



Gobierno de Guatemala

**GENERAL DEBATE OF THE SIXTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF
THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

STATEMENT BY

H. E. MR. OTTO FERNANDO PÉREZ MOLINA

**PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GUATEMALA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

New York, 26 September 2012

**STATEMENT BY H. E. MR. OTTO FERNANDO PÉREZ MOLINA, PRESIDENT OF
THE REPUBLIC OF GUATEMALA DURING THE 67th SESSION OF THE GENERAL
ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS
(September 26, 2012)**

Mr. President of the General Assembly, Vuk-Jeremic,
Mr. Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon,
Fellow Heads of State and Government,
Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen

At the outset, allow me to greet Mr. Vuk Jeremic, our President of this 67th session of the General Assembly. At the same time, I would like to put on record our appreciation to Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser for his stewardship of the previous session.

I have the honor to represent Guatemala for the first time before this main Organ of the United Nations. Guatemala and this Government in particular, have always supported any initiative that furthers the noble goals and principles of the United Nations, summarized in three words: peace, development and human rights.

My country is committed to the pacific solution of conflicts, the central theme of our debate. In that spirit, at the end of 2008 we agreed to sign a Special Agreement with our neighbor, Belize, to seek a resolution of an age-old territorial dispute through the International Court of Justice. Our Congress unanimously approved the Agreement, and on October 6, 2013 simultaneous plebiscites will be held in both countries to democratically ratify the commitment to approach the International Court of Justice.

Further, we Guatemalans lived under an armed conflict which lasted during 36 years. I was a soldier that participated in that conflict. Because I know war, I very much value dialogue. That is why in 1996 I was one of the signatories of the Peace Accords in my country. That motivates me, Mr. President, to reaffirm my support to your sage decision to convene this session to discuss the pacific solution to conflicts.

Mr. President,

My Government has set three overarching objectives in order to be able to advance firmly and in a sustained manner toward a Guatemala that fully enjoys the benefits of peace. In the first place, we have proposed a Zero Hunger Pact, which pursues reducing in a sustained and sustainable manner the chronic malnutrition that affects over 40 per cent of our children below 5 years of age. This reduction will not be sustainable if we are unable to develop our rural areas and permanently reduce the poverty that affects families living off the land, and particularly indigenous families.

In the second place, my Government is promoting a Pact for Security, Justice and Peace, which seeks to reduce the social violence which afflicts our country. I found a country with high levels of violence, and that is why it has become a priority of my Government to reduce them. But we

are certain that we can attain progress in this area, since the indicators in only the last 9 months already show a notable decrease of 13% in the number of homicides compared to the same period last year. I can therefore state that, without being satisfied with these indexes, we are moving in the right direction and meeting our promise of having lower levels of violence and more security in Guatemala, in an environment of full respect for human rights. In this endeavor, we work closely with our neighboring countries, and especially with our brothers of Central America.

In the third place, we are struggling on the economic front through the Fiscal and Competitiveness Pact. Fiscal affairs have been one of the weaknesses of our institutional arrangement, and for this reason in the very first days of my Government we successfully promoted a fiscal reform, approved by Congress, which increased our fiscal receipts by 15 per cent, allowing us to maintain a stable macroeconomic environment by reducing the fiscal deficit without having to reduce public expenditures. At the same time, fiscal stability is allowing us to stimulate private investments that generate employment opportunities, as demanded by our citizens, men and women.

Mr. President,

Unfortunately, our efforts in relation to the three challenges mentioned (lowering chronic malnutrition in children, reducing violence and insecurity, and promoting employment and fiscal reform) are partially challenged by a scourge represented by the trafficking of narcotics. At least 40% of the homicides in our country are linked to the traffic of illicit drugs, and my Government is obligated to allocate scarce fiscal resources to combat transnational gangs that traffic in illegal drugs, from the producing countries in the South to the consuming countries in the North. Moreover, my country has gradually been transformed into a producer and a consumer of drugs, aggravating even more an already difficult situation.

The existing framework, born out of the international conventions of the past five decades and currently in force, has not achieved its desired results. The markets for consumption expand instead of decrease; the number of producers and the type of drugs available tend to multiply; and the routes elected for marketing and trafficking are trending towards diversification. The drug problem is ever greater and more complex. It involves more countries and a greater number of persons. Clearly, it is a transnational phenomenon, and it is for this reason that I raise it in this universal forum of the United Nations.

Mr. President,

We believe that the basic premise of our war against drugs has proved to have serious shortcomings, in that it has not been possible to eradicate the consumption of drugs in the world. I believe that the time has come to accept this fact, and to adapt our fight against this scourge taking into account the new realities.

The most affected group of the population from drug consumption, our youth, demands more effective responses from us. Let us address the problem for what it is: largely a public health issue, more than a problem of criminal justice. We must offer treatment, prevention, social

protection, economic opportunities and development for the families and communities involved in the market of drugs. Let us not fill our jails and overburden our justice systems in prosecuting thousands of cases of young people which could have a different life if we approach the problem in a different manner. I invite the members of the General Assembly to jointly seek avenues that allow us to offer our youth a more promising future, improving their opportunities for a better life and at the same time a lowering of violence and poverty.

Fifty years is sufficient time to evaluate with clarity what we have achieved and to understand why we have not achieved the results we had hoped for. In that regard, I also call on the member states of the United Nations to review the international norms that currently govern our global policies regarding drugs. The 1961 Convention and the additional protocols of 1971 and 1988 must be evaluated on the basis of its results and brought up to date to allow us to achieve the desired outcome. This is a serious challenge which must be addressed with great responsibility, and that should lead us to a respectful and frank multilateral dialogue, informed by scientific evidence regarding the best strategies available to assure that our youth is protected from the scourge of drugs.

In this regard, in the past month of April the Heads of State and Government of the Western Hemisphere met in the Summit of the Americas in Cartagena de Indias. Our host, President Santos of Colombia, invited us to discuss new avenues to combat narco-trafficking. The agreement we reached was that we should undertake studies to assess new alternatives which we would discuss next year, before June. This is a step in the right direction, and a process that we believe should be emulated at the global level.

In the same spirit, my Government would like to establish an international group of countries that are well disposed to reforming global policies on drugs, which convenes those Governments that are willing to promote in the appropriate international forums an objective assessment of prevailing policies, as well as considering new creative and innovative alternatives. We must seek new avenues with responsibility and perseverance, with the cooperation of all: producing, consuming and transit countries.

Allow me to stress that it is not a matter of lowering our guard and abandoning the fight. Rather, it is a matter of arming ourselves better and responding with greater effectiveness, because our sons and grandchildren deserve a more integral and effective response from the international community.

I finalize these ideas reaffirming that Guatemala will not renege on any of its international commitments to which it is a party. We are not seeking a unilateral action as a country that only would sow chaos and conflict in a global response. We will wait patiently until the international community finds a new consensus to change our own policies in Guatemala. But at the same time I commit my leadership to move forward an updating of the global policy on drugs, so that it becomes more effective and based on international norms that reflect the challenges and realities of the Twenty First Century.

Mr. President,

Before concluding, I would like to very briefly mention three points, which I believe to be relevant to this General Assembly.

First, as a sample of our commitment with the defense and promotion of human rights in all their expressions, I offered in my acceptance speech when assuming the Presidency on 14 January last, that Guatemala would seek the ratification of the Rome Statute, to become a member of the International Criminal Court. I am pleased to inform that on April 2 we did indeed deposit our instrument of ratification.

Second, in the same aforementioned speech, I indicated that our priority in foreign policy would be contributing to the ideals of democracy, justice and peace, in a framework of absolute respect for international law. In this regard, I offered that Guatemala would carry out its work in the Security Council of the United Nations with responsibility and a constructive spirit. I believe that we have met this promise, and we are pleased that in six more days Guatemala will assume the Presidency of the Security Council for the month of October.

Third, regarding the events of the last weeks, we reject all acts of defamation of religions. At the same time, we condemn violence in all its expressions, including the violation of diplomatic missions. Both expressions of intolerance offend all of us.

Finally, I would like to recall that on December 21 next, we will be celebrating in Guatemala the beginning of a new era in accordance with the calendar of the Mayan civilization. The new era, the 13 Baktun, is an invitation to renew physical and spiritual energies in an environment of peace, cooperation and dialogue. All Heads of State and Government are invited to join us to share in this dawn of a new era. The Mayans of yesterday and today, and all Guatemalans, await you with open arms.

Thank you.