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STATEMENT

BY

H.E. MR. PÁL SCHMITT

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF HUNGARY

AT THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 66TH SESSION

OF THE

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me at the outset congratulate you on your election to the high post of the President of the 66th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

I welcome South Sudan as the 193th member of the United Nations. I commend the successful conduct of the referendum on their independence as a manifestation of the principle of self-determination. This historic act has put an end to a long civil war on the African continent and opens up new horizons for the stability and prosperity of the people of South Sudan.

Mr. President,

Hungary fully aligns itself with the statement made earlier by President Van Rompuy on behalf of the European Union. To complement this, allow me to outline my country's position on three issues figuring high on our foreign policy and development agenda, namely the Arab Spring, sustainable development and the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases.

Arab Spring

Mr. President,

More than 20 years ago, Central and Eastern Europe - including Hungary - was the scene of sweeping political changes. Beginning from early 2011, the world has yet again witnessed the outburst of popular will for profound transformations, this time in North Africa and the Middle East. Those of us, who took active part in the democratization process and the transition to rule of law and market economy in our region, have been following the events of the Arab Spring with great sympathy and understanding. The revolutions leading to sweeping shifts in Tunisia, Egypt and other countries were driven by a sincere desire for a better life and for putting in place new political systems capable of better responding to the aspirations of all parts of the society. The voice of Tahrir Square echoed the aspirations of millions of people.

The overthrow of autocratic regimes, nevertheless, is only the first step in this direction. As shown by our own experience, the most difficult stages of the transformation process are yet to come. The victorious popular uprisings of the Arab Spring come across tremendous challenges in terms of establishing new structures of power, drafting new constitutions and other basic laws as well as conducting free and democratic elections, just to mention a few. These must be essentially internally driven processes, carried out with the support of the international community.

The Hungarian society has, on the one hand, already met successfully many of these challenges and, on the other hand, has also made some avoidable mistakes. We therefore feel equipped to share our experience and offer a substantive toolkit for good governance and democratic changes. As a good friend and supporting partner, we truly hope that those

witnessing transitional periods today will be able to benefit from both our achievements and omissions.

We are of course far from trying to give advises and provide readymade solutions. While advocating the universal character of the human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as the virtues of rule of law and good governance, we believe that those ideals can only be implemented in conjunction with the respect of cultural, religious and other traditions of each nation.

At the present juncture of what we conceive as a long transformation process in the Arab world, we thus offer to share our own experiences and lessons learned. The Hungarian Government, in cooperation with NGOs, has already carried out, and plans to carry out in the future, concrete projects and programs aimed at, *inter alia*, assisting the new emerging democracies in North Africa and the Middle East in the field of institution building, security sector reform, drawing up the legislative framework for the political and economic renewal. We welcome the central role and increasing involvement of the UN and its various agencies in the support of the democratization of these countries. Hungary stands ready to contribute to such efforts and provide its specialized expertise.

Sustainable development

Mr. President,

Over the past two decades since the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the three pillars of sustainable development have been put in the focus of the international development agenda. Time has proven that only a coherent approach to the environmental, economic and social aspects of this concept is capable of ensuring the long-term survival and prosperity of mankind. We should not miss this chance to formulate new courses of action in the era of reinforced mutual interdependence and globalization.

Against the background of the constantly deteriorating global environment, it is a more and more demanding task to strike the necessary balance between ensuring growth in all regions of the world, decent life for our societies, and the preservation of natural resources in the interests of the survival of our planet. Responding to this dilemma, the concept of green economy is gaining an ever widening support. We regard Rio+20 as a unique event to generate the widest possible support for and acceptance of this green concept. Its aim is to support sustainability to socio-economic development at national, regional and global levels. In addition to this, the concept of green economy has the potential to also contribute to job creation and eradication of poverty. If implemented in a coherent manner, it will create new resources for achieving the internationally agreed development goals. No doubt, these goals do require innovative thinking in terms of technology transfer, investments and fair trade.

In order to put this concept in practice, a reorganization of the environmental architecture of the United Nations is needed. Such a reform should pursue the goal of streamlining and pooling the existing structures, with a view of increasing coherence and efficiency of the whole system as such.

Prevention and control of non-communicable diseases

Mr. President,

It is our shared responsibility to develop joint strategies to mitigate the effects of non-communicable diseases. Their rapid growth is preventable and can be controlled to a significant extent. Hungary has been in the forefront of this fight, with a national cancer and diabetes control systems in place that may contribute to paving the way for functional alternatives around the world. It is also our fundamental belief that the development of comprehensive national and regional strategies for control programs can seriously bring down the growing rate of these illnesses. These can contribute to prevention, early detection and adequate treatment in a cost-effective way. We are also proud of Hungary's long lasting traditions of sharing knowledge and providing educational and training programmes for students and experts from all over the world. In past decades hundreds of students from outside Hungary obtained their medical degree in our country. We are cooperating with various countries, sharing knowledge and experiences in order to contribute to the collective efforts that need to be carried out to bring about better health worldwide.

The high level meeting has given a momentum to the fight that needs to be fought not only on an individual level by victims of these diseases, but also by our countries and by the international community together. We need to capitalize on this in order to reach the ultimate goal of saving lives around the world and thereby further enhance one of the founding objectives of the UN: human development.

Hungary's candidacy for a non-permanent seat of the Security Council for 2012-2013

Excellencies,

As you may all know that Hungary has put forward its candidacy to become part of the Council in 2012-2013. We continue upholding the principles and objectives enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and international law, such as the equality of nations, peaceful settlement of disputes and respect for human rights. Hungary stands also ready to contribute in a meaningful way to all efforts aimed at enhancing the capabilities of the UN in the field of conflict-prevention and mediation. We believe in an integrated approach to conflict resolution and will advocate a stronger integration of security and development concerns as well as an enhanced interaction between the Council and other main organs of the UN.

Mr. President,

Let me conclude by assuring you once again that Hungary will continue to contribute at its utmost to strengthening the global cooperation of countries within the United Nations system that is so strongly needed to tackle today's challenges.

I thank you, Mr. President.