



Statement

H.E. Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann

Acceptance speech upon his election as President

New York, 4 June 2008

[*Spoke in Spanish*]: I am very moved to feel the affection and confidence that members have shown towards me in electing me President of the General Assembly for the sixty-third session. I thank all Member States, in particular my Nicaragua and my greater homeland, the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, for their generous endorsement by acclamation. We must maintain that unity in order to help put our Organization on track to meet resolutely the demands of the third millennium.

The United Nations still has a lot to contribute to the world. However, in order to do so effectively, it must be precisely what its name implies: an organization of united nations, not an organization of nations in disarray, much less one of subjugated nations. Unity based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members is currently the greatest demand placed on the Organization—unity in the struggle to democratize the United Nations and unity in the effort to preserve the world and all manifestations of life within it, for the sake of present and future generations, from the scourge of war between Member States and acts of aggression such as those occurring in Iraq and Afghanistan. There must be unity in the struggle to eradicate hunger and poverty, and unity in the struggle to preserve the world's indispensable biodiversity and cultural diversity.

What we need, dear sisters and brothers, is an infallible unity in order to build solidarity. We should not forget those paradigmatic phrases of the Constitution of UNESCO:

“[A] peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace which could secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world, and [. . .] the peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind.”

Without that peace, which springs from solidarity, the world cannot be saved and it will continue to sink into the morass of selfishness, individualism and indifference towards the fate of the other half of the men, women and children on Earth who live, or rather survive, submerged in hunger and poverty. Hunger and poverty are inexcusable while others spend lavishly on luxury items and superfluous things and devote trillions to wars. We need great unity to free ourselves, together, from so much folly.

The unity that the world requires of us is born of love and a desire to transform all of us into instruments of peace, justice and solidarity. I firmly believe that that is essential to ensuring that we achieve our common goals while respecting our most important and diverse national interests. We cannot therefore allow hatred, rancour or a desire for revenge in our struggle. On the contrary, that is what we must firmly fight with unbending love and respect. Ghandi must be our paradigm in the struggle for a better world.

The United Nations continues to be the most important organization in the struggle for the survival of the human species and of any manifestation of life here on Earth. All of us here in the United Nations, however, are and should continue to be committed, individually and collectively, to respecting the principles and rules of behaviour established in the Charter. It makes no sense to sign the Charter and then proceed to act as if it entailed no obligations—as if others are obliged to abide by it, but we are not. In addition to being a grave mistake, that would work against the noble principles of the United Nations and the hopes of humanity.

The selfishness out of which we often act is responsible for the most pressing problems in the world today. The anthropogenic nature of some natural phenomena, including climate change, can no longer be refuted. It is also irrefutable that the behaviour of some Member States has caused the United Nations to lose much of its

credibility as an organization capable of putting an end to war and of eradicating extreme poverty from our planet.

We should stop the denials. We should begin to act seriously and, with all due responsibility, call things by their proper names and handle our problems with total and complete candour.

However, the candour and steadfastness that we are calling for, and which we will need if we are to prevail in our struggle, should not be confused with an invitation to lash out against any particular country, as if in vengeance. That would be to deny that all of us, without exception, are to a lesser or greater degree responsible for the regrettable state of our world.

It is incumbent upon all of us to unite and steer our Organization and our world towards the path of peace and solidarity. The United Nations has officially designated 2009 as the International Year of Reconciliation. Let us fully heed that call. Reconciliation does not oblige us to forget the past; that would be impossible. What reconciliation obliges us to do is prevent memories of past outrages from becoming obstacles to our unity from now on. We must therefore be careful not to wear each other down through futile recriminations.

I firmly believe in the revitalizing power of love, and that the different and better world that each and every one of us yearns for is possible. That is why I am here and why I have agreed to assume the great responsibility that the General Assembly has just bestowed upon me.

I wish to express my deep gratitude for President Kerim's cordiality towards me and for the frank and honest way he has shared his experience with me. His cooperation during the transition period will be extremely important for me, my staff and our management of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly. I applaud the manner in which President Kerim responded to the general acclaim in this Organization for the revitalization of the General Assembly in order to facilitate the construction and development of a more dynamic and efficient multilateralism while restoring the desired equilibrium between the principal organs of our system.

Rest assured, Sir, that during the sixty-third session of the General Assembly, we will follow your dynamic example by giving all of our support to the Working Group on the revitalization of this Assembly, and we

will endeavour to strengthen its role, its efficacy and its efficiency, reaffirming the leadership role assigned to it by the Charter.

I also wish to acknowledge our dear Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, with whom I will undoubtedly work in a spirit of excellent cooperation and coordination. I applaud our Secretary-General's vigorous and swift response to the most pressing issues of the day. I would like specifically to mention his leadership in facing the worldwide crisis unleashed by skyrocketing food prices, with its traumatic consequences for billions of people around the world.

I wish to congratulate in advance those who are about to be elected Vice-Presidents. I extend my warmest congratulations to all of them. I assure them that their jobs will not be merely ornamental or limited to protocol. We have a lot of work ahead of us, and I plan to share my responsibilities with the Vice-Presidents. I will endeavour to ensure that we make an exemplary team, which will encourage greater unity within our Organization.

In addition to paying priority attention to the fight to eliminate hunger and poverty from the world and to democratize the United Nations, we will pay very special attention to such issues as climate change, the energy crisis, terrorism, human rights, disarmament and nuclear control, the rights of women and children, and the preservation of biodiversity and cultural diversity. Of course, all of the other very important issues on the Organization's agenda will also receive all the attention they deserve.

Once again, I extend my very warm thanks to all. Members may rest assured that we will spare no efforts to ensure that the sixty-third session of the General Assembly will be prepared to meet the demands of this very difficult, but also hopeful, moment.

The winds of unity are blowing stronger than ever south of the Rio Grande [*also known as Rio Bravo*]. Just 12 days ago, on 23 May, a treaty was signed in Brasilia to establish the Union of South American Nations. That is indeed cause for celebration. It brings us great joy and inspires us to keep fighting with even more zeal for the unity needed not only in Latin America and the Caribbean, but throughout the world and our Organization. The more united our nations are, the more successful the United Nations will be in definitively eradicating war, hunger and poverty on Earth.