



MISSIÓ PERMANENT
DEL PRINCIPAT D'ANDORRA
A LES NACIONS UNIDES

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73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly

—speech by the Head of the Andorran Government, Antoni Martí Petit—

New York, 28th September 2018

Madam President,

Mr. Secretary-General,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For the people of Andorra, 2018 is a year of celebration in two ways: globally and locally. On the 28th of July, the Principality of Andorra celebrated 25 years since its entry into the United Nations; and on the 10th of December, it will be 70 years since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

These two events have, as I have already mentioned, a double meaning: a global one and a local one. What some people call 'glocal'. In fact, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights has a global dimension for Andorra, as well as the other countries that make up the international community. But it also has great local roots; because fundamental rights have been respected in Andorra since time immemorial; therefore, it is no wonder that the Andorran Constitution expressly states that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is in force in Andorra.

This is why our country has wanted to take an active part in the 'Stand Up for Human Rights' campaign, emphasising the dissemination of the important rights in the education area. The High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet —with whom I have had the honour of coinciding in the Ibero-American community over recent years— knows that she may count on Andorra for the Declaration made on the 10th of December 1948 to remain as valid and strong as ever.

Because, as I have already said, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was already part of Andorran positive law even before Andorra became part of the United Nations.

Now I would ask you to think back to what the world was like 25 years ago, when Andorra joined this Organisation as a full member. 1993 was a time of hope for everyone: the fall of the Iron Curtain and the end of the Cold War gave way to a wave of unprecedented democratisation. Never had so many people in the world lived under democracy as during the final years of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. Human rights were consolidated, economies grew and inequalities were gradually reducing. They were years of peace, cooperation and multilateralism; of respect, understanding and dialogue between cultures and religions; and around us, on the old continent, they were years of optimism in a long, fruitful process of European construction.

Today, we all remember that period with some nostalgia. We were able to see it this summer, during the meaningful homages paid to the Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who did so much for peace and multilateralism at the end of the last century and beginning of this millennium. And we have just seen it this week, during the Peace Summit dedicated to Nelson Mandela, who was, without a doubt, one of the key characters of that historic moment.

25 years on, many of the hopes of 1993 have become blurred and some of the milestones reached have taken us backwards.

The prestigious non-governmental organisation Freedom House has noted —year after year— a constant decline in world democracy since 2006. In its last report, we read that in 2017, only 4 out of every 10 people live in free countries.

This slow decline in democratic regimes has been accompanied by an increase in inequality, intolerance and extremism. Even in established democracies, we increasingly hear the voices of people who have put up with discrimination in silence for many years: women, disabled people, victims of sexual abuse or of any kind, and so on. All this shows us that our optimism 25 years ago was rather naive.

However, despite all the deceptions and despite all the faults, all we can do is to continue defending the international order that was created by the United Nations, just after the Second World War.

Because it is an order that is based on three principles that are as elemental as they are universal: all of us have the same rights; what affects all of us must be decided by all of us; any conflict must be solved peacefully and lawfully. When I say “all of us” I refer to everybody, individually, within a representative democracy; and also to all the countries, on an equal footing, at this General Assembly.

Representative democracy and multilateralism are the result of common values and, therefore, it is not surprising that they have a crisis at the same time.

The way I see it, democratic, multilateral order is threatened by two extremes: populism and technocracy. In the face of complex problems, populism proposes solutions that are simple but that are not really solutions, because they end up creating new problems and questioning democratic principles and values. Technocracy, in the face of complex problems, proposes solutions that are as complex as they are elitist. Solutions that are not inclusive, that generate inequality and that leave many people aside.

Populism is fed on the deception of these people who have been left aside and who have suffered from exclusion, lack of understanding and inequality.

In recent years, we have said time and time again that the world is struggling between opening up and closing down, between multilateralism and unilateralism, between cooperation and protectionism. But perhaps the mistake lies in wishing to present things in this way. All too often, defenders of multilateral order and of globalisation believe that we have not made any errors and that it is the other people who are mistaken. Without seeing that globalisation has created antibodies; and that not all the antibodies are harmful, because perhaps not every kind of globalisation is good.

In the face of this dialectic between opening up and closing down, we should not seek confrontation but look for balances. There needs to be a balance between cosmopolitanism and being deeply rooted, because there are good things in both areas.

We have commented on the risk of protectionism, populism and closing down far too often without realising that there is also another risk: that of elitist globalisation which is inhuman and not very inclusive, if at all.

Very often the solutions we have found to major international questions —whether they are geopolitical, economic or social— are solutions that do not consider people and that go against one of the slogans of the United Nations, the imperative “Leaving no one behind”.

Therefore, I view the theme chosen by the president of this General Assembly, Maria Fernanda Espinosa —with whom we also share the Ibero-American community— very positively: “Making the United Nations relevant to all people” and this means constructing “peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies”.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The action of the United Nations, and by extension of the entire international community, must be inclusive and focused on the real problems of people. Because, if this were not the case, we would be persevering with our mistakes: we would reinforce the image of international institutions that are difficult to understand and far removed from people, and we would be opening the door to populism even wider.

This is why Andorra wants to participate in a particularly active way in promoting and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda. These objectives are focused on specific, tangible needs of the world population; they are large global objectives that have local applications and impacts; and, if they are obtained, they will reinforce the bonds that are so necessary between people and institutions.

Andorra presented the first Voluntary National Review on the Sustainable Development Goals at the High-level Political Forum of the ECOSOC last July. As explained in the review, our government has been working for some time classifying the different political actions into the 17 sustainable development goals of the 2030 Agenda. It has also set up a campaign to involve the education community, civil society and private companies in promoting and achieving the various goals. This is a way of opening up and bringing the United Nations and its agenda closer to the people.

In our opinion, innovation and the new technologies play a very important role in achieving the sustainable development goals. This is why we need a transversal alliance between the public and the private sectors to make the technological advances available to the 2030 Agenda.

We have assessed our level of compliance with six sustainable development goals linked to the environment: water and sanitation; clean, accessible energy; sustainable cities; responsible consumption and production; protecting life on Earth and combating the climate change. Various actions introduced by the government in recent years follow the lines to meet these goals: the permanent improvement of water and air quality; a complete plan of energy transition that has enabled us to reduce our dependence on the exterior and to promote renewable energy; direct grants for renewing buildings using energy efficient criteria and so on. All these actions are aimed at complying with the 2030 Agenda.

Andorra has also placed an emphasis on two more goals: measures to combat the climate change and quality education. Because these are two things with which the Andorran society identifies in a transversal way.

Therefore, we vindicate the validity of the Agreement on Climate Change that many countries signed here, in New York, in April 2016; and we insist that the international community must comply with the agreements and commitments made in Paris in December 2015. We reiterated this in Paris last December, during the One Planet Summit, promoted by the Secretary-General and by the president of the French Republic and Co-Prince of Andorra, Emmanuel Macron.

Andorra is working to fulfil the commitments of the Paris Agreement and strongly encourages the rest of the international community to do the same.

As far as quality education is concerned, Andorra is proud of having a rich, diverse, integrating education system that is available to all citizens. A system in which families can opt for Andorran, Spanish or French education and one which prepares our young people to become citizens of a global world, deeply rooted in their own country and own identity.

This is perhaps why a great deal of Andorran international cooperation effort focuses on the area of education. Several Andorran non-governmental organisations —with the financial support of the government— are carrying out projects to promote training and

opportunities for street children in Bolivia, to educate young girls in Honduras and to provide schooling for poor children in Madagascar.

Your Excellencies,

When choosing the theme for this General Assembly, our president talks to us about leadership and shared responsibilities: “Global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies.”

This would seem to me to be a key matter: If we allow the action of the United Nations, and by extension of the entire international community, to move away from people’s real needs, we would be losing leadership.

In the face of the increase in populism and extremism, political leaders often feel they are misunderstood. However misunderstood leaders do not exist; because a misunderstood leader is not a leader. A leader who does not connect with the people is not a leader.

The United Nations cannot afford the luxury of disconnecting from the problems, needs, expectations and hopes of the citizens of this globalised world. Therefore, Andorra offers support to the plans to reform the architecture of the United Nations that are being carried out by Secretary-General Guterres and his team. A more efficient management of resources is highly necessary; particularly a management focused on people.

Madam President,

Mr. Secretary-General,

Friends of the international community,

Please allow me, in this final part of my speech, to make a short personal comment. Seven and a half years ago I took on the responsibility of leading the government of the Principality of Andorra. A responsibility that the ballot boxes gave me again in March 2015. Therefore, this will be the last time that I take part in a United Nations General Assembly.

In Andorra, the men and women of my generation started in politics coinciding with the approval of the 1993 Constitution and with the recognition of our country as a full member of the international community. I was elected a member of Parliament the same year that Andorra became a part of the United Nations.

Therefore, I am a child of that time of optimism that I mentioned at the beginning. Of those years in which democracy was spreading, economies were growing and multilateral institutions were strengthening. However, it was up to me and the people of my generation to take on full responsibilities to govern in a time of crisis; of economic crisis, of social crisis and of a crisis in values, at a time when what we believed to be solid and resistant was proving to be fragile and unstable.

Over time, we have got used to living with this awareness of fragility and instability. When all is said and done, maybe it is not so bad. Our predecessors, the old people of Andorra, were very aware of the fragility of the balances on which our very old institutions stand.

If I compare it with the spirit of optimism of 25 years ago, the symbol of our times, of this current moment, is precisely this awareness of fragility: of the economy, the institutions, the worldwide geopolitical order, the environment, of the planet as a whole. Everything seems to be much more fragile, in much greater danger.

From this awareness of fragility we have found the strength to undertake actions that had been sitting on the table for years, to make reforms that had been outstanding for decades: to have a more open, transparent and cooperative economy; to construct a more inclusive and integrating society; to find sustainable models of growth; and to preserve the institutions and values we had been handed down through history, adapting them and making them useful for today's people.

Out of necessity we have made virtue; out of weakness we have found strength. So that the younger generations may take the reins of their times with the same optimism we had 25 years ago.

We must work right through to the last moment so that our deceptions become their hope; so that from our mistakes they find the ability to prevent them from happening again; and so that our good choices are the foundations on which they can continue to build peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies.

And that all of us —the older generations and the younger ones— should always be aware that everything that happens in the global area has local repercussions; and that all the actions that we do on a local basis contribute to shaping the global society.

A global society in which everybody feels that they are listened to and included.

A global society to which Andorra —from its smallness, but also from the serenity of centuries of peaceful existence— is fully committed. The Secretary-General, the president of this 73rd General Assembly and all our friends in the international community know this.

Politicians move on, countries and institutions remain; and I'm sure that in the future you will continue to count on the Principality of Andorra to construct a fairer, safer world.

Thank you very much.