



THE WORLD FOOD CRISIS:

An opportunity to reinforce partnerships towards the achievement of the MDGs

Address by His Excellency Armando Emílio Guebuza, President of the Republic of Mozambique, on the occasion of the General Debate of the 63rd session of the United Nations General Assembly Session, under the topic "The Impact of the Global Food Crisis on Poverty and World Starvation", as well as the need for the democratization of the United Nations

New York, September 24th, 2008

Mr. President,

We would like to join previous speakers in congratulating you for your election to preside over the sixty-third session of the United Nations General Assembly. We are confident that under your wise and diligent leadership, our deliberations will be successful. We take this opportunity to assure you of our full collaboration, and wish you success in the discharge of your important responsibilities.

We wish to express our gratitude to your predecessor, Srgjam Kerim, of Macedonia, for his endeavors, pragmatism and dynamism, while conducting the proceedings of the sixty-second Session.

Furthermore, we reiterate our appreciation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, for his engagement in the quest for peace, justice, and solutions for the various challenges faced by the humanity.

Mr. President,

We have witnessed the rise of new and complex challenges. Among them is the food crisis - one of our main concerns due to its direct, immediate impact on the life of our peoples. The origin of this crisis may be linked to factors such as:

- ❖ Climate change, and subsequent irregular rain causing an impact on the agricultural productivity;
- ❖ Desertification of vast areas and droughts around the planet;
- ❖ An increased demand for cereals;
- ❖ Rise of oil prices and their impact on the prices of transportation and other products such as agricultural raw materials;
- ❖ The impact of trade liberalization and agriculture subsidies in developed countries, which leads to a gradual agriculture decline in developing countries; and
- ❖ The distortion of cereal prices across the globe.

Once the causes of the crisis have been identified, it is now up to the international community to implement relevant and necessary solutions in a consonant and vigorous manner. It is in this process that the crisis can be transformed into an opportunity to boost international partnerships and develop our countries and peoples.

In this context, it is important that the international cooperation stimulates the revival of productivity to farmers in developing countries, thus contributing to the speediest transformation of their current subsistence farming into commercial agriculture. This includes an improved access to better seeds, to fertilizers and pesticides, and investments in infrastructures to make markets accessible, as well as water management. Accordingly, we reiterate the need to implement the pertinent recommendations set forth at the Conference of the Least Developed Countries on the "*Rules of World Trade Organization and the Food Crisis*". Likewise, we call for the support to regional efforts such as the

“Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme” (CAADP)”, in the framework of NEPAD, and the on-going work under the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), with a view to find a collective response to mitigate the impact of the food crisis and to reestablish agriculture as the mean to ensure food supply and better conditions and quality of life of the peoples of Southern Africa.

Mr. President,

Mozambique is vulnerable to natural disasters and to the dynamics of the international prices of food and fuel products. These are factors that represent a major threat to the implementation of the Government’s socio-economic programs. Despite the notable progress that we have been registering for our production of cassava and maize, we still import large quantities of other food products. Therefore, any cereal price fluctuation across the globe immediately affects the day-to-day life of our people.

Mozambique is endowed with natural resources which are favorable to the production of mixed-farming. However, the shortage of financial resources and the weak network banking in the rural zones, associated with the lack of infra-structures and technology to secure the development of a commercial agriculture, have not allowed us to scale-up our production to the levels that could meet the food needs of our population. The situation is worsened by the poor distribution and commercialization systems, making it difficult to distribute and commercialize the products from certain surplus zones to the needy ones. Moreover, the cyclic natural disasters that have struck us have resulted in losses of significant plantation areas, causing those people to live permanently in need. These calamities are also the cause of soil erosion and depletion, making it unfeasible to grow crops, and as consequence brought us to food insecurity and nutrition to our people.

In order to address the food crisis, our Government approved, last June, a Food Production Action Plan for the period 2008-2011. The program was designed with goals and a mechanism to implement the *Green Revolution*, which we launched in 2007.

We are aware that implementing this action plan together with the *Green Revolution* will require additional resources. Indeed, this will be only feasible if additional resources are committed for the completion of these programs. We acknowledge the positive effect of the *Green Revolution* on the MDGs, since no one can think about tomorrow, about education, about gender equality or empowerment of women while in hunger.

Mr. President,

Last February we launched the Presidential Initiative for the benefit of women and children. At that time, several meetings were held with health professionals, religious and traditional leaders, women and youth. During these meetings, which are being replicated at the local level, it became clear that health issues permeate the MDGs. Although

significant, the advancements that we have recorded are not enough to have an effect on the reduction of avoidable deaths in Mozambique.

Our assessments show that we could, for instance:

- ❖ Reduce maternity mortality by more than 50%;
- ❖ Achieve a decrease of 17% in child mortality;
- ❖ Significantly facilitate access to anti-retroviral treatment and to the treatment of tuberculosis and malaria;
- ❖ To have, by 2010, more than 95% of the mothers and children sleep under insecticide-treated mosquito nets;

However, in order to achieve these objectives, we are dependent upon an additional funding of US 4 dollars per capita a year for the health sector, from now to 2010. Additionally, we need 10 million more for mosquito nets. The supply of the deficit amount of 590 million US-dollars along the next 7 years could help us train and employ around 20 thousand additional health people. This figure would raise the number of doctors by 119%. The number of nurses and of mothers gaining access to a health care would rise by 68%.

In so doing, we want to prevent avoidable deaths. As we have indicated, though, we cannot fulfill it by ourselves. We strongly believe that predictable, substantial, and long-term financial support would help to meet the needs identified above. We need to have efficient health system and a coordinated support from our development partners to the national health system. This is a noble way to ensure the fulfillment of the eighth MDGs, which stresses the need to “create a world partnership in favor of development.”

We wish to take this opportunity to commend and encourage the persistence of the international solidarity movement to help Africa, and Mozambique in particular, both in the women and children’s health context for the fulfillment of the commitments made at the Millennium Summit. In several parts of the world, funds and initiatives have been promoted in support of our initiatives. In this interaction with our partners, the necessary consensus have been built regarding our priorities and essential strategies can be formulated to ensure a sustainable development.

Mr. President,

The world has been changing and, with all these changes, new challenges have arisen on a planetary scale. The United Nations is a universal institution with the legitimacy, and in fact the mandate, to debate strategies and find solutions for such major challenges. Therefore, structural reforms are needed so as to raise the UN capability to the level of the current challenges. In this regard, the reform process should continue so that the United Nations can achieve greater unity and ability to provide an appropriate response to the challenges that are imposed to us by the need of reinforcing the multilateralism and the promotion of partnerships for peace, security and development across the world.

In conclusion, Mr. President, we would like to reiterate the importance of international cooperation to secure the production of enough and affordable food for all, and to build a viable consensus for the United Nations reforms.

Thank you for your time and attention.