



STATEMENT BY
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**Minister Cansfield,
Ambassador Nasev,
General Consul Durakovski and
Honorary Consuls Bitove and Madjarov.**

**Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentleman
Dear friends,**

Thank you Mike Zafirovski for those kind introductory words and thank you for your invitation especially to my good friend John Bitove for his generosity which allows me to be here this evening.

I am grateful to be amongst friends and a very close family of compatriots.

Allow me to use this “Club setting” to share some of my views, ideas and aspirations as the serving President of the United Nations General Assembly – and to give you some insights in to my experiences over the past year – because my work began when I became president-elect on 24 May 2007.

Let me set the stage by saying a few words on the role of the General Assembly and its President – how this role is evolving and its significance in setting and formulating the work of the United Nations.

The General Assembly is the highest political body of the United Nations. It is where all 192 member states have a say. It is where Member States set the strategic and policy directions for the United Nations.

It is also where decisions are made on membership to other UN bodies such as the Security Council, or as we have most recently seen, for the Human Rights Council.

But this is also the body that debates and decides on resources: the operating budget of the Organization and also the budgets of the various peacekeeping missions. These come close to 10 billion dollars annually - around 2 billion dollars for the administration of the Secretariat, over 7 billion to finance UN peacekeeping missions around the world. In addition, the Assembly that approves the budgets of the international tribunals which are around 1.4 billion annually.

The General Assembly also sets and carries forward the reform agenda for the whole organization: this includes the often talked about topic of Security Council reform and reforms to foster closer coordination among the numerous United Nations agencies that work on development or humanitarian assistance around the world, for example – by providing food aid to those who have suffered due to the global food crisis or emergency assistance to the victims of the Myanmar cyclone disaster

But the Assembly’s reform agenda also includes management reforms for the whole UN secretariat to improve the use of financial and human resources,. And it certainly includes the reform of its own work under the theme of “revitalization of the General Assembly.” – to which I will come to in more details in a moment.

As for the role of its President – my role is to lead, facilitate and coordinate the work of the 192 member states. Presidents are selected for one year term to lead each annual session of the General Assembly which runs from mid-September. I am presiding over the 62nd session of the Assembly and my term will come to an end on 15 September this year.

Over the past few years the General Assembly have been gaining a more prominent role by becoming more active and relevant. This has certainly been part of my goal as President – to use my persuasive power to rally member states to take on the real challenges that we face in the world today.

Quite often it is the Secretariat led by the Secretary-General that receives attention. But as noted, member states are the ones within the General Assembly that set out the work and provide the resources – it is up to the countries, big and small, like Canada or Macedonia to give the marching orders to the Secretariat, the various UN programmes, funds and agencies and to the Secretary-General himself. This is an important point.

The Security Council is often the most visible organ of the UN. Yet we are seeing a change here. The Security Council deals with peace and security issues. But in our globalized world we see a reinterpretation of security to mean a much more comprehensive and broader approach. The social, economic, humanitarian, human rights and even environmental aspects of security have come to the forefront of our policy debates. These are precisely the issues that make up the broad agenda of the General Assembly. Nothing testifies to this better than the fact that just a few days ago, on 22 May, I was able to convene and chair the first-ever meeting of the General Assembly on human security.

It is clear that there are no more purely so called hard and soft security issues – the global challenges we face today are complex – they cannot be compartmentalized into purely security threats or economic, social human rights or environmental challenges.

Take climate change for example – a defining global challenge – in fact the flagship issue of the current session – that its social and economic implications go beyond the environmental impact has now been well accepted – but now its security implications have also been acknowledged. Last year the Security Council held a special debate on this aspect of climate change– and it has been noted that the brutal conflict in Darfur has some of its roots in droughts and water and grazing land scarcity.

Or, take a look at the conflicts we still face around the world. Most of them are long drawn out conflicts within a state -- where solutions require much more than a security agenda. This means a need the main UN bodies – especially the General Assembly and the Security Council -- to work together more effectively. One new development reflecting these changes is the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission which was set up jointly by the General Assembly and the Security Council to assist countries emerging from conflicts to help them stay the course of peace.

In this regard we have come a long way in the past 60 years of UN peacekeeping. On 29 May we just celebrated international peacekeepers day. I may even be as bold to say here in Canada that now UN peacekeeping means I believe what one of its greatest architects, your former Prime Minister Lester Pearson had in mind – a broader and lasting effort on the part of the international community to safeguard peace and go beyond the simple monitoring of a fragile ceasefire.

But the challenge for the General Assembly is not simply to have on its agenda the relevant problems the world faces today, but to also demonstrate that it is able to take action on them and make substantive progress in dealing with them.

This is what is at the centre of my efforts – this is also why I continuously engage member states collectively and individually.

In the current session we have made progress on priority topics we have great relevant to all of us:

- Addressing climate change**
- Financing for development**
- Achieving the Millennium Development Goals**
- Countering terrorism and**
- Strengthening the United Nations**

While I may have listed them as if they are individual priorities – they are quite interconnected. Climate change, financing for development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals, are intertwining pillars of the United Nations sustainable development agenda.

Countering terrorism is very much also about addressing the conditions conducive to its spread, which is also about development issues. And UN reform is not something that happens in a vacuum: it is precisely about how to make the UN more effective in dealing with climate change or reaching the Millennium Development Goals.

Or take biodiversity: at the recent United Nations ministerial-level meeting in Bonn at the end of May – where I shared the podium with host Chancellor Angela Merkel and also Prime Minister Stephen Harper – we focused on the interconnectedness of climate change, sustainable development and biodiversity. I stressed to the participants that precisely because of the interconnected web of life on earth, degradation in one area limited progress in others and if in turn we would be able to make improvements in one area then that would support progress in others.

But we also operate in dynamic conditions: the world is not standing still waiting on us to deliver on our priorities. New challenges confront us that in turn test our common resolve and priorities. Take the global food crisis. It is a complex challenge that has its climate change, development and financing aspects as well as a test case for reforms as it calls for immediate, practical, effective and coordinated UN action.

The UN Summit on the Food Crisis in Rome has begun to lay the groundwork for a comprehensive global response to resolve this issue. The Secretary-General's High Level Task Force presented initial recommendations that represent the collective thinking of the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization.

Now it is up to the General Assembly to consider how to take this issue forward. I have suggested that Member States request that a Special Session is convened to enable the international community to agree a unified strategy and take immediate, intergovernmental agreed decisions.

We must come together to demonstrate our global solidarity to overcome this crisis by announcing concrete new initiatives as part of a global, unified strategy.

In discussing this and other issues – on the agenda of the General Assembly – my goal has been to urge member states to be more constructive, more cooperative, and be more focused on results. I believe we have made good progress and I sincerely hope this will continue in future.

Member states have also begun to accept the important contribution of a wide array of non-governmental actors - whether its business people, civil society groups, academia, media or influential private individuals – can make to the Assembly’s work.

One of my strong beliefs and “operating principles” has been to enlarge the work of the General Assembly to involve non-state actors in our work – inject their participation not simply as observers to our debates but as active participants in our quest for practical solutions.

For example, during our debate on climate change the entrepreneur Sir Richard Branson challenged member states to create an actual war room to tackle the problem. In the same debate the actress Daryl Hannah came to promote through her own individual example an environmental friendly life style.

Ted Turner teamed up with religious organizations to create a special fund to fight malaria when I invited him to speak to us on how we can make good on our promises to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

And most recently, on Tuesday at our debate on human trafficking, the actress and philanthropist Ashley Judd gave us a sobering guidance on what it means for the heart and mind to be committed to a humanitarian issue by giving vivid examples of the tragedies of trafficked persons from all around the world she has recently met.

But involving individuals and the private sector must not be based simply on charity. In early May Prime Minister Gordon Brown invited me to a London event on promoting the Millennium Development Goals with business leaders where I made it a point to stress to the audience – that also included two presidents from developing countries, President Kufour of Ghana and President Kagame of Rwanda – that we needed to move beyond philanthropy and build on the technical expertise and innovation of business and invest in new technologies with a profit motive. This is also what we will be looking at next week when on Monday I have convened a panel of private investors to explore with member states the nexus of private investment choices and carbon emissions reduction.

I am quite happy to report that the General Assembly’s work is more and more characterized by a broad-based, multi-stakeholder approach to challenges – to reach beyond member states with regular and more substantive inclusion of civil society, private-sector and other representatives in the decision-making process.

All this indicates a shift away from “business as usual” – which is one of my key goals – to make the General Assembly more responsive; more action oriented – less bureaucratic, less about procedure and process and certainly less repetitive.

But the real aim is to strengthen the United Nations itself. This is why I have proposed to member states to do away with the notion of “General Assembly revitalization” and instead proposed to talk about: ‘the role of the General Assembly in strengthening the United Nations system.’

To lead, facilitate and coordinate – were the roles I mentioned for the President – I have been using these roles as tools precisely to have member states be the driving force of the actions the United Nations can take. And the guiding principle driving that force should be practical progress and not vested interests and age-old political reflexes.

For example in the course of the current session member states were willing and able to adopt the first resolution in the General Assembly proposed by Israel on agricultural technology for development or a resolution proposed by Kyrgyzstan on social justice.

The membership of the Assembly was also able to come together and make progress on analyzing the myriad of mandates the Organization has and to see whether all of them are really necessary to maintain. Then we were able to have our first frank discussions on topics close to the heart of Canadians: human security and also within that the principle of responsibility to protect.

We also had for the first time an interactive dialogue between member states and UN Secretariat officials on key management topics such as budget and human resources.

Strengthening the United Nations is of course for a purpose – to make it capable to deliver not only on our ideals and expectations which may be too high-minded but to at least undertake effectively the tasks it takes upon itself through its membership.

Its legitimacy and relevance depends above all on its ability to translate its decisions and commitments into practical actions – whether we are talking about resolutions of the Security Council, for example, in the form of practical action in Darfur; or, in the General Assembly on key development targets such as the Millennium Development Goals.

We must begin by encouraging all member states of the United Nations to live up to their responsibilities; by emphasizing the interdependence of all nations; by recognizing that crucial issues on the Assembly's agenda are not about numbers, but about people; and, by involving a multitude of external actors in the Assembly's work: to not only assert their rights, but also to be willing to engage in efforts to make the exercise of those rights sustainable and universal.

In this context, allow me to say a few words about Canada's role in world affairs. In his latest book 'Intent for a Nation' Michael Byers says, "Canada has the capacity to do truly great things."

One cannot agree more. When it comes to so called soft-power diplomacy Canada is a real champion. From Lester Pearson to Lloyd Axworthy one can only appreciate the determination to promote such values and concepts as human rights, human security, the responsibility to protect, international development assistance, as well as the protection of cultural diversity and the strengthening of international institutions and international law, including through the creation of the International Criminal Court. Those are all areas where Canada has made significant contributions to further United Nations actions.

While talking about global governance, I would like to draw your attention to the concept which I am pleading for in my capacity as President of the General Assembly.

We need a new kind of internationalism that caters to a new kind of global society - based on principled pragmatism and shared responsibility: a new way of thinking about our shared fate and our shared responsibilities in a way that reflects the complexities of contemporary human and economic relations.

For this to happen I believe we need a real change in our mindset.

Our globalized world has outgrown the rigid parameters of existing institutional frameworks. If we want to tackle the truly global challenges we face, and also, take full advantage of the benefits of globalization we now need to think radically about reform – this is why ever since taking office I have been advocating the need for a new culture of international relations.

The world today is - more than ever - best described as a true global village and characterized by interdependence. Relations run deep, creating vast and dense interdependent networks in all spheres and at all levels, down to the level of the individual. The speed with which these interactions happen is also unprecedented.

But our global village is also more vulnerable. Major challenges become global problems that need global attention. And our responses to single issues are themselves interconnected and have impacts on other concerns. The nexus between climate change, the food crisis, rising energy prices and the growing use of land to produce bio-fuels is a prime example.

Traditional attributes of power are losing their significance, speed is becoming more important than size. I strongly believe that the traditional balance of power politics must give way to a new understanding based on equilibrium of shared interests.

The new culture of international relations should not be super-imposed, but fluid and flexible to cope with our dynamic, changing world, and it should have the well-being of the individual and communities at its centre.

This is precisely why I use the word culture and not order. In the past sixty years people around the world have gradually become alienated by the notion of order.

I also believe that such a new culture can best capture the two key shifts that I believe characterize international relations today: a shift away from state-centered

policies towards human centered approaches that emphasize the individual as the primary subject and agent of policy; and a shift from a preoccupation on rights to the accentuation and acceptance of responsibilities from the level of the state down to the level of the individual.

The United Nations can and must provide the framework for this new culture but I am also convinced -- and this is what has been at the heart of my efforts -- that the United Nations can and should be the catalyst for this new culture.

To achieve this we need a fundamental renewal and radical rethinking of what we expect from the United Nations and in fact from other international and regional bodies. This is the real challenge for our immediate future.

While politics at all levels – local, regional, national and international -- still seems to be about the exercise of power, what is changing, is the increasing opportunities we *all* have to make a difference. We now have more of a chance to become the subjects, the shapers of our own fate, of the fate of world politics, if you wish, rather than be subject to and objects of the complex international relationship that confer power.

That is very much true for all of us here I believe – I certainly hold it true for myself.

In conclusion let me use a concrete example to illustrate what I have just talked about and which may seem at times too abstract.

Today is World Environment Day. This is a Day established by the UN General Assembly in 1972. Since 1972 environmental issues have crept to the fore of our agenda – today climate change is a defining issue for the United Nations – it is certainly my top priority agenda item for the 62nd session.

It is clearly understood to be challenge that requires a common effort from all stakeholders as it has such broad implications for our way of life. Solutions to combat it are very much about the longer-term collective and individual well being of all of us on this planet.

The full UN system has been mobilized –into a common effort. I have also been regularly and closely working with the Secretary-General on this issue.

Member States and other important actors have come together on this topic, including individuals such as Sir Richard Branson and Daryl Hannah whom I mentioned earlier – who were all eager and ready to be part of the global solution.

And we are continuing our efforts: as mentioned, next Monday I will be chairing a special follow-up to that climate change meeting, focusing on lowering carbon emissions and how to specifically involve private investors in this quest.

The slogan for this year’s World Environment Day is: “Kick the Habit! Towards a Low Carbon Economy.” This slogan is very much about what we can do collectively and individually to reduce carbon emissions – this is where responsibilities clearly transcend rights – that our responsibility to reduce our carbon emissions out weighs our right to pollute. If not, our irresponsibility will deny the right of future generation to enjoy the rights and freedoms we all share on this planet.

The new culture of international relations, therefore, may need not rest on grandiose reforms like enlarging the Security Council only, but on our everyday action to be more responsible citizens of an ever more global and interdependent family.

I thank you for your attention and for inviting me to be here with you tonight.