



PALABRAS DE S.E. FRANCISCO ÁLVAREZ DE SOTO

VICECANCILLER DE LA REPÚBLICA DE PANAMÁ

EN EL

DEBATE GENERAL DEL SEXAGÉSIMO SEXTO PERÍODO DE SESIONES

DE LA ASAMBLEA GENERAL DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS

**“LA FUNCIÓN DE LA MEDIACIÓN EN EL ARREGLO PACÍFICO DE
CONTROVERSIAS, LA PREVENCIÓN DE CONFLICTOS Y SU SOLUCIÓN”.**

Nueva York, 27 de septiembre de 2011

Cotejar con intervención definitiva



Mister President,

Distinguished Delegations,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour to address the international community, to firstly express the complacency of the Government of the Republic of Panama on the election of His Excellency Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, as President of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

The delegation of Panama is gratified by the celebration of this General Debate with the presence of the Secretary General and the representatives of the different Members States, Observers and organizations and congratulates the President of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly, for his excellent work.

President Al-Nasser has invited us to focus this debate on strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution. The transcendence of this theme invites us to reflect profoundly on its multiple dimensions, since mediation is an essential instrument in the preservation of international peace and security.

Mister President,

Panama is a multiethnic country where people of diverse races, cultures, creeds and languages coexist in harmony and freedom, and where the adherence to representative democracy, independence and the respect of sovereignty, ideology and territorial integrity of all countries, are unalienable particularities of the qualities that define us as a Nation.

In our view and as a founding member of this distinguished Assembly, Panama will always advocate for international peace and security, the promotion of dialogue between Member States, the strengthening of multilateral dynamics and facilitating the mission of the United Nations.

This is due largely to accumulated experiences during the course of the diplomatic trajectory of our country. More than three decades ago, the Security Council celebrated an extraordinary session outside these Headquarters, for a second and last occasion, with the purpose of politically mediating the dispute over the sovereignty of Panama over its Canal and the territories adjacent to the Canal Zone, controlled then by the United States of America, which constituted the platform that launched the Panamanian cause to the international stage.

The joint will and intervention of the Members of this illustrious General Assembly, demonstrated in its historic resolution 31/143 of 1976, which to a great extent inspired the signing of the Treaties between Panama and the United States in 1977. Nowadays, the Panama Canal, fully under our sovereign authority, is one of the most important axes of our economic development, supervised by a Panamanian administration, for the benefit of all nations. For this noble success of multilateralism, Panamanians will always be grateful to the United Nations.

In the eighties, and as agents of multilateral mediation, the Contadora Group was established in Panama, which forged a Latin-American alliance committed to democracy, economic cooperation and regional security, from which emerged the Esquipulas Peace Agreement; an overarching advancement in the consolidation of peace in Central America. The Contadora Group was the origin of the Rio Group, nowadays an important mechanism for consultation and political coordination in Latin America.

Upon regaining our democracy at the beginning of the nineties, and with the support of the United Nations Development Programme, as a Nation we initiated a sustained exercise of consultations between the principal actors in government and civil society, with the objective of strengthening our administrative institutions, securing an impeccable reversion of the Panama Canal to Panamanian hands, overcoming asymmetries within our country, and identifying strategies to accomplish our development priorities.

Throughout the past two decades, our culture of dialogue has bestowed upon us the necessary aptitudes to transform our country into a democratic and dynamic society, which is advancing with firm pace under the current administration of President Ricardo Martinelli Berrocal.

All of this has led Panama to be considered the second most competitive country in Latin America, according to the World Economic Forum classification scheme, taking into account our first-class financial system, our ports and multimodal logistics infrastructure of the highest quality, our efficient technological absorption, all in an environment that is open for business which generates global interest in direct foreign investment.

Our robust outlook for economic growth and favorable management of public debt, combined with continuous, adequate and careful financial discipline, have been determining factors in our recently achieved investment grade with a stable outlook according to the major risk rating agencies. Likewise, we have begun an active agenda of cooperation in matters of information exchange and fiscal transparency, adopting all suggested measures which have allowed compliance with the recommendations of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in this field.



Nevertheless, this journey of success has not been easy, and certainly poses many future challenges.

Mister President,

I believe that all countries gathered today will assume the main challenges that the international community faces in the achievement of a coherent restructuring of the world economy, and the reform of its institutions and control mechanisms.

Panama is fully aware of this, and thus, our international agenda directs us to actively participate in important multilateral mechanisms and economic integration fora, allowing the opening of new markets in trade, investment, tourism and technology, all for the benefit of our citizens and which, doubtlessly, Panama considers should be promoted without delay the larger economies if we really wish to overcome the difficult times faced by international markets.

Our country also understands that to guarantee a favorable economic climate, internal conflicts must be avoided, and this depends on, among many other things: the effectiveness of the democratic regime, public security, the guarantee of human rights, the responsible management of natural resources, tolerance, access to health and sanitation services, the affordability of basic goods, good governance, and inclusive and balanced development.

In Panama, after living for 21 years under a military dictatorship until 1989, we have assumed a strong commitment with democracy as a means to peacefully solve the conflicts that arise in our society.

The experiences lived under that dictatorship have led us to speak out, unequivocally, in bilateral and multilateral fora to strengthen or reestablish the validity of democratic institutions where required, and has led us to clearly express our position in defence of democracy in junctures like that of Honduras, the failed coup attempt in Ecuador or the "Arab Spring", which has brought about a wind of liberty in that region of the world.

Mister President,

The responsibility to solve disputes which catalyze international conflicts lies, primarily, on the States whose disagreement have generated such conflicts. Nevertheless, the United Nations, as the global diplomatic epicenter it should be, is called upon to evermore perfect mediation as a means to resolve international disputes. This precept is a fundamental principle of the constitutive Charter of this

organization, enshrined in its Article 33, a mandate which has materialized in numerous accomplishments around the world, when rationality, mutual understanding and concordance have prevailed over postures of aggression, hate and destruction.

Mediation and dialogue have been the position that Panama has sustained regarding conflicts that threaten to peace and international political stability. In this regard, allow me to point out that the Government of the Republic of Panama considers that the Palestinian people have the right to be recognized as a State, but they must first resolve their differences with their neighbor, Israel, which also has the right to a peaceful and harmonious coexistence with Palestine and other States of the region. There will be no better solution than that which will emerge from direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority.

Also trusting that which will emerge from a dialogue between the parties in the case of China, Panama, from the most absolute respect to the existing diplomatic truce, calls for allowing greater participation from Taiwan in the fora and international initiatives, recognizing that these peoples wish to contribute to the search for peace and global wellbeing

Another, Panama is one of twenty three nations that recognize the Republic of China (Taiwan) and at the same time maintains harmonious commercial and cultural relations with the People's Republic of China, framed by Panama's respect for the current diplomatic truce.

Therefore, and given the validity of this important clause in international law, we invite the Secretary General and the President of the General Assembly to continue promoting and enhancing the role and visibility of mediation as a viable strategy for the peaceful resolution of disputes.

However, for the United Nations system to continue its effective peace mediation activities, it is necessary that each Member State honor the commitments undertaken so that the Organization can count on sufficient resources. This call for international cooperation is particularly relevant in these times of budgetary constraints in many countries, and when the aggressive competition for scarce resources becomes one of the primary origins of armed conflicts.

Mister President,

Panama is a country with a lengthy and notable trajectory of peace and conciliation. In our opinion, the best option when facing the threat of an armed conflict is a broad, transparent and unconditional diplomatic dialogue between the parties.

In that sense, we also welcome that, in July of this year, the international community achieved an important milestone in the path to collective security by the unanimous adoption of a resolution entitled "Strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful



settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution". This consensus marks a victory for reason over the absurd unreasonableness of confrontation. The international community has identified the great advantage in investing in a concerted effort to consolidate peace, before we are forced to contain the subsequent human tragedies that result from violent conflicts, as we have been and are witnesses to, for example in Somalia, where hunger, disease and destruction reign.

Human history has taught us that hunger, misery, ignorance, injustice and social inequality engender the greatest threats to peace and security. If we, the Member States of the United Nations, are still determined and resolved to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, we must opt to proactively ensure a peace that is based not on reacting to political or military acts of aggression, but instead in trusting and guaranteeing universal and equal human rights, in all the corners of the world.

Due to our belief in the valuable role the United Nations should play, it is a great source of pride for Panama to share with this august Assembly that President Ricardo Martinelli's Government proposed the creation of the Regional Hub of the United Nations for Latin America and the Caribbean in our country, with the aim of strengthening coordination and dialogue between the regional agencies, mainly the 16 United Nations agencies already established in Panama. The National Government will finance this project, which will be a unique model of best practices in the sustainable construction in Latin America and the world.

In the last decade, our country's privileged geographic position and the logistical infrastructure that Panama City offers has attracted diverse humanitarian aid organizations; this has encouraged Panama to promote the construction of a Logistical Regional Centre for Humanitarian Assistance for the Americas. This Regional Centre shall possess the necessary agreements to expedite the entry and exit of humanitarian aid destined to help in the event of natural or other disasters, such as the one that took place in Haiti this year and where humanitarian aid is still very much needed. With these projects, we reiterate our commitment to the multilateral system and to the United Nations, and we demonstrate that small lower-middle income developing countries are also providing international cooperation even in these times of economic difficulty for the great economies.

Panama does not want to pass up the opportunity before this Assembly to call for reflection regarding the environmental, political and social challenges that all societies face and which we must overcome once again through dialogue and cooperation between States in the effort to construct responses to these global challenges.

Without a doubt, one of these great challenges is the one posed by climate change and its effects.

Mister President,

Climate change is a priority of my country's foreign policy in the environmental realm. We are committed to all efforts destined to strengthening international environmental organizations and to the struggle to find joint solutions to the causes and effects of this phenomenon.

As part of our support to the Organization's own initiatives, and for the benefit of the international community, we will host the Meeting of the special working groups of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, on the road towards the meeting of the Conference of the Parties that will soon take place in Durban, South Africa.

These working groups will gather in Panama from 1 to 7 October 2011 in order to advance modalities for a second period of commitments of reductions in carbon emissions by developed countries and the stabilization of the global temperature, with the objective of achieving progress in the complete implementation of the of the Framework Convention through long-term cooperation mechanisms.

Panama hopes that this meeting will serve as a bridge between the results obtained in the Mexico meeting and the one that shall take place in South Africa, since it is necessary to establish defined, transparent and ambitious goals, as well as to reaffirm the political will of developed countries in this matter, as it is they who have the fundamental responsibility, in conformity with the Convention.

Mister President,

As the Secretary General stated so eloquently in his address before this General Debate, "Saving our planet, lifting people out of poverty, advancing economic growth... these are all one and the same fight." This is why Panama, once again and before the General Assembly, renews its commitment to the community of Nations, to work for a world where war, sectarian hate, discrimination, intolerance, and destruction, promoted under different flags and creeds that, without justification, only generate poverty and misery, may finally be replaced by dialogue, negotiation, cooperation and friendship that stem from our differences, which have, on the contrary, always been a source of wealth and well-being for the peoples of the world.

Thank you.