



MISION PERMANENTE DE COSTA RICA
ANTE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS

211 EAST 43RD ST.
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017

Statement by

*H. E. Dr. Abel Pacheco de la Espriella
President of Costa Rica*

*Fifty-Nine Session of the
General Assembly of the United Nations*

(Check against delivery)

*September, 21st, 2004
New York*

A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY TO GLOBALIZE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Mr. President,

Allow me to convey to you, on behalf of the Government and People of Costa Rica, our warm congratulations and best wishes on your assumption of the important role of President of this global forum.

The Nineteenth Century was, for most of mankind, the century of freedom. However, in many regions of the world, there were, and still are, unacceptable levels of repression.

The Twentieth Century was, for a good number of nations, the century of economic development. However, at the end of the Twentieth Century, many regions of the world were subject to poverty, pressing hunger and injustice that conspire together against the worthy aspirations for peace, security and justice.

The Twenty-First Century should be devoted to universalize freedom, consolidate economic development and, above all, to create an opportunity for social justice, international cooperation, equitable relations among the nations and the eradication of poverty.

Since the beginning of my administration, and in consonance with this idea, I have advocated for a form of globalization tempered by justice, centered on fulfilling both the basic needs of all human beings and their inherent right to attain happiness.

On May 2002, at my inauguration, I said that "Just a few years ago, when I began arguing for the need to globalize justice and to humanize globalization, some skeptics thought that I was a lonely voice crying in the desert of inhumane competition (...) Today, we are many. Our voice is powerful in demanding that the process of globalization be made more humane."

Thus, I am encouraged today by the fact that world opinion shares these same concerns, as it was reflected in the recommendations of the report entitled "A Fair Globalization." In it, it is stated correctly that "We believe the dominant perspective on globalization must shift more from a narrow preoccupation with markets to a broader preoccupation with people."

Since there is greater integration between peoples and economies, it is urgent to incorporate elements of a humanistic ethic into the globalization process, with the view to generalize the benefits of both economic development and scientific and technological progress. These significant developments, product of human wisdom and intelligence, are and must be enjoyed by all as part of the patrimony of all mankind.

Mr. President,

Today, this Organization congregates 191 states with different identities and diverse histories. However, on each passing day, the future and the present of these states are more interdependent.

In international for a, it has become common place to speak of the need to formulate inclusive national models of development. I believe it is high time to speak of an inclusive global society.

This General Assembly, which represents and expresses the common will of all mankind, must play a central role in promoting a markedly humane globalization.

Mr. President,

Economic development must be directed and guided. The economy's positive and powerful forces should not be left to the invisible hand determined, in most cases, by the obvious inequality among nations.

In this sense, it is necessary to consider some important data regarding the situation of the global economy:

1. The rate of growth of the Global Gross Domestic Product has decreased progressively from an average of 3.6% in the Sixties to an average of a 1.1% in the Nineties.
2. If we compare the GDP per capita of the twentieth poorest countries and that of the twentieth richest countries, in constant dollars, we notice that, between 1960-1962, the first ones were almost 54 times poorer than the later ones, while four decades later, in the period 2000-2002, they were 121 times poorer than the second group of countries.

These results show an inverse relationship to what we should be looking for, if we really seek a peaceful, stable and fair world.

Mr. President,

In light of this fact, and in order to enable the 1200 million poorest people to participate in the benefits of economic development, we must promote policies and programs that create opportunities for all.

To this end, it is necessary to make progress, at the international level, in the following two directions:

- First, we must agree and strengthen rules and policies that provide a fair normative framework for globalization,
- Second, we should create or broaden the venues for effective international negotiation, management and implementation of those agreements.

Poverty, the lack of opportunities, deficient medical services and limited access to education, frequently accompanied by excessive expenditure in armaments, cause the suffering of most peoples.

It is noteworthy that, in 2003, the world reached a new record by devoting 956 billion dollars to military expenditure. This represents seventeen times the amount of resources devoted, worldwide, to official development assistance and more than the sum of the foreign debt of the 64 countries with the lowest GDP.

These numbers show that mankind has not understood yet that security does not result from a multiplication of the weapons but from a multiplication of the loaves of bread. Peace and security are built, in the first place, by combating injustice, satisfying the basic needs, striving for common social goals and by a fair and honest government.

As pointedly noted by Dr. Oscar Arias, former president of Costa Rica and Nobel Peace prize, "the billions of dollars spent every year on weapons and on military contingents deprive the world's poorest peoples of the chance of fulfilling their basic needs."

In this regard, Costa Rica fully supports the draft Framework Convention on International Arms Transfers. That project, based on the obligations already undertaken by states, seeks to regulate the export of weapons, their marking and tracing, in order to prevent any arms transfers to terrorist and rebel groups and to those states that breach international humanitarian law or basic human rights principles.

I respectfully urge all UN states member to adopt this international law instrument. I am convinced that it will contribute substantially to our struggle against the illicit traffic of weapons around the world.

Mr. President,

The aphorism that "the security of one is inseparable from the security of all" becomes truer every day. Global democratic governance requires strengthening both the United Nations and the competences of the General Assembly.

Every state member must have a voice and every people of the world must be represented, in conformity with the principles of equality and universality that govern the UN system. The Security Council must be reformed to enlarge it and to make it more democratic.

The maintenance of prerogatives for some states, in prejudice of the great majority of state members, is not only antidemocratic but contrary to the principle of sovereign equality among states, enshrined in the San Francisco Charter itself.

Committed to principles of universality and democracy on which the United Nations is based, I renew Costa Rica's longstanding call for the admission to the United Nations, in conditions of full legal equality, of the Republic of China in Taiwan, whose government has reiterated its willingness to assumed the obligations imposed by the Charter.

Mr. President,

Allow me to refer to one of worst scourges that affect the peaceful relations among the nations: the threat of terrorism.

The grave attacks committed all over the world in the last few years and, in particular, those committed in New York, Madrid and Beslan, prove how far terrorists are prepared to go.

Costa Rica is fervently committed to the culture of life and, in consequence, our people and government condemn any act of terrorism.

Even the loftiest ideals, from the most legitimate sources, become mere excuses and pretexts when they are taken over by terrorists. The first victims of the terrorist are the causes that they claim to defend.

The international society must confront, firmly and resolutely, all acts of terrorism, whose painful and deadly consequences distress so many nations and so many innocent victims. It is essential to combat all forms of terrorism as well as its sources of financing and safe-havens. It is equally essential to combat, with the same resolve, the poverty, inequality and hunger - of both food and justice - that afflict many peoples.

The coordination of the struggle against terrorism must be assigned to an independent, professional and permanent organ located at the center of this Organization.

For this reason, we propose the creation of a United Nations High Commissioner on Terrorism that would assist the Security Council, as well as the General Assembly and the ECOSOC, in the comprehensive fight against this threat and its causes. Only by creating such an organ, that would assemble resources and multiply efforts, it will be possible to respond adequately and jointly to the challenge posed by international terrorism.

Mr. President,

Today, global democratic governance has two fundamental pillars: the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court.

The International Court of Justice, whose obligatory jurisdiction Costa Rica accepts without any reservation, provides us with an impartial instance for the peaceful solution of controversies within the framework of the rule of law, thus avoiding haphazard or arbitrary interpretations of the legal norms.

Nevertheless, we note with concern that very few states accept without conditions the obligatory jurisdiction of the Court. Most states have made reservations that exclude, in some cases, all the possible or even all the conceivable situations in which they would have to submit to the authority of the principal judicial organ of the United Nations.

The International Criminal Court, whose establishment Costa Rica supported enthusiastically, provides us with an impartial organ to judge the most serious crimes against mankind. Ironically, while we all repudiate those crimes, only 94 states have ratified the Rome Statute and have accepted the competence of that Court.

I would also like to refer to the need to globalize criminal justice in order to prosecute those who, taking advantage of public office, rob their own peoples.

How many generations will be condemned to pay the odious debts created by leaders irremediably sick of greed? Please remember: corruption is the mother of poverty because it deprives the poorest peoples of the world of the resources necessary to finance their education, health, housing and social security.

It is time to give justice its rightful place. There should be no loopholes. Asylum and protection should not be given to those who ransack their own peoples. All safe-havens of impunity must disappear.

As we have a duty to protect the oppressed and persecuted, we also have a duty to protect those who do not have yet a voice. In particular, there is a pressing need to agree on a normative framework, internationally binding, to uphold human dignity from the moment of conception.

Necessarily, to defend life is to defend the very essence of man itself: all the promises, joys and hopes of the human being.

I believe in science within ethical limits. As a medical doctor, I reject human cloning while I firmly support research on adult stem cells, which does not present the same ethical and legal problems that cloning does.

I invite you all to join us in our efforts to adopt an international convention to ban all forms of human cloning.

Mr. President,

We have a great debt with nature.

It is time to ensure that globalization be sustainable from an ecological point of view, in order to maintain the viability of human life on planet Earth. Notwithstanding the commitment of 120 nations, we have been unable to obtain the necessary support for the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol.

In 2001, the High Level Panel of Financing for Development proposed that the various international entities on environment be consolidated in a single Organization with a standing similar to that of the WTO or the IMF. Regrettably, this proposal, as well as similar initiatives, has not enjoyed yet the necessary consensus for its approval.

Undoubtedly, something must be done soon in this regard.

Mr. President,

We live in a globalized world. That is the logical outcome of the natural evolution of things and the progress of mankind, especially in the areas of telecommunication and information technology. This fact has brought nations closely together and, at the same time, it has created unavoidable multilateral responsibilities.

Today, we live in a world that tries to follow not only the rules of the global market but also democratic principles; that tries to uphold higher standards regarding human rights' observance while it rejects all forms of odious discrimination and shows concern for the environment.

The observance of those minimum standards, adopted by the international society itself, should be the rule to measure each state.

Costa Rica would like to see the following principles recognized and practiced by the whole international community:

- greater respect for human rights and labor guarantees; and,
- greater protection for the environment and greater social investment in exchange for less military expenditure.

States should have greater opportunities to access international cooperation, credit and the markets while the prices should be fair, reflecting the real costs.

It is not fair that poor countries, such as Costa Rica, that are making efforts in the areas of:

- disarmament,
- respect of human rights,
- labor justice,
- protection of the environment, and,
- greater social investment,

be penalized by excluding them from the lists of beneficiaries of cooperation programs and from systems of preferential treatment for the access of their products to the markets of developed countries.

If we desire a lasting peace and a secure world, we should give a humane dimension to the relations among the various nations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let us undertake together the challenge to overcome poverty, hunger, malnutrition and injustice, as we committed ourselves to do just yesterday, in the meeting convened by the President of Brazil, His Excellency Mr. Luis Ignacio Lula da Silva.

Let us make this task the center of the international agenda for the short term.

A better world is possible. It is in our hands to build it!

Thank you.