



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**ADDRESS BY H. E. DR. LEONEL FERNÁNDEZ REYNA, PRESIDENT
OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC AT THE
62ND SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED
NATIONS**

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President of the General Assembly
Secretary-General
Heads of State & Government
Ministers of Foreign Affairs
Permanent Representatives to the United Nations
Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Government and the people of the Dominican Republic, it is our pleasure to congratulate, Dr. Srgjan Kerim, President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, for his recent election, as well as to convey our greetings to the Member-States of the U.N. General Assembly.

The four years following the 2000 Millennium Summit, the Dominican Republic faced a crisis in which the national currency devaluated by one hundred per cent (100%); the working class had to redouble their efforts simply to satisfy their basic necessities; the drug-trafficking and crime gained a foothold; and our levels of credibility decreased worldwide.

According to World Bank, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) statistics, more than 1.5 million of the 9 million Dominican citizens fell into the worst poverty levels. We were living one of the most dramatic crisis in the history of the Dominican Republic.

Since we took office in 2004, the Dominican Republic restored its credibility with investors and entrepreneurs. We have been able to reactivate economic growth. We have been able to reduce inflation. We have increased employment levels and improved social conditions and the quality of life of the Dominican people.

Although we began like the Phoenix bird, emerging from our own ashes; negative international circumstances threaten to impede our prospects for future growth.

These last weeks, for example, the price of oil on the international market rose at an unprecedented rate and projections point towards continued increases. These price increases are suffocating our economies.

Additionally, as a result of recent developments on the international stage, the free trade zones in the Dominican Republic, as well as Mexico and Central America, have started to loose their competitive edge to Asia.

This lack of competitiveness has resulted in the loss of jobs, stagnation of production and the need for new investments.

But, Mr. President, at the same time that the price of oil increases and the prices of goods in the global economy fluctuate, we are also faced with a trend of rising cost of food.

Curiously enough, we are surprised by the news that due to the elimination of export subsidies in Europe, the price of milk has increased on the international market.

The same has occurred, although for different reasons, with the cost of corn, soy, and wheat, as well as other products—all key to the basic nutrition of the family.

Due to the climbing prices of these products, the cost of chicken, turkey, bread and eggs have also risen.

As you could appreciate, Mr. President, we are facing a grave situation, which could lead our people towards widespread hunger, and consequently, catastrophe and a fall into extreme poverty.

These factors have led to a vicious circle that sends shock waves throughout the global food chain while, in spite of the ongoing praise for free trade, the world's most powerful countries still remain protected.

While a farmer in the U.S., to provide an example, has access to state-of-the-art farming equipment, the most modern facilities, and technologically proficient staff, they also receive government subsidies of approximately US \$750,000 per year; and on top of that, they are able to produce a pound of corn for a mere 7 cents on the dollar.

And while this takes place, Félix David Garcia Peña, also a corn farmer, who belongs to the Association of Farmers in San Juan de la Maguana, in the southern part of the Dominican Republic near our border with Haiti, is struggling to make ends meet and to lead a decent life.

His farming equipment is outdated. His tractor explodes in clouds of smoke every morning when he attempts to turn it on. His facilities are dilapidated. He receives no government subsidies, and his production costs for one pound of corn is twelve (12) cents on the dollar, almost double the production cost of the farmer receiving subsidies in the United States.

When we asked Felix how we—as the government—could help him, he stated “I don't want anything. All I want is fair trade to be able to sell my corn.”

The fact is that the challenges of globalization have a harsh impact on countries such as the Dominican Republic. What we are experiencing is the interdependent character of current international trends. What often seems to be distant or remote, nevertheless, has a direct impact on the daily life of our peoples.

Another example that illustrates the undeniable interdependence of all nations on earth is climate change. This is not a new topic to this Organization, but with each year that passes, we find ourselves closer to the predicted disasters.

In the Dominican Republic, we are already experiencing the impact of climatic change in various ways: an increase in volatility and frequency of floods, droughts, and hurricanes that destroy our eco-system, our bio-diversity, and our infrastructure.

Also, we are experiencing an increase of coastal erosion and beach loss, as well as frequent whitening of our coral reefs, thus reducing our marine bio-diversity and the very natural beauty that make our tourism attractive.

Due to all these challenges presented by globalization, a country like the Dominican Republic, asks itself where is the international solidarity, where is the cooperation between countries, how are we going to collaboratively address all of these challenges, which affect many people around the world.

The truth, Mr. President, is that there cannot be solidarity when there are those in the world who seek to profit and accumulate wealth at the expense of the misery and tragedy of others. There cannot be cooperation, Mr. President, when there are people that only think of conducting business without taking into account the pain and anguish of those who are suffering.

The U.N. was created to promote solidarity and cooperation, and it is only fair to recognize that there is no other organization of this magnitude, prestige, capacity and service than this international organization.

But, this great Organization dedicated to the well-being of humanity, which emerged after the tragedy of the Second World War, also has to reform itself, if it aspires to fulfill the ideals of its inception, which are consecrated in the San Francisco Peace Conference.

The current structure of the United Nations no longer represents the modern day. The structure corresponds to the Cold War era still, although the world has advanced beyond the era that was dictated by the rivalry of two superpowers.

Then, in the midst of the twenty-first century, we, the Dominican Republic, do not truly comprehend why the President of the World Bank must be an American, the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), a European; while all the important global decisions are taken by only five countries.

As one of the founding members of the United Nations, the Dominican Republic aspires to a position on the U.N. Security Council as non-permanent member. In this position, we would strive to be a voice in favor of the weak, the most vulnerable, the deprived, and the most condemned on the Earth.

This is our only aspiration, Mr. President. To assume with responsibility, conviction and determination the values and principles with which this Organization has always pledged to represent, as a guiding light for peace, human dignity, and harmony among all the world's peoples.