

Final

STATEMENT  
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**The World in Transition and the New Role of the United Nations**

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Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Here in Crans-Montana, we are not so very far from ancient Rome, where a philosopher, witnessing the collapse of Pax Romana, made a pessimistic prediction: "When the fragmented world breaks down, the pieces will bury the brave ones". Perhaps the major difference between this ancient philosopher and contemporary politicians is that the latter still have the possibility - we very much hope - of averting the disaster.

In my statement, I would like to share with you some observations on the challenges facing the world today and the ways and means to meet them.

1. The process of transformation in the world, which began at the end of the Cold War, has sometimes been compared to the political transitions of the last century, or to the global situation after the Second World War. I think that such comparisons are misleading. The changes currently taking place in the world cannot be reduced to the simple transformation of an international system, as has happened previously - they are much more fundamental.

2. The reasons for these changes are manifold, but, first and foremost, they are evoked by technological progress. The most vivid example is the remarkable breakthroughs that have revolutionized communications, linking nations and continents and making information readily available in all four corners of the world. International networks are spreading around the globe. For instance, one of them - the Internet computer network - has about 14 million users world-wide and is not controlled by any government. As a result, the mass media is becoming an increasingly influential factor in world politics. In addition, computers move more than \$1 trillion around the world's financial markets every 24 hours. So fast is the pace of advance that, very often, human institutions cannot keep up with it. Moreover, we can expect there to be many more technological breakthroughs, in particular in such other fields as genetics, which may affect the social behaviour of future generations and, correspondingly, all spheres of human interaction.

3. Technological change is bringing about a comprehensive shift in the civilizational paradigm which has no precedent in the history of humankind. It is impossible to predict all the consequences of this process. Against this background, instability in the world is at a particularly dangerous level. Violent

regional conflicts, such as those in the former Yugoslavia, Nagorny Karabakh, Somalia and Rwanda, are only a part of a broader picture. In 1993, 42 countries were involved in major conflicts and another 37 were experiencing political violence. However, the crisis has not yet reached the highest point. There is enough evidence to assume that there will be more failed or disintegrating States and many more millions of refugees and migrants, more disturbing contrasts between rich and poor, as well as more crises in other areas of State interactions. Threats to human security and well-being are no longer personal, local or national - they are global. Drugs, AIDS, terrorism, pollution, nuclear proliferation, poverty and environmental degradation do not respect national borders. Their grim consequences travel the world.

4. Finding itself in the midst of all this turbulence, the world needs a safeguard to prevent it from slipping into the yawning chasm of anarchy and destruction, an instrument for a comprehensive approach, to help it contain instability and direct the process of transformation into non-violent, evolutionary channels. Such an instrument exists in the form of the United Nations - the world's only global organization which, in fact, constitutes about 40 programmes and agencies, as well as a global network of transcontinental, regional and subregional structures which all form part of the UN system. The United Nations can provide unique tools for the collective decision-making and agreed actions of the entire international community. Over the years, it has accumulated enough experience, and created a corresponding infrastructure, to deal with any international crisis - from a natural disaster to a regional war - and to promote peace and security in all aspects. It is the most skilled of all the international bodies in facilitating economic development, being able to channel

funds, disseminate information, conduct field operations and achieve coordination on a global scale. For the newly-independent States, the UN could serve as a unique source of knowledge and expertise in many fields, particularly in the elaboration of legal norms for democratic, market-oriented societies.

5. The UN, and the regional structures, are equipped to play the role of the world's "safety net" and, very often, this is exactly what they are called upon to do. However, in order to be truly effective, the UN needs understanding and support. During the Cold War era, the role of the UN was underestimated - it was considered to be mainly a forum for political rhetoric rather than action. Today, it faces the crisis of over-expectation. Whatever problem occurs in the world, it is immediately addressed to the UN. Today, it deals not only with conflict resolution, but also with economic and social affairs, although many people are unaware that peace-keeping operations constitute only one - and not the largest - part of UN activities. For example, in Geneva - the second UN global headquarters - there are six UN specialized agencies which can provide technical assistance to governments on a range of specific issues. There is the International Telecommunications Union, which is the major organization promoting international cooperation for the improvement of all kinds of telecommunications; the World Intellectual Property Organization, which constitutes the world's leading authority in the field of patents, rights in trade marks, industrial designs etc.; and the International Labour Organisation, which has accumulated considerable experience and "know-how" in such fields as settlement of labour disputes, management techniques and employment policies. Much can be offered by the World Health Organization and the World Meteorological Organization, as well as UN programmes such as the Offices of

the UN High Commissioners for Human Rights and for Refugees, the UN Conference on Trade and Development and the Economic Commission for Europe.

6. The major asset of the UN is its experienced international personnel and, indeed, its power is in their knowledge. However, to use this capital effectively, we need not only human but also material resources. In spite of the fact that the entire UN peace-keeping budget of \$3+ billion per annum is little more than the \$2.5 billion that the world spends each day on arms, many Member States still seem unable to pay their contributions in full and on time. As at 31 May 1994, Member States owe the United Nations \$1.9 billion for peace-keeping operations out of a total debt of \$2.9 billion. It is sometimes surprising that the UN is able to do its job at all - simultaneously conducting 18 peace-keeping operations, delivering humanitarian aid to those in need, taking care of the world's 15 million refugees, as well as many, many other tasks.

7. To overcome financial, as well as other problems - such as adapting the UN in substance and structure to today's new realities - more attention needs to be paid, at the highest political level, to global governance. The UN is not made up simply of the Secretary-General and his international staff as the chief executive body of the World Organization - though they are of the utmost importance. In decision-making, prime responsibility for peace and security rests with the Security Council; in the economic field with ECOSOC; and in all global issues, with the General Assembly. These three decision-making bodies are no more than the sum of their Member States - UN action depends upon their political will. Experience has shown that participation by not only

Foreign Ministers but also Heads of State and Government in the work of these major UN bodies helps to mobilize such political will. I would like to hope that in the years to come, in addition to the World Summit for Social Development to be held next March in Copenhagen, we shall also witness summit meeting of the Security Council and General Assembly, as well as periodic ministerial meetings of the Security Council and ECOSOC. Such support, and the more generous delegation of national sovereignty to the UN and the regional structures, would not only strengthen the international "safety net" but would also allow governments to concentrate on domestic issues, creation of conditions of well-being and stability for their people, not at the expense of others but within the framework of common efforts - through the UN system - to promote peace, development and democratization.

8. To adjust to the new international environment, it is also important to urgently overcome the stereotype of the Cold War, when the UN was considered exclusively as an intergovernmental body. If I may recall that the UN Charter begins with the words "We, the peoples of the United Nations...". It is not just governments but people, human beings, who are the true actors on the international scene. To meet the comprehensive challenges, the universal structures need the support of all people. In his recent report, *"An Agenda for Development"*, the UN Secretary-General stressed that "the time has arrived to bring NGO and United Nations' activities into an increasingly productive relationship of consultation and co-operation". An important part of the NGO community is the business sector.

9. One year ago, I had a meeting with representatives of the business community in France, at which I suggested the setting up of an organization of European businessmen in support of the United Nations. Following that meeting, I received many letters from both individuals and companies with enquiries and proposals on how best to assist. The establishment of a Business Council in support of the United Nations, at both European- and State-level, could be beneficial to both the UN and to the business community. The similar Council in the United States bears witness to the mutual advantages of such an undertaking.

10. The forthcoming 50th anniversary of the United Nations would appear to be a good occasion for the stimulation of practical action to strengthen global and regional governance. I deeply believe that through the common actions of international organizations, governments and people from all different communities, the world should be able to come safely through its current trials and enter a new era of human-oriented civilization.

Thank you for your attention.

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