



**Statement by H.E. Mr. Pranab Mukherjee
Defence Minister of India at the General Debate
Of the 61st UN General Assembly on September 27, 2006**



Your Excellency, Madame President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, let me join previous speakers in welcoming your election as the President of the 61st UN General Assembly. On India's behalf, I would like to assure you of our constructive support and our wholehearted commitment to work with you to achieve both the larger goals of the UN Charter and the more topical goals of the reform of this Organization that were set out in last year's World Summit Outcome Document.

Madame President,

The topic before us at this General Debate is "Implementing the Global Partnership for Development". It is difficult to contest its relevance or topicality. Today, whether we look at issues such as international trade, international financial mechanisms, methods to improve economic and social well-being, or even the various threats to peace and security that challenge our collective existence, one common theme that emerges is the lack of an effective and equitable global partnership. This is an imperative even for achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Madame President,

The important Annual Report of the Secretary General has highlighted several successes in moving ahead with UN reforms. During the last UNGA, a Central Emergency Response Fund, the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council were established and a Global Counter Terrorism Strategy agreed upon. We have also gradually moved forward on management and budgetary reforms. While these are certainly important and critical, if we are honest, we have to acknowledge that significant unfulfilled tasks and challenges lie ahead, particularly in unaddressed issues, including reform of the architecture of our multilateral bodies that oversee security, trade, financial flows and development. Without this reform, the discontents of globalization would only deepen. Without it, there cannot be substantially enhanced and assured resource and technology flows to developing countries, necessary for real economic transformation and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Madame President,

It is sometimes argued that private sector investment is today replacing the traditional reliance on aid and developmental assistance. While we appreciate the important role of private sector investment, it cannot replace public investment in developing countries whose absorptive capacities are often limited and where physical and social infrastructure is weak. ODA remains an important means to augment public investment in areas such as human capital development and rural infrastructure, which rarely attract private sector investment. This process of increasing the available pool of resources for investment in the social and economic infrastructure of developing countries can be promoted at one level, by developed countries, through expeditiously reaching the target of setting aside 0.7% of GDP for ODA. At another level, there is also a need to develop innovative sources of financing. We must evolve a broader understanding of ways to encourage least developed countries out of the debt trap by extension of debt-cancellation programmes, without insisting on conditionalities, such as encouraging privatization which, applied indiscriminately, may recreate the original difficulties that necessitated a recourse to debt in the first place.

The impasse in international trade negotiations is disappointing to say the least, considering the hopes raised after the Hong Kong Ministerial and at the G-8 Summit in St. Petersburg this July. Early resumption is desirable but adherence to the existing mandate is imperative – the mandate of the Doha Declaration, the July Framework and the Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration. When agriculture was brought into the ambit of negotiations at the creation of the WTO, the developing countries were given a clear understanding that trade

distorting agricultural subsidies would be phased out in a time bound manner. Minimizing the vulnerabilities of the poor farmers must be our collective priority. Demanding market access from developing countries, which displace low-income and subsistence farmers to satisfy commercial interests, cannot be supported. Proportionately lower overall tariff reduction commitments and operable and effective development instruments of Special Products and Special Safeguard Mechanism are the essential components of securing food security, livelihood security and rural development needs of developing countries. The overarching principle of special and differential treatment, therefore, remains a categorical imperative, and is the underlying basis of the position of developing countries.

In our view, there exists an overwhelming logic for giving the United Nations a role in providing direction to the comprehensive reform of the international financial and trading systems. These reforms must be aimed at building an international architecture that reflects the realities of the 21st century and is able to create an environment that effectively supports national efforts to eradicate poverty. The Millennium Development Goals have given hope to the poor and the underprivileged of the world and these goals are to be achieved by 2015. In this context, the World Bank must remain steadfast in its mission for 'a world free of poverty' and its strategy must remain embedded in the historical development-centric approach. The Outcome Document of last year's World Summit had emphasized that 'enhancing the voice and participation of developing countries in the Bretton Woods Institutions remains a continuous concern'. The bridging of this 'voice' deficit requires fundamental reforms in the quota structure, which are long overdue and absolutely necessary to enhance the credibility and legitimacy of the IMF. The quota reform has to begin with the revision of the formula, so as to reflect the relative economic strengths of countries in the 21st century. The UN should encourage that immediate steps are taken to initiate the second stage of IMF quota reform, involving a basic revision of the quota formula and subsequent increase of quotas for all under-represented countries. And all this must be done in a time-bound manner.

Madame President,

Change is the law of life. Acute dissatisfaction in many statements is the result of preventing institutions from changing. What is true in the economic field is equally true of the architecture of our international security system—as reflected in this unique Organization that is supposed to reflect the collective will of our world—which remains mired in the past. Recent tragic events in Lebanon, and the stasis in the peace process in the Middle East, have highlighted the growing failure of the institution designated by the Charter with primary responsibility for issues relating peace and security. There is wide acceptance that the Security Council can no longer be regarded as being reflective of the changed international environment that has emerged since the time of its

creation. The Security Council has not only to be more representative but also to be more effective if it is to be able to satisfactorily perform the role mandated to it by the Charter. At the same time, it has needlessly diverted its attention to issues and areas that go beyond its mandate. For instance, the inclusion of items on its Agenda that have nothing to do with peace and security represents an encroachment on the roles mandated to other UN bodies. In order to ensure that the international community exercises real ownership of the process of securing our world, it is essential that comprehensive reform of the Security Council is undertaken and that its membership is expanded in both permanent and non-permanent categories. It is no accident that the Secretary General's report refers to the enhancement of the legitimacy and the urgent need for reform to ensure relevance and credibility.

The revitalization of the General Assembly is intertwined with the reform of the Security Council, and it is no coincidence that its reform too has long been frustrated. A strengthened and more effective United Nations presumes a revitalized General Assembly that exercises its role and authority in the areas of responsibility assigned to it by the Charter. These include its effectively addressing topics such as international law and human rights, financial, budgetary and administrative matters, as well as the global economic architecture and important issues related to development.

Madame President,

I now turn to one of the most crucial issues of our times: the problem of terrorism. While this phenomenon has become increasingly global, our collective response to it has remained rather inadequate. The multiple ways in which terrorism challenges the core principles of humanity and the mandate of the United Nations are underlined by the outrages perpetrated in India over the last few months. Barely two months ago, in a single black day, more than 200 lives were lost and more than 1000 were injured by dastardly bombings in Mumbai and elsewhere in India. These and other such incidents of outrage were clearly designed to spread maximum terror among ordinary people. And ours is not the only country to be singled out by vicious and senseless acts of murder. A strong response to terrorism requires broad-based international cooperation denying the space available to terrorists, and increasing the capability of States to address terrorist threats. It requires sustained and specific cooperation by a variety of national, regional and global agencies.

Madame President,

We have joined in the adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy earlier this month, even though we would have ideally liked the United Nations to convey a far stronger message to counter terrorism. We

must collectively and unanimously reject the notion that any cause can justify terrorism. No cause can ever justify the targeted killing of innocent men, women and children. The international community must signal that it will no longer tolerate the actions of the sponsors and abettors of terrorism or of those who wilfully fail to prevent terrorists from utilising their territories. We hope that the Strategy would provide the impetus to unite the international community in its fight against terrorism via practical measures that facilitate cooperation by way of extradition, prosecution, information exchange, and capacity building.

While we have gone along with the Global Counter Terrorism Strategy, the Comprehensive Convention against International Terrorism, which remains a work in progress, would have provided the requisite legal framework upon which a counter-terrorism strategy could have been based. It cannot be beyond our collective ingenuity to reach an agreement on this Comprehensive Convention, even though we have missed the target of doing so in the 60th UN General Assembly. We must work together to finalize and adopt the Comprehensive Convention, at least during this session of the General Assembly.

Madame President,

The existence of nuclear weapons continues to threaten international peace and security. In our view, the best non-proliferation measure is universal disarmament and the international community needs to take immediate steps to eliminate the threat of use of nuclear weapons. We have to revive momentum for achieving what late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi called "a nuclear weapons free and non-violent world", to be achieved through negotiations in a time bound manner. India will be presenting a working paper at this session of the UNGA on the issue of nuclear disarmament on which we look forward to working with UN Member States.

In recent years, new dangers have emerged due to the link of proliferation of WMD related materials and technologies to non-state actors and terrorist groups. The international community needs to work together to meet these challenges. India's record in this regard is impeccable and we have instituted effective measures to ensure that technologies developed by us are not leaked in any way.

Madame President,

It is true that the developing countries bear the heaviest burden from pandemics, epidemics and chronic disease. The scourge of HIV/AIDS, Malaria, Avian Influenza and Tuberculosis seriously threaten the future of many developing countries by robbing them of their most productive segment of society - the youth - thereby affecting the future of these countries. An enhanced

global collaborative effort is called for to confront the proliferation of challenges affecting the lives of the majority of our citizens.

We also need to address the central issue of the special needs of the developing countries, especially in Africa and the vulnerable small states. On our part, we shall continue to expand our programme of South-South cooperation also through New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), through TEAM 9 – our special program for West African countries – and by means of the connectivity mission in Africa as well as assistance, capacity-building and technology transfer aimed at reducing the vulnerabilities of small states.

Madame President,

Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, who embodied our commitment to the UN ideals, said “in a world of incessant and feverish activity, men have little time to think, much less to consider ideals and objectives. Yet, how are we to act, even in the present, unless we know which way we are going and what our objectives are?” Confronted as we are by the globalization of threats and by the limitations of our international systems to address such challenges, the need for a comprehensive reform of the UN has never been more imperative. We need to enfranchise the UN to meet the challenges of our time by reinforcing its role and authority as the core of real multilateralism.

We look forward to working closely with other Member States, under your leadership, to press ahead with essential reforms at the UN and implement an effective global partnership for development that encompasses everyone and enables every individual to live a life of dignity in a clean, safe and healthy environment.

Thank you, Madame President.

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