



I T A L Y

STATEMENT BY
THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF ITALY

THE HONORABLE
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TO THE 65TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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Mr. President,

Italy is about to celebrate the 150th anniversary of its unification. We are a young Country, but a people with deep roots and ancient traditions. By our history, geographic location and age-old international outlook, we are the heirs to an illustrious legacy. By necessity and vocation, we are dedicated to dialogue, respect for diversity and mutual understanding.

There is no alternative to this inclusive approach even when it requires compromises or concessions. I prefer to call it “idealistic pragmatism,” since our ultimate goal is to spread peace, freedom and prosperity: an ambition that is best achieved through cooperation. This propensity for dialogue is one of Italy’s greatest contributions to the UN.

Mr. President,

Italy is a strong supporter of the UN’s central role in global governance and the management of international crises. By virtue of its universality and impartiality, the Organization has the legitimacy to intervene in crisis situations. Italy participates in peace-keeping missions not only by contributing large numbers of highly-qualified troops, but also by drafting strategic plans and doctrine, and providing training and logistic support. We are the sixth top contributor to the UN PKO budget and, since 2006, the first EU and WEOG contributor of troops to the UN.

Approximately 8,000 Italian troops are assigned to operations under the aegis or the mandate of the UN. Our presence is spread across 22 missions throughout the world: from Lebanon to Haiti, the Balkans to Afghanistan. Through its experience in these difficult areas, Italy has learned important lessons. In particular, our “comprehensive approach” provides valuable insight into how to integrate the military aspects of a mission with the commitment to economic, institutional and civil reconstruction.

We are convinced that to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century, the United Nations system must be strengthened, starting with its capacity to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security. The UN must be empowered to fulfil its role as a “producer of security and stability” that fosters reconciliation, strengthens democracy, and ultimately helps to create a more stable world. This is why we support the Secretary-General’s New Horizon and Global Field Support Strategy initiatives. We must also continue to foster synergies between the

UN and regional organizations that play a key role in bringing peace to crisis areas. I refer to the African Union and, above all, to the European Union. The Treaty of Lisbon includes new arrangements for the European Union's international representation. Once the Resolution on its participation in the work of the United Nations has finally been approved, I sincerely hope the European Union will be able to make a greater contribution to the responsibilities of the General Assembly and to enhance its capacity for political guidance.

In the field of security, a commitment to disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction has always been a feature of Italian foreign policy. Proliferation is a growing threat that can only be countered through international cooperation. In this regard, the Italian government has just presented some concrete proposals. We need to set the goal of a "zero-nuclear" option in an appropriate timeframe – but without conveying the impression that it is an unrealistic aspiration.

Mr. President,

2010 is a key date on the road to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. In this endeavour, our collective responsibility and credibility are at stake. Italy is a strong proponent of a holistic approach to development. For the sake of true democratic ownership, the donor community – in collaboration with the private sector and civil society – must work in a partnership that makes the beneficiary Countries the protagonists of development.

The time has come for the international community and the United Nations to increase their commitment to two regional crises. Somalia is the most serious and urgent situation on the African continent today. In the past two years, the Italian government has contributed considerable financing to AMISOM and the Somali security forces, but this is not enough. International support for AMISOM must be stepped up. The second crisis is in Pakistan, where the recent floods have devastated the lives of 20 million people. The Italian government is implementing an additional 80 million euro aid package to bring relief to the Pakistani population. But in addition to providing aid, we need to act wisely. This is why Italy has called for new trade measures to increase market access for Pakistani goods and bolster Pakistan's economic recovery. A natural disaster of this magnitude also demonstrates the urgent need to address the effects of climate change through collective and shared measures.

Mr. President,

Globalisation has generated a new demand for belonging and identity. But a fruitful dialogue among cultures cannot take place without universal values. It is imperative to defend the universal validity of fundamental rights and avoid the risks of relativism. Italy is well-equipped to play an important part in this dialectic, also on the strength of a humanistic heritage that affirms the human being as the measure of all things. True to this heritage, the Italian government has promoted a campaign for a moratorium on the application of the death penalty. We welcome the consolidation of an international trend toward achieving this objective, and hope it will be confirmed when Italy and a broad alliance of Countries present the resolution on the moratorium in the upcoming months.

Religious tolerance is a prerequisite for peace and a founding principle of our civilization. The right to search for truth through the word of God is “the freedom of freedoms,” but in some areas of the world people are afraid to freely and openly profess their faith because they face persecution by extremists. Italy is strongly committed to protecting freedom of religion, and will always oppose discrimination against religious minorities. In fact, Italy together with its EU partners is actively involved in the preparation and presentation of the annual resolution on religious intolerance.

Another target of our fight against discrimination is the international initiative to ban female genital mutilation. Since September 2009 Italy together with a group of African Countries has promoted such an initiative, which hopefully will lead to the presentation of a Resolution here that fully respects African ownership. FGMs, which violate a woman’s physical integrity, affect millions of women throughout the world, including in my Country, where 35 thousand such cases have been reported.

Women’s rights and national progress go hand in hand but women are still suffering in many countries throughout the world. By pooling together our efforts we can ensure the necessary consensus for resolutions that safeguard our own and future generations from prejudice and intolerance. In this spirit we welcome the creation of “UNWomen” within the Secretariat and hope that it quickly becomes operative.

Mr. President,

Reaffirming the central role of the United Nations in global governance requires a *constant* commitment to a comprehensive reform of the Organization. Such a reform should affect the Secretariat, the various Funds, Agencies and Programmes and, obviously, the decision-making bodies.

For the reform of the Security Council we seek realistic compromise solutions that garner the broadest possible consensus and ensure an adequate representation of African, Arab and other underrepresented groups of countries. More than 15 years of negotiations have proven that the membership is profoundly divided. It is now time to search for genuine and far-reaching compromise. Italy and its Uniting for Consensus partners are ready to engage constructively in the reform process and have already demonstrated their flexibility. We look forward to engaging with the rest of the membership during the current General Assembly session.

The process of revitalizing the General Assembly should aim to restore its central role. The universal character of the GA lends it a potential for political guidance that should be realized: this is the place where we could jointly identify the main problems that threaten the security, stability, and development of all Member States and draft common strategies to address them effectively.

Mr. President,

The vision of the future to which Italy aspires – a future of peaceful coexistence and mutual enrichment between values and cultures – can only be ensured through the successful completion of the many reform processes underway. We can achieve them if we build our actions on dialogue and mutual understanding. And when we do achieve them, the UN system will be equipped with the tools it needs to fulfil the main principles and values of the Charter. One above all the others: each and every individual throughout the world is endowed with inalienable and absolute rights on which compromise can never be tolerated.