



ADDRESS

BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY
MR. DONALD R. RAMOTAR
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA**

**GENERAL DEBATE
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Mr. President, Mr. Secretary General
Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen:

I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of this year's General Assembly. I must also commend your predecessor, Ambassador John Ashe of Antigua and Barbuda, and his team, for so effectively setting the stage for what will now follow under your distinguished tenure, as it relates to the post-2015 development agenda and other critical issues that warrant the focused attention of the international community.

This UN General Assembly is taking place on the eve of the target year set by world leaders in 2000 to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. It is therefore timely to assess the progress made and also to understand why we could not achieve all the goals in full. This is essential in moving forward with the Post 2015 agenda that we are about to finalise.

I wish to recall that in the year 2000 when the eight goals were announced, they inspired great hope and enthusiasm throughout the world. This was particularly so in developing countries and among the world's poor.

It is true that the world has made tangible progress in its efforts to achieve the MDGs. Global poverty has fallen and continues to fall; many more of the world's children are attending primary schools; health services have improved for a large number of people resulting in a significant decline in child mortality; and the spread of HIV/AIDS and malaria has been halted and even reversed in some regions.

In Guyana, despite the negative impacts of the international financial situation, we have managed to keep our economy on a steady growth path over the last eight years. Not only have we succeeded in growing our economy but also in ensuring that growth has resulted in an improved quality of life for our people.

Indeed, we are one of only seventeen countries in the world which the FAO recognized as not only meeting the goal of reducing hunger by half, but also of improving the nutrition of our people.

We have achieved universal primary education and are close to achieving universal secondary education. We have also made important strides in housing, health, water and other social facilities. Here, I would like to express my country's gratitude to all of our development partners who have contributed greatly to the gains we have made towards achieving the MDGs.

Guyana's success in building our capacity in the health sector could not have been possible without the assistance provided by Cuba, including the training of hundreds of our doctors. That country is doing so despite their own economic

difficulties. Once more we wish to join with the vast majority of countries of the world in calling for an end to the US economic blockade.

Mr. President, while we must recognise the gains made globally, let me hasten to say that they were not uniform across countries and regions. In some places, the progress has been dramatic. Asia for instance has had remarkable success in achieving many of the goals. In Latin America and the Caribbean there has also been considerable progress.

There are, however, some areas where hardly any noticeable change has taken place since the year 2000. In some others, many countries ravaged by conflicts and wars, laudable gains have been reversed. Some goals have also proven more elusive than others. Maternal mortality stands out in particular as requiring additional attention.

It is clear that the world could have advanced much further along the road to achieving the MDGs. This, unfortunately, did not happen because the partnership needed to achieve all the objectives was not strong enough. We therefore need to examine the reasons for the suboptimal results.

It is true that all of us have a responsibility to the welfare of the world's people and to the state of our planet in general. The reality however, is that some countries have far more resources than others, some use much more of the world resources as well, and while our responsibilities are common, they necessarily have to be differentiated.

The gaps between the top and bottom segments of our world population are widening greatly. The concentration of wealth in the hands of a few has reached dangerous proportions. Oxfam International recently highlighted this phenomenon. Some figures are startling.

It is noted that the richest 1% of the population owns about 46% of the global wealth which is some \$110 trillion, while the bottom 50% of the population owns just about \$1.7 trillion or 0.7% of the world's wealth. This amount of \$1.7 trillion is the same as the wealth possessed by 85 of the world's richest people. Clearly, this degree of inequality is unsustainable.

In much the same manner, while we have all agreed on increased developmental assistance to developing countries, the reality is that the net transfer of financial resources from developing to developed countries continues unabated, amounting to US\$200 billion in 2002 and increasing to US\$557 billion in 2010. This perverse trend continues.

This transfer of financial resources is only a part of the picture. The developing countries also suffer a net loss of skills to the developed world through

migration. This is after we would have expended huge amounts on training. In addition, our efforts in the health and education sectors are often frustrated by the elevated level of expenditure on school books and essential medicines due to intellectual property rights. Clearly all of these imbalances are unsustainable and will only be addressed through concerted global action.

While many developing countries demonstrated serious determination in working towards the goals by allocating more resources to human development, the support by the developed countries as envisaged by MDG 8 fell significantly short of expectations.

It is extremely disappointing to say the least that in the face of pressing demands, only about half a dozen developed countries have kept their pledge to provide 0.7% of their Gross National Product (GNP) to Official Development Assistance.

As we prepare for yet another conference on financing for development in Ethiopia next year, I wish to remind that the commitment of 0.7% was made over four decades ago in this very Assembly and reiterated in 2002 at the Monterrey Conference.

In light of these failures it is imperative that the post 2015 framework includes:

1. A time-bound commitment for delivery of official development assistance for which commitments have already been made.
2. A global framework for managing intellectual property rights that places the development imperative at its center.
3. A global trading architecture that recognizes the asymmetries in the global state of development and is suitably responsive to these.
4. A framework that ensures private sector investment is consistent with the development agenda.

The recommendations of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals and of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing provide a good platform on which to build.

Mr. President, as we craft a transformative agenda, it will be especially important to ensure that it is flexible enough to address the peculiar needs of some countries. The special circumstances occasioned by the vulnerabilities of Small Island and Low - lying Coastal Developing States (SIDS) bear particular mention in this regard. Far too often the progress made can be speedily reversed owing to the impacts of

climate change and natural disasters. In this regard, we must spare no effort to ensure that we have a legally binding agreement in 2015.

Ironically, as we discuss the post 2015 development agenda, many CARICOM countries are being graduated from eligibility for concessionary financing since they are classified as middle-income based on the narrow measure of GDP per capita. In addition, many of these countries are heavily indebted as they must make unavoidable investments in building and rebuilding social, economic and productive infrastructure to strengthen their resilience.

We call on the international community to reconsider this approach by adding a vulnerability index to the equation. We also call for debt relief as the debt accumulated by most of these countries makes their economies unsustainable.

Mr. President, the most important precondition for progress is peace. In this regard, many conflicts and potential for conflicts continue unresolved while new threats to global security have risen to dangerous levels.

The situation in the Middle East is most disturbing. Still at the heart of this is the great tragedy that is the plight of the Palestinian people. Once again, we have seen the bombing of an almost unarmed population in the Gaza by one of the world's most powerful military machines, supported and replenished by even more powerful military forces.

Guyana calls for the end of the apartheid-like situation that exists in Palestine, where poverty and degradation are weapons used to repress a whole people. The people of Palestine have a right to live with dignity in their own country and the UN must never compromise on the principle of self-determination.

The continuing wars in Syria and Iraq are most distressing. They are leading to more extremism and a rapid descent to barbarism. This has resulted from years of financing and arming of radical forces to promote political objectives. We condemn the barbaric and grotesque killing of journalists, humanitarian aid workers and other hostages and the loss of lives of civilians in these conflict areas by the murderous extremists in those countries. Guyana condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

The situation in Ukraine is another cause for concern. We must not forget that the two world wars had their origins in Europe. That is why we should exert every effort to bring all the partners to the table for a peaceful resolution. Attempting to secure military advantages is not only foolhardy but dangerous. The solution has to be based on justice and the aspiration of the peoples in that country.

Always a potential source of conflict are the many unresolved border issues that exist in our world which are often used to retard the development of countries, preventing them from improving the quality of life of their own peoples and the promotion of the welfare of the regions to which they belong. My own country is not unaffected. The United Nations must therefore redouble its efforts to assist in the resolution of these issues.

Mr. President, we currently face a stark reminder of how fragile global welfare is in the face of singular threats such as the Ebola epidemic. Make no mistake, this is a global problem that requires an immediate global response many times over what is currently being done. In this regard, let me acknowledge the prompt response and leadership shown by Cuba and the United States of America in rendering assistance to the countries in West Africa.

My dear friends, in our time we must continue the search for new approaches to many of the global problems that confront us. In today's interconnected and interdependent world, the destinies of states and peoples are increasingly intertwined. The concerted global action that is necessary to address today's problems can only be achieved with strong multilateralism and through relevant, responsive and more democratic global institutions.

Critical among these are reforms to the UN Security Council and the international financial institutions. Concrete progress in the reform of the Security Council is imperative in order to assure the continued legitimacy and relevance of this important United Nations organ. In like manner, accelerated reform of the international financial institutions is critical if we are to ensure their effectiveness in protecting global financial stability and supporting sustainable development.

In conclusion, I wish to recall the proposal which Guyana made through its first democratically elected President, Dr. Cheddi Jagan, for a New Global Human Order on which this General Assembly has pronounced in several resolutions. That proposal seeks to balance the interests of the developed and developing countries. It is a proposal whose time has come and should be pursued with other initiatives to find solutions so that we can realise the dreams of generations that came before us for peace, progress and prosperity.

Just as how the MDGs provided a new focus and raised hopes in the year 2000, so today we must rekindle that spirit to eradicate poverty and inequality in the post 2015 period.

Let me express our appreciation to the Secretary General and his staff for their tireless efforts in carrying out the mandate of this Organisation in challenging times. Please be assured that you have the full support of the Government of Guyana. I thank you.