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S T A T E M E N T O F
THE GOVERNMENT OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC
OF MAURITANIA

AT

THE 63rd SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

DELIVERED BY
HIS EXCELLENCY MR. ABDERRAHIM OULD HADRAMI

AMBASSADOR, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

NEW YORK
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Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with pleasure that I offer you my warmest congratulations on your election as President of the 63rd session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. We have every confidence in your exceptional efforts and your successful work to consolidate the gains achieved and enhance international peace and security under a world system characterized by prosperity, stability and progress.

I would also like to pay tribute to the valuable efforts made by your predecessor Mr. Srgjan Kerim to strengthen the principles of dialogue and consultation as means to reach the most effective solutions for international causes and disputes.

Further, I would like to express our thanks and gratitude to the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his continual efforts on behalf of important files relevant to the reform of the Organization or enhancing international peace and security.

Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The current 63rd session of the General Assembly of the United Nations meets at a time when our country has witnessed a change of the head of State. And I would seize this opportunity to explain the reasons for this change.

In August 2005, after two decades of political tyranny, bribery and increasing corruption, the armed forces and security forces intervened to put an end to the grave deviations that threatened the structure and existence of the Mauritanian State. This move by the Military Council for Justice and Democracy led to a transitional democratic phase that was successfully concluded in April 2007. Mauritians and international observers attested to the fairness and transparency of this phase. The Mauritanian experiment in democracy became an example worthy of being emulated by others.

In addition, the satisfaction of various observers, the engagement of international organizations and the support of civil society added to the success of the experiment. A series of elections were held, with the support of international partners, leading to the ratification, in a popular referendum, of the Constitution in June 2006.

A parliament with two chambers was elected in November of the same year. A new president of the Republic was elected in March 2007. A new law for the organization of the press was enacted in October 2006. This law established a higher authority for the press, radio and television.

As for good governance:

- ✓ a new general inspectorate of the State was established;
- ✓ our country acceded to the transparency initiative in the field of extracting industries;
- ✓ public officials have to disclose their property;
- ✓ public transactions are done in a transparent manner.

Lastly, women were accorded a quota of 20% of all candidatures in our Islamic Republic. As a result, 18 women were elected to the current Parliament.

These splendid achievements, in addition to the atmosphere of peace and harmony enjoyed by the people of Mauritania was the result of the work of the military establishment which promised to complete this process and kept its promise within the announced timeframe. Once the former President assumed his office, anything was possible in new Mauritania with all its new institutional gains, to consolidate and deepen the achievements of the transitional period 2005- 2007.

Regrettably the former President has early proven his weakness and inability to lead the country and meet the many challenges he faced.

Conditions in the country continued to seriously deteriorate during the last fifteen months, in the political, security, economic and social fields. The deteriorating situation constituted a real threat to the country's peace, security and stability. It even threatened the structure and foundations of the State.

Thus our country has, over the last three months, gone through an institutional crisis that led to the interruption of the work of parliamentary institutions and paralyzed the affairs of the State, whose stability was jeopardized due to the intransigence of the executive authority, which prevented Parliament from exercising its constitutional powers.

In order to secure the loyalty of some parliamentarians, from the majority party, who were unhappy with the difficult situation and concerned about the future of the country, he resorted to certain illegal measures that are unacceptable in a democratic system. He used public finances to buy the allegiance of some parliamentarians. In addition, he did some irregular appointments, and arbitrary firing of public officials to stem the people's desire for change. Moreover, he continuously threatened to dissolve the Parliament to avoid the formation of a parliamentary committee to investigate the sources of financing of a private business created by his family.

In the field of security, and as a result of his laxity and refusal to listen to the advice of security services, a number of terrorist acts took place for the first time in the country's history as a result of the release of a number of terrorists who were in custody until he took office.

Economically and socially the situation has become disastrous. And while the people suffer misery, hunger and disease, the former President, who only visited one city inside Mauritania, the city of Tainatan, in the aftermath of floods that hit the city, made twenty five visits abroad costing the Mauritanian taxpayer a lot of money, without achieving any tangible results in the field of co-operation between Mauritania and its development partners.

The former President continuously and intentionally obstructed the work of democratic institutions, which led to the State's paralysis.

Faced with the failure of his maneuvers, he resorted to the firing of the high officials in the leadership of the army and the security services at the same time. This almost led to a confrontation among high officers and created a situation, which could have taken the country to a civil war.

In view of the political impasse, the armed forces and the security forces, conscious of the serious dangers to the country, intervened in order to correct the deviations and pressure national unity and the other gains of the country, and its prospects of development and progress.

This change has engaged the support of two thirds of members of parliament and about 90% of mayors and two thirds of the recognized political parties in addition to other organizations of the civil society including cultural and professional societies and unprecedented popular marches.

The Higher Council of State declared its commitment to:

- Protect democracy and enhance democratic process in Mauritania;
- Guarantee the continued regular work of the institutions of the State;
- Allow the officially recognized political parties to practice their activities;
- Guarantee freedom of the press and the media;
- Respect the obligations, agreements and international treaties concluded in the name of the Mauritanian State;
- Organize free and transparent elections at the earliest possible date.

Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Conscious of the importance and need for integration among countries and peoples, Mauritania would like to renew its adherence to the Union of Arab Maghreb as a strategic choice of the people of the region, the League of Arab States, the African Union and the purposes and principles of the United Nations. In the same spirit, we would like to renew our support of the efforts aimed at reforming the United Nations and in particular the Security Council. In this respect we call for giving the African continent permanent representation on the Security Council. Africa is the only continent without permanent representation in the Council since the inception of this organization. We also call for giving the Arab group representation in the Security Council in view of the fact that they represent more than 11% of the peoples of the world. We also support giving permanent seats in the Security Council to Japan and Germany, since both countries play a vital role in the maintenance of peace and security in the world.

Mr. President,

Allow me to pay a special tribute to the great efforts made during the last session of the General Assembly in the field of development, and especially as regards the steep rise in food prices and of all other goods, the financing of development projects, in addition to the problem of the greenhouse gases and their effect on our planet.

Mr. President,

The 63rd session of the General Assembly of the United Nations comes at a very difficult time, when the world is suffering from the sharp increase in the prices of food, which negatively affects the economies of developing countries. This might even undermine the economic structure of these countries if no urgent measures were taken to face it. The food crisis facing the world requires concerted international efforts that would plan for overcoming the negative effects of this crisis.

Mr. President,

Today we are at the midpoint of achieving the millennium development goals. However, most developing countries are still far from achieving these goals. That is why we call on rich countries to keep their promises to finance development in the developing world.

Mr. President,

The Arab-Israeli conflict is a source of tension and a threat to international peace and security in a vital and sensitive region. That is why my country supports the peace efforts aimed at settling this conflict in a manner that guarantees for the Palestinian people the restoration of his rights and the establishment of his State, with Jerusalem as its capital that co-exists in peace and security with the State of Israel.

As regards the question of the Sudan, we totally reject the latest developments specially the request of the Prosecutor of the Criminal Court to issue an arrest warrant for the President of the Sudan because we believe this would jeopardize peace efforts in that country and could add more tensions to a sensitive region of the world.

Mr. President,

My country follows with interest the question of Western Sahara. While we would like to pay tribute to the latest steps of going back to the negotiating table, we renew our support of the efforts of the Secretary General aimed at reaching a final settlement that enjoys acceptance by both parties.

Mr. President,

The spreading of the culture of peace and the spirit and values of tolerance among peoples and civilizations, the restoration of rights and realization of justice among peoples, are, in our view, the best way to maintain peace and security in our world. The fact that there are outstanding questions which remained without any solution for long periods of time, the widening gap between the poor and the rich, the unfair world economic structure and the absence of any approaches to spread justice, equality and fairness, have all contributed to the creation of pockets of tension and the phenomenon of extremism and terrorism.

We, in Mauritania, reject terrorism in all its forms. To the extent we condemn terrorism, we adhere to our Islamic tolerant values, which reject violence and extremism and call for tolerance and brotherhood. We believe that the international family should seriously consider the causes of this phenomenon and ways of facing it so that we may eradicate it fully from our world.

Mr. President,

We would like to affirm the importance accorded by developing countries to development, while we look forward with hope to the results of the Doha conference scheduled for 29 November to 2 December for this purpose. We also would like to express our concern at the deadlock of the Doha round of trade negotiations and call on industrialized countries to show more flexibility and stronger political will in this respect.

Mr. President,

Development has economic, social and environmental dimensions. Any shortcomings in any one of these dimensions would negatively affect the others. That is why we call for the need to deal with the phenomenon of climate change. My country is one of the ten most vulnerable countries that, God forbid, could suffer the effects of the greenhouse gases if they caused a rise

in the sea level. We call on industrial countries to limit the emissions that cause the greenhouse effect.

Mr. President,

Implementing the commitments declared by the international community at the time of the establishment of this Organization will not be realized unless all countries and peoples of the world were able to benefit from the available resources and development efforts in the developing countries were supported with a view to creating the right conditions for decent living in freedom and equality. Only then, we would honour the commitments we have always affirmed.

Thank you.