



Statement by

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at the

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the General Assembly of the United Nations

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Madame President,

Let me begin by congratulating you on your election as President of the General Assembly. I am especially pleased to see a woman in this important position after a break of nearly 30 years.

I would like to join those who have expressed thanks to the Secretary-General for his leadership and commitment in recent years in addressing the very serious challenges facing the international community.

Allow me also to use this opportunity to congratulate the Republic of Montenegro on its accession to the United Nations.

Madame President,

The commitment to global partnership for development is a timely, yet sobering, theme in light of the long road we have still to travel and the setbacks already encountered.

A major setback has been the crisis in **global trade talks**. Trade can be the single most important vehicle for global development and we should not let the opportunity, presented to us by the Doha Development Agenda, slip from our grasp. We must ensure that gains from trade liberalisation benefit the poor and are fairly distributed. Iceland remains strongly committed to the Doha Development Agenda.

Many developing countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, have little chance of achieving the Millennium Development Goals by the target date, unless significant additional resources are made available.

We welcome and support international efforts for debt relief to the poorest countries. We also applaud those countries that have committed to increasing **official development assistance** (ODA). Iceland is also shouldering its responsibility. Over the next three years, Iceland's development assistance will almost have tripled in size and we are determined to do even more. Beyond 2009, our assistance should increase even further, with the ambition of reaching the UN target of zero point 7 per cent (0.7%) of GNI (Gross National Income).

Madame President,

The global partnership rests on the principles of transparency, accountability, good governance, equity and commitment to poverty reduction. Iceland also places special importance on the rights of women and children. As the Iranian Nobel Prize winner, Shirin Ebadi, has so rightly pointed out:

".. to disregard women and bar them from active participation in political, social, economic and cultural life would in fact be tantamount to depriving the entire population of every society of half its capability."

We want to see more determined efforts by development partners and UN agencies to pursue **gender equality**. The work of UNIFEM must be given more weight within the UN. Iceland has increased its support to the work of UNIFEM more than tenfold over the last two years, and we will increase our support even further.

UNICEF's mission statement correctly insists that the survival, protection and development of **children** are central to human progress. Nobody questions this statement, yet more than 10 million children die from preventable causes every year. Iceland will increase further its contributions to the vital work of UNICEF. I am proud to say that the people of Iceland have been particularly active and make the highest contribution per capita to UNICEF of national societies.

Madame President,

At least a half of the eight Millenium Development Goals relate to resource use and environmental conservation, that is to **sustainable development**. We will not be able to eradicate extreme poverty or hunger if we cannot safeguard the environment, the basis of food security around the world. We cannot hope to reduce child mortality, unless we deal with the contamination of freshwater. There is a close relationship between the health of the earth's ecosystem and human welfare, security and peace.

Icelanders base their livelihood on the living resources of the sea and abundant renewable energy. Iceland rose from relatively recent poverty to affluence through the application of technological innovations, and by drawing on international cooperation. We are convinced that our own success could be replicated in many other parts of the world, given the right incentives and an enabling environment.

In this connection I would like to refer, in particular, to two areas of sustainable development, ocean issues and energy issues.

Ocean issues have far-reaching development implications. Ninety-five per cent of those who live from fisheries are in the developing world. A billion people depend on fisheries for their main intake of protein. At the same time we see the rapid increase in pollution of the ocean and depletion of its living resources. This is why Iceland has prioritized this area in its development cooperation and the work of the fisheries department of the United Nations University in Iceland.

Energy issues also loom large. While Icelanders enjoy the good fortune of having clean, renewable energy for 70 per cent of our total energy use, energy issues are increasingly becoming one of the main drivers of the sustainable development agenda within the United Nations. Two billion people lack access to electricity. All eight Millenium Development Goals will require greater energy consumption.

Unfortunately, more energy consumption, in most cases, means greater greenhouse gas emissions. One of our greatest challenges today is to square the development circle; to meet our development needs while safeguarding the environment. One way, certainly, is to increase substantially the share of **renewables** in world energy demand. This is why Iceland is taking an active part in promoting renewables and new technologies through its development cooperation and the work of the geothermal department of the United Nations University. Another example of our commitment in this area is the international seminar on hydrogen use for the developing world in Reykjavik later this week. It will be co-hosted by Iceland and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Madame President,

Much has been achieved over the past 12 months in implementing the outcome of the Summit. In this connection, I would like to join others in expressing appreciation for the outstanding work done by Jan Eliasson, as President of the 60th session of the General Assembly.

We now have a Peacebuilding Commission. The new Human Rights Council has also been established. It is the duty of all of us to make sure that we strengthen its credibility and turn it into a powerful defender and reinforcer of basic human rights. Its credibility will depend to a large extent on its even-handedness.

Useful work has already been done on internal reforms of the UN. The success of these reforms – and I am in particular thinking here of the mandate review – will effect the long-term credibility of the UN.

It is with great interest and high hopes that we await the outcome of the work of the *High-Level Panel on UN System-wide coherence*.

Madame President,

Fundamental to implementing a global partnership for development is **peace and security**. In the face of crippling effects of **terrorism**, we welcome the agreement on a global counter-terrorism strategy. In the fight against terrorism, **human rights** must not be compromised, otherwise we are undermining the values which we seek to defend. Torture cannot be justified.

As we have seen recently, years of careful development can be reversed almost overnight by war. Conflict prevention, restraint by the parties involved and a commitment by other actors to urge restraint, rather than encouraging conflict, are also fundamental to the partnership.

Madame President,

Sixty years ago, on the 19th of November 1946, Iceland became a member of the United Nations. Iceland has since then strongly supported the principles of the UN as written in the Charter.

With the full support of the other Nordic Countries, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, Iceland decided in 1998 to present, for the first time, its candidature for a seat on the Security Council in the period 2009 - 2010, with elections to be held in 2008. This candidature, which was declared within the WEOG in April of 2000, is based on our readiness to shoulder the responsibility of serving on the UN body, charged with maintaining and strengthening peace and security. As one of the almost one hundred smaller states of the UN, Iceland makes every endeavour to cultivate mutually beneficial relations with all members of the organization, and believes itself favourably positioned to exercise with fairness and firmness the role of a Security Council member.

Madame President

The task of building a Global Partnership for Development is not easy. But it is the only way we can realistically address the challenges facing us, whether they be challenges of poverty, security, environment or health. As Secretary General Kofi Annan has put it *“the cause of larger freedom can only be advanced by broad, deep and sustained global cooperation among States.”*

Madame President I thank you.