

We should consider at this session, as a priority issue, how we, the "friends of the UN", can identify and put into place practical measures to strengthen the UN system.

Any analysis of what is needed to strengthen the UN system must be based upon a realistic assessment of what has gone wrong and what has gone right.

A first thing that has gone wrong is that the Security Council has become increasingly ineffective. We all recognize that the Council does not operate in a vacuum. It will continue to mirror world tensions. But deteriorating relationships between its permanent members must not be allowed to immobilize the Council. We must immunize the Council to the extent that no matter what the crisis and whatever the state of relations among its members, their representatives will continue to talk.

Last year, the members of the Council held a series of private meetings to discuss how to improve the effectiveness of the Council. But the exercise appears to have run out of steam. Even ideas which appear uncontroversial on the surface seem to have been ignored. Why, for example, can the members of the Council not agree to hold regular *in camera* sessions, with the Secretary-General present, to review the Council's and Secretary-General's role in facilitating the solution of current, incipient or potential disputes? A reluctance to talk is no excuse. The Council, at least behind-the-scenes, must function as a multilateral hot-line.

Mr. President, a second failing is that we have not lived up to our own responsibilities as member states of the UN. We have expected the Secretary-General to fill the vacuum, without giving him adequate political support to do the job. We must allow the Secretary-General a greater margin of initiative and independence of action. He has been able on his own to take action in some areas of UN activity. He has, for example, made a promising start in improving the management of the UN's limited financial and human resources; he has used a period of budgetary restraint to begin to weed out low-priority activities. The Secretary-General has also been exerting a positive influence on many intractable international problems. But we must provide him with more political backing. He should be allowed and encouraged to increase his "fact-finding" capacity and his ability to exercise his "good office" in particular situations.

A third thing that has gone wrong is that too much valuable time and resources are being wasted throughout the UN system on extraneous political issues. We all accept the fact that the Security Council and General Assembly are political fora. But, even here, we should avoid the repetition of sterile political debates, the proliferation of resolutions on the same topic, and the scheduling of redundant conferences and meetings.

We must also resist the "over-politicization" that is increasingly infecting the technical parts of the UN system, which are neither mandated nor equipped to handle such issues. It is naive to expect that a certain number of heated political issues will not be raised. It becomes debilitating, however, when political issues begin to frustrate the normal give-and-take between groups in working out consensus on the essential activities of UN organizations. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural