

EGYPT



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**Statement of
H.E. Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi**

**President of the Arab Republic of Egypt
before the 73nd Session of the United
Nations General Assembly**

New York, 25 September 2018

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Unofficial translation

Madame President,

I would like to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the 73rd session of United Nations General Assembly, and to express my appreciation for the efforts of Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, the president of the former session.

I also commend you on your choice of the theme of this year's session, for we are in dire need for renewing our commitment and contributions towards enhancing the United Nations role, as a foundation for a just and effective international order. A world order that is based on the balance of interests and responsibilities, the respect for state sovereignty, the dissemination of a culture of peace, as well as one that rises above racism, extremism and violence, and achieves sustainable development.

These are the values that shape Egypt's vision towards the United Nations, since our participation in the inception of the organization seven decades ago, and throughout the six terms during which Egypt served on the UN Security Council, the latest of which was in 2016-2017. These values are also the driving force behind Egypt's active contribution to UN Peacekeeping operations, rendering Egypt the world's seventh largest troop contributing country.

With such solid belief in the values and role of the United Nations, and in all frankness, we have to admit that there is a flaw in the international system, which negatively affects its performance, and casts a shadow over its credibility in the eyes of many peoples, particularly in the Arab and African regions, wherein Egypt lies.

For how can we blame an Arab who questions the credibility of the United Nations and the values it proclaims, at a time when his region is threatened by the disintegration and collapse of the nation state, to give way to a wave of terrorism and sectarian conflicts that deplete the capacities of the Arab peoples? Or how can we blame an Arab who wonders why the Palestinian people were denied their legitimate rights to live in dignity and peace, in an independent state that reflects their national identity, hopes and aspirations?

Can we consider an overstatement an African's complaint regarding the ineffectiveness of the world order, when his continent suffers from an economic order that perpetuates poverty and inequality, reproduces social and political crises and provides no prospects for progress and development?

Madame President

I raise these questions, as Egypt chairs of the Group of 77 and China, which constitutes the majority of the population of this planet, and thus has the greatest interest in enhancing the role of the United Nations. For the developing countries can ill afford to exist in an international order, which is not governed by laws and the lofty principles upon which the United Nations was founded, or one that can be subject to polarization or attempts by some to dominate over it and impose their will on the members of the international community.

I would hereby like to summarize Egypt's vision in three key principles to which we ought to renew our commitment, and three causes to which we must accord priority, for the United Nations to regain its effectiveness and role.

The first such principle is that there can be no way forward towards achieving an effective international order, if its main constituent unit, the nation-state, which is premised on the notions of citizenship, democracy and equality, is in danger of disintegration. I speak out of Egypt's unique experience, where its people have exerted tremendous efforts to restore their state and save their identity. They chose the nation state to be their vehicle for reform and to realize their aspirations for freedom, development and dignity.

The disintegration of nations as a result of civil strife or regression to sectarian loyalties is responsible for the most dangerous phenomena in our contemporary world, including armed conflicts, human trafficking, irregular migration, organized crime and illicit trade in arms and drug trafficking.

There is no doubt that the Arab region is one of the most vulnerable to the dangers of nation state disintegration, and the ensuing creation of a fertile environment for terrorism and exacerbation of sectarian conflicts. Thus, preserving and reforming the foundations of the state is a fundamental priority of Egypt's foreign policy in the Arab region. There can be no way out of the crisis in Syria and the plight of Yemen, except by restoring the nation state, preserving its sovereignty and state institutions, as well as realizing the legitimate aspirations of its people. Egypt fully supports a UN-led political solution in these two countries, and rejects any exploitation of the these crises to create footholds for regional interventions, or enable an environment for terrorism, extremism and sectarianism.

This same principle applies to our policy in Libya, where Egypt plays a pivotal role in support of rebuilding the state, particularly with regards to the unification of

the Libyan armed forces so that it is capable of defending Libya and countering the dangers of terrorism.

We should not forget that a year has passed since the adoption of the United Nations action plan on Libya, which sought to comprehensively address the Libyan crisis, without achieving progress in its implementation. This requires us to renew our commitment to a comprehensive political solution, as set forth in the said United Nations Action Plan. If we are to halt the loss of life, the depletion of Libya's resources, and move towards the reconstruction phase, then there is no room for partial solutions neither in Libya nor in Syria or Yemen; crises of such magnitude require comprehensive and not partial solutions.

Mr. President

The second principle is the commitment to peaceful and sustainable solutions to international conflicts. This is the *raison d'être* of the United Nations. Yet, despite the commendable efforts of the UN in numerous conflicts, including South Sudan, the Central African Republic and Mali, they have so far fallen short of finding permanent settlements to such conflicts.

There is also an urgent need to mobilize resources to help countries in post-conflict situations to rehabilitate their institutions and commence reconstruction and development. The fundamental issue here is to translate this principle into tangible support for national efforts, so as to overcome conflicts and build states in accordance with their priorities, while avoiding the imposition of alien models of governance and development, or intervening in the internal affairs of states and violating their sovereignty.

We cannot talk about the peaceful settlement of disputes as a founding principle of the United Nations and an indicator of its credibility, without citing the Palestinian cause. It stands as a perfect example of the failure of the international system to find a just solution to the conflict, based on international legitimacy and United Nations resolutions, that guarantees the establishment of a Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The terms of reference of this just solution and the determinants of a final settlement are well known. There is no time to waste on such a debate. What is required is the political will to resume negotiations and achieve a settlement in accordance with these determinants. I repeat here what I have said in previous years on this platform, the Arabs are still stretching out their hands in peace. Our peoples

deserve to turn this tragic page in history, and the Palestinian people deserve to exercise their legitimate rights.

Madame President,

The third principle is the commitment to achieving sustainable development as a necessary precondition for a stable world order, and the best way for the prevention of armed conflict and humanitarian crises.

While we welcome the consensus reached on the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, we note however that the implementation of the goals set forth in this ambitious plan require that we tackle the financing for development conundrum. This can be achieved through the creation of an enabling environment which allows for the free flow of resources necessary for development, without imposing any conditionalities, and supporting national efforts to mobilize financing for development. The reform of the global economic and financial architecture cannot be delayed. We look forward to the United Nations to serve as a platform for developing ideas to achieve this reform, in particular with regards to the creation of mechanisms that would help halt illicit financial flows out of the developing countries, and facilitate the return of these vital assets to their rightful owners.

Madame President

The international commitment to the preservation of the nation state, the peaceful settlement of disputes, strengthening cooperation to achieve comprehensive development and addressing imbalances in the global economic system are all necessary conditions for any serious consideration of the revitalization of the United Nations system and the restoration of its credibility.

In order to implement these three aforementioned principles three main priority areas also need to be addressed, in order to ensure the credibility and the future of the United Nations and the international order as a whole.

First: We need to strengthen partnerships between the United Nations and regional organizations, to meet the rising challenges the international community faces at the political, economic and developmental levels, as well as the security threats, including protracted conflicts and the proliferation of terrorism. Here, I would particularly like to emphasize the successful partnership that exists between the United Nations and the African Union, as a model for burden sharing and leveraging the comparative advantages of each organization to address the complex challenges facing our continent, particularly in the fields of peacekeeping, peace

building, as well as humanitarian and developmental assistance. As Egypt will shortly assume the presidency of the African Union in 2019, we look forward to strengthening the strategic partnership between the Union and the United Nations, through programs that have a real impact on the continent, and building on the progress made to consolidate the African Union's post-conflict reconstruction and development policy. This is in addition to Egypt's hosting of the African Union Center for Post-Conflict, Reconstruction and Development and the Community of Sahel-Saharan States Counter-terrorism Center.

Second: We need to continue our efforts to implement the initiative launched by Egypt during its membership of the UN Security Council, to put in place a comprehensive International framework to develop policies and bolster cooperation, in order to counter terrorism and terrorist narratives. In this context, we welcome the Secretary-General's initiative to convene the United Nations Conference on Counter Terrorism last June, following the periodic review of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism strategy.

As you are well aware, Egypt is engaged, since the beginning of this year in the comprehensive operation "Sinai 2018" to combat and decisively eradicate terrorism. This is taking place through a comprehensive strategy that integrates the security, ideological and developmental dimensions. Based on this experience and on Egypt's overall experience in supporting counter- terrorism efforts in the Middle East and North Africa, I can assure you that the level of finance, the sophistication of arms and training, as well as the means of communication obtained by these extremist groups, and the facilitation of movement and travel of foreign terrorist fighters, point to the inevitable need to develop a global system to combat terrorism wherever it exists, and to counter whoever provides it with support in any possible way.

Third: We need to address the major shortcomings in the international community's handling of human rights issues. The credibility of the United Nations cannot be restored, as long as millions continue to suffer from extreme poverty, live under foreign occupation or fall victim to terrorism and armed conflict.

The protection of human rights will not be realized through media defamation or the politicization of Human Rights mechanisms, while ignoring the need to tackle all human rights in an equitable manner, including economic, social and cultural rights on equal footing.

Egypt has a solid constitutional foundation for the protection of human rights. Major strides have been achieved in the field of women and youth empowerment.

Women hold 25% of the ministerial posts and more than 15% of seats in parliament. International youth conferences, which are held annually in Egypt in November, have also become a regular forum for the youth to communicate and raise their concerns. We are determined to continue to accord high priority to the issues of women economic empowerment, and the causes of the youth, science, technology and innovation during Egypt's presidency of the Group of 77 and China, as a practical example of our commitment to the promotion of human rights in a comprehensive manner.

Madame President,

Egypt, like the vast majority of the world's peoples and nations, has a vested interest in restoring the credibility of the multilateral system with the United Nations at its forefront. We believe that the Organization can overcome skepticism over its merits and credibility by restoring the lofty principles upon which its charter was premised, and acting according to the priorities I addressed, which reflect the aspirations of our peoples. Only then will our organization reclaim its credibility, and our peoples regain their confidence in a future of peace, cooperation and respect of one another.

Thank you for listening. May God help us and you for the good of all our peoples.