



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA



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STATEMENT

BY

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MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

TO THE

63RD REGULAR SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

New York
27th September 2008

Your Excellency Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann
President of the 63rd session of the United Nations General Assembly,

The United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon,

Excellencies,

Mr. President,

At the outset, my delegation wishes to convey, on behalf of the people and the Government of the Republic of Zambia our deepest and sincere appreciation and gratitude to Member States, including the United Nations, for the numerous messages of condolences we received following the loss of our beloved President, His Excellency Dr. Levy Patrick Mwanawasa, SC, who passed away in Paris, France on 19th August 2008. Your messages of sympathy comforted and strengthened us immensely.

We are particularly indebted to the Government of Egypt for the medical attention rendered to our late President when he suffered a stroke while attending the African Union Summit in Sharm-el-Sheik on 29th June 2008 and for his subsequent evacuation to France. We are similarly grateful to the Government of France, for the medical attention and hospitality availed to the late President up to the time of his death as well as for the repatriation of his body to Zambia for burial. The President was put to rest on 3rd September 2008, which incidentally would have been his 60th birthday.

Mr. President,

I wish to inform this august Assembly that in accordance with the Zambian Constitution, elections for the new President should be held within 90 days of the death or incapacitation of a sitting President. In this regard, the Government has designated 30th October 2008 for the Presidential by-election. In the spirit of transparency, accountability and good governance, the Zambian Government has invited international organizations, including the United Nations, to send election observers to these elections.

Mr. President,

At this juncture, let me join others who have spoken before me in congratulating you on the assumption of the Presidency of the 63rd regular session of the United Nations General Assembly. Zambia has no doubt that you will steer this session to a successful conclusion. I wish to assure you of Zambia's support.

May I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to your predecessor, H.E. Dr. Srgjan Kerim of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, for ably presiding over the proceedings of the 62nd session of the United Nations General Assembly.

I wish to thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his tireless efforts in his dedicated service to humankind in trying to maintain international peace and security, achieve development and eradicate poverty for all.

Mr. President,

The theme for this session, **“The impact of the global food crisis on poverty and hunger in the world as well as the need to democratize the United Nations”** is, indeed, testimony to the noble efforts of the Secretary General. The theme is also most appropriate, especially that it is relevant to the development challenges currently facing Africa and the developing world as a whole. It is confirmed in his reports that many developing countries, and in particular sub-Saharan Africa, will not meet the MDGs by 2015 and, therefore, Member States should re-double and re-confirm their commitments if we are to meet this target.

Zambia believes that the attainment of the MDGs will only be meaningful if it is all inclusive. This entails that implementation of programmes and policies for empowering women, the girl child and other vulnerable groups of society are part of the overall process within this framework. Zambia in this regard, supports the assertion that “women empowerment and gender equality are drivers for reducing poverty, building food security and reducing maternal mortality”. It is with this realisation that most of the Member States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), signed the SADC Gender and Development Protocol in August 2008, the first of its kind in Africa. These regional and national efforts need to be complemented by global action. It is in this regard, that Zambia welcomes the on-going debate on the reforms of the United Nations system wide coherence, particularly as they relate to strengthening the gender architecture, which is currently fragmented and under resourced.

Mr. President,

In the process of empowering women, and striving for gender equality, Zambia realizes that HIV/AIDS continues to be a challenge in the country’s development with the prevalence rate of women being higher than that of men. The pandemic is robbing the country of a young and productive work force. The Zambian Government, therefore, has put in place a number of policies that have seen the reduction of the prevalence of HIV from 16 per cent in 2001 to 14 per cent in 2007. This reduction in the prevalence rate is an indication that our Government is determined to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS. This would not, however, be possible without the support of the international community.

Mr. President,

The Monterrey Consensus places obligations on both developed and developing countries to come up with concrete strategies and action to address poverty. Most African countries, including Zambia, have resolved to develop their economies and embarked on prudent macroeconomic management, channeling resources to growth sectors which present the greatest prospect for wealth and employment creation. They have further developed policies, plans and programmes which are not only growth oriented but also pro-poor and address social development.

Mr. President,

I wish to acknowledge with appreciation the role that our cooperating partners and the international community have played, and continue to play, in all our developmental and poverty eradication programmes. We welcome the commitments made by Africa and its cooperating partners in the context of various important initiatives and partnerships in recent years, inter alia, the Tokyo International Conference on African Development, which among others came up with a follow-up mechanism with regard to implementation of commitments made during the Conference. Similarly, the China-Africa Partnership and the European Union-Africa Strategic Partnership have also contributed substantially to Africa's development needs. With regard to the India-Africa Forum, we also look forward to the speedy implementation of commitments undertaken during the Summit Forum in India in April 2008. Furthermore, we appreciate the assistance rendered by the G8 Africa Partnership, the Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief of the President of the United States of America, the comprehensive health-care initiative sponsored by the Government of Cuba, the Initiative for Africa's Development of the Republic of Korea and the special technical assistance programme for Africa of Pakistan. In similar vain, we look forward to the implementation of the recently launched Africa Turkey partnership forum.

Zambia notes with concern, however, that the efforts the cooperating partners are making with regard to improved access to the markets of the developed countries and official development assistance flows and finance for development for African countries, have not been completely fulfilled. We commend the five cooperating partners that have met or exceeded the 0.7 per cent target of the GNI as contribution to official development assistance. We urge the cooperating partners which have not fulfilled their commitments to do so. We also look forward to the upcoming Doha Review Conference on Financing for Development and hope donors will honour their commitments.

We are all aware that improved market access for developing countries is one commitment, which once fulfilled, offers the greatest prospects for our integration into the world trading system. It also has the potential to foster food security for all and raise the standard of living of the majority of the population which depends on agriculture for their livelihood. In this regard, Zambia notes with disappointment that the Doha Trade negotiations collapsed at a time when many of us were looking forward to a successful conclusion of the protracted talks. It is my country's hope that the negotiations shall reconvene and conclude as soon as possible so as to enable the developing countries to compete favourably and integrate into the multilateral trading system.

Mr. President,

With regard to the current global oil and food crises, they not only pose a threat to the gains made in achieving macro economic stability and growth in developing countries, but also pose but are an even greater threat to the achievements made towards eliminating extreme poverty and reducing by half the proportion of people suffering from hunger.

A solution to the food crisis must be found as a matter of urgency. In this connection, Zambia wishes to thank the Secretary-General for establishing a High-Level Task Force on Food Security, whose task is to find a coherent and coordinated approach to solving the food crisis. In addressing the food crisis, we must be mindful of the fact that a large percentage of the population in developing countries depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Therefore, in finding a solution to the high food prices, we should ensure that we do not inadvertently encourage rural-urban migration by putting in measures that disadvantage those engaged in food and general agricultural production.

In addition, the issue of climate change, which has worsened the food crisis, requires the concerted efforts of the international community to resolve by way of developing adaptation and mitigation measures. Zambia, like most of Sub-Saharan Africa, has not been spared from the adverse effects of climate change, such as increased exposure to drought, rising temperatures, more erratic rainfall and extreme weather conditions. These are threatening water and agricultural systems, thereby condemning millions more to face malnutrition and water shortages.

Mr. President,

Let me now turn to the on-going reforms of the United Nations, and in particular, the protracted reform of the Security Council. Zambia wishes to reiterate the fact that the United Nations Reform will not be complete without meaningful reform of the Security Council. Any new proposals to reform the Security Council should consider Africa's call for two permanent seats with veto powers and two additional non-permanent seats, as this will not only address the historical injustice against Africa, but also respond to the need to democratize the Security Council given that Africa constitutes the second largest block of UN membership. Equally important in this regard, will be the need to reform the working methods of this important UN body.

Mr. President,

It is a matter of concern to my delegation that the question of Western Sahara has remained unresolved for such a long time. In accordance with the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14th December 1960, the people of Western Sahara should be free to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination. In this regard, Zambia calls for the implementation of all relevant UN resolutions on this matter while supporting the ongoing efforts between the parties concerned to find a lasting solution.

With regard to the situation in Zimbabwe, Zambia welcomes the signing of the inter-party agreement on 15th September 2008 and pays tribute to former South African President Thabo Mbeki who, on behalf of SADC, successfully discharged the mandate entrusted to him. We remain optimistic that the concerned parties will adhere to the agreement, which has created a good basis for addressing the socio-economic problems confronting the country. In this regard, we appeal to the international community to give every possible support to the people of Zimbabwe in their effort to resuscitate their economy.

Mr. President,

There is no doubt that the United Nations continues to remain the only multilateral institution capable of addressing challenges of our "One World". The world's poor are looking to the United Nations System to deliver on its commitments to enable them live in dignity, full of opportunity, free of hunger, diseases such as HIV/AIDS and above all, in a peaceful, secure and environmentally sustainable world. Let us therefore not fail them, for they deserve no less.

I thank you.