



Guatemala

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

STATEMENT BY

H.E. Mr. Oscar Berger Perdomo
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GUATEMALA

GENERAL DEBATE

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Madame President, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa,
Mr. Secretary-General, Kofi Annan,
Fellow delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

In this year, 2006, several important anniversaries merge to offer us the background of our debates.

- For the United Nations, it represents a new opportunity to assess progress since we adopted, six years ago, the package of commitments generally known as the Millennium Development Goals, which received renewed impetus during the 2005 Summit. Among the outcomes of that Summit surface those that inform the main theme of our debate during this Assembly, as well as the guidelines on the reform of our Organization.
- For this great city, the headquarters of our Organization, it marks the fifth anniversary of the tragic events of September 11 which altered history forever.
- For Guatemala, it marks the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Peace Accords that put an end to a bloody internal conflict of over four decades.
- For our Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, it marks the end of his ten year term, which has left a highly positive balance: a balance which I want to acknowledge and for which I would like to thank him. He has discharged his stewardship with skill and integrity; in our case, our debt with him is even greater, given his personal involvement in the peace processes of Central America.

I will move on immediately to address some of these substantial issues. But before doing so, I would like to leave testimony of our appreciation of Mr. Jan Eliasson's stewardship and exceptional leadership of the previous session. At the same time, we celebrate your own election, Madame President, and have no doubt that you will bring us to a safe port.

Madame President,
Distinguished delegates:

I will allude very briefly to four matters:

- The compliance with the Peace Accords of Guatemala, a process in which the United Nations participated very closely with a pro-active role.
- The follow-up of the 2005 Summit, and especially goal 8 of the Millennium Declaration: to foster a global partnership for development
- Our view on some selective aspects related with United Nations reform.
- Our view on some selective substantive aspects which affect international relations

I will move on immediately to the first matter.

The brief time allotted to me does not allow going into any detail, but it is undeniable that we have advanced substantially in the direction of giving a concrete expression to the prospective vision contained in the Peace Accords. More to the point, if we contrast today's Guatemala to that of 1996, we now have a society that is much more plural, tolerant, deliberative, and participative than in the past. Our representative democracy tends to take roots, after three free and transparent sequential elections. The army is truly subordinated to the civil power. Important progress has been achieved in strengthening a multiethnic and multilingual society. The State is committed to the respect of civil, political and human rights, and promotes increasing participation of women in our society. Significant efforts have been in strengthening the administration of justice and consolidating the Rule of Law. The proportion of public expenditures assigned to the provision of social services has increased notably in the last years. We have, within our means, assisted the victims of the conflict through, among other aspects, a program of reparation payments. We promote the national front against hunger and malnutrition as a priority of my Government. Likewise, recently we adopted the Policy on Rural Development which was elaborated and will be implemented with the participation of entrepreneurs, peasants and unions.

At the same time, we recognize that much remains to be done. Human rights violations persist, often linked to an increase in crime, including organized crime. It is for this reason that we invited the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to open an office in our country, to join us in strengthening our own capacity to defend and protect vulnerable groups. We have also invited the United Nations to support an initiative to establish a Commission to Investigate Illicit and Clandestine Groups. Furthermore, we have promoted domestic legislation to combat the scourge of crime, including the recently promulgated Law against Organized Crime.

The commitments contained in the Peace Accords entail serious budgetary implications. To address them, we recently sent to Congress, and Congress approved, a Law against fiscal evasion. At the same time, we have re-launched an ample consensus around a Fiscal Pact which assures the financing of our future development through improvements in the allocation and administration of public expenditures and the collection of taxes.

My Government assigns priority to the recognition of indigenous people's identity and rights. In this regard, we trust that soon this General Assembly will adopt the Declaration on Indigenous Peoples which saw light in the Human Rights Council, and which will contribute to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

In summary, our Government Plan assimilates the Peace Accords and defines their compliance as a National commitment. In 2005, a Framework Law of the Peace Accords was passed to strengthen the institutional aspects of the peace process. Among other aspects, one of the goals is to achieve socio-economic development that responds to the needs of all the population.

This last comment leads me to the second matter of my remarks, regarding the Millennium Development Goals. Actually, a major part of our own Government program is entirely consistent with those goals, especially regarding combating poverty and hunger and achieving universal primary education. Our policies, which emphasize rural development, have a pro-poor approach. Efforts undertaken have basically been of internal origin – Government and civil society – but we have also received support from the international community in the context of a genuine partnership. Increasingly, the international community respects our own priorities and adjusts to our procedures of budgetary programming. In other words, from the vantage point of our own country, significant progress has been achieved since the Conference on Financing for Development was held in 2002. This observation from one country's perspective coincides with the turn-around observed during the past few years in the prior trend towards declining ODA. It is to be hoped that this new trend of increasing ODA persists and accelerates, especially in favor of the least developed countries.

In contrast to this relatively encouraging panorama in the area of financing for development, it is a source of great concern that the negotiations of the Development Round, as agreed at Doha, have been suspended. This marks a serious setback for the global economy, and especially for the chances of developing countries to improve their participation in international trade. If the potential of the Development Round is not rescued, including the dismantling of agricultural subsidies as well as other restrictive practices of trade in agricultural products which persist in the main developed economies, it is difficult to continue alluding to a Global Partnership for Development as posited by the Millennium Development Goals. In this regard, it is urgent to renew the negotiations of the Doha Round under the aegis of the World Trade Organization.

We also support deepening of South-South cooperation in all its domains.

Moving on now to the third part of my remarks, we believe that the reforms undertaken at the United Nations since 2000, and especially since the 2005 Summit, have been significant and point in the right direction. We can relate with the new Council of Human Rights, of which we are members, and support its fulfilling its role in promoting and protecting human rights at the global level. We also understand the considerable potential of the new Peace Building Commission to contribute to the joint work of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, to the benefit of countries emerging from conflict. We promote the revitalization and strengthening of the General Assembly as the only universal instance with enough legitimacy to debate and adopt policies, as prescribed by the Charter and as agreed in the Millennium Declaration and the 2005 Summit. We reiterate our strong support for the Economic and Social Council as a meeting place to foster sustainable development. We especially applaud the decision to convene each biennium a high-level meeting on development cooperation.

We add our voice to the clamor to overcome the stagnation in the discussions on Security Council reform. The parameters of the debate are well known. For our part, we have historically favored a moderate expansion in the number of non-permanent members, but more recently we have signaled that we could support any formula capable of bringing about a consensus, including the expansion of members in both categories. We also support a more representative, transparent and effective Council. We are candidates

for a non-permanent seat for the biennium 2007-2008, because we believe that our unique experience as a country that made the transition from conflict to peace and democracy provides us with insights that would contribute to the work of the Council. In addition, we are one of the few original signatories of the Charter that have not had the opportunity to serve in the work of this body. If elected, we commit ourselves to carry out our responsibilities in a professional, responsible and dignified manner, in representation of our region, and also to promote from within the reform of this crucial forum to assure peace and stability in the world.

My country's foreign policy is in accordance with the national interests that hold as principles a better insertion of Guatemala in the Globalized World, as well as the strengthening of multilateralism and regional integration. We have promoted a deeper integration with our immediate neighbors in Central America, and important progress in the establishment of a Customs Union has been achieved. We, the five Central American countries have agreed a Free Trade Agreement with the United States of America, and will start, in 2007, negotiations on an Association Agreement with the European Union.

On the other hand, my Government has endeavored to deepen the bilateral relations with Belize, while at the same time find a definitive, just, equitable and honorable solution to the territorial differendum between our countries. Thus, on September 7th 2005, we signed, under the auspices of the Organization of American States, an Agreement on a Framework for Negotiations and Confidence Building Measures that covers an ample range of subjects that tend to bring us closer. One of the tangible results of this effort has already been a Free Trade Agreement signed just a few months ago.

Guatemala participated actively in the High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development held in this same Hall less than a week ago. In this context we emphasize that the attention to the guatemalan migrants is another priority of my Government. An essential element of the public policy in this one subject is the full respect of the Human Rights of all migrants; which will only be fully strengthened when all States become parties to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families

In solidarity, we join other countries that have suffered conflict situations. This is why we have been part of an increasing number of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. We value our presence, with other Latin-American countries, in our neighbor Haiti, and we celebrate the democratically elected Government of H.E. President Rene Préal. We also contribute with troops in the Democratic Republic of Congo and with military observers in six other countries in the African continent.

We deplore the violence that has affected several countries in the Middle East, in particular Lebanon. We advocate to find a solution that in the future will allow Israel and a sovereign Palestinian State to live in peace with safe borders in the widest context of a region that finds its own destiny in harmony and progress.

On other issues and given the importance of coordination between States in my region, Guatemala organized from 11 -13 September 2006 the I Mesoamerican and

Dominican Republic Meeting on Regional Security, with the goal to achieve an agreement with the countries of the Central American group, as well as with Belize, Colombia, Dominican Republic and Mexico to develop a comprehensive strategy to fight the main threats in the region and to unify the security commitments, policies and procedures already agreed and contained in regional and international agreements, treaties and Conventions, as well as those taken at Summit level. We count on the support of the international community and of the United Nations to organize three more meetings to finalize de design of such strategy.

Finally, Guatemala jointly with Transparency International is organizing the 12th International Anti-Corruption Conference, from 15-18 November this year. The theme for this conference will be "Towards a fairer World: Why is corruption still blocking the way?" This joint effort reflects the commitment of my Government with the fight against the problem of corruption that has eroded for many years our institutions and has forbidden our citizens the opportunity to transit to a more just country. We welcome you all and hope to be able to share with you our challenges, progress and difficulties in this joint battle.

Madame President:

Under your leadership, this General Assembly will have to address issues of great importance for humanity as well as for our Organization. Guatemala pledges to participate actively in the debates foreseen for this year. From this moment on we offer the full collaboration for the success of your presidency.

Thank you