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Sixty-third session

5th plenary meeting

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Official Records

President: Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann (Nicaragua)

The meeting was called to order at 9.10 a.m.

Agenda item 100

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/63/1)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with the decision taken at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 19 September 2008, the General Assembly will hear a presentation by the Secretary-General of his annual report on the work of the Organization (A/63/1), under agenda item 100. I give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: I welcome all participants to the opening of the general debate of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly. It is customary for the Secretary-General, on this occasion, to assess the state of the world and to present our vision for the coming year.

We all recognize the perils of our current moment time. We face a global financial crisis, a global energy crisis and a global food crisis. Trade talks have collapsed yet again. We have seen new outbreaks of war and violence and a new rhetoric of confrontation. Clearly, climate change threatens our planet ever more. We often say that global problems demand global solutions. And yet, today we also face a crisis of a different sort. Like those others, it knows no borders. It affects all nations. It complicates all other problems. I refer, here, to the challenge of global leadership.

We are on the eve of a great transition. Our world has changed more than we may realize. We see new

centres of power and leadership in Asia, Latin America and across the newly developed world. The problems we face have grown much more complex. In that new world, our challenges are increasingly those of collaboration, rather than confrontation. Nations can no longer protect their interests or advance the well-being of their peoples without the partnership of other nations.

Yet, I worry. There is, today, a danger of losing sight of that new reality. I see a danger of nations looking more inward, rather than towards a shared future. I see a danger of retreating from the progress we have made, particularly in the realm of development and a more equitably sharing of the fruits of global growth. That is tragic, for at this time one thing is clear: we must do more, not less. We must do more to help our fellow human beings weather the gathering storm. Yes, global growth has raised billions of people out of poverty. However, if you are among the world's poor, you have never felt poverty so sharply. Yes, international law and justice have never been so widely embraced as on this sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

However, those living in nations where human rights are abused have never been so vulnerable. Yes, most of us live in peace and security. However, we see deepening violence in many nations that can least afford it: Afghanistan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq and Sudan, to name but a few. We can do something about it, and with strong global leadership, we will.

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(spoke in French)

I would like to speak to you, members of the Assembly, about the three pillars of development: human rights, peace and security. I say this candidly: the situation in the area of development is serious. In the course of last year, we watched, with the greatest concern, the skyrocketing of fuel prices, foodstuffs and commodities. The rich countries fear a recession, while the poorest ones no longer have anything to eat. That is why in two days, we shall hold a high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We must raise awareness throughout the world and harness global action, with a particular focus on Africa. As you know, progress has been uneven. Not all promises have been kept, but we have made enough progress to know that achieving the MDGs is within our reach.

At the high-level event, I shall bring together a new coalition, made up of Governments, non-governmental organizations, and leaders of the private sector and religious and philanthropic groups.

We know that this is an effective formula. It has already worked for malaria, a scourge which kills one child every 30 seconds. Last year, I set up a new type of public-private partnership, which operates on the basis of a scientific strategy, marshals funds and is managed centrally at the global level. On Thursday, I will announce the results of new research which show that this partnership is a resounding success. The moment is drawing near when we can declare that malaria, one of the last scourges besetting humanity, has been eliminated.

At the present time, we are going to apply this new global partnership model to other MDGs. I will ask you, the members of the Assembly, to be both ambitious and specific. I will ask you to indicate what you intend to do and how you will do it to help us achieve our goals by 2015. And I propose that we hold, in 2010, a summit meeting on the Millennium Development Goals in order to review the follow-up on these new commitments. We have to take things in hand, starting today. We have to respond to this appeal, wherever we may be. We owe it to the poor of the Earth.

(spoke in English)

The United Nations is the champion of the most vulnerable. When disaster strikes, we act. We did so this year in Haiti and other Caribbean nations hit by

hurricanes. We did so in Myanmar after Cyclone Nargis; there, the challenge now is to push for political progress, including credible steps on human rights and democracy. We did so in South-East Asia, affected by severe flooding, and in the Horn of Africa, afflicted by drought, where 17 million need emergency help.

Since taking office, I have called for more strenuous action in Somalia. Must we wait and see more children die in the sand? We at the United Nations are leaders. We at the United Nations are duty-bound to do what compassion and human decency demand of us.

The global food crisis has not gone away. It may have faded from the daily headlines, but note this fact: last year, at this time, rice cost \$330 a ton. Today, the price is \$730. In a single year, the food staple that feeds half the world's population has more than doubled in price. People who used to buy rice by the bag now do so by the handful. Those who ate two meals a day now get by on one. The United Nations has led the world's response. Our United Nations High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis set forth solutions. We focused on getting seeds and fertilizer into the hands of small farmers. We aim to create a new green revolution in Africa. But the truth is that we lack new resources. The international community has not matched words with deeds.

(spoke in French)

We know that peace and security are under attack from all quarters. In countries such as Burundi, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Timor-Leste, members of peacekeeping operations, who number more than 100,000, are helping the local population overcome conflicts and restore peace. We cannot underestimate what the United Nations can accomplish thanks to its good offices, especially in the area of preventive diplomacy. The results are clear in Nepal and in Kenya, as well as, I hope, in Zimbabwe. In Cyprus, an island which has been long divided, the chances for reunification are genuine. In Georgia, the United Nations can help to defuse tension related to the recent conflict. In Côte d'Ivoire, we will help organize elections before the end of the year; these will represent an enormous step towards the renewal of democracy.

In Darfur, it remains difficult to meet deployment timelines. Crucial equipment and personnel are still not in place. I would be failing in my obligations if I did

not stress how dangerous it is to act as if the United Nations can settle all of the complex problems of our time without enjoying the full support of its Member States. Without the necessary resources, mandates are meaningless.

(spoke in English)

The global financial crisis endangers all our work: in financing for development, social spending in rich nations and poor, the Millennium Development Goals. If ever there were a call to collective action — a call for global leadership — it is now.

At the Doha Review Conference later this year, we will have an opportunity to address the critical issues of international economic cooperation and development.

I urge all members to engage at the highest level.

We need to restore order to the international financial markets. We need a new understanding on business ethics and governance, with more compassion and less uncritical faith in the magic of markets. And we must think about how the world economic system should evolve to more fully reflect the changing realities of our time.

(spoke in French)

Other problems call for a firm hand on a global scale. I am thinking in particular of the fight against malaria and AIDS, and of reducing maternal and child mortality. I am thinking of terrorism as well as disarmament and non-proliferation, which are just as important as ever.

I note the progress that has been achieved in the Six-Party Talks regarding the Korean peninsula, and I urge that the agreements be implemented.

I ask Iran once again to comply with Security Council resolutions and to cooperate fully with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

I am thinking, above all, of human rights. We must absolutely bring to life the principle that justice is a pillar of peace, security and development. We have to give effect to the responsibility to protect.

We understand that, in these areas, everything is not black and white. We admit that politics can be very complex and that it requires unending compromises. But crimes against humanity cannot remain

unpunished. We have the means to combat impunity and must therefore do so.

Finally, I am thinking about the crucial problem of our time: climate change. Last December, in Bali, world leaders agreed on a road map for the period up to 2012, when the Kyoto Protocol will cease to guide us. We must regain our momentum. The first test will be in three months, in Poznan, in Poland. By then, we must arrive at a common idea of the form that a new global agreement on climate change might take. There are only 14 months before Copenhagen. I urge the Polish and Danish Governments, together with all the States Members of the United Nations, to deploy all their persuasive powers at the global level to help us to make progress on this literally existential question.

(spoke in English)

In closing, let me briefly return to the theme of my address to the General Assembly last year — a stronger United Nations for a better world.

The foundation of all our work is accountability. The United Nations Secretariat, including myself, is accountable to you, the Member States. And that is why I push so hard and so strongly for United Nations reform. We need to change the United Nations culture. We need to become faster, more flexible, more effective and more modern.

In the coming weeks, I will ask the Member States to support my proposals for a new human resources framework. We need to replace our current system of contracts and conditions of service. It is dysfunctional. It is demoralizing. It discourages mobility between United Nations departments and the field. It promotes stagnation, rather than creativity. It undercuts our most precious resource — the global, dedicated corps of international civil servants that is the backbone of the United Nations.

Whenever I travel, I go out of my way to meet these brave and committed men and women. They work in the most difficult circumstances, often at great personal sacrifice. I cannot fully express my admiration for them.

The time has come to invest more in our staff. And that is why I am promoting mobility matched with proper career training as a way to create new professional opportunities, in order to inject new flexibility and dynamism into the Organization.

Finally, let us also remember: you, the Member States, are accountable to each other, and to the Organization as well. You cannot continue to pass resolutions mandating ambitious peace operations without the necessary troops, money and materiel. We cannot send our brave United Nations staff around the world — 25 of whom died this year — without doing all we can to assure their security. We cannot reform this vital Organization without providing the required resources.

It takes leadership to honour our pledges and our promises in the face of fiscal constraints and political opposition. It takes leadership to commit our soldiers to a cause of peace in faraway places. It takes leadership to speak out for justice; to act on climate change despite powerful voices against one's leadership; to stand against protectionism and make trade concessions, even in our enlightened self-interest.

Yet that is why we are here. We have before us a great opportunity. We have ample reason to be optimistic. Today's uncertainties will pass. The challenges before us are our creation. Therefore we can solve them together. By acting wisely and responsibly, we will set the stage for a new era of global prosperity that is more widely and equitably shared.

I count on your leadership.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Secretary-General for his presentation.

Agenda item 8

General debate

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a great honour for me to address this gathering at the opening of the general debate of this sixty-third session of the General Assembly.

The international situation at this time is far from satisfactory. In fact, the world is in even more serious trouble than it was 63 years ago when the United Nations was founded. Right now we are witnessing a confluence of large-scale, interrelated crises.

But crises do not necessarily turn into tragedies. We are living in a time of tremendous opportunities to introduce corrective measures in order to improve our way of doing things, of interacting with one another and with Mother Earth and the natural world in general.

If we are to seize the opportunities that these crises now offer, we must move beyond laments, speech-making and statements of good intentions and take concrete action based on a firm resolve to replace the individualism and selfishness of the dominant culture and replace it with human solidarity as the golden rule that guides our behaviour.

Our Organization has done many laudable things which, had the United Nations not existed, would surely not have been achieved. However, if we look at the Organization's progress in fulfilling the primary purposes for which it was founded, we must admit that in terms of eliminating war, achieving disarmament and ensuring international security, we have failed.

In signing the Charter of the United Nations, all of us undertook to uphold certain principles which, if they had truly been upheld by all Member States, would have placed the world in a much better position today to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

The world — our world — is ailing, and its illness is the one that Tolstoy described more than 100 years ago as the "mania of selfishness". Some say that this is irreversible — that it is too late to do anything about it. I think this attitude is one of dangerous defeatism that will only paralyse us and guarantee that we keep sinking, until we drown in the morass of maniacal, suicidal selfishness in which we find ourselves.

More than half the world's people languish in hunger and poverty while at the same time more and more money is spent on weapons, wars, luxuries and totally superfluous and unnecessary things. We must resist the temptation to bury our heads in the sand in an attempt to deny reality. Let us be brave enough to acknowledge the vast inequities that exist in the world and within most of our countries, even in many of the most developed countries. These inequities are time bombs that will not simply go away if we ignore them.

In addition to the problem of hunger, poverty and high food prices, there are many other problems whose human origin can no longer be doubted. These include climate change, efforts to privatize water and the squandering of water as though it were an inexhaustible resource, the arms build-up, terrorism, human trafficking, the Palestine situation, problems related to humanitarian aid, gender inequality and

children in especially difficult circumstances such as armed conflict or humanitarian disaster.

These are the most pressing problems that our world faces today. All of them are man-made, and all can be traced in large part to the lack of democracy at the United Nations. A small group of States takes decisions based on selfish motives, and the world's poor are the ones who suffer the consequences.

The decisions with the most serious consequences for the membership do not go through the General Assembly. In any event, the resolutions of the General Assembly — that is, of the representatives of “we the peoples”, in whose name our Organization was founded — are regarded as mere recommendations that are casually ignored even though they represent the wishes of 95 per cent of the Organization's Members.

The current financial crisis, on top of the high cost of food and the humanitarian devastation caused by recurrent natural phenomena, will have very serious consequences that will impede significant progress — if indeed any progress is made — towards the targets established in the Millennium Development Goals, which are themselves insufficient. It is always the poor who pay the price for the unbridled greed and irresponsibility of the powerful.

The world has reached a point at which we have no alternative: either we love one another or we all perish; either we treat each other as brothers and sisters or we witness the beginning of the end of our human species. But if we choose the path of solidarity, recognizing each other as brothers and sisters, we will open up new horizons of life and hope for everyone.

This is what the peoples of the entire world, particularly the dispossessed of the Earth, hope to hear from this distinguished gathering of some 100 heads of State or Government. They want to hear a universal commitment to defending the United Nations, on the understanding that this entails respecting and defending the principles on which our Organization is based.

First among them is the principle of the sovereign equality of all Member States; second is the obligation of all Members to meet their Charter commitments. Failure to do so would be not only a serious breach of international commitments; it would amount to an attack on the United Nations and its ability to work effectively for peace.

The United Nations has officially proclaimed 2009 the International Year of Reconciliation. Starting today, we must begin to adopt that mindset. We should emerge from this general debate in a state of reconciliation, determined to stop treating each other arrogantly and to stop attacking each other. We must forgive those who might have caused us great pain and suffering but who are now pledged to refrain from attacking us again.

Forgiveness is never a sign of weakness. On the contrary, great spiritual strength is needed to forgive and to refuse to let memories of past abuses become obstacles to achieving the levels of unity and solidarity we need in order to build a new world — in the conviction that a different world is possible.

In a moment I will have the great honour and privilege of inviting all delegations, one by one, to present, as representatives of the States Members of our Organization, their vision of how we should address the great challenges of the day and how we can achieve the unity we need in order to do so effectively.

The first representative on whom, with great pride and pleasure, I shall be calling to take the floor is a very dear friend of many years, President Lula of Brazil, the largest country in my extended homeland of Latin America and the Caribbean. Immediately afterwards, I shall have the great honour to call on our dear brother President Bush and to shake his hand. What he has to say to us will be of great importance for the world. After that, I shall call on our very dear brother President Sarkozy of France, who also currently holds the presidency of the European Union. Next will come the Presidents of the Philippines, Gabon, Bahrain, Liberia, Turkey, Argentina, Madagascar and Serbia, as well as the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, who is currently also Chairperson of the African Union.

I am sure that the spirit of our great brother and friend, the servant of God Julius Nyerere, will be with us, helping us to attain the noble objectives of this general debate.

These introductory remarks are from the heart and are meant as a kind of fraternal embrace of all members, without any exclusion — to use a phrase of the Apostle Paul that has always been a favourite of mine, *in caritate non ficta*, “with unfeigned love”.

Before giving the floor to the first speaker for this morning, I should like to remind members that the list of speakers for the general debate has been established on the agreed basis that statements will have a time limit of 15 minutes to enable all speakers to be heard at each meeting. Within that time frame, I would like to appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at a normal speed so that interpretation in the six official languages of the United Nations can be properly provided.

I should also like to draw the attention of members to the decision taken by the General Assembly at previous sessions, namely, that the practice of expressing congratulations within the General Assembly Hall after a speech has been delivered is strongly discouraged. In that connection, after delivering their statements, speakers are invited to exit the General Assembly Hall through room GA-200, located behind the podium, before returning to their seats.

May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to proceed in the same manner during the general debate at its sixty-third session?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Finally, I should like to draw the attention of members to the fact that, during the general debate, official photographs of all speakers are taken by the Department of Public Information. Members interested in obtaining those photographs are requested to contact the Photo Library of the United Nations.

Address by Mr. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil.

Mr. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Da Silva (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): It is my great pleasure to greet my dear friend Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, President of the General Assembly. I wish you much success in your mission.

The present session of the General Assembly is being held at a particularly serious time. An often predicted economic and financial crisis is now today's harsh reality. Because of the responsibility of speculators, entire peoples are suffering anguish in the wake of successive financial disasters that threaten the world's economy. Indispensable interventions by State authorities have defied market fundamentalists and shown that this is a time for political decisions. Only decisive action by Governments — particularly those of countries at the epicentre of the crisis — will be able to rein in the disorder that has spread through the world's financial sector, with perverse effects on the daily lives of millions of people. The lack of rules favours adventurers and opportunists, to the detriment of real companies and workers.

The great Brazilian economist Celso Furtado said that we must not always allow speculators' profits to be privatized while their losses are invariably socialized. We must not allow the burden of the boundless greed of a few to be shouldered by all. The economy is too serious a matter to be left in the hands of speculators. Ethics must also apply to the economy.

A crisis of such magnitude will not be overcome through palliative measures. Mechanisms for both prevention and control are needed to ensure full transparency for international finance. Today's supranational economic institutions have neither the authority nor the workable instruments that they need to control the anarchy of speculation. We must rebuild them on entirely new foundations.

The global nature of this crisis means that the solutions we adopt must also be global and must be decided upon in legitimate and trusted multilateral forums, without coercion. The United Nations, as the world's largest multilateral arena, must call for a vigorous response to the weighty threats that we all face.

Yet there are other, equally serious matters facing the world today. One of them is the food crisis, which afflicts more than a billion human beings. The energy crisis is also growing worse every day, as will the risks to world trade if we fail to achieve an agreement at the

Doha Round; another is the unrestrained degradation of the environment, which lies behind so many natural calamities whose victims are overwhelmingly the poor.

The fall of the Berlin Wall was expected to open up possibilities for building a world of peace, free from the stigmas of the cold war. However, it is sad to see other walls going up so quickly.

Many of those who preach the free circulation of commodities and capital continue to fight the free movement of men and women, using nationalistic and even racist arguments that evoke unpleasant memories and fears of times that we thought were behind us.

A supposedly “populist nationalism”, which some forces seek to identify and criticize in the South, is being unabashedly promoted in the developed countries. The financial, food, energy, environmental and migration crises, to say nothing of threats to peace in several regions of the world, reveal that the multilateral system must be overhauled to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Gradually, countries are moving beyond old conformist alignments with traditional centres. That new attitude, however, does not imply a confrontational stance. Simply by using direct dialogue without intermediation by major powers, developing countries have stepped into new roles in designing a multipolar world, with examples such as India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA), the G-20, the summits between South America and Africa and between South America and the Arab countries and the BRIC countries — Brazil, Russian Federation, India and China.

A new political, economic and trade geography is being built in today’s world. While navigators in the past would look to the North Star, today we are trying to find our way by looking at multiple dimensions of our planet. Now we often find our North Star in the South. On my continent, the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) was created last May, as the first treaty — after 200 years of independence — that brings together all South American countries. This new political union will coordinate the region’s countries in terms of infrastructure, energy, social policies, complementary production mechanisms, finance and defence.

Meeting in Santiago, Chile, just over a week ago, the Presidents of South America demonstrated

UNASUR’s ability to respond quickly and effectively to complex situations, such as the one in our sister nation, Bolivia. We supported its legitimately-elected Government, its democratic institutions and its territorial integrity and we issued a call for dialogue as a path to peace and prosperity for the people of Bolivia.

Next December, in the state of Bahia, Brazil will host the first summit of all of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on integration and development. This will be a high-level meeting under no umbrella, based on Latin America’s and the Caribbean’s own perspectives. All these efforts in the multilateral sphere are complemented by my country’s solidarity initiatives with poorer nations, particularly in Africa.

I also wish to emphasize our commitment to Haiti, where we command troops of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti and are helping to restore peace. I reiterate my appeal for the solidarity of developed countries with Haiti, since implementation has fallen far short of the many promises.

The strength of values must prevail over the value of strength. Only legitimate and effective instruments can assure collective security. The United Nations has spent 15 years discussing the reform of its Security Council. Today’s structure has been frozen for six decades and does not match the challenges of today’s world. Its distorted form of representation stands between us and the multilateral world to which we aspire. Therefore, I am much encouraged by the General Assembly’s decision to launch negotiations in the near future on the reform of the Security Council.

It is multilateralism that must also guide us toward solutions to the complex problems of global warming, based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. Brazil has not shirked its responsibilities. Our energy matrix is increasingly clean. Today’s food and energy crises are deeply intertwined. The inflation of food prices is affected not only by climatic factors and speculation in agricultural commodities; it is also driven by rising oil prices which affect the prices of fertilizers and transportation. Attempts to tie high food prices to the distribution of biofuels do not stand up to an objective analysis of reality.

Brazil’s experience demonstrates — and this could be the case for countries similar to ours — that

sugar-cane ethanol and biodiesel production reduce our dependency on fossil fuels, create jobs, regenerate degraded land and are fully compatible with expanding food production. We wish to intensify all aspects of that discussion at the world conference on energy and biofuels which we will be holding in November 2008, in the city of Sao Paulo.

My obsession with the hunger problem explains my ongoing efforts, along with other world leaders, to reach a positive conclusion to the Doha Round. We are still pushing for an agreement to reduce scandalous farm subsidies in rich countries. A successful Doha Round will have a very positive impact on food production, particularly in developing and poor countries.

Four years ago, along with several world leaders, I launched the Action Against Hunger and Poverty here in New York. Our proposal, then and now, is to adopt innovative funding mechanisms. The International Drug Purchase Facility is one early result of that initiative, helping to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria in several African countries. But it is not enough. We still have a long way to go if we want humanity to actually achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

In December 2008, we will commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, paying a tribute that will go far beyond mere formalities. That document expresses inalienable commitments that challenge us all. As Governments, we must do more than support the Declaration with rhetoric. We are called upon to fight for the values proclaimed six decades ago and to make them a reality in each country and around the world.

Today's Brazil is very different from what it was in 2003, when I became President of my country and stood for the first time before the General Assembly. Our Government and society have taken decisive steps to transform the lives of Brazilians, creating nearly 10 million formal jobs, distributing income and wealth, improving public services, lifting 9 million people out of extreme poverty, and bringing another 20 million into the middle class. All this has occurred in an environment of strong growth, economic stability, lower external vulnerability and, above all, a stronger democracy with the intense participation of our people.

In the year when we commemorate the one-hundredth birthday of the great Brazilian Josué de

Castro — the first Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and a pioneer in the studies concerning the problem of hunger in the world — it is worthwhile to reread his warning: “It is no longer possible to sit back and let a region go hungry without the entire world suffering the consequences.”

I am proud to state that Brazil is overcoming hunger and poverty. I reiterate the optimism that I expressed here five years ago. We are much greater than the crises that threaten us. We have the heart, the right-mindedness and the will to overcome any adversity. More than ever, that is the spirit of Brazilians.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. George W. Bush, President of the United States of America

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly with now hear an address by the President of the United States of America.

Mr. George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Bush: I am pleased to be here to address the General Assembly. Sixty-three years ago, representatives from around the world gathered in San Francisco to complete the founding of the Charter of the United Nations. They met in the shadow of a devastating war, with grave new dangers on the horizon. They agreed on a historic pledge to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights and unite their strength to maintain international peace and security. That noble pledge has endured trying hours in United Nations history, and it still guides our work today.

Yet the ideals of the Charter are now facing a challenge as serious as any since the United Nations founding: a global movement of violent extremists. By deliberately murdering the innocent to advance their aims, those extremists defy the fundamental principles of international order. They show contempt for all who respect life and value human dignity. They reject the words of the Bible, the Koran, the Torah or any standard of conscience or morality. They imperil the values of justice and human rights that gave birth to the United Nations — values that have fuelled an unprecedented expansion of freedom across the world.

To uphold the words of the Charter in the face of this challenge, every nation in this Hall has responsibilities. As sovereign States, we have an obligation to govern responsibly and solve problems before they spill across borders. We have an obligation to prevent our territory from being used as a sanctuary for terrorism, proliferation, human trafficking and organized crime. We have an obligation to respect the rights and respond to the needs of our people.

Multilateral organizations have responsibilities. For eight years, the nations in this Assembly have worked together to confront the extremist threat. We have witnessed successes and setbacks, and through it all a clear lesson has emerged. The United Nations and other multilateral organizations are needed more urgently than ever. To be successful, we must be focused, resolute and effective.

Instead of only adopting resolutions decrying terrorist acts after they occur, we must cooperate more closely to keep terrorist attacks from happening in the first place. Instead of treating all forms of Government as equally tolerable, we must actively challenge the conditions of tyranny and despair that allow terror and extremists to thrive. By acting together to meet the fundamental challenge of our time, we can lead towards a world that is more secure, more prosperous and more hopeful.

In the decades ahead, the United Nations and other multilateral organizations must continually confront terror. That mission requires clarity of vision. We must see the terrorists for what they are: ruthless extremists who exploit the desperate, subvert the tenets of a great religion and seek to impose their will on as many people as possible. Some suggest that those men would pose less of a threat if we would only leave them alone, yet their leaders make clear that no

concession could ever satisfy their ambitions. Bringing the terrorists to justice does not create terrorism. It is the best way to protect our people.

Multilateral organizations must respond by taking an unequivocal moral stand against terrorism. No cause can justify the deliberate taking of innocent life, and the international community is nearing universal agreement on this truth. The vast majority of nations in this Assembly now agree that tactics like suicide bombing, hostage-taking and hijacking are never legitimate. The Security Council has adopted resolutions declaring terror unlawful and requiring all nations to crack down on terrorist financing. Earlier this month, the Secretary-General held a conference to highlight victims of terror, where he stated that terrorism can never be justified.

Other multilateral organizations have spoken clearly as well. The Group of 8 has declared that all terrorist acts are criminal and must be universally condemned. The Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference recently spoke out against suicide bombing, which he said runs counter to the teachings of Islam.

The message behind those statements is resolutely clear. Like slavery and piracy, terrorism has no place in the modern world. Around the globe, nations are turning those words into action. Members of the United Nations are sharing intelligence with one another, conducting joint operations and freezing terrorists' finances. While terrorists continue to carry out attacks like the terrible bombing in Islamabad last week, our joint actions have spared our citizens from many devastating blows.

The brutal nature of the extremists is increasingly clear and the coalition of nations confronting terrorists is growing stronger. Over the past seven years, Afghanistan and Iraq have been transformed from regimes that actively sponsor terror to democracies that fight terror. Libya has renounced its support for terror and its pursuit of nuclear weapons. Nations like Saudi Arabia and Pakistan are actively pursuing the terrorists. A few nations, regimes like Syria and Iran, continue to sponsor terror, yet their numbers are growing fewer and they are growing more isolated from the world.

As the twenty-first century unfolds, some may be tempted to assume that the threat has receded. That would be comforting. It would be wrong. The terrorists believe time is on their side, so they have made waiting

out civilized nations part of their strategy. We must not allow them to succeed. The nations of this body must stand united in the fight against terror. We must continue working to deny the terrorists refuge anywhere in the world, including ungoverned spaces. We must remain vigilant against proliferation by fully implementing the terms of resolution 1540 (2004) and enforcing sanctions against North Korea and Iran. We must not relent until our people are safe from this threat to civilization.

To uphold the Charter's promise of peace and security in the twenty-first century, we must also confront the ideology of the terrorists. At its core, the struggle against extremists is a battle of ideas. Terrorists envision a world in which religious freedom is denied, women are oppressed and all dissent is crushed. The nations represented in this Hall must present a more hopeful alternative — a vision where people can speak freely, worship as they choose and pursue their dreams in liberty.

Advancing this vision of freedom serves our highest ideals, as expressed in the United Nations Charter's commitment to the dignity and worth of the human person. Advancing this vision also serves our security interests. History shows that when citizens have a voice in choosing their own leaders, they are less likely to search for meaning in radical ideologies, and when Governments respect the rights of their people, they are more likely to respect the rights of their neighbours.

For all these reasons, the nations of this body must challenge tyranny as vigorously as we challenge terror. Some question whether people in certain parts of the world actually desire freedom. This self-serving condescension has been disproved before our eyes. From the voting booths of Afghanistan, Iraq and Liberia to the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, the Rose Revolution in Georgia, the Cedar Revolution in Lebanon and the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan, we have seen people consistently make the courageous decision to demand their liberty.

For all the suggestions to the contrary, the truth is that, whenever and wherever people are given the choice, they choose freedom. Nations represented in this Hall have supported the efforts of dissidents, reformers and civil society advocates in newly free societies through the new United Nations Democracy Fund, and we appreciate those efforts. As young

democracies around the world continue to make brave stands for liberty, multilateral organizations like the United Nations must continue to stand with them.

In Afghanistan, a determined people are working to overcome decades of tyranny and protect their newly free society. They have strong support from all 26 nations of the NATO alliance. I appreciate the United Nations decision this week to renew the mandate of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. The United Nations also has an active civilian presence in Afghanistan, where experts are doing important work helping to improve education, facilitate humanitarian aid and protect human rights. We must continue to help the Afghan people defend their young democracy so that the Taliban does not return to power and Afghanistan is never again a safe haven for terror.

In Iraq, the fight has been difficult, yet daily life has improved dramatically over the past 20 months thanks to the courage of the Iraqi people, a determined coalition of nations and a surge of American troops. The United Nations has provided the mandate for multinational forces in Iraq through this December, and the United Nations is carrying out an ambitious strategy to strengthen Iraq's democracy, including helping Iraqis prepare for their next round of free elections. Whatever disagreements our nations have had on Iraq, we should all welcome this progress towards stability and peace and we should stand united in helping Iraq's democracy succeed.

We must stand united in our support of other young democracies, from the people of Lebanon struggling to maintain their hard-won independence to the people of the Palestinian territories, who deserve a free and peaceful State of their own. We must stand united in our support of the people of Georgia. The United Nations Charter sets forth the equal rights of nations large and small; Russia's invasion of Georgia was a violation of those rights. Young democracies around the world are watching to see how we respond to this test. The United States has worked with allies in such multilateral institutions as the European Union and NATO to uphold Georgia's territorial integrity and provide humanitarian relief. Our nations will continue to support Georgia's democracy.

In this Hall are representatives of Georgia, Ukraine, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Liberia, Iraq and other brave young democracies. We admire their courage, we honour their sacrifices, and we thank them for their

inspiring example. We will continue to stand with all who stand for freedom. This noble goal is worthy of the United Nations and it should have the support of every member of this Assembly.

Extending the reach of political freedom is essential to prevailing in the great struggle of our time, but it is not enough. Many in this Hall have answered the call to help their brothers and sisters in need by working to alleviate hopelessness. Those efforts to improve the human condition honour the highest ideals of this institution. They also advance our security interests. The extremists find their most fertile recruiting grounds in societies trapped in chaos and despair — places where people see no prospect of a better life. In the shadows of hopelessness, radicalism thrives. Eventually, that radicalism can boil over into violence, cross borders and take innocent lives across the world.

Overcoming hopelessness requires addressing its causes: poverty, disease and ignorance. Challenging these conditions is in the interest of every nation in this Hall, and democracies are particularly well positioned to carry out that work because we have experience responding to the needs of our own people. We are natural partners in helping other nations respond to the needs of theirs. Together, we must commit our resources and efforts to advancing education, health and prosperity.

Over the years, many nations have made well-intentioned efforts to promote these goals, but the success of these efforts must be measured by more than intentions. It must be measured by results. My nation is placing insistence on results at the heart of our foreign assistance programmes. We launched a new initiative, called the Millennium Challenge Account, which directs our help to countries that demonstrate their ability to produce results by governing justly, fighting corruption and pursuing market-based economic policies, as well as investing in their people. Every country and institution that provides foreign assistance, including the United Nations, will be more effective by showing faith in the people of the developing world and insisting on performance in return for aid.

Experience also shows that, to be effective, we must adopt a model of partnership, not paternalism. This approach is based on our conviction that people in the developing world have the capacity to improve their own lives and will rise to meet high expectations

if we set them. America sought to apply this model in our Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. Every nation that receives American support through this initiative develops its own plan for fighting HIV/AIDS and measures the results.

So far, these results are inspiring. Five years ago, 50,000 people in sub-Saharan Africa were receiving treatment for HIV/AIDS; today, that number is nearly 1.7 million. We are taking a similar approach to fighting malaria, and so far we have supported local efforts to protect more than 25 million Africans. Multilateral organizations have made bold commitments of their own to fight disease. The G-8 has pledged to match America's efforts on malaria and HIV/AIDS. Through the Global Fund, many countries are working to fight HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. Lives in the developing world depend on these programmes, and all who have made pledges to fight disease have an obligation to follow through on their commitments.

One of the most powerful engines of development and prosperity are trade and investment, which create new opportunities for entrepreneurs, help people rise out of poverty and reinforce such fundamental values as transparency and the rule of law. For all these reasons, many represented in this Hall have conducted free-trade agreements at the bilateral and regional levels.

The most effective step of all would be an agreement that tears down trade barriers at the global level. The recent impasse in the Doha round is disappointing, but that does not have to be the final word. I urge every nation to seize this opportunity to lift up economies around the world and reach a successful Doha agreement as soon as possible. Beyond Doha, our nations must renew our commitment to open economies and stand firm against economic isolationism. These objectives are being tested by turbulence in the global financial markets.

Our economies are more closely connected than ever before, and I know that many of you here are watching how the United States Government will address the problems in our financial system. In recent weeks we have taken bold steps to prevent a severe disruption of the American economy, which would have a devastating effect on other economies around the world. We promote stability in the markets by preventing the disorderly failure of major companies.

The Federal Reserve has injected urgently needed liquidity into the system. Last week, I announced decisive action by the federal Government to address the root cause of much of the instability in our financial markets by purchasing illiquid assets that are weighing down balance sheets and restricting the flow of credit. I can assure the Assembly that my Administration and our Congress are working together to quickly pass legislation approving this strategy. And I am confident that we will act in the urgent time frame required.

The objectives I have laid out for multilateral institutions confronting terror, opposing tyranny and promoting effective development are difficult, but they are necessary tasks. To have maximum impact, multilateral institutions must take on challenging missions, and like all of us in this Hall they must work towards measurable goals, be accountable for their actions and hold true to their word.

In the twenty-first century, the world needs a competent and effective United Nations. This unique institution should build on its successes and improve its performance. Where there is inefficiency and corruption, that must be corrected. Where there are bloated bureaucracies, they must be streamlined. Where Members fail to uphold their obligations, there must be strong action — for example, there should be an immediate review of the Human Rights Council, which has routinely protected violators of human rights. There should be a stronger effort to help the people of Burma live free of the repression they have suffered for too long. All nations, especially members of the Security Council, must act decisively to ensure that the Government of the Sudan upholds its commitment to address the violence in Darfur.

The United Nations is an Organization of extraordinary potential. As it rebuilds its Headquarters, it must also open the door to a new age of transparency, accountability and seriousness of purpose. With determination and clear purpose, the United Nations can be a powerful force for good as we head into the twenty-first century. It can affirm the great promise of its founding.

In the final days of the San Francisco Conference, the delegates negotiating the United Nations Charter received a visit from President Harry Truman. He acknowledged the enormous challenges they faced and said that success was possible only because of what he

called an unshakable unity of determination. Today, the world is engaged in another period of great challenge, and by continuing to work together, that unshakable unity of determination will be ours. Together we can confront and defeat the evil of terrorism. Together we can secure the Almighty's gift of liberty and justice to millions who have not known it. Together we can build a world that is freer, safer and better for the generations who follow.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the United States of America for the statement he has just made.

Mr. George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the French Republic

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the French Republic.

Mr. Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the French Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the French Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sarkozy (*spoke in French*): I bring you fraternal greetings from Europe — Europe that is conscious of its responsibilities and wishes to act; Europe that is true to its values — democracy and freedom; Europe that is loyal to its friends, but also Europe that wishes to speak to the whole world in service of dialogue and of peace.

At a time when the world is deeply troubled, I have come to tell you, on behalf of Europe, that in the midst of so many difficulties the international community has a political and moral responsibility that we must shoulder. Let us not forget that if we are gathered here today, it is because following one of the most terrible tragedies that humankind has ever known, there were men and women of good will who were determined that in the future no one could ever say, when faced with misfortune: "There is nothing we can

do.” That is why we are here, because those who went before us did not renounce their responsibility. Europe believes that today, our duty is to act and to refuse to submit.

We can wait no longer. We are beginning to gauge the tragic consequences of having already waited too long. We cannot wait to achieve peace, to end the tragedy in Darfur. We cannot wait to fight terrorism, to avert the food crisis that condemns so many human beings to die of hunger. We cannot wait to prepare for the post-petroleum world, to fight global warming, to save the oceans, to put an end to monetary, social and ecological dumping. We cannot wait to bring ethics to financial capitalism.

For too long we have all been resigned to being powerless. For too long we have retreated before the need to give to the globalized world institutions that will enable it to be regulated.

The world of the twenty-first century cannot be governed with the institutions of the twentieth century. We are a century behind. Let today’s major Powers and the Powers of tomorrow unite to shoulder together the responsibilities their influence gives them in world affairs.

To all those who are hesitant, I wish to say that enlarging the Security Council and the G-8 is not just a matter of fairness, it is also a question of effectiveness. We can no longer wait to turn the G-8 into the G14 and to bring in China, India, South Africa, Mexico and Brazil. Italy is proposing a major step in that direction at the next summit, which it will host, and Italy is right.

Let us act to make our international institutions more representative, because if they are more representative they will be stronger, more effective and more respected. A new world is emerging not only through all our successes, but also through all the crises besetting the planet. However, we cannot receive that new world passively, we must build it.

Let us learn to manage together the most acute crises that no one, not even the most powerful among us, can resolve alone. I am convinced that it is the duty of the heads of State and Government of the countries most directly concerned to meet before the end of the year to examine together the lessons of the most serious financial crisis the world has experienced since that of the 1930s. Who would understand it if the

world’s major economies should fail to take the time to meet to discuss what we must do together and the lessons we must draw from what has happened?

Let us rebuild together a regulated capitalism, in which entire swathes of financial activity are not left to the sole judgement of market operators; in which banks do their job; which is to finance economic development rather than to fuel speculation; in which rules of prudence apply to all and serve to avert and soften shocks instead of exacerbating them; in which the credit agencies are controlled and punished when necessary; in which transparency of transactions replaces such opacity that today it is difficult to understand what is happening; and in which modes of remuneration do not drive people to take unreasonable risks. It is my duty to say that those who jeopardize people’s savings should be punished and at last face up to their responsibilities. We will succeed in that on the condition that we work together.

In our globalized world, the fate of each is linked to that of all others. The negotiations on climate change, begun in Bali, will conclude in Copenhagen next year. Whatever our particular interests, we do not have the right to fail.

Europe will adopt an unprecedented raft of measures on energy and climate in December. Europe does not wish to teach lessons; it wishes to set an example. Europe also wishes to set the example by acting to bring about peace. It did so in Georgia. It did so with the Union for the Mediterranean. Because for over half a century Europe has undertaken to stop the endless cycle of war, vengeance and hate that has periodically taken it to the edge of the precipice, it does not want war. It does not want a war of civilizations. It does not want a war of religion. It does not want a cold war.

Europe wants peace, and because it wants peace it says to Russia that it wants links of solidarity with that country, that it wants to build a shared future, and that it wants to be Russia’s partner. Why not build a continent-wide common economic space that would unite Russia and Europe? However, Europe also says to Russia with the same sincerity that it cannot compromise on the principle of the sovereignty and independence of States, their territorial integrity or respect for international law. Europe’s message to all States is that it cannot accept the use of force to settle a dispute.

Europe says to Iran that it respects that country, that Iran has the right to civil nuclear energy and that it will explore all avenues of dialogue. However, it says to Iran with the same sincerity that it cannot accept a nuclear-armed Iran that would endanger the peace and stability of the whole region. Nor can Europe tolerate — and I say this solemnly — Iran calling for the destruction of the State of Israel.

Europe says to Israel that it is its friend and that it will let no one threaten its existence. Europe says to Israel that it will always be at its side in the fight against terrorism, but with the same sincerity says to telling Israel that there will be no peace until there is a viable Palestinian State with recognized borders.

Europe says to Afghanistan that it will continue to stand by it and that it will not permit barbarians allied with Al-Qaida again to take an entire people hostage and to turn an entire country into a terrorist base.

Europe says to Somalia that it will help it, with the support of the United Nations, to combat the scourge of piracy off its coasts. Until all States join together to establish a maritime police force, we cannot allow some hundreds of pirates to threaten the free passage of ships throughout the world.

Europe says to Africa that it is committed to co-development, that it wishes to be Africa's privileged partner, and that it has a common destiny with Africa and a profound sense of solidarity. Europe says to Africa that it has its place among the permanent members of the Security Council and in the enlarged G-8. How can one ever hope to settle the great issues of the world while ignoring Africa, South America or a large part of Asia? Europe believes in the African renaissance, which is under way and, first and foremost, is in the hands of the Africans, particularly those of African youth, which is the youth of the world.

Essentially, what brings us here together in this forum, where everyone must listen to the others and thereby show them a form of respect, is something more basic even than democracy. What brings us together is respect for the dignity of all just as they are, and for diversity of their opinions, cultures and beliefs. Human dignity is a universal value. What we must promote everywhere is respect for that diversity, which is the surest guarantor of peace and human fraternity and the surest antidote to intolerance, hatred, violence, obscurantism and fanaticism.

That is what Europe wants: peoples united in respect, understanding and solidarity; peoples united throughout the world working together for the great common cause of safeguarding of humanity. Time is at a premium; the world cannot wait.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the French Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the French Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mrs. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, President of the Republic of the Philippines

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of the Philippines.

Mrs. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, President of the Republic of the Philippines, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Mrs. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, President of the Republic of the Philippines, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Macapagal-Arroyo: The developing world is at a tipping point. In the Philippines, we feel the pain of high prices of food, fuel and rice. Our people pursue the universal dream of a better life for themselves and their children: better education, better health care, higher wages, a dignified retirement. We are proving the value of a new paradigm for self-reliance through the use of, first, a targeted strategy with a set of precise prescriptions to ease our price challenges; secondly, food self-sufficiency and more energy independence; and thirdly, long-term reforms. This is a positive example that we wish to share with the rest of the world.

Our gains over the past seven years were hard-earned. We made tough and sometimes painful decisions to reset our economy: tax increases, banking reforms, a crackdown on smugglers and tough fiscal discipline, to name a few. Thankfully, these reforms have given us some running room to weather the first wave of global price shocks that reverberated across the world earlier this year.

It has not been easy, but Filipinos are tough and resilient. We have pulled together. We have been able to draw on additional revenues to provide targeted investments in food and fuel to keep our poor afloat until a better day. But we are also realistic and know that we cannot do it alone. We need a strong United Nations as never before. We need rigorous international cooperation as never before.

Economic uncertainty has moved like a tsunami around the globe, wiping away gains, erasing progress, not just here on Manhattan island, but also in the many islands of the Philippines. Just when we thought the worst had passed, the light at the end of the tunnel became an oncoming train hurtling forward with new shocks to the global financial system. The setbacks from these global shocks of the past year — and of the past weeks — are real and profound. It will take time and perseverance to put the pieces back together.

To address these global challenges, we must go on building bridges among allies around the globe in order to bring the rice to where it is needed to feed the people, to make investments to create jobs, and to keep the peace and maintain stability in the world.

It is therefore timely that the Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, has organized this year's agenda around the impact of the global economy on the poor. He deserves our highest praise for his quick and decisive action on the global food crisis. His Comprehensive Framework for Action, involving the United Nations, donor countries, civil society and the private sector, seeks to achieve food security through the right combination of policies, technologies and investments. This is a model of the United Nations in action.

Since the volatile global economic situation became apparent many months ago, in the Philippines we have increased and stabilized the supply of rice and delivered targeted subsidies to the poor. We have reached out to neighbours such as Viet Nam and others in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and elsewhere to ensure a stable supply and affordable prices. We have clamped down on price gouging and invested additional billions in planting and agricultural modernization.

We have increased our energy independence by 17 per cent through greater use of geothermal energy, biofuels and other renewable sources, and we expect to attain 60 per cent energy independence in two years. Biofuels have been cited as being a positive factor for

clean energy. At the same time, they have also been cited as a negative factor that contributes to high food prices. We are pursuing a policy of using non-food biofuel sources planted on land unusable for food production purposes. We see this approach as a way for countries to seek a sustainable balance between food and energy needs.

For food self-sufficiency, our food baskets are North Luzon in our largest island and the southern island of Mindanao. Mindanao has fields of the highest productivity, yet also the majority of our poorest provinces. It is a sad irony that our food basket has some of the highest incidences of hunger in our nation.

The prime reason is the endless Mindanao conflict. Our archipelago of 7,000 islands has had its share of religious strife, ethnic tension and violence. For years, we have worked to achieve peace in Mindanao. Much progress was made until violent elements within the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) decided to take the law into their own hands. We will restart the dialogue when the area is secure, when our people are safe and when responsible elements in the MILF regain control.

There is no alternative to peace. I stand before the Assembly today to declare loud and clear that we are committed to the process of peace in Mindanao. We gratefully acknowledge here today the central role of so many friends and allies, including the United Nations; Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Libya, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia and others in the Organization of the Islamic Conference; Australia, New Zealand, the United States and other bilateral partners supplying official development assistance; and the European Union and Sweden. All have played a big role in advancing peace and development in Mindanao.

We will refocus the peace talks from an approach that is centred on dialogue with rebels to one of authentic dialogue with the communities. The context of our engagement with all armed groups will subscribe to the United Nations-recognized principle of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. We maintain high hopes in interfaith dialogue as a means of building bridges rather than barriers between communities of different cultures and ethnicity. In furtherance of this effort, the Philippines will host the first-ever Special Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace and Development in May next

year. We will also cooperate with the Alliance of Civilizations.

We are also pleased that the Secretary-General will join us in Manila during the second Global Forum on Migration and Development. Our overseas Filipino workers are true global pioneers. There is no ship abroad that does not have a Filipino crew or a nation that does not have highly skilled Filipino workers. The movement of people from one country to another will surely increase as globalization continues to erase borders. This fact should be recognized as having implications for the growth and development of both sending and receiving countries.

In many troubled places of our world, the United Nations is the last great hope for peace and security. For this reason, the Philippines contributes one of the largest police contingents to United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Mr. President, your leadership is more vital than ever. The Philippines will fully support you as you lead our General Assembly for the coming year.

In conclusion, there are hundreds of millions of good people across this globe who are struggling as never before. We must hear their cry for help. It is within the collective power of the leaders at this United Nations General Assembly to fulfil the universal dream of better education, better health, food on the table and a dignified life.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of the Philippines for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, President of the Republic of the Philippines, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Amir of the State of Qatar.

His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to

the United Nations His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Sheikh Al-Thani (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset to congratulate you, Su, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. I wish you every success in your mission.

I should like also to thank your predecessor, Mr. Srgjan Kerim, for all of his efforts in the previous session. I should further like to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his efforts to promote and revitalize the role of the United Nations.

I need not remind anyone in this Hall, which holds such a high-level assembly, that the primary goal of this Organization and the fundamental purpose of its Charter is to achieve and maintain world peace.

The human experience replete with hopes and horrors reminds us all that world peace can only be achieved by a conscious, positive act and not through mere wishful thinking. We have sought to achieve peace through war in which the powerful tried to impose their will, as in the two notorious world wars of the twentieth century.

We have sought to find peace through entente between empires, as between Britain and France in 1904. We sought peace through coexistence between the United States and the Soviet Union in 1971. In all those attempts, either by war or by entente between Powers, by agreement between empires or by coexistence between blocs and doctrines, peace has remained elusive.

We have all come to realize through those long and exhausting experiences that achieving peace is a positive act that means more than just eliminating the threat of weapons. While it is true that humanity has not suffered a global war in the past 60 years, it is also true that peace in those last six decades has remained elusive. It has been a peace beset by conflicts on all continents and in all territories. We have also come to the conclusion that in a world where barriers of distance and time have come to evaporate, achieving peace means establishing and promoting economic and social justice among peoples. That is what constitutes positive peace.

If the purposes and principles of the Charter have established the political rights of nations on the basis of international law, the right of peoples to social

justice must be based on the idea of development. In the past, the first generation of advocates and supporters of national liberation movements demanded what they called “positive neutrality”, believing that they could thus distance themselves from the wars of the major powers. However, the realities of today’s world require a different approach, for peace cannot be achieved through conflict between powers, agreement between empires, or coexistence among blocs, and not even through positive neutrality.

The alternative to those three options is our new choice, namely positive peace, an era of international law that ensures political rights and an era of development offering parallel and equal opportunities in one world, which cannot go into the future burdened by the injustices of politics or blinded by the darkness of underdevelopment.

Qatar is getting ready to host the follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development. My country looks forward to an international cooperation that offers the broadest base possible for political as well as social peace. We hope that participation the conference will be at the highest possible level. The goal is ambitious and the purpose is vital for the safety and peace of the one human global village.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Amir of the State of Qatar for the statement he has just made.

His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Ms. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Liberia.

Ms. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Ms. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Johnson-Sirleaf: I am honoured to address the General Assembly on behalf of the Government and the people of Liberia, the second time I am doing so since I assumed office in 2006.

I congratulate you, Mr. Miguel d’Escoto Brockmann, and your country, Nicaragua, on your election as President of this historic sixty-third session. There is no doubt that you will bring your vast experience to bear in guiding this session to a successful conclusion. You can rest assured of the full cooperation and support of the Liberian delegation.

Let me also seize this opportunity to pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Srgjan Kerim of the Republic of Macedonia, for the exemplary leadership he provided this body over the past year.

By the same token, I would like to commend the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his farsightedness and wisdom in carrying out his mandate. The Liberian people still recall with fondness his visit to Monrovia earlier this year, when they shared with him their respect and appreciation for the United Nations, which has provided exceptional support as a guarantor of the peace we now enjoy in our country after 14 years of war.

In our 161 years as the first independent republic in Africa, we navigated for nearly a century among the sharks of racism, colonialism, prejudice, human degradation and underdevelopment. We have experienced a war that killed nearly 8 per cent and displaced 40 per cent of our population, a war that destroyed our underdeveloped economy and inadequate infrastructure. Through it all, Liberia has come to appreciate the United Nations as a truly fundamental, relevant and important forum and instrument for world peace.

In its 63 years of existence, the United Nations has expanded in scope, form and content. It is, correctly, still primarily concerned with the promotion of international peace and security. On the basis of our experience as a founding Member, Liberia is committed to contributing to the redefinition of that international peace and security that it is very strongly linked to and demands the promotion of economic growth and sustained development, particularly food security, relief from the debt burden, globalization and fair trade.

We believe in a peace and security environment that combats HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases and that promotes poverty eradication and human rights, especially the rights of women and children. We believe in the fight against international terrorism, drugs and other international crime, and we believe in disarmament, especially the elimination of nuclear weapons and the control of small arms and light weapons.

The history and experience of Liberia have taught us to have faith in the United Nations, which today maintains nearly 11,000 men and women from all over the world helping our country consolidate its newly won peace. We wish to thank the Security Council, which has correctly seen the necessity to renew the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). We particularly thank the resource-contributing countries, for, without them, we would never be able to save the lives we are saving and promote the development we are promoting.

Our history and experience have taught us to believe in regional peace and security and cooperation. Liberians still say, with passion: "Thank God for ECOMOG" — the Monitoring Group of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) — referring to the period of our war when young men and women from ECOWAS countries, led by Nigeria and including Senegal, Ghana, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Mali and Benin, laid down their lives to save our country. Subsequently, a Nigerian-led military mission, the ECOWAS Mission in Liberia, provided the beachhead for the establishment of UNMIL. We shall always be grateful to ECOWAS, which is now dedicating itself to its prime objective of economic integration and development.

We also believe in our subregional entity, the Mano River Union, which comprises the countries of Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone and now, Côte d'Ivoire, which joined us earlier this year. The Mano River basin, as is well known, had been the epicentre of the conflict system in West Africa since 1990. As the current Chair of the Union, I can say on behalf of my colleagues that the countries of that basin have declared never again to war and all forms of armed violence. The Mano River Union will henceforth be a net exporter of peace and all the dividends that come with peace in West Africa.

I am proud to say that Liberian history and experience have taught us never to shirk in our opposition to wars and the causes thereof, to man's inhumanity to man, to oppression, racism, human rights abuses, especially those against women and children, and abuses inflicted on the basis of race, creed and religion.

In doing so, we know that we may at times not be seen as following the party line, be it in Africa or on African issues, or the positions of some close allies. We continue to ask our friends to realize that we will be guided by our principles, history and experience to act in the best interest of our people and of the greater world community.

It is in this connection that we took a stand on the situation in Zimbabwe, because we had faith that the leaders of that wonderful and great country needed to know that fairness in elections and justice in political participation were the best ways to ensure durable peace. My Government wishes to thank the Zimbabwean leaders and their people for choosing the path of negotiation for the comprehensive agreement that has now been reached. We thank the leaders of the Southern African Development Community — especially South African President Thabo Mbeki, for his role in facilitating the peace deal. May all Zimbabweans work to ensure full implementation of the agreement.

Over the past year, Africa has registered unprecedented economic growth and has experienced relative peace in many hitherto-turbulent regions and countries. Unfortunately, people in Somalia, in parts of the Sudan — especially the Darfur region — Chad, Niger, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other countries have yet to breathe the air of relief and peace. They need the concerted efforts and support of the United Nations for the African Union and subregional bodies to take the actions necessary for peace. Where there is evidence of non-cooperation and even aggression against peace forces, the world must move into gear under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.

As we have seen in Liberia and throughout the world, armed conflicts are exacerbated by easy access to small arms and light weapons. Thus, as part of the efforts for durable peace in conflict zones, we must put in place rigid measures to ensure effective control of such weapons. In that connection, my Government

supports an arms trade treaty. We continue to champion the call for total and complete nuclear disarmament in order to prevent the world from annihilating itself.

Those fears are not unfounded if we imagine such weapons in the hands of a terrorist. But the threat of terrorism — the senseless destruction of innocent lives and property — oftentimes even defies the imagination. The world must unite to fight that scourge. No nation or person is protected against it. Those who feel angry enough to carry out such dastardly acts defeat their own purposes because they end up killing those who may be ready to let the world hear about their causes. They actually end up losing everything. We grieve with those who lost their loved ones during the terror attacks in Pakistan even while the world was meeting here.

While some plot evil deeds, there are those who are committed to working with Liberia and Africa and the rest of Africa to fight poverty and to promote positive, all-around international cooperation. We are grateful for the many avenues for cooperation that have been provided. We thank the United States for its African Growth and Opportunity Act, which aims to promote trade rather than aid; we thank the European Union for its Everything but Arms facility; we are grateful for the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation; we thank the Japanese Government and its partners for leading the Tokyo International Conference on African Development; and we thank others to whom the continent is looking for new avenues for sustained development. We are pleased to note that our cooperation efforts have included intra-Africa and South-South endeavours, with great successes having been achieved so far.

Beyond Africa, my Government believes, with great interest, that a durable solution can be found to the Israeli-Palestinian and Arab-Israeli conflict. Late last year, I had the opportunity to visit and hold talks with Israeli and Palestinian leaders alike in Tel Aviv and Ramallah. I gathered from conversations and reports regarding other sustained efforts in search of peace that the solution of two States, with secure and recognizable borders and mutual recognition of each other, is the way forward. We must never give up working for a formal end to the conflict and for a durable peace for all in the region.

I should now like to report briefly on Liberia, the country for which, we dare say, the United Nations is

most likely to receive its best-ever performance record. On 19 September 2006, approximately eight months after I had assumed the presidency of Liberia as the first woman to have been so elected in Africa, I addressed this body, laying out my vision for a country that had suffered near-total devastation — a country that was the best example of a State that had nearly collapsed. At that time, I said that Liberia was back, moving forward on an irreversible path of peace and development.

Today, I have come to renew that pledge. I have come to report how much progress has been made in the light of what we inherited. It should be remembered that we inherited a situation in which nearly two thirds of Liberians lived below the poverty line, with an even higher poverty rate in rural areas. The economy collapsed, with gross domestic product falling 90 per cent from 1987 to 1995 — one of the largest economic free-falls ever recorded in the world. Indicators in the areas of health, education, water, sanitation, food security and infrastructure were very poor and sometimes beyond measure.

My Government, with the support of international partners, began to take steps to move the whole country into gear. There was a need, first, for clear direction in the form of a national vision or agenda, formulated and contributed to by the people as their own; secondly, to restore the international reputation and creditworthiness of the country; and thirdly, to demonstrate the necessary leadership — strong, committed and focused — for the people.

The Government, in collaboration with civil society, undertook broad consultations with people in all parts of the country. That resulted in a framework for reducing poverty and making progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. Our poverty reduction strategy for the period 2008-2011 is now in place, anchored on the pillars of consolidating peace and security, revitalizing the economy, strengthening governance and the rule of law, and rebuilding infrastructure and delivering basic services.

Clearly, those three years are not enough time to accomplish the daunting tasks laid out in our poverty reduction strategy; they are part of a process aimed at long-term development that will continue far beyond 2011. They are part of a process that must identify effective responses to the food and energy crises and to the as-yet-undetermined effects of climate change.

However, the Liberian people are gaining confidence in the strategy, for they are seeing that our national security policy, supported by the United Nations, is now producing the desired results.

They also know that, starting at a low base, we saw growth of more than 9 per cent in 2007. Roads and buildings are sprouting up in many places; health clinics are reopening or being established where they did not exist before; agricultural production is increasing; and a huge external debt is well on the way to being cancelled, with exceptional support from our partners.

We believe that that is truly a success story for a country emerging from so much destruction in so short a period of time. But we owe it first to our people — the Liberian people — and, very strategically and importantly, to the international community, led by the United Nations. The presence of the United Nations Mission in Liberia has given hope to the people that they need not surrender to the threat to peace and development represented by the large percentage of unemployed youth who cannot be absorbed by an economy that is still too weak, despite its high level of growth.

I come from a continent where female leadership — particularly a female head of State or Government — is still unthinkable in some quarters. I have only a handful of female colleagues at the global level. To help sensitize and energize the world with regard to the reality of female leadership, my friend and colleague Ms. Tarja Halonen, President of Finland, and I are organizing an international colloquium on women's empowerment, leadership and development that will be held on International Women's Day in March 2009 in Monrovia. I believe that this will provide us with the opportunity to make special efforts in support of women who are desirous to seek elective public office and to encourage other women to seek such office.

Mr. Golding (Jamaica), Vice-President, took the Chair.

As I conclude, let me thank the President for the great work he and his colleagues are doing for a world meant for succeeding generations. Let me also say unequivocally that not only is Liberia back, but we are lifted and we are blessed. We thank all who have contributed to this progress.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Liberia for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Abdullah Gül, President of the Republic of Turkey

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Turkey.

Mr. Abdullah Gül, President of the Republic of Turkey, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Abdullah Gül, President of the Republic of Turkey, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Gül: At the outset, I wish to extend our sincere congratulations to Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. I would also like to take the opportunity to pay tribute to the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session, Mr. Srgjan Kerim, for his able leadership during his past term.

For Turkey, the United Nations Charter reflects the common aspirations and conscience of humanity. The United Nations provides a political and moral compass for our endeavours towards a just international order — a better order that will prevent new conflicts, ensure that human rights are upheld and lead to more equitable and sustainable distribution of prosperity.

In this framework, we believe that the most pressing task before the international community is to bridge, as quickly as possible, the enormous gap between the wealthiest and the least fortunate. We have certainly made considerable progress in that direction, including towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals; however, our common fight against poverty, illiteracy, epidemic diseases, child mortality and climate change is still far from over. On the contrary, volatile fuel prices, the food crisis and the global economic slowdown have brought about an even

more challenging development and security environment. Under such circumstances, the fight against terrorism, racism, xenophobia and all forms of religious discrimination and extremism takes on particular importance.

We must indeed remain extremely vigilant against the risk of further alienation between different cultures and religions. In that respect, we regard the Alliance of Civilizations initiative, which we cosponsored with Spain under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary-General, as an important instrument that can help us avoid such a dangerous track.

Turkey will continue to be a leading country in further advancing the goals of this initiative which enjoys worldwide backing, including from the European Union and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. We hope that the Group of Friends of the Alliance of Civilizations, which now consists of 14 international organizations and 76 countries representing different regions ranging from Latin America to Africa and Asia, will keep growing. In this vein, we look forward to hosting the second Forum meeting of the Alliance of Civilizations in Istanbul next April.

As I said, a top priority issue on our agenda is the need to address the problems of the developing world. There is no question that developing countries should get all the assistance they need to achieve sustainable development. They must be supported under a renewed global development agenda and through increased foreign investments and enhanced trade facilities. For its part, Turkey is trying to contribute to this endeavour, first and foremost through increased development assistance. Turkey also provides special facilities for development, health, education and agricultural projects in various parts of the world. As a result of such fast-growing aid programmes, Turkey is now recognized as an emerging donor country by the international community.

The United Nations Ministerial Conference of the Least Developed Countries which Turkey hosted in Istanbul last year has clearly demonstrated our commitment to humanitarian and development assistance. We have now offered to host the Fourth Ministerial Conference. Similarly, the first-ever Turkey-Africa Cooperation Summit held in Istanbul last month provided an important opportunity to

explore new avenues of cooperation with the African continent.

Turkey is also committed to combating global warming, which has serious implications for the entire world, but more so for the developing countries. Driven by that conviction, we are taking active part in negotiations to shape our new global climate change agreement, which will replace the Kyoto Protocol.

Turkey also pays special attention to the global water crisis. In that regard, we hope that the Fifth World Water Forum which we will host in Istanbul next March will inspire new thinking and concrete action on this important question.

If I may now turn to the political issues besetting our region, I am pleased to note that Turkey has been actively contributing to the advancement of peace by facilitating dialogue. We have also been working hard to build a sense of co-ownership of regional issues among our neighbours through a series of regional cooperation initiatives. Encouraged by its strong regional ties, Turkey has launched another initiative designed to prevent further conflict in the recently traumatized South Caucasus. In that regard, I believe that the Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform proposed by Turkey could be an instrumental framework for building a climate of confidence in the region that will allow discussion of our common problems in a democratic setting.

In the light of impressions from my visits to our neighbours Armenia and Azerbaijan and those of Prime Minister Erdoğan to the Russian Federation and Georgia, all parties concerned seem receptive to the idea; we hope they will give it a chance to work. I sincerely believe that a positive perspective thus created will help to solve frozen conflicts, including occupied Nagorno-Karabakh, on the basis of respect for the principle of territorial integrity. No doubt, such a perspective will also help improve the bilateral ties between the countries of the region.

The President returned to the Chair.

It is also well past time to settle the conflicts of the Middle East, at the core of which lies the Palestinian question. Turkey actively supports all endeavours to bring about a lasting solution to that central problem and alleviate the plight of the Palestinian people. Turkey is also making every effort to help advance the Syrian and Lebanese tracks. One

recent example is the indirect peace talks that Syria and Israel started under Turkey's auspices this past May in Istanbul.

In Iraq, too, Turkey stands firmly with the Iraqi people and Government. Besides our bilateral efforts, I am particularly pleased to see that the Neighbouring Countries process, which I initiated five years ago, is functioning well. If the international community's efforts are to succeed, the Iraqi people need to settle their differences through dialogue and compromise on controversial issues, among them the final status of Kirkuk.

Afghanistan is another country where Turkey is investing heavily in the future of a nation with which we have special historical ties. Turkey will continue to contribute to the security of the Afghan people and to their reconstruction efforts. We will also continue our initiatives to create an atmosphere conducive to regional ownership and cooperation, in particular between Pakistan and Afghanistan. That is equally vital for the common struggle against terrorism and for the stability of the region.

Finally, an urgent and peaceful settlement of the question of Iran's nuclear programme, in conformity with International Atomic Energy Agency norms and Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons obligations and respecting the right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, remains high on Turkey's active diplomatic agenda.

I am convinced that would-be solutions to individual conflicts in the Middle East will be sustainable only if we adopt a comprehensive approach based on a positive vision for the future. That is why I invite all the parties to give serious consideration to the longstanding idea of collective arrangements for conflict prevention and resolution that would promote regional security and stability by building confidence, facilitating political dialogue and encouraging economic and cultural cooperation in the Middle East.

Turkey gives full backing to diplomatic efforts towards a political settlement in Cyprus. The solution lies in the establishment of a new partnership State composed of two constituent States of equal status. The process towards that goal should be based on the United Nations parameters of bi-zonality and the political equality of the two sides. We welcome and firmly support the comprehensive settlement

negotiations recently started between the two leaders under the good offices of the Secretary-General.

At the same time, I believe that efforts to end the unfair isolation of the Turkish Cypriots who voted courageously in favour of the Comprehensive Settlement of the Cyprus Problem in 2004 — a plan that was unfortunately rejected by the other side — are long overdue.

Before concluding, I would like to stress the indispensable nature of the United Nations in resolving all those matters. Indeed, without an effective and functional world body, it is impossible to realize the hopes and expectations of our nations. That is why we attach the utmost importance to reforming and further strengthening the United Nations system as a whole. It is also why Turkey is constantly stepping up its engagement in and contributions to all aspects of the United Nations agenda, ranging from development and peacekeeping to human rights.

It is also with that sense of responsibility that Turkey has decided to put forth its candidature for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for 2009 and 2010. Turkey has not been represented in the Council for nearly half a century, and we believe that the main tenets of our foreign policy, together with our economic, social and cultural attributes, will allow us to bring added value to the work of the Council. I hope that the General Assembly, with its valuable support, will do us the honour of granting Turkey the opportunity to do so.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Turkey for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Abdullah Gül, President of the Republic of Turkey, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Ms. Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, President of the Argentine Republic

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Argentine Republic.

Ms. Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, President of the Argentine Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Ms. Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, President of the Argentine Republic, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Fernández de Kirchner (*spoke in Spanish*): As the first female head of State in the history of my country, I would like to address this Assembly by speaking first on the issue of human rights. Members know that, for my country, the policy of unrestricted respect for and promotion of human rights is one of our State policies.

In that context, I would like to urge that the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance — which was so energetically promoted by our country and which I co-signed, as First Lady of the Argentine Republic, in Paris last year together with 73 other delegations — be ratified by all countries that have signed it. Thus far, only four countries — Argentina, Albania, Mexico and Honduras — have ratified it. I know that the Republic of France will soon be ratifying it, but it is indispensable that we all strongly commit to ensuring that the inviolability of persons be one of the guiding principles for all States.

In this context, I would also like to put forward the Latin American Initiative for the Identification of Disappeared Persons. I would like to say that, together with the Guatemalan Foundation for Forensic Anthropology, the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team and the Peruvian Forensic Anthropology Team, we are promoting this initiative to establish genetic identity banks to enable us to report precisely on violations of human rights and properly identify victims.

We deem invaluable the testimony of the women who are with us here at the Assembly today, members of Las Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo — the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo — who envisioned the creation of this genetic information bank. They have been able to recover, from oblivion and disappearance, 95 of the 500 grandchildren who disappeared, children of those political prisoners who disappeared under the former dictatorship in Argentina.

The work of these women is living witness to how, even amidst adversity and against all that State terrorism — not just in my country but in other republics — has meant, it is possible to overcome

death and fight for life. The recovery of these children shows how important — how crucial — it is to support this type of initiative and underlines the importance of the work that has been done to identify the victims of the Balkan wars and those of the 11 September attack on the World Trade Center.

In the fight against impunity, which is a State policy in the Republic of Argentina, we cannot fail to mention an issue that, for us, is undoubtedly another cornerstone of this inexhaustible struggle. My country, the Republic of Argentina, suffered two attacks, in 1992 and 1994: the 1992 bombing of the Israeli Embassy and the 1994 bombing of the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association (AMIA) building.

Last year, before this very Assembly, former President Kirchner asked INTERPOL to ratify the arrest warrants issued by my country's Ministry of Justice against Iranian citizens accused of participating in the AMIA building bombing. Days later, INTERPOL ratified them, and international arrest warrants were issued accordingly. I call upon the Islamic Republic of Iran, in compliance with international law, please to agree that the Argentine justice system can bring to trial in public, transparent courts, and with the full guarantees given by a democratic system, those citizens who stand accused.

Before all the countries of the world brought together in this Assembly, and with the conviction I have always held that innocence must be respected until an individual has been convicted and sentenced by a competent judge, I would like to affirm that, in my country, those citizens will have a fair and public trial with their full participation, with all the guarantees afforded by Argentine law and by the oversight of the international community. Given the gravity of these events, this would guarantee to the Islamic Republic of Iran that there would be fairness, truth and justice in that trial.

I would thus urge once again that, in compliance with international law and because ensuring access to justice is what truly shows how we respect truth, justice and freedom, this request from the Argentine justice system, accepted by INTERPOL, be respected. That would undoubtedly contribute to providing truth for all — not just for Argentines, but for the entire international community — at a time when truth and justice are elusive values internationally.

In this Hall, as we have been doing since 2003, I would also like to call for the reform of our multilateral bodies — not only of the United Nations, which includes us all, but also of the multilateral financial institutions as well. That involves us all, and it is necessary to recreate a multilateralism which has been lost, leading to a far more insecure world. The Organization needs to be reformed, not just from the point of view of dogmatic approaches to the world, but to meet the real need of all States to ensure the functional, operational and results-oriented character of the activities and interventions of the Organization.

In this context, I would modestly like to put forward an example from our region, South America, of how we were recently able to demonstrate that multilateralism can be achieved, despite differences of approach and vision that different Governments in our region may have.

Here I am looking at the President Evo Morales — the legitimate President of our sister Republic of Bolivia. I would like to say that, a few days ago, the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) met in support of the democratic legitimacy of that country. In a concrete multilateral exercise, heads of State, who do not always share the same viewpoints or interests when we take decisions, were able to work unanimously to forge a resolution and plan of action to help our sister Republic of Bolivia, affected by those who do not respect the democratic will of the people freely expressed through elections.

That is not our only experience of multilateralism. Previously, at the meeting of the Rio Group in the Dominican Republic, at the time of the incident between the sister Republics of Ecuador and Colombia, heads of State intervened and were able to navigate a conflict which, on the basis of history, in other situations would surely have degenerated into an armed conflict between two sister countries.

What I want to say with this is that, for us, the exercise of multilateralism is not simply a hackneyed speech. It is a deeply-held conviction and a concrete and objective policy, showing results in what are normally called emerging regions, where we are capable of giving examples of multilateral collaboration in overcoming conflicts.

The other reform that we have always promoted is that of the multilateral credit institutions, but fundamentally the reform of an economic model that

placed the generation of wealth at the centre of the fictional economy and of the world of finances. Recent days show that those matters, those positions, were not the result of an ideological bias or closed dogmas but of objective and timely observation of what was going on.

Today, we cannot speak of the “caipirinha effect” or the “tequila effect” or the “rice effect”, or the effect that always showed that the crisis moved from the emerging countries towards the centre. Today, if we were to give it a name, we would have to say, perhaps, the “jazz effect”, which moves from the centre of the first economy of the world and spreads to the rest of the world. That situation does not make us content or happy.

Quite the contrary, we consider this an historic opportunity to review behaviour and policies, because during the period of the Washington Consensus, we — the countries of South America — were told that the market would solve everything, that the State was not necessary, that State intervention was something for which groups that had not understood how the economy had developed were nostalgic. However, now we are seeing the most formidable State intervention in memory from exactly the place where we had been told that the State was not necessary, in the framework, moreover, of an incredible fiscal and trade deficit.

My country, the Argentine Republic — which, if it continues to grow at the rates at which it has been growing since 2003, will this year be completing the largest economic growth cycle of its almost 200-year history — has always upheld the need for a State presence, fundamentally because the market does not assign resources to the most vulnerable sectors and because we see the State as connecting the interests of society and market interests.

Since 2003, an Argentina that had been in debt up to as much as 160 per cent of its GDP has today reduced its debt to almost 50 per cent of GDP. We have fully paid our debt to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and about 15 days ago we announced that we will settle our debt with the Paris Club, which had a cut-off date of 10 December 1983 — the very year when the first democratic President took office, after the dictatorship. Here in New York yesterday, in the Council on Foreign Relations, I announced that Argentina has received a proposal from three very important banks that represent bond-holders who did

not participate in the 2005 bond exchange and who are proposing to do so in conditions more favourable for my country, Argentina, than those of the 2005 exchange.

Thus we believe not only that our strategy has been correct but that it is absolutely necessary for all of us to review, with a great deal of intellectual humility, what is happening today in the markets and see what are the possible solutions for overcoming the situation. We emerging countries have a great advantage in what we do not have: no credit risk agency will come, nobody from the IMF will come tell us what to do, a great country that has grown on the basis of its real economy and today really has problems on the basis of a casino economy or a fictional economy, where it was thought that only capitalism can produce money. I always say that capitalism was invented in order to earn money, but on the basis of the production of goods, services and knowledge. Money alone does not produce more money. It has to go through the circuit of production, work, knowledge, services and goods so that there can be a virtuous cycle that can generate well-being for the whole of society.

Finally, I want to mention a matter that affects not only my country, beyond its geographical location, but also concerns this Assembly and also the need to face the twenty-first century without colonial enclaves. Here I refer to the issue of our Malvinas Islands, where, despite the resolutions of this body, despite all the measures taken here for the United Kingdom to agree, in virtue of what is set out in Article 33 of the Charter of the United Nations, to negotiate in peace between the parties, that country resolutely refuses to discuss with the Argentine Republic the issue of the Malvinas Islands.

I believe that a member of the Security Council — one that is among the principal nations of the world in the defence of freedom, human rights and democracy — should give concrete proof that it is not just talk but that it is truly convinced that it is necessary to end this shame, that of a colonial enclave in the twenty-first century. I want to request again, as have the different Presidents who preceded me — because Malvinas is for Argentineans a State policy as well — the cooperation that this body has always provided to once again urge the United Kingdom to agree to comply with international law and to demonstrate that it is serious in wishing to build a different world and a different citizenry.

Lastly, I wish to speak to all those men and women who have institutional governmental responsibilities in any of the branches of the State in their respective countries to once again advocate for the transformation of an international policy that has its fullest expression in this House. The reform of the instruments that we are requesting is not simply a question of cosmetics and formulas and changes that barely conceal that everything is continuing as it stands. The present situation, the complexity of the world that is coming, in terms of food and energy, requires all of us to re-examine our behaviour and our paradigms. We must accept with humility that it is necessary to build a world that is different from the one we have had to date — one in which respect for human rights, for the will of peoples and for those who are different, do not think as we do or who pray to a different god is not merely a catalogue of good intentions set out in the United Nations Charter, but a reality that is experienced a little more concretely every day.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Argentine Republic for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, President of the Argentine Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Marc Ravalomanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Madagascar.

Mr. Marc Ravalomanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Marc Ravalomanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ravalomanana (*spoke in French*): Eight years ago in this very Hall, we, the leaders of the world, solemnly adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Three years ago, we reviewed the Goals to assess the progress made thus far. We realized

that the Goals were in danger of not being attained by the year 2015, and we all acknowledged that we would be able to achieve them only through a considerable increase in our efforts.

Have we been able to deliver on those promises and commitments? I am afraid that we have not. In fact, the situation is more complex now than it was three years ago. We are facing a global food crisis, a global economic crisis and a global security crisis, with war and political hostilities spreading throughout the globe. In spite of efforts to reduce the divisions between the rich and the poor, the progress we have made so far on the MDGs has fallen far short of the targets we established.

Those global crises are of such importance that they are threatening to delay the achievement of the MDGs beyond 2015. It would be a major mistake if we were to do nothing to prevent that from happening. We must remain focused on the achievement of the MDGs. I highly appreciate the aid and assistance provided by donors and international organizations. Those institutions and their programmes are making a difference in the daily lives of people throughout Africa, including in Madagascar.

In Madagascar, for example, under-five mortality rates have dropped from 159 to 94 per 1,000. Primary school enrolment has increased from 67 per cent to more than 92 per cent. A million Malagasy have risen out of poverty in the past five years. None of that would have been possible without the support of the international community.

Unfortunately, official development assistance continues to shrink, while the aid provided by the international community remains insufficient. The target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income allocated to official development assistance was set with a view to achieving the MDGs in the developing countries. In his report on Africa's development needs (A/63/130), the Secretary-General rightly stresses that most of the wealthy donor nations have failed to deliver on their promises to help the world's poorest countries. The same report estimates that donor countries must increase aid by \$18 billion a year in order to honour their pledge to provide \$50 billion dollars by 2010.

In Africa, we continue to bear the consequences of those broken promises. Africa cannot break the vicious cycle of poverty: families have difficulties

feeding themselves and the number of families with access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation infrastructure is very small. I call upon all donor countries to honour their promises and to demonstrate leadership by explaining to their people why supporting the MDGs and the fight against poverty is a moral obligation and essential to creating a more stable and peaceful world.

We are all aware of the current world food crisis. For us and other countries, it is a heavy burden that poses many new challenges. The global food crisis is partly the result of the domestic agricultural subsidies and tariff protection practices of developed countries, which for many years have discouraged agricultural production in developing countries. In Africa, we find ourselves in very difficult circumstances. Because we have such low agricultural output, we are dependent on the global marketplace to feed our people. With commodity prices soaring, however, we cannot afford the basic food items needed to survive. We are in an unprecedented crisis. Rising food prices are pushing more people into absolute poverty.

The international community needs to take urgent and coordinated action to counter the negative impacts of increasing food prices on poor and vulnerable countries. Global trade policies must foster food security for all. Developed countries must reform their agricultural subsidy policies and amend the strategies and practices that increase the volatility of international prices. The international community must also help African countries to expand agriculture and to strengthen agricultural investment and the infrastructure needed for rural development.

The new agricultural development strategies must address the need for environmental management, sustainable development and the resistance of crops to disease and climate change. Given the impact of global climate change, maintaining healthy biodiversity is critical to sustaining future production performance.

Small subsistence farmers, representing 80 per cent of Africa's population, are key to its development. We must support them through a variety of programmes focused on training, access to finance and equipment, and marketing and distribution processes. Those small subsistence farmers must be an integral part of, and benefit from, a new model of agricultural production, economic development and environmental management. In that regard, I appreciate the true value

of the new dynamic of the Food and Agricultural Organization's pragmatic approach.

I would like to speak about what we are doing in Madagascar to address the challenge of food security. Our chief intention is to make Madagascar's agriculture more productive, more sustainable and more open to innovation and entrepreneurship, as the initiative Future Farmers of Madagascar shows.

For example, we are promoting the widespread use of the System of Rice Intensification, developed in Madagascar in the 1980s, an eco-friendly method of production that is an important part of the natural revolution, recently launched in Madagascar. That revolution is based on sustaining our natural resources and maintaining an ecological balance. It respects the soil, the environment and the people. At the moment, as rice is the staple food of the people of Madagascar, we are trying to keep the domestic rice price at an affordable level to protect the most vulnerable layers of the population.

In addition to that food crisis, we are confronted with other important challenges: climate change, increasing energy prices, unpredictable financial markets and other threats to our peace and security. What are the consequences of those threats and challenges?

First, those threats have a severe impact on the education, health and well-being of the population. In short, they have a very negative impact on our development. Secondly, those challenges are now competing with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Many of the resources dedicated to achieving the MDGs are now being directed elsewhere. They are being used to reconstruct countries destroyed by war or that have collapsed as a result of social conflicts. They are also being used to stabilize the food markets, meet energy demands and tackle climate change issues.

I understand that countries devastated by wars and other armed conflicts, by environmental disasters or by famine need assistance. I understand, and I support reforestation efforts and the need for new hydro-energy plants. What I do not understand, however, is that all those challenges and threats offer reasons for countries to abdicate on their promises of doubled aid for education, health and infrastructure, in order to achieve the MDGs in developing countries, especially in Africa.

For that reason, I have repeatedly stressed the importance of international assistance, especially the need to increase, improve and better coordinate that assistance, if donors are to meet their previously agreed pledges. There are links between the MDGs and the political, economic, environmental and other challenges I have mentioned. Therefore, more investment towards achieving the MDGs will contribute to addressing those challenges. In fact, improving the situation of the most dominated is one of the best means to solve them.

However, we must realize that those challenges will not be solved by simply shifting resources from one problem to another. It is clear that those other challenges require additional resources and a better coordination of efforts. Africa has been hit harder than any other continent by the food crisis, by higher energy prices, by environmental degradation, by disease and by social and political destabilization. That is why I would like once again to reiterate the need for a new Marshall Plan for Africa.

It seems that many world leaders, and public opinion, have forgotten or neglected the MDGs. We cannot fill one group's basket with the advantages of globalization while we empty the basket of another through the cost of globalization. It is increasingly clear that domestic interests are serviced at the cost of international needs. The outcome of the latest round of the World Trade Organization proved that. The lack of shared decision-making power in international institutions and global forums is a significant obstacle to making progress in developing countries and to achieving the MDGs. I would like to see a United Nations that can mobilize the resources and political will to tackle the toughest of problems — and succeed.

I am optimistic. I believe that we can turn the situation around. I appeal to you as leaders of the world. Everyone needs to contribute more goodwill, more motivation, more technical assistance, more coordinated efforts and, above all, more financial resources to the international basket. If you want to do so, if we are all committed to doing so, we shall be able to confront those crises together and achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and I am sure that we are going to win.

The recent fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development provides an encouraging and promising example of our partners' commitment and

willingness to advance the development agenda of Africa and to achieve the MDGs. More and more foundations, such as the Gates, Rockefeller, MacArthur, Better U and Clinton Foundations, and others, are playing a vital role in Africa. All those initiatives are much appreciated.

Madagascar has embarked on the path of transformation. To accelerate and better coordinate our development process and to make a quantum leap forward, we have created the Madagascar Action Plan, or MAP. It is a bold and ambitious, five-year plan that aims to promote rapid growth, lead to the reduction of poverty and ensure that the country develops in response to the challenges of globalization and in accordance with the national vision, Madagascar Naturally, and with the Millennium Development Goals. To implement the plan we have mobilized the whole population, whose active participation strengthens its sense of national pride and country ownership.

To help it move further on that path and to achieve the MDGs, the international community must double its efforts in Madagascar. For our part, we are resolved to assume our responsibilities, build trust with our partners, strengthen our capacities, promote democracy and good governance and take control of the future of our country.

It is crucial to share the responsibility and to prove our ability for leadership in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. I am calling on the leaders of the world to confront the challenge of transforming our thinking and our actions towards development to build a new Africa that becomes a continent of hope and opportunity.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Madagascar for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Marc Ravalomanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Boris Tadić, President of the Republic of Serbia

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Serbia.

Mr. Boris Tadić, President of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Boris Tadić, President of the Republic of Serbia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Tadić: In 1945, on the heels of the most destructive conflict the world had ever seen, facing an uncertain future characterized by the threat of nuclear annihilation, the United Nations was established by men and women of strategic vision. In San Francisco, my country proudly sat among the Organization's founders.

Our courageous political ancestors created this Organization in the belief that international law, based on the doctrine of sovereign equality of States, must supplant the use of force to settle differences between nations. This core abiding conviction of the founders must be repeatedly reconfirmed. The founders' sense of purpose must also be reaffirmed. And the obligation they handed down to us must continue to be exercised by all with a solemn sense of responsibility.

However much the world has changed since 1945, the United Nations remains the only universal intergovernmental institution that unites us as a global community of sovereign States. And standing at the very heart of this indispensable Organization is the General Assembly, the ultimate source of the international system's legitimacy. The unique world forum that is the General Assembly brings us together as sovereign equals, each acting on behalf of a country, with one vote, as guaranteed by the Charter of the United Nations.

The sacrosanct character of the foundational doctrine of sovereign equality and its accompanying binding obligation to respect each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity constitutes the very nature of the enduring legitimacy of the United Nations.

This arrangement has not changed, and I believe it must not change — unless we seek to overthrow the Charter and overturn the global legal order upon which it is built.

I come before the General Assembly as the President of a country that has become caught up at the heart of one of the most dangerous challenges to the

nature of the international system since the founding of the United Nations. I speak of the unilateral, illegal and illegitimate declaration of independence by the ethnic Albanian authorities of our southern province of Kosovo and Metohija, a territory that stands at the crucible of the identity of the Serbian people. It is the essential link between our proud national past and our proud European future. It is what ties the living tradition of Serbia to itself today.

The attempt at secession took place on 17 February 2008, in direct violation of the Charter of the United Nations, the Helsinki Final Act and Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). Kosovo's ethnic Albanian leaders chose to take that unilateral step after walking away from the negotiating table. They believed that if they walked away, the path to securing independence would open up before them. They believed it because that is what they were told. And they believed it because an artificial deadline on the talks was affirmed from the outside, after which, if no compromise solution was reached, Kosovo's independence would be imposed.

Under such circumstances, a negotiated solution was never a realistic option. With a fixed deadline and a default position that fulfilled the maximalist demands of Kosovo's ethnic Albanians, what incentive did they have to negotiate with Serbia in good faith? All they had to do was to pretend to engage in a process predetermined to fail and wait out the clock.

The incentives for compromise were far outweighed by the incentives for maximalism. The result was the rejection of Serbia's reasonable offer of almost unrestricted self-government, the broadest possible autonomy one can imagine.

Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) amounts to an attempt to partition a State Member of the United Nations against its will, and with disregard for the firm opposition of the Security Council, in order to appease a volatile and threatening ethnic minority. As a result, the very nature of the international system has been called into question.

We all know that there are dozens of Kosovos throughout the world, just waiting for secession to be legitimized, to be turned into an acceptable norm. Many existing conflicts could escalate, frozen conflicts could reignite, and new ones could be instigated.

We have heard the argument that Kosovo is sui generis, that it is a unique case. But the truth is, that is tantamount to saying that Kosovo is an exception to international law, that Kosovo should stand beyond the rules that govern the behaviour of the international community.

The Republic of Serbia rejects that claim, believing that no people is authorized to declare itself an exception, especially when doing so is in defiance of the position taken by the Security Council.

We face a defining moment. We must stand together in steadfastness and determination against a fundamental violation of international law.

Serbia responded to Kosovo's UDI with utmost responsibility and restraint. Despite political turmoil, our country continued to work hard to contribute to maintaining regional stability. From the very onset of this grave crisis, Serbia has ruled out the use of force. And we have not exercised other unilateral options, such as the imposition of economic sanctions against our breakaway province. Instead, we have opted for a peaceful and diplomatic approach, the result of which is that a vast majority of States Members of the United Nations have refrained from recognizing Kosovo's UDI. They have continued to abide by their obligations under the Charter of the United Nations to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of my country. On behalf of the Republic of Serbia, allow me once again to sincerely thank these countries for their adherence to the principles of international law.

Serbia proposes a non-confrontational way to respond to the threat posed to its territorial integrity. We have chosen to use the law. While rejecting violence and unilateralism categorically, we are equally emphatic in demanding that justice be delivered through the proper legal means at the disposal of any State Member of the United Nations. To that end, the Republic of Serbia has submitted a draft resolution to be considered at this session of the General Assembly. Let me make it clear that the text of the draft resolution refrains from taking political positions on Kosovo's UDI. Instead, in simple and direct language, it asks the principal judicial organ of the United Nations — the International Court of Justice — to render an advisory opinion on the following question: "Is the unilateral declaration of independence by the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government of Kosovo in accordance with international law?"

We believe that sending the Kosovo question to the International Court of Justice would prevent the crisis from serving as a deeply problematic precedent in any part of the globe where secessionist ambitions are harboured. We also believe that an advisory opinion from the Court would provide politically neutral yet judicially authoritative guidance to many countries still deliberating on how to approach Kosovo's UDI in line with international law.

Members' votes in support of the draft resolution would serve to reaffirm another key international principle at stake: the right of any State Member of the United Nations to pose a simple, elementary question on a matter it considers vitally important to the competent court. To vote against is in effect to vote to deny the right of any country, now or in the future, to seek judicial recourse through the United Nations system. To vote against means to accept that nothing can be done when secessionists in any part of the world proclaim the uniqueness of their cause and claim exception to the universal scope of international law. Such an attitude could lead to the end of the United Nations system as we know it. Allow me therefore to formally ask for the support of each and every Member State for Serbia's proposal before the General Assembly.

While the International Court of Justice deliberates on the legality of UDI, Serbia will remain a good-faith partner in the interim administration of our southern province. The functionality of a reconfigured international civilian presence under the overall authority of the United Nations, as defined by resolution 1244 (1999), is of great importance to my country. It must remain status-neutral and cannot therefore be based on the so-called Ahtisaari proposal, which was rejected by Serbia and not approved by the Security Council.

It is well known that the European Union (EU) has committed itself to building the much-needed institutional and societal fabric of our southern province. Let there be no doubt: My country supports the deepening of Europe's engagement in any part of Serbia, including Kosovo. In order for Europe's presence in Kosovo to be fully anchored within an acceptable, legitimate framework, it is vital that its mandate be approved by the Security Council. We will work with the Member States and the Secretariat to ensure that we achieve consensus in the near future on

the international civil presence in our southern province.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize that the central strategic priority of the Republic of Serbia is rapid accession to the European Union. Serbia will join the EU not only for reasons of geography, heritage, and economic prosperity, but also because of the values we hold in common. They constitute the intangible greatness of twenty-first-century Europe and they form the foundation of our democracy, our society and our beliefs in what we can accomplish.

Our common values also point to the significance of reconciliation — an important reason why Serbia is fully cooperating with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. We have demonstrated our unequivocal commitment time and again. We will continue to do so because it is our duty — our legal, political and moral duty — to the victims, to ourselves and, most of all, to the generations to come.

Europe has become the unifying force of the region. My country's absolute dedication to joining the EU is shared by all the countries of the western Balkans. If we choose, as democracies, to belong to something that is greater than the sum of its parts, the balkanization of the Balkans can be reversed.

Serbia's European vision is complemented by our strong desire to continue restoring and deepening the many close friendships that Yugoslavia made across the globe during the post-Second World War period. It will be one of the key priorities in the years to come for my country and my Government. As a country that is the largest successor to a co-founder of the Non-Aligned Movement, Serbia will work hard to contribute to a more equitable global community, devoted to advancing the democratization of international relations, economic and social development, and human rights.

I close by saying that my country remains ready to further promote a nobler form of intergovernmental cooperation that truly addresses challenges, alleviates divisions, and reduces tensions. Such a vision can be built only on the firm foundation of the universal principles of sovereign equality, solidarity and international law within the framework of the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Serbia for the statement just made.

Mr. Boris Tadić, President of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, President of the United Republic of Tanzania.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kikwete: Allow me at the outset to convey my very warm regards and congratulations to you, Sir, on your well-deserved election to preside over the sixty-third session of this Assembly.

On behalf of the African Union, the United Republic of Tanzania and in my own name, I would like to assure you of our unqualified support and cooperation throughout your term of office. Allow me also to use this opportunity to thank and congratulate your predecessor, Ambassador Srgjan Kerim, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session, for his leadership and for a job very well done.

Our illustrious Secretary-General, His Excellency Ban Ki-moon, deserves special tribute from us for the excellent manner in which he is discharging the responsibilities of his high office. We appreciate the way in which he has answered the call of duty. My delegation and I reaffirm our support for his great work. His devotion to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) reversing the impact of climate change and his concern for Africa's development have won the hearts of many of us in the continent.

As I stand before this Assembly in my dual capacity as Chairman of the African Union and as President of my country, I bring with me a message of

hope and optimism from Africa. Africa is no longer the hopeless case as perceived by some. There are so many good things happening in the continent. There is increasing political stability, peace reigns in almost all nations but a few and the economies of many nations are blossoming.

Africa is now a continent in full embrace of democracy, good governance, rule of law and respect for human rights. There is stronger commitment to deal with vices in society, including the problems of corruption.

Most African countries have embraced democratic governance and regular, periodic elections are the norm. In the past two years, a good number of African countries have successfully held democratic elections. It is a matter of principle enshrined in the Constitutive Act of the African Union that leaders who come into office through undemocratic means are not allowed to participate in the activities of the African Union. It is this principle that guided the African Union in suspending Mauritania from the organs of the African Union until democratic dispensations are restored.

It is heart-warming, indeed, that Africans, through the African Union and their regional economic organizations, have been proactive and have taken the lead in monitoring elections and resolving conflicts where they have arisen. This was the case with Kenya and very recently with Zimbabwe. Indeed, Africa has come of age. The old principle of non-interference in internal affairs is surely being replaced by non-indifference to violations of democracy and abuse of human rights in Member States.

There are fewer conflicts in the continent today than was the case a few years ago. This is testimony to the fact that democracy and good governance are taking root and the African peace and security architecture is working. However, much more needs to be done to strengthen the African Union's capacity for early warning, conflict prevention and conflict resolution. There is also a need to do the same with the regional economic groupings to buttress their peacebuilding efforts.

I would like to recognize the United Nations, the European Union and States and other institutions in the world that have generously supported the strengthening of the infant African Union peace and security mechanism. I would like to call on all of them to

continue supporting the African Union mechanism as well as the regional mechanisms and peacekeeping operations in Africa.

There are only three conflict situations worth mentioning and discussing in this Assembly today. These concern the conflicts in Darfur and Somalia and the volatile security situation in the eastern part of Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In Darfur, the humanitarian crisis still persists although there may be some encouraging signs of improvement. I believe the situation would be much better if the entire contingent of the United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) forces was deployed, and the peace talks between the rebels and the Government of Sudan were resumed and concluded. Also, improvement would be seen if humanitarian aid work was allowed to be carried out unencumbered and matters related to justice were dealt with judiciously.

There is a need therefore for the United Nations, the African Union and the Government of the Sudan to continue to work together expeditiously to remove the obstacles impeding the deployment of UNAMID, to remove the obstacles impeding the dialogue between the Government of the Sudan and the rebels, impeding humanitarian operations and impeding the process of dispensation of justice in Darfur.

I was in Sudan two weeks ago and held very fruitful discussions with His Excellency President Omar Al-Bashir. I also met officials of the Joint UN-AU peacekeeping mission in Darfur. We discussed the situation in Darfur, the obstacles involved and came to some understanding on the way forward. I am hopeful that progress can be made. We need to seize the moment and the opportunities that are now unfolding.

It is the considered view of the African Union that the indictment of President Omar Al-Bashir at this particular point in time will complicate the deployment of UNAMID and the management of the humanitarian crisis in Darfur. It is for this reason that the African Union sees deferment as the most expedient measure now.

Let me make one thing clear: when we talk about deferment, we should not in any way be perceived as condoning injustice. Justice is a matter of essence. It must be done, it must be seen to be done. We are

simply concerned with the best possible sequencing of measures so that the most immediate matters of saving lives and easing the suffering of the people of Darfur are taken care of first. Getting the support and cooperation of the Government of the Sudan is a matter of essence in the fulfilment of all that we want to be seen done in Darfur.

The conflict in Somalia remains difficult to manage and resolve. The inter-party dialogue has not yet borne the desired results. The African Union peacekeeping efforts seem to be overstretched. We call upon the United Nations to step in and take over the peacekeeping responsibilities at the earliest possible time before the African Union mission is overwhelmed. Time is of the essence. Let me use this opportunity to commend the Governments of Ethiopia, Uganda and Burundi for their invaluable contribution to peacekeeping efforts in Somalia.

The volatile security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo is a matter of great concern. We are deeply saddened by the ongoing fighting between the government forces and rebel forces of General Laurent Nkunda. The continued presence of negative forces threatening the security of countries neighbouring the Democratic Republic of the Congo is another complicating factor.

The African Union is committed to be more proactive in the search for lasting peace in that troubled region. We will work with regional leaders and the United Nations in that regard.

On September 15 this year, a landmark breakthrough was achieved in the Zimbabwe political crisis when the three political parties to the conflict: The African National Union-Patriotic Front, the Movement for Democratic Change-Tsvangirai and the Movement for Democratic Change-Mutambara, signed the historic agreement for ending the conflict and forming an inclusive Government. The leaders of those three parties are now engaged in the process of implementing that agreement. Getting to this point in a conflict situation that seemed almost impossible to resolve is a major achievement indeed.

We need to congratulate President Robert Mugabe, Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai and Deputy Prime Minister Arthur Mutambara on their wisdom and statesmanship. We also need to acknowledge, recognize and commend, in a special manner, President Thabo Mbeki of the Republic of

South Africa for his sterling leadership. It was his patience, perseverance and understanding that made it all happen. His imminent departure from office, which comes suddenly, raises some concerns about what may happen if difficulties are experienced with the implementation of the agreement. I see no cause for alarm. The South African Government remains, and I am sure the new leadership will continue to be, seized of the matter.

Moreover, since the agreement is the product of the decision taken in July by the African Union at its summit in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, the African Union and the Southern Africa Development Community stand ready to assist if need should arise.

We in Africa thank you, Mr. President, for including the food and oil crises among the themes for this session of the General Assembly. The current global escalation of food and fuel prices has reached crisis proportions. Sub-Saharan Africa is the region affected the most. It is home to the majority of the least developed countries on this planet. Their food and oil bills have increased exponentially. Food import bills have increased by over 40 per cent over the past year, while oil prices have increased by over 100 per cent since 2005. Even the recent drop in oil prices has not helped much, because prices are still more than twice what they were in 2005.

The high food and oil prices threaten to erode the humble gains made in implementing the Millennium Development Goals and sustaining macroeconomic stability in Africa. The food and oil crisis, coupled with the worsening financial crisis throughout the world, gives us every reason to be very worried. The need for comprehensive action to reverse the situation cannot be overemphasized. We call upon the international community and key players in the global economy to act quickly. The United Nations should take the lead.

Yesterday, this Assembly held a high-level event on Africa's development needs. The meeting received a comprehensive report from the Secretary-General on "Africa's development needs: state of implementation of various commitments, challenges and the way forward" (A/63/130). We are glad to note that the report incorporated some of the recommendations of the Millennium Development Goals Africa Steering Group.

The report's findings underscore the fact that Africa cannot meet its development needs without the

support of the international community. Indeed, the international community has been responding favourably. A number of commitments to assisting Africa have been made over the years in different international forums. Unfortunately, the commitments made have not been met fully.

We appeal to the General Assembly to echo the call and impress upon Africa's development partners the need to honour their promise and deliver on their commitments. I also urge this family of United Nations Member States to fully support the political declaration adopted at the high-level meeting yesterday, as we re-dedicate ourselves to meeting the development needs of Africa.

We in Africa have been following with keen interest the ongoing process of the reform of the United Nations. We remain convinced of the ideal that a reform of the United Nations would be incomplete without a reform of the Security Council. On our part, we have authorized our permanent representatives in New York to embark on negotiations with all parties on the reforms of the Security Council. At this juncture, I should reiterate the position of the African Union of asking for two permanent seats with veto power and two non-permanent seats. Our demand should be seen against the backdrop of the reality that Africa is the only continent without a permanent seat in the Security Council, despite our large membership in the United Nations. That is an anomaly. It has to be corrected. The reform of the Security Council, therefore, should take that into account.

The reforms of the United Nations have, on the other hand, to enable the Organization to work better and be more efficient, effective and responsive to the challenges of our times. We are happy with the work of the General Assembly at its previous sessions on advancing the United Nations system-wide coherence agenda. The work has thus far advanced intergovernmental consultations on the United Nations delivering as one: one programme, one budget, one office and one leader.

Tanzania is one of the eight pilot countries on the United Nations "delivering as one" project. Our experience so far has shown that delivering as one is possible. It improves national ownership and strengthens national leadership in the development process. It permits the realignment of United Nations assistance with national priorities and streamlines

business transactions, thus enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of United Nations activities. I urge this Assembly to follow up on the implementation of this important reform, and I appeal to our development partners to provide the requisite resources.

At the sixtieth session of this Assembly, I reported on the work of the Helsinki Process on Globalisation and Democracy, a joint initiative launched in 2003 and co-chaired by Finland and Tanzania. The Helsinki Process, a forum to facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogue on the possibilities offered and challenges posed by the process of globalization, has come to an end. The main objective of that initiative was to mobilize political will in support of the Millennium Development Goals. The President of Finland, Ms. Tarja Halonen, and I would be glad, as co-chairs of the Process, to present the final report to the Secretary-General this week. We trust that the report will add impetus to global efforts to see political will prevail in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. A democracy deficit in international institutions is attendant.

Before I conclude, allow me to mention three things. First, I would remind this world body that the Western Sahara problem remains unresolved. Allow me to make a humble appeal to the Security Council to expedite the process so that the matter is concluded soon. It has been going on for too long. The people of the Western Sahara will then be given the opportunity to determine which way to go. They deserve to be afforded the opportunity to live a normal life in a nation that has been designated as theirs.

Secondly, we should remain seized of the Palestinian question until the two-State solution — the State of Israel and a State of Palestine living together side by side and in harmony — is attained.

Thirdly, there is a matter that we discussed at the most recent African Union summit. It is with regard to the issue of universal jurisdiction being practiced by some European nations. It has now become a matter of harassment for African leaders. We discussed the matter at length at the summit, and we intend to raise this issue with the United Nations for appropriate attention.

Once again, I would like to reiterate the support of the African Union and Tanzania of your efforts, Sir, in fulfilling our collective objectives during this sixty-third session of the General Assembly. Count on our support; rely on our support.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the United Republic of Tanzania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Didjob Divungi Di Ndinge, Vice-President of the Gabonese Republic

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Gabonese Republic.

Mr. Didjob Divungi Di Ndinge, Vice-President of the Gabonese Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Didjob Divungi Di Ndinge, Vice-President of the Gabonese Republic, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Divungi Di Ndinge (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, on behalf of His Excellency El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic and head of State, whom I have the honour to represent here, I should like to sincerely congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. You can be assured of our full and entire readiness to cooperate to ensure the success of your weighty mission. It is also my pleasure to pay a well-deserved tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Srgjan Kerim, for the talent and dedication that he showed in guiding our work throughout the sixty-second session. Finally, to His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, I express my encouragement as he carries out his lofty duties at the head of our Organization.

The food crisis that is currently raging is characterized by rising prices for foodstuffs. Its causes are both structural and immediate. Indeed, the predominance of biofuel crops over subsistence crops and the implementation of trade policies based on subsidies and export restrictions have a disastrous

impact on food security. The food riots of the second half of 2008, which have taken place throughout the world — particularly in Africa — in response to soaring food prices, reflect a major crisis and express the increased difficulties faced by hundreds of millions of people in feeding themselves.

One hardly need repeat the words said by Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali when, in November 1999, he addressed the thirtieth session of the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO): “Hunger is as unacceptable as war.” It is therefore urgent that we make a lasting response to the food crisis by taking collective action at the global level to halt it and ensure food security for our most vulnerable populations.

Here, I should like to commend the adoption, on 5 June 2008, of the Declaration of the High-level Conference on World Food Security by heads of State or Government meeting in Rome. Likewise, at the regional level, we welcome the conclusions of the regional meeting on the food crisis held on 29 July 2008 in Kinshasa under the auspices of the Economic Community of Central African States. At the continental level, we call for the effective implementation of the July 2003 Maputo Declaration, which sets out a framework for accelerating agricultural development and food security; the 2006 Abuja Declaration, which advocates a green revolution in Africa; and, more recently, the Sharm el-Sheikh Declaration on the challenges of the increase in food prices and agricultural development.

It is in that context that Gabon, like other countries of the South hit by this crisis, has taken urgent fiscal and budgetary measures supported by a six-month suspension of import duties and taxes on consumer products and a suspension of the value-added tax on such products, causing a substantial loss in terms of the State budget.

In addition, from a medium- and long-term perspective, Gabon is working together with international partners, in particular FAO and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), to implement its national poverty reduction strategy and its special food security programme. The latter incorporates aspects related to water management, intensifying vegetable production and diversifying and increasing agricultural production. We are prepared to go even further, because we must banish the spectre of

hunger and malnutrition once and for all. The achievement of Millennium Development Goal 1 depends on that.

Furthermore, the food crisis poses the problem of the role and place of agriculture in our economies. Rather than making us overly concerned, it should lead us to rethink that sector in order to increase its contribution to the development of our countries.

The challenge of feeding a planet with a growing population is closely linked to the environmental issue and to climate change. Environmental degradation is characterized by the degradation of natural resources, including the growing water shortage, the increase in arid lands, deforestation and the effects of global warming. All these elements prevent an increase in agricultural production that could contribute to a lasting solution to the food crisis. Thus, we must do our utmost to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

That is why my country welcomes the road map adopted during the negotiations held in Bali, as the outcome of the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The road map is an important step towards the formulation of a follow-up to the Kyoto Protocol, which is set to expire in 2012. Here I should like to commend the recent efforts made by the industrialized countries at the Group of Eight (G-8) summit held in Hokkaido, Japan, in July 2008, at which they once again reaffirmed their will to halve their greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

For its part, my country, Gabon, whose forests are one of the components of the important Congo Basin — the planet’s second ecological lung, after the Amazon — has acceded without reservation to the conventions related to the fight against climate change and the preservation of biodiversity. Indeed, we have decided to shoulder our share of the responsibility by devoting 11 per cent of our territory to humankind through, *inter alia*, the establishment of 13 national parks. Naturally, those efforts require others, in particular the admission of our forests into the carbon-trading mechanisms and the granting of compensatory measures to African countries by industrialized countries, which are the primary emitters of carbon dioxide.

Developing countries need the international community’s ongoing and substantial support to meet the new challenges that they face. It is thus urgent that

all development partners keep their promises, in particular by doubling official development assistance, introducing innovative development financing methods and cancelling debt, whose burden undermines our development efforts.

This appeal also has to do with the varying constraints that weigh on developing countries, particularly HIV/AIDS pandemic, malaria and other infectious diseases that impact their populations and their economies. In fact, with regard to HIV/AIDS, the efforts of African countries to provide universal access to prevention, care and treatment by 2010 do not appear to be sufficient to eradicate that modern-day scourge.

The interdependence of the threats confronting the international community highlights more than ever the need to provide a new impetus to the efforts to promote solidarity and international peace and security. In a number of regions around the world, tensions and deep crises maintain instability and insecurity, thereby inhibiting any chance for development.

Specifically with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we can never emphasize enough that only concerted and thorough efforts based on the principle of two States — Israel and Palestine — living in peace and security within secure and internationally recognized borders will make it possible to bring about a lasting, just and equitable solution to that conflict.

In Africa as well there are many hotspots of tension that continue to be concern. That is the case with respect to Somalia, where the instability that has prevailed for more than 15 years undermines any fledgling development. Still, we should commend the recent efforts to promote a political process that would be open to all in that country, in particular reaching the agreement signed on 9 June 2008 in Djibouti between the Federal Transition Government and the Alliance for the Reliberation of Somalia under the auspices of the United Nations, with the support of the African Union. One hopes that that event, which is a true opportunity towards a lasting settlement of that conflict, will lead to the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation that could help end the chaos that has prevailed in that country since 1990.

The overall security situation in Darfur also continues to be a source of great concern for the international community. One should, however, commend and encourage the tenacious efforts undertaken in the joint mediation of the African Union

and the United Nations in carrying out an inclusive process that would lead to a settlement to the conflict in Darfur, which has lasted for a number of years.

The situation between Chad and the Sudan has sparked genuine hope, due to the resumption of dialogue between those two States within the framework of the various agreements that they have signed, particularly the Dakar Agreement of 13 March 2008.

With respect to Central African Republic, we can only commend the meaningful progress made within the framework of the preparations for an inclusive political dialogue since the first meeting of the follow-up committee on peace talks. We encourage the United Nations and international partners to commit further in rebuilding that fraternal country.

Lastly, with respect to Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon welcomes the progress made in the implementation of the Ouagadougou Agreement and its additional agreements. We appeal to the various partners of that fraternal country to support those efforts.

The myriad challenges we have just addressed can be dealt with only through collective actions at the global level. That is why the heads of State and Government recognized in the Millennium Declaration and reaffirmed in the Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit the need to strengthen the United Nations in order to make it a tool that would allow them to better achieve their priority goals. That is why my country welcomes the fact that since the 2005 World Summit, most of the major recommendations in the Outcome Document have been implemented in the framework of the process of reform of the United Nations. The establishment of two major bodies — the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council, which have been operational since June 2006 — is a perfect demonstration of this.

Bolstered by the major progress made, we need to continue our efforts over the coming sessions to complete the reform process. For example, we need to complete the revitalization of the General Assembly, the Organization's most representative deliberative body. Similarly, consistency in the actions of the United Nations bodies should be reinforced. From that standpoint, I wish to commend the Delivering as One initiative, which has had encouraging results in the pilot countries.

Regarding reform in the Security Council, we need to commend the tireless efforts of the different Presidents of the General Assembly, which have made it possible to complete the process of consultations that should lead to the beginning of intergovernmental negotiations by 31 January 2009, at the latest. The building of a more just and secure world that would meet the deep aspirations of our peoples depends on that.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Gabonese Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Didjob Divungi Di Ndinge, Vice-President of the Gabonese Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.