



THE GAMBIA

Check Against Delivery

STATEMENT

BY

**HER EXCELLENCY AJA DR. ISATOU NJIE-SAIDY
VICE PRESIDENT
THE REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA**

AT THE

GENERAL DEBATE

OF THE

62ND SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Mr. President,

Let me at the outset congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to the Presidency of the General Assembly, and to reassure you of The Gambia's full support and cooperation during your tenure in office. Let me also use this opportunity to express our appreciation of the excellent manner in which the outgoing President of the General Assembly, Her Excellency Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa managed the affairs of the Assembly over the 61st Session.

My delegation would also like to use this opportunity to once more congratulate our new Secretary General, H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon on his assumption of his leadership of the UN. The Gambia is particularly delighted that Mr. Ban Ki-moon had the opportunity to address the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the AU during his meeting in Banjul in July 2006. His subsequent election can only be a source of pride and delight for us.

We also wish to commend him for the initiative he took to convene a high-level event two days ago, on a subject that is of great concern to all nations and peoples of the world – climate change. All the salient issues surrounding this phenomenon have been brought to the fore. It is now our fervent hope that action will be taken to address them in a most timely manner.

Mr. President,

The mid-term review of the Millennium Declaration two years ago indicates that the Millennium Development Goals are far from being attained in most of the developing world. This notwithstanding, for us in The Gambia, our commitment to the MDGs is unwavering. The overarching policy objective of the Government, under the leadership of His Excellency the President of the Republic of The Gambia Alhaji Dr. Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh, is to reduce poverty and achieve all the MDGs. We have just concluded a Second Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper which clearly sets out our policy framework for achieving growth and poverty reduction despite our meager resources and endowments, and despite the failure of several partners to fulfill their pledges of aid, debt relief, and market access for African countries. The same mid-term reviews showed that the commitments that were made in many fora by the international community in support of the MDGs in poor countries have not translated into real resource flows into these countries. We therefore call on the international community to rededicate itself to the provisions of the Monterrey Consensus, and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. In this regard, my delegation welcomes the panel of eminent personalities established by the former British Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair, to monitor pledges made at G8 summits including those made at the

Gleneagles Summit. My delegation considers it particularly critical to take action to reverse the downward trend in overseas development financing.

We also need to re-examine the framework of key rules that govern international trade and finance, global competition, foreign direct investment and international migration. It is important that bodies making rules in these areas accommodate the views of developing countries in general, and least developed countries in particular. For Africa, where we must of necessity move away from aid dependency, the development of the continent must be addressed from the crucial vantage point of trade and market access, so as to enable our economies to be advantageously positioned in order for us to begin enjoying the fruits of globalization.

Mr. President,

My delegation would like to seize this opportunity to request this august assembly to pause for a moment and reflect on the plight of the poor around the world. Poverty anywhere is indeed a problem everywhere. And it is worth remembering that the plight of the poor can affect the comfort and security of the more privileged and affluent members of the human society. Poverty engenders many economic, social and political problems. It negatively affects global health and is a threat to international peace and security. Therefore the need for greater international solidarity to fight poverty in all its forms cannot be over-emphasized.

The development efforts of most governments, particularly in Africa, continue to be undermined by the scourges of malaria, HIV/AIDS and other health related issues, such as hunger, and malnutrition. I must thank our true friends and development partners for the excellent support they are providing to the Gambian people, particularly in the areas of health, education, and agriculture. It is my hope that the international community will live up to its commitment to support the efforts of our governments as we strive to improve the well-being of our people. In order to achieve the MDGs by 2015, which we should all consider to be a necessary condition to affect people's living standards, Africa needs significant investments in health, education, agriculture and infrastructure.

Mr. President,

Allow me to turn to peace and security in the world, especially on our continent: Africa. In recent years, we have witnessed significant improvements in most of the continent. In West Africa, we have been consolidating the peace and deepening the democratization process. The people of

Sierra Leone have just gone through a peaceful, free and fair presidential election. My delegation would like to congratulate them and wish the new Government success in its efforts to follow the path of rapid socio-economic development for the Sierra Leonean people. The return of peace to Cotê d'Ivoire is a welcome and a vital development not only for the country and its people, but also for the entire West Africa Sub-Region. The Government of the Gambia fully welcomes the Ivorian Government's commitment to organize presidential elections shortly, and we wish the friendly people of that great country every success.

The situation in Somalia requires the urgent response of the international community. Lasting peace, stability, and reconciliation can only return to that country when the transitional government is empowered to establish law and order. The United Nations as the overall guardian of international peace and security should support the efforts of the African Union and Somalia's neighbours, to rally the various factions together and bring lasting peace to that country.

Mr. President,

As we gather here, thousands of innocent civilians including women and children continue to be victimized by the fratricidal conflict in the Sudanese region of Darfur. My Government welcomes the commitment of the International Community to replace the existing African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) with a hybrid UN-African Union Mission (UNAMIS), invested with a more active mandate to keep and enforce the peace in Darfur. We in The Gambia, have been in the forefront in African Union's peace efforts in Darfur and we will continue to support the International effort with a substantial contribution of Gambian Troops to serve in the new arrangement. At this juncture, let me salute the Sudanese Government's cooperation and manifest willingness to find a lasting solution through a political process.

Mr. President,

The peace and security situation of the Great Lakes Region remains a major source of concern. While we welcome the successful elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo last year, we recognize the fragility and precarious nature of peace in that country and the region as a whole. My delegation therefore calls on the International Community to continue to work towards the search for ways of achieving durable peace. We also urge the International Community to assist in bringing all the parties to the negotiation table, and to move vigorously to address the humanitarian situation.

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Mr. President,

Just as the security and peace situation in Africa preoccupy my delegation, so also do the conflict and turmoil in the rest of the world, especially in Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine. The conflict in Iraq remains a major source of concern, not least because it now threatens the peace and security of the entire Middle Eastern region, if not the whole world. Within Iraq itself, the conflict has brought untold suffering on the civilian population including women and children. Furthermore, the alarming rate of civilian deaths cannot be justified. Also, the resultant large volume of refugee outflows have now placed unbearable pressure on the economies of the neighbouring countries. While we recognize the potential of refugees to make positive contributions to the economies and societies of their host countries, refugee outflows of the magnitude being seen in Iraq can only pose a threat to social and political security. We strongly urge that as a matter of urgency, alternatives be found to the resolution of the conflict in that country.

A new approach to the situation in Afghanistan is also long overdue. The country needs more of political dialogue than military engagement. We also wish to see leaders in the region engage each other in meaningful dialogue and renew their commitment to good neighbourliness.

The unresolved question of the self-determination of the Palestinian people remains the most important political and moral question of our time. A few years ago, we all placed our faith in the so-called Roadmap for Peace, and hoped that the Quartet would bring about the eagerly awaited two-state solution. My delegation now very much welcomes the new initiative being led by the United States of America and very much looks forward to the convening of a conference that would once and for all settle this festering imbroglio. We urge all concerned to come to the table in good faith and with a strong will to make a positive contribution to the search for a lasting solution to the problems of peace and security in the Middle East and, indeed, throughout the world.

Mr. President,

Allow me to highlight some issues relating to international justice. The illegal, outrageous and protracted embargo imposed on the friendly Republic of Cuba has no basis; its is void of political as well as commercial sense, and those who impose the embargo should join our ranks in the international community, in rejecting the embargo as a colossal error of judgment that should

never have happened in the first place. We hope to see a repeal of all laws, measures, and policies in this direction.

Mr. President,

My delegation sincerely hopes that the international community will reflect deeply on the dangers posed by the increasing and unprovoked militarization of the Taiwan straits. Regional, and ultimately, international stability are under threat from the build up of thousands of military warheads for use in attacks on Taiwan. The problem of the Taiwan Strait is one that is very serious, and which calls for urgent action by the international community. The United Nations should not wait until it is too late to address the situation of the strait and its growing militarization. We, the member States of the United Nations have abdicated our responsibilities towards Taiwan by refusing it full membership of the organization. The legitimate aspirations of the people of this dynamic, technologically developed economic powerhouse ought to be fulfilled by member states of the United Nations.

Mr. President,

Let me seize this opportunity to assure this august Assembly that my delegation is not acting against the interest of any member state. Rather, we speak out in the interest of peace across the Taiwan Strait, peace throughout the Asia-Pacific region, and indeed, peace in the whole world. It is in this spirit that my delegation would continue to call for the General Assembly to address this threat to international peace and security.

Mr. President,

Let me conclude by putting on record, the Gambia's frustration with the stalled reforms of the United Nations. As the former Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Anan, said when the proposals were first made two years ago, no reform of the UN can be complete without the reform of the Security Council. For us in Africa, it is just unacceptable that a body that decides on life and death issues for millions of Africans, includes no African country as a permanent member. This is why the Gambia continues to strongly endorse the Ezulwini Consensus that represents Africa's Common Position on the reform of the Security Council.

Mr. President,

At a time when we are all committed to good governance at the national level, we cannot ignore good governance at the international level. The proposed reforms of the United Nations, especially the Security Council must be seen within this context.

I wish us all a very fruitful Session, and thank you for your attention.

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