



STATEMENT

BY

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PRESIDENT OF THE COOPERATIVE
REPUBLIC OF GUYANA

AT THE

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON THE OCCASION OF THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY
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Mr. President, Your Majesties, Colleagues Heads of State and
Government, Excellencies, distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen

As the United Nations proudly celebrates its fiftieth anniversary this year, Guyana joins the other members of our international family in congratulating the Organisation on reaching this important milestone. In anticipation of this happy event, our people have been engaged in several commemorative activities as a demonstration of their continuing faith in the institution. It is in testimony of this faith that I have come to address this special Assembly.

Let me say at the outset, Mr. President, how pleased I am to see you, a distinguished son of Portugal, guiding our work at this historic juncture. From Portugal came a number of intrepid explorers who dared to chart a bold course through perilous seas to bridge the Old World and the New. I have no doubt that you will bring the same degree of courage and imagination to bear as we proceed in search of a New Global Human Order in which all our peoples may live in peace and prosperity.

To your predecessor in office, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, of Cote d'Ivoire, we convey our sincere gratitude for his leadership of the Assembly at a time when it is seeking to renew itself in order to better perform the many tasks entrusted to it by its membership. He has made a significant contribution to the process of reform and restructuring which has been undertaken by our organisation.

A special word of appreciation must also be said to His Excellency the Secretary General, Dr. Boutros Boutros Ghali, under whose able direction, the Secretariat strives to respond to the challenges both old and new, which today confront the United Nations.

Mr. President, Guyana's faith in this Organisation is born of the positive influence which it has had on our national life. Like so many nations represented in this august Assembly, Guyana owes its freedom and independence largely to the decolonisation efforts of the world body. Today, we continue to look to it for the preservation of our hard won sovereignty and territorial integrity. Its lofty principles and provisions provide a shield upon which we rely for our security.

Under its auspices we have sought to develop full political, economic and social relations with sister states in the world community. On the basis of mutual understanding and respect, we have joined in the international effort to reduce conflict and maximise cooperation. Without the ready assistance of the United Nations, our achievements and progress would clearly have been more difficult. Other states, I am sure, are equally appreciative of the benefits which membership of the organisation has brought them.

I believe however, that we are yet to exploit fully the provisions of the Charter to secure global peace and stability.

Despite the ending of the Cold War, a multiplicity of local and regional conflicts continue to inflict suffering and to sap our strength. World security is also seriously undermined by new threats such as the aids pandemic, drug-trafficking, rampant poverty and environmental degradation. Our individual attempts to curb the spread of these dangers have done little to obviate their tragic consequences. These efforts must be complemented by collective action.

Our experience of half a century must surely teach us that there is no alternative to firm commitment to the UN. We cannot expect to reap the full benefits of global endeavour if we withhold our participation in its activities. The United Nations will succeed only to the extent that its members wish it to succeed. Interdependence cannot be a meaningful concept if states insist on clinging to selfish national interest. We must all be prepared for the sake of the common good to sacrifice some of our particular concerns and if necessary, some of our sovereignty.

For the United Nations to reach its full potential, its members must be ready and willing to perform the multilateral agreement which its Charter represents. As with every contractual arrangement, there are both rights to be honoured and obligations to be discharged. The negotiations which we have launched to elaborate an Agenda for Peace as well as an Agenda for Development should have as their aim the identification of the commitments which both developed and developing countries are prepared to

make for their common good. Only then will international cooperation have been placed on a sound and reliable footing.

Fortunately, there has never been a more propitious time for joint action than the present. The abatement of East/West rivalry has given a welcome fillip to multilateralism. This is evident in the new mood which prevails at the United Nations. We should capture this mood and, with determination, seek to strengthen the Organisation to enable it to meet the challenges which face it in the post Cold War period. Wherever necessary, we must reform and restructure its machinery so that it might better discharge the functions for which it was designed.

Mr. President, as a small state which attaches paramount importance to the collective security system provided by the United Nations, Guyana will continue to press for a reform of the Security Council so that it may effectively play the role which it has been assigned under the Charter. Persuaded of the need for more equitable representation on the Council, we would wish to see its membership suitably expanded to reflect the vast expansion which has taken place in the Assembly since 1945. Our first concern therefore is to see that the Council's present size is sufficiently enlarged to allow developing countries such as ourselves a greater voice in matters relating to international peace and security.

In principle, we are not opposed to an increase in the number of permanent members but are concerned that this should

not be to the detriment of non-permanent members. Accordingly, we would not wish to see a Council that gives dominance to one region above the legitimate interests of others. Due cognisance must be taken, as Resolution 48/25 requires, of the principle of equitable representation. We are equally concerned about an extension of the veto since we believe that this runs contrary to the ideal of democratic membership. We therefore advocate a restriction in its future use with a view to its eventual elimination.

The discussions in the Working Group have revealed a wide range of views on how the Council might be best reorganised. It is no easy task to reconcile them. We are encouraged however to think that, with patience and compromise on the part of all its members, the Working Group on the Reform of the Council, will be able to successfully conclude its task in the not too distant future. Ultimately, a new Security Council will emerge - one that will be not only more representative but more effective. A Council that enjoys the confidence of all states is more likely to be relied upon to maintain international peace and security.

Mr. President, reform is sorely needed also in the economic and social activities for which the United Nations is responsible. Admittedly, many of the Specialised Agencies such as the UNDP, UNICEF and WHO - to name just a few - do excellent work often with limited resources and in most difficult circumstances. Overall, however, the Organisation's thrust for

development is weak and wobbly. Not only are efforts disperse and uncoordinated but worse yet, they suffer from a lack of direction and dynamism which are essential to progress. Clearly, the Economic and Social Council which is the organ charged with the promotion of the economic and social welfare of member states is not functioning as it should.

Disenchantment with the Council's performance has led to calls for its replacement by a stronger and more effective body. Suggestions have been made for the creation of an Economic and Social Security Council, which like its political counterpart would have the authority and capability to spearhead the campaign for development. There have been many variations of this proposal but they all have the same aim. However, since the Council's problems do not derive from its nomenclature but rather from its marginalisation by the Bretton Woods institutions, there is no reason why it could not be reinforced and given the scope to execute its full mandate. Member states, particularly the developing countries should not continue to be held to ransom by a confusion of authority resulting from inter-Agency rivalries.

Mr. President, development must be the United Nations' first order of business. The vast majority of its member states are still entrapped by poverty and unable to satisfy the most basic needs of their populations. Deprived of adequate housing, clothing, food and medical care, millions of people find it increasingly difficult to survive. Even in those countries which have experienced some economic growth, unemployment and attendant

social pressures have combined to destroy entire societies. As we now know only too well, it is not only the small and weak states that suffer from this state of degradation. Poverty and unemployment now exist in the mansions of industrialised nations. The situation has now become so critical that unless urgent action is taken to remedy it, our world will be plunged into further chaos and our civilization, such as we know it, threatened with collapse.

As a victim of this widening crisis, my own country has made a valiant effort to combat its worst effects. The Government which I head has sought to implement political, economic and social policies designed to relieve the burden which our people now bear and to give them the opportunity to improve their circumstances. By providing for the growth of democracy and free enterprise, we have encouraged the full development of the human potential. Yet such is the oppressive weight of our debt obligations that we are hard put to overcome our difficulties. Despite a sustained growth rate of 8% over the past few years, we are simply unable to satisfy the wide array of social needs which cry out for satisfaction. Without external assistance, we cannot easily make progress.

Our economy recently received a serious setback with the occurrence of a major environmental disaster. At the Omai Gold Mining operations in the Essequibo region, there was a severe spillage of cyanide slurry into the nearby river. As a result all aquatic life was destroyed and the surrounding villages

exposed to possible harm. Fortunately, with the timely intervention of the Government, assisted by a number of friendly Governments and international agencies, we were able to bring the situation under control. Needless to say, however, this was not without cost to our developmental effort.

Mr. President, it must be clear to all that until and unless there is full international cooperation to restore buoyancy to the global economy, we will continue to witness the spread of poverty and social disintegration. Beggar-thy-neighbour policies which cater only to selfish concerns will retard the establishment of just and equitable arrangements that would allow all nations to develop themselves. Less than generous provisions of development assistance will seriously curtail the ability of developing countries to address their many problems. We must therefore find the necessary political will to support global economic recovery and growth.

At the World Summit for Social Development held earlier this year in Copenhagen, Denmark, I advocated the adoption of a New Global Human Order in recognition of the fact that the North-South, East-West consensus that has emerged in respect of development, the role of the state and the market and a sustainable environment has created the need for a new basis for the conduct of international relations. Inherent in this consensus however, are several contradictions which have generated new social, economic and political problems of unintended character, complexity and magnitude.

In the socio-economic field, for example, the ascendancy of economic liberalism has clearly brought with it the accentuation of inequality at all levels - within countries, developed and developing and among countries North and South, East and West. Individualism and materialism are extolled at the expense of social and human values. The market mechanism which has been touted as the most effective means of securing development is clearly not the panacea it is said to be. Moreover, while the international community says it is committed to the reduction of poverty, national and international policies do not reflect this commitment.

The ascendancy of democracy appears to have brought with it, in some instances, not greater people participation and consensus, but the rule of the powerful and the manipulation of the majority. Moreover, its presence at the national level contrasts starkly with its absence in the wider community of nations. It seems also to be fostering isolationism among the rich rather than solidarity among humankind in the cause of universal peace and prosperity. Without that solidarity, however, there can be no impetus toward genuine interdependence and cooperation among nations. I would therefore hope that this Assembly will give serious examination to these inconsistencies with a view to eliminating them by the declaration of a New Global Human Order that would bring peace and prosperity to all peoples.

The several Summit Conferences, that have been held

during the past five years, have led me to believe that the basis for such an Order now exists. At the World Summit for Children which was held here in New York in September 1990, we agreed to take joint action to protect our young generation from the ravages of poverty and despair. Three years ago in Rio de Janeiro, we expressed our determination to preserve our fragile ecosystem in the interest of sustainable development. Similarly, at the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo at which we considered the rational management of the earth's finite resources. At the World Social Summit in Copenhagen in March of this year, we analysed the problems of poverty, unemployment and social disintegration. Finally, only a few weeks ago at Beijing we focused our attention on the role of women in our societies in order to assure them of their rightful place.

We should now hasten to synthesise these far-reaching commitments into an appropriate Declaration of undertakings and a comprehensive Agenda for Development. These documents can be then transformed into a global compact that would reflect the concerns and obligations of all the parties. Like the Lome Convention on which development cooperation between many African, Caribbean and Pacific countries and the European Union has been based for many years, this compact will provide the stability and predictability which are needed to build a firm and successful partnership for development. I emphasise the concept of partnership since in this new and mutually accepted relationship, both sides will have a say on what form and conditions their cooperation will assume.

In the end, however the various agreements which we have reached in our series of Summit Conferences will come to nought without the provision of considerable new funding. Developed countries who themselves are now faced with economic and social difficulties, are reluctant to consider new approaches for assistance by developing countries. Yet, with imagination and initiative, I believe that we can readily find significant additional resources. We need only to realise both in the North and the South that an investment has to be made in the creation of a New Order from which both can benefit.

One attractive suggestion is the setting aside of a small percentage of the world's expenditure on arms for development purposes. UNDP has estimated that if military budgets were to be reduced by only 3% during this decade, roughly \$1.5 trillion would be obtained by way of a "peace dividend." There is no reason why now that the Cold War has ended, such a redirection of resources cannot take place. Another proposal that merits consideration is a tax on producers of pollution and speculative currency movements. In terms of the latter it has been calculated that on the basis of a 0.5% tax, some US\$1500 billion can be found. These are no piffling sums. Along with an appropriate measure of debt relief, they can help to redress the serious imbalance which now exists between developed and developing countries.

Mr. President, I know that some may consider these proposals radical. Yet the problems which the United Nations

faces now require radical solutions. As the Secretary General continues to point out, the implementation of the organisation's many mandates urgently require more financial resources. So too do the several agreements which we have signed to cooperate in areas of common concern. We must make it our duty, therefore, not only to pay our contributions in time but also to find additional funding that would put the world body on a sound footing and allow it to cope with the challenges of the twenty-first century.

There is no greater gift that we can give to the United Nations on this its fiftieth birthday than our total commitment to work for its preservation and indeed for its improvement. As a former Secretary General, Dag Hammarskjold once said: "The UN is not some abstract Picasso painting but is something which we ourselves have drawn." Let us therefore resolve, on this historic occasion to give new life to this Organisation which despite many obstacles to its operation, has discharged many of the functions for which it was created. And let us proceed to construct a New Global Human Order in which all peoples can live in peace and dignity.

I thank you.

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