



MISSIÓ PERMANENT DEL PRINCIPAT D'ANDORRA A LES NACIONS UNIDES

**68th session of the United Nations General Assembly
-speech by the Head of the Andorran Government, Antoni Martí Petit-
New York, 28 September 2013**

(check against delivery)

Mister President,

Mister Secretary-General,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to begin by congratulating the President of the 68th session of the General Assembly, Mr. John Ashe, from Antigua and Barbuda. We are fully convinced you will be a clear example of how small States can assume responsibilities that arise from our participation to the international community.

It is an honour for me and a high responsibility to address this Assembly on behalf of the people and the Government of the Principality of Andorra. And it is an honour to do so at this 68th Assembly, when we celebrate 20 years since our country became member of the United Nations. In fact, in 1993, with the approval of the Constitution and our entry into the United Nations, Andorra was formally recognised as what had been a reality for over 700 years: a sovereign, democratic country without an army, which has kept itself neutral in the heart of the Pyrenees.

The visit of the Secretary-General to our country last April on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Constitution served to reinforce, once again, Andorra's commitment to the United Nations' principles and values. These are

principles and values that are not just relegated to great declarations and founding charters, but that must be translated into greater effectiveness on people's life conditions.

In this respect, it is particularly worthwhile mentioning the emphasis that the United Nations have placed on development in recent years. I refer to the Millennium Development Goals, adopted in 2000 and which are to be assessed definitively in two years' time. It was particularly relevant to directly link the main principles of peace, democracy, negotiated conflict resolution and Human Rights with more specific matters also of extreme importance, such as eradicating poverty and hunger, widespread universal primary education and the sustainability and protection of the environment.

During this General Assembly, we have talked about and will continue talking about defining new goals to be introduced from 2015. However, we should not forget that all the reports indicate that we will reach the date in question with most of the objectives from 2000 still not having been accomplished. Over the last 13 years, we have advanced very little in the sustainability and protection of the environment; child mortality continues to increase in the poorest regions and countries; achieving universal primary education is totally unviable by 2015 and the advances in preventing and treating AIDS in the poorer countries are still insufficient.

There is still a great deal of work to be done.

Mister President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It would not, however, be fair to only emphasise what we have not done and to forget all the advances that have been made in other areas. In fact, since 2000, the proportion of people who live in a situation of extreme poverty has been halved; the percentage of the world population with access to safe drinking water went from 76% in 1990 to 89% in 2010; notable progress has been made in the fight against malaria and tuberculosis, and the objective to

reduce hunger in the world by 50% in 2015 would seem to be an accessible goal.

Andorra applauds the decision of combining the United Nations' main principles with specific objectives to solve the great problems humanity is facing. We cannot give the impression that we are just a group of Heads of State and Government who have met in a city in the first world, full of good words and good intentions, but totally inefficient when it comes to solving problems that threaten the lives and the dignity of millions of people all over the world. Unfortunately, this is the image we have, at times, projected from the international community.

This is why I said that we applaud the fact that specific objectives have been set, that we evaluate whether they are being met and that we come here to explain the progress and the shortcomings. And I hope that the goals of the post-2015 agenda goals will be even more ambitious and that we will be able to dedicate a lot more effort to them.

Because the citizens of the world need to know that those who proclaim the spread of democracy and the rule of law are the same people who have been making great efforts to reduce poverty, hunger and child mortality and to promote gender equality and universal education.

Otherwise, we will run the risk of citizens seeing the institutions, and also the United Nations, as something far removed from their everyday lives and real problems. And, what would be even more serious: we run the risk of words such as democracy, Human Rights or international law becoming meaningless.

Mister President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

A year ago, on the occasion of the 67th General Assembly, we condemned the Benghazi attack. Today, one year later we all must feel we are from Nairobi. We must stand by those who condemn terrorism and defend the United Nations' principles.

A year ago, we used this platform to express our deep concern about the Civil War in Syria, and in particular, the devastating effects that this conflict was having on the Syrian population. We said that this conflict was putting the international community in a terrible dilemma: finding the right balance between the search of a diplomatic resolution and the respect of the rule of law.

The use of chemical weapons against civil population, which we condemn and which is contrary to all the values that this General Assembly stands for, places the international community in a scenario that requires fair and strong answers. The strong reaction to this situation, led by the United States of America and France –along with a pragmatic attitude from Russia– has generated the momentum to advance in the search of this right balance.

Firstly, to reach an agreement on the proof and destruction of these chemical weapons. Secondly, to take advantage of this dynamics created to make a larger diplomatic effort in order to reach a peaceful solution of the conflict. This will require new steps in the Geneva process. Without forgetting the humanitarian dimension of the Syrian conflict, which is not only a priority but unfortunately an urgency.

The resumption of negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis also can be included in the dynamics of the search of the right balance; the right balance based on the solution of two States. The right balance which recognizes as equally legitimate the will of the Palestinian people to have a peaceful and democratic State, as well as the Israeli wish to obtain guarantees for its existence and security.

In every conflict we are unable to solve, we are placing the principles and values that are most appreciated by the international community at risk: peace, security, dialogue, Human Rights and democracy itself.

It is not easy for the international community to find always an effective, fair way of reacting. Perhaps, because we are reacting to the problems rather than preventing them.

Therefore I would like to go back to what I said at the beginning of my speech: We cannot allow the United Nations' principles and values to be relegated to great declarations without an effective reflection on the people's life. Peace, legality and democracy must be accompanied by an effective respect for Human Rights and a substantial improvement in the living conditions of people: less poverty, less hunger, more education and more gender equality. An ambitious development agenda which is effectively applied is the best prevention for conflicts that put peace and security at risk.

Mister President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I started my speech by remembering Andorra's admission to the United Nations 20 years ago, and referring to more than seven centuries of peace in our country. This is an almost compulsory point of reference at an event such as this; and I am sure that you will have heard it from other representatives from Andorra.

We are proud of our country's peaceful history. But we are also extremely aware that Andorra would probably not have enjoyed more than 700 years of peace if there had been great inequalities between its inhabitants, if the laws had not been fair or if tyranny had reigned instead of a parliamentary regime. Because there cannot be peace without justice, in Andorra or anywhere else.

And all those of us who are here today, all those of us who have spoken from this platform this week, have the obligation to guarantee peace and fairness, democracy and development, Human Rights and peaceful conflict resolution ; that all the principles and values to which we are firmly committed should always go hand in hand. It is a long, difficult path, but it is the only possible way to construct a better world.

Referring to President Obama's words, some days ago, "We live in a world of imperfect choices", but this evident difficulty must not be an excuse for inaction. Such as our Co-Prince, President Hollande, stated from this

platform: "The UN has a responsibility to take action". And he added: "The worst decision is not to take any decisions."

Thank you very much.