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Mr President, it is a great honour to make my first speech to this distinguished Assembly.

The UN has a duty to lead the world in addressing the shared threats and opportunities that dominate our age. And it must do so in deed as well as word: that is why I want to use this platform to express my admiration and support for UN missions around the world, from Lebanon to Liberia, from Congo and Haiti to East Timor, which are saving lives and spreading hope.

Since 1946, when the first meeting of the UN General Assembly took place in London, the United Kingdom has been determined to fulfil its international responsibilities through the UN. The new Government in the UK under the leadership of Gordon Brown is proud to continue that tradition, and I reaffirm our commitment today. The focus at this Assembly has been on the immediate and pressing issues.

In the Middle East, we need urgent action towards a two-state solution that addresses the security of Israelis and the rights of Palestinians at the same time.

In Iraq, recent security gains can only be sustained through continued support for the development of the Iraqi security forces, through national reconciliation and political support from the whole region.

Our international community depends on responsibilities as well as rights. If Iran wants to be a leading and respected country, it must cease its support for terrorist groups in Iraq and Afghanistan, and end its defiance of three UN Security Council resolutions in respect of its nuclear programme.

In Zimbabwe, we need UN action to support African leadership to reverse the vicious cycle of economic and social devastation that now afflicts the country.

We have all seen the extraordinary scenes in Burma. I call on the regime to allow peaceful protest, encourage national dialogue and promote genuine reconciliation. Let us send a message to the monks

on the streets of Burma: we support your demand for a democratic Burma. And let us take a message from the monks on the streets of Burma: the human desire for freedom knows no bounds of race or religion or region. It is good that the Burmese government have allowed Gambari into the country, but it is vital that they now use this to start the process of reconciliation.

But as well as addressing the traumas of our fellow citizens around the world, the UN must be the place where we address the longer term threats.

Today I devote my speech to one of the great threats to stability and prosperity in the world: the threat of global inequality. I do so because inequalities are not just morally offensive; they are also dangerous. Inequality fuels extremism. It undermines support for an open global economy. It corrodes trust and reciprocity between nations.

The UN Charter talks of the “sovereign equality of states”, and the “equal rights and dignity of men and women and of nations large and small”. The principle of equality is nowhere more evident than in this Assembly where all states have an equal voice. But in the world outside this hall, economic, social and political inequalities within and between states persist and worsen. We cannot stand united against the shared threats and opportunities in our world, when we are so divided by economic and political disparities.

So the need for governments and international institutions to reduce inequalities, and promote our common humanity, is stark.

We focus on the divide between developed and developing nations. However, the growth rates in many developing countries are faster than in developed economies. That’s the good news.

But there are around a billion people in the world, living in 58 countries, left out of the story of human progress. This “bottom billion” have an average life expectancy of 50 years. 14 per cent of children in the bottom billion die before their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday and over a third suffer malnutrition. The countries that are the home to the bottom billion have seen their national income fall each year during the 1980s and 90s.

Even where inequalities are narrowing between nations, they are widening within them. According to the UNDP, in 73 countries – containing 80 per cent of the world’s population – economic inequality has risen in recent years.

Every nation represented here has responsibilities to its own people. The drive to tackle poverty needs open markets. It needs the empowerment of citizens through democratic and transparent institutions, free from corruption. It needs strong and effective education and health services available to all.

But national action is not enough. Because the causes of inequality cross national boundaries, we need cooperation between nations, bilateral and multilateral, led by the UN.

Three quarters of countries where the bottom billion citizens live have recent or current experience of civil war. Conflict is the trap door to extreme poverty.

Look at Darfur, over 200,000 people are dead, 2 million are displaced and 4 million are on food aid. We have decided a course of action in resolution 1769. Now we need to get on with it - agreement on force composition, swift deployment, effective protection of civilians on the ground and a political process, in which the legitimate grievance of the Darfur people, is addressed through negotiation.

In Afghanistan, one of the five poorest countries in the world, we need to back up military efforts to secure safe space with economic, social and political reconstruction.

Beyond these crises, we need also to improve our capacity to *prevent* the emergence of conflict. That is our vision of the Responsibility to Protect. A critical dimension is controlling the spread of weapons whose easy availability makes it so simple to set up militias, and provoke violence and mayhem. Last year this Assembly voted overwhelmingly to take forward UN work towards an Arms Trade Treaty. The UK Government will continue to press for this goal.

Freedom from conflict is the platform. The battle against debt, disease and illiteracy is the next stage.

Despite progress in some countries, the world is off track to meet its Millennium Development Goals. That is why in July, here at the UN, the UK Prime Minister launched a Call For Action: to honour our own commitments, and go further, to build a truly global partnership – with the private sector, trade unions, faith groups, civil society and cities – which can deliver the 2015 MDG targets. That requires the developed world to meet its commitment to spend 0.7 per cent of its national income on development. The UK will meet this commitment by 2013. But it requires shared responsibility. Poor governance and corruption are the enemy of development.

Progress on aid needs to be combined with a new global trade deal which opens up economies on a fair basis.

Western producers continue to benefit from subsidies and tariffs, particularly for agriculture. Higher tariffs for processed goods prevents poor countries diversifying their economies. This is a bad deal for western consumers, and it squeezes out the livelihoods of producers in poorer countries. It is neither in rich countries financial self-interest, nor is it fair.

The UK government believes conclusion of the Doha trade round this year is both necessary and achievable.

Finally, we must address the greatest long term threat to our aspirations to tackle inequality.

Climate change affects all countries. But the poorest countries, and the poorest people within those countries, will suffer the most disruption and devastation. I congratulate, you, Mr President, on choosing climate change as the theme of this general debate. And I congratulate the Secretary-General for his leadership on this issue. But we need more than debate.

The UNFCCC is the only body that can conclude a global agreement on climate change. In the next two months, we therefore need urgent agreement on the steps towards progress at Bali. Beyond that, we need a roadmap to COP 15 in Copenhagen and the agreement of a global deal that succeeds the end of the first commitment period of the Kyoto protocol.

At the heart of an agreement must be the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities – all countries must take on responsibilities, but these must be equitably distributed, with the greatest action taken by the richest countries. The UK stands ready to play its part. The Climate Change Bill to be enacted in the next session of Parliament will place into UK law our commitment to cut carbon emissions by at least 60 per cent by 2050 on 1990 levels. But we need similar binding commitments across all rich nations.

The challenges are immense. Crisis resolution and conflict prevention. The Millennium Development Goals. A new trade deal. Climate change. They call on all our resources. Military intervention is never the whole solution, but sometimes the solution cannot be found without armed force. Development budgets are necessary, but the developing world needs a growth plan not just an aid plan. Diplomacy needs to bridge differences between nations, but also reach out to business and civil society.

The United Kingdom is proud not just of its bilateral relations with the countries in this Assembly but also our commitment to multilateral institutions that can be a force for good in the world.

But international institutions need to reflect the world as it is not as it was. The UK therefore welcomes the prospect of inter-governmental negotiations this session to achieve agreement on reform of the Security Council. We support the permanent membership of Germany, Japan, India and Brazil and permanent representation from Africa. We are not wedded to a single model of reform. Achieving effective change is what matters.

In a world where over a billion people are online, where companies have bigger turnovers than countries, where global NGOs have memberships bigger than national populations, our international institutions must look inwards to internal reform but also outwards to broader popular movements for change.

In the last phase of globalisation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the emergence of new powers and the breakdown of the international order resulted in conflict that scarred the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Unless we can build trust and reciprocity between nations, and embody them in durable and robust international institutions that reconcile difference and nurture common values, the latest phase of globalisation could again be a false dawn.

Globalisation is not just something we must adapt to; it is something we can and must shape. It must be put to use spreading power, wealth and opportunity.

This mission is, for my government, driven by both moral purpose and national interest. We must address the insecurity and inequality that exists beyond our borders if we are to enhance security and prosperity within our borders. We live in a more prosperous world, a more peaceful world, a more democratic world than ever before. Let's commit to living in a more equal world.