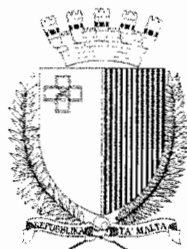


MALTA



STATEMENT BY

**THE HON. DR. LAWRENCE GONZI
PRIME MINISTER**

GENERAL DEBATE

**SIXTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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Mr. President,

May I extend to you, Mr. President, my heartfelt congratulations on your unanimous election to preside over this Sixty-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly. In wishing you every success, I would like to assure you that Malta, which has excellent relations and increasing cooperation with your country, Qatar, will extend its full support and collaboration in your tasks ahead.

Mr. President,

I would also like to pay tribute to your predecessor, President Joseph Deiss for his leadership and effective role during the last twelve months.

Mr. President,

Allow me also to convey my warmest and sincere congratulations to H.E. Ban Ki-moon on his re-election to serve our Organization as its Secretary-General for another term. My Government would like to place on record its appreciation of his firm and capable leadership.

Mr. President,

Just two months ago this Assembly admitted by acclamation the Republic of South Sudan as its 193rd Member of the United Nations.

Malta is proud to have been one of the Member States that co-sponsored the resolution which ushered in the new nation State of the Republic of South Sudan in the world community of nations.

Mr. President,

Throughout the past twelve months since we gathered here in this Assembly we have all been witness to the continuing upheavals and crises resulting from the strife, poverty and social inequalities that still persist in many parts of the world. This situation has been compounded by food insecurity exacerbated by drought and famine which threaten the survival of millions of people particularly in Somalia and the rest of the Horn of Africa.

Malta has long recognised the difficulties faced by countries situated in the Horn of Africa and has directed most of its development and humanitarian aid to these countries through the implementation of development projects. The participation of Maltese NGOs in the implementation of these projects was pivotal in enabling Malta to help relieve some of the most pressing needs. In addition, my Government has also answered the call of the United Nations for financial contributions to assist in alleviating the sufferings of the people in the Horn of Africa. This we did through CERF.

Of concern, however, is the fact that only four years remain to meet the Goals which we, together and unanimously, agreed in our 2000 Summit Declaration to achieve by 2015. We recognize that progress has been made in some critical areas notwithstanding continuing adversities but we are still not there.

Within its limited means, Malta has been able to financially assist and support NGOs and interested individuals to carry out projects in developing and least developed countries. Projects over the past 19 years have included the building of schools, clinics, centres for persons with disabilities, social housing and extensions at hospitals, in various countries in Africa as well as central and south America.

Mr. President,

My Government continues to place before the Membership of this Organization the case for assistance in dealing with the influx of illegal immigrants that are still reaching Malta because of the

situation which has developed in Libya and North Africa. We continue to call for international solidarity and burden sharing in dealing with this phenomenon. It is also our hope that the European Union's Asylum Support Office which opened in Malta last June will contribute to the task of streamlining asylum policies in the European Union and its Member States and improve cooperation between authorities.

In this context, may I express the appreciation of the Government of Malta for the assistance we have received so far from a number of European Member States as well as from the United States of America in the resettlement process.

Mr. President,

The Mediterranean – which links Europe, Africa and the Middle East together – has not been spared the many challenges and difficulties facing other parts of the world. It is, however, also seeing the birth of hope in the form of a new political and social reality as a result of the sacrifices being made by the peoples of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria as they strive to take back the political leadership of their countries. Malta salutes these brave people.

In these turbulent times for Libya, Malta, that in its history has earned the title of “Nurse of the Mediterranean”, has also been serving as a safe harbour where thousands have found refuge and assistance.

As a member of this Organisation, the European Union as well as the International Contact Group on Libya, my Government has over the past months, provided a humanitarian hub for the evacuation of nearly 20,000 persons, providing medical assistance, and the relief efforts by Intergovernmental and Non-Governmental Organizations, including United Nations organizations such as the World Food Programme (WFP). Malta is proud of this role which it continues to play in alleviating the hardships of the Libyan people.

As a result of the courage, vision and tenacity of its people, Libya is today on the threshold of assuming its place in the community of free and democratic nations. The Libyan National Transitional Council's approach over these recent highly charged weeks has undoubtedly enhanced its standing and legitimacy. We welcome the NTC's determination to ensure that it is justice and not vengeance that will be pursued by this brave people. It is important that the process of national reconciliation takes hold as soon as possible, underpinned by the fullest respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all elements of the population.

Allow me, at this juncture, to take this opportunity to join others in welcoming the Delegation of Libya as the new and rightful representatives of Libya at the United Nations and in this Assembly.

The next few months will be a major challenge for the international community and the people of Libya alike. At this defining moment, the Libyan people deserve the fullest international solidarity on the political, economic and financial fronts. My Government supports UN leadership in the international community's programme of action and endorses the three fundamental principles under which the UN intends to operate:

- Libyan national ownership;
- rapid response and delivery; and
- effective coordination.

Close co-ordination in particular with the European Union which we believe to be a key player in post conflict assistance and support will be particularly crucial.

Mr. President,

Egypt and Tunisia also deserve every encouragement as they embark on the reforms ahead. Processes to democratic transition need to be sustained, including from the economic perspective. A holistic approach is a crucial element in maximizing international endeavours, not least to stimulate

economic growth. Democracy stands a better chance of flourishing if there is economic development and a tangible improvement in living standards.

At a time when the people in the Middle East and North Africa, and beyond, have embarked towards a new path for freedom, dignity and prosperity, we must also invest our efforts and determination to fulfill the long-sought aspirations of the Palestinian People. The dramatic developments unfolding in the Arab world make progress on the Israeli-Palestinian track even more urgent.

Malta was heartened by, and welcomed, the speech of President Obama last May where he laid out the foundation for future negotiations and outlined a comprehensive vision for peace between Israelis and Palestinians. The resumption of meaningful and sustainable negotiations seemed within reach.

Unfortunately, this was not to be and the timeframes set by the international community for the establishment of a Palestinian state are now with us. A situation of political stalemate persists despite the fact that, from an institutional perspective, the preparations for statehood have been successfully completed. The situation on the ground complicates matters further and undermines the resumption of negotiations and the goal of two viable states living side by side in peace.

No effort should be spared to break the deadlock in Israeli-Palestinian talks. Getting Israelis and Palestinians back to the negotiating table with the necessary political will to embark on meaningful and sustainable negotiations remains the overriding goal. Agreement on parameters for negotiations would clearly be a step in the right direction. In this regard Malta is fully behind the efforts by the European Union and in particular by its High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to make this happen.

My Government strongly believes that the elements set out in the Conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Council of the European Union adopted in December 2009, December 2010 and May 2011 provide balanced parameters for the resumption of negotiations.

Mr. President,

Two weeks ago the New York community and the American people, were joined by the international community in commemorating the victims of one of the most heinous crimes committed in recent history. We all remember with sadness and sorrow that fateful day of 11 September 2001 when the hand of evil carried out a terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in downtown New York. The ten years since that tragic event, where nearly three thousand innocent people met their deaths and thousands more were wounded, have not erased the scars or the pain.

Terrorism continues to respect no frontiers. Many States have been and continue to be the victims of deadly attacks by terrorists. In Afghanistan, Iraq, India, Pakistan, Russia, Spain, Indonesia, the United Kingdom, and China, terrorism has struck with intensity and brutality. Only one month ago another reprehensible and deadly attack was perpetrated against the UN Complex in Nigeria. Malta strongly condemns these cowardly and horrible acts and pledges to continue to work with other Member States to ensure that these criminal acts are not only condemned in absolute terms but also suppressed.

Mr. President,

Unfolding events in North Africa highlight that we must continue to promote and protect human rights across the world. This is a responsibility our present generation bears also on behalf of future generations.

It is in this spirit that I had, during my address to the Sixty-fourth Session of this Assembly in 2009, proposed the drawing up of a Universal Declaration on Human Responsibilities as the second part of a diptych to be formed with the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. Such a Declaration would be open for signature by any Member State wishing to subscribe to it.

We have been encouraged to move forward in presenting this draft Declaration by a number of Member States that share with us the growing need to embrace Responsibilities and Duties in their international setting. In the light of this positive response, my Government intends calling an international gathering during 2012, at official level but with the presence of experts, to examine the draft Declaration that has been prepared and finalise it in such a way that it can also be opened for signature in 2012.

Malta strongly believes that such a Declaration would strengthen that solidarity which our rapidly changing world demands.

Mr. President,

The environmental sustainability of our planet is one of the priorities of my Government. Malta is working towards a successful outcome at next year's UN Conference on Sustainable Development – Rio+20 – with the hope that it will build further on the commitments agreed at the 1992 UNCED.

In this context, since 1988, when Malta put the protection of climate for present and future generations on the political agenda of this Organization, my Government has worked to support and endorse efforts that address climate change. Malta has also made a contribution to the Climate Change Fund.

Mr. President,

The coming twelve months under your Presidency offer the membership of this Organization, challenging and exciting times. The agenda of this Assembly is long and demanding. We recognize that your task will not be at all easy. Allow me to assure you of our full support.

Malta will also continue to shoulder its international responsibilities with vigour, commitment and determination. We stand ready to work with other Member States to make our Organization stronger and better able to tackle the global challenges facing mankind.

Thank you.