

**Mr President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of my delegation, and in my own name, I extend to you, Mr President, our warmest congratulations on your well deserved election as President of the sixty-fourth session of this august assembly.

I also wish to commend the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr Ban Ki-moon, for his tireless effort at the helm of our organization in the cause of international peace and security.

Mr President, in this globalised world, nations will increasingly face unconventional, emerging threats to their security. The recent, rapid spread of the AH1N1 virus is a case in point.

The commitment of the entire membership of our Organization is required in forging a consensus to deal with the uncertainties of the times ahead. More than ever before, multilateralism will be the way forward.

Mr President,

As we confronted the severe food and energy crises of a year ago, little did we realize that the world was about to be engulfed in an unprecedented economic crisis. The most severe meltdown since the Great Depression has spared no country, precisely because we live in an interconnected world.

Millions of people all over the world have lost their jobs, their incomes and their savings. It is estimated that an additional 50 million people have already been driven into extreme poverty.

Whatever modest progress developing countries had achieved, has been severely set back.

The world may be witnessing the early signs of a slow recovery. However, the aftershocks of the crisis will continue to be felt for much longer.

Developing countries have experienced declining capital flows, stagnating foreign aid and a fall in remittances and export revenues.

Mauritius, with a small open economy, has been exceptionally exposed to the adverse effects of the crisis. Although, both our manufacturing sector and our tourism industry have been negatively impacted, we have registered positive economic growth. This is due to the reforms my Government has implemented since 2005.

Bold reforms have succeeded in making our economy more resilient.

In 2008, our GDP grew by 5.3% and the unemployment rate dropped to 7.2%. Mauritius has attracted Foreign Direct Investment amounting to almost 5% of GDP, and achieved the highest level of job creation in more than a decade.

However, the global crisis has been a severe blow. Growth has been slowed and we expect a growth of around 2.7% this year. But our economy is now structurally more sound, more competitive and resilient.

We are concerned that a prolonged crisis could drive our export-oriented economy into reverse gear, with further declines in trade and capital flows, exchange rate volatility, and further falls in tourist arrivals.

To mitigate the damage to our economy, we have reacted as soon as the first signs of the sub-prime crisis started in the US. We introduced an expansionary budget with emphasis on infrastructural projects and as the crisis spread into a world wide financial and economic crisis – we put in place a Stimulus Package to save jobs, protect people and prepare for the recovery.

We have, in other words, been ahead of the curve.

In this uncertain economic situation, the priority of Mauritius is to safeguard the hard-earned gains from past reforms.

We have been collateral victims of financial imbalances, over-leveraged financial institutions, inadequate regulation and deficient supervision.

Developing countries benefit little from periods of boom and pay an inordinately high price for the busts that often follow.

We hope that strengthening regulations and supervisions will prevent the accumulation of high risk, toxic assets that led to the crisis.

Mr President,

The crisis has also made it clear that the Brettonwoods institutions stand in need of fundamental reform. However, reforms will be effective only if they take into account the long-term stability and sustainability of the global economy. Institutions that make global decisions must reflect the changing nature of the global economic environment.

For too long, we have condoned a clear democratic deficit in global economic governance.

We need to reshape the global economy into a more equitable system, responsive to the needs of all countries and one that reflects the realities of the day. In this regard we appreciate the convening of the UN Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and its Impact on Development last June.

This conference provided a uniquely inclusive platform to address the urgent concerns of all nations. It has allowed the formulation, of proposals to lessen the impact of the crisis, especially on vulnerable populations.

The implementation of its recommendations should avoid a further deterioration in the conditions of the world's poor. And we look forward to the recommendations of the G-20 Summit, which starts today in Pittsburgh.

In coping with the effects of this crisis, we have to resist the temptation of resorting to trade protectionism. We should not forget that International trade has been a powerful engine for development and generated substantial economic growth.

From our perspective as a vulnerable Small Island Developing State, it is vital that markets remain open and that international trade flows are not impeded.

It is essential that the Doha Round, with development at its core, be successfully concluded without however, any unravelling of the July 2008 convergence package. We look forward to significant progress at the 7th WTO Ministerial Conference scheduled for December this year in Geneva.

The negative impact of the economic crisis on the most vulnerable populations is for us a source of great concern. The global economic slowdown has further delayed the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Confronted with this grave setback, the developing world looks to a strong demonstration of solidarity.

We hope the donor community will do more than just honour their previous commitments. The Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus and the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development have been overtaken by the events of the past year.

But I strongly believe what we need now is a change in our approach in the developing economies. We need to urgently apply ourselves to make pro-business policy reforms instead of just relying on aid. That is the way to create wealth and prosperity. Charity is a noble endeavour and is needed, but relying on charity alone is not the answer to future prosperity and opportunity for all.

We need to unleash the entrepreneurial drive of our people.

That is the ultimate answer to the eradication of poverty. We all know that it is better to show a man how to fish rather than give him a fish everyday.

And we need to co-ordinate our actions to bring down trade barriers. In fact what the developing countries need is a Marshall Plan with a single co-ordinated program. And to qualify, countries need to meet benchmarks for good governance, respect for human rights, accessible health care and education and predictable economic policies.

Such a plan was successful in uplifting the economies of Europe after World War II. I have no doubt it can be adapted to meet the same measure of success for developing countries.

At the national level, my Government is mobilizing considerable resources to meet the Millennium Development Goals. In a unrelentless drive to fight poverty, we have introduced an Eradication of Absolute Poverty Programme. This programme aims to break the vicious circle of poverty begetting poverty.

And to show our commitment to eradicate poverty in our region, Mauritius took the initiative to host a SADC International Conference on Poverty Eradication and Development last year so that we can develop a common pragmatic approach.

We are committed to the attainment of the MDGs on schedule and look forward to the high-level review meeting next year.

Mr President,

Ensuring the fulfillment of the MDGs demands a stronger commitment on the part of national governments in the fight against HIV/AIDS. We are heartened, in this instance, by the response of the international community which has been timely, generous and effective. Each and every nation must be fully engaged in this fight.

In Mauritius, we treat HIV/Aids as a national priority. I have set up a National AIDS Committee which I chair. We have put in place a multi-sectoral strategy to protect the population at large, with special emphasis on vulnerable groups. And yesterday I was delighted to learn about the breakthrough for a HIV/AIDS vaccine which could be available in not a too distant future.

Recently, the AH1N1 pandemic has rapidly taken on alarming proportions. Although, we have taken all possible steps to effectively deal with this new influenza virus, the escalation of the outbreak could stretch our health resources and infrastructure.

In this connection, developing countries require early access to the vaccines that are in the pipeline, once their safety is assured.

Mr President,

Food security should have been an absolute priority of development strategies. It has, for too long, been neglected. Many countries struggle to guarantee adequate food for their people. The present economic recession compounds an already difficult situation.

Over one billion people, mostly in developing countries, do not have sufficient food to meet their daily basic nutritional needs. One in six of the human family goes to bed hungry and angry.

The present relative decline in food prices must not make us lose sight of the structural long term deficit the world faces.

This age-old problem is complicated by uncertainties linked to climate change and the diversion of food crops for bio-fuel production.

We must strengthen measures for the improvement of food security globally. Existing funding mechanisms must be improved to assist the World Food Programme effectively avoid recurrent outbreaks of famine.

Mauritius welcomes the initiative of the FAO to convene a World Summit on Food Security in Rome in November. It is our earnest hope that this conference will not just be another conference but will propose practical measures to alleviate hunger and malnutrition.

In Mauritius, we have adopted a comprehensive strategy to achieve a reasonable level of food self-sufficiency.

We are mobilizing technological, financial and human resources to produce locally as much food as is practically possible. To this end, we have set up a one billion rupee Food Security Fund to optimize efficiency and boost agricultural production.

To benefit from economies of scale, we are encouraging production, in surplus of local consumption, for export.

We are establishing partnerships regionally to jointly produce food-crops, livestock and marine products. The effective implementation of this strategy will contribute to improving our national food security.

We are currently working with Mozambique on a rice production project which will contribute to improving food availability in both countries.

Mr President,

Climate change poses an existential challenge to mankind. Our profligacy puts at stake the very future of our planet and the forms of life it supports. This is an environmental threat with far-reaching social and economic implications that we have yet to mainstream into our national planning and decision-making processes.

We cannot, with impunity, treat our home planet with contempt. We can yet forestall bringing upon ourselves the full wrath of nature.

But time is running out. Divergences must be resolved at all cost and quickly at Copenhagen.

To move forward in a pragmatic manner, we need to break away from the finger-pointing, recrimination and brinkmanship of the past.

In Copenhagen, we must imperatively agree to a targeted reduction in greenhouse gas emissions that would restrict global temperature rise to no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius. But action, to be fair, must be proportional.

Those who have polluted the most, should bear most of the burden. Developing countries need extra help so that their growth path is not thwarted.

We must create a financial mechanism to assist developing countries to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change. This financial mechanism has to be credible, sustainable and be managed according to the principles of good governance. It should also be a channel for the transfer of technology.

I therefore make a strong appeal that we unite to act collectively and quickly in our own interest and that of future generations.

For its part, Mauritius is implementing the “Maurice Ile Durable” project to respond to climate change and the energy crisis. This is an ambitious programme which focuses on the use of renewable energy and the emergence of small power producers. The implementation of this programme will reduce our dependence on fossil fuels considerably and facilitate the transition to a clean, energy-efficient economy.

We have mobilized appropriate resources, with the collaboration of the private sector and development partners, to build a green and ecological future for Mauritius. We are doing our utmost to contribute, in full measure, to the global effort required.

Mr President,

The inherent constraints faced by Small Island Developing States (SIDS), in particular limited resources, remoteness, small domestic markets and vulnerability to natural disasters, cannot be ignored.

We share a common future and the welfare of one is unsustainable without the welfare of all.

We appeal to the international community to be more forthcoming in assisting SIDS in their efforts to become integrated in the global economy. A one-size-fits-all approach to development threatens to further marginalise SIDS in an increasingly globalised world. It is patently obvious that SIDS deserve special treatment and need to be recognized as a group of countries having specificities of their own.

Mr President,

The promotion and protection of human rights is a key priority of my Government.

I wish to extend our appreciation to the UN membership for the re-election of Mauritius to the Human Rights Council.

We will continue to work with other members of the Council in a spirit of dialogue, cooperation and objectivity to ensure that human rights violations are effectively addressed.

In line with our commitment to see that perpetrators of grave human rights violations are brought to justice, we wish to reaffirm our unflinching support for the International Criminal Court (ICC).

At the national level, we have adopted legislation such as the Equal Opportunities Act and the Truth and Justice Commission Act to further entrench human rights. Our achievements in the field of human rights were widely acknowledged during the Universal Periodic Review conducted earlier this year by the Human Rights Council. We were indeed gratified by the unique opportunity provided to us by this Review to make a critical self-assessment of the situation in Mauritius.

Mr President,

When I addressed this Assembly, in September 2007, I had called on the international community to do more than just stand by the people of Burma.

This appeal is more than ever relevant. We cannot condone the recent condemnation of Ms Aung San Suu Kyi by a kangaroo court.

We would like to reaffirm our solidarity with and support for Ms Aung San Suu Kyi, an emblematic lady who personifies the courage and dignity of her people; a people battered and bruised but unbowed.

It is imperative that we convey a clear and strong signal to the military junta that the international community will not tolerate its confiscation of the Burmese people's sovereignty. In this respect, I welcome the recent decision of the EU to extend the sanctions imposed on Burma.

For its part, Mauritius will continue to implement the decision I had taken, in 1997, to suspend importations of rice from Burma. This decision has a cost but it is a price we are prepared to pay in defence of principles we hold dear.

We must show to the world that there will be no double-standard in our approach.

I urge those countries that give comfort and sustenance to the regime not to let their short term, mercantile interests perpetuate the misery of this long suffering people.

Mr President,

The Arab-Israeli conflict, with the question of Palestine at its core, remains an issue of deep concern not only to the region but also to the world at large.

We take heart in the efforts of the administration of President Obama to impart new impetus to the Middle East peace process. And we cannot agree more with President Obama, that continuing to build new settlements flies in the face of logic if lasting peace is to be achieved.

As a long-time proponent of a two-state solution, Mauritius welcomes the Quartet's commitment, renewed in Trieste in June, to actively and vigorously work for a comprehensive solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The Arab League's commitment to peace with Israel and the Arab Peace Initiative have been encouraging developments.

We hope that those most directly concerned will display the courage and the political maturity to engage in a meaningful dialogue in earnest.

Mr President,

The United Nations Organisation is, more than ever before, the ultimate guardian of mankind's aspiration to global peace and security. I salute its unceasing effort in resolving conflicts around the world, in particular on the African continent.

Conflicts and insecurity in Africa have been a major cause of the continent's underdevelopment.

A study carried out by Oxfam last year indicates that conflicts, between 1990 and 2005, cost the continent 300 billion dollars. This is almost equivalent to all the international aid received by sub-Saharan Africa during that period.

The African Union has moved ahead with the creation of an African Standby Force. Once fully established, the Force will, hopefully, help in the advancement of peace and security at the continental level.

The creation of a mechanism for continental Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution is also a positive step in improving the peace and security architecture of Africa.

I take this opportunity to commend the United Nations and the European Union for helping Africa in enhancing its capacity to respond adequately and in a timely manner to security threats on the continent. The European Union deserves our appreciation for its contribution, to the tune of 500 million Euros under the 10th European Development Fund, for the implementation of the Africa Peace Facility. Allow me also to highlight some of the progress that has been achieved on the continent this year, namely the formation of an all-inclusive Government in Zimbabwe and the holding of presidential elections in Mauritania.

We welcome the Agreement of Goodwill and confidence-building for the settlement of the problem in Darfur reached, in February, by Sudan's Government of national unity and the Justice and Equality movement. We commend the role played by the African Union-UN Joint Mediation Team and particularly the Government of Qatar which has done so much to drive the process.

We call on other parties to the conflict, to join in the search for peace in Darfur. We hope that conditions will speedily be created for the return of refugees and of internally displaced persons.

We have high expectations that the preliminary agreement reached, in Maputo, will provide the political framework for the resolution of the troubled situation in Madagascar.

We are heartened by the active involvement and solicitude of various international bodies in trying to return the country to constitutional order.

We cannot condone unconstitutional governments anywhere, be it in Honduras or Madagascar.

Somalia reminds us that we cannot, with impunity, wash our hands of any country however remote it may be or unimportant it may seem. The international community's neglect of the country and its indifference to the suffering of the Somali people have resulted in a quintessential failed State.

That neglect and indifference have come back to haunt us in the form of piracy. Armed bands led by warlords have filled the political vacuum left by the delinquency of the Somali State. Today the territory of Somalia is not only a haven for pirates but also provides a base to terrorist groups.

The transitional government has to be assisted to regain control of the country, to put an end to the suffering of the Somali people and to deal with the problem of piracy.

Mr President,

Terrorism is an insidious, tentacular malignancy - a bane of our times. It is not only a security threat. It is a moral challenge - the negation of the fundamental values of civilization: the sanctity of human life and the intrinsic worth of the human person.

Every terrorist attack causes us pain, anguish and revulsion. But the one in Mumbai, in November last year, took on a special poignancy for the people of Mauritius. In the blind and mindless carnage unleashed by the terrorists on that city, one of the victims was a compatriot of ours. We have condemned in no uncertain terms this dastardly act and we expect that all will be done to ensure that the terrorist organization behind this cowardly act be brought to justice.

My Government unreservedly supports all campaigns and initiatives against terrorism.

Mr President,

Mauritius nurtures the hope of a complete elimination of all nuclear weapons one day. Pending the ultimate realization of this, we support all measures aimed at

halting the further spread of such weapons. In this regard, we welcome the comprehensive agenda of President Obama to achieve the goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

Mr President,

Multilateralism is the cornerstone of the United Nations and should be strengthened in the face of the current global challenges.

Global challenges need a global response.

We follow with keen interest the process underway to revitalize the UN General Assembly and to improve its working methods, to bring more coherence to the UN system, and to reform the UN Security Council.

We are particularly satisfied at the start of the inter-governmental negotiations earlier this year on the reform of the Security Council in the Informal Plenary of the General Assembly.

The comity of nations should work together, in a spirit of solidarity, to reach a unified position on the reform of this important body. The reform of the Council should cover the categories of both permanent and non-permanent members, with a revised set of working methods.

We fully support India for a permanent seat in a reformed Security Council. And we would like to, once again, express our unequivocal support to the Common African Position. We also support a Latin American and Caribbean country to be a permanent member in a reformed Security Council.

Mr President,

I take this opportunity to reaffirm the sovereignty of Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, which was detached by the United Kingdom from the territory of Mauritius prior to our independence. The dismemberment of the territory of Mauritius was in total disregard of the UN General Assembly Resolutions 1514 of 14 December 1960 and 2066 of 16 December 1965.

As President Obama said two days ago at this very podium, - we must demonstrate that international law is not an empty promise.

We must all abide by it.

We have consistently urged the United Kingdom to engage in a meaningful dialogue with Mauritius for the early return of the Chagos Archipelago. We are pleased to inform the Assembly that two rounds of talks have been held with the United Kingdom this year.

We look forward to these discussions coming to fruition and hope that Mauritius will be able to exercise its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, in the near future.

My Government and the French authorities are also in the process of addressing the issue of Tromelin. We are discussing the modalities of co-management of the island in a spirit of friendship and trust, pending the settlement of the sovereignty issue, which has to be resolved and not left on the backburner.

Monsieur le Président,

Nul ne peut nier le rôle essentiel que l'Organisation des Nations Unies est appelée à jouer dans le concert des nations. En même temps, il est un point sur lequel nous nous accordons: l'Organisation demande à être reformée. L'affluence à cette tribune, où convergent, chaque année, plusieurs points de vue et plusieurs sensibilités souligne notre volonté d'agir et de construire ensemble.

Les préoccupations et les aspirations particulières de nos peuples se font écho et prennent, ainsi, une résonance universelle. Nous prenons conscience, en effet, que quelle que soit la latitude sous laquelle nous évoluons, nous avons un destin commun.

Monsieur le Président,

Je suis d'un peuple qui s'est abreuvé de plusieurs cultures, dont les femmes et les hommes vénèrent Shiva, Jésus, Allah et Boudha, dans les langues les plus diverses. Et l'histoire du peuplement de notre île et sa situation géographique ont fait de notre pays un véritable carrefour de cultures.

Nous avons fait du droit à la différence, d'une part, et de celui à l'égalité, d'autre part, nos chevaux de bataille. Et je me plais à rappeler à mon peuple multi-ethnique que chaque individu a, en partage avec le reste des humains, 99,9% du même code génétique.

Nous qui sommes réunis, ici, avons beaucoup à apprendre l'un de l'autre. L'échange de nos expériences et de nos connaissances nous enrichit et nous rend plus forts. Le respect de la pluralité qu'exige ce forum ne doit ni nous faire oublier nos singularités, ni concourir à l'émergence d'un discours dominant.

Je salue, Monsieur le Président, le thème que vous avez choisi pour cette année. Si cette tribune arrive à favoriser la fécondation mutuelle des cultures et à mettre en valeur ce que l'être humain a d'universel, nous aurons atteint, dans une large mesure, notre objectif.

Je vous remercie de votre attention.

Thank you.
