

**Statement by Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India
at the General Debate of the 63rd UN General Assembly**

[26 September, 2008]

Your Excellency, Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I first congratulate you on your election as the President of the 63rd UN General Assembly. I am sure that your wisdom and experience will guide us as we deliberate the many challenges that the world faces today.

Mr. President,

The United Nations is the embodiment of our faith in the benefits of collective action and of multilateral approaches in resolving global issues.

At the 2005 World Summit, we pledged ourselves to an agenda for early and meaningful reform of the United Nations. However, we must acknowledge frankly that there has been little progress on the core elements of the reform agenda.

We need to make more determined efforts to revitalize the General Assembly to enable it to fulfill its rightful role as the principal deliberative organ of the United Nations.

The composition of the Security Council needs to change to reflect contemporary realities of the twenty-first century.

It is only a truly representative and revitalized United Nations that can become the effective focal point for the cooperative efforts of the world community. We need to expeditiously hold negotiations towards this end.

Mr. President,

Globalisation has contributed to ever widening circles of prosperity and we in India have benefited from it. But its benefits have not been equitably distributed. Ensuring inclusive growth within nations, and inclusive globalization across nations, is a central challenge that faces us.

The development gains that many countries have made are today threatened by a possible food crisis, a global energy crisis and most recently, unprecedented upheavals in international financial markets.

The net impact of these problems is that both the industrialised economies and the developing economies face inflation and a slow down in growth after several years of robust expansion. Industrialised countries can afford periods of slow growth. Developing countries certainly cannot.

There is therefore urgent need for coordinated action by the global community on several fronts.

The explosion of financial innovation unaccompanied by credible systemic regulation has made the financial system vulnerable. The resulting crisis of confidence threatens global prosperity in the increasingly interdependent world in which we live. There is, therefore, a need for a new international initiative to bring structural reform in the world's financial system with more effective regulation and stronger systems of multilateral consultations and surveillance. This must be designed in as inclusive a manner as possible.

The world food crisis is the cumulative consequence of the neglect of agriculture in the developing world, exacerbated by distortionary agricultural subsidies in the developed world. Diversion of cultivable land for producing bio-fuels is compounding the problem.

The world needs a Second Green Revolution to address the problem of food security. We need new technologies, new institutional responses and above all a global compact to ensure food and livelihood security. This will require transfer of technology and innovation from developed to developing countries. India is very keen to expand cooperation with Africa in Africa's quest for food and livelihood security for its people.

Trade liberalization in agriculture can help provided it adequately takes into account the livelihood concerns of poor and vulnerable farmers in the developing and least developed countries.

It is feared that many of the conflicts of the 21st century will be over water. We must reflect on how to use this scarce resource efficiently. We need to invest in new technologies and new production regimes for rainfed and dryland agriculture and explore cost effective desalination technologies.

Mr. President,

Poverty, ignorance and disease still afflict millions of people. The commitment to achieve the ambitious targets set as part of the Millennium Development Goals was an acknowledgement by the international community that global prosperity and welfare are indivisible and affluence cannot coexist with pervasive poverty.

Unfortunately, solemn commitments made for transfer of financial resources from the developed to the developing world have remained largely unfulfilled. The commitment of developed countries to move to the long-set target of 0.7% of Gross National Income as ODA needs to be honoured as a matter of priority. In this context, special efforts have to be made to address the concerns of Africa for adequate resource flows to support its development.

Poverty alleviation and livelihood security are closely linked to energy security. We need a much greater measure of predictability and stability in the oil and gas markets. We need to think of ways and means, such as early warning mechanisms, to help countries cope with oil shocks.

We must put in place a global cooperative network of institutions of developed and developing countries engaged in R&D in energy efficiency, clean energy technologies, and renewable sources of energy.

India is registering rapid economic growth and has combined it with declining energy intensity. However, our total demand will keep increasing and we are actively looking for all possible sources of clean energy.

The opening of international civil nuclear cooperation with India will have a positive impact on global energy security and on efforts to combat climate change.

This is a vindication of India's impeccable record on non-proliferation and to our long-standing commitment to nuclear disarmament that is global, universal and non-discriminatory in nature. The blueprint for this was spelt out by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in this very august assembly twenty years ago.

I reiterate India's proposal for a Nuclear Weapons Convention prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons and providing for their complete elimination within a specified time frame.

Mr. President,

Climate change can be overcome successfully only through a collaborative and cooperative global effort.

We support the multilateral negotiations taking place under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The outcome must be fair and equitable and recognize the principle that each citizen of the world has equal entitlement to the global atmospheric space.

I believe that the pursuit of ecologically sustainable development need not be in contradiction to achieving our growth objectives. As Mahatma Gandhi said, "The Earth has enough resources to meet people's needs, but will never have enough to satisfy people's greed".

India has unveiled an ambitious National Action Plan on Climate Change. Even as we pursue economic growth, we are committed to our per-capita emissions of greenhouse gases not exceeding those of the developed countries.

Mr. President,

The growing assertion of separate identities and ethnic, cultural and religious intolerance threatens our developmental efforts and our peace and stability. It is vital that we strengthen international cooperation to combat terrorism and to bring the perpetrators, organisers, financiers and sponsors of terrorism to justice. We should conclude expeditiously the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism.

In this context, the situation in Afghanistan is a matter of deep concern. The international community must pool all its resources to ensure the success of Afghanistan's reconstruction efforts and its emergence as a moderate, pluralistic and democratic society.

We welcome the return of democracy in Pakistan. We are committed to resolving all outstanding issues between India and Pakistan, including the issue of Jammu and Kashmir, through peaceful dialogue. We also welcome the coming to power of democratically elected governments in Nepal and Bhutan. We seek to expand areas of cooperation with all these countries to deal with the challenges of sustainable development and poverty eradication.

Mr. President,

The United Nations is a living symbol of pluralism. It has weathered many storms. It is the vehicle through which our combined will and efforts to address global challenges must be articulated and implemented. Unless we rise to the task, we would bequeath to succeeding generations a world of diminishing prospects.

Thank you.