



PRESIDENCIA
REPÚBLICA DE COSTA RICA



Misión Permanente de Costa Rica ante las Naciones Unidas
Permanent Mission of Costa Rica to the United Nations

DISCURSO DE
STATEMENT BY

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SEXAGÉSIMA NOVENA SESIÓN DE LA ASAMBLEA GENERAL DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS
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Silence is no longer an option for us... It is time to act for world peace.

Mr. President, distinguished Heads of State and Government, esteemed delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

I congratulate His Excellency Mr Sam K. Kutesa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda, for his election to the presidency of the General Assembly. We wish him the greatest success.

Mr. President,

Whirlwinds of oppression and violence, anxiety, desperation and systematic violations of human rights affect many corners of the world. We are witnesses to an upsurge in violence and armed confrontations, an increase in despicable crimes and extremism, together with ever increasing numbers of people displaced, of humanitarian crises, and of deplorable acts that go unpunished.

We have seen the images and listened to the screams of pain that come out of Gaza, Iraq, Syria, Ukraine, Afghanistan, Mali, Lybia, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia and the Central African Republic.

The cries can also be heard in Central America where thousands of children and young people cross borders alone heading towards the United States of America, fleeing from violence and a lack of opportunities in search of dreams that can turn into nightmares.

Costa Ricans are not indifferent to the terror of armed conflicts, less still to the suffering of the millions of people that fall victim to its most abject manifestations. As a country we have always stood side by side with our sister nations in an effort to bring an end to war and establish peace.

The conflicts tormenting us often emerge from fragile state situations and from these States' institutions: extreme poverty, corruption and impunity. In all of them, serious human rights violations have occurred.

None of these conflicts erupted without prior warning. All showed clear signs of unrest. In some cases the threat was identified but no action was taken due to a lack of consensus, as in Syria. In others, the danger was not acknowledged in time, as in South Sudan. In all of them, the victims are the ones who are most vulnerable and most in need of our help, those who cannot make their voice heard.

They are the reason we are here.

Faced with the loss of so many human lives, we have reason to ask ourselves if we have kept the solemn promise that accompanied the founding of the United Nations sixty-nine years ago. Are all members of this organisation refraining from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State?

In some cases yes, in others no. However, failure to act is unacceptable. When States disregard this promise the system of the United Nations is called to action, otherwise it becomes weak.

The biggest challenge facing the international community, the United Nations and the Security Council – the one I discuss here today – is to uphold international peace and security as global public goods.

“Si Vis Pacem Para Pacem.” If you want peace, prepare for peace. Maintaining international peace and security begins with a culture of peace. As an unarmed democracy and home of the University for Peace, the Inter-American Institute and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Costa Rica believes that a culture of peace and education for peace must be an absolute priority. We are convinced that peace, like war, emerges from within human beings, rather than being a fatalistic product of history.

Maintaining international peace and security is not restricted to dealing with conflicts. This organisation was founded on the ashes of two world wars precisely in order to prevent them.

On the one hand, prevention begins at a State level, with the strengthening of democracy and its institutions, with good governance and with the social state based on the rule of law as a fundamental pre-requisite for promoting the development of fair and inclusive societies. On the other, prevention is also reliant on a solid and functional multilateral system. Costa Rica values and encourages the preventive diplomatic measures that feature in Chapter VI of the Charter, which include mediation, good offices and early warning.

As part of the Group of Friends of Mediation, I would like to highlight Costa Rica's leadership in negotiating General Assembly resolution 68/303 that seeks to acknowledge the key role regional and sub-regional organisations play in mediating and managing conflicts. To date, this is the first resolution to be included that recognises the importance of mediation and it represents a real achievement for the General Assembly.

Maintaining international peace and security requires all States to resolve our international conflicts peacefully, in compliance with the Charter of the United Nations and in strict accordance with international laws and agreements. Costa Rica firmly believes and applies all aspects of international law and therefore we draw particular attention to the role of the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court.

Peace cannot take root where there is impunity. When war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity have been committed, those responsible must be investigated and put on trial, ultimately by the International Criminal Court where national justice proves insufficient. Our country is opposed to the weakening of the Statute of Rome and any proposal for reform that could lead to impunity becoming tolerated. Once again we remind the Security Council of its authority and responsibility with regard to cases that occur in States not party to the convention.

This is the only approach that Costa Rica knows. Our single and most powerful defensive weapon is and will always be international law.

Mr. President,

Maintaining international peace and security also necessitates strengthening the single global organisation charged with defending them. The Security Council must progress from a mentality of reaction to one of action and reaffirm its moral, humanitarian and political commitment to all of humanity. It must be vigilant, strategic and proactive. It must be democratic, transparent and inclusive.

My country has objected to the use of the veto for obstructing measures seeking to avoid or resolve conflicts. As Costa Ricans we are amazed at the way some permanent members of the Security Council have cited support for the principle of sovereignty in blocking the Council's intervention at a moment when it should have been acting to prevent rivers from turning red with blood. The blood of innocent victims.

We reiterate our call to the permanent members to refrain from using the veto, especially in situations of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and mass human rights violations. We therefore welcome the French proposal for a Code of Conduct around the use of the veto.

In this spirit, Costa Rica also supports the Secretary General's "Rights Up Front" initiative to place human rights at the centre of the United Nations preventive activities.

For our serious and unshakeable commitment to human rights, I respectfully ask you to back Costa Rica's re-election to the Human Rights Council this coming October.

Mr. President:

Our poet Jorge Debravo said that we Costa Ricans *"have the obligation to fight for a better future for man. For a wonderful future. It is not an option for us to remain silent. It is not an option for us to be observers or simple witnesses in the struggles of our nations. In a time like this, remaining neutral is to betray humanity's future"*.

Because silence is not an option for us, we condemn the indiscriminate rocket attacks on Israel by Hamas and its use of human shields in the same way as we condemn Israel's use of disproportionate force by the military operations of its armed forces. We demand respect for the ceasefire along with negotiation of a permanent solution in which both States coexist in peace and harmony.

Because silence is not an option for us, we repudiate the transfer of conventional weapons into existing conflict zones. As one of the world leaders in the negotiation that led to the Arms Trade Treaty – an idea originally proposed by Ex-President Oscar Arias Sánchez, Noble Peace Prize laureate – we urge States to examine their laws and policies regulating the transfer and availability of arms and munitions, with a view to preventing access to

them by those who will probably use them for violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

Trading with death is to be an accomplice to its atrocities. In this regard, it would be appropriate to ask ourselves: what is the ethical – not legal or regulatory – difference between trading arms that kill young people in less-developed countries and trading drugs that do the same thing in the planet's richest countries?

Because silence is not an option for us, Costa Rica repudiates the use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas of Syria, Gaza and east Ukraine. Costa Rica urgently calls on the States to develop stricter rules and commitments to prohibit and restrict their use, not only because they are a violation of international humanitarian law, but also because taking action on this issue, here and now, is critical to reducing the incentives to non-combatants to take up arms and join the extremists.

Because silence is not an option for us, we also condemn the use of cluster munitions in Syria, South Sudan and Ukraine. As the host of the Fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which took place in San Jose from September 2nd to 5th, my country will continue to repudiate the manufacture, use and trade of these weapons. We celebrate that Central America has now become the first region in the world to be declared free of cluster munitions and reiterate our commitment to continue promoting this Convention's universalisation.

Because silence is not an option for us, we reiterate our rejection of nuclear weapons. No State should develop or possess nuclear weapons. Maintaining and modernizing nuclear weapons requires immense economic and human resources that are necessary for responding to the key challenges of our time, such as achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals. Costa Rica is ready to negotiate a new legally binding instrument for nuclear disarmament and we call on the States to comply with their commitments in this regard.

Mr. President:

There will be no peace without sustainable development. There will be no peace as long as there is poverty. There will be no peace as long as wealth is distributed so unequally. There will be no peace while we destroy our communities' habitats. There will be no peace while large sectors of humanity do not have guaranteed access to drinking water. There will be no peace while we fail to understand that humanity and all of Planet Earth's biodiversity can and should grow and live together. There will be no peace while we fail to guarantee all human rights: civil, cultural, economic, political, social and, in particular, the right to develop.

In wanting peace, we call on the nations of the world to join us in the process of defining the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

In just one year's time, the General Assembly will be tasked with adopting the framework that will guide international efforts for achieving sustainable development. The size of the

challenge we face in this regard is colossal; we must very humbly acknowledge that, despite progress, compliance with the Millennium Development Goals has been, at best, insufficient.

I am convinced that the new Sustainable Development Agenda must be an instrument concerned primarily with action, with precise objectives, clear targets and indicators that enable us to measure and monitor its success. In addition, it must be the product of a broad international consensus, achieved through open and transparent processes of negotiation that not only include the States but also other international actors as well as civil society organisations, whose experience in this regard will significantly enrich the final agreement.

We are faced with the most serious threat in our history: to our very survival as a species. The actions taken in the presence of this threat cannot continue to be tentative. Quite the contrary. Every public policy at both the national and international level must take climate change into account as a determining factor.

Costa Rica celebrates the clear and decisive approach taken by the General Secretary at the beginning of this General Assembly of convening the Climate Summit. Now is the time to demonstrate our political commitment to achieving a legally binding instrument on climate change by 2015.

In addition, we demand robust actions by those countries that contribute most to global warming. Their methods of production and consumption must be completely revised since their impact on the planet's most impoverished people is undeniable – these people are the ones most affected by climate change. For humanity to survive, we must reverse the current trend in climate change.

Mr President:

Three years ago, we were one of 33 countries to set up the Community of Latin-American and Caribbean States (known as CELAC owing to its acronym in Spanish). Its agenda is underpinned by absolute respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Its end objective is to build diverse, equitable, fair and egalitarian societies in which eradicating poverty and hunger is given priority status.

In the international context of increasing military tension and armed conflict, CELAC's member states, who appreciate how our region's prosperity and stability can contribute to international peace and security, have declared Latin America and the Caribbean a **Zone of Peace**.

As President Pro Tempore of CELAC, I reiterate our commitment to preventive diplomacy and peaceful dispute resolution with the aim of eradicating forever both the use and the threat of force from our region.

Mr President:

Costa Rica counts on the United Nations and the Security Council to maintain international peace and security, in order to promote sustainable development and ensure genuine respect for all human rights. At times when we must control the reflex to resort to coercive measures as a first course of action, when anxiety and desperation might unsettle many, hope must prevail. At times of fear, assurance. At times of conflict, peace. At times of rejection and prejudice from others, a kind and welcoming embrace between fellow human beings. At times of death, life!

With faith in dialogue and consultation, I have come to the General Assembly to ask you to declare peace. To conscientiously and decisively work together towards a culture and education for peace; towards strengthening the social state based on the rule of law, as well as its institutions and our economies; towards the prevention of conflicts and the resolution of international controversies by peaceful means; towards a renewed role for the Security Council; towards an end to and a reversal of climate change; towards sustainable development from which no one in the world is excluded.

I have come to tell you that silence is not an option and that we must raise our voice in the presence of actions and situations that go against the universal principles of the Charter of the United Nations. I have come to inspire us to work together on new paradigms for sustainable development, human security and peace for the whole world.

The Costa Rican poet Julieta Dobles wondered:

*"Will the Earth in the new millennium become
that common home?"
I would like to respond using her own words:
"No one is saved alone.
Perhaps in sharing words and actions
peace will finally break out."*

Thank you very much.