



STATEMENT

BY

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**GENERAL DEBATE
OF THE
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**PERMANENT MISSION OF BELIZE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

Mr. President, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Once again I am privileged to address this Assembly on behalf of the Government and people of my country, Belize. And, it is with great delight that I congratulate you, H.E. John Ashe, upon your elevation to the Presidency of this 68th session of the General Assembly. You are a testament to all the peoples of the Caribbean and the world, of the height to which each of us can attain when industry and character are fused into one. Excellency, please be assured, that you will have the unqualified support of Belize throughout your term in office. I take this opportunity as well to thank your predecessor for his service as President of the 67th session of the General Assembly.

Mr. President,

It is in the quest for the attainment of the twin ideals of peaceful conflict solution and the enhancement of the lives of all peoples that leaders of member states make this annual September pilgrimage to address this United Nations General Assembly.

Mr. President

Belize commends the United Nations and its visionary leadership over the years for their unstinting efforts at discharging the core functions of our organization. The promulgation of the Millennium Development Goals in 2000 resulted in all countries working together for the first time in human history to address and rectify the gaps in their development agenda to reduce poverty.

The promulgation of the MDG's was a major breakthrough in the UN's

development agenda. It held forth the hope for the provision of massive amounts of desperately needed aid, technology transfer and other development assistance from affluent nations, financial institutions and philanthropists to nations mired in poverty. This was unquestionably good news. It was reminiscent of the Marshal Plan, which rescued Germany and Japan from abject ruin after the Second World War and catapulted them to heights of affluence never before experienced by them.

At the end of the 1990's, most countries were in dire straights. According to Kofi Annan, former United Nations Secretary General, over 60% of the world subsisted on \$2.00 or less per day; over one billion people were living on less than \$1.00 per day. Illiteracy was nearly at 1 billion, 800 million were chronically hungry -1 in 7 people on earth- including 200 million children and, 1.3 billion lacked even the most basic health sanitation and education services. Today, 13 years into the process of implementing MDG's the scorecard now reveals that while a minority of countries are showing commendable successes in attaining the MDG's the vast majority of nations are still mired in poverty with scant or no sign of development.

Mr. President

We note with disappointment, that the rich countries have not even been able to bring themselves to honour their commitment to contribute even the 0.7 percent of their gross domestic product as official domestic assistance to poor countries. And, the resources being provided by the international and other financial institutions and by private donors fall far short of what is needed by poor countries for the attainment of these most laudable goals.

It is evident that for some inexplicable reason the developed countries abandoned goal 8 of the MDG's titled "Development a Global Partnership for Development". In the absence of the partnership of the developed countries

the attainment of the MDG's by poor countries will remain illusory for they neither possess the requisite Leadership cadres, the financial, human and technical resources, the infrastructure, the requisite levels of investment and trade nor the institutions to foster the needed levels of development to generate the resources needed to underwrite the expenses associated with the attainment of these goals. And what is perhaps even worse, far too many countries have no realistic prospect of attaining that capacity within the foreseeable future.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, however, Belize remains committed to the attainment of the MDGs and we are assiduously pursuing same.

Toward a new global partnership

Mr. President,

Given the experience with the Millennium Development Goals it is in our view eminently fitting that you should have maintained the spotlight on the development agenda for this 68th General Assembly, namely, "The Post 2015 Development Agenda: Setting the Stage". The Millennium Development Goals must remain a work in progress. And the Post 2015 development Agenda must be informed by our experiences with the Millennium Development Goals.

In that regard, careful analysis must be undertaken to ascertain why it was that our rich development partners failed to live up to their obligations under the partnership to provide the promised development aid and expertise to poor development partners. And new mechanisms must be devised to ensure that the Post 2015 Development Agenda does not suffer a similar fate.

As we embark on setting the stage for the post 2015 Development Agenda, Belize has recognized and identified four underpinning points:

1. That the post 2015 agenda must be global
2. That it should integrate the outcomes of major summits into a cohesive action-oriented and implementable agenda, building upon successes and improving upon lessons learned
3. That the necessary resources must be sourced and committed to underwrite this new partnership for development.
4. That it must be guided by our core values of conflict prevention and poverty eradication.

Belize endorses the intergovernmental processes for the elaboration of the post 2015 development agenda. Our domestic priorities which complement the global agenda are contained in the document Horizon 2030, which articulates our development framework. Sector specific documents emanating from Horizon 2030 inform our national development agenda in areas such as security, energy, gender, education and health.

The Belize Guatemala Claim

Topping the list of our domestic priorities is the resolution of the Guatemalan claim. This claim poses an existential threat to our nation and requires urgent resolution if the peoples of our two countries and our region are to continue to enjoy the peaceful coexistence that has characterized our relationship thus far.

Mr. President

When I addressed this Assembly last September I had been pleased to report that our two states had agreed to submit to the citizens of our respective countries in simultaneous referendum on the 6th day of October 2013, six

days from today, the question of whether it was the will of our respective constituencies that the Guatemalan claim be submitted to the International Court of Justice for final resolution. Regretfully, however, last April, Guatemala gave official notice to both Belize and the Secretary General of the Organization of American States, that the Guatemalan government had decided, not to proceed with the referendum on the 6th October 2013 and was proposing that the same be postponed sine die.

Not unexpectedly that decision was not well received in Belize. The Guatemalan claim is a constant source of anxiety to our citizens as well as to investors in our country. Furthermore, both our territorial and our maritime border regions have been suffering from depredation and environment degradation in consequence of the wanton and sustained illegal activities of Guatemalans, fishermen and other criminal elements engaged in narco-trafficking, human trafficking, smuggling, illegal panning for gold, the extraction of Xate and other exotic plants and animals, the illegal felling of timber and the pillaging of our ancient Mayan ruins. The felling of timber in our rainforest areas are contributing to the denuding of our mountains which result in violent flooding in the rainy season and the transmission of top soil sand and silt into the sea. These soils are then ultimately deposited into our pristine barrier reef choking and destroying the fragile eco-systems therein, and compromising the health of the entire reef and the marine ecological system thriving therein.

Additionally, the increasing trespassing by the Guatemalans into our country has given rise to more frequent violent encounters between Guatemalans and members of our Belize Defense Force resulting in fatalities, in some instances. These incidents put a heavy strain on the relations between our country and Guatemala and the peace of our region as a whole.

While Belize appreciates that the activities of the Guatemalans in our border regions are as a direct result of poverty and failed development in their own country, we are concerned by the fact that such activities create the conditions for conflict. There are some 65 Guatemalan villages along the 141 mile Belize Guatemalan border. These villagers are largely indigent and unemployed. In the absence of employment and increased security patrols on both sides of the border the incursions of the Guatemalans will not, abate but will only get worse.

Belize is resolved to do all in its power to protect her citizens and territorial integrity but our efforts alone will not be sufficient to put an end to the forays of the Guatemalans into our country. The input of the international community will be vital in assisting with the development in the border regions of income generating enterprises to ameliorate the poverty, which impels the Guatemalans to trespass in our border regions.

Border conflicts are dangerous by nature. In the words of former Secretary General Kofi Annan " [Conflicts] tend to suck in their neighbors, send thousands of refugees spilling into other countries, create havens for armed groups and terrorists, and they cause the spread of terrorist networks and cause border lawlessness including piracy. In short, conflicts ... Are inherent generators of global insecurity the causes of which need to be addressed by wealthy and poor states alike."

I would wish to take this opportunity to thank the Organization of American States and the Group of Friends who support the effort of Belize and Guatemala to resolve the Guatemalan claim peacefully and, in the interim, to ensure that peace is maintained between our two countries.

Climate Change

Climate Change is another threat of an existential nature, looming not only over Belize but over all nations of the world, large and small. It is in our view urgent that consensus be arrived at by the international community as to the imminence and magnitude of the threat posed by Climate Change to humanity as well as on the way forward in dealing successfully with this perilous phenomenon. This is another threat that can only be successfully dealt with by this United Nations. Combating the threat will necessitate huge expenditure, the deployment of cutting edge technology and the cessation of the use of fossil fuels.

Developing countries like Belize will need both technical and financial assistance from the international community and international financial institutions, to adapt to the changes being brought about by Climate Change as well as to mitigate the deleterious effects thereof.

Belize has established a National Climate Change Committee to coordinate our government's interventions in all areas relating to Climate Change. We are also establishing a new Climate Change Policy and Strategy, which provides for the scaling up of mitigation and adaptation efforts at all levels. We applaud the Secretary General for his decision to convene a High Level Meeting on Climate Change in the near future.

Citizens Security

The security of citizens is the paramount obligation of every government. The Belize government takes this responsibility seriously. However, the threats to the security of our citizens are so numerous in today's globalized world that no single country has the capacity to tackle the same on its own. Belize works actively with our multilateral and bilateral partners in sourcing necessary

resources, technical assistance and training in our quest to secure our citizenry. We are party to the Central American Security Strategy, which is dedicated to combating the activities of national, regional and transnational criminals. We also collaborate closely with security and law enforcement authorities in our region, including Canada, the United Kingdom and the USA.

We were very pleased by the adoption earlier this year of the Arms Trade Treaty and we will, in due course, ratify same. We have also enacted a whole raft of legislation to strengthen our crime fighting capabilities.

Education

The Belize government invests as much as 26% of its annual budgeted expenditure on the Education Sector. We believe that education is one of the quickest ways of uplifting our people out of poverty. Almost one half of our population is below the age of 25 and approximately 37% is below the age of 18, they will all need world class education and skills training if they are to be able to compete successfully in the global markets. Belize is not able at this time to provide education and training at that level locally and cooperates with its international partners for the provision, in large measure, of such education.

NCD's and Disabilities

Mr. President,

Non-Communicable Diseases and Disabilities are impacting the countries in our Caribbean region very negatively. In our country the incidence of cancers, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, chronic lung diseases, hypertension and strokes are reaching epidemic proportions. Empirical data reveals that in low and middle income countries Non-Communicable Disease related impairments account

for 66.5% of persons living with disabilities. It is urgent that this United Nations seek to address these afflictions which are blighting the lives of untold numbers of our citizens.

Mr. President, at the last meeting of the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, the historic decision was taken for our community to pursue all necessary steps for the recovery of reparations for the Descendants of the Victims of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade from the nations, which participated in and benefitted from the trade. Belize urges this United Nations to lend its support to this initiative, which seeks to address, at least in part, the unspeakable evil perpetrated by the European Nations who participated in the trade.

Earlier this year Belize successfully rescheduled its debt obligations with its commercial bond holder. That exercise enabled our country to avoid the specter of sovereign default. Despite the restructuring however, Belize is still challenged in its capacity to finance its developmental programmes and continues to rely upon the cooperation of its bilateral and multilateral cooperation partners to achieve its developmental goals. In that regard, Belize would wish to express its gratitude to the UN and its related agencies including UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNESCO, FAO, UNODC and PAHO who work tirelessly in support of the implementation of our national developmental objectives. We would also wish to thank the many nations that are partnering with us in development at this time.

Belize would like to enlist the support of this United Nations to assist in persuading the international financial organizations that GDP per capita is not of itself an accurate measure of the wealth of a nation or of its state of development particularly in the case of heavily indebted middle income countries. This method of assessment would disqualify these countries including my own, from badly needed concessionary financing and such an

eventuality can well lead to the reversal of their hard won gains.

Human Rights

Mr. President,

The Government of Belize is committed to a rights-based approach to the development of our country and her people. To this end we have embraced the international human rights regime and are using our best efforts to enable inclusive growth. In this regard, we are pleased to inform you that the Government of Belize has, in consultation with its stakeholder partners at the national level, submitted its Second Universal Periodic Review for consideration by the Human Rights Council during its 17th Session in October.

We also condemn the cowardly terrorist attack which recently took place in Kenya.

Taiwan / Cuba/ Israeli-Palestinian situation

Mr. President,

Earlier I referred to my country's position in regards to the post-2015 development agenda, that it must be inclusive if we are to achieve meaningful development. We need to ensure that all our countries are allowed to participate in a meaningful manner; this includes the Republic of China (Taiwan). We cannot deny the significant advancements they have been able to accomplish in such a short time and their own contributions to support global goals and commitments, especially in the area of development cooperation. We can learn from their experience to advance our own development.

Cuba

Mr. President, every year the Assembly votes to lift the economic embargo against Cuba. We continue supporting that call.

Belize also continues to call for an urgent and peaceful resolution to the Israeli- Palestinian conflict.

Syria /Chemical and Biological Weapons

Mr. President,

The situation in the Middle East troubles us. As responsible citizens of the world we condemn the use of chemical weapons and we welcome the framework agreement led by Russia and the United States of America and supported by the Security Council that should lead to the removal of all chemical and biological weapons from Syria. Indeed, we call on other nations to abide by the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction.

Conclusion

As we approach the end of an era and look toward the post 2015 development process, our government, policy makers, decision planners and all levels of society will be challenged to focus on what we want and can achieve together.

We must commit to the process of ensuring that we adopt global goals and objectives that reflect global priorities that reflect our national contexts. Our agenda must be reflective of the world's most pressing problems which include but are not limited to environmental sustainability, inequality, growth with equity and social inclusion.

Mr. President, we extend confidence that this process under your guidance will be an inclusive, accessible, and a transparent one.

I Thank You.

