



STATEMENT BY

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IN THE GENERAL DEBATE
OF THE SIXTIETH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 21, 2005

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Mr. President, Mr. Secretary General, distinguished delegates

Following closely as it does, on the heels of the High Level Plenary Meeting last week, this Sixtieth Session of the General Assembly is challenged to take steps toward the early implementation of the agreed outcomes.

In the eyes of many, the Summit Document is less than satisfactory in terms of both its scope and substance. Nonetheless, it represents an agreed platform on which we can build further to reach higher levels of international cooperation.

Mr. President, to you falls the task of spearheading this enterprise. Your outstanding diplomatic experience assures us all that you will succeed in the mandate given to you. If I am to give you any advice on how you should now proceed, I would simply echo that of Dag Hammarskjold, your compatriot and former Secretary General when he said:

"Never measure the height of a mountain, until you have reached the top.
Then you will see how low it was."

We owe a debt of gratitude to the outgoing President His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping of Gabon, for his effective stewardship of the work of this Assembly during the fifty-ninth session. To the Secretary General I wish to express our appreciation for the efforts to equip our Organisation for the challenges of today.

I would also like to offer our appreciation and thanks to our host country, the United States, and to renew our assurances of sympathy in the severe loss suffered in the wake of hurricane Katrina.

Mr. President, as was stated earlier by H.E. Bharrat Jagdeo President of Guyana, the international development goals, especially the Millennium Development Goals, which were set at the Millennium Summit five years ago and which we have just reviewed, remain an important benchmark for global development. Aimed at securing the important prerequisites for our economic and social advancement such as health and education and other basic human services, they must be fully embraced and pursued by the international community.

My own country has been diligent in working towards these objectives. Through a visionary poverty reduction strategy and the allocation of more resources to the social sector, we have been able to improve the lot of the disadvantaged sectors of our population and enlarge their opportunities for self-fulfillment.

Unfortunately, further progress is now jeopardized, by a number of untoward developments. Among these has been the recent revision of Europe's Agriculture policy and more particularly the Commission's proposal to drastically reduce the price for the sugar exports of the African, Caribbean and Pacific states. This proposal, if implemented, will seriously affect our own sugar industry and plunge many of our people who depend on it into extreme poverty.

Our economy stands to lose some forty million dollars per annum, a sum that nullifies the eight million dollars which we will have received from the recent G-8 decisions on debt relief. The result is an example of the skewed and often incoherent policies pursued by some developed countries. Without consultation or warning, they adopt measures that wreak enormous havoc on the economies of the developing countries, particularly the small and vulnerable.

The only hope on the horizon lies in the promise held out by several recent initiatives such as the Millennium Challenge Account of the United States, the International Financing Facility of the United Kingdom, the Initiative against Hunger and Poverty led by Brazil and other states and more latterly, a levy on air travel suggested by France for the financing of development. As the review of the Millennium Development Goals has revealed, an additional fifty billion dollars will be needed annually to reach the targets set. New and additional resources are clearly required if we are to make any impact on global poverty.

While we would prefer to rely on trade instead of aid for our development, the prospects for improving our position are bleak. The road from Cancun to Hong Kong has been tedious, strewn with many obstacles and now highly uncertain. As in New York, the developed countries seem content with making broad declarations rather than specific commitments. The calls by small economies for special and differential treatment have thus far been only grudgingly acknowledged. Yet, without full regard to paragraph 35 of the Doha Declaration, countries like mine are likely to be further marginalized from the global economy.

Mr. President, economic and social progress will come to the developing world only when it is allowed to have a say in the decision-making on development issues. The chapter in the UN Human Development Report on our interdependent world quotes an African proverb which states that "Until the lions have their historians, tales of hunting will always glorify the hunter." It is time that the developing world which has long been considered only an object in the development process, be given a more participatory role. Only then will we be able to properly address the outcome of our policies.

Many of the prescriptions for poverty eradication have been based on the time worn theory of development which posits that the economic prosperity of the developed world will eventually raise the standard of living for all states. Any serious analysis of this development paradigm as it has functioned over the past several decades, will amply demonstrate that this is a flawed concept. The gap between the rich and the poor continues to widen - a reality to which the 2005 United Nations Human Development Report testifies.

There has to be, Mr. President, a serious global rethink of what constitutes real and sustainable development. We cannot avoid the conclusion that while the realization of the Millennium Development Goals provides the necessary foundation for development, true economic and social progress cannot be achieved in the absence of a more comprehensive policy framework that encompasses significant assistance and investment flows, wider debt relief, more equitable trade and economic cooperation as well as the transfer of science and technology for developing purposes. This realisation has led my Government to advocate at the

United Nations the promotion of a New Global Human Order, a more comprehensive and holistic development strategy based on equity and social justice.

With regard to the second major area of concern treated in the Secretary General's Report, in Larger Freedom viz. the issues of democracy, human rights and security, let me say that Guyana, as a newly restored democracy, fully supports the promotion of all fundamental human freedoms and values. After all these constitute the bedrock of the United Nations Charter and the basic rights of our peoples. We therefore welcome the initiative to establish a Democracy Fund, to propagate the democratic ideal and the creation of a Human Rights Council to replace the current Commission on Human Rights.

The elevation of the latter body can do much to enhance respect for Human Rights. We would be concerned however, about the representativity of the proposed Council and would be seriously distressed if it were to emerge as an elite directorate sitting in judgement of other states deemed to be less than equal. The "holier than thou" attitude of some countries on matters relating to democracy and human rights is not acceptable in an organization founded on the principles of the equality of members and mutual respect. It would be imperative therefore for the General Assembly, in its further consideration of this proposal, to carefully examine such issues as criteria for membership, size and voting procedures to ensure that the principles of the Charter are not vitiated.

There is finally, Mr. President, the third leg of the Report's thematic tripod viz. security. As is now almost universally acknowledged, security is a sine qua non for the protection of democracy and human rights as well as for the promotion of development. It is thus essential, in the face of the vast array of threats to international peace and security, that we mount the necessary defences against the spread of terrorism, transboundary crime, arms and drug-trafficking, disease and the increasing incidence of natural disasters. Unfortunately, however, the cost now takes a very heavy toll on our limited human and financial resources.

To illustrate the challenge faced, let me cite the case of my own country which, after suffering a disastrous flood earlier this year that claimed, according to an ECLAC assessment, almost sixty per cent of our GDP, now faces spiraling oil prices amounting to twenty-four per cent of GDP and a heavy revenue loss on our sugar export earnings. How can one meaningfully speak in these circumstances of achieving the Millennium Development Goals? Small countries like ours must find solutions to these pressing problems or else run the risk of being thrust further back into underdevelopment.

Mr. President, for several decades now, we have been seeking to reform the United Nations system to make it more responsive to the challenges of our times. To some extent we have succeeded in our effort but clearly, much more remains to be done.

We urge you therefore Mr. President, to pursue the revitalisation of the General Assembly, the most democratic and representative of the organs of the United Nations, to enable it to advance the high principles and purposes of its Charter. The potential of the Assembly's role in fighting the scourge of war and promoting development is yet to be fully explored. At the same time, it is necessary to bring development issues, which are now largely

in the purview of the multilateral financial institutions, more fully within the ambit of the United Nations, more particularly the ECOSOC where developing countries can have a greater voice on matters affecting their welfare.

Of some urgency is the reform of the Security Council, the organ responsible for the maintenance of global peace and security. It is high time that the Council be made more equitable in its composition, more democratic in its decision-making and more effective in its operation. The deliberations of the relevant Working Group have generated wide-spread agreement on the need for expansion of the membership. The various permutations have been done and all options are on the table. We are now offered an historic opportunity to reform the Council - an opportunity which, if not taken at the flood, may not soon come our way again. My delegation therefore urges this Assembly to expedite and conclude its work in this area.

The latest proposal for an advisory Peace-Building Commission is a welcome one since there is a clear continuum between conflict and development. Much too often the gains made in conflict resolution are rapidly negated by the lack of accompanying measures to preserve stability and encourage development. Such a Commission, if properly conceived and constituted, can usefully complement and optimize the work of the principal organs of the United Nations.

In the end, however, Mr. President, if we are to achieve a stronger, more democratic and effective United Nations, we must go beyond the reform of its organs and agencies to a reform of the attitudes and behaviour of states, which, while, giving lip service to such concepts as partnership, cohesion and interdependence, fail to practice these virtues in their relations with others. There is always a vast divide between declarations and deeds. Yet, the implementation of the common agenda that we have set ourselves at this sixtieth session, is not possible without a greater commitment to change.

As the 2005 Human Development Report states. "It cannot be business as usual." The Millennium Declaration must be more than a paper promise. We need to "mobilize the investment resources and develop the plans needed to build the defences that can stop the Tsunami of world poverty." This is the challenge issued to this sixtieth session of the General Assembly and the yardstick by which its success will be judged. For the sake of the billions who continue to live in fear and want, we must therefore seek to achieve that "larger freedom" which is the birthright of all humanity.

I thank you.