



Address by
His Excellency Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo
President of the Republic of
GUYANA
to the
Sixty-Sixth Session of the
United Nations General Assembly

SEPTEMBER 21, 2011

NEW YORK

Kindly check against delivery

Mr President, Mr Secretary-General,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my distinct honour to speak on behalf of the Government and people of Guyana on the occasion of this sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

Allow me first to convey to you, Mr. President, my warmest congratulations on your election to guide the work of the 66th session of the General Assembly. I have no doubt that under your leadership, Qatar will be instrumental in the service of your Presidency and indeed in that of the Assembly as a whole as we face the challenging times that are ahead.

I also recognise the service which your predecessor has rendered and wish to record our appreciation.

To our distinguished Secretary-General I offer my delegation's congratulations on the renewal of his mandate, an act that bears testimony to the confidence reposed in him by the Member States of this body.

Mr President, This is the last time that I will address this great chamber as the President of my country. Before the end of this year, I will be proud to be the first President of Guyana to demit office under the constitutional term limits I signed into law in the early days of my Presidency. Inevitably, this milestone has caused me to look back on the changes that have taken place since I first stood here 12 years ago.

Three things strike me as I reflect on the role of the United Nations over those 12 years.

The first is that the central point that I and others have repeatedly made from this podium stays as true today as it was when I first articulated it. This core point is that while the values which inform the work of the United Nations and our member states – the values of peace, equality and justice – are timeless, these are of limited use unless we, as the United Nations and as individual member states, draw on them to catalyse consistent, meaningful and practical responses to the contemporary, changing challenges our peoples face.

But the second point that strikes me is how utterly different today's contemporary challenges actually are, when compared with those of just 12 years ago, never mind those of the 1940s when the United Nations was founded.

The rise of China, India, Brazil and other developing countries is transforming the globe – for the better. Billions of people have been lifted out of poverty; new businesses are generating millions of jobs, growth and capital; and there is once again genuine intellectual debate about the right way to embed rights and justice at the core of the global governance structure.

But the rise of these great powers is happening in a totally different way to how powers emerged in the past. They are rising in a world that is inter-connected through instant communications capabilities, and globalised trading and financial systems. That means that what we are witnessing is unlike anything that has happened before, and there are few communities, and there is no

country, on the planet that are impacted by these changes as they happen.

And this presents the United Nations and its member states with great opportunity to realize our values and to secure the global peace, justice and security to which we aspire. But to do so, we must face up to the opportunities of inter-connectedness with responses that are inter-connected. And our record on international, collective action in recent years is not good.

And this leads me to my third point: which is that the search for justice and the achievement of rights for all requires us to broaden our traditional understanding of security. We must struggle to achieve rights in a new way – and as many have said before me, alongside the physical security challenge, there are many other aspects to human security and the realization of rights. I think that there are four other elements of security in particular that we need to properly understand to ensure well-being for all of the world's people.

The challenge of food security: we are heading for 8 billion people, then 9 billion people. Rising prosperity means that these people want greater amounts of, and more nutritious, food. On current trends, we need 100 million hectares of new land by 2020 to meet this demand. How do we do this and avoid excessive price increases and volatility ?

The challenge of energy security: as the world gets richer, our demand for energy increases massively. We are likely to demand 36% more energy by 2035. How do we generate the energy needed to meet this demand in a way that helps people everywhere to

develop, and does not choke off economic growth through high prices caused by energy scarcity?

The challenge of resource security: if we are to alleviate poverty, countries need to develop. And if countries are to develop, they need minerals and other commodities. China on its own is accounting for over a third of the demand for many of the most important global commodities, and countries across the world – most notably in South America and Africa – can supply them. How do we help global development by sourcing these minerals and using them efficiently and justly?

And the challenge of climate security: if we are to avert the biggest economic and social catastrophe ever seen, we have to stabilize our planet's climate. At the absolute limit, this means stabilizing global temperatures at a maximum of 2 degrees above pre-industrial levels. Yet we are on track towards perhaps a 4 or 5 degree rise according to the United Nations Environment Programme. The disaster that this represents is beyond anyone's comprehension. And the fact that we are not treating it as the emergency it is will be viewed by history as the biggest derogation of responsibility by societies and governments to ever take place. How can we rapidly change this situation before we run out of time ?

These four challenges represent both opportunity and difficulty. The difficulties are obvious. But they are opportunities in the sense that we have enough land, innovation and human ingenuity to feed the world. We have enough energy to power future prosperity. We have enough resources to provide the foundations for economic growth. And we know that if we are to avert climate change, that means using fossil fuels and land in the right way. Once we start

realizing these opportunities, we can create new platforms for peace, development and physical security.

This sounds like an impossible task. But I would argue it is not. There are solutions to enable these opportunities to be grasped today, and the United Nations can provide the platform for making the changes that are needed. We can do this if we draw motivation from the realization that the idea of integrated, sustainable development – where we optimize our response to the inter-linked security challenges - is not some abstraction for environmentalists. It is not a piece of rhetoric about a theoretical better future. Instead, it is an essential, specific call to action that has the potential to be the key global breakthrough of our time. It can change the global paradigm of development in a way that enables us to address the inter-connected security challenges we face in the world today.

Pursuing this integrated response to our global challenges presents unparalleled opportunities for peoples across today's developing world. The food we need, the energy we generate, the minerals and other commodities that catalyse economic growth, and the forests and other land that can be the drivers of climate solutions – these are all largely in the developing world, and with the right international action, the developing world can lead the world in the creation of the transformational shift we need to see for people across our planet to be truly healthy and secure.

Importantly, within the United Nations, we already have many of the entities we need to solve these problems in an integrated way. And realizing this should motivate us to know that by next year's Rio+20 Conference, we can start to make the progress that is necessary.

But that means consistency in our efforts to address all forms of insecurity. We need to support peaceful peoples everywhere to assert their basic rights to physical security and development – the global response to the Arab Spring and other peace movements across the Middle East was remarkable for its inconsistency. Guyana supports the right of the Palestinian people to full statehood, and we urge the acceleration of the negotiations to achieve this. We welcomed – and were delighted to co-sponsor the resolution that resulted in – the entry of South Sudan into this General Assembly. But we need to do much more – and Guyana will be supportive of all peoples who struggle for democracy and dignity.

It also means that we need to rapidly upgrade our response to supporting development, food, energy and resource security. We need to see the Doha trade round, not as some zero-sum game between the developed and developing world, but as a critical component to enable the world to meet the urgent challenges that an increasingly prosperous, growing population will present. We need to redouble our efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals, and to defeat non-communicable diseases, which is why Guyana welcomes this week's meeting on NCDs and the adoption of the Political Declaration.

And finally, we need to move beyond the global insanity that is our response to climate security. Existing pledges on greenhouse gas emissions under the Copenhagen Accord will not contain global temperature rises within limits that will avert catastrophic climate change, and some states will face extinction. Moreover, the anaemic delivery on financial pledges made at Copenhagen, and formalized in the Cancun Agreements, is leading to a disastrous break down in

trust between the developed and developing world. And the prospects for reaching an internationally legally binding agreement on climate change at COP 17 in Durban, South Africa, would appear rather bleak. There is therefore an urgent need for high order political leadership to re-energise the climate change process and deliver credible results.

In Guyana, we have long said that it is possible to meet the inter-linked challenges I speak of through an integrated, sustainable response. Four years ago, we started on that road, and after one of the most comprehensive national consultations on climate change anywhere in the world, we have started to implement our Low Carbon Development Strategy. We are maintaining over 99.5% of our forest cover; Norway is paying Guyana for climate services we provide; we are using some of these payments to eliminate 92% of our energy-related emissions, and we are using the rest of the payments, coupled with domestic resources, to shift our entire economy onto a low-carbon, low-deforestation, climate-resilient trajectory.

So we hope that we are proving in our own way that it is possible to address the inter-linked security challenges of today. If we are to embrace the new world order that is now upon us, and find a way that enables the new powers to continue their peaceful emergence in a way that lifts the possibilities for people everywhere, action from individual countries is not enough.

The United Nations and other international institutions need to modernize fast, and the international system needs to correct the inconsistencies between aid, trade and climate policies as I have outlined.

In part, this means making the United Nations Security Council more democratic, transparent and legitimate. Fifty-four African countries have no permanent seat on the Council. Neither do the thirty-three countries that comprise the Latin America and Caribbean region. Guyana strongly supports early reform of the Security Council through an expansion in both the permanent and non-permanent categories and enhanced representation of developing countries.

But we also need practical solutions as well. And in devising these, today's developed world needs to catch up with the realization that the world has changed, and it is in their vital national interests to do the work that needs doing. Food security is not just about people in poor countries – prices in Europe and the United States are rising too. Energy insecurity will hit today's developed countries and destroy their competitiveness as rapidly as it will hit the developing world. Resource insecurity is already driving up imported inflation in Europe and elsewhere. And climate insecurity could be the tipping point for today's powers to be relegated to history with all the suffering that will entail for their people.

So the narrative is changing, distinguished colleagues.

And I hope that we will rise to the challenge.

Mr. President, from now on, I will watch proceedings in this chamber from afar. But for all of my invocations for the United Nations to do better, it remains the place where noble ambitions are pursued. I wish the United Nations and all its members every best wish for a secure, prosperous and socially just future.

On behalf of my country and people, Mr. President, you may be assured, of our full support for the organization and for strengthening its capacity to better fulfill the many mandates entrusted to it.

Thank you.
