

**The 67<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations**  
**Statement of the Minister for External Affairs, the H.E. Gilbert Saboya**  
**Sunyé**

**New York, 28 September 2012**

Mister President,  
Mister Secretary General,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would first like to extend hearty congratulations to the President of the 67th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, Mr. Jeremicz, whom I wish the greatest success in this stage.

Just a year ago I ended my statement by reasserting the notion of compromise as an essential value and core feature of political endeavour: meaning compromise as a deep-seated belief in the values of democracy, of respect for human rights and of the rule of law; as the assumption of individual responsibility in a common project; and ultimately as a pledge to dialogue and capacity for understanding.

It is in the pursuit of such compromise, of such balance —the fair balance as we might call it— that the very difficulty of government is to be found. This is the case at home, in each of our states, and also in this common home, the United Nations.

A year ago in this very assembly we were echoing a phrase of the then French president, who stated: "Let us choose the path of compromise, which is neither a renunciation nor a repudiation, but which allows us to move forward, step by step, stage by stage."

Indeed, on the path of compromise, the path of the right balance, we cannot and must not abandon the defence of human rights, the rule of law, and the most essential democratic values such as freedom of expression. Neither can we nor should we deny respect to others. However, establishing the fair balance does not mean engaging in a balancing act. To be fair, the balance

must be based on strong principles: there can be no excuse for violence or intolerance. President Obama was right when he mentioned here that the recent attacks on diplomatic missions were not solely an attack against the United States, but were also an assault on the foundations of the United Nations itself. There can be no excuse for such acts. Neither can there be impunity. "We are all Chris Stevens. But what defines us is not how we fall but how we rise again. We will stand by all Chris Stevens in their rise to defend the ideals of the United Nations."

Allow me today to echo the words of the new President of the French Republic, François Hollande, Co-Prince of Andorra, who at this very assembly stated: "The mission of the United Nations is to tackle these problems and find strong and just responses to them."

For over 65 years, the United Nations has been a reference for peace, justice and respect for human rights. Remarkable progress has indeed been observed in recent years. It is no less true, however, that the countries represented here cannot afford the luxury of falling into complacency. The demand for just and strong responses is very real.

The change of regime in Libya and the conflict in Syria —still ongoing and waging harshly— have forced the international community into a perverse dilemma: that of having to find the fair balance between solving conflicts peacefully and the rule of law; in short, between peace and justice. It would appear that in order to attain a peaceful solution to a conflict or to end hostilities, one has to sacrifice justice and to allow those who have violated human rights to go unpunished; or that by being inflexible in applying international law, these conflicts go on forever. The fair balance must not allow those who violate human rights to go unpunished. The fair balance must not allow conflicts to go on endlessly. Now, with regard to Syria, it is time to give support to open societies and to back a political transition that will guarantee a framework for democratic development.

Mister Secretary General, I wish to praise both your commitment and that of Special Envoy Mister Lakhdar Brahimi to finding a solution to the conflict in Syria.

"People want progress and solutions today. They want ideas, your leadership and concrete hope for the future", stated the Secretary General, thus aptly reflecting what the world expects from us all.

We also need to maintain some perspective; because if complacency is dangerous, so too are harsh criticism and pessimism. Although the way the United Nations system works is indeed far from optimal, we should not forget however that what today is reality seemed an unattainable dream a century ago. We should move on from talk of dreams and progress to talk of ambition. We should move on from dreaming about change to having the ambition to change. We should move on from Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" and progress to the "I have an ambition" we all have. In his speech, Secretary General, Mister Ban Ki Moon, rightly mentioned raising "the level of ambition". The step from dream to ambition needs perspective: dreaming only requires knowing how we would like things to be, but having ambitions and realising them requires us to know how far we are prepared to go, while very much bearing in mind the path travelled and everything experienced on it.

In this respect the United Nations and its system allow us to face the future with cautious optimism, as the world with the United Nations has been better and fairer than it was without it. It is, however, when we look at its evolution that we realise something is not quite right, as this evolution, or process, is fraught with limitations, shortcomings and obstacles with which the international community must deal with when resolving conflicts peacefully and in accordance with the law.

The Secretary General rightly emphasised his new "Education First" programme, which also encourages democratic values, human rights and the rule of law. These are the values that can guarantee equal opportunities and social cohesion. During its forthcoming presidency of the Council of Europe, Andorra will embrace education as a tool for encouraging democratic values,

respect for human rights and the rule of law. Andorra is particularly sensitive to education, not only in the sphere of its international cooperation, but also domestically, as it is aware that its unique, multicultural and multilingual educational approach, which features three public systems (Andorran, French and Spanish) in a small society with its own identity, has not brought problems, but has rather been an asset and an essential part of our social cohesion.

It is this commitment to multiculturalism and multilingualism that we find within the Francophonie. This commitment to openness towards one another and to exchange is a good one. It is a long way from self-absorption in one's own language or culture. Now is not the time for self-engrossment but rather for openness. It is time for ambition and not protectionism. The work of the Francophonie is therefore deeply aligned with our values, and we are shortly to meet in Africa at the forthcoming Summit of the Francophonie to defend a spirit of openness to democratic values and human rights.

It is this commitment to multiculturalism that also belies the strong bonds we feel with our Latin-American friends. Our involvement at this General Assembly in the preparatory work for the forthcoming Cadiz summit, in our dear neighbour Spain, should also be interpreted from a perspective of openness, and of the defence of democratic values, human rights and the rule of law.

Mister President, ladies and gentlemen,

The Principality of Andorra today reasserts its commitment to the founding principles of the United Nations, with the endorsement of peace, liberty, justice, democracy and human rights. They are not utopian values and principles but quite the contrary, as it would be unrealistic and unthinkable to seek to establish stability in the world with values other than these.

What is important is not to come here today proclaiming that Andorra has one of the oldest and most stable parliaments and political systems on the planet, but how, at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, this system was consolidated in a very short period of time and in circumstances that were far from ideal, and how, also in a very short time, this same system was again able to adapt to modern reality at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In our country, indeed, it was not until 1971 that

women were entitled to vote, yet only 40 years later, in 2011, the people of Andorra elected a parliament with the second highest number of female representatives in the world. This is why I spoke before of viewing things from a perspective of process and evolution.

History shows us that what appeared utopian not so long ago is reality today. We should not assume that things cannot change and cannot get better. The limits that the United Nations seem to have encountered after almost seven decades of existence will be surpassed one day, and today's challenges will be viewed as things of the past. The numerous countries that form the international community have shown how rapidly things can change when there is a will to act. One only has to take a look at the determination with which many of the members of this assembly have joined forces and coordinated their policies to find solutions to the grave financial and economic crisis that has rocked the world over the last few years.

Mister President, ladies and gentlemen,

This need for rapid and profound change has also arrived in Andorra. A year ago, we stated in our speech that our country had one of the most closed economies on the planet and placed significant barriers to inward investment, while foreigners had to meet costly requirements to attain full economic rights.

Today, only 12 months later, the Andorran economy is 100% open to foreign capital, and every foreign resident is granted full economic rights from the first day of his or her residency. Before, I referred to openness in a broad sense, but today economic openness should enable us to rediscover the path of inclusive growth that has defined us, albeit now within an open and diversified economy geared to the pursuit of competitiveness, innovation and general progress.

This entire process has been accompanied by an update of the Andorran model, with a comparable tax framework and a commitment to transparency towards the international community. This whole process is based on the belief

that at this time recovery does mean faint-hearted withdrawal, but rather requires an ambition to open up to the world and a willingness to compete.

This conviction is the driving force behind the implementation by the Principality of Andorra of some of the most significant socio-economic changes in its entire history.

Mister President, ladies and gentlemen,

Twenty years ago the United Nations pioneered in the defence of sustainable development. When the international community met in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, at what was then known as the Earth Summit, the need to consider sustainable growth became manifest and the subject was tackled from a three-fold economic, environmental and social perspective.

The conclusions of the Rio Summit, to which scant or no attention has been paid, are today such topical issues that the Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio last June, insisted on the very same policies. However, although 20 years ago sustainability might have seemed solely an environmental issue, experience has shown us that public finance, economic growth and our model of social protection must also be sustainable. The challenge of sustainability is now, more than ever, shared and interdisciplinary.

Many years ago the United Nations was created in the belief that maintaining peace and security in the world was unrealistic without advances in human rights, in international law and in democracy. There can be no lasting peace or security without liberty or justice.

More recently, we have all learned both that separating democracy from economic progress makes no sense and that it is foolish to believe in unrestrained, unlimited growth at any cost —beliefs of which we are still feeling the consequences. A few days ago, at the reception for the diplomatic corps, our Episcopal Co-Prince, Joan Enric Vives, mentioned the dangerous tendency towards prioritising having rather than being. We must learn the lessons of

recent years in which the desire to have everything we wanted too often prompted us to forget to pursue everything we needed.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We must build a more sustainable, more interrelated and more co-responsible world in order to lay the foundations for firmer economic growth. A pledge to progress and prosperity also means support for democracy, for security and for peace.