

29 September 2008

**Statement of Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann,  
President of the 63rd Session of the General Assembly,  
at the closing of the General Debate of the 63rd session of the United Nations General  
Assembly**

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Friends all,

We have concluded the General Debate of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly. I thank you for speaking with the candor that is required when we face challenges that will, if unchecked, bring about the end of life as we know it.

We have all recognized that this debate is taking place during a particularly troubling time for the world. Many of you have argued that we cannot continue with business as usual. I agree. I believe the stage is being set for changes that will bring genuine democracy to the United Nations. With this, we will be able to introduce profound changes that will realize the promises of the Charter to “We the people”.

We have heard from 111 Heads of State and Government. We have outlined our priority concerns, and reaffirmed our conviction that this uniquely representative body remains the most important and most democratic forum for global debate. The General Assembly enables the dialogue that is essential to identify and, more importantly, agree on solutions to our most pressing problems. But it is only when all voices are heard that we can expect to implement truly comprehensive solutions.

As you all pointed out, we are meeting at a time when our deeply flawed global economic system teeters on the brink of collapse. All of us recognize the seriousness of this crisis, which has its roots in a “mania of selfishness” that has come to dominate today’s culture of “I and mine”. We have heard more about “we and ours” during this debate. Those appealing for courage and compassion have far outnumbered those who inspire fear and distrust.

The current financial turmoil is perhaps most starkly reflected in the world food crisis that we agreed would provide the underlying theme for this debate. It is astonishing that, after 63 years, we are still facing the shameful fact that hundreds of millions of people suffer from hunger and malnutrition. This is madness, and reflects how upside down our priorities have become. Still, in recent days we have heard a number of concrete and far-ranging proposals that, if implemented, will prevent the food crisis from becoming a prolonged catastrophe.

Your inputs to the Assembly over the past two weeks are heartening. It is clear that we are now acutely aware that the confluence of crises facing us – even many of our calamitous natural disasters – are of human origin. As such, they require human solutions. Throwing our hands up in despair is not an option. As leaders, we must join hands in solidarity and confront our failures together.

We must be brave enough to challenge the vast inequities that exist in the world. We must take steps to defuse the time bombs that are ticking at the heart of virtually all our societies. And, as unappealing as it may sound, this will require sacrifices from all of us. We must reorder our priorities if we are to fulfill the promises of security and well being that billions of people have entrusted in us.

And there are undeniable signs that we are getting our priorities straight. We have decided to focus first and foremost on the most vulnerable, the billions of people who are living in abject poverty and neglect.

In this spirit, we dedicated our time to two high-level meetings on the Special Needs of Africa and on the Millennium Development Goals. I was gratified to hear the passionate calls for solidarity with our African brothers and sisters.

And the new level of concern and support for the MDGs reflects a deep and genuine commitment to keep our promises to those for whom prosperity remains an impossible dream.

These high-level meetings have generated unmistakable momentum for a successful gathering in Doha in November when we consolidate the promises around financing for development. These commitments will remain the focus of our deliberations throughout the 63rd session.

We have heard urgent appeals for a stronger United Nations. We must overcome our failures of the 20th century and move into the 21st century with renewed confidence that this Organization can indeed fulfill our obligations to the world. Leaders expressed enthusiastic support for the decision by the Assembly to enter into serious negotiations about the make up of the Security Council in the months ahead.

This discussion is central to the future of the UN. We are ready. We have agreed to hold three thematic debates around the importance of democratization, not only of the Security Council, but of the Bretton Woods and other international financial institutions.

All of these relate to the General Assembly, the most representative body in the world. We must restore the authority to the Assembly that was intended in the Charter. We must give meaning to the concept of the sovereign equality of all Member States proclaimed by the Charter. If we do not have democratic rule at the United Nations, how can we demand it for the rest of the world?

Excellencies,

I hope we can take to heart the appeals that we have heard over and over again during this general debate. These appeals have been in different languages. They reflect the needs of cultures even more

diverse than our 192 Member States. But they come down to an essential truth. We are all brothers and sisters and, if we hope to climb out of the terrible mess we have created, we must treat each other with the respect and love.

Call it compassion. Call it brotherhood and sisterhood. Call it stewardship. Call it solidarity. The idea is the same in all parts of the world. We owe it to each other. We owe it to Mother Earth, who is struggling to survive our abuses. We owe it to succeeding generations. Let us join forces to assure that we rise to these challenges together, setting aside our petty differences. We can, we must make a difference in the months ahead.

Thank you.