

SPEECH FOR

HRH Prince Turki Al Faisal

To The United Nations Association, Westminster Branch, London.

"The Challenges Facing the International Community and the United Nations".

Bismillah al Rahman al Rahim. Wassalat Wassalam Ala Afdhal Ilmursaleen, Sayyidna Muhammad Wa Ala Alihi Wa Sahbihi Ajma'een.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for inviting me here this evening to this excellent branch of a very important association.

You have asked me here today to speak to you about the challenges facing the international community.

Where shall I begin?

In my part of the world, there are four serious crises that are affecting the security and stability of the world

They pose huge challenges; and the decisions we make now, and the actions we take will affect all of us – not just today but tomorrow and for all our tomorrows to come.

They will affect us, our children and our children's children.

The bloodshed caused by these crises, dominates news on our television screens on an almost daily basis:

The crises of war and desecration in Iraq; the hunger and despair of the People of Palestine; the international, pervasive threat of terrorism;

And the sectarian conflicts which are threatening to cripple our world, killing innocent people.

The worst challenges facing us today are caused by man's inhumanity to man.

Challenges of war and of waste;

Challenges of anger and injustice; and the challenge of greed ignoring need.

But we came up with a formula sixty years ago that was going to prevent these man-made disasters;

A union that would ensure that in this precious world of ours we would finally work together to keep all good people safe, to promote education, health and national wealth.

The promise we made went like this:

We the peoples of the United Nations are determined

***to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war**

***to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person**

I know you recognise it.

And the same declaration talked of justice for all, respect, and promotion of social progress.

Brave words, strong words.

Words carrying the hope of a new world order.

Saudi Arabia was one of the founding members of the United Nations. Everything that the UN stood for summed up with eloquence the view of life held by my grandfather, King Abdulaziz.

Let me tell you a story here – particularly appropriate for an English audience.

In 1936 my father, then Prince Faisal, welcomed to Saudi Arabia a member of the British royal family. Princess Alice was the first member of the British Royal Family to visit us in the Kingdom and so she was greeted and welcomed with warmth and delight.

The good princess was a keen letter writer, and wrote home to her daughter of her adventures. These included her first meeting with my grandfather King Abdul Aziz.

She wrote - and I quote: "He (that is King Abdul Aziz) said that tho we must have different ideas and outlooks, if within, our feelings of right and duty were similar then that was all that mattered."

Ladies and gentlemen

Right And Duty.

I believe with a passion that the words of the declaration setting up the United Nations are right. And I believe it is our duty to make our global society work.

But we, sorry people of the world that we are, become confused by national interests, tempted by greed, hampered by fear and too often forget that duty to fulfil our human obligation to do right by one another.

We forget the most important principle of life - that all men are equal in the eyes of God.

That everyone deserves justice

The UN declaration was brave and inspirational. It was a declaration for all of the people not for some of the people.

But today, brave and inspirational declarations are made – but not all declarations are kept.

And it is here we have let ourselves down. And we have let down our fathers and our grandfathers. And we have let down all those who died praying for a better tomorrow in the dreadful wars of the 20th century that left a bloody trail across our planet.

Ladies and gentlemen

We are letting down all those good people who believed in the promise of a new world order – one world order for all

As good neighbours.

Good neighbours do not take each other's property.

Good neighbours do not eat, when those next to them are starving.

Good neighbours do not believe that they have more right to life, to work, to freedom than another.

But in our United Nations family it appears sometimes that some do have rather more rights than others.

As a father I treat my children equally – or face rebellion. I am sure it is the same for you.

And so must all countries be dealt with fairly.

You can guess that here I am speaking about Palestine.

What use are UN resolutions 242 and 338?

Let me remind you again of the essence of these resolutions.

They call for Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab territories and emphasize the inadmissibility of acquisition of land by force.

It is simple – you don't take what belongs to someone else.

It takes nothing from Israel – a land already carved out of the Middle East by a guilty West.

We have come to terms with the existence of Israel - the cuckoo in the Middle East nest. We have offered Israel two peace proposals, the Fahad Peace Plan of 1982 and the Abdallah Peace Plan of 2002. Israel has chosen to ignore both. But we have not come to terms with Israel taking more and more.

The Palestinian territories are not an empty patch of wasteland. This land belongs to several million people whose history is rooted in that soil, who have nowhere else to go – and why should they? This land is their home and was meant to always be their home.

In 1917 the British government supported the establishment of a national home for Jewish people, but on a condition. The condition was that it was – and I quote - “clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine.”

So it follows that the United Nations should stand by Resolutions 242 and 338, that the UN should make that commitment to the people of this crippled, battered land. So why don't they?

It is wrong, terribly, terribly wrong that that resolution has never been implemented and that subsequent resolutions which sought to implement those principles have been vetoed by members of the Security Council and most frequently by one member of the Security Council, the United States of America.

There has been a suggestion recently that this problem of one dominant autocratic power overruling decisions made by the majority, could be resolved by expanding the Security Council.

Let us run through several of the different, but ultimately similar, proposals:

One proposal is that there should be ten new seats on the Security Council, six of them permanent of which four go to the G4 countries – Brazil, India, Japan and Germany.

No prizes for guessing which group supports that allocation of power.

Another proposal is that there should be 11 new seats on the Security Council, six of them permanent of which two go to African countries, and that amongst the non-permanent seats five are always allocated to African countries.

No prizes for guessing which group of countries proposed that either.

And there is a third proposal that there should be ten new non-permanent Security Council seats. A suggestion made by a group of 20 nations feeling reasonably put out by what they saw quite clearly as the “self-interested hijacking of the system” by the other groups proposing expansion.

Ladies and gentlemen

The view of all those that support the idea of expansion is that it would give the Security Council more resonance within the world at large.

Do you believe that? I don't.

So what do we in Saudi Arabia want?

We are not looking for an expansion of the Security Council with six new permanent members, four of whom are from the Arab world.

We are not looking for an expansion of the Security Council at all.

In our view this debate is just a diversion from the real problems facing the United Nations. The problem is the ability of the self interested few to override the rights of the majority.

The United Nations should and can be a remarkable force for good – but it is constantly and consistently hampered by the ease with which some of its most important resolutions are vetoed.

Expanding the Security Council will not improve its viability or its efficacy. It will simply add more layers, more rules to the game being played at the UN table.

And already the knotted web of strange rules and regulations by which the UN works is the barrier that ends in inaction, stagnation, ongoing destruction and despair. The desecration and aggression the Palestinian people face every day is a reminder of that.

A Council which, ultimately, does the bidding of the minority rather than the majority is a very lame affair. It is not fair, it is not right and I don't believe that it is what our forefathers intended.

There is a saying in English which you all know well:

The road to hell is paved with good intentions.

I believe that this is what the United Nations has become: an organisation full to the brim with good intentions.

But we want a United Nations that is strong and resolute

We believe that the rules of the game have to change.

At the moment the rules allow the five permanent members of the council to ride roughshod over the interests of the non-permanent members. And when they don't get the backing they want within the Council, do they give in? No, they just take the game elsewhere, ignore the other players and do whatever it is they want to do from outside the Council.

Our Foreign Minister, Prince Saud, believes that there is one way to end the constant stalemate and that is to ensure that Security Council Resolutions which have been issued by the Council, like Resolution 242 cannot be contradicted or obstructed by other resolutions; or prevented from being implemented by a veto.

Resolution 242 was passed unanimously by the Security Council.

As we move forward into the 21st century it is imperative that some resolution is reached on the Middle East; that Palestinians are allowed without fear of persecution and attack to live freely in their land; that their lands are given back to them so that their country can be independent, contiguous, and economically viable. It is vital, Ladies and Gentlemen, that we as an international community support that rightful claim.

As my brother, Prince Saud, our Foreign Minister, said just two weeks ago: "The Arab-Israeli Conflict has overshadowed and dominated all other issues in the past six decades. No regional crisis has greater potential to affect other regional conflicts or world peace than this conflict. "

We believe that failure to find a just and comprehensive solution provides extremist terrorist elements within our society with perfect breeding grounds of injustice and despair which allow destructive extremism to fester and grow across our planet.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let us look at another of those huge problems; one which sits on the doorstep of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and that has wreaked havoc with the lives of innocent men, not just from the Middle East but from several corners of our world.

Let us talk about Iraq.

This terrible, horrific war continues to rage in our midst and is threatening the stability of the entire region.

Let us look at the death toll for September 2007. According to the Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, 66 US military personnel were killed, as well as 96 members of Iraq's security forces and 752 civilians. These are the killings that we know about.

Let us think about that. 752 innocent civilians, trying to go about their daily lives, supporting their families, perhaps just going to school or visiting an elderly relative - were killed in Iraq in September. What is even more horrifying is that the news headlines saw these figures as positive; positive because the death toll when compared to the death toll for August had been almost halved.

Ladies and gentlemen

It is not positive news. How can the violent death of nearly one thousand people in one month be positive news? And we haven't even attempted to count the deaths of militants.

This is a horrific war and we must do all we can to bring it to an end.

Peace, security and stability in Iraq are essential for peace, security and stability in the region.

Peace security and stability in the region are essential for stability in the world.

Our lives are all interconnected.

God did not create this beautiful world we live in with lines of national and international demarcation running through it. Mankind made the lines.

And that brings me to my next point.

Ladies and gentlemen

There is a suggestion in the international political arena that Iraq should be divided on ethnic and sectarian lines, into a loose coalition.

It is a suggestion being made by those who invaded Iraq to rid it of an evil dictator who they believed – or so we were told – was harbouring weapons of mass destruction. In three months 36 million people around the world protested against the war but the war went on.

Ever since, there has been a volcanic eruption of dissent and discontent, violence and sectarian hate.

Everyone is looking for a solution, a way out, an end.

This partition of Iraq is a proposal gaining ground with a strange selection of self-interested bed-fellows. It includes Kurdish, Shi'ah and Sunni politicians. All are culpable of that ambition. Not to mention American, Iranian, Israeli and European power brokers who through ignorance or malice are equally culpable.

Dividing Iraq will not work. It will make things worse, far, far worse and that is not only unacceptable, it is also untenable.

One of the great problems of this plan is that Iraq does not have a neat set of ethnic dividing lines.

There has never been a meaningful census showing exactly where Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds and other factions live, although the two elections held since the toppling of Saddam Hussein have made it clear that Iraq's cities and 18 governates all have significant minorities.

This means that if you try to divide the country along these non visible non-realistic sectarian and ethnic lines there will surely be ethnic cleansing.

And how do you divide a country where forty per cent of the people live in the multi-ethnic Baghdad and Mosul areas?

History tells us how difficult it is to split cities.

The people of the United Kingdom understand this more than most – the scars left on the city of Belfast by sectarian division are still fresh in the memory for the people of Northern Ireland.

And if Iraq was divided – who would get the spoils, the wealth?

Who would get the oil?

More than 90 percent of Iraq's revenues come from oil. But there is no oil in the presumed Sunni Arab west, the Kurds would want the oil in the north but would not be able to export it, and control of Basra would also be an issue with different groups trying and vying for control because of its oil.

Iraqis are living a pitiful existence in a country which could and should be economically stable, politically strong and a dynamic force in the Middle East. That is the dream and that is the aim we should all have.

So by who and why is this division being suggested. Exhausted by war and desperate to get their troops out of there are those who believe that this could stem the insurgency and allow Western troops an earlier exit.

But sadly they are wrong.

A national poll in Iraq asked the telling question: What would be the worst thing that could happen to Iraq? After the obvious – chaos, civil war, terrorism, ongoing occupation came - I am sure you have guessed -division of the country.

Iraq does not want to be divided. Even today amongst all the terror and bloodshed, the great, vast majority of Iraqis know that the result of division would be chaos and civil war – the things they want least of all. They yearn for peace, for security, days when they can wake up and go about their normal business without wondering if their home will still be there when they get back, if their husband, wife, child will come home that night; and nights when they can sleep peacefully in their beds.

What should we do to bring about that dream?

I propose that the United Nations Security Council pass a resolution that calls on all the nations of the world to protect the territorial integrity of Iraq.

This will diminish and mitigate the political ambitions of the powerful few pushing for the break up against the wishes of the majority.

I also call upon the Security Council to work with the Iraqi government to change the Coalition's role in Iraq to protecting Iraq's territorial integrity, by force of arms, under Chapter 7 and to invite the world community to provide whatever aid is necessary for that objective.

This will put paid to the ambitions of those intent on tearing Iraq into pieces. Will it bring peace to Iraq? Not immediately.

But it will set the United Nations on the right course and will help set Iraq on the right course.

I believe this is our duty. It will put an end to the unilateralism that has crippled the work of the United Nations and restore a little bit of its shattered legitimacy. By solving these problems, we can face the other two with resolution and moral fortitude.

Terrorism breeds in despair and ineptitude. Sectarian conflict flares up when politicians seek to advance their ambitions at the stake of social harmony. By removing the circumstances in which these issues breed, we can look forward to a Middle East of harmony and progress.

Ladies and gentlemen

Now is the time when we need a strong and effective United Nations that will lead us forward to a world where our children will leave to their children a world which is infinitely better than the one we are leaving them.

In the words of English philosopher Edmund Burke: **“All it takes for the forces of evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.”**

It is time to do something before it is too late.

Thank you