



PERMANENT MISSION OF SOUTH AFRICA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
333 EAST 38TH STREET 9TH FLOOR
NEW YORK, NY 10016
Tel: (212) 213-5583 Fax: (212) 692-2498
E-mail: pmun@southafrica-newyork.net

STATEMENT BY

H.E. MS M. NKOANA-MASHABANE

**MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND
COOPERATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

AT

**THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 65TH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

NEW YORK, 25 SEPTEMBER 2010

Check against delivery

Your Excellency, the President of the United Nations General Assembly, Dr Joseph Deiss
Your Excellency, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki Moon
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

My delegation joins previous speakers in expressing our congratulations to His Excellency Dr Joseph Deiss on his election as the President of the 65th session of the United Nations General Assembly. We assure you of our full cooperation and wish you a very successful and rewarding term.

I take this opportunity to thank His Excellency Dr. Ali Abdussalam Treki for the excellent work he did in steering this organisation during his tenure as the President of the 64th session of the General Assembly.

Mr. President,

The theme of the 65th session of the General Assembly on "reaffirming the central role of the United Nations in global governance" resonates with what our global citizen, Nelson Mandela, said about this body on the occasion of its 50th anniversary, that (and I quote):

"The United Nations has to reassess its role, redefine its profile and reshape its structures. It should truly reflect the diversity of our universe and ensure equity among the nations in the exercise of power within the system of international relations in general, and the Security Council, in particular". (Close quote)

My delegation supports the choice of this theme and we wish to reiterate our belief in the centrality of the United Nations and the system of multilateralism.

Despite the challenges that face humanity in the 21st century, the relevance of the United Nations as a multilateral mechanism through which a myriad of complex world affairs can be administered and resolved cannot be over-emphasized.

These challenges compel us more than ever before to strengthen the United Nations.

South Africa is committed to working with other member states to achieve the full potential of the United Nations in addressing the urgent challenges facing the international community – in making it more relevant, more responsive to the diversity of humanity, and more representative.

Mr President,

The creation of the United Nations was one of the notable successes of the 20th century, and thanks to its existence the world has been spared another war on the scale and magnitude of the First and Second World wars.

The exponential growth in the membership of this organization over the years from 51 members in 1945 to 192 today, clearly demonstrates the confidence that peoples of the world have placed in this organization and the ideals contained in its Charter.

The universal membership of the United Nations gives it the legitimacy to be at the centre of efforts to address global challenges.

But the question, however, is whether the United Nations has leveraged this diversity of its membership as a source of strength, and acted decisively against any tendency that runs contrary to its fundamental values and founding principles.

The answer to this is a Yes, because the United Nations has in the past played an invaluable role in the world-wide process of decolonization, transforming the political landscape of the world, and bringing the much cherished freedom and independence to the peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

This organization was instrumental in bringing about the demise of the universally despised apartheid system in our own country, South Africa.

Mr President,

When this organisation recognised the "right to development" as a human right, it gave voice and hope to those who know the face of poverty.

When this organisation sent its troops to far-flung places to keep peace among neighbours who should be living together, it again underscored the reason for which it was established.

Yes, amidst all the challenges, the United Nations has been relevant and responsive to our diversity of interests.

Five years ago at the World Summit Meeting, we agreed that in order for this organisation to continue to play its central role effectively in global governance there is a need to strengthen and reposition it to deal with the challenges of the 21st century.

We believe that the revitalization of the General Assembly remains one of the cornerstones of the United Nations reform agenda. The General Assembly is the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations, and plays a critical role in the process of standard-setting and the codification of international law. Its decisions are taken by a collective and among equals, for the common good.

We will support measures that are aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the General Assembly, especially regarding its role in the maintenance of international peace and security. We have indeed witnessed with satisfaction that the General Assembly has on several occasions promptly acted where the Security Council was unwilling or unable to respond to grave developments in the aftermath of the conflict in Gaza in 2009.

Indeed, no transformation of the United Nations can be complete without the fundamental reform of the UN Security Council. South Africa believes that the objective of the reform should be that of creating a Security Council which is truly representative of the membership and effectively responsive to international crises as mandated by the Charter of the UN. It remains indeed a travesty of justice that Africa, which constitutes a large portion of the work of the Council, is not represented in the permanent category.

This world, Excellencies, should be free of weapons of mass destruction in accordance with our undertakings on total disarmament. In this regard South Africa welcomes the recently agreed program of work of the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr President,

While the right to development and freedom from want are central to the work of the United Nations, we have just come out of a meeting to review our performance in achieving the MDGs and agreed that more needs to be done to act on commitments already made by the international community in this regard.

The people of Haiti have a story to tell about how best the international community can respond in unison, and effectively, to a nation in distress.

The speedy and satisfactory conclusion of the Doha development round at the World Trade Organisation, which promised so much for the developing South, unfortunately remains a dream yet to be fulfilled.

At the same time, the global economic crisis has reiterated the point that many of us have always been making about the need to work for an international financial architecture that is sensitive to the developmental needs of the South.

The contribution of the G20 is a welcome development in this regard, and we believe that this group should compliment and reinforce the good work of the United Nations and not act as an alternative. The G20, in its composition, will also need to mirror the rich diversity of humanity by making sure that all regions of the world, Africa in particular, are well represented.

We look forward to the full implementation of undertakings made for the transformation of the international financial architecture, including the reform of the Bretton Woods Institutions, as a step towards building a world system founded on equity and social justice.

Environmental issues, including climate change, have also moved high on the priorities of the international agenda. South Africa is fully committed to a multilateral outcome on the basis of the Bali Action Plan with a two track negotiated and legally binding outcome. We are convinced that the Copenhagen Accord provides political guidance for future.

We should accordingly work together to ensure that the forthcoming meeting in Mexico of CoP16 takes bold and concrete steps to address climate change and its effects. On our part, South Africa will have the opportunity to host COP17 in December 2011 on the eve of the end of the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol.

Excellencies,

Peace and stability is one of the preconditions for bringing about an Africa of the "new beginning" that the Chairperson of the Union HE President Mutharika spoke about on the first day of this debate. The United Nations has been an important partner to Africa, working together with us, through our regional body, the African Union – be it in Somalia, the Sudan or the Democratic Republic of Congo. South Africa is encouraged by the commitment shown by the international community in trying to assist both the government of Sudan and Southern Sudan as they prepare for the upcoming referendum in January 2011.

The people of Zimbabwe also need our helping hand of the international community in their implementation of the Global Political Agreement. The African Union and the SADC speak for us too in calling for the lifting of sanctions against Zimbabwe.

We will continue to work with the peoples of Zimbabwe, Madagascar and Burundi (among others) in their effort to build and consolidate peace and democracy in their respective countries.

In the case of the Western Sahara, South Africa remains concerned with the continuing impasse which stands in the way of a solution that will result in the people of Western Sahara exercising their inalienable right to self-determination.

We count on the United Nations, especially the Security Council, to continue to take decisions that enable us to decisively deal with the challenges of peace and security on our continent.

The United Nations should see Africa as a partner in the maintenance of international peace and the management of conflicts and accordingly do more to strengthen the working relationship between the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council.

In this respect, South Africa will continue to support all international efforts to help the people of Palestine and Israel in their endeavour to find a lasting peace, leading to the establishment of a viable Palestinian state, on the basis of 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its Capital, existing side by side in peace and security with Israel.

We are at one with the call made by several delegations for the lifting of the embargo on the Republic of Cuba.

We have been converging here, year after year, to make strong statements on Palestine, the embargo on Cuba, and the independence of the Western Sahara. The ultimate test for the relevance of the United Nations will therefore be in bringing closure

to all these long standing issues in a manner that is consistent with our decisions and the collective will of nations represented in this organisation.

In conclusion, Mr President

We were also privileged recently to be the stage, and Africa the theatre, of the 2010 FIFA World Cup tournament. Our people spoke for us during that soccer event in how they embraced each other, in their diversity of many nations, consistent with the spirit of Ubuntu - that I am because you are! They gave us hope and confirmed the faith we have in our belief that a better world is possible. The role of sport in development and in advancing peace can never be underestimated. As states, we can best respond to this message from our people by making sure that the United Nations, in playing its central role in the global system, is more relevant, more inclusive, and more representative.

Looking ahead, South Africa is honoured to have been endorsed by the African Union as a candidate for the Security Council non-permanent membership for the period 2011 to 2012. We stand ready to continue to contribute to the achievement of peace and security in the world.

I thank you!!