



Guatemala

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GENERAL DEBATE OF THE SIXTY-FIFTH SESSION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

STATEMENT BY

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PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE REPUBLIC OF GUATEMALA TO
THE UNITED NATIONS

New York, September 28, 2010

STATEMENT OF THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF GUATEMALA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS DURING THE GENERAL DEBATE OF
THE 65TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
(New York, 28 September, 2010)

Mister President,

Mister Secretary General,

Esteemed colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I

Our President, Alvaro Colom Caballeros, participated in the high level plenary on the millennium development goals, but had to return to Guatemala due to commitments related to his high office, among which stand out the emergency as a result of a sequence of natural disasters which have affected us during the past three months. The same occurred with our Foreign Minister, who due to unforeseen circumstances had to leave New York yesterday. It is for this reason that I have the high honor of reading this message which was prepared to be presented today by the Minister.

Before proceeding, I would like to express our profound gratitude to Doctor Ali Abdussalam Treki for his outstanding performance in heading the 64th session of the General Assembly. At the same time, we wish much success to our brand new President for the present session. We have no doubt that with his vast experience he will be able to lead our work to enhance the work of the General Assembly as the main policy-making organ of the United Nations.

II

Mister President,

We have just concluded our assessment of the compliance of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals adopted ten years ago, in an international environment that was perhaps more encouraging than the one we presently experience. As has been highlighted in past days, the results reflect lights and shadows, with some countries showing impressive gains, while others even suffered regression, and the majority experienced progress in some areas and not so in others, or advances whose benefits were distributed unequally between different segments of the population.

In addition, the international environment today is much less encouraging than ten years ago. The last decade started with the attack on the Twin Towers in this very same city, placing counter-terrorism squarely on the priority agenda; it continued with a military confrontation that

was not sanctioned by the Security Council, with all its subsequent consequences, and concluded with three simultaneous crisis – food, energy and especially financial and economic – whose effects we still have not recovered from.

Further, after building up a cumulative body of scientific evidence that no longer allows room for doubt, we confirmed that the same effects of technical progress have brought with them devastating consequences on our common habitat – the planet – and that the destruction wrought by climate change are palpable and dramatic. On another matter, in the present decade we have witnessed with great clarity that organized crime does not recognize borders, and that it tends to propagate itself to those countries with the least capacity to confront its considerable assets.

My own country has been a victim of some of these phenomena, which nullify or at least mitigate the considerable efforts dispensed, especially since the Administration of President Colom took over in early 2008, to promote our development, achieve higher levels of welfare for the postponed sectors of our population, and consolidate our democratic institutions. Here, again, we experience lights and shadows, since in spite of an unfavorable international environment, and as President Colom pointed out in this same chamber last Monday, we have achieved progress in addressing some of the most pressing problems faced by the most vulnerable population of our country. But the shadows are present, and they find their origin in three phenomena that are totally or partially out of our control. I highlight three.

First, the financial and economic crisis had a strong adverse impact on our economic performance. National income grew less than 1% in 2009 under the downfall of our exports, the contraction of family remittances, and the collapse of direct foreign investment. This impacted in a very negative manner on our collection of tax receipts, in spite of the multiple initiatives of the Government to elevate the tax ratio to deal with the increasing demand for social services and public security. Although a modest recovery is perceived this year, its intensity will depend to a high degree on the uncertain evolution of the international economy. In summary, the international economic environment has not been very propitious to meet our goals of economic growth, in spite of the official cooperation received, which we sincerely appreciate.

Second, in the last decade a collection of illicit activities, related to organized crime, has taken root in our country. The trafficking of persons, arms and drugs as well as money laundering have expanded in a manner that is quite worrisome, under the double banner born from organized crime's capacity to co-opt, combined with its capacity to intimidate. Especially the trafficking of drugs has weakened our democratic institutions. In response, we have associated ourselves with the United Nations and other friendly countries, both through bilateral as well as multilateral cooperation, whose most visible expression is the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), to which I will allude further on. In addition, in recognition that the struggle against delinquency and organized crime – a basic responsibility of any State – today has clear transnational characteristics, we have joined our neighbors of Central America and Mexico in combating regional criminal networks. In this

regard, mention should be made of the decisions adopted during the Inter-sectorial Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Relations, Public Security, Defense, Attorney-Generals and Chiefs of Police of the countries belonging to the Central American Integration System, held in Antigua, Guatemala, just a few days ago.

Third, as if the above were not enough, we have been victims of acts of nature with an unusual frequency, which suggest the extreme vulnerability of Guatemala to the effects of climate change, given its location in a tropical isthmus. We had not even begun to recover from the effects of tropical storm Stan from end of 2005, when we were affected by a grave drought in 2009, and, in the last few months, first, the eruption of the Pacaya Volcano, which caused extended damage to agricultural production, followed by tropical storm Agatha in June, which affected 330,000 persons (including around 100 dead) and caused material damages whose estimated costs reach almost a billion dollars. These estimates in human suffering and material losses continue growing with the unprecedented levels of rainfall experienced during the past month, which keep adding-up victims and damages.

The Government has acted with all the resources within its means to address the situation, and has also appealed to international cooperation. I would like to note that the United Nations was among the first to respond to our call, and for this reason express our appreciation to the Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs and the Administrator of UNDP. Up to now, we have focused on the emergency phase, but it is imperative to address as soon as possible the reconstruction and transformation phases. The Government has prepared a detailed Plan to take on this task, and we have convened a International Conference of Donors, to be held in Antigua, Guatemala, on October 11 and 12 to introduce the plan. We hope that many of the countries present in this General Assembly will join us in that gathering at the highest level of representation possible.

III

Mister President,

I move on now to some brief words on our Organization and its agenda for the immediate future. I begin reiterating our support for multilateralism in general and the United Nations in particular. We have found a strong and permanent backing on the part of the Organization, be it to go along with the peace process; provide development cooperation and assistance when facing emergencies, as is happening at this time. The last example of a fruitful and innovative cooperation is reflected in the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala. In a period of three years, the Commission demonstrated that it is indeed possible to combat impunity and strengthen the Rule of Law. We value this cooperative effort between the Government of Guatemala and the United Nations, and will continue to support it.

We also value the work of our Organization in the sphere of maintenance of the peace. We have participated in several operations, especially in Haiti and the Democratic Republic of

Congo. We support the work of the United Nations in the area of peace-building, and hope to participate as of next January in the Peace Building Commission as a full-fledged member. We applaud the decision of the General Assembly for having established the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women, and we are pleased that its first Head will be Dr. Michelle Bachelet. We also commit ourselves to continue supporting initiatives to introduce greater coherence to the work of the System.

At the same time, we harbor the hope that during this year some tangible progress will be achieved in the long-delayed reform of the Security Council. We believe that it is crucial to provide greater legitimacy to this forum, which would benefit all the main organs and the Organization in its entirety. In the meantime, we have announced our candidature to occupy one of the spaces that correspond to our region in the Security Council for the biennium 2012-2013, in the hope of contributing to its work.

We reiterate our profound commitment to achieve significant progress during the next Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Cancun. We have participated actively in the preparatory work, under the understanding that rarely has humanity faced a larger challenge and which affects all countries and all communities on the planet. What is at stake is no less than the future of humanity. It is indispensable that in Cancun a cluster of decisions be adopted, including the definition of the architecture of a climate change agreement based on the core topics identified in Bali; the adoption of a road map for the negotiations to achieve the goal of emission reductions in the long run; and defining the structure of the financial mechanism of the Convention.

In rejoining the Human Rights Council, we reiterate our commitment to the full respect of human rights in all their expressions, including the responsibility to protect our respective populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. We also assign a high importance to other transnational topics which affect us very directly, which would be the case of international migrations and the situation of indigenous peoples.

IV

Mister President,

It is commonly held that without peace there will be no development. We have witnessed that in several parts of the planet promising signs have appeared, that, we hope, can lead to resolving long-brewing tensions. We trust that the direct negotiations recently begun in the Middle East will be fruitful and lead to a Palestinian State that can live next to Israel in peace and harmony, behind secure borders for both parties. We also applaud the engagement and growing climate of cooperation being generated between the parties separated by the Taiwan Straits. We hope that this climate of cooperation can be extended to the participation of Taiwan in some activities of the United Nations, particularly in the negotiations of the United Nations Framework Convention of Climate Change and in the International Organization of Civil Aviation.

Finally, I am pleased to announce that we have achieved a major step forward to turn to the International Court of Justice, together with Belize, to seek a juridical solution to the age-old territorial dispute between us. This step consists of the approval on the part of our Congress of the Special Agreement signed with Belize in December of 2008, and which clears the path towards a popular referendum as contemplated in said Agreement. We hope that the Belizean Parliament will also authorize as soon as possible the referendum to be held simultaneously in both countries as the final step that allows both parties to present themselves to the Court.

Thank you, Mister President