



*“The United Nations General Assembly:  
the pre-eminent forum for global debate”*

**OPENING STATEMENT BY  
THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**H.E. MR. JOSEPH DEISS**

**AT**

**THE SIXTY-FIFTH SESSION  
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS  
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**As Delivered**

Secretary-General,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we meet to begin the work of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly, the world is slowly recovering from the economic and financial crisis. This recent setback should not, however, discourage us from our struggle against the major calamities afflicting the world. On the contrary, the international community's response to the crisis has shown us that multilateralism is working.

Today, all populations affected by poverty or threatened by war, global warming or natural disasters have the right to expect that our discussions and our actions will relieve their suffering and their pain.

All of us who comprise this General Assembly have an important instrument available to tackle the great issues of today. I am convinced of this.

In fact, as the Charter tells us, the General Assembly is the pre-eminent forum for global debate. It must be the place for a convergence of efforts and of institutions called upon to establish and assume global governance. There is no subject of concern to man and our planet which could be irrelevant to our debates.

Too often, however, public opinion sees a United Nations with a General Assembly that is powerless, a talking shop, with no real impact. I hope that the sixty-fifth session that is now beginning will show that we are able to make a difference. I hope that this session will meet the great expectations placed in us. We have an obligation to deliver results. The issues to be discussed are too serious for that obligation not to be our primary motivation, which pushes us to move beyond our purely national interests and truly work for the benefit of all.

In that connection, I would like to thank the President of the sixty-fourth session, His Excellency Dr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, for the informed action he has taken while leading our Assembly and for his personal commitment.

I also commend and express my gratitude to our Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his tireless commitment in the service of our Organization, here in New York and around the world.

The session now beginning will have a heavy agenda. We shall have to focus our energies to make progress on many issues that are crucial for humanity. Three broad areas lie before us:

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. We must make sure that the Millennium Development Goals are achieved.

In December 2009, you decided to hold a High Level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals. Next Monday, many Heads of State and Government are expected here in New York. This Summit will certainly be one of the milestones of the United Nations year and we do not have the right to fail.

Despite the economic crisis, the Millennium Development Goals are within our reach. In particular, we must bridge the gaps in the fight against hunger, child mortality and maternal health. This is possible. Our work in the coming week must result in a sincere commitment and a genuine plan of action to ensure that we reach the ambitious goal that the international community set for itself in 2000.

2. We must reinstate the United Nations and the General Assembly at the centre of global governance.

The challenges which we face today have acquired a global dimension and require global solutions. Our actions must have broad legitimacy and be the result of inclusive processes. We have to improve the mechanisms for information, consultation and cooperation between the United Nations and other actors and tools of global governance.

"Reaffirming the central role of the United Nations in global governance", this is the issue that I would like you to explore further during the general debate. Indeed, this is the subject that I proposed as the special theme, following consultations with many permanent representatives, various regional groups and the Secretary-General.

We must advocate for a strong, inclusive and open United Nations. As we know, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and civil society make an essential contribution to our work.

However, we must also move forward decisively with internal reforms. Reform of the Security Council remains important. We are all aware of the need for this reform. I would like us to be able to make progress on this matter, but it is for you, the Member States, to take decisions that enjoy broad support and make a convergence of views possible.

Other institutional issues during this session will be the review of the work of the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission.

Furthermore, we must continue efforts to revitalize the General Assembly. In that regard, I trust you will ensure that our debates begin on time and that we make the most effective use of the time available.

Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Excellencies,

3. We must promote sustainable development.

Climate change, vulnerability to natural disasters and threats to biodiversity are only some of the environmental challenges that affect all States and require a concerted effort from all countries.

Environmental issues will figure prominently on our agenda, which includes the high-level meeting on biodiversity during the week of the Summit on the Millennium Development Goals.

I believe that it is crucial to increase awareness of the need for economic structures that are more respectful of the environment and of future generations.

In this context, the term 'green economy' is frequently used. I am aware that some of you are concerned by the use of this term. The adjective and noun 'green economy' have different meanings to different groups. Some fears are justified and must be taken into account.

Let it be clear from the outset, however, that for me 'green economy' does not mean 'new conditionality' but rather 'opportunity'. It is an opportunity to ensure sustainable development for the benefit of our planet, ourselves, our children and our grandchildren.

The world is changing, but the fundamental purposes and principles of the United Nations are timeless.

Our efforts in the three areas that I have just mentioned - poverty eradication, governance and sustainable development - will make essential contributions towards peace and security, international cooperation and friendship between peoples.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Charter must remain our ultimate guide.

Peace and security are our primary calling, and here much work remains to be done. This includes all of the conflicts which still ravage our world to this day and which cause distress and suffering to hundreds of thousands of men, women and children.

It is international cooperation and friendship between peoples that will enable us to make progress in the areas of human rights, development, humanitarian aid, disarmament and counter-terrorism.

It is international cooperation and friendship between peoples that will enable us to make progress in the areas of health and the environment.

These are the values that will allow us to establish a genuine global partnership and to move forward in all areas of crucial importance for peace and security.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My vision is of a strong General Assembly, which should be the main forum for global debate. However, that will require us to learn how to listen to each other. I assure you that I will make myself available so that we can work together in harmony. My door is open. I offer you my leadership so that progress can be made, but, above all, I would urge you to overcome our selfishness and our rivalries for the benefit of humanity.