Keynote remarks by Ambassador Antonio de Aguiar Patriota
at the Independent Commission on Multilateralism inaugural retreat
on "New Threats, Challenges, and Opportunities for the Multilateral System"

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I

- We meet united by the shared assumption that the world is in disorder and multilateralism is in disrepair. At the same time, we all believe that multilateralism is not only worth saving, but would benefit from a new compact that involves adjustments in terms of governance and a recommitment to the UN Charter, in particular its provisions on collective security and the use of force.

- Last year, we celebrated 200 years since the Vienna Congress and marked the First World War centenary. This year we will be commemorating the 70th anniversary of the United Nations. UN Member States have been called upon to examine the lessons of history on at least two occasions in the past year. In January 2014, Jordan organized an open debate on õWar, its lessons and the search for a permanent peaceö at the UN Security Council. Next Monday, February 23rd, China is convening a UNSC open debate on õMaintenance of international peace and security: reflect on history, reaffirm the strong commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nationsö.

- Numerous authors, think tanks, and prominent individuals are offering their reflections on the topic of the current state of the international system. To name a few examples: Henry Kissinger in his recent book õWorld Orderö; Amin Maalouf in his work õDisordered Worldö; the 21st Century Concert Study Group; The Elders. And, of course, this Independent Commission on Multilateralism itself is part of the same trend.

- An underlying thread common to the many recent analyses of our current geopolitical status points to the transition from a unipolar to a multipolar world order. There is scant historic precedent of a similar transition in the absence of war. To some extent the replacement of the Napoleonic hegemonic project by the Vienna Congress and the Concert of Europe can be recalled as a historic precedent, notwithstanding the obvious differences between the early XIX century and the early XXI century.

- One of the lessons that can be drawn from the plurilateral coordination among major European powers after Napoleonøs military defeat has to do with the attitude of the victors towards the vanquished. The fact that France was not excluded ó whether due to Talleyrandøs diplomatic shrewdness, or wisdom on the part of the Metternich and his comrades in victory ó should be remembered as an example of an õinclusiveö attitude that helped to set the stage for decades of stability and absence of major conflict among the XIX century major powers.

- The XX century provides us with contrasting examples that are also worth retaining. The League of Nations at the end of World War I held the promise of a new concert of nations for the promotion of cooperation and dialogue on matters related to peace and security. However, the fact that it was comparatively less inclusive turned out to represent an insurmountable weakness. The less than magnanimous treatment reserved by the Treaty of Versailles to a defeated Germany, at the same time, sowed the seeds of a resumed world conflict of even more devastating proportions 20 years later.

- Fast forward to 1945: the birth of the United Nations signals the creation of an inclusive system of collective security, while the Marshall Plan and the reconstruction of Japan marked a departure from Versailles, in a XX century display of magnanimity towards the defeated.

- 70 years after the creation of the UN, it is possible to affirm that a multilateral framework based on the UN Charter and international law has played a significant role in preventing the outbreak of a new devastating world conflict. This does not mean that the world has not experienced periods of intense military and ideological rivalry such as the one between Washington and Moscow that ended with the fall of the Berlin wall and the demise of the Soviet Union.

- After a brief unipolar moment, the world seems to be mired today in a context of serious challenges associated to the rise of terrorism, lingering tensions that result from the end of the Cold War and a redistribution of geopolitical influence, with the emergence of China at its core. An initial question worth pondering is whether the absence of magnanimity towards Russia after the end of Cold War ó as pointed out by John Mearsheimer in his article õWhy the Ukraine Crisis Is the Westøs Faultö ó is not one of the issues to be closely examined in light of historical experience. While Moscow was neither deprived of its permanent member status at the UN Security Council nor of its nuclear arsenal, NATOøs enlargement has been seen by many as an unwise provocation.

- Additionally, in light of historic experience, we should ponder whether todayøs governance mechanisms, in particular the Security Council, are inclusive enough and are still capable of fulfilling their role.

II

- As we examine the new threats, challenges and opportunities to the multilateral system in 2015, there are a series of positive circumstances from which to derive encouragement, as far as the international communityøs ability to shape a new international order in line with a multipolar distribution of power.

- In contrast with the post Napoleonic period or the aftermath of WWI and WWII, the world has developed a solid body of international law, with the UN Charter at its center and a multiplicity of international organizations that perform highly valued roles in a

variety of areas, from the IAEA to UNESCO, including WTO and other Bretton Woods institutions. A culture of dialogue and of attempts at coordination has established itself.

- Even as we confront the challenge of evolving from a unipolar moment to a multipolar reality, under unprecedented historical circumstances, it is worth noting that important adjustments to governance mechanisms have taken place through diplomatic means. At the WTO, the replacement of so-called õQuadö (composed by USA, EU, Canada and Japan) by a new inner circle including emerging economies was one of the consequences of the Cancun Ministerial Conference in 2003. After the 2008 international financial crisis, the G7 was replaced by the G20 with the incorporation of the BRICS countries to this informal high-level coordination mechanism. At the UN, Member States have been able to establish new institutional mechanisms, as exemplified by the creation of the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Architecture.

- Furthermore, the UN system is currently in the process of undertaking ambitious forward looking agendas, with a significant potential impact over the coming years and decades. Such is the nature of the Post-2015 sustainable development agenda, on the basis of the Rio+20 outcome document, which succeeded in establishing a new consensus reflecting a common vision for international cooperation on the intersection of economic, social and environmental concerns.

- The review of peace operations called for by the Secretary-General and the Peacebuilding Architecture review can also be considered forward looking exercises geared to adapting the UN to a new set of circumstances.

- It is also possible to argue that there are certain relatively new priority areas for multilateral cooperation that can act as a unifying force in todayøs world. The first is climate change, which as indicated by Amin Maalouf in his brilliant book õDisordered Worldö oblige the nations of the world to work together. This is an interesting unifying element that was not present in past junctures, when adjustments required by new geopolitical configurations were examined, such as in Vienna and Versailles. The climate change agenda highlights, perhaps better than any other in todayøs world, the notion that we are all in the same boat and that there will be no salvation without cooperation.

- Another unifying force can also be found when we look at new threats, challenges and opportunities (although it is not always perceived as such): I am thinking of the fight against terrorism. There is no respectable ideology espoused by any member of the international community that seeks to justify terrorism. If we look at the current permanent members of the UN Security Council, they all struggle with terrorist pressures, from separatist movements such as the Uyghurs in China and the Chechens in Russia to extremist groups like al-Qaeda, ISIS and others that target Western European and North-American cities.

- Interestingly the UNSC reaches consensus without great difficulty on matters directly related to combating terrorism through cooperative multilateral efforts. However, notwithstanding the existence of a body of international law and organizations/the

capacity of the UN system to respond to new challenges/and the presence of certain unifying issues/there is a growing awareness that when it comes to peace and security the international community needs to update its governance structures and establish a renewed commitment to searching for solutions through more effective cooperative efforts.

III

- What is preventing the world from cooperating more effectively on peace and security? A first order of consideration has to do with the emergence of new threats associated with non-state actors motivated by extremist ideologies that question the very tenets of the international system ó the best example being ISIS. At the same time, while there may be a general overarching consensus as regards the need to contain this phenomenon and defeat it, the strategies adopted to combat terrorism by major powers, in particular after the 9/11 attacks, have proved to be extremely divisive.

- When the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center were hit in September 2001, the entire international community expressed solidarity towards the US. The resolutions that authorized the use of force against the Taliban in Afghanistan were adopted by consensus in the UN Security Council. The 2003 military intervention in Iraq, however, seriously disrupted that unity. Whether one adopts a legal, a moral, or a purely õrealpolitikö standpoint, the truth is that the invasion of Iraq was a fiasco, as US General Wesley Clark admits it in a recent book, and indirectly contributed to promote terrorism. The 2003 Iraq invasion cannot be dissociated from the particularly brutal forms of extremism that have spread through the region and beyond since then.

- Equally divisive has been the unilateral interpretation by NATO of the Security Council authorization to protect civilians in Libya, and the policies regarding the departure of Bashar al-Assad in Syria as a pre-condition for a diplomatic solution to the crisis.

- Division also continues to produce paralysis when it comes to diplomatic efforts aimed at resolving the long-standing Israel-Palestine issue. Additionally, the enlargement of NATO, after the end of the Warsaw Pact has generated mistrust in Russia and China and beyond.

- Tensions are also associated to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as the failure by nuclear weapon States to implement commitments undertaken in past NPT Review Conferences or to convene a conference on the creation of a nuclear weapons free zone in the Middle East. While there is a prolonged stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament and the UN Disarmament Commission, the only results achieved on this matter are related to the Arms Trade Treaty.

- Finally, the growing inequality among nations (a subject dealt with under the Sustainable Development Agenda) remains a potential source of instability. According to

a study by OxFam, the wealthiest 1% will soon own more than the rest of the world's population.

IV

- How to react to this situation? The first step is to honestly assess the first 15 years of the current century when it comes to the responses ó or the inability of the international community to respond ó to the threats and challenges that have emerged.

- Strategies associated to õregime changeö and the use of force in Iraq and Libya have put the UN Charter under a õstress testö. These strategies were in part responsible for the difficulties the UN Security Council faced in dealing with the Syrian conflict in its initial stage and impacted as well on the Russian response to the Ukrainian crisis.

- We should not forget, at the same time, that the bloodiest conflict of the present century has been that of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The situation in DRC has been dealt through consensual strategies and given rise to innovative forms of peacekeeping.

- Iraq, Libya and even Afghanistan illustrate the shortcomings of strategies to combat terrorism through the use of force and õregime changeö. The inescapable conclusion is that bad situations became even worse and more problematic.

- In shaping a new cooperative multilateral order, attuned to multipolarity, either the UN will be at the center of that order, or there will be no order.

- There is an evident need to increase representation in the Security Council and to address its lack of legitimacy and its archaic dynamics that prevent countries other than the current permanent members to play a significant role.

- It is necessary to reestablish an international pact on the inadmissibility of the use of force outside the UN Charter provisions and without proper authorization of the Security Council.

- We cannot minimize the responsibility of the permanent members of the Security Council to make this new pact viable, both in terms of the rules governing the use of force and the update of governance structures. At the same time, the remaining 188 Member States cannot remain inactive and wait for the P-5 to take the lead. There is a need to act and engage civil society and think tanks in this effort. That is why initiatives such as the Independent Commission on Multilateralism should be very much valued.