

Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the opening of my statement in this General Debate, allow me to express to you, Mr. Vuk Jeremic, the satisfaction felt by the Republic of Paraguay in seeing you preside over the work of the 67th session of the General Assembly. Be assured of my delegation's support during your work.

Allow me as well to congratulate Ambassador Nair Abulaziz Al-Nasser for his important and effective work as President of our great Assembly's past session.

I also extend these expressions to Secretary General Ban-Ki Moon for his commendable work during the past six years at the head of the Organization, demonstrating his firm commitment in favor of global peace and security.

Mr. President,

In relation to the theme of this General Debate, "adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situation by peaceful means", the Government of Paraguay once again reaffirms and ratifies the importance of settling disputes by peaceful means, while respecting the principles of International Law. Relations between States would be more fair, supportive and equitable if they were guaranteed by full compliance with International Law, whose principles guide the peaceful settlement of disputes. Ignoring treaties in favor of political circumstances is unacceptable, because political considerations can never take precedence over formal international agreements.

State of Affairs in Paraguay

On this occasion however, the first and last time that I will address this great assembly, I believe it is necessary and unavoidable to elucidate to the international community the political process my country is currently undergoing.

On the night of June 22, 2012, the history of Paraguay changed. The National Congress, exercising its constitutional powers, decided almost unanimously to remove the former President of the Republic from office, by means of an impeachment process established by the Constitution.

The Paraguayan Congress sought in this manner to put an end to a very serious political crisis that threatened the country, in which 17 fellow countrymen had already lost their lives, and to avoid further bloodshed and grief on Paraguayan soil.

As mandated by the Constitution, I assumed office as President of the Republic, because it was my obligation as Vice President.

Since then, in accordance with the oath of office, I govern Paraguay peacefully and democratically, fully respecting public liberties. The Government of Paraguay, along with the overwhelming majority of Paraguayans, takes pride that there are no political prisoners in the country, that nobody has been exiled, that freedom of the press and freedom of expression are fully guaranteed and that each and every right enshrined in Human Rights agreements signed in the framework of this organization, as well as in the Organization of American States, is assured.

Paraguay has normal diplomatic relations with the great majority of United Nations member states. We guarantee to all of them that Paraguay will continue to work tirelessly in favor of peace and security, the basic pillars of our organization.

Nonetheless, Paraguay finds itself in a difficult international situation; one created by its neighbors, the members of MERCOSUR (Southern Cone Common Market) and UNASUR (Union of South American Nations). Both entities have adopted sanctions against the Republic of Paraguay without allowing it to exercise its right to defend itself, as clearly expressed in the international agreements that are invoked for the application of sanctions.

In violation of international treaties, these countries have attempted to become the custodians of Paraguayan Democracy, putting aside the principle of non-intervention consecrated in our United Nations Charter. Throughout its history Paraguay has suffered repeatedly as a result of arrogant intervention in its internal affairs. The holocaust known as the War of the Triple Alliance, resulting from an unjustifiable coalition that decimated Paraguay's population and destroyed its economy has still not faded from the memory of my people.

In the short time of my government, our detractors have not been able to point out a single violation of the agreements we have mentioned. The great Justo Pastor Benitez, an illustrious Paraguayan politician, was correct in saying that "in the absence of justice, it is dangerous to speak the truth".

Here, before humanity's highest assembly, I expressly declare that Paraguay will never accept intervention by foreign powers in its internal affairs. We will continue building upon our democracy according to the will of the Paraguayan people, sovereignly exercised through our freely elected institutions. We are certain that we will know how to overcome these crucial circumstances with dignity and integrity. We will not be subjugated. We invite our neighbors to reflect further, and together to set the course towards reconstructing the currently compromised South American integration process. Peace is built through dialogue, to which we are open.

Those who aspire to becoming leading actors in the international community will have to recognize that this is impossible in the absence of regional unity. Leadership is demonstrated by respecting International Law. Only in this manner will it be possible to have a common position regarding Security Council reform, a longstanding wish of the universal institution that embraces us.

In these difficult times, it is only by putting our international institutions on the path for which they were created - at the service of the women and men that day by day sculpt humanity's future - that we will find ways to resolve our current political and economic difficulties.

Paraguay, a founding member of the Organization, remains committed to this endeavor.

Organizational Reform

Mr. President,

The many different events that have taken place in our planet's diverse geography during this past year are evidence of the relevance and validity of a forum such as the United Nations in the international arena. It is for this reason that it is imperatively necessary to undertake a courageous, imaginative and profound reform of the organization's organs, structure and functions. Changes are needed to adapt the Organization so that it may respond with greater effectiveness and agility to an international agenda that is very different from that which existed at the time the UN was conceived, and which furthermore faces a shifting dynamic in the international scenario that was impossible to envision at its inception.

It is for this reason that Paraguay appeals to continue striving towards the sublime international utopia of a universal organization governed by the strong and the weak, the large and the small, the rich and the poor, all equal in a magnificent global assembly.

Paraguay believes it is necessary to insist on the need for the gradual elimination of the veto power in the reform process.

Sustainable Development

This year, on the twentieth anniversary of the historic United Nations Conference on Environment held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and known as the "Earth Summit", we believe it is necessary to reaffirm the belief that sustainable development, in its economic, social and environmental aspects, must be the backbone of the United Nations' focus. For this reason the Republic of Paraguay confirms its belief in this matter and reaffirms the need to maintain a balance between economic development, social development, and environmental protection as interdependent pillars of human development.

Being the largest producer per capita of clean energy in the world, we will use this energy to foster our country's development for the benefit of the Paraguayans and foreigners that inhabit our land, building its future. This energy, which we will use gradually, will be another factor on the road to our prosperity.

Landlocked Developing Countries

Mr. President,

The issue of Landlocked Developing Countries is an important aspect of Paraguay's foreign policy. The asymmetries and disadvantages caused by this adverse geographical condition will only be offset in the measure that international recognition of this matter is achieved, and that special and differentiated treatment is obtained from Developing countries in the process of Paraguay's insertion into a globalized world.

In this regard, this past September 12, during the recent Fourth Conference of Ministers of Trade of the aforementioned group, which Paraguay had the honor of chairing during 2010-2011, we once again stressed the need that mainly Transit States, and also the international community as a whole, duly recognize the comparatively disadvantageous situation of landlocked developing countries in relation to the conditions that are necessary for their development.

Peacekeeping

Paraguay wishes to reaffirm its commitment to international peace and security, and within the specific framework of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations it ratifies its political willingness to continue contributing to those operations with human resources. Regionally we highlight the progress achieved by the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, in which the deployment of Paraguayan military personnel has increased by more than a hundred troops, proof of our commitment and solidarity to the reconstruction of a country devastated by the scourges of nature.

I would also like to draw attention to the great effort and dedication of the Paraguayan military observers in the increasingly difficult situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, where they have remained, even in the most difficult circumstances.

I take advantage of this opportunity to render a well-deserved tribute to those soldiers all around the world performing their military duties with relentless efforts and sacrifices at the service of the United Nations Organization.

Inviolability of Diplomatic and Consular Premises

At this time we must all be reminded of the obligation we have as Member States to protect and defend the security of diplomatic and consular premises in all countries.

Transnational Crimes

Paraguay is increasingly concerned with the increase of transnational organized crimes through its most evil manifestations: drug trafficking, arms trafficking, trafficking of migrants and human trafficking in general, among others.

These transnational crimes mostly originated in situations of social and economic inequality among our peoples. Strong unity of international efforts is thus needed more than ever in order to fight and eliminate these scourges. The Government of the Republic of Paraguay reaffirms its strong and unequivocal commitment in the fight against all activities carried out by criminal organizations and calls for stronger and more concrete commitments by developed countries, where most of the demand related to these crimes originates.

Paraguay also reaffirms its strong condemnation of terrorism in all its forms.

For this reason, Paraguay, through its Secretariat for the Prevention of Money Laundering, in close cooperation with other national institutions, has made a coordinated effort to adapt its legal and normative framework in accordance with its commitments and with the recommendations made by the international organizations charged with preventing and prosecuting crimes related to money laundering and the financing of terrorism. Laws and resolutions have been passed pursuant to the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and in February of 2012 Paraguay was removed from FATF's list of Non-Cooperative Countries and Territories.

Human Rights

Advancing the promotion, awareness building and full respect for human rights worldwide must continue to be an unchanging and steadfast commitment in our organization's international agenda. Human rights violations are a scourge that must forever be eradicated from our civilization.

Social Commitment

The Government of Paraguay reiterates that the growth of nations can only be achieved through social equality, putting first basic needs such as education, health and land reform, among others. Economic growth without social development will only result in a world that is more unequal and unjust.

Decent Work

The Paraguayan government is actively working to build a development model that gives priority to decent work, and in this regard we are advancing mechanisms within the framework of a State policy aimed at improving working conditions. Among these are: a) the creation of the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security, b) the ratification of Covenant 189 of the International Labor Organization, approved in 2011 by the International Labor Conference in order to improve the working conditions of thousands of domestic workers in Paraguay and c) the implementation of an employment policy for young people through a Bill aimed at inserting young people into the workforce, which has been partially approved by the National Congress.

Gender Issues

Since its beginning, this government has maintained its beliefs and commitment in the inexorable process towards equal opportunities and rights for of Paraguay's inhabitants, and in this regard we have not given up in the constant struggle for full social, economic, political and cultural rights for women.

As evidence of these firm beliefs, soon after assuming its duties my government decided to upgrade the Secretariat for Women's Issues to a an Executive Ministry, in accordance with UN recommendations.

Finally on this subject, regarding Paraguay's election for a new period as member of the Commission on the Status of Women for 2013-2017, I must mention our satisfaction and our full commitment.

Conclusion

Mr. President,

The Government of Paraguay which I proudly lead since the end of last June now has a historic democratic obligation, which is to guarantee that the general elections scheduled for April 21, 2013 are peaceful, transparent and exemplary. When the next President of the Republic takes office on August 15, 2013, the good health and strength of Paraguayan democracy will be confirmed. At that time I will look into the eyes of my countrymen and those of foreigners that live in our country and forge the future alongside us, and will be able to say: mission accomplished.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH