

Mr President,

I stand for H.E. **Dr the Honourable Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius**, who has not been able to be personally present to address this august Assembly this session. The Hon. Prime Minister has asked me to convey his kind greetings to your Excellency and to make the statement on his behalf.

**Mr President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am pleased to join the previous speakers who have preceded me, in extending my warmest congratulations to you on your election as President of the Sixty-Third Session of the United Nations General Assembly. I can assure you of the full support of my delegation in the task that lies ahead of you.

I express my deep appreciation to His Excellency Dr Srgjan Kerim for the efficient manner in which he conducted the business of the Assembly in the preceding session.

I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to His Excellency Mr Ban Ki-moon, our Secretary-General for his tireless efforts to meet the ever greater expectations we have of the United Nations Organisation.

Mr President,

Each year from the rostrum of this august Assembly, we raise our voice in alarm and speak of our resolution in facing the challenges and threats confronting our world. Yet progress in our common endeavour to forge a better world for our people remains halting and uneven. New problems and challenges arise while old ones persist. On top of these; climate change, high food and energy prices and terrorism put in jeopardy hard-earned development gains.

The problems we face are many and daunting but we believe that Mankind has the ingenuity and resources to overcome adversity through a unified response. We must show political will and global responsibility. The goal of promoting human development and security in all its manifold aspects should remain our priority. In this regard, the theme of the 63rd Session of the General Assembly, "*The impact of the global food crisis on poverty and hunger and the need to democratize the United Nations*" is both timely and relevant.

Mr President,

We are all affected by the growing global food crisis. Those already living on the edge are being pushed over. According to the IMF, food prices have increased on average by more than 40% over the past 12 months. This is driving untold numbers back into poverty and reversing progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. As always the brunt of food insecurity is borne by Africa, Asia and the Caribbean where riots and strikes have occurred and social unrest threatens political stability.

Admittedly a number of factors underlie the present food scarcity. Some of these factors are beyond our control, such as extreme weather phenomena and changes in consumption patterns with growing affluence in certain parts of the world. However there is an urgent need that we address issues such as outdated agricultural practices, inadequate infrastructure, inequitable distribution of land ownership and insecurity of tenure. The list is long, the remedies are known. Hopefully we can bring to bear the political will that is required.

Mauritius, Mr President, is a net food importing country. To reduce our dependence on food imports, the Government is implementing a plan to maximize food production. We are optimizing land use and diversifying into the production of food crops, livestock and seafood. To overcome the constraints of land availability and take advantage of economies of scale, we aim, in partnership with neighbouring countries, to produce for our common domestic markets and eventually for exports to the region. Our experiments, in this respect, with Madagascar and Mozambique, are proving to be mutually beneficial and hold great promise for the future.

The Right to Food is one that is very often overlooked and yet it is intimately connected to human dignity. It is important that the international community acts now to ensure that this fundamental human right is respected. In this era of scientific and technological prowess, when we are unravelling the mysteries of the immensities of the universe, of the sub-atomic particles, when the discoveries of science daily amaze us and change our perceptions of reality, it is unconscionable that countless children should sleep on an empty stomach. One of every six persons in the world suffers from hunger. That is the greatest moral challenge facing humanity today.

We commend the Secretary-General for the timely establishment of the High Level Task Force. The implementation of its Framework of Action will improve access of vulnerable people to food and help in achieving resilience and global food security in the longer term. We welcome the recent proposal by the European Commission for a Special Facility amounting to more than US \$ 1.5 billion for a rapid response to food crises in coordination with the UN Task Force and international organizations.

Mr President,

The unprecedented level of the price of oil, over a period of almost one year, has dealt a severe blow to the economic growth of many developing countries. Mauritius depends on imported oil for 80 percent of its energy consumption which makes it extremely vulnerable on this count. The share of petroleum products in our import bill went up from 12% in 2000 to 18% in 2007. We have recently set up a “Maurice Ile Durable” project to encourage more efficient use of energy and to tap renewable energy sources.

Monsieur le Président,

A Maurice nous sommes fiers de notre plurilinguisme. Permettez, Monsieur le Président, que je dise quelques phrases en langue française comme il est de tradition, chaque année, pour le représentant mauricien. Je reprends le fil de mon allocution pour mieux vous présenter le projet Maurice Ile Durable. C'est un projet audacieux. Mais nous croyons que la conjoncture mondiale, nous dicte l'audace. L'objectif fondamental est de trouver un équilibre

entre nos besoins économiques, environnementaux et sociaux. Nous avons réalisé, l'an dernier, un taux de croissance de 5,4% et, cette année, nous prévoyons un taux de plus de 5,7%. Toutefois nous réalisons que la croissance n'est pas une fin en soi.

Le Gouvernement poursuit un modèle de développement qui tient compte, non seulement des impératifs économiques, mais également des aspirations profondes de chaque citoyen mauricien. Mais il s'agit, en même temps, de ne pas compromettre les chances des générations futures.

Ce projet de Maurice Ile Durable ambitionne de faire de Maurice un laboratoire grandeur nature. Nous utiliserons les ressources naturelles dont notre île est abondamment pourvue - la mer, le soleil, le vent et la biomasse d'une végétation luxuriante. Nous sommes à la recherche d'une solution écologique aux problèmes du réchauffement climatique et de notre dépendance sur un marché d'hydrocarbures totalement volatile. Nous nous fixons pour objectif de réduire de deux tiers notre dépendance en produits pétroliers, d'ici vingt ans. C'est notre manière, à nous, Monsieur le Président, de contribuer à l'effort international visant à combattre l'effet de serre. C'est le pari d'une petite économie insulaire très vulnérable. Mais je veux croire qu'il est aussi celui d'une planète menacée d'asphyxie à long terme.

Mr President,

Whilst the causes of food insecurity and the energy crisis are multiple and complex, there is little doubt that climate change will exacerbate the situation in the future. With informed predictions, warning of a significant rise in temperature, during the 21st century, even the best case scenario is fraught with dire consequences. However, climate change places a particular burden on developing countries which have done the least to cause the problem.

Developing countries are in dire need of assistance to enhance their adaptive capacity and minimize their vulnerability because they cannot, on their own, bear the burden of the costs of mitigation and adaptation. As an island, Mauritius is especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change, sea level rise, beach erosion, coral bleaching and extreme weather conditions. They not only affect our local resources and industries such as fisheries and tourism, but also threaten vital infrastructure, settlements and services. The increased frequency and scale of natural disasters exacerbate our inherent vulnerability.

Climate change should be addressed as a development issue in view of its impact on socio-economic development. It is our responsibility to act collectively on the basis of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. The urgency of the situation dictates that our planet not be held to ransom by intractable and prolonged disagreements. Failure to respond now carries tremendous risks for the future of our planet. All humanity is concerned by climate change. Its effects spare no country.

Mauritius is fully engaged in the post-Bali process. The meeting in Poznan, later this year, and the final meeting in Copenhagen, next year, will be crucial in determining emission targets. It is vital that we reach a comprehensive agreement on a climate change framework. Mauritius made a plea at the last High-level Meeting on Climate Change for the creation of a

special fund to enable the development and implementation of adaptation measures. Our appeal to international donors to provide the much-needed resources for operating the fund is yet to be answered. However, we welcome the recent declaration by the leaders of the G8 of a long term emissions reduction target of at least 50% by 2050; as also their undertaking to help support the mitigation plans of major developing countries through technology transfer and capacity-building.

Mr President,

Small Islands Development States are innocent victims of global warming and the degradation of the environment. Only a few weeks ago, we witnessed the devastation caused by a quick succession of hurricanes in the Caribbean. We, therefore, call on the international community to assist SIDS to incorporate adaptation and mitigation plans in their national strategies. Continued access to official development assistance, concessionary financing arrangements, reduction of debt servicing, and improved terms of trade are crucial in building up the economic resilience of SIDS. We are particularly concerned about the inadequate level of implementation of the Barbados Plan of Action and the Mauritius Strategy. We reiterate our request to the international community to honour the offers of assistance made during the International SIDS Conference held in Mauritius in 2005. Furthermore, the arbitrary GDP criteria applied to determine the eligibility for securing concessional finance disqualifies most SIDS from accessing much needed funds for important infrastructure development. It is absolutely necessary in this regard that SIDS are treated as a distinct category.

Mr President,

Eight years ago, when we gathered here, we were optimistic that achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 was within our reach. The Millennium Declaration gave a new momentum to our efforts to achieve these goals. More than halfway through, the MDG track record is mixed. Some developing countries are on target while others, particularly from the African continent, are facing crippling difficulties. Even the gains painstakingly achieved in fighting hunger and poverty are tenuous and could be nullified by the current food and energy crisis. It is vital that donors and development partners honour the pledges, made in the Millennium Declaration, the 2002 Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development and the 2005 World Summit.

Mauritius is on track to meet the MDG targets. Efforts are underway in all key socio-economic sectors to further improve living standards and to achieve the MDGs as early as possible. We are addressing poverty in a comprehensive and coherent manner, convinced this will have a positive impact on the other development goals. Our experience has demonstrated that the most effective remedy to poverty is inclusive economic growth.

At the national level, Government is pursuing a number of programmes, announced in its last Budget, to eliminate absolute poverty. We have introduced an Eradication of Absolute Poverty Programme, comprising a number integrated development projects within identified pockets of poverty. We have also put in place a Human Resource Development, Knowledge and Arts Fund to ensure that university studies become affordable to all. We aim to double enrolment in tertiary education by 2015.

Mauritius hosted, in April this year, the SADC International Conference on Poverty and Development. I am happy to inform this Assembly that the Conference has formulated a regional strategy for poverty eradication in the SADC countries. The SADC Secretariat has taken follow-up action on the development of an implementation plan. A joint Ministerial Task Force on Food Security, comprising the Ministers of Finance, Trade and Agriculture, met in Lusaka, on 13 July 2008, in line with the recommendation of the Conference to tackle the food crisis affecting the region.

Africa's development needs were debated at the highest level on Monday and culminated in the adoption of the Political Declaration on "Africa's Development Needs: State of Implementation of Various Commitments, Challenges and the Way Forward." Concrete and concerted action is called for now by both African states and their cooperation partners to help achieve sustained and sustainable development on the continent. Furthermore, we look forward to the forthcoming International Conference on Financing for Development, in Doha. It will be a unique opportunity to address the various facets of concessionary financing and to find new resources for development.

Mr President,

We are fully supportive of a Multilateral Trading System that is fair, balanced and equitable and which provides opportunities to all countries, developed and developing, big and small alike. More importantly, the Doha Development Agenda should deliver on its promise of development, through increased trading opportunities as a means of eradicating poverty. With regard to the WTO negotiations, we join those who have called for the talks to progress on the basis of what has already been achieved. We remain fully committed to the Doha Development Agenda and will contribute constructively to the negotiations.

We support the effective and quick implementation of the Aid for Trade process which should take into account the priorities and needs of beneficiary countries. At present, our limited industrial capacity prevents us from taking full advantage of the opportunities offered by globalisation. On the regional front, I am pleased to say that we have made major strides in our integration process. The South African Development Community Free Trade Area was launched on 17 August 2008 and we are aiming to fully liberalise trade by 2012.

Mr President,

The international mobilisation in the fight against HIV/AIDS and the positive results achieved are a clear demonstration of what can be achieved through solidarity in action. Since the adoption of the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, increasing numbers of people have gained access to HIV prevention and treatment in low and middle income countries. However, many countries still have a long way to go in meeting the goal we set ourselves under the 2000 Political Declaration of achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010. The high prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa continues to be a cause for alarm.

Engagement at the highest level is vital in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The Mauritius National AIDS Committee under the Chairmanship of the Hon. Prime Minister oversees the implementation of a multi-sectorial HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan. This Plan provides for anti-retroviral treatment free of charge to all HIV infected persons, voluntary counselling and testing service and the implementation of a “Prevention of Mother-to- Child” transmission programme. The Government of Mauritius has also increased the amount allocated to the fight against HIV/AIDS by 50% in the current Budget.

Mr President,

As we celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in December this year, we must remain unwavering in our resolve to promote and protect human rights. Much remains to be done to ensure that the basic rights of individuals are universally protected. The Mauritian Constitution guarantees that our citizens enjoy fundamental rights in their everyday lives. The National Human Rights Commission, the Human Rights Centre, the Parliamentary Commission on the Democratisation of the Economy and the proposed Equal Opportunity Act are important mechanisms for the protection and promotion of Human Rights in our country.

Mr President,

As an advocate of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, Mauritius severely condemns the decision of Myanmar’s military junta to prolong the house arrest of Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi. National reconciliation and full democratization of Myanmar cannot be achieved without the release of Ms Aung San Suu Kyi and other political detainees and the participation of the National League for Democracy in the political process.

Mr President,

War, conflict and human rights violations are closely co-related. Situations of conflict and war inevitably give rise to violations of human rights and atrocities against innocent civilians. Displacement and violent death continue to be the lot of far too many in parts of the Middle East, Africa and Asia. Mauritius has always supported the struggle of the Palestinian people and their inalienable right to self-determination. We favour the creation of a Palestinian State, co-existing with the state of Israel, within secure and recognised borders. It is only through dialogue, negotiations and compromise by both sides that lasting peace can come about in the Middle East.

We believe that the Quartet roadmap to peace and the Arab Peace Initiative remain viable blueprints to advance the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. The momentum injected since the Annapolis Conference held last November, the on-going Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, the ceasefire agreement in Gaza and the exchange of prisoners, are significant steps forward. We hope these positive developments will pave the way for a lasting settlement to this conflict and, ultimately, lead to comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

The deteriorating humanitarian situation in Darfur remains a matter of grave concern for my delegation. We urge all parties involved in the conflict, especially the authorities, to exercise restraint in their actions and move towards a just and lasting solution to the conflict.

We welcome the power sharing accord in Zimbabwe between the leader of the Movement for Democratic Change and the leader of the ZANU-PF. We hope that a Government of national unity will bring peace, stability and the reconciliation of the Zimbabwean people who have suffered, for far too long, the brutal consequences of the political crisis and economic meltdown.

Mr President,

The grave and pervasive threat of terrorism knows no boundaries. No country is shielded from its pernicious and devastating impact. Mauritius is committed to the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. It is imperative that we conclude a comprehensive convention against terrorism as soon as possible to reinforce the existing legal framework. As part of its contribution to the international efforts to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, Mauritius has joined, in June 2008, the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism.

Mr President,

We fully share your view aiming at the democratization of our organization. The ongoing discussions on the Revitalization of the UN General Assembly, the System Wide Coherence, Mandate Review and Management Reform in the context of the UN reform process should be aimed at strengthening multilateralism. We need a comprehensive reform of the United Nations Security Council so that it is able to meet the needs and respond to the aspirations of the increasingly changing geopolitical realities of the world.

We call for the expansion of the Security Council in both the category of permanent and non-permanent membership, including improvement in the working methods. Mauritius remains firmly committed to the Ezulwini Consensus which calls for two seats in the category of permanent members and five non-permanent seats for Africa.

I should once again like to reiterate the unequivocal support of Mauritius for India to be a permanent member in a reformed Security Council. We also reiterate our support for a Latin American and Caribbean country to be a permanent member of the reformed Security Council. Furthermore, we welcome the recent unanimous decision of the General Assembly to start the Intergovernmental negotiations on the reform of the Security Council in the Informal Plenary of the General Assembly at latest by February 2009.

Mr President,

The principles and objectives enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations should continue to guide us in our actions. I would like to bring up, once again, before this august Assembly, our legitimate sovereignty claim on the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia. This archipelago was excised from the territory of Mauritius, by the United Kingdom, prior to our independence in disregard of UN General Assembly resolutions 1514 of 1960 and

2066 of 1965. We have always favoured a settlement of the issue through constructive bilateral dialogue. In this regard, I wish to inform the Assembly that high-level talks are underway. Government is very sensitive to the aspirations of our citizens to return to the islands of their birth, in the Chagos Archipelago. I wish to recall here that they were forcibly removed from the archipelago prior to its excision from Mauritius. Likewise, we urge France to pursue dialogue with Mauritius on the issue of Tromelin. It is our firm conviction that these bilateral dialogues will further consolidate our historical and friendly relations with both the United Kingdom and France.

Mr President,

The United Nations is the only forum which enables us to unite our efforts and our solidarity in moving forward our common agenda. As ever we face difficulties and the way forward is uncertain. But if we arm ourselves with faith and courage we can rise to the occasion. I wish to reiterate that the United Nations remains the most important and credible international multilateral organization in the maintenance of peace and security and for building a better and safer world. You can rest assured of our unwavering support in the work of the United Nations.

I thank you.