



# Guatemala

*Check against delivery*

## Sixtieth Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations

Statement by His Excellency

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General Debate

New York, September 20, 2005

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

As a founding Member of the United Nations, Guatemala is attending this Assembly to reaffirm its faith in and commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms, the sovereign equality of States and participatory, transparent and democratic multilateralism. The United Nations continues to be the best tool available to humanity in order to accomplish this goal.

The purposes the signatories of the Charter set for themselves six decades ago have lost none of their validity. They continue, indeed, to loom as most serious challenges facing humanity. One of those challenges, namely the maintenance of international peace and security, has taken on new characteristics. Its relation to sustainable development and the fight against poverty is paradigmatic in that regard. Moreover we confront new threats that pay no heed to State boundaries, make good governance more difficult and undermine democracy. Relevant examples are unlawful trafficking in persons, weapons and drugs, as well as terrorism. Small and vulnerable countries, such as mine, are particularly affected by these problems.

For quite some time, we have been trying together to cope with these new challenges. But only now have we been able to reflect on them and reach a number of agreements that we trust will enable us to modify the Organization so that we can address them, as a whole, more efficiently and with renewed ambition.

We support the call the Secretary-General made at the commencement of this general debate for the adoption of an "accountability pact", which is to ensure an effective holding to account and supervision involving the Secretariat and governments.

Guatemala will continue to participate actively in the efforts to establish the Peacebuilding Commission. Our own national experience enables us to contribute actively to these efforts.

We also undertake to contribute to the conclusion of a comprehensive counter-terrorism convention and in the implementation of the integral strategy that aims to suppress that phenomenon.

We attach equal importance to the creation of a standing Human Rights Council, whose composition is to be agreed upon during this session, in order to properly focus, depoliticize and make more effective the discharge of our responsibility to ensure full observance of human rights.

We are decidedly in favor of strengthening the Office of the High Commissioner for *Human* Rights, which should be provided with the resources necessary in order that it may be able to carry out its work efficaciously.

For not dissimilar reasons, we resolutely support the discharge of our responsibility to protect.

We consider it indispensable to advance decidedly in the areas of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, through initiatives like the one taken by Norway, Australia, Chile, Indonesia, the United Kingdom, Rumania and South Africa, an initiative for which Guatemala reiterates its support.

As regards the principal organs, we support the strengthening and revitalization of the General Assembly, whose task is to provide political guidance in connection with the work of the Organization. It is necessary to restore the main role of the Economic and Social Council in the area of sustainable development, as well a continuous strengthening of its cooperation with the Security Council.

We urge that the utmost be made to ensure the widest support by States for reforming the Security Council. It is essential that that reform be a comprehensive one and include a revision of the Council's methods of work and the procedures by which decisions are taken, the purpose being to strengthen the Council and render it more legitimate, ensuring also that it reflects present-day realities and ensures representation by developing countries..

We look with sympathy upon the aspirations of Brazil, Germany, India and Japan to become permanent members of the Council. We also feel that Africa should be represented. Guatemala trusts that through dialogue we shall be able to resolve the differences that exist as to how to proceed and will succeed in finding a formula that will enjoy the support of a wide majority and thus make possible a satisfactory reform of the Security Council.

A year ago Oscar Berger Perdomo, constitutional President of Guatemala, sought, in addressing this Assembly, to express the feelings of our country at this crucial time of its history. I am pleased to take this opportunity to review briefly some of the advances made:

In addition to the integration of the Peace Agreements into the Plan of Government, a Framework Law concerning those Agreements has been enacted.

Social dialogue has been pursued in all the areas of action of the Government

A 43% reduction of the strength of the army was achieved, at the same time as progress was made in modernizing and professionalizing it. In line with this evolution, the Guatemalan army has increased its participation in United Nations peace activities, which it is now supporting in Haiti and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Public expenditure is concentrated in the social area and in infrastructure, to which goes 60% of the 2006 national budget.

A secretariat for food and nutritional security has been created, while a State policy in those matters has been adopted, with a participatory and sustainable focus.

Significant activities are being carried out at the national level and jointly with other Central American countries to combat common crime and transnational organized crime.

The program for economic and social reactivation continues to be implemented with enthusiasm. The cadastral law was recently enacted. A fair competition policy, adopted by consensus, with the participation of civil society, will be presented next week.

The fight against poverty and social exclusion continues to occupy a central position in all the activities of the Government, which are carried out in a manner that fully respects the ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity of the country. We have recently established a national policy for the indigenous peoples. It has been presented by Doctor Rigoberta Menchú, Nobel Prize winner and ambassador for the peace agreements of Guatemala

Appropriate measures, including prosecution, continue to be taken against persons guilty of acts of corruption. Full transparency continues to be ensured in the area of government procurement.

Our commitment to full observance of human rights is being maintained at the national level. In this connection interagency activities are being carried out under the recently adopted national human rights program. The High Commissioner for Human Rights has established an office in Guatemala. The functions of this office are to provide advice to the government, State entities and civil society in order to strengthen the promotion and the protection of human rights in the country.

Nevertheless the advances made are increasingly being compromised by the inordinate increase in the price of fossil fuels, which affects extremely adversely countries whose economies are, like that of Guatemala, net importers of oil. The cost of oil to us is absorbing an increased proportion of the foreign exchange generated by exports of goods and services. At the same time we have had to cope with considerable increases in the cost of transportation and, fuel being our main source of power, of electricity, with its multiplier effect on productive sectors and the price of basic consumer goods. The effects of all this at the level of the economy as a whole and the microeconomic level alike threaten to slow down the expansion of our economy. For our part we are doing all we can to conserve and develop alternative sources of power; we appeal to the international community to collaborate with us in order to ease the impact of this situation.

Through the consolidation of a regime of democratic, participatory and inclusive, Guatemala is taking actions to strengthen democracy at the national level. Our commitment to democracy in the world is indefectible. This why we participate actively in the work of bodies that seek to promote and defend it and also support the Fund for Democracy.

The foreign policy of my country has as its main objectives achieving a better insertion of Guatemala into the world, strengthening of multilateralism and regional integration. We have strengthened relations with countries and groups of countries with which we have a dialogue and are united by institutionalized mechanisms of cooperation; we have also established new strategic associations with countries and groups of countries in South America, the Caribbean, Asia and Africa.

This year has witnessed considerable advances in regional integration. Advances have been made in the process of joint assessment carried out with the European Union to launch, in 2006, negotiations for the conclusion of an Association and Free Trade Agreement between both regions.

The Free Trade Agreement with the United States (CAFTA), which brings together the Central American countries and the Dominican Republic, offers very valuable opportunities to our country as regards the generation of employment, more investments, and legal certainty.

We are, however, entering CAFTA with a handicap: I refer to the risk ratings we have received from credit assessment agencies and export promotion institutions of developed countries, ratings that are less favorable than the ones we feel entitled to. This situation, among other unfavorable consequences, unjustly makes credit more expensive for us. Guatemala has one of the best debt servicing records of any Latin American country, one of the world's best external debt indicators, well-established working relations with all multilateral agencies, sustained economic growth over more than the past fifteen years, a stable currency, a one-digit rate of inflation and a high level of monetary reserves.

Strategically Guatemala has advanced in the negotiation of trade agreements with Colombia, the Republic of China in Taiwan, the Russian Federation, MERCOSUR, CARICOM, the Andean Group, Chile, Canada, Egypt and Israel.

Another fundamental pillar of the foreign policy of Guatemala is catering for the needs of Guatemalan migrants. The Government endeavors, to solve their problems and to ensure that their human rights are respected, taking actions for this purpose at the national and international levels. We appeal to the recipient countries, particularly the United States of America, to facilitate the regulations of the status of Guatemalan migrants in their territories.

For these reasons we continue, at the international level, to cooperate with all the efforts seeking to resolve the problems that migrants face. We welcome the recognition of the link between international migration and development that is contained in the final document 2005 World Summit Outcome.

Guatemala will continue to take the necessary measures to put an end to poverty in the country and attain sustainable development. Prioritization of public expenditure at the national level is not sufficient to enable us to take actions of the scope of those we consider adequate.

We consider it imperative to ensure the success of the Sixth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization. By definition the Doha Round should place development at the center of its negotiations. We trust that when we meet in Hong Kong in December we shall take decisions that are by and large consistent with the aspirations of the developing countries. We need to have a level playing field as regards trade in agricultural commodities and we require a wider access to the markets of the most dynamic economies of the planet for our goods and services, as well as for expanding and diversifying our productive base.

We welcome the offer made by President Bush in this hall to speed up the elimination of all the duties and subsidies that distort free trade in the world.

We urge donor countries, development agencies and the international financial system to increase their financial and technical cooperation with medium low income countries with a moderate debt level, one of which is my country.

I wish to stress our concern for the situation of the 23 million inhabitants of the Republic of China in Taiwan, whose aspirations for representation in international organizations remain unfulfilled. Guatemala, which is committed to the maintenance of international peace and security, as well as to the peaceful settlement of disputes, appeals to the countries bordering the Taiwan Strait to refrain from any threat or use of force and urges to them resolve their differences by peaceful means.

We also express our hope that the difficult situation prevailing in the Middle East will have a satisfactory outcome, in conformity with Security Council resolutions 242, 338, 1397 and 1402. We are heartened in this regard by the undertaking assumed and the advances made in the Middle East Peace Process, particularly by the dialogue begun between the parties, the implementation of the Road Map, as well as the implementation of the Disconnection Plan. One cannot avoid recalling here, in this anniversary of our Organization, the millions of persons who perished during the Second World War and the Holocaust, as a result of the power attained by totalitarianism. Our presence here also brings to our mind the struggle to recover democracy, freedom and the dignity of the human being.

Hope was born from the liberation of men, women, boys and girls from concentration camps, the end of the war and the adoption of the Charter in San Francisco. We cannot disappoint those hopes, or go back to the past. The United Nations must deliver on its promises and continue to offer humanity an opportunity.

Thank you.