spared from the impact of the Global Financial Crisis.

Furthermore, the rapid transformation of global communication and the radical increase in global people movements have improved the well-being of all human kind. But equally they have created or at least amplified a new set of security threats to all human kind: pandemic diseases, transnational organised crime and the continuing threat of global terrorism.

Then there is the global challenge of climate change. The unconstrained carbon emissions of one state impact on the long-term survival of all states. Climate change is no respecter of national or geographic boundaries. Climate change simultaneously demands both national and integrated global responses.

So two-thirds of a century after our formation, we, the United Nations, now face increasingly complex global challenges in an increasingly fragmented world – and a much more contested international space. Emerging powers are gradually reshaping regional and global orders into an increasingly 'multi-polar' system. We now have multiple players with competing interests ranging across the international spectrum. Economic, environmental and security.

These new global realities create an imperative for responsive, representative and, most critically, effective systems of global governance. If we fail to make the UN work, to make its institutions relevant to the great challenges we all now face, the uncomfortable fact is that the UN will become a hollow shell. Nation states may retain the form of the UN, but increasingly seek to go around the UN and deploy other mechanisms, to achieve real results. And that is the question we all face today. A question of our collective political will to make the existing institutions work. To combine the existing and unique legitimacy of the UN system with a newfound effectiveness on security, development and climate change.

Let us look at three examples of how the current system is not meeting expectations.

On development, the Millennium Development Goals are falling short of the targets we set barely a decade ago - in part because donor states are not all honouring the financial commitments they have made.

On climate change, the UNFCCC's progress at Copenhagen did not reflect the global challenge we are currently facing.

On disarmament, the Conference of Disarmament has been in a state of inertia for 12 years, despite the recommendations of the recent Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference that now require urgent work.

Mr President, the United Nations has most of the essential structures in place. But for the structures to work, we must harness the political will necessary to make them work. In other words we must enable the institutions we have created to do the job for which they were created. Put even more starkly, we must do that which we say.

If we have a Conference on Disarmament, it should do disarmament – not pretend. If we say we have a convention on climate change – it must do the job to tackle climate change. Similarly with development. Otherwise the UN's credibility in the eyes of the world – and our own citizens – will eventually collapse.

We do not need another grand plan for UN reform. We need to summon the political will simply to make the UN work. The international community can no longer tolerate the actions of a few dissenting states to roadblock the common resolve of the many. This challenge to the continuing legitimacy of the United Nations is underlined by the vast array and complexity of the challenges the international community faces today.

Mr President, the international community faces the continuing challenge of international terrorism. Terrorism knows no geographic or political boundaries. We are now in the tenth year since terrorists launched their murderous attack on this great city of New York. The threat of international terrorism remains alive. It continues to challenge civilised norms, to generate fear and insecurity, and to take innocent civilian lives in many parts of the world.

The outlawing of terrorist organisations under the provisions of the relevant Security Council resolutions, together with the individual and cooperative measures taken by member states, reflect the unprecedented levels of international collaboration in responding to the world-wide threat of terrorism. As part of the effort to combat terrorism, many member states have their armed forces and other personnel committed to Afghanistan – again sanctioned by Security Council resolutions.

These brave soldiers, police officers and aid workers, representing so many of the countries here in this General Assembly, including Australia, remain in Afghanistan following many years of conflict. The result is that Afghanistan no longer represents an unimpeded base for the global operations of terrorist organisations such as al Qaida. The result is also that we are all contributing to the security and stability of Afghanistan as a nation.

This has been a difficult war. But our collective resolve is strong to prevent Afghanistan once again becoming a base for the export of terrorism. Our mission statement remains – building the capacity necessary for the Afghan Government to be responsible for its own security for the future. We in Australia remain committed to the core task of training the Afghan National Army 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade in the province of Uruzgan.

We are also helping to train the national police in Uruzgan and to build the capacity of the provincial government to provide services for the community. We are on track in our core mission but Afghanistan will need the international community's help for many years to come. In the meantime, many Australian soldiers have lost their lives, many have been wounded and many families devastated by the sacrifices they have made in that country.

Beyond Afghanistan, terrorism continues to remain a threat to people of all faiths and civilisations. We must remain nationally and internationally vigilant against the possibility of further terrorist attacks. The threat remains real.

We must equally be concerned about the continued challenge of nuclear proliferation. Violations of the non-proliferation regime by states such as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Iran represent a potent and potential threat to us all. The international community cannot stand idly by.

It is for this reason that Australia provides robust support for the UN sanctions regime against both the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Iran. These sanctions must continue, and if necessary be further enhanced, in the absence of policy change in Iran and the DPRK.

The UN has played a critical role in promoting the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. Non proliferation and nuclear disarmament are mutually reinforcing processes and cannot be separated. Australia's activism on arms control and disarmament remains undiminished. And there remains much urgent work to be done.

In 1996, Australia tabled the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in this Assembly to ensure its adoption. Since then 182 states have signed and 153 states have ratified the treaty. Nine more states are needed to ratify the treaty in order for it to enter into force. Australia welcomes recent statements by Indonesia and the United States of their intention to ratify the treaty. Australia would urge all remaining states which to date have failed to indicate their intention to ratify the treaty to enable it to enter into force. The NPT Review Conference was held earlier this year.

Australia and Japan had worked closely together in the lead-up to the Conference including through the jointly sponsored report prepared by former Foreign Minister of Australia, Gareth Evans, and his Japanese counterpart, Yoriko Kawaguchi. This significant report provided substantial momentum in the lead up to the Review Conference. We believe that the Evans/Kawaguchi report also represents the most comprehensive, practical, and contemporary blueprint for the international community to both consider and adopt a comprehensive arms control and non-proliferation agenda.

The Review Conference agreed by consensus on 64 sets of actions. And Australia and Japan took the initiative this week in New York to jointly host a cross regional meeting of Foreign Ministers with the aim of working towards the implementation of these 64 actions. The potential catastrophe of nuclear conflict

means that the status quo is not an option. We must move ahead with the negotiation of a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty. And we must ensure the UN disarmament machinery is doing its job.

Of course, for many people around the world, the threat of small arms is more immediate than the threat posed by nuclear weapons. The former Secretary-General, Mr Kofi Annan, famously referred to small arms in Africa as weapons of mass destruction in slow motion. But they are of equal concern to our friends in the Pacific, the Caribbean and elsewhere. It is only proper that Australia is playing a leading role in the development of a proposed Arms Trade Treaty. Including by co-hosting a further meeting in Boston next week.

On the wider question of security, the Australian Government under Prime Minister Gillard warmly welcomes the statement to this Assembly by the President of the United States, concerning his efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and sustainable peace in the Middle East.

Australia's position remains constant: such a settlement must allow both Israel and a future Palestinian state to live side by side in peace and security. Australia calls upon all parties to put their shoulder to the wheel to seize the historic opportunity that now presents itself to bring about a lasting peace.

All member states of the General Assembly should welcome the prospect of both an Israeli and a Palestinian state being represented at the 66<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the United Nations to be held just next year.

Australia over the last several years has promoted the concept of an Asia Pacific community involving the active membership in the future architecture of our region of both the US and Russia. Australia therefore welcomes the imminent membership of the United States and Russia in the East Asia Summit. EAS Leaders will take this historic decision in Hanoi in October.

Australia, as a founding member of the East Asia Summit, looks forward to contributing to the evolution of this wider sense of community across this, the most dynamic region of the world.

On questions of wider human security, Australia remains fully engaged on international and regional challenges including irregular people movements, organised crime and people smuggling.

The most immediate and pressing threat to the physical security of Australia's wider region lies in the scourge of natural disasters. The Asia Pacific region has seen tsunamis, earthquakes, volcanoes and floods on a massive scale.

Australia proposes that the international community consider afresh our capacity to respond rapidly, coherently and proportionately to large-scale natural disasters. Within our own region, Australia argues that this would represent an effective benefit to the peoples and countries of our region, which are particularly prone to natural disasters. It would also in time constitute a valuable confidence and security building measure between the armed forces, emergency services and security agencies of the various nation states of the Asia Pacific.

The magnitude of what I witnessed last week when I was in Pakistan underlines the importance of better planning, preparation and coordination to deal with natural disasters on a mass scale.

We cannot afford simply to wait for another such disaster to occur before realising that the resources of the United Nations and its agencies are simply incapable of meeting challenges of such an order of magnitude.

The challenges to global economic stability remain significant. The full impact of the Global Financial Crisis is not yet clear. There are still systemic problems within the global financial system. These must be dealt with through the appropriate national and international institutions if we are to remove the underlying causes of the crisis which began in this country in September 2008 and which then proceeded to ravage the economies of the world and the working peoples of the world.

Some 210 million people are out of work across the world – up by 30 million since 2007. Beyond the specific reforms necessary in the global financial system, the parallel problem of global financial imbalances must also be addressed. These have formed part of the G20 agenda in which Australia is active. The objectives of the Framework for Strong, Sustainable and Balanced Growth agreed to by G20 states at their Pittsburgh Summit in September 2009 remains essential and must be implemented if we are to act on the causes of the recent crisis.

Last December, the nations of the world assembled in Copenhagen for the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC. Australia was an active participant at Copenhagen. Together with a number of other states, Australia worked tirelessly

to produce the Copenhagen Accord. The Accord did not represent all that the international community needed then in order to bring about a comprehensive response to the continuing challenge of climate change.

The Copenhagen Accord, however, represented four significant advances:

- for the first time, it entrenched two degrees centigrade or less as the limit beyond which global temperatures could not be allowed to rise in order to avoid irretrievable climate change for the planet;
- for the first time, both developed and developing countries accepted they had responsibilities to bring about this outcome;
- for the first time, developed and developing countries agreed to develop a framework for the measurement, reporting and verification of mitigation actions; and
- for the first time, developed countries committed to mobilise an amount approaching US\$30 billion in international public financing for immediate action in developing countries to 2012, and to work toward a goal of mobilising US\$100 billion annually by 2020 in funding from all sources.

Much, however, remains to be done. We must continue to strengthen our global resolve to move towards a solution for the planet. The imperatives are real.

Australia believes the international community must urgently address the particular climate change adaptation needs of the world's most vulnerable states,

in particular the island countries of the Pacific, the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean.

One significant area of progress in the period ahead lies in the proper protection, preservation and re-forestation of the world's rainforests. Collectively, rainforest degradation and deforestation in developing countries represents about one fifth of global greenhouse gas emissions. Australia stands ready to act with other states, to build on the work already done, to achieve an effective outcome in this area as rapidly as possible.

The international community needs to see an early sign of real success in our international efforts to combat climate change. We believe action on rainforests through what is called the REDD+ set of initiatives represents one such area of possible early advance.

Australia is now active on both the UNSG's High Level Panels on Global Sustainability and Climate Change Finance. Together with our continued participation in the UNFCCC, Australia will continue to be among the most globally active states in global forums on bringing a comprehensive and effective global response to climate change.

In doing so, the governments of the world will have to consider closely new growth models which incorporate both the concept and the reality of lower carbon economies. For the economies of the world, this transformation - what some have called the next industrial revolution - also represents an unprecedented opportunity for investment and employment as the global economy embraces:

- new energy efficiency measures; and

- new renewable energy strategies

The international community needs to embrace a new way of looking at climate change, which sees action on climate change providing new industries, new investment and new job opportunities for the future.

All governments at this General Assembly have participated in the Millennium Development Goals Summit. Australia fully embraces the MDG framework. This week in New York, we've said our aid program has doubled over the last five years and is projected to double again by 2015.

Over time, more of our aid will go to the least-developed countries and we will continue to give high priority to assisting the world's small island states, and particularly our Pacific neighbours, in recognition of their special needs.

We expect to invest some \$5 billion in education to 2015, including support universal for primary education. Australia also expects to invest at least \$1.6 billion in women's and children's health to 2015.

Australia applauds the initiative to create a new institution entitled UN WOMEN under the capable leadership of the new Under Secretary-General Michelle Bachelet, the former President of Chile. Australia looks forward to working with UN WOMEN on the vast array of challenges which half of humanity faces and for which our existing international frameworks have been found wanting.

The education of women and girls, and the security of women and girls from violence and sexual abuse and exploitation, must now become a core part of our global campaign for a fairer world.

Human rights abuses and humanitarian crises in failing states continue to plague us. We must enhance the Responsibility to Protect negotiations and support the mandate of the International Criminal Court. We must also continue to speak out against flagrant abuses.

Often it's the indigenous peoples of the world who suffer most. I am proud of Australia's apology to our own indigenous peoples and our policy of closing the gap between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. I am also proud of Australia's support for the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. On the treatment of our indigenous peoples, Australia is making a major effort, although we still have a long way to go.

Mr President, Australia is a founding member of the United Nations. We've been active in this institution for the last 65 years. We are also a candidate for the Security Council for 2013-2014.

We've contributed 65,000 of our number to 52 different peacekeeping missions across the world. We remain active in several such peace operations today, including in Cyprus, Sudan, Timor-Leste and Afghanistan.

Over the years, Australia has led a number of significant UN initiatives, including:

- the Cambodia Peace Settlement

- the conclusion of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the Chemical Weapons Convention
- as well as leading the force that stabilised Timor-Leste after its people voted for independence.

Australia remains intimately engaged in all the funds, programs and specialised agencies of the United Nations. We are also active in other international institutions including the Commonwealth.

Australia is the 12<sup>th</sup> largest source of funding for the UN budget. Australia pays in full and on time. We always seek to do that which we say.

Australia wants to be part of the solution to the many challenges which the international community now faces – not just point to the problems. Australia believes in the power of creative ideas and active diplomacy to solve long-standing international problems.

Australia values good international citizenship. It is for these reasons that Australia has been committed to the United Nations since the beginning.

The United Nations is inevitably imperfect. As the organization's second Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjold, famously said: "the United Nations was not created in order to bring us to heaven, but in order to save us from hell".

Its imperfections, however, only mean that we need to work to make it better. That is up to us – the member states. The organization can only ever be what we member states allow it to be. As I said at the outset, the United Nations was

born of the unparalleled catastrophe and barbarism of two world wars just twenty years apart. That fact – and our need to secure a much better future - make it imperative we recommit to the United Nations as a decisive instrument to create that better future for all of us.

Mr President, our responsibility today is to fulfill the vision which our forebears had for this great institution 65 years ago. Our responsibility is to make the United Nations fulfill its mission. To make the United Nations work through the combined political will of all member states.

I thank the General Assembly.