

NICARAGUA



ACCEPTANCE SPEECH
of H.E. Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann upon his election as
President of U.N. General Assembly 63rd Session

New York, June 4 2008

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Mr. President

Mr. Secretary-General

Distinguished delegates

Friends all,

I am very moved to feel the affection and confidence you have shown for me by electing me President of the Sixty-Third Session of the General Assembly. I thank all of the member states, particularly my Nicaragua and my greater homeland, the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, for their generous endorsement by acclamation. That unity we must maintain in order to prepare our Organization well to meet the demands of the third millennium.

The United Nations still has a lot to contribute to this world, but in order to be effective it must be what its name implies: an organization of *united* nations, not nations that are dispersed, or even worse, subjugated. Unity “based on the principle of sovereign equality among all its members” is the greatest demand on our Organization today. Our nations must be united in the struggle to democratize the United Nations, united in their determination to preserve the world and all expressions of life within it, for the sake of present and future generations, from the scourge of war among member states and acts of aggression such as those occurring in Iraq and Afghanistan. And they must be united in the struggle to eradicate hunger and poverty as well as in the struggle for the preservation of the indispensable biodiversity and cultural diversity.

What we need, dear sisters and brothers, is a foolproof unity with which we can build solidarity. We should not forget those paradigmatic phrases of UNESCO's Constitution: ...**"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 that the peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind"**.¹

Without this peace, resulting from solidarity, the world cannot be saved and it will continue sinking 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. Such hunger and poverty is inexcusable, while others spend lavishly on luxury items, superfluous things, and trillions on wars. We need this unity to free ourselves, together, from so much senselessness.

The unity which the world requires of us is one born out of love and a desire to make each of ourselves instruments of peace, justice, and solidarity. I firmly believe this solidarity is essential to ensure that we achieve our common goals while respecting our diverse national interests. Therefore we cannot allow hatred, rancor, or a desire for revenge into our struggle. On the contrary, this is what we must firmly fight against, with unbending love and respect. Ghandi must be our paradigm in this 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 even of any manifestation of life here on Earth. But the United Nations is and should continue to be each and every one of us, committed individually and collectively to respect the principles and rules of behavior established in the Charter. It makes no sense to sign the charter and then proceed to act

¹ Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. London, 16 November 1945.

as if it entailed no obligations—as if “others” are obliged to abide by it, but not us. In addition to being a grave mistake, that would work against the noble principles of the United Nations and the hopes of humanity.

Our selfishness is responsible for some of the most pressing problems in the world today. The anthropogenic nature of some natural phenomena and even climate change itself is something that is no longer refuted. Also irrefutable is the fact that the behavior of some member states has caused the United Nations to lose credibility as an organization capable of putting an end to war and 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 frankness.

However, the candor and steadfastness which we are calling for, and which we will need in order to prevail in our struggle, should not be confused with an invitation to assail any country, as if to return their previous blows with other blows. That would be to deny that *all of us*, without exception, are to a greater or lesser degree responsible for the regrettable state in which we find our world.

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

I firmly believe in the revitalizing power of love, and that an alternative 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 which you have just bestowed upon me.

I wish to express my deep gratitude for President Kerim's cordiality, 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 and thus facilitate the construction and development of a more dynamic and efficient multilateralism and recover the desired equilibrium between the principal organs of our system.

Rest assured, Mr. President, that during the period of the sixty-third General Assembly, we will follow your dynamic example by giving all of our support to the Working Group on the revitalization of this General Assembly and we will endeavor to strengthen its role and its efficacy, reaffirming the leadership characteristic assigned to it by the Charter.

I also wish to acknowledge our dear Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, with whom I am certain to maintain very good relations of cooperation and coordination. I applaud our Secretary-General's vigorous and swift response to the most pressing issues of the day, and would like to specifically mention his leadership in facing the worldwide crisis unleashed by skyrocketing food prices, with the traumatic consequences this has yielded for billions of people around the world.

I wish to congratulate in advance the vice presidents who are about to be elected. I extend to all of you my warmest congratulations. I assure you that your 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 endeavor to ensure that we form an exemplary team which will encourage greater levels of 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 special attention to the issues of: climate change, energy crisis, terrorism and 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 the attention they deserve.

Once again, my very warm thanks to all of you. 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. Just 12 days ago, on May 23rd, a treaty was signed in Brasilia to establish UNASUR—the South American Union of Nations.

This 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 UN will be in wiping war, hunger, and poverty off the face of the Earth.

¡Muchas gracias!