



**Misión Permanente de Costa Rica ante las Naciones Unidas**  
**Permanent Mission of Costa Rica to the United Nations**

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**Discurso de**  
Statement by

**Su Excelencia**  
His Excellency

**Enrique Castillo-Barrantes**  
**Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores**  
Minister of Foreign Affairs

**Debate General de la 67 Asamblea General de la ONU**  
General Debate of the 67<sup>th</sup> United Nations General Assembly

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Mr. President  
Distinguished Delegates  
Colleagues  
Friends

Let me begin my remarks by congratulating Vuk Jeremić, President of this General Assembly, on his election. My country offers its support to you as you fulfill your transcendental role. Your success will also be that of the United Nations and, therefore, of all the peoples of the world.

We endorse your commitment to the “adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means,” and we share the roadmap that you have outlined for the exercise of your duties.

We thank the notable work of your predecessor, Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, and emphasize, in particular, his commitment to mediation.

We reaffirm our support of the five imperatives of the agenda presented in January by Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon for the second period of his mandate.

Mr. President,

One year ago, we came to this Assembly encouraged by an echo of hope. It came from North Africa and the Middle East. It was nourished by heterogeneous voices which, however, gathered around one universal value: freedom.

That hopeful clamor persists in complex transitions to democracy, propelled by popular will. Tunisia, Egypt and Libya are the greatest examples. To them, we convey our admiration and respect.

Today, however, the sound most strongly resonating in this hall is the desperate scream of women and children in Syria. To them, we convey our solidarity.

At the same time, we are distraught by the furry unleashed by the manipulation of intolerance and extremism. We are worried by the resurgence of territorial conflicts, the rhetoric of war among some States, and the insensitivity of autocratic regimes. And we are relentlessly challenged by the determined persistence of terrorism, drug trafficking, and organized crime.

Meanwhile, the alarms of environmental deterioration grow increasingly intense.

These challenges alert us to many dangers; however, they also reiterate the seminal importance of this Organization and of the multilateral system.

Mr. President,

The peaceful settlement of disputes is imperative for the coexistence among peoples, nations and countries. For Costa Rica, it is also a practice of daily life and a central component of our foreign policy. It is a value deeply rooted in our respect for diversity, our pledge to tolerance and our commitment to the Rule of Law.

To avoid conflicts or to strip them of their violent burden, it is necessary to promote preventive diplomacy and mediation. We enjoy their best results when they generate legally binding agreements and decisions, in the framework of the Rule of Law.

Therefore, a clear link exists between the mobilizing idea proposed by President Jeremić for this period of sessions and the commitment by the United Nations and its Member States to the Rule of Law.

Driven by its belief in the power of mediation, Costa Rica joined a group of countries dedicated to promoting it from within the heart of the United Nations. In July 2011, thanks to the initiative of the group, which was cosponsored with enthusiasm by many States, the Assembly adopted by consensus its first resolution aimed at strengthening the role of mediation. A few days ago, the Assembly gave its support to a follow-up text.

Moreover, Costa Rica is proud to have propelled one of the most successful processes of mediation in the history of our hemisphere. Midway through the decade of the 1980s, various armed conflicts bloodied brother countries of Central America. No end was in sight. However, thanks to the tenacious leadership of Costa Rican President Óscar Arias, on August 7th, 1987, the region's Heads of State signed the Central American Peace Accords in Guatemala. Such leadership earned our compatriot the Nobel Peace Prize.

The success of these Accords stemmed from a double commitment of the signatories: to cease hostilities, but also to address the root causes of the conflicts. Thanks to this comprehensive approach, the vision of the five Presidents of the isthmus, and the effective international backing, Central America silenced the guns and activated peace. It was a peace founded on democracy and the commitment to development and justice.

Unfortunately, today the region confronts another challenge of similar proportions. I refer to the onslaught of drug trafficking and international organized crime. We are a transit route between the centers of production in the south and the greatest center of consumption in the north. This condition has transformed us into the victims of a problem over which our control is minimal and our resources even more meager.

As Central Americans, we have agreed on regional strategies to jointly address prevention, interdiction and repression. Yet our capacity for action is limited and has imperiled rapid implementation.

Despite this critical situation, Costa Rica has refused the dangerous notion of a "war" to confront this scourge. Rather, we work to expand opportunities for young people, promote preventative action, improve police capacity, strengthen the effectiveness of the judiciary, and assist addicts.

Fortunately, we are obtaining results in citizen security. For example, our rate of homicide, which is the lowest in Central America, has fallen from 11.7 for every hundred thousand habitants in May 2011, to 9 in May of this year. Reports on crime in general went down 12% from 2010 to 2011. However, the assault of the cartels is so large, the logic of the drug trade so fatal, and the global strategies to control it so disarticulate and insufficient, that the negative predictions for our region persist.

In light of this reality, Costa Rica considers it necessary to develop a more active link between the United Nations and the design and implementation of well-balanced strategies

towards the drug trade. It is necessary, moreover, that drug traffickers be viewed as a real threat to peace and international security.

Mr. President:

Costa Rica is a small, democratic, disarmed and civilian country. The multilateral system and international law are our only instruments of defense. For this reason, we have recognized the enforced jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice since 1973.

At the end of 2010, we went to the Court after the Government of Nicaragua illegally deployed military forces and civil personnel in a part of our national territory. In March of the following year, the Court pronounced a series of provisional measures. Among them, the Court ordered Nicaragua to remove its forces from the disputed zone, and granted Costa Rica its environmental custody. However, the Government of Nicaragua has consistently evaded the order and continued to send personnel to this territory. It has done so in open defiance of the Court, to the detriment of our bilateral relations, and in violation of paragraph 31 of the Final Declaration of the Rule of Law that was adopted one week ago by this Assembly.

We would like that this case did not mar the relations between our countries, even less our profound human ties. Yet, Nicaragua still fails to fulfill the provisional measures of the Court. We regret this, we condemn this and we denounce this once again in this hall.

Mr. President,

Despite its clear support of the Rule of Law and its commitment to mediation, the international community has been unable to adopt a crucial instrument to avoid conflict or, at least, limit its most destructive force.

At the end of last July, the possibility of agreeing on a universal, robust and binding Arms Trade Treaty did not reach consensus. It was a somber moment for peace and human dignity. Costa Rica, one of the coauthors of this initiative, will not back down on its attempts to promote the kind of instrument that millions of victims of conventional weapons demand from the silence of their tombs.

The Rule of Law should be, as well, the base global governance. And if in any area this governance must be vigorous, it is the environment.

The Rio+20 Conference brought about important advancements in this sense. But the largest tasks and commitments are still pending. While the global temperature continues to rise, droughts and floods keep costing lives, destroying infrastructure and displacing populations. The environmental risk is about to acquire exponential dimensions. We cannot wait any longer to act.

Costa Rica adopted sustainability as a development model several years ago, and has embraced its national responsibilities on the matter. We have improved our forest coverage; we generate 90 percent of our energy from renewable sources; more than 25% of our territory is under national parks, and we have adopted the goal of becoming a carbon-neutral country by 2021.

But these and many other initiatives of small countries will serve little without the commitment of the biggest carbon emitters, and without international cooperation for mitigation and adaptation in the most vulnerable countries.

The design of the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals gives us an excellent opportunity to advance globally. We expect a multi-sector and participatory process during their definition, with Rule of Law and good governance components as part of them.

Environmental, social and economic vulnerabilities are among the reasons why middle income countries, like Costa Rica, should not stay on the margins of international cooperation.

Middle income countries still need the support of the international community to consolidate our improvements in economic conditions and human development. Let's not forget that our achievements are due, in part, to the proper use of cooperation. To eliminate it because it has been well used would be a fatal contradiction.

This is why Costa Rica, together with other middle income countries, will continue to participate actively in improving the methodology guiding the "graduation" processes in the framework of the UNDP. As we have mentioned, it is necessary to consider not only income levels, but also other criteria that better reflect the extent of our challenges, and that foster cooperation strategies to support, with solidarity, our efforts for development.

Mr. President,

The main leadership of global governance should belong to the United Nations, based upon international law. Only legitimate multilateral action can promote and protect the major global public goods.

We cannot discount the external challenges to the leadership of this Organization. But more importantly, we must recognize the internal need of committing ourselves to making it more vigorous, effective, efficient, inclusive and representative.

Member States should understand that the best form of promoting our national interests through the United Nations is to reform it in order to improve its performance.

Costa Rica aligns itself with the concept of a global Secretariat formulated by the Secretary General, and is ready to give its constructive support to translate this idea into reality.

We are also committed to the integral reform of the Security Council and convinced that improving its working methods should be an ongoing process.

Mr. President,

Today I want to renew Costa Rica's commitment to all human rights.

Since we became members of the Human Rights Council, we have deployed intense and constructive activity within it. The facts demonstrate this. Among them, I emphasize the *United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training* that we advocated in the Council together with other partners, and that was adopted by this General Assembly during its past session.

Because we are respectful of tolerance, we consider it unacceptable to insult anyone's convictions, practices or religious symbols. But the way of avoiding or responding to these

insults is not limiting freedom of expression. The right path is open discussion, dialogue, education, respect for others and, above all, respect for human life.

For this reason, we reject violence as a response to messages that are considered offensive, especially when such violence results in the violation of diplomatic premises and places the integrity of its occupants at risk. We emphatically condemn the killing of U.S. Ambassador to Libya, Christopher Stevens, and members of his personnel.

Costa Rica is also committed to human security, and is part of the network of countries that promotes it within this Organization. We celebrate the recent resolution that advanced the common understanding of this concept.

We emphasize the value of the Responsibility to Protect as a critical operative principle of the international community. Its three pillars comprise a dynamic system of mutually-related parts. As a contribution to its preventative dimension, we promote, together with Australia, Denmark and Ghana, a network of national focal points or Responsibility to Protect. We invite all member states to join this network.

The fight for human dignity also demands the fight against impunity. This is why we empathically support the International Criminal Court, one of the most relevant achievements of the multilateral system since the creation of the United Nations.

Mr. President,

The upheavals of the world demand attention and generate anguish. But, besides them, hope also flourishes.

What better examples to mention than the spirit recently radiated from London by the Olympic and Paralympics athletes, who competed with clear rules, fair play, mutual respect and a feeling of achievement?

If the conflicts of our world referred to the analogy of that experience, the course of humanity would be different.

Maybe this fundamental change is not possible. But, at least, we should continue working for a world more just, peaceful, free, sustainable, respectful of human dignity and adhered to the Rule of Law. Costa Rica reiterates its profound commitment to this task.

Thank you very much.

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