



Permanent Mission of Costa Rica to the United Nations

General Debate

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STATEMENT BY

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(Please, check against delivery)

Mr. President, Chiefs of State and Government, Delegates and guests:

I convey to you a warm salute, which I extend from this universal podium to the whole of humanity.

I salute, especially, my Costa Rican fellow citizens. For their free will and sovereign decision, I have the great honor to represent them before you all.

I start my words with renewed support to the United Nations; to its contributions to human rights, peace, security, sustainable development, tolerance, solidarity, respect for diversity and to International Law.

This is, without any doubt, an organization of States; but, furthermore, it is an organization of people, which from their particularities embrace themselves under the humanistic and universal values which sustain the United Nations.

At this moment, all over the world, those values and the commitments they imply flourish, but also suffer.

We can congratulate ourselves for the children who are receiving a good education and for the parents who see them grow up without fear that they will sink in war. The youngsters, the workers and peasants with opportunities for a worthy life inspire us, as well as the women who enjoy full exercise of equality. In this regard, we congratulate ourselves for the appointment of Michelle Bachelet, former president of Chile, as director of UN Women.

But it anguishes us the mothers in charge of their homes that barely can feed their children. It worries us the elderly adults who age with deprivations and in loneliness; the children who live in an emptiness of affections and stimulations; the farmers who lose their harvests due to the lack of markets, credit or good laws.

And it offends us that, even nowadays, there are women waiting to be stoned, populations drowned in the barbarism of genocide, and nuclear weapons that are being accumulated while the barns are being depleted.

Mr. President:

When we comment on the United Nations and global governance, as you have suggested, we must remember that good global governance starts with good national government. But, at the same time, the success of our local administration depends upon a fair international system, efficient, open and responsible, and also capable to undertake the great challenges of our time.

As a President submitted to the constant scrutiny of my people, from whom I come from and to whom I owe myself, I am aware that the best preaching arises from the example

Because of this, my Government makes its utmost to represent the values, promote the development and increase the integral welfare of all Costa Ricans. We are convinced that success on this task depends upon respect to individual freedoms and to social rights, as well as solidarity, juridical security, transparency, accountability and free and permanent public debate, essence of Democracy.

We promote economic growth and free trade, environmental responsibility and political transparency in a frame of public liberties. Such is a course of action rooted in our history. It took us to introduce free and obligatory primary education in 1870, banish the death penalty in 1877, abolish the Army in 1949, preserve 25% of our territory in the sixties, and universalize the access to health in the mid seventies.

My Government stands upon that legacy in order to act in the present and to construct the future. We work for the attention and early stimulation of our children and the care of elderly adults. We fight against inequality, and strive to provide quality education and health, and foster an economic development increasingly based upon clean energy, sustainable economy and creative intelligences.

I refer to all these as a national humble experience, not as a pretentious global lesson.

Mr. President:

History, geography and circumstances frequently determine us. But only to a certain point. Because individual and collective will, responsibility and constructive leadership can be able to break the obstacles and trace better paths.

Because of this, we must draw the curtains of prejudice which darken reality; change the echoes from the past for the sounds of the future, and bury recriminations towards others as an excuse to avoid our duties.

Beyond national responsibilities, good global governance implies for us, leaders from around the world, to join in assuming our responsibilities towards the people of the United Nations.

The starting point must be respect towards International Law and multilateral organizations. For an unarmed and pacific country as Costa Rica, those are the main instruments for our security; the indispensable requirement to live in peace and to foster development.

Mr. President:

Last Tuesday we celebrated, with profound personal and national conviction the International Day of Peace, in whose birth our Country played a key role. It stimulates

us to know that, by initiative of the General Secretary, Ban Ki-moon, its thematic axis has been '*Youngster for Peace and Development*'.

The trilogy of youth as incentive, peace as a framework, and development as a goal, is critical to build a better world. But that trilogy would be truncated without freedom as opportunity, human dignity as an unavoidable compromise and tolerance as a habit of coexistence.

For the leaders of countries committed to those fundamental impulses, the main question is how to advance them in the world of today.

I propose to empower furthermore the concepts, organisms and instruments for the promotion and protection of human rights. Here lies our interest to participate constructively, as members, in the activities of the Human Rights Council. Here also lies our adherence to the main Covenants and Protocols on the matter, our insistence on the responsibility to protect civilians and our commitment to human security.

Costa Rica, besides hosting the conference which approved the American Convention of Human Rights in 1969, was the first Country to ratify it, and the one that houses the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

I am convinced that respect of human rights lies, to a great measure, upon international justice. Its most recent and innovative dimension, arisen from the Treaty of Rome, is the International Criminal Court, to which we reiterate our support after a decade of contributions. To actively use the weapons of the law is another unavoidable responsibility of global governance.

In matters of peace and security, Costa Rica adheres to the five points on arms control that are being promoted by the General Secretary. In particular, we insist on the necessity to start the negotiations for an Arms Transference Treaty, while at the same time we advance towards the Model Convention for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and we complete the ratification process for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

The accumulation and transference of weapons, in special nuclear, chemical and bacteriological ones, not only constitutes a threat to peace and survival. It is also an aggression to development. Each soldier who enrolls, each missile that is activated and each isotope enriched with military purposes, imply less schools and hospitals, less food programs, less roads, less wireless networks, less seeds for the farmers or less good judges to administer justice.

But peace must go beyond action; it should also lodge in the mind and imagination of human beings. To educate for peace is to vaccinate against war. Thirty years ago, our country promoted, and the United Nations supported, a pioneer and visionary institution in the matter: the University for Peace. Its contribution reaches all bounds of the world,

and our compromise with it increases every day. For this reason we proudly celebrate its anniversary.

Mr. President:

It is paradoxical that, while many countries waste resources in weapons, the international community has not been capable of confronting in an effective manner the lashes of drug traffic, organized crime, terrorism, traffic of weapons, and the aberrant exploitation and trafficking of human beings.

My country and Central America suffer with increasing rigor the aggression of drug cartels. If we don't react, we are at risk of being virtually taken by their gangs, with consequences that will transcend local spaces and will turn into a clear challenge to international security.

My government has made of citizens' security one its major goals; our people demand it and we are not going to fail them. We are fighting crime it with energy and determination; also, with full respect for human rights, intelligent policies and the rule of law.

But the great battle against transnational crime, however, demands much more from us all. Narco-activity puts today at risks the improvements in development achieved by Central American Countries. From being just a transit point, due to our geographical location between the great drug producers of the south and the great consumers of the north, ours have been becoming, with different degrees, countries that produce, traffic and consume drugs. We are not free today of any of the manifestations of drug trade, which has extended its tentacles to many areas of our social life. Youngsters, in their schools and neighborhoods, see their future menaced by the easy offer of drugs; our health systems are overwhelmed by the problem of addiction; the integrity of our institutions is menaced by corruption and aggression, and violence reaches never-seen levels.

The battle against drug trade could only be won with coordination, global cooperation, and a major revision of the strategies pursued up to now, many of them failed ones.

From this podium I call to the highest drug-consuming countries, so that they undertake more effective actions against such mayor problem, and cooperate with the countries suffering from a malaise we have not created. I make and urgent call to world-wide solidarity in this chore, and for multilateral organizations to develop an agenda more integral in its strategies, more balanced on its resources and responsibilities, and better supervised through its development. If no new efforts germinate in a vigorous manner, we will repent very soon of the inaction.

Mr. President:

If Costa Rica, a country of middle income, has achieved indexes of human development comparable to countries of high income, it is because, among other things, our social investment has replaced military expenses. For this reason why we insist that international aid should not ignore its ethical dimension. We support that such aid is destined with preference to countries in most precarious situations. But it should not forget countries that, thanks to good investments and right policies, have improved our conditions of life. We should benefit with the innovative schemes of technical cooperation, productive financing and public-private alliances. Particularly, we need to complete with success the round of Doha on international trade, an essential engine for economic growth.

We must also establish peace with the environment and development. It is an unavoidable task to organize the economy in a sustainable manner, in order to produce material and social welfare.

Global Warming is growing. Contamination of hydrographic basins advances. Toxic residuals and wastes of consumerism are drowning even countries and regions that did not generate them.

The conclusion is clear: either we act together, and soon, or with the same velocity we will regret the consequences.

Today we are expectants for the upcoming climate change summit in Cancun. We hope that all countries, but in particular the big polluters and generators of carbon emissions, will assume their responsibilities towards humanity. In Costa Rica we have assumed ours, when we compromised ourselves to the goal of being one of the first carbon-neutral countries in the world. We are also moving forward in the application and development of clean energies, and the protection of our hydrographic basins and biodiversity.

Let us not forget, nevertheless, that sustainability, above all, must be human. Therefore, the importance of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Their fulfillment, in five years, is an unavoidable task for the United Nations and, in particular, for each member country.

Mr. President:

It is obvious that the challenges of global governance are many: also, exhausting. But the possibilities to confront them exist. We, as global leaders, should act upon them.

As part of our collective responsibilities, the United Nations should adapt its own governance to a world in an accelerated change. If it does not respond to its new

realities, and if member States do not commit ourselves to the task, the Organization runs the risk of sinking into irrelevance. The adaptation of the UN to the challenges of global governance demands more effectiveness, efficiency and transparency in its administration, its decision processes and field operations. In this universal organization we must also preach with the example. This is why Costa Rica has made its utmost to collaborate in an active and constructive way in the process for reforming and upgrading the Organization.

As countries we still need the help of the world; but the world also needs the help of all the countries. It is the only way to advance in favor of our people.

Costa Rica offers, with modesty, its contribution, its effort and its voice.

Thank you all, very much