

22 April 2009

**Statement of Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann,  
President of the 63rd Session of the General Assembly,  
regarding the Proclamation of Mother Earth Day**

H.E. President Evo Morales Ayma, President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia,  
Excellencies,  
Dear Friends,  
Brothers and Sisters All,

I am very pleased to preside over this session to consider and take action on the draft resolution entitled Mother Earth Day. I wish to acknowledge the presence of my dear friend the President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia Evo Morales Ayma. As you know, Bolivia has taken the lead in bringing this resolution to the General Assembly and we are grateful for the personal attention that President Morales has given this important initiative.

The proclamation of 22 April as International Mother Earth Day is an acknowledgement that the Earth and its ecosystems provide us with life and sustenance throughout our lives. It also recognizes our responsibility, as called for in the 1992 Rio Declaration, to promote harmony with nature and the Earth to achieve a just balance among the economic, social and environmental needs of present and future generations of humanity.

Mother Earth is a common expression for our planet in many cultures. It reflects the interdependence that exists among human beings, other living species and the planet we all inhabit.

The draft resolution has been led by the Plurinational State of Bolivia and co-sponsored by Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Barbados, Belarus, Benin, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Mongolia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Paraguay, Philippines, Portugal, Saint Lucia, Serbia, Seychelles, Somalia, Spain, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Togo, Uruguay and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The proclamation of 22 April as International Mother Earth Day aims to invite States, the United Nations and the rest of the inter-governmental system, organized civil society and other stakeholders to observe the day each year. It provides a timely opportunity to raise public awareness around the world to the challenges that we face regarding the well-being of the planet and all the life it supports.

(proceed to formal text...)

Part Two

(Continuation –concluding remarks of formal plenary meeting)

I am very pleased that we have adopted this historic resolution that establishes International Mother Earth Day. I wish to thank President Evo Morales Ayma for his inspiring words and honouring the Assembly with his presence today. He deserves our congratulations for making our concerns about our beleaguered planet a bigger part of public discourse. I thank our distinguished delegates for their insightful interventions as well.

I believe the Assembly’s adoption of International Mother Earth Day has special significance at this point in our human odyssey. As scientists have pointed out, we are approaching and may have already reached a tipping point at which the damage that we are doing to the environment is irreversible. We may face a future of inexorable decline as we destroy the fragile ecosystems that support all life on the planet. The question before us is how to slow this decline or, in the best of scenarios, how to reverse it and return our planet to good health?

We are also approaching a tipping point in our collective awareness of the terrible harm our species is inflicting on dear Mother Earth. We are now aware of the miraculous intricacy of our land and marine biodiversity as well as their fragility. Two years ago this noble body declared 2010 as in International Year of Biodiversity as part of the effort to slow the horrendous rate of loss of our planetary wealth. Still we continue to squander our natural abundance in the name of a quasi-religious faith in profit and the marketplace. The unfolding economic and financial crisis must be seen not only as policy failures, but as a warning that our hyper-consumption, unfettered greed and obsessive accumulation of power and dominance have no future if we are to survive.

The Assembly is sending a special message of hope with Mother Earth Day. We are putting people and the well-being of the planet at the centre of our attention and recognizing good stewardship of our dwindling resources as a shared responsibility. Mother Earth, after all, nurtures and sustains life and our very humanity. It is only right that we, as Sisters and Brothers that we are, take care of Mother Earth in return. Let us become good stewards once again. Let us listen to the wisdom of indigenous peoples who, despite all odds, have sustained their profound links to nature. Let us support the billion small food producers who, with sustainable farming methods, can continue to provide us with healthy food and not be driven into abject poverty by unfair trade policies and rapacious agro-industries. Our decision today marks one more symbolic step in changing the dominant mindset that has brought us so close to self-destruction

This morning we have another opportunity to pause and reflect on this moment in history – its challenges and its opportunities. I would like to now close this formal meeting of the Assembly and turn to the informal segment.

I have the honour to introduce two people – two heroes of Mother Earth – who have had an enormous influence on my thinking about our relationship with Mother Nature. Leonardo Boff is perhaps the most widely recognized prophetic voice in Latin America today – a voice that magnificently articulates

our special charter with Mother Earth. I am very grateful to the Brazilians Government for making possible his presence among us for this historic special event.

And our other special guest, Maude Barlow, is known and loved by all of us who recognize in her the world's leading authority on water. She promotes the same spiritual values as President Morales and Leonardo Boff – values that are indispensable for the survival of our species. Leonardo and Maude honour us with their presence. We open this informal segment with a brief presentation by Ms. Barlow.

(Closing remarks for informal session)

On behalf of the Assembly I want to express my heartfelt thanks to Ms. Barlow, my special advisor on water, and Mr. Boff for sharing their vision for returning Mother Earth to good health. I think their message – as well as the message of the General Assembly – is one of hope and solidarity.

Clearly we need to mobilize our forces on a global scale to confront the problems we have created. There is no doubt in my mind that the United Nations provides the best platform for the enormous tasks ahead. This forum as well needs the inspiration and the vision that our scientists, civil society activists and political leaders can provide.

Let us thank President Morales and Maude Barlow and Leonardo Boff for their contributions today. And let me close by inviting you to attend the important special event celebrating International Mother Earth Day this afternoon from 2:30 to 5:30 in Conference room 4.

Thank you.