



INTERVENCION
DEL
EXCELENTISIMO SEÑOR
JUAN CARLOS VARELA RODRIGUEZ
PRESIDENTE DE LA REPUBLICA DE PANAMA

**Debate general del sexagésimo noveno período ordinario de
sesiones de la Asamblea General de las Naciones Unidas**

Nueva York, 25 de septiembre de 2014
Cotejar con intervención definitiva

Your Excellency Sam Kutesa, Foreign Minister of Uganda and President of the General Assembly,

Your Excellency Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations,

Your Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegations,

I come from a region where my generation lived through challenging conflicts. This inspired me to go into public life so as to be able to address this General Assembly today, as President of the Republic of Panama, at a time when the world is experiencing conflicts and very serious situations which call for all of us to take action.

I am addressing you on behalf of a noble, good and peaceful Panamanian people whom I salute from this podium.

Panama is a peace loving country, which has granted me the opportunity to lead a government that is steering our foreign policy to one of unity and consensus in accordance with our geographic location and the mandate of being a nation that defends peace and the common good for all the inhabitants of this beautiful Planet.

Despite the serious conflicts experienced these days throughout the world, there is peace in America, our continent.

The most important challenges we are presently facing are: inequality; the fight against organized crime, drug and human trafficking; and, the regulation of migration flows to more developed economies.

These challenges are being addressed by the governments of the region but demand further coordination.

As leaders we must understand that in order to achieve and maintain peace in the world, we must first lead our nations along the same path.

This is why I am committed to social justice and to strengthening the Rule of Law, leading an honest, human government that is in touch with the people; a government which strength relies on the principle that public office is for the service of others; a government that is putting our country's resources for the benefit of the Panamanian people, the region and the world.

Fourteen years ago, the international community of Heads of State and Government, gathered in this General Assembly, approved the Millennium Declaration which defined the global development agenda in order to face common challenges and improve the standards of living of their peoples.

Regardless of any differences, countries were able to agree at the time and reached consensus so as to reconsider the priorities of each nation, focusing on the achievement of fundamental goals aimed at guaranteeing the human potential of our citizens.

Nearly a decade and a half after that historic Declaration, all countries, without exception, through different governments, have made important progress in compliance with the Millennium Development Goals.

Nonetheless, several challenges of the MDGs not only prevail but new challenges have been added which require us to build a new consensus and establish goals at the regional, hemispheric and global levels.

This is why, on behalf of the Panamanian people and Government, I wish to reiterate our commitment to being a facilitator of dialogue; a Government that promotes consensus among the international community, so that together we may redefine the post-2015 global development agenda.

For the last five centuries, the Isthmus of Panama has been the transit route of civilizations.

Today, our nation is still committed to that same role. As we mark the centennial of the Panama Canal this year, we reiterate our commitment to being a nation at the service of the international community, with the Canal, our logistic system, ports, airports, and our heartfelt embrace to all countries of the world.

Like in this building, the United Nations Headquarters, all the worlds' flags come together in the Panama Canal. And for that, Panamanians feel very proud.

This is the reason we are a country of convergence and we have a great responsibility with the Panamanian people and the international community.

Furthermore, Panama assumed the challenge of the Canal expansion project, which we will complete with determination and the support of professionals and workers from Panama and various other nations.

Panamanians feel a great responsibility to contributing to a common understanding in order to maintain peace, to promote international security and to join efforts towards the solution of our common problems.

This is why we reaffirm today our vocation as a country of dialogue, ready to fulfill this responsibility of uniting the Americas and the world, within the United Nations framework, and in every opportunity we have to mediate in disputes that hinder us from achieving consensus to tackle the new global challenges.

In April 2015, our country will host the Summit of the Americas and we are working hard so that this event joins all Heads of State and Government of this Hemisphere, so as to promote integration and social peace, with equity and prosperity.

All 193 countries in the world have different political systems, beliefs, religions and cultures that must be respected. In spite of these differences, we all face common challenges.

That is why, in order to secure the wellbeing of our citizens, our governments are called to find unity of criteria for strengthening the multilateral systems, which must be activated, with all our might, to combat threats and common problems.

Amidst conflicts and difficult situations at the global level, there are strong messages of hope: Volunteer physicians from all over the world are making progress to fight Ebola in Africa; and, several countries are united in the fight against terrorists' atrocious crimes that affect innocent people and threaten international peace and security.

Panama is aware of these collaborative efforts and supports them. We express our solidarity with all victims and their families.

I am convinced that the men and women we elect to public office must serve only the people who elected us and manage the power temporarily granted to us with the purpose of improving the quality of life of our population.

Politics is called to be one of the strongest expressions of social service because it is the search for the common good.

The greatest legacy which I will strive to build during the next five years is to leave the Panamanian people a functional democracy; to strengthen the Rule of Law, where public servants are accountable only to the Nation, with strong institutions, accountability and without impunity so that honest and transparent administrations might be guaranteed.

All governments have the obligation to ensure that government resources are used exclusively in the service of our citizens, and that all public works and projects have the people's interests in mind.

With this mission, along with the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, I became President of my country this past July 1st, fully committed to installing a government that will continue fostering the economic growth enjoyed by Panama; while giving priority to public investment that has greater impact on the quality of life of all Panamanians.

With an average domestic economic growth of 7%, increasing foreign investment, legal security, low inflation and unemployment rates, and a consolidated democratic system, we are making progress in fulfilling the proposals on which basis I was elected.

During our mandate:

1. We have taken strong measures to curb speculation in the cost of food.
2. We are working so all Panamanian families have adequate housing with access to drinking water, basic sanitation, water supply, sewage and solid waste treatment plants.

3. We have launched major social projects for our youth so that they may grow up in safe neighborhoods with better opportunities, jobs, sports facilities, and cultural centers to keep them away from crime.
4. Our public schools will have adequate facilities and trained teachers in the English language, in order to promote a bilingual education.
5. Our social welfare programs will allow all students to finish high school and senior citizens to live with dignity.
6. Our students will have the opportunity to graduate from college or study at newly established Higher Technical Institutes that will prepare them for the new jobs our economy is creating in the areas of logistics and tourism, among others.
7. Our public health system will be unified and the resulting savings will be used to strengthen preventive health programs, ensuring better medical care and premium quality medication.
8. We are building a modern and efficient public transportation system with the addition of lines 2 and 3 of the Metro to improve the quality of life of our people.
9. We will promote tourism and support air connectivity to and from cities in the United States, Canada, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Europe.
10. We will protect our logistic and financial systems to avoid access by organized crime and gangs, whom we shall tackle with the full force of the State to defeat them and keep them away from our youth.

Our Government will work tirelessly to prepare our youth so that they may become responsible citizens of the world and protect our natural resources to guarantee sustainable development.

We will work closely with the private sector and civil society in order to fulfill all these national goals, as well as the Millennium Development Goals and the new challenges of the Global Agenda.

We live in a diverse world, with different cultures, religions, and political systems, but we can always find common ground in the wellbeing of our citizens.

That was the successful formula for the approval of the Millennium Declaration and it will be the key in defining and fulfilling the post-2015 development agenda.

You may count on Panama as a country that is respectful, and willing to serve as bridge to attain our understandings, based on respect for diversity, tolerance, pluralism, and human rights.

But above all, you can be certain that you can count on Panama's government, a government of men and women, respectful of the Law, willing to share experiences, to learn from best practices, and to contribute to global peace, to socio-economic development, and the wellbeing of all peoples.

I would like to finish by sharing with you a statement that has accompanied me since my youth:

“The time has come to put our capacity in service of others.”

May God give us the strength to continue to build together a better world for our citizens and for future generations.

Thank you very much.

Note: This is a courtesy translation. Kindly compare to original text in Spanish.