

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Seyed Mohammad Hadi Nejad Hosseinian  
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of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations  
Before the fifty fourth session of the General Assembly On Agenda Item: 154  
United Nations Decade of International Law**

**New York, November 17, 1999**

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In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful  
Mr. President,

Ten years ago this August Assembly made a historic decision. Upon the initiative of the Non-Aligned Movement and in accordance with the G.A. Resolution 44/23, the period 1989-1999 was pronounced as the United Nations Decade of International Law. The proclamation of the Decade of International Law was indeed a timely measure, indicative of growing conviction of nations that in a highly interdependent world every one's interests are best served by a more principled and orderly system based on law. This cardinal goal and the four main objectives of the decade that were relevant at the time of the announcement of the Decade, are applicable today, and will continue to be pertinent in years to come. This is the message that we should convey to the succeeding generations: peace and security in the world could only be preserved through the predominance of the rule of law in international relations.

At this stage, when the decade is approaching its termination, a glimpse at the Secretary General's report which reflects the programs carried out in the past ten years, document A/54/362, indicates that much has been accomplished in implementing the Decade's concepts. First and foremost, the establishment of two Ad Hoc tribunals by the United Nations to bring to justice the perpetrators of the most heinous crimes in the territory of former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda, as well as the adoption of the Statute of the International Criminal Court, in Rome in 1998, were among the major achievements of the community of nations during the Decade. We remain convinced that the establishment of a universal and effective criminal court will provide the succeeding generations with the best hope for achieving a world spared from the scourge of aggression and genocide, which over this century, have caused loss of millions people's life worldwide.

Moreover, various activities carried out in the course of the Decade have helped disseminate its noble goals among various sectors of the society of nations. The United Nations Congress on Public International Law, which was convened upon the proposal of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Mexico, in this Assembly in 1995, was a successful exercise in involving pertinent institutions, academicians and individuals in the promotion of the Decade's purposes. Centennial celebrations of the First International Peace Conference of 1899, convened upon the initiatives of the Netherlands and the Russian Federation, in the Hague and St. Petersburg in 1999, were also meaningful contributions to the Decade's activities.

Thus, we wish to commend all, individuals, institutions, governments and NGO's, who have contributed to the dissemination of the lofty objectives of the Decade around the world and those who have helped to enrich the content of its program of activities. The working group of the Sixth Committee on the United Nations Decade of International Law, as the main coordinating body of the activities of the Decade, and the office of legal affairs of the United Nations deserve credit for their tireless efforts. Certainly, their endeavors have immensely facilitated the development and the implementation of the Decade's programs.

Mr. President,

The end of ten years of focused work to promote the prevalence of the rule of law in international relations does not necessarily mean that all objectives of the Decade have been fully realized. I venture to take this opportunity to pinpoint two areas requiring serious and close attention in the coming years.

Firstly, it is crystal clear that in a well-organized world system based on the rule of law, decentralized reaction to possible cases of violation of norms and principles of international law cannot be permissible. It is equally true that in a law-abiding society of nations, states cannot and should not take the law into their own hands and be the judge of their own conduct. Obviously, the very nature of unilateral measures of a punitive character, which has unfortunately been on the rise in recent years, is detrimental to the cause of promotion of and respect for the principles of international law, which constitutes one of the main objectives of the Decade. The strong opposition demonstrated by various governments around the world vis-a-vis the application of unilateral sanctions, including in particular the adoption the General Assembly resolutions 53/10 and 54/21 illustrate the firm determination of the community of nations to reject unilateralism in its entirety. Undoubtedly, the Charter of the United Nations, which has passed the test of time, provides appropriate mechanisms to counter those who challenge the basic norms of international society. It is therefore, imperative for all states and international organizations to continue to act in accordance with international law and the Charter provisions. This is an important recommendation contained in the program of activities of the Decade, which must be fully kept in perspective, both in words and programs, and more importantly in deeds and decisions.

Secondly, I wish to underline the important duty assigned to the United Nations with respect to promoting disarmament and arms control, which undoubtedly is an essential factor for the preservation of world peace and security. Beyond doubt, years of negotiations in this field have led to some success in the prohibition of certain types of weapons of mass destruction. But despite the incremental success, achievements have been minimal with regard to the elimination of nuclear weapons. Moreover, recent developments in some regions have not only questioned the credibility of the non proliferation regime, but have also seriously challenged the CTBT effectiveness. Therefore, the nuclear disarmament should be the focus of our attention for years to come. In these circumstance, we will not comfort in believing that the turn of the Millennium will easily bring about a secure world for human being.

Mr. President,

At the threshold of the new millennium, the people around the world, in whose name the United Nations Charter was drawn up, continue to aspire full implementation of its purposes and principles. We, the representatives of the governments elected by those people, should spare no effort in realization of a world with full respect for human dignity, better standard of living, strict adherence to international law and justice, and above all, materializing a secure world free from weapons of mass destruction of any kind and the evil of war.

Thank you.

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