



INDIA
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Address

by

Dr. Manmohan Singh

Prime Minister of India

at

the 59th session of

the United Nations General Assembly

New York

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Mr. President,

Allow me to congratulate you on your election as President of the 59th Session. May I assure you of India's full support in ensuring its success.

As we gather here in the 60th year of the United Nations — we might perhaps pause to reflect on the fate of the ideas and ideals of the international community that animated its creation. The post-war generation had already become aware that the world which had emerged from the ashes of global war could no longer be a peaceful world unless the underlying forces of conflict were addressed by the entire community of nations as a collectivity. Nations united together to make the world a safer and more peaceful place, in which a free people could together pursue a destiny of shared prosperity.

Mr President,

The impulse behind the creation of global institutions nearly sixty years ago has become an even more pressing reality today. If we look around us, the single most defining characteristic of our contemporary world is the global, transnational character of the challenges we confront, whether these are in the realm of international security or development. Virtually every major issue that we face as nation states, has both a domestic as well as a transnational dimension. It is becoming increasingly apparent that unless we fashion a global response, based on consensus, to these challenges, we would not succeed in creating a world that manifests the ideals of the United Nations.

Terrorism is one such challenge for which many of us have paid an unacceptable price. We shall not forget that three years ago, it was this city that witnessed the single most horrendous terrorist act in human history. About three weeks ago, the world saw another brutal act of terror, in Russia, which took the lives of hundreds of innocent civilians, including young children. Terrorism exploits the technologies spawned by globalization, recruits its foot soldiers on ideologies of bigotry and hatred, and directly targets democracies. And yet it is a sad reality that international networks of terror appear to cooperate more effectively among themselves than the democratic nations that they target. We speak about cooperation, but seem hesitant to commit ourselves to a global offensive to root out terrorism, with the pooling of resources, exchange of information, sharing of intelligence, and the unambiguous unity of purpose required. This must change. We do have a global coalition against terrorism. We must now give it substance and credibility, avoiding selective approaches and political expediency.

Let us turn to other challenges we face today, such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. There is an increasing reliance on restrictive regimes and the use of punitive action to confront this threat to international peace and security. While India is opposed to proliferation and has an impeccable record in this respect, we believe that it is only a global consensus of willing nations that would ultimately prove to be more effective in this regard.

The Chemical Weapons Convention is a good model to follow in respect of other weapons of mass destruction including nuclear weapons. It is through representative institutions rather than exclusive clubs of privileged countries that we can address global threats posed by proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.

As far back as in 1988, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had outlined a series of specific steps in an Action Plan, whose central proposition remains valid – that progressive steps towards the elimination of weapons of mass destruction must be based on a balance of obligations between those who possess such weapons and those who do not. It is quite evident today that a global discourse is required for evolving a more cooperative and consensual international security order. India believes that this consensus must differentiate between States whose actions strengthen non-proliferation and those that weaken its objectives.

Let me turn to the central theme for the vast majority of UN members; the challenge of development and the eradication of poverty. Globalization has undoubtedly brought enhanced effectiveness and efficiency in economies, integrated market places, higher standards of living and a revolution in global connectivity. But there is also the phenomenon of widening economic disparities, both within and among countries. Connectivity also means that people are painfully aware—in real time—of how far and how fast they are falling behind in their relative conditions of living. Development today is no longer a function of domestic resources and national policies alone. It is a process that is integrally linked to the international economic environment.

The international community must find ways to contracting the circles of exclusion. We need to find innovative sources of financing and access to technologies that are necessary to assist those who are on the margins of globalization. Just as prosperity cannot be sustained by being walled in, poverty cannot be banished to some invisible periphery. Development must return to the centre of global discourse. We must evolve equitable and rule-based regimes to manage global trade, investment flows and movement of services.

Four years ago, at our Millennium Summit, we adopted ambitious global development goals, but have already fallen behind in their implementation.

While globalization has generated new challenges, it has also given us new technologies to deal with these challenges. The world faces looming pandemics such as HIV / AIDS, but it today possesses remedies and skills that can rid the world of this scourge. We face problems of environmental degradation in many parts of our planet, but we also have available safe and environment-friendly technologies. Many countries are beset by problems of hunger and malnutrition, but we possess modern techniques of food production and processing to make a hunger-free world a credible and realistic goal. Although our excessive dependence on hydrocarbons raises concerns about the long-term availability of energy, technology has made available environmentally sound alternatives. What we lack is a global concert and a mobilization of the international community to overcome these challenges.

Mr. President,

The experience of the decades since the inception of the United Nations demonstrates the great significance of democracy as an instrument for achieving both peace and prosperity. While it is gratifying that the frontiers of democracy have expanded dramatically in the last decade and a half, they still exclude significant numbers. Only a few months ago, in our 14th General Elections, India

The situation in Iraq causes great concern. The UN has a central role to play in erasing the discord of the recent past and in ensuring that the Iraqi people can soon exercise effective sovereignty, preserving the country's unity and territorial integrity. An end to the suffering of the Iraqi people and recognition of their aspirations should be the guiding objectives. Consistent with our long-standing ties of friendship with the Iraqi people, India will contribute to Iraq's humanitarian and economic reconstruction.

In the past three years, the international community has assisted Afghanistan in pulling back from the brink of chaos and chronic instability. We sincerely hope that the forthcoming Presidential elections and the subsequent Parliamentary elections will allow the Afghan people to express their will, free from interference and intimidation. India's assistance to Afghanistan's reconstruction will continue.

Relations between India and Pakistan have been a matter of attention for the international community. It is known that since January this year India and Pakistan have initiated a composite dialogue to resolve all issues, including Jammu and Kashmir. I reaffirm our determination to carry forward this dialogue to a purposeful and mutually acceptable conclusion.

In closing, Mr. President, I would like to reaffirm India's commitment to the principles that have brought us together in this Organization.

These principles retain their relevance and validity even while the global economy and the international political order pose new and very different challenges. All of us have to grow out of the comfort of the predictable, discard constraining habits of thought and move forward with confidence to meet the demands of the present and the future. Each of us has to be prepared to take on new obligations and larger responsibilities relevant to our times.

I deem it a privilege to say unhesitatingly that India is conscious of the responsibilities that lie ahead. I speak of an India on the move, on the cutting edge of economic, technological and developmental transformations. This is an India endowed with outstanding human resources, and we are putting in place policies which will respond to emerging and critical tasks. We have the capabilities and capacity to take these on, and to participate in the structuring of a just and dynamic world order. We are confident that in an inextricably interdependent world, our commitment to the common good, which this organization embodies, will be resolute.

In this, we are inspired by the vision of internationalism bequeathed to us by India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru – of a world order whose pillars are peace, harmony, cooperation and development. This vision needs to reanimate the collective wisdom of the world community for a new partnership to meet the unprecedented challenges we face.

Thank you.