



# Guatemala

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## SIXTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS

STATEMENT BY

*H.E. Mr. Oscar Berger Perdomo*  
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GUATEMALA

GENERAL DEBATE

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Mr. President,  
Mr. Secretary General , Ban Ki-moon  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

## I

The electoral process that will conclude next January 14<sup>th</sup> was initiated hardly two weeks ago, and I will have the honor to bestow the presidential sache on the democratically elected person by my people. From this event, two circumstances are derived: Firstly, representative democracy deepens and consolidates ever more in Guatemala, as evidenced by an electoral process that even international observers described as very satisfactory. Secondly, this is my last appearance before the General Assembly, occasion which I take advantage of to attest my support to the United Nations, to greet our new Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, to the outgoing President, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Califa, and the incoming President, Srgjan Kerim.

Now that we have only a few months before handing over power, I wanted to make a brief account of the main accomplishments of my administration, within the framework of that we consider a success history, despite the problems that continue to besiege us. After surmounting a four decades long internal conflict, this success story is not only for Guatemala but also for the United Nations, an organization so closely tied to our Peace Accords. And precisely those Agreements encompass our main objectives, namely the strengthening democratic institutions, the **impulse** of economic and social development, the fight against poverty and exclusion, the full respect of human rights and the consolidation of a multicultural, multiethnic and plurilingual Nation.

## II

Allow me to reveal some of the accomplishments of the last years.

In first place, one of the successes of our Administration was improving the quality of public management by means of creating or strengthening public institutions, the articulation of coherent policy programs combined with specific actions and, in many instances, updating legislation. It would be tedious to enumerate the multiple areas revamped, which diverse subjects such as food security, the energy sector, the administrative and financial decentralization, the revenue administration, trafficking of persons and assistance to immigrants, this last subject so dear to our interests.

At the same time, we have progressed in strengthening and creating new democratic control mechanisms of the institutions, invigorating the direction of Ministries as well as enhancing result oriented management, all along while integrating main political aims with planning and budgets. In this context, we have construed a State where public expenditure and biddings are subject to civil society scrutiny. Having instituted the "Guatecompras" program and making it mandatory for the public sector, we have reinforced the commitment to work with transparency in all areas governmental endeavors.

Secondly, we have achieved an economic reactivation during the last four years, within a framework of a solid financial stability. We passed growth rates of 3,5% in biennium 2004-5 to attaining 5% in 2006 and 5,6% in 2007. The overall poverty index fell five percentage points between year 2000 and 2006, from 56% of the population to 51%, respectively. We acknowledge that such relation is still unacceptable high but the achievement of said reduction must inspire us to continue fighting to fulfill in Guatemala one of the main Millenium Development Goals of the Nations United. For this reason,

public policy turned completely towards rural development, where the main social backlog and poverty are concentrated.

One of the sources of the increasing dynamism of our economy has been the export sector, whether to Central America, as well as the rest of the world. All this effort has been impelled by our National Agenda for Competitiveness 2005-2015, complemented by a marked increase of investment in infrastructure, mainly, I insist, in the rural areas. The commitment to reach better levels of competitiveness was also translated into the construction of a new international airport and the remodeling of six more, along with qualitative and quantitative improvements in seaports as well as in the rehabilitation, paving and extension of over 2,100 kilometers of road grid in all the country.

Thirdly, we have given an enormous impulse to social expenditure, particularly destined to education, health and housing. The goals set forth in the Peace Agreements of assigning 4.8% gross domestic product to social expenditures have been surpassed, reaching 5.7% en 2006, approximately twice the proportion registered ten years ago.

Thanks to this reorientation and the deepening of institutional reforms, particularly in education, the principal social indicators have begun to show significant improvements. For example, the net rate of school attendance at primary level was raised from 72.6% in 1997 to 95.5% in 2006. At the same time, we achieved a higher rate of health coverage thanks to the adopted strategy, whereby another 4.1 million of Guatemalans can access this essential service.

In fourth place, in the area of indigenous peoples inclusion, we enacted the Public Policy for Coexistence and the Elimination of Racism, under the aegis of the Presidential Commission Against Discrimination. Also, we have incorporated into public policies, planning and projects multicultural criteria; we have strengthened bilingual and intercultural education and we have instituted an affirmative action policy in order to elevate the proportion of indigenous civil employees in the public sector.

Fifth, during my Administration a human rights approach in all the public sector policies was promoted and in fact, during these past four years more public policies regarding human rights were enacted than during all the previous governments. In this context, allow me to mention only one aspect: The right of indemnification that victims of violations to human rights has been acknowledged and with that aim we devised a National Plan of Compensation with duration of 13 years was enacted in order to respond to all claims.

Finally, we addressed the issue of citizen security in an integral manner, a social phenomena conditioned by multiple economic, social, political or cultural factors, all along insisting in the full observance of human rights. We recognize that there still is a long stretch to cover in this matter but in practice vast and significant advances have been attained. To address new national and regional challenges that have arisen in regard to citizen insecurity and organized crime, my Administration concentrated its efforts in strengthening public institutions and the consolidation of democratic governance.

I must state that many of the impelled policies ought be conceived as State policies instead of those of a given Government. In that respect, we have impelled a

transition program to transfer power to the new democratically elected authorities in the second round of elections to be held next November 4th, all the relevant information deemed important to facilitate the administration of the new Government.

### III

Logically, our foreign policy was also inspired by such principles and values as that of the internal policy, before outlined. Perhaps the area in which we have best managed to promote those objectives is in the United Nations, an organization that has accompanied us in the negotiation, instrumentation and follow up of our Peace Accords. We have tried to compensate that support in a modest way with our contribution to peacekeeping in several parts of the world, particularly in our sister nation of Haiti, as well as through our active presence in the various UN fora. Owing to that circumstance, it is our interest to preserve, to strengthen and adapt to contemporary times this our Organization - the United Nations - whose ideals we value so much.

The United Nations occupy a special place in our foreign policy. We not only value for its past role — MINUGUA left the country at the end of the 2004 — but also for its continued contributions. In 2006 the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights was established, which accompanies and counsels the State. In this month of September a new concerted effort between Guatemala and the United Nations with the collaboration of a group of friendly nations is being put in place through the establishment of an International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) whose objective is to improve our investigation capacities and the arraignment and prosecution of criminal activities in our country. It is an unprecedented collaboration between a Member State and the United Nations in order to combat impunity and particularly transnational crime, an endeavor that will surely leave very tangible benefits as much to my country as important learning lessons to the United Nations.

We also reiterate our commitment to the Central American integration which has produced remarkable advances in the last four years. We are close to securing our integration process by means of enacting a customs union and we are also embarking in a negotiation process with the European Union aimed at securing an Association Agreement.

### IV

Reviewing some of the items in our agenda, I had the privilege yesterday to partake in the High Level Event on Climate Change, where I added our voice of alarm to the irreversible harm that we are causing ourselves by global greenhouse emissions. The amount of scientific data evincing this phenomena is unquestionable and Guatemala has not been spared of its effects. But we also have the scientific means to mitigate and even revert recent tendencies, all of which require an shared but differentiated effort of all of us to confront it. The United Nations offer unmatched fora to approach this common threat, so serious a threat to humanity as wars with weapons of mass destruction or as transnational terrorism.

### V

I dedicate the last part of my speech to review some pressing items of the agenda of this General Assembly. I have the following observations:

- As a pluricultural, multiethnic and plurilingual country, we are proud to have worked along with other countries in the negotiation efforts that lead to the recent adoption of the UN Declaration of Indigenous Peoples Rights.
- As Members of the Human Rights Council, we have actively participated in its institutional building process. We believe that the greatest challenge that the Council has before it is the finalize said process and to set forth the universal, periodic review mechanism. Guatemala will be one of the first countries that will be put under such review.
- We are pleased by the holding of the first Annual Ministerial Examination of the ECOSOC to appraise the progress attained in fulfilling the targets and the objectives of development, as well as the launching of the Development Cooperation Forum.
- We support any reform and reorientation of the Organization that enhances its ability to deliver results, its coherence and efficacy. We take note of what has been already enacted in DPKO as well as the idea of the Secretary General of reforming DPA. We are concerned though that the reform issues related to the development agenda agreed at the World Summit of 2005 are not accorded the same priority.
- Also, as a principal actor in the Financing for Development Conference of 2002, we believe that the dialogue slated for next 23rd and 24th October affords the opportunity to review the actual achievement of its goals and to implement the undertakings set forth by the Monterrey Consensus.
- In our capacity of middle income country, we are pleased by the celebration of the Intergubernamental Conference of Middle Income Countries last March in Spain and we are committed to the success of the second such meeting to be convened in El Salvador next October.
- We await with expectation the much discussed reform of the Security Council and we note the advances attained during the last session of the Assembly, which is the best intergubernamental negotiation to date. We trust that during this session of the General Assembly such efforts are not disparaged but rather pursued.

## VII

Mr. President,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

As stated, this is the last occasion that as President of Guatemala I come before this Assembly, whereby I reiterate my deep gratitude to the United Nations and to all its Member States for their support to our work and our initiatives during the four years of my mandate.

May God bless you all.  
Thank you.