



Remarks

by

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General Assembly

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Mr. Chairman,
Madame Chair,
Distinguished Members of the European Parliament,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Good evening.

I am pleased to be here with you in Strasbourg and I would like to thank distinguished Chairpersons Brok and Joly for giving me this opportunity to share some thoughts and ideas with you in my capacity as the President of the 68th session of the UN General Assembly.

In a few short months from now, the citizens of the 28 countries you represent will engage in an exercise that is central to the European Union: voting to elect the members to this august body—the European Parliament – which in itself is a unique institution. Its members are elected to devise policies and translate them into legislative frameworks and to ensure oversight, accountability and transparency and thereby strengthen the governance of the Union. In these days, where change is constant and interdependence inevitable, all of you as individuals, and the representative, transparent and dynamic institution that has emerged forth, are nothing short of remarkable.

Beyond the borders of the countries of the region you represent, the international community has increasingly turned to the European Union to translate its enormous successes at home to the global stage, and to play a leading role in the never-ending human quest for peace, security and prosperity, through consistent support for constructive dialogue and multilateralism and concrete commitments to sustainable development and humanitarian assistance. It is the widely held view that a strong EU is well placed to give global leadership and support and to improve the lives of those who are the poorest and most vulnerable on our planet as well as to be an engaged, active partner and stakeholder in the fight to protect the planet. And on matters of human rights, gender equality, renewable and sustainable energy, the EU has been a strong, credible and consistent voice within the multilateral system and global family of nations.

Distinguished MEPs,

Within the context of the UN system, we frequently hear of the use – or rather the overuse – of the phrase, “punching above one’s weight!” Happily in this case, the entire international community is pleased that the European Union is doing just that. The EU and its Member States constitute the single largest financial contributor to the United Nations system – underwriting close to 40 percent of its regular budget, more than two-fifths of the peacekeeping operations budget, and about half of all contributions to UN funds and programs.

In addition, the EU remains the world's largest trading block and, collectively, the world's largest donor of official development assistance (ODA) and humanitarian aid. While many countries in the Union still struggle with a slow economic recovery, I strongly welcome the decision of the EU to maintain its ODA commitments and to reserve a significant share for development and humanitarian assistance in the 2014-2020 multiannual EU budget. In this regard, I commend the dedicated vision and financial support that has been and is still making a difference in the lives of the world’s poorest and most vulnerable people.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In 2000, at the dawn of the millennium, the international community came together and made an ambitious and paradigmatic promise: to create a world free from fear and want, and to make the right to development a reality for all. Member States pledged to spare no efforts to eradicate poverty, and they adopted a set of eight time-bound and measurable goals – the Millennium Development Goals – to chart the course towards a new era of shared prosperity. This historical commitment has galvanized efforts and paved the way towards significant achievements: the proportion of people living in extreme poverty has declined by half, and the target of halving the percentage of people suffering from hunger is now within reach. Millions of people have gained access to improved water sources and sanitation, and with improved access to public education, treatment regimes and medication, the progression of HIV has been reversed and the numbers of both those being born with and dying from HIV and AIDS have been considerably reduced across the world.

Despite these clear achievements, it must be conceded that much remains for us to do. Climate change is impacting ecosystems, societies, economies, the way of life of millions of people and is threatening to reverse some of the progress we made so far. The biodiversity of our planet has come under threat while clean water is becoming a precious commodity. Every day across the world, 18.000 children die from preventable diseases, 870 million people go hungry, some 783 million live without clean water, 2.5 billion have no adequate sanitation and 1.4 billion people are without access to energy. The loss and suffering is not confined to human society for science tells us that every day an estimated 150 to 200 species of plants, insects and animals become extinct, in the process altering ecosystems and value chains on which people depend and in their loss, taking with them potential for beauty, medicinal value, economic usage and applications.

In the development dialogue the terms *partnership* and *resource maximization* are being heard increasingly. It is therefore quite ironic that across the globe, 50% of our human resources are not being maximized. Political, economic and social empowerment of women is crucial and should be at the core of the next development agenda. At the global level, women and girls are predominantly poor, undereducated, underutilized, underpaid and underappreciated. Bridging the poverty gap is simply not possible if we leave aside half of the global population. Today, thirty-six (36) percent of the Members of the European Parliament are women, well above the global average which hovers at about twenty (20) percent.

Distinguished MEPs,

With a mere two (2) years to go before the target date for the realization of the MDGs, much needs to be done and attention has begun to shift to what should follow in the post-2015 era. To this end, to follow up on efforts made towards the achievement of the MDGs, Heads of State and Government gathered last September for a special event of the General Assembly. They adopted an outcome document in which they called for a collective intensification of efforts to achieve the remaining MDGs. They also affirmed their resolve to craft an ambitious and inclusive post-2015 agenda that will address the unfinished business of the MDG's as well as the new and emerging challenges. This agenda, with the eradication of poverty at its core, will open a new chapter in the UN history of development by integrating in a balanced manner the economic,

social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. It should also promote peace and security, democratic governance, the rule of law, gender equality and human rights for all.

As we begin tracing the contours of this new agenda, it has become apparent that “business as usual” is not an option. The world in 2030 will be very different from the one we knew as we entered the new Millennium. Our Planet now counts seven billion inhabitants and is expected to have over eight billion by 2030. The world will need at least 50 percent more food, 45 percent more energy and 30 percent more water to sustain the needs of its growing population. Severe weather events caused by climate change will increase in magnitude and frequency, threatening to reverse some of the progress we made so far.

The challenges are many and with great challenges come great responsibility for all of us. In this new era, the goal of building a more sustainable world is one that has to be shared by all nations, North and South, developed and developing alike. It is now understood that the post-2015 agenda should entail a single framework and set of goals, universal in nature and applicable to all countries, while taking into account different national circumstances, policies and priorities. Our negotiations on the post-2015 agenda are also taking place against the background of a changing geopolitical landscape with the rise of the emerging economies. This changed landscape will bring new challenges and require new relationships, strategic priorities and approaches. As these relational dynamics evolve so too will the EU’s role.

The modern world is as much connected by social media and technology as it is by the economic, social or environmental considerations which transcend national boundaries. The task of turning our development aspirations into tangible and implementable realities will require the efforts of governments, businesses and societies, everywhere. We will need a renewed and strengthened global partnership for development to address financing, technology and capacity building needs. We will need to effectively mobilize resources, domestic and international, public and private. The MDG experience has demonstrated that governments cannot do it alone. Civil society, the private sector, scientific and knowledge institutions, parliaments and local authorities will be key partners.

Our interconnection and our common challenges require our common action and our common solutions. In the new development approaches, the role of the private sector must not be overlooked as a significant amount of investment from private capital, as well as product innovation will have to be applied to development challenges and their solutions. In this context, your history of development support, commitment to gender equality, steps toward greener lifestyles, and the green initiatives which are very much a feature of European business are all strong indicators which point to the role the EU will play in the post-2015 development framework.

If there is to be a global partnership for sustainable development then all stakeholders must be included and the process itself should be broadly inclusive, as development – indeed sustainable development – is the business of all members of society. As Jean Monnet, one of the Founding Fathers of Europe, said:

[quote] *"Rien n'est possible sans les hommes, rien n'est durable sans les institutions"* “Nothing is possible without people, nothing is sustainable without institutions”. [end quote]

Distinguished MEPs,

2015 will be a pivotal year, and a historic opportunity to set the world on a new sustainable course. During the remaining part of this session of the General Assembly, I will spare no efforts to promote convergence amongst the various intergovernmental processes now underway at UN Headquarters that will provide critical inputs for the post-2015 development agenda. I will do my utmost to support the members of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals and the members of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing in reaching consensus on forward looking results by September 2014. As mandated by Member States, I will also advance the process to develop options for a technology facilitation mechanism. In addition, I have appointed co-facilitators, including one Member State of the European Union, to hold intergovernmental consultations on the organizational modalities for the September 2015 Summit that will see the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda. Finally, our ambitions must be matched by effective means of implementation. I am therefore

pleased to inform you that I have recently launched the intergovernmental consultations on all issues related to the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.

Setting the stage for the post-2015 development agenda is the silver thread of the General Assembly activities during this 68th session. We are laying the groundwork for the intergovernmental negotiations that will be launched during the next 69th session. In order to foster exchanges of views and encourage constructive dialogue, I will convene three high-level events and three thematic debates bringing together the UN Membership and other major stakeholders. The events will focus on (1) water, sanitation and sustainable energy; (2) the contributions of women, young and civil society, (3) the role of partnership in the post-2015 development agenda, (4) ensuring peaceful and stable societies, (5) the contributions of North-South, South-South, triangular cooperation and ICT and (6) the human rights and the rule of law. I encourage a broad participation from the EU and its Member States, at the highest level. I have no doubt that your vast experience will provide insightful contributions.

Distinguished MEPs,

History will judge if our efforts today are proportionate to the scale of the challenge confronting our generation. But it is my firm belief that our commitment to an ambitious post-2015 development agenda will be the litmus test, the testimony of our engagement to build a safe and prosperous world, where present and future generations can share in the benefits of sustainable development. It is this objective that I encourage this EU parliament to work toward and commit to.

Thank you.
