



**PERMANENT MISSION OF SINGAPORE  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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**UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
66<sup>TH</sup> SESSION**

**GENERAL DEBATE**

**STATEMENT BY**

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*Please check against delivery*



Mr President,  
Secretary-General Ban,  
Dear Colleagues,

1 Allow me to congratulate Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser on your election as President of the 66th General Assembly. I would also like to congratulate Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Your Excellency's unanimous re-election to a second term.

2 My warmest congratulations also to South Sudan on becoming the newest member of the UN family.

3 We wish President Nassir and Secretary-General Ban success in the year ahead.

#### THE UN IN TODAY'S CONTEXT

Mr President,

4 The world has seen difficult times since the global economic crisis of 2008. This has been compounded by natural and man-made disasters, which have grown in scale and severity.

5 The repercussions of these events produce unpredictable outcomes. Governments have to grapple with the challenge of reviving growth and creating jobs for our citizens - even as the uncertain global economic recovery comes under threat, from the severe fiscal and debt crisis of the US and Eurozone.

6 Fears about the risk of a double dip recession remain.

7 Other important global challenges need serious attention and resources as well: These include long-term issues such as sustainable development, climate change and water security.

8 There are also immediate concerns such as food security, job creation and making our cities more liveable.

9 These are issues that require urgent joint action by the global community.

10 By next month, we will have 7 billion people to feed, clothe and find meaningful employment for. This is a stark reminder of the magnitude of our task.

11 The UN must play an important role in dealing with these challenges.

12 First, the UN, the World Bank, IMF and the WTO can help ensure that the global economic framework remains conducive for growth, amidst the maelstrom of economic instability.

13 We are in for a bumpy ride, with growth in all the major markets slowing, and no guarantee of recovery.

14 At the same time, we face a worrisome rise in protectionist sentiments. A recent report by the World Trade Organization (WTO) showed that the G20 countries introduced 122 new trade restrictive measures from 2010 to April 2011.

15 Too many countries are focused more on domestic political concerns than on implementing their multilateral commitments and taking concerted action at the global level.

16 This is why the prospects for a breakthrough in the Doha Development Round continue to be dim.

17 As the preeminent multilateral institution in the world, the UN should take a strong stand, make a united pledge against trade restrictive measures and continue to push for free trade.

18 Fighting protectionist pressures collectively is important for the long-term sustainability of our economies.

19 The philosophy of common enrichment that imbues the UN Charter must replace short-sighted strategies of survival if we are to truly gain the path of sustainability.

20 Due to its sheer membership size and functions, the UN will need time to achieve consensus and make decisions.

21 This leaves the door open for ad-hoc coordination by smaller, informal groups, especially during critical periods like the fall of 2008.

22 There is a role for smaller or regional groupings like the G20 and G8 that may be more efficient and dynamic in decision-making.

23 A certain amount of fluidity is a given in global governance for some time to come, and even necessary in order to tackle increasingly complex and varied global problems.

24 But ultimately, a balance needs to be struck between efficiency and genuine legitimacy.

25 The G20 accounts for over 80% of world trade and GDP. But that still leaves a significant number who are not in this group.

26 There is scope for the UN to play a meaningful role by ensuring that all groupings take into account and promote the greater interest. The UN must also act together with these groupings as complementary parts of the international system, not as mutually exclusive competitors.

27 The UN also has an important role in tackling two other challenges - food and water security, which are two sides of the same coin.

28 The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has reported an escalation of international food prices to levels not seen in decades.

29 And according to the World Bank, rising food costs has pushed 44 million people into extreme poverty and hunger since June 2010.

30 The hunger crisis in the Horn of Africa is but one face of this devastation.

31 Equally critical is the challenge of water security. The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) has pointed out that about one-third of the world's population lives in countries with moderate to high water stress, with a disproportionate impact on the poor.

32 With current projected global population growth, the task of providing water for human sustenance will become increasingly difficult.

33 And increasing competition over this scarce but vital resource will only fuel instability and conflict within states as well as between them.

34 The UN is doing a great deal in both areas to proactively foster collaboration among Member States.

35 UNEP has long been actively addressing the water issue together with partner UN agencies and other organizations. Looking ahead, the UN can do more to build synergies of technology, policy and capacity in this field. In this regard, it is events like the annual World Water Week in Stockholm which come to the forefront of the public's minds when talking about championing water issues.

36 Likewise, since 2008, Singapore has been organising the Singapore International Water Week, a global platform that brings together policymakers, industry leaders, experts and practitioners to address challenges, showcase technologies, discover opportunities, and celebrate achievements in the water world.

37 In Singapore, we have always regarded water as a strategic resource. We have invested considerable resources into researching and testing new technologies.

38 We would be happy to share our experiences.

39 I am certain that there are also many other success stories of countries which have adopted modern technology and sound policies to overcome their water needs.

40 This is why Singapore is happy to be a member of the Green Group, an informal grouping initiated by Slovenia whose members discuss ways to augment our collective experiences in water management.

41 This pattern can be replicated by the UN to include more Member States.

#### LEADERSHIP FROM WITHIN

Mr President,

42 The efficiency of our responses can and should be reviewed and improved upon. At present there is a disconnect between the proliferation of resolutions, which we debate year after year, and present realities.

43 There is also a greater need to coordinate better between New York and the ground. The immense good work in the field that various UN personnel, like our humanitarian and aid workers, are doing has to be better related to what Member States do at UN Headquarters.

44 While established processes are important, this should not hamper innovative thinking and solutions.

45 For example, we should set definitive timelines and specific objectives to resolutions, and retire others.

46 Let us focus on what needs to be done, who should do it, and when it should be done by.

47 This will ensure that there are targeted outcomes and real implementation.

48 This may seem like a small, procedural change, but to borrow a phrase, sometimes “little things can make a big difference”.<sup>1</sup> The alternative is to leave the shaping of the new global governance to other groupings which will by definition be less inclusive. This will lead to a further marginalisation of the small and the weak.

49 The UN needs to find ways to work with limited groupings as complementary parts of the international system. This is what the Global Governance Group or 3G has sought to achieve.

50 To act as a bridge between the UN and the G20, the 3G has provided ideas to strengthen the latter's engagement with the UN. The 3G has focused on areas of ongoing and potential cooperation such as development, tackling the problem of food security and fostering the growth of liveable cities.

51 It has called for a comprehensive approach to address the different factors affecting food security and volatility of food prices.

52 This includes a call for a renewed political commitment to a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the WTO which we believe is key to achieving food security.

Mr President,

53 The UN remains the only truly universal and international organisation. There is no alternative to the UN.

54 The steady expansion of its membership from 51 at its founding in 1945, to 193 today bears testament to the value that countries accord to membership in this organisation.

55 The UN is uniquely placed to influence our collective future. However, we should not take this position for granted as the UN's ability to influence global issues is dependent on the decisions that we as Member States take at the UN.

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<sup>1</sup> From *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, by Malcolm Gladwell, 2000

56 Sixty-five years ago, following the devastation of World War II, we managed to forge a consensus that was underpinned by the notion of inclusive global citizenship, and manifested by the establishment of a set of international institutions, practices, and norms.

57 At the forefront of this was the UN Charter. Globalisation and economic integration have since redefined global governance and decision-making.

58 As such, the UN needs to adjust its processes to this new environment.

59 But at the core, its values remain the same - to maintain international peace and security, promote development, human rights and respect for the rule of law.

60 It is up to us, the Member States, to rally the necessary political will to put aside narrow self interests and act for our collective good and secure the well-being of our future generations.

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