

Address by Vaclav Havel
President of the Czech Republic
at the Millennium Summit of the United Nations
New York, 8 September 2000

Madam President,

Mr. President

Mr. Secretary-General,

Ladies and gentlemen,

What will this world, and the United Nations, look like a hundred years from now?

There are countless possibilities - from the most horrific to the ideal. And it would be against our elementary political obligation if we did not seek to pursue the better rather than the worse choices.

What should the United Nations be in case of a favorable development of the world, and how should it help to advance such development?

First of all, it should probably quickly change from a scene of clashes among particular interests of various states into a platform of joint, solidarity based, decision-making - by the whole of humankind - on how best to organize our stay on this planet. Even more definitely, it should transform itself from a large community of governments, diplomats and officials into a joint institution for each inhabitant of this planet - who would all see it as their very own Organization for which they spend money not only in order that it defend them as individuals but also in order that, on the authority of the people, it looks for ways toward a lasting well-being of the humanity and toward a genuine quality of life.

Such a United Nations would probably have to rest on two pillars: one constituted by an assembly of equal executive representatives of individual countries, resembling the present plenary, and the other consisting of a group elected directly by the globe's population in which the number of delegates representing individual nations would, thus, roughly correspond to the size of the nations. These two bodies would create and guarantee global legislation. Answerable to them would be the Security Council - or its successor-which would serve as an executive organ handling, on a continuous basis, some of the crucial problems of the world. The composition of this organ would, of course, have to be different from that of the present Security Council. The qualifications and the personalities of the individual members should probably carry more weight than the circumstance as to which country they come from. Also, the right of veto should probably not be exercisable by any single member. The future United Nations should have its own permanent military and police force. This superior executive organ should monitor the observance of laws or decisions of the Organization, and seek their enforcement in the areas of security, human rights, environment, alimentation, economic competition, health, finance, local development, etc.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Whenever I encounter any problem of today's civilization, inevitably, I always arrive at one principal theme: the theme of human responsibility. This does not mean merely the responsibility of a human being towards his or her own life or survival; towards his or her family; towards his or her company or any other community. It also means responsibility before the infinite and before eternity; in a word, responsibility for the world. Indeed, it seems to me that the most important thing that we should seek to advance in the era of globalization is a sense of global responsibility.

Somewhere in the-primeval foundations of all the world's religions we find, basically, the same set of underlying moral imperatives. It is in this set of thoughts that we should look for the source, the energy and the ethos for global renewal of a truly responsible attitude towards our Earth and all its inhabitants, as well as towards future generations. Without an ethos emanating from a rediscovered sense of global responsibility, any reform of the United Nations would be unthinkable, and without meaning.

Let me conclude by expressing my great appreciation of the report prepared for this Summit by the Secretary-General. Behind his proposals, I see precisely the same ethos that I have just described.

Thank you.
