



MAURITIUS

STATEMENT

by

**Dr. The Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam
Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius**

at the

**General Debate of the 61st Session of the
United Nations General Assembly**

**22 September 2006
New York**

Check Against Delivery

Madam President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to express my sincere congratulations and those of my delegation to you, Madam President, on your election as President of the 61st Session of the UN General Assembly.

My delegation wishes to commend Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the leadership and courage he has displayed during his tenure at the helm of the UN Secretariat. Secretary-General Kofi Annan assumed office at a time when the United Nations was facing severe criticism and its very relevance questioned. His dedication and professionalism, have contributed significantly towards enhancing the efficiency and credibility of our Organisation and its Secretariat.

His initiatives to move forward the development agenda of the United Nations have been of crucial importance, particularly, for the African continent. As the Secretary-General prepares to relinquish his office in the next few weeks, we thank him warmly and wish him well in all his future endeavours.

Madam President,

Since our last annual meeting several ongoing conflicts remain unresolved and new ones have emerged. The situation in the Middle East continues to be a major preoccupation for the international community. While violence is still raging in Iraq and peace still eludes the Palestinian people, the recent conflict involving Israel and Hizbullah has not only cost so many innocent lives but has also resulted in the wanton destruction of vital infrastructure within Lebanon. Now that the guns have finally gone silent, we urge all concerned in this unnecessary month-long conflict to abide fully by the provisions of Security Council Resolution 1701 and settle their outstanding issues through UN mediation.

Madam President,

There seems to be an unanimous view in the world today that the epicenter of global insecurity and instability remains the Middle East. Global peace and prosperity will remain an elusive dream unless and until the international community stretches all its diplomatic sinews to create conditions for lasting peace in the region. Mauritius strongly believes that a fair and final settlement for peace in the Israel-Palestine conflict rests in the early implementation of the existing Roadmap endorsed by the international community.

We reiterate our support for an independent sovereign Palestine State existing side by side with the State of Israel.

Madam President,

The situation in Darfur remains a matter of serious concern not only to us in Africa but to the international community as a whole. We are confident that Security Council Resolution 1706 has the capacity to lend strong support to the efforts already deployed by the African Union to put an end to this crisis.

Madam President,

Terrorism continues to be a major disruptive phenomenon for peace and development. The recent adoption of the resolution on the United Nations global Counter-Terrorism strategy sends a clear message that terrorism is unacceptable no matter who commits it, no matter where it takes place and no matter what the reason. Mauritius unreservedly condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

But let us not delude ourselves into thinking that we can address the scourge of terrorism without addressing the root causes of terrorism.

Madam President,

Fifteen years ago, this Assembly initiated discussions on reform of the Security Council. Numerous proposals have been made since. Each proposal, whatever its merits, has met determined resistance from some member states defending their own narrowly defined interests.

It is deplorable that Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean regions are not represented in the permanent membership of the Security Council.

It is also morally and politically unacceptable that the world's most populous democracy is still denied a seat as a permanent member of the Council. We are of the view that the reformed Security Council should include India among its permanent members.

Madam President,

The establishment of the Human Rights Council constitutes a significant step in the implementation of our common Reform Agenda. This new organ of the General Assembly should perform efficiently so as to establish itself as a credible universal institution for the promotion and protection of human rights.

My delegation would like to thank the General Assembly for electing Mauritius as one of the 47 members of the Council at the elections held earlier this year. We will do our utmost for the promotion and protection of human rights universally in accordance with the mandate conferred by the General Assembly to the Council.

Madam President,

The multilateral approach to Disarmament has been on the backburner of our work for some time. It is unfortunate that little progress has been achieved in respect of the strengthening of the foundations of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Mauritius supports the aim of the total elimination of all nuclear weapons based on a comprehensive and non-discriminatory disarmament regime.

Madam President,

My delegation wishes to draw the attention of this Assembly that, thirty-eight years after its independence, Mauritius has still not been able to exercise its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago including Diego Garcia. The Archipelago was excised from the territory of Mauritius by the former colonial power for military purposes, in total disregard of United Nations General Assembly Resolutions 1514 and 2066. This exercise also involved the shameful displacement of the inhabitants of the Chagos from their homeland in total disregard of human rights.

We call once again on the United Kingdom to pursue constructive dialogue in earnest with my government with a view to enabling Mauritius to exercise its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago.

We view positively the visit jointly organised by the governments of Mauritius and of the United Kingdom, in April this year, to enable the former inhabitants of the Chagos to visit the Archipelago for the first time since their displacement to pay respects at their relatives' graves on the Archipelago.

Madam President,

We hope to continue meaningful dialogue with France, on the question of sovereignty over Tromelin, given our excellent bilateral relations. We view the agreement, reached at the Experts' level in Paris, in January 2006, to set up a French-Mauritian joint commission for the co-management of the Tromelin zone, as a positive first step.

Madam President,

My delegation is pleased that you have chosen Development as the focus of your Presidency and welcome your proposal to dedicate this session of the General Assembly to the issue of "Implementing a Global Partnership for Development".

The biggest dilemma is how to secure the necessary financial flows towards developing countries.

We call on the international community to honour commitments made to developing countries concerning Official Development Assistance. Equally, we hope for conditions that will allow resources for development to be derived from better access to the markets of the more affluent countries.

Madam President,

Our meeting today coincides with the end of the First UN decade for the eradication of Poverty 1997-2006. The progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals – including halving the proportion of people suffering extreme poverty by 2015 has been below expectations as reflected in the Human Development Indices.

Poverty continues to prevail from generation to generation in many parts of the world, in particular in Sub Saharan Africa. The political, social and economic marginalization or exclusion of the poor people very often undermines the stability and development potential of many countries.

Madam President,

Does this imply, that conventional solutions have failed because they do not really address the root causes of persistent poverty?

Or is it because instead of taking a bottom up approach we have adopted a top-down approach relying too much on the trickle down effect.

The fight against poverty is becoming more and more complex. Only a holistic and comprehensive approach will allow us to push back the frontier of misery, conflict and hardship afflicting such a sizeable proportion of humanity.

In our own sub-region, we have initiated measures to address the issue of poverty in earnest. At the recent SADC Summit held in Lesotho in August, we debated the issue of poverty alleviation. An Extraordinary Summit of the *South African Development Community* on Regional Integration, scheduled for next month, will discuss a roadmap on Poverty and Development.

Madam President,

There is almost a symbiotic relationship between poverty and ill health, with disease often further impoverishing the poor and impacting negatively on the stock of scarce human capital in poor countries. Apart from Malaria and HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis

and now avian flu which are getting a lot of attention, other vector borne diseases have manifested themselves and growing in an exponential manner.

Madam President,

The alarming rate with which the HIV/AIDS pandemic is ravaging our populations has far-reaching implications on our socio-economic development. It impedes our global efforts towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

We appreciate the political commitment of the international community to combat this scourge so as to bring solace to those already afflicted and to prevent further spread of the disease. Mauritius has promptly and spontaneously joined the innovative financing mechanism initiated by France and Brazil - to introduce a solidarity levy on air tickets to fight HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis. The launching of the UNITAID this week has given new hopes.

Madam President,

Climate change is yet another serious threat. For too long, some of us have conveniently decided to ignore it. In fact well known institutions and eminent scientists have reached the conclusion that climate change may be one of the biggest threats to humanity. Of particular concern is the impact of global warming on certain vectors of diseases leading to their proliferation.

It is estimated that in Africa for example, we would witness potentially many more millions of cases of malaria and other mosquito borne diseases occurring as a result of climate change.

Madam President,

Mauritius is fully committed to the successful conclusion of the Doha Development Round. We look forward to a Multilateral Trading System that would be fair and equitable and which would provide for the specific situations and needs of small and vulnerable economies.

The WTO Task Force recommendations on Aid for Trade submitted in July 2006 should be implemented urgently to enable countries particularly small and vulnerable economies to access resources to undertake the adjustment and restructurization programmes and to enhance their trade infrastructure and supply capacities.

Madam President,

Globalization does not seem to be living up to its promises. We should not allow it to be a process that unleashes the potential of the few while suppressing the aspirations of the many. It will have to be tamed into a development process that will provide an opportunity to every single citizen of the world to achieve his or her full potential.

Mauritius, like so many small island economies with meagre resource bases, has had to adjust to the realities and challenges of increasing liberalisation and global economic competition especially the erosion of trade preferences which have so far helped in addressing our inherent disadvantages. My Government has embarked on a programme of bold and wide-ranging economic reforms to adapt to the new realities of the international economy.

Madam President,

At the end of the day, what is the ultimate role that each of us here has as Heads of States and Heads of Governments?

We have been entrusted with the future destiny of our people and of our countries. We are but temporary custodians of the welfare of our people and that of humanity.

If we really want to build better societies and a better world for future generations, we must indeed make a significant dent on the poverty issue, we must channel significant resources and energy in reaching the Millennium Development Goals, and we must ensure that we create stable and sustainable societies. To achieve this, we can no longer afford to simply keep talking about noble intentions. We must walk the talk, not just talk the talk.

Each of us here has the responsibility of implementing national policies which provide opportunities for those who have always been deprived of their human dignity as a result of living perpetually on the margins of the socio-economic mainstream.

My Government is guided by the notion of "Citizenship With Dignity" as a moral compass for action. We believe that socio-economic justice is a fundamental pillar of human dignity. We are therefore bent upon providing concrete opportunities to the economically disenfranchised in order to lift them out of the vortex of unjust economic inequalities.

I have always upheld the ideals of social justice. Therefore, I have ensured that my Government dedicates no less than 12% of our last national budget towards an ambitious Empowerment Programme. This Programme is funded by State and Non-State actors thus heralding a new partnership for development in my country.

The Program will provide tangible avenues for the poor and the unskilled to equip themselves with the tools necessary for them to join the economic mainstream. It also seeks to create a new and flourishing class of entrepreneurs.

Madam President,

This is one of the effective and concrete ways in which we can truly ensure that we widen the circle of opportunities.

Madame la Présidente,

La solution aux problèmes évoqués passe, dans une large mesure, par l'ouverture vers l'autre, l'écoute, le dialogue et la solidarité.

A Maurice, nous avons l'immense chance de nous trouver à un carrefour des grands courants philosophiques et religieux. L'histoire de notre peuplement l'a ainsi voulu.

Nous sommes les enfants de plusieurs généalogies. Notre identité a été tissée par des fils venus de l'orient, et de l'occident, du nord et du sud. Plusieurs ethnies, cultures, religions et langues évoluent sur notre territoire et nous veillons à ce qu'elles s'enrichissent mutuellement.

Nous recherchons l'interculturel, ce qui nous donne, à nous Mauriciens, une identité multiple et dynamique. C'est, nous pensons, la meilleure façon de construire une nation et de nous affirmer.

Cette situation, vous l'imaginez, exige une vigilance continue, tant de la part des dirigeants politiques que des religieux ou des responsables de la presse, ainsi que l'application rigoureuse et transparente des principes de justice.

Nous voulons croire que l'expérience mauricienne peut être vécue à l'échelle internationale et nous formulons des vœux pour que le dialogue entre les hommes et les communautés et la communication entre les chefs d'Etats et de gouvernements aient enfin raison des désaccords qui rongent aujourd'hui le monde, notre monde, notre seul monde.

Je vous remercie de votre attention.
