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INTERVENCIÓN DEL
SEÑOR VICE-PRESIDENTE
DE LA
REPÚBLICA ORIENTAL DEL URUGUAY

Cr. DANILO ASTORI

- DEBATE GENERAL -

***66º PERÍODO DE SESIONES DE LA ASAMBLEA GENERAL
NACIONES UNIDAS***

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STATEMENT BY

H.E. Cr. DANILO ASTORI

VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE EASTERN REPUBLIC OF URUGUAY

- GENERAL DEBATE -

***66th SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
UNITED NATIONS***

New York, 26th September, 2011
(Check against delivery)

Mr. President of the General Assembly,
Heads of Delegation,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I come to speak before this Assembly representing a country that is celebrating the 200th anniversary of an endeavor that led to its inception as an independent State. A country that holds its aspiration intact to continue providing its long-standing tradition of respect to the principles of International Law and its permanent commitment with the cause of peace and the peaceful coexistence among nations. Uruguay takes pride in its vocation of service to the international community, promoting dialogue, understanding, and the endless search for consensus, as the most appropriate ways of interaction among its members.

The full force of the principles of international law and the strengthening of multilateralism, embodied by this organization as its maximum expression, are the guiding star of our international actions. Not only are they a moral imperative, but a legal obligation for all States, as they are enshrined in the United Nations Charter since its creation, at an occasion when my country had the honor to participate reaffirming its vocation, already expressed in the older days of the League of Nations, of which it had also been an active member.

Bearing these principles in mind, this year we recognized and welcomed the 193rd member of this Organization, the Republic of South Sudan. Likewise, in March we recognized the State of Palestine. We believe that all necessary conditions exist for this recognition to become universal and that the two-State solution, supported by Uruguay since 1947, to become effective, reaching a solution that reaffirms the right of Israel and Palestine to coexist in peace within secured and recognized borders, in a renewed cooperative environment and free from any threat or action that might violate peace.

The Palestinian People have the legitimate and full right to constitute itself as a State. But the Jewish People also have the undeniable right to live in peace, inhabiting a safe country, free of terrorist attacks, which Uruguay has always rejected and condemned.

Uruguay is proud to have made a decisive contribution to the creation of the State of Israel, whose hard-working people have lived up to the historic vision of the men and women who made its creation possible. We are convinced that the time has come for the Palestinian people to be able to show the world its decisive contribution to peace, development and international cooperation.

Once more, faithful to our adherence to international law, we must express our outmost rejection to coercive measures that violate the principles of the United Nations Charter, such as the economic, trade and financial blockade imposed by the United States against Cuba, a unilateral measure that not only infringes upon the Charter but also on international law, as well as the peaceful settlement of disputes, one of the most important principles of my country's foreign policy.

We reject all sort of violence, and the threat or use of illegal force, including terrorism, an unjust and unjustified crime, a cruel scourge that 10 years ago showed one of its most painful faces here, in New York City. Our heart goes to the victims' families and the American people, as well as our wish and commitment to making sure that this kind of acts will never happen again on this soil or anywhere else in the world.

Mr. President,

If the principles of international law are our guide, the promotion and protection of human rights and international humanitarian law are also among the priorities of the Uruguayan State in the field

of foreign policy; they represent the country's political and institutional heritage, of a profound democracy and a solid rule of law.

In this sense, allow me to express our gratitude for having chosen Uruguay to Chair the Human Rights Council. We will strive to honor this vote of confidence by working every day in strengthening the multilateral system of protection and promotion of human rights.

Uruguay has an outstanding record in this area, not only because it is one of the countries that has adhered to the widest array of conventions, but also because it made specific contributions in fields as diverse as the defense of the rights of the child; mainstreaming a gender perspective into all United Nations system policies and programs, which allowed to establish and implement the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and promoting fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of expression, among others.

During the course of its mandate, our country intends to promote a new culture of dialogue on Human Rights. A practice which favors cooperation of the countries with the system, but also of the system with those countries that need assistance to improve their internal situation with regards to Human Rights. We would also like to improve the procedures and favor the application of the instruments that the Council has in a non selective manner and avoiding double standards. Also to strengthen the role of the High Commissioner of the U.N. for Human Rights, a key factor in the promotion and protection mechanisms, providing the necessary resources to efficiently conduct the different mandates that the Member States are increasingly assigning. To achieve all these goals it will be critical to count on the support from all the countries here represented.

Likewise, Uruguay is not indifferent to armed conflict situations. This is why we have worked firmly, and will keep doing so, to preserve and strengthen the international humanitarian law standards that are applicable to such cases.

In keeping with this, we understand we cannot ignore mass atrocities such as genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. Always keeping in mind the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other States, a principle that our country and region holds dear, we acknowledge the State's primary responsibility to protect its population, as well as the importance of fostering cooperation with States that might require international assistance to fulfill this obligation; the aim is not to weaken their sovereignty but to strengthen it.

Mr. President,

A few months ago we welcomed the United Nations Secretary-General to our country, and we congratulated him again on his reelection, which Uruguay promoted from the very beginning in an enthusiastic manner. Mr. Ban Ki-moon expressed the recognition of the international community to one of the most relevant aspects of our foreign policy in the last decades: an unwavering and committed participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations. With approximately 30% of its operational defense forces devoted to these operations, Uruguay is the main troop contributor as a proportion of its population, and ranks 10th in absolute terms; Uruguay offers the United Nations valuable human and material resources for an activity that is the flagship of this Organization, dealing with scenarios and mandates that are increasingly complex.

Given the complexity of current international affairs, together we have begun a profound discussion on the United Nations peacekeeping system. We remain convinced that the sustainability of these missions will be impossible unless we seriously reconsider the resources needed for its correct operation and update the conditions offered by the system to the United Nations, both in terms of equipment and human resources.

Today, peacekeeping operations represent the most visible face of the United Nations; therefore, it is the aspect that exposes it the most to the international scrutiny, many times for good and a few others for bad.

Uruguay reaffirms its commitment to peacekeeping operations and to the strictest enforcement of mandates and standards regulating the conduct of field personnel. For this reason, in shaming and unacceptable cases of misconduct, such as the one carried out by five members of our military in Haiti, where since the beginning of MINUSTAH we have contributed several thousand men and women, some of whom have offered their lives, to help this brother country to consolidate peace and stability, we have not hesitated in acting with the utmost severity and rigor as the circumstances demand. Today, Military Justice has prosecuted the five individuals accused with prison for committing military faults, and the case has been passed on to the Civil Justice system (criminal case). Thus, within the framework of the respect of due process, with utmost transparency and in cooperation with the relevant entities of this Organization, we will stop at nothing to uncover the truth and sanction those responsible.

Mr. President,

Our commitment to international peace and security has also driven our country to play an active role in the field of disarmament.

Together with many other countries, Uruguay has firmly promoted all those initiatives aimed at eliminating nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, as well as those defending the control and reduction of conventional weapons, which every year cause thousands of innocent civilian casualties.

As a member of the Tlatelolco Treaty, by virtue of which Latin America and the Caribbean became the first area free from nuclear weapons, Uruguay has decisively contributed to strengthening both the regional regime and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, considered to be the corner stone of disarmament and non proliferation. Uruguay has adhered fully to the five items mentioned by the United Nations Secretary General. We believe the international community must make the most of this cumulative progress to advance firmly toward a world free from nuclear weapons.

Mr. President,

The topic of this year's debate is related to the agenda of international peace and security. Before dealing with it, we must express our satisfaction for having selected a topic that underlines the pressing need to strengthen the political capacities of United Nations. Prevention and mediation, carried out in a professional and accurate manner, can save thousands of human lives, millions of dollars in material damages, lost generations, growing resentment, despair and a vicious circle of violence that can only be broken sustainably by reconciliation.

This is why we welcome your efforts and those made by your country and many other nations to strengthen the role of mediation and preventive diplomacy as a mechanism for dispute settlement; these efforts can be carried out in several levels. There can be no doubt that the United Nations is the natural place given its intrinsic legitimacy and impartiality. However, it cannot be ignored that in practice this must be complemented by the actions of regional entities and even countries acting individually, which can be very effective, as shown in several examples.

Based on the above, and as a country that has traditionally and historically has promoted dialog and understanding, Uruguay supports a larger investment of efforts and resources in the development of these activities.

Besides strengthening the above capacities, facing global issues requires developing a community spirit, which needs more than just aggregating individual political wills. A systemic approach is fundamental.

Climate change is probably one of the most evident examples of the most urgent global challenges. It is essential to start enforcing immediately adaptation and mitigation measures for its adverse effects.

Lacking an adequate environment will limit the effect of any other development effort. We are aware that necessary measures demand introducing changes in production schemes and seriously compromise resource distribution within our countries.

The Uruguayan Government strongly supports the climate change's negotiation in the context of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. We want to make the most of this occasion to make a call to step up the efforts so that the next Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change consolidates a second stage of commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Furthermore, it is essential that we make progress in the field of the negotiations on chemicals, and specially, in the context of the current exercise in the area of mercury. The sensibility and meaning of this matter, which has a great impact in the environment, requires the commitment of all our countries in order to successfully conclude the current negotiations.

Another priority of our country in this area is the particular situation of agriculture in the context of the climate change phenomenon. This sector, from which a huge number of developing countries depend, it is especially exposed to the negative consequences of climate change. For that reason, it is necessary that agriculture has an especial chapter in the framework of the UNFCCC negotiations.

Mr. President,

New balances between power centers, the rise of new States, intra-State conflicts calling for a reformulation of peace missions, global threats such as climate change or terrorism, the establishment of international criminal justice, profound political changes in many countries ...There is no doubt that this is a different world! But this change does not just affect political and security affairs. World economy and development issues are also going through huge transformations. Developed countries are facing serious difficulties to recover from a deep economic crisis, emergent economies are playing a growing role in setting the direction of world economy, the need to establish new regulations and global agreements has become more than apparent in recent years. We are entering a new era in international economic relations.

In this context, we must remember that peace and stability cannot be achieved without sustainable development. This year the United Nations have taken very significant steps in acknowledging the link between security and development, a link that is not born from political declarations, but from empirical evidence, a link that can only be achieved through capacity building at the national level.

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Río + 20) offers us a unique opportunity to renew the will to achieve the goals and commitments contained in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the World Summit for Sustainable Development, and Agenda 21. The quest for long-term development must be based on an integral development concept that is able to take into account its economic, social and environmental dimension.

We understand it is essential that Río + 20 reaches tangible results that benefit our citizens. For this to happen, it is essential to approach the issues related to technology transfer, technical training, and financing for developing countries.

Mr. President,

Food security is a fundamental component of Uruguay's development agenda, as well as one of its national priorities. We remain convinced that the current critical situation is caused by structural causes that must be resolved collectively and urgently.

We are particularly concerned by the lack of progress in the negotiations of the Doha Round of WTO. This ambitious exercise that has, as one of its objectives, the reduction or elimination of trade distortions, will promote, through the strengthening of trade, the development of the most disadvantaged countries of the world.

It is essential to eliminate agricultural subsidies. Countries that until a few decades ago were self-sufficient for their food needs now need to import a large deal of what they consume, and they do so from countries which subsidize their agricultural production. The artificial situation of the low agriculture export prices, sustained for decades by some countries through subsidies and other trade distorting measures and limitations of market access, are mainly the responsible of the food security problems. Stimulating investment to increase production and improve productivity, a successful conclusion of the Doha Round, as well as the transfer of adequate technology to developing countries, capable of achieving efficient agricultural economies, are fundamental aspects to obtain food security.

As a middle-income country, Uruguay still faces serious development challenges, particularly regarding eradicating poverty, diversifying production, introducing technological innovation and promoting renewable energy, just to mention a few. The advances achieved after much effort must be consolidated and to this end it is vital to keep counting on the support of the international community, and of the United Nations system in particular. I must reiterate the urgent need to discuss a "new cooperation modality or scheme" that takes into account the specific development needs characteristic to middle-income countries such as Uruguay.

Mr. President,

Uruguay is committed to the reform process of the Organization and, through the Global Governance Group (3G), has maintained a proactive attitude in order to promote a strong bond between the United Nations and informal discussion forums that are not included in the system.

But it is necessary to lead by example. This is why we believe that improving global governance is first a domestic issue, within the United Nations system, and in this sense, my country is very satisfied with the results obtained in the pilot program of Delivering as One, whose next intergovernmental conference will be held next November in Montevideo.

Based on the above, but above all because of its firm commitment to the cause of peace and multilateralism, Uruguay seeks to hold a seat as a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 2016-2017, for the second time in the last 66 years, after having done so in 1965-1966.

In conclusion, Mr. President,

Consolidating multilateralism is one of the most ambitious international challenges. Multiple existing crises demand immediate response and action. The rise of new informal forums with a limited number of members but a growing influence in international governance requires an additional collective effort to strengthen the role of the United Nations as a political discussion forum where all States are able to participate in decision-making. A permanent effort is required to combine efficacy with legitimacy, a challenge that has become increasingly more significant as globalization deepens. We need a new United Nations Organization for the XXI century. The first decade of the century has already run its course. History is harsh with those who cannot adapt to its

challenges, and its consequences are bitter. At the United Nations we are responsible to put forward appropriate answers to the international community. We still have time to do it.

Thank you very much.
