



Guatemala

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SIXTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS

STATEMENT BY

H.E. Mr. Álvaro Colom Caballeros
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GUATEMALA

GENERAL DEBATE

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Permanent Mission of Guatemala to the United Nations
57 Park Ave. New York, NY. 10016
Tel. (212) 679-4760 - Fax. (212) 685-8741
E-mail: guatemala@un.int

STATEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT OF GUATEMALA, ALVARO
COLOM CABALLEROS AT THE 63rd SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE
UNITED NATIONS
(New York, 24 September, 2008)

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Esteemed colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is an honor for me to represent my country, Guatemala, in this august international body. It is an honor for me to represent my people that for decades and even centuries have been struggling for improved standards of living, better conditions of conviviality and improved circumstances to exercise their rights. My Administration is, precisely, an expression of those hopes, given that after 54 years actions are prioritized towards the poorest and most marginalized populations and are people-centered, aiming seriously and responsibly to narrow the considerable gaps of inequality which separate us from development and modernity.

Before continuing, I would like to salute Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann, my Central American compatriot and President of this plenary. There is no doubt that with his vast experience and well-known ability he will know how to guide our work to enhance it and leave its impact on the General Assembly as the main policy-adoption organ of the United Nations. At the same time, we are grateful to Srgjan Kerim for his firm stewardship of the recently concluded session, whose initiatives will surely endure.

My presence barely a few months after having assumed the Presidency of my country underlines our commitment with the United Nations and with multilateralism. In this context, I salute Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, wishing him continuous success in his tenure. The Organization played a prominent role in Guatemala's recent history, and continues to do so up to today. The Guatemalan peoples appreciate and value this presence, and try to reciprocate, in part, through our presence in various peace-keeping operations of the United Nations.

Mr. President,

The entire planet continues to suffer from insecurity, which is a transnational phenomenon. Seen from that vantage point, the leaders are under the obligation to consider the problem in all its scope and complexity. The world suffers the ravages of terrorism and organized crime, including narco- activity. In this regard, my Government is adding its part to the global combat against these ills, adopting measures that seek not only to dispose of effective and refined security forces for this purpose, but also to strike against organized crime, in the framework of the rule of law and justice. The United Nations joins us in this arduous task through the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), whose valuable contribution I sincerely appreciate.

However, the threats to security are also of another type. Social inequality, hunger, the high price of food, the use of the latter to produce bio-fuels, and global warming, all threaten security, stability, governance, and, in the case of climate change, even the future of the planet.

Mr. President,

The world faces today the onslaught of a severe energy crisis which provokes its effects in cascade and punishes the poorest and most vulnerable. We have been awed witnesses of the revving-up of the price of a barrel of oil to levels never before seen, pushed by various factors, which include armed conflicts and speculative movements. We are pleased at the recent reversal of prices – which we believe should be more intense and should be better reflected in the price of gasoline and diesel – but at the same time we are witness to the need of diversifying our sources of energy, without irreversibly damaging our environment. My Government has taken on the matter of overcoming this enormous challenge, not faced before, of building and implementing a diversified energy matrix which will leave us progressively less dependent on petroleum and is based on our natural resources.

Mr. President,

Before this Assembly come the leaders that can change the situations that are impoverishing and harming millions of marginalized persons in the world. Respectfully allow me to propose today that in the same manner in which we have accepted the globalization of trade and information, we also favor the globalization of the right to labor and free flow of men and women labor migrants.

With the same drive and devotion towards free trade, let us apply an international structure that guarantees the fundamental rights of migrants.

If we globalize what's material, I am convinced we are morally compelled to globalize what's human to pave the road to hope for millions of migrants in the world. With this idea in mind, I allow myself to suggest to the Secretary-General that the creation of a panel comprised of former presidents from origin and recipient migrant countries to examine the nature, scope and consequences of the migratory phenomenon, and to disseminate its findings during the next substantive session of the General Assembly.

Let's dare to begin a human movement to eliminate the suffering of millions of human beings that simply seek opportunities of work and welfare, that with the wisdom of humble persons are truly achieving a redistribution of wealth that was produced at the expense of their poverty, marginalization and discrimination.

Mr. President,

It has become a common issue to speak of the effects of globalization and the interdependence among nations, but the fact of the matter is that each day our fate increasingly depends on events in the world that surrounds us. For this reason, my Government is very attentive to applying a pro-active and plural foreign policy, recognizing that, in assuming our primary responsibility for our own actions, we must also try to act abroad to take advantage of opportunities and minimize risks.

We wish to play a responsible role in the community of nations, open spaces and maintain cordial and fruitful relations with all member countries of this Organization, and,

especially, with our neighbors of Latin America and the Caribbean. In this respect, I reiterate before you our special commitment to Central American integration.

I also reiterate our firm intention to put an honorable end to the historical territorial dispute with Belize through a decision taken by both countries to initiate the process that would lead to a juridical solution through the International Court of Justice.

We will support all initiatives that seek a pacific solution to controversies that appear on this Organization's agenda; some highly complex and of long standing, such as in the Middle East, in the African continent and in other regions. We believe that the United Nations, in cooperation with regional institutions, can help the parties directly involved in seeking negotiated outcomes to those controversies. We also applaud the recent environment of distension between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China (Taiwan).

Mr. President,

Some brief remarks about our Organization and its agenda for the immediate future. It is evident that in a world changing at an astonishing speed we need to think permanently of adapting the United Nations to address not only secular challenges, but also emerging ones. Clearly, climate change falls in this category. We assign high importance to other transnational themes which affect us directly, as is the case of the double food and energy crisis, international migrations and the situation of indigenous peoples. We also renew our commitment undertaken in the 2005 Summit to the concept of the Responsibility to protect our populations against genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

The General Assembly is the appropriate place where we can exchange views on the nature of the problems we face and to offer guidance on how to address them; down the road, the operational arms of the Organization and its specialized agencies must help member states in implementing concrete actions. In general, we wish to see a robust presence of the United Nations in the promotion of development, and we are pleased that we can contribute with our work in the Economic and Social Council, which we hope to rejoin in 2009 as full members.

We recognize the imperative of adapting the Organization to present circumstances in the world, at the level of the intergovernmental for a – particularly the Security Council – and at the level of the Secretariat. We will work together with the other countries of the Organization to insure its continued timeliness and relevance; to that effect Guatemala will contribute with proposals and national positions on the specific matters that will draw our attention during the present session.

Mr. President,

To conclude, I join your message of solidarity delivered during your opening statement. As a Central American I would like to highlight that solidarity does not entail to give what is left over but to give what is needed. Let us build global solidarity with determination so that the world will be more human, more peaceful and more harmonious with our natural resources. May God bless mankind.

Thank you.