



BRAZIL

Opening of the General Debate of the 71st Session of the General Assembly

Statement by H.E. Michel Temer

President of the Federative Republic of Brazil

20 September 2016

(Please check against delivery)

Mr Peter Thomson, President of the United Nations General Assembly,
Mr Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Heads of State, Government and delegations,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Brazil brings to the United Nations its vocation of openness to the world. Ours is a country that was built by the force of diversity. We believe in the power of dialogue. We diligently uphold the principles governing this Organization. These principles are more necessary than ever before.

Today's world is marked by uncertainty and instability.

The international system is experiencing a deficit of order. Reality evolved faster than our collective capacity to deal with it. From regional conflicts to violent fundamentalism, we confront threats, both old and new, that we failed to contain. Faced with the tragedy of refugees or the resurgence of terrorism, we cannot avoid a sense of perplexity.

Hotbeds of tension show no sign of dissipating. Political near-paralysis leads to prolonged and unresolved wars. The system's inability to react to conflicts exacerbates this cycle of destruction.

The social vulnerability of many, in many countries, is exploited by narratives of fear and entrenchment. Xenophobia has returned. Extreme forms of nationalism are gaining ground. Across all continents, various manifestations of demagoguery bring serious risks.

Even in the realm of the economy, the world lacks regulations to mitigate the asymmetries of globalization. Many yield to the facile solution of protectionism.

We must not recoil before this world. On the contrary, we must unite to transform it through diplomacy – a diplomacy that is balanced, yet firm; sober, yet determined; a diplomacy with both feet on the ground, but with a thirst for change.

This is how Brazil works in our region and beyond, as a country that pursues its interests without giving up its principles.

Mr President, we want for the world what we want for Brazil: peace, sustainable development and respect for human rights. These are the values and aspirations of our society. These are the values and aspirations that guide us internationally.

We want a world where right prevails over might.

We want rules that reflect the diversity of the concert of nations.

We want a UN that delivers results and is able to face the great challenges of our time.

Our discussions and negotiations must not be confined to these rooms and corridors. They must also be projected into the markets of Kabul, the streets of Paris, the ruins of Aleppo. The United Nations cannot merely amount to an observation post for the condemnation of global scourges. It should be a source of effective solutions.

Those who sow conflict have reinvented themselves. Multilateral institutions have yet to do so.

For decades Brazil has been warning that it is vital to make the structures of global governance more representative, for many of them have become aged and disconnected from reality. The UN Security Council must be reformed. We will continue to collaborate to overcome the impasse on this issue.

Mr President,

Manifold challenges transcend national borders. Among them is drugs and weapons trafficking, which is felt in our cities, in our schools, and in our families. Fighting organised crime requires us to work hand in hand. The safety of our citizens depends on the quality of our collective action.

The war in Syria continues to engender unacceptable suffering, with women and children as the main victims. Reaching a political solution is urgent. We call on parties to respect the agreements endorsed by the Security Council and to ensure humanitarian access to the civilian population.

We are also concerned by the lack of prospects for peace between Israel and Palestine. Brazil supports a solution based on two states living in peaceful coexistence within mutually agreed and internationally recognised borders. It is our common responsibility to give new impetus to the negotiating process.

Another reason for concern is the lack of progress in the agenda of nuclear disarmament. Today, there are more than 15,000 nuclear weapons in the world. That amounts to more than 15,000 threats to international peace and security.

The most recent nuclear test in the Korean Peninsula is a reminder of the danger that nuclear proliferation also poses. Brazil can speak with the authority of a country where the use of nuclear energy exclusively for peaceful purposes is an obligation enshrined in the Constitution.

Yet, not all news is bad. There are examples – already mentioned on different occasions – of what can be accomplished through dialogue.

We celebrate that diplomacy has prevailed in the Iranian nuclear issue, and encourage full compliance with the agreements reached.

The peace accord between the Colombian government and FARC puts an end to the last armed conflict in our continent. I congratulate President Juan Manuel Santos and all Colombians for this achievement. Brazil stands ready to contribute to peace in Colombia.

The reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States shows that there are no eternal antagonisms, nor unbreakable deadlocks. We hope this *rapprochement* may bring progress to the region as a whole, also in the economic and commercial areas. The reestablishment of relations should be followed by the end of the economic embargo against Cuba.

This year, Brazil and Argentina celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials. The Agency is the world's only bi-national organization responsible for applying nuclear safeguards. As Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has stated, the Agency is an inspiration for regional and global efforts towards the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Mr. President,

Confidence-building between Brazilians and Argentineans in the nuclear area is part of the inception of our integration experience, and of the foundation of projects like MERCOSUL. For Brazil, Latin-American integration is the expression of a constitutional principle and a permanent foreign policy priority.

Governments of different political inclinations coexist in our region. This is natural and sound. What is essential is that there continues to be mutual respect and that we work towards basic common objectives, such as economic growth, social progress, security and freedom for all citizens.

These are the objectives that guide the presence of the United Nations in Haiti. Since 2004, Brazil leads the military component of MINUSTAH and has already sent to that Caribbean country more than 33,000 contingents. We trust that the UN presence in the field will be focusing more in development and institutional strengthening.

Brazil's neighborhood also includes our brothers and sisters from Africa, to whom we are tied by the Atlantic Ocean and by a long History. This year, we will host the Summit of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries. Out of the Community's nine members, six are Africans. Brazil looks towards Africa with friendship and respect, ready to undertake projects that will unite us even more.

Mr. President,

Development is more than just an objective; it is an imperative. A developed society is one where all have access to good quality public services in education, health, transportation, security. One where equal opportunity is assured. One where access to decent work is not a privilege for a few. In a nutshell, development is dignity – and the dignity of the human being is one of the principles of the Brazilian State, as laid down in Article I of our Constitution.

The 2030 Agenda is the greatest United Nations endeavour in favour of development. Turning it into reality will require more than the sum of national efforts. Supporting developing countries will be crucial to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and Targets.

Prosperity and well-being today should not impair the future of mankind. Economic growth should be socially balanced and environmentally friendly. We live in the same Planet. There is no plan B. We must take ambitious measures under the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

Tomorrow, I will deposit Brazil's instrument of ratification of the Paris Agreement on climate change. As the world's most biodiverse country and displaying one of the world's cleanest energy matrices, Brazil is an environment powerhouse with an uncompromising commitment to the environment.

Development also depends on trade. In periods of economic crisis, protectionism is on the rise. It must be curbed. Protectionism is a perverse barrier to development. It subtracts jobs and makes men, women and families around the world – including in Brazil – fall victim to unemployment and despair.

The multilateral trading system is part of the fight against this evil. Ending protectionism in agriculture is particularly important for development. We cannot keep

backtracking on the implementation of WTO commitments in agriculture any longer. It is urgent to prevent sanitary and phytosanitary measures from serving protectionist purposes. It is urgent to discipline subsidies and other distortive domestic support policies in the agricultural sector.

Home to a modern, diversified and competitive agriculture, Brazil contributes to food security. We produce for ourselves and we help to feed the world.

Mr. President,

The full enjoyment of human rights remains an unaccomplished aspiration in today's world.

Each human being has the right to live freely, according to one's own beliefs and convictions. Such fundamental liberty, however, is disrespected everyday. Persecutions, political detentions and other arbitrary acts remain recurrent in many quarters.

We must also turn our eyes to minorities and other more vulnerable segments of our societies. This is what Brazil has done, by means of cash transfer programs and better access to housing and education, including financing for students from poor families. By the same token, we have upheld gender equality, as foreseen in our Constitution. The rights of everyone must be respected.

Refugees and migrants are often victims of situations of violation of human rights. They are victims of poverty, of war, of political repression. The High Level Meeting held yesterday shed light on several aspects of this problem.

Brazil is the work of immigrants, men and women from all continents. We vehemently reject all forms of racism, xenophobia and other expressions of intolerance. To the extent of our capacities, we give shelter to refugees and migrants, as I had the chance to highlight during the meeting yesterday.

In a world that remains marked by hatred and sectarianism, the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games of Rio proved that nations can come together in an atmosphere of peace and harmony. For the first time ever, a delegation of refugees competed in the Games. Through sport, we can further peace, fight against exclusion and combat prejudice.

Mr. President,

I bring to the United Nations, in sum, a message of uncompromising commitment with democracy.

Brazil experienced a long and complex process – conducted and with rules established by the Brazilian National Congress and by the Supreme Court - which led to an impeachment. Such a process took place in absolute respect to the constitutional order. Impeaching a President is certainly not a trivial matter in a democratic regime. But there is no democracy without rule of law – without rules applicable to all, including the most powerful. This is what Brazil is showing the world.

And this is being done in the midst of a cleansing process of its political system. We have an independent Judiciary Branch, an active Public Prosecution Office, and Executive and Legislative bodies that do their jobs. The wills of individuals do not prevail over the strength of institutions, nor over the watchful eye of a plural society and a press that is completely free.

Our task now is to resume economic growth and to bring millions of lost jobs back to Brazilian workers. We are clear that the way forward is to take the path of fiscal responsibility and social responsibility. Confidence is being restored, and a more prosperous horizon begins to take shape.

Our development program contemplates, in particular, partnerships in investments, trade and science and technology. For this, our relations with countries from every continent will be critical.

Mr. President,

I do not wish to conclude this intervention without referring to our Secretary-General, who will soon be leaving office. Ban Ki-moon spent the last ten years in tireless pursuit of peace, development and human rights. Rest assured, Mr. Secretary-General, that you have earned our appreciation and gratitude.

Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In this second decade of the twenty-first century, we can no longer doubt that our challenges are global. There is no place for isolationism. We have a common destiny.

The United Nations is where we come closest to the universal ideal that drives us.

Sixty years ago, my fellow countryman Oswaldo Aranha stated from this rostrum that “even in this troubled world of ours, no-one wishes to see the doors of this house closed”. As he warned, without the United Nations, “the shadows of war would definitively and irrevocably obscure the hopes of humankind”.

In this assembly of nations we nurture our hope. Hope that stems from dialogue, understanding and respect. Respect to others, to ourselves, to our children and grandchildren.

Thank you.