



United Nations



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General Assembly

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Statement

H.E. Dr. Ali Abdussalam Treki

Acceptance speech upon his election as President

New York, 10 June 2009

[*Spoke in Arabic*]: It gives me great pleasure to express my thanks and appreciation for the confidence that the General Assembly has placed in my country and in my person by electing me by acclamation President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. My special thanks are due to the African Group, which supported my nomination and provided me with encouragement. It is indeed my honour to represent the Group by assuming this important position. This choice is a tribute to my country, its people and its leader. It is also an expression of appreciation for Libya's commitment to the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and its effective contribution to the realization of international peace and security, especially on my continent of Africa. However, at the same time, it places a moral commitment on our shoulders to further advance the achievement of the purposes of the United Nations. For my part, I will make every possible effort to achieve those goals, in consultation and cooperation with all Member States.

I am truly happy to find myself once again among a large number of friends. I worked with many of them for many years in this Hall, and I will be honoured indeed to work with them again for an entire year.

I would like to thank my dear friend, President Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, for the frank and sincere way in which he has shared his experience with me. Undoubtedly, his cooperation with and advice to me during the transitional period will prove most important as I conduct the work of the sixty-fourth session. I take this opportunity to commend his efforts in leading the General Assembly to respond effectively to a large number of pressing issues.

I wish also to express my happiness with the welcome and encouragement bestowed upon me by my dear friend, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, whom I have had the pleasure to know and whose admirable character

I have appreciated for many years. I admire his leadership of the United Nations, his perseverance and his quick responses to the exigencies of urgent matters. I wish to reassure him that I will cooperate with him and benefit from his experience in seeking the best ways to address the priority issues facing the United Nations.

The world has gone through many cruel and bitter stages, including a phase of colonialism and slavery, which embodies oppression in its cruellest forms. The peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America were the victims. Successive wars were fought, chief among which were the First and Second World Wars. The peoples of small and large countries alike paid the highest price for those wars in terms of destruction, material losses and hundreds of thousands of human lives lost.

Following the Second World War, the peoples of the world saw a glimmer of hope in the establishment of the United Nations as an end to their suffering and the beginning of a new era of security, peace, justice, equality and development. An era of decolonization and independence dawned for small nations, with the United Nations playing a major role in its achievement. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted, ushering in a new era focused on respect for human individuals, their dignity and their right to life. Despite the defects and shortcomings of the United Nations, it deserves to be commended for its many achievements, especially in the humanitarian field.

The countries that emerged victorious from the Second World War had the lion's share in leading the establishment of the United Nations. The Charter was drafted to give the victorious countries rights not accorded to other States. This represented a major defect, especially with respect to the Security Council. The world, however, has evolved considerably since then; criteria have changed and a multipolar structure has emerged. It is no longer possible for the United Nations, with a membership of 192 countries, to remain the Organization it was when

it had only 50 Members. The need to reform the United Nations system has emerged, especially vis-à-vis the role of the General Assembly and the need to grant it full authority to shoulder its responsibilities in the march of human progress.

With the emergence of the United Nations, the peoples of the world believed that they would enjoy peace and prosperity. Regrettably, however, wars proliferated, although they have been confined mostly to the regional and local levels. Competition among the major Powers has played a role in their inflammation. Thousands, if not millions, of victims have fallen all over the world. Military expenditure has increased, and military budgets have risen into the trillions of dollars. The small countries have felt obliged to increase their military capabilities at the expense of their development and the welfare of their peoples. Weapons of mass destruction have proliferated and the entire world has felt threatened. Although the major Powers, which possess nuclear weapons, have called for disarmament, they have not set a good example for other countries by taking the initiative to dismantle their own weapons of mass destruction. Hence, the call to discard weapons of mass destruction has been met with barely any response.

The exorbitant amounts spent on arms could have been spent to reduce poverty, fight diseases and assist poor peoples in the field of development. Hundreds of millions of people suffer from hunger; hundreds of millions are deprived of their right to education and suffer from disease, with no access to medicine. Poverty rates have risen, with repercussions for small nations that have suffered greater instability as they experience military coups and rebel movements, hampering their development and increasing their torment. The world can enjoy no peace, being divided between poor and rich, with the gap between the two widening. Furthermore, peace cannot prevail in the world while some peoples live under foreign occupation and suffer the consequences of racism. Peace can prevail only within a framework of justice and respect for human rights regardless of one's religion, race, colour or nationality.

The time has come for us to understand that all wars are wrong and sinful. We should work together to avert war through the administration of justice in order to safeguard human lives and preserve human dignity. The only war worth relentlessly fighting, with the participation of all, is that against fatal diseases, poverty, hunger and illiteracy.

Undoubtedly, many challenges lie ahead that we must make a concerted effort to meet through the United Nations. United Nations reform in all its aspects—especially reform of the Security Council and revitalization of the General Assembly—must continue to be one of our priorities. We should make every effort to achieve it as soon as possible. Indeed, the realization of peace and security through the administration of justice and putting an end to wars is a core purpose of the United Nations. It is a responsibility to be shouldered by all Member States.

Furthermore, we have no choice but to continue to address the issue of climate change firmly and effectively through cooperation among Member States in order to make the General Assembly an effective instrument for successfully advancing the current negotiations on climate change and for establishing a new framework for our future work based on our achievements to date and our envisaged goals.

The world financial and economic crisis remains of major concern and requires greater effort in the search for new, effective methods to tackle the crisis, mitigate its impact and achieve sustainable economic growth and development, taking into account the negative effects of the crisis on the realization of the Millennium Development Goals, especially in our continent, Africa.

It is imperative that we stand firmly for the realization of human rights. Such an undertaking cannot be achieved solely through rhetorical statements, but requires the provision of the basic necessities for a dignified life, such as food, medicine, clean drinking water, educational and health services and the means to fight dangerous diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. We can do so only through solidarity and joint coordination so as to create a better world in which all enjoy security and peace, with a decent standard of living, and in which the basic rights and freedoms of all are respected.

As I have been chosen to preside over the next session of the General Assembly, I would like to assure all Members that I will be at their disposal in our joint effort to enhance and strengthen the United Nations and its bodies. I count on the assistance and cooperation of every Member of the United Nations and will not align myself with any party or group. My only alignment will be with justice, security, peace and the common interests of the entire international community. I will cooperate with the Secretary-General and the Secretariat for the common good.