



ADDRESS

by

His Excellency Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo
PRESIDENT
Republic of GUYANA

at the

SIXTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

on

Friday, September 24, 2010

UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS

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Mr. President, Distinguished colleagues Distinguished Secretary General
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I bring to all delegates at this sixty-fifth United Nations General Assembly the warm greetings of my Government and people.

To you Mr. President, I offer our congratulations and best wishes on your unanimous election to the Assembly's highest office. We are confident that you will direct our deliberations toward the strengthening of multilateralism as the corner stone of inter-state relations.

To your predecessor, Ambassador Treiki of Libya, I take this opportunity to convey our sincere appreciation for his successful stewardship of the Assembly during the past year.

Mr. President, the United Nations was founded out of the ashes of war and violence. Its noble ambitions, grounded in the timeless values of peace, equality and justice, seek to create a better world for this and future generations. But if these values are to mean anything, the United Nations must not be merely about a statement of aspiration. Instead, we must strive until the United Nations provides the framework where the timeless values I speak of can be given life through meaningful and practical responses to the contemporary challenges our peoples face.

Those challenges are many – but this week has drawn three of them into particularly sharp focus. One, our global efforts towards the halving of poverty and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. Two, a global financial crisis that threatens to undo much of the progress we have made in lifting people out of poverty. And three, a climate crisis that runs the risk of planet-wide disruption that endangers entire nations and the continuation of much of what we take for granted today.

These challenges are all a function of the dominant characteristic of the modern world – our inter-connectedness as a global community. And we will only meet the challenges if we adopt an inter-connected response. The notion that we can protect our national and global interests through inward-looking national responses is no longer valid. Instead, it is in all our interests for the United Nations to provide the platform that facilitates globally inter-connected responses.

But distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I think we have some way to go if this platform is to be created. When it comes to the Millennium Development Goals, although progress has been made we have not connected the rhetorical support from the developed world for their achievement to actual delivery; when it comes to the financial crisis, we have not connected the benefits of globally open financial systems to measures that protect against the risks that these systems create; and when it comes to

the climate crisis, we have not connected the scientific evidence to global policy responses that mitigate the worst extremes of climate change.

We could choose to continue in this vein – but it is clear where this will lead us. Or we could choose to ask ourselves if we are prepared to be held accountable for carrying our share of the responsibility. My country recognizes that we must deliver our part. We are on track to meet most of the Millennium Development Goals, especially in the areas of education and health. We are doing all we can to weather the financial crisis with the minimum suffering for our people. And we recognize that we must do more than just complain about climate change - we have created our Low Carbon Development Strategy which sets out a long term path to protect our 16 million hectare rainforest and move our entire economy onto a low carbon trajectory.

But there are times when it feels like the international system sets out to put hurdles on the path to overcome these challenges. Inconsistencies and a lack of coherence between aid, trade and climate policies in the developed world, to name just three areas, often-times create difficulties for developing countries who seek to make progress.

The United Nations can help to change these realities, and provide the framework for global responses that match the ambition of the institution. But at the core of this framework must be an enhanced understanding of the concept of accountability.

As countries like mine fully embrace our need to be accountable for the actions we take to support a global response to the MDGs, financial instability and climate change, so too developed countries must recognize their responsibilities, and the need to take a holistic approach to their dealings with the rest of the world. Aid flows are appreciated and valuable, but they sometimes pale into insignificance when the same countries that promote how their aid is helping the achievement of, for example, the Millennium Development Goals, are also pursuing unjust, narrow-minded trade or climate policies.

I therefore call on the United Nations to establish a set of global accountability indicators. Where we can transparently monitor whether the members of the international community are pursuing policies that in a holistic sense helps them to discharge their global responsibilities – not just through the provision of aid, but also through the avoidance of unfair trade and climate policies.

Through the Millennium Development Goals, we have started to develop some of the indicators we need. And as we enhance them further, I believe that we will see that better accountability, properly understood, can help us to rise to the challenges we face.

Mr. President I would like to highlight the centrality of the need to protect and preserve our environment. While each of the issues I have mentioned is a global one

requiring a global response, the environmental challenges we face mock those who think we still live in a world where global collective action is somehow a discretionary choice.

The destruction of a natural habitat anywhere in the world removes the life-forms that will be the bedrock of future medical advances for citizens everywhere. A ton of carbon emitted in Africa or Asia threatens the citizens of the smallest village in North America. When those who seek to represent those citizens deny that this is true, or fail to understand its consequences, they threaten their own national interests and the wealth and security of their nation.

Therefore, failure to appreciate the need for an inter-connected, global response to climate change and loss of bio-diversity is not just an abdication of responsibility to some intangible global good, or to people on the other side of the world. It is a very real, measurable threat to citizens in every village, hamlet and city in the world, and history will not judge kindly those who were too blinkered or ignorant to realize this.

So Mr. President, a step-change in our efforts to avert catastrophic climate change and protect bio-diversity is needed.

When we met here last year, many hoped that the UN would facilitate agreement on global action to stabilize our planet's climate when most of the world's leaders met in Copenhagen in December. Not only did the global community fail to accomplish this, we are now in real danger of suffering from a catastrophic drift in ambition, where we no longer even try to connect the scientific evidence on climate change with the necessary global action to avert it.

This drift in ambition must be stopped. It is a consequence of choices we make, it is not pre-determined. So we must re-dedicate ourselves to crafting a shared response to shared climate threats.

Most progressive countries now realize this, and are committed to temperature rises of a maximum of 2 degrees celsius or lower. They know that this will require global economic growth powered by efficient and clean energy, new green industries, and a new, less carbon intensive approach to agriculture and forestry.

But despite knowing this, the international community continues to fail to put in place the measures that will enable the economic transformation we claim that we want.

This is in large part due to the absence of a global agreement which prices high carbon activity and rewards low carbon innovation. We need this to change.

To do this, Guyana continues to hold that the international community needs a legally binding global climate treaty that first facilitates the emissions cuts needed to stabilize the planet's climate, and then enables us to move on from seeing climate change purely in terms of its costs, but also to see how it can catalyse a once in a

lifetime global economic transformation that can benefit people everywhere. This cannot happen without deep, binding emissions cuts in today's developed world which can stimulate the financial flows that will address mitigation and adaptation across the developing world.

We recognize that achieving this global treaty may not be achievable this year. But we are not powerless to act now. The international community can do three things even in the absence of a treaty, and we can achieve breakthroughs in each when we meet in Cancun.

First of all, we can hold the developed world accountable to the commitments they have made to immediate short-term ramp-up of financing for climate action in the developing world. The existing commitments of US\$30 billion total by 2012, and US\$100 billion per year by 2020, can be agreed to in Cancun. Second, we can solve the vexed issue of an effective financial transfer mechanism which ensures that the funds flow to both adaptation and mitigation actions. And thirdly, we should look at ramping up meaningful sectoral responses that work in the short-term – specifically, in Guyana we believe that action on deforestation and forest degradation is one of the most impactful actions that can be taken quickly.

I want to emphasise that none of this is about asking the developed world to provide us with aid. Instead, it is about ensuring that capital to address climate change is allocated where it can have the biggest impact.

In addressing these matters, I want to raise a sensitive subject – the Copenhagen Accord which was the only tangible outcome from last year's climate summit. I know that many countries here today associated themselves with the Accord reluctantly, and some did not associate at all.

But I believe that reluctant or no association with the Copenhagen Accord, and strong support for some of its provisions, are not mutually exclusive. Even countries that do not associate themselves with the Accord should hold the developed world accountable for its commitments.

Mr. President, as we put in place the resources and functioning financial transfer and other mechanisms to address deforestation and forest degradation, we can make particular progress which can inspire progress in other areas such as technology transfer and energy efficiency. We know that deforestation and forest degradation cause about 17% of all greenhouse gas emissions. And over 30 countries identified specific measures to secure 7 Gigatons of cumulative emissions reductions by 2015 for less than 25 billion euro. If we secured this, it would be the single biggest source of greenhouse gas abatement in the coming 6 years. This is now possible, with the developed world making commitments to the Interim Partnership on REDD+, established in Oslo in May.

We have long said that if the international community is prepared to be held accountable, we will not be found lacking. Three years ago, we said that notwithstanding the immense climate challenges in our country – in 2005, floods cause damage equal to 60% of our GDP – we were prepared to do our bit. And we identified that as a country where over 80% of our territory is rainforest, we could make a disproportionate contribution to solving climate change.

So we looked at the contribution we could make in two ways, one by creating a financing mechanism where we can put our entire rainforest under protection, and two by using the resources we receive for the climate services we provide from our protected forest to re-orient our economy onto a low carbon trajectory.

As a consequence, after one of the most comprehensive national consultations on climate change anywhere in the world, we have started to implement our Low Carbon Development Strategy. We have identified how we can save cumulative forest-based emissions of 1.5 Gigatons by 2020, we have a REDD+ deal in place with Norway, and because of this, we are in the process of creating a climate finance fund which will amount to between US\$300 million and US\$500 million between this year and 2015. We have also identified how we can use this climate financing to invest in education and health care, to catalyse private finance to move virtually our entire economy to clean energy, to open up non-forested land for new economic activities and to invest in our urgent climate adaptation needs and to support our indigenous people to transform economic activities .

So we therefore hope that we are demonstrating the value of action on the three inter-linked financing commitments I spoke of. And I hope that we are starting to show how inter-connected global responses can deliver globally valuable results.

Mr. President, distinguished delegates, the United Nations Organisation is, despite its many limitations, our best hope for the advancement of humanity. Its universality allows the organization to play a central and catalytic role in balancing the different interests of member states and in generating consensus on the issues that divide us. We must therefore commit fully to the principles and purposes of its charter and to the improvement of its structure. On behalf of my country and people, Mr. President, you may be assured, of our full support for the organization and for strengthening its capacity to better fulfill the many mandates entrusted to it.

Thank you