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## **New Security Challenges: Soft and Hard**

Delivered at conference entitled  
“Belgium in the UN Security Council 2007-2008 - An Assessment”

*\*Check against delivery\**

Belgian Chamber of Representatives, Brussels  
Friday, 3 April 2009

Mr. Chairman  
Excellencies  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a distinct privilege and a pleasure to be with you. Let me, at the outset, extend my sincere appreciation to the organizers for the invitation to this most timely event. It is an honour to be taking part with such eminent experts on global security issues and on the workings of the Security Council. I, too, look forward to hearing their opinions and views.

As you know, Foreign Minister de Gucht was to deliver his keynote now, and I am certainly not pretending to take his place. We have two rules at the United Nations Secretariat: first, we serve all Member States, whether big or small. And second, just as the customer, the Member States are always right. So, I will not evaluate the outcome of the Belgian Security Council membership – the Foreign Minister will join us to do that later. Rather, I hope to be able to put some of the discussions here in a wider context of the security challenges that face the international community from the perspective of the United Nations Secretariat.

The title of this address refers to “soft” and “hard” threats. But, to me, one of the defining characteristics of the security challenges we face is exactly that this dichotomy hardly seems to apply any longer. It may, in fact, frustrate efforts to address the challenges by obscuring their many facets. Much of what has traditionally been classified as “hard threats”, such as inter-State war, or terrorism, can – and often is – fuelled or exacerbated by “soft threats” such as lack of development, massive human rights abuses, humanitarian emergencies, or even climate change. The Secretary-General has stressed, for example, that if we do not address the current economic and financial crisis, it may evolve into political instability. We must confront this continuum of threats, but without losing sight of priorities.

The understanding of the inter-relationship between challenges is best expressed in the preamble to the United Nations Charter, which affirms that the Organization was not only created to “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”, but also to “reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights” and “to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom”.

This is not to say that all challenges are security threats, but rather an acknowledgement of the connections across issues and their potential to escalate when not addressed through comprehensive measures. Common to all the challenges is that they can only be resolved through inclusive, multilateral action.

Over the years, the Security Council has itself gradually broadened the understanding of what constitutes a threat to international peace and security – and through this, the Council has contributed to a reinterpretation of the line between “soft” and “hard” threats. The Council regularly discusses in open meetings issues such as civilians and children in armed conflict, the role of civil society in conflict prevention and in the pacific settlement of disputes, the spread of small arms and similar issues that probably in more traditional thinking would be labelled “soft” security issues.

Almost ten years ago, in 2000, the Security Council declared HIV/AIDS an international security issue through the adoption of resolution 1308. The same year, the Council adopted the landmark resolution 1325 – its first-ever resolution addressing the impact of war on women, and women’s contribution to conflict resolution and sustainable peace. In April 2007, the Council held its first ministerial-level debate on the link between security, energy

and climate. To me, one of our key challenges consists in fully acknowledging these linkages across threats, and in addressing them in a holistic manner – which is, of course, easier said than done.

This does not mean, however, that the Council does not remain focused on what we may consider “core” security business. Quite the contrary. The United Nations currently has 16 peacekeeping operations deployed on 5 continents, with more than 112,000 troops, police and civilians, all authorized by the Security Council. These operations support very complex transitions to peace, with important roles in security, institution-building and rule of law. These expanding mandates of peacekeeping are also a demonstration of the link between “soft” and “hard” threats.

It is clear that the growing demand for peacekeeping is a vote of confidence and trust in the United Nations. It also brings our peacekeeping engagement to an unprecedented scale, complexity and level of risk. United Nations peacekeeping is overstretched, and a critical challenge is to ensure sufficient support and adequate resources, provided by Member States, to enable missions to fulfil their mandates. We are grateful for the important role that Belgium continues to play in peacekeeping, and I hope that these contributions will be strengthened.

There is also a need for continued engagement to resolve regional conflicts, and to address their causes. This involves continued serious efforts for progress in the Middle East, in Darfur, Somalia and other areas for durable solutions. The recent international meetings on Afghanistan – first in Moscow on 27 March, and earlier this week in The Hague – have re-energized multilateral efforts to make progress for the people of Afghanistan. Participants in the Moscow and Hague meetings agreed to promote good governance and stronger institutions, to generate economic growth, to strengthen security and to enhance regional cooperation – and they pledged to provide the resources required to achieve these goals. They also welcomed the Afghan Government’s efforts to reintegrate into civilian life those Afghan fighters who distance themselves from international terrorism, respect the Constitution and lay down arms. This is a clear example of a multi-dimensional approach.

Terrorism remains a leading threat to international peace and security. The United Nations has a responsibility to lead the global efforts to confront this scourge. Indeed, this Organization has itself become a target of terrorist activity. The General Assembly’s adoption, in 2006, of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy demonstrated clearly the international community’s unequivocal resolve, and provides a firm basis for concrete political, operational and legal measures, in full respect of human rights and the rule of law. The Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force and the subsidiary bodies of the Security Council play important parts in this fight. A key element in this work is to address conditions that can be conducive to the spread of terrorism – another illustration of the continuum between “soft” and “hard”. During its Security Council membership, Belgium played a significant role in these efforts as Chair of the Security Council committee established pursuant to resolution 1267, the so-called Al-Qaida and the Taliban Committee. This work is also part of the broader efforts to bring stability to Afghanistan.

The need to address security and other challenges through an inclusive approach is also evident in the development of the United Nations’ institutional structures. While recognizing the cross-cutting nature of the challenges, it is also critical to avoid any duplication. The creation, in 2006, of the Peacebuilding Commission, which draws members from the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the main troop

contributing countries and the main contributors to the budget, is a recognition of these close linkages across issues that require new institutional mechanisms to eliminate overlap. As you know, Belgium has been particularly active in making the Peacebuilding Commission realize its potential, and I hope that the debates today will also touch upon these critical efforts to facilitate a sustainable peace in countries emerging from violent conflict.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

One security challenge, which cuts across the “soft” and “hard” divide, is disarmament. There is a need to rethink priorities in this area to revitalize multilateral disarmament. Global military expenditure has topped 1.3 trillion US dollars. Indeed, global military expenditure has gone up – in real terms – by 37% over the past ten years – and it is still growing. This arms build-up not only increases the likelihood of violence, but it drains much-needed resources away from development. Strategic disarmament could free up significant funds that could be channelled towards improving the lives of the over 1 billion people that live on less than 1 dollar a day – the “bottom billion” – especially at this time of global economic crisis. Moreover, strategic disarmament would help to build greater confidence among States and contribute towards stability, which would, in turn, also further the development agenda.

The Security Council’s work to ensure non-proliferation of nuclear weapons is also critical in this area. The world remains concerned about the nuclear activities in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and in Iran, and there is support for efforts to address these concerns through dialogue.

Resumption of the Six-Party Talks at an early date is necessary to advance the goal of verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The United Nations is concerned that a North Korean ballistic missile launch would be damaging to peace and stability in the region. The United Nations urges the DPRK to exercise restraint and to observe relevant Security Council resolutions.

Iran must fully implement the relevant Security Council resolutions. The United Nations supports efforts for a comprehensive diplomatic solution to address the concerns of the international community, in full respect of Iran’s right under NPT to a civilian nuclear programme. As you know, Belgium has contributed actively to the Security Council’s work by chairing the sanctions committee on Iran.

The 2010 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is an important opportunity for all of us to contribute to robust, creative responses to the serious challenges to the global non-proliferation regime, and I hope that this opportunity will be seized.

It is vital that the Conference on Disarmament – the world’s only multilateral negotiating body – is enabled to fulfil its mandated function. Political will is essential to find common ground between strategic priorities. Recent positive statements on the part of several Member States and a more favourable international climate could provide much-needed impetus to multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. In this context, we welcome the decision on 1 April of the Presidents of the United States of America and the Russian Federation to begin bilateral intergovernmental negotiations to work out, by July this year, a new, comprehensive, legally binding agreement on reducing and limiting strategic offensive arms to replace the START Treaty. We hope this spirit will also guide multilateral efforts elsewhere, in particular in the Conference on Disarmament.

On 21 March, the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zone in Central Asia entered into force. This is the first nuclear-weapon-free zone to be established in the northern hemisphere and will encompass – for the first time – an area where nuclear weapons previously existed. I trust that this important move will inspire others.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Discussions on the effectiveness and impact of the work of the Security Council are, probably, as old as the Council itself. But, let's pause for a minute, to reflect on our security environment without a Security Council. As Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, which is housed at the Palais des Nations that was the headquarters of the League of Nations, I am reminded on a daily basis of the background to the size and composition of the Security Council as we know it. The Council of the League also had – in its largest configuration – fifteen members. The League Council met, on average, five times a year and in extraordinary sessions when required. Authorization of any action required both a unanimous vote by the Council and a majority vote in the Assembly. In total, 107 public sessions were held between 1920 and 1939. And, we know the result.

By comparison, the Security Council of the United Nations held 260 meetings and passed 65 resolutions last year alone. This increases the workload from 2007, where the Council met over 214 sessions and passed 56 resolutions. There is, of course, always room for strengthening, and the Secretary-General has also encouraged Member States to advance their discussions on reform of the Council. But, we must also not lose sight of its achievements.

63 years ago, at the closing of the first General Assembly in 1946, the distinguished Belgian statesman, Paul Henri Spaak who presided the Assembly said that “*when we measure the dangers through which we have passed, and recall the suffering that has been inflicted on the world in these last years, we get the full measure of our own responsibilities, and of the hopes that are placed in us*”. This rings just as true today. The challenges we face have only grown in scope and complexity – and with them, the expectations of the United Nations have increased. We can only meet those expectations if we respond to the full range of challenges and if we recognize how closely they are connected. Multilateralism – based on international law – holds the greatest potential for effective solutions.

Thank you very much.