

President's Address to United Nation General Assembly's 61st Session

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Madam President, Respected General Secretary and Distinguished Delegates.

I am indeed very happy to see a sister from fraternal Bahrain presiding over this important session of the General Assembly. Your election symbolizes the increasingly significant role women are playing in the Muslim world. Madam President, you will have Pakistan's full support in fulfilling your challenging responsibilities.

Since the devastating earthquake in the northern regions of Pakistan last October, this is the first occasion that I am addressing this very august body. I, therefore, take this opportunity to express our deepest gratitude for the relief and financial assistance we received from around the world. We were deeply moved by the global solidarity displayed in the hour of our distress and need.

Madam President, multilateral cooperation is the key to addressing the existing and emerging challenges of the 21st century - political disputes, terrorism, proliferation, poverty, hunger, disease, economic disparities, migration, unemployment, environmental degradation and natural disasters. We appreciate the Secretary General's initiatives to equip the United Nations to respond to these challenges. But we are yet a distance from the vision endorsed at the 2005 UN Summit.

Madam President, over the past six-years, despite daunting external and internal challenges, Pakistan has been transformed into a dynamic nation, moving rapidly towards the vision of our Founder - a modern, progressive, Islamic and democratic republic.

We have reformed our institutions of governance and our economy. Democratic governance has been introduced at the grass root level. We are focusing on the uplift of the under privileged sections of our society - the poor, the women and the minorities. Women are being politically and economically empowered and protected against discrimination. Minorities have been politically mainstreamed. We also have unshackled the media. Having successfully put our economy on an upsurge; we are now embarked on second generation reforms to spread the benefits of growth to all our people.

One of our strategic aims is to utilize Pakistan's unique geo-strategic position to build trade, energy and communication corridors linking South Asia, West Asia, Central Asia and China. Regional integration will accelerate economic growth and prosperity in our part of Asia, and even going beyond.

Of course, Pakistan still faces daunting challenges, within and without. We are facing them boldly to build an environment of peace and stability in our region.

Madam President, Pakistan desires a peaceful environment in the region. We are being engaged in a peace process with India, aimed at confidence building and resolving issues, including the Jammu and Kashmir dispute that have been the source of tension and conflict between the two countries in the past. Improved relations, and the conducive international environment, have brought an acceptable solution of this longstanding dispute within reach. I am confident that my positive meeting with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in Havana will help to carry forward the peace process which is vital for the future of both countries and for peace in South Asia and beyond.

A stable security environment is also important for peace in our region. Pakistan has proposed the creation of a Strategic Restraint Regime in South Asia, encompassing minimum nuclear deterrence and a balance of conventional forces. We do not want to enter into an arms race. But we will do whatever is necessary to preserve the credibility of our minimum defensive deterrence level.

Pakistan has a legitimate requirement for nuclear power generation to meet the energy needs of our expanding economy and our expanding industry. As a responsible nuclear State, we will continue to seek nuclear technology for power generation under strict IAEA safeguards. We cannot accept discrimination in the nuclear field.

Madam President, Peace and stability in Afghanistan is in Pakistan's vital interest. It will assure tranquility on our Western frontiers. It will also enable Pakistan to realize its ambition of linking Central Asia and South Asia through Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Afghanistan confronts complex security, political and economic challenges including a resurgent Taliban who also threaten Pakistan's efforts against extremism and terrorism. The common challenge imposes a joint responsibility on Pakistan, Afghanistan and the coalition forces.

Problems along the bordering regions of Pakistan and Afghanistan are compounded by the continuing presence in Pakistan of over three million Afghan refugees, some of them sympathetic to the Taliban. The incentives offered to the refugees for their voluntary return by the international community are minimal. A serious international commitment is required to facilitate their repatriation back to their country.

Madam President, The unfortunate history of our region has placed Pakistan in the frontline of the global campaign against terrorism. We cooperate daily with many countries including the United States and the United Kingdom. Our cooperation has pre-empted several terrorist plots, such as the one uncovered recently to blow up airliners flying from London. Over the past five years, Al-Qaeda has been significantly degraded as an organization in our region.

While we confront terrorism, our strategy must seek to eliminate this phenomenon comprehensively. We cannot do so unless we understand and address the root causes of terrorism today. How are terrorists able to find willing recruits even among educated youth in advanced and democratic societies? The reasons are very clear.

Across the Muslim world, old conflicts and new campaigns of military intervention have spawned a deep sense of desperation and injustice. Each new battleground involving an Islamic state has served as a new breeding ground for extremists and terrorists. Indiscriminate bombings, civilian casualties, torture, human rights abuses, racial slurs and discrimination only add to the challenge of defeating terrorism.

In my view a two pronged strategy, which I call "Enlightened Moderation", is required to address the situation. This strategy envisages that, apart from combating terrorism frontally, the international community must undertake resolute efforts to resolve the conflicts afflicting the Islamic world. Unless we end foreign occupation and suppression of Muslim peoples, terrorism and extremism will continue to find recruits among alienated Muslims in various parts of the world.

We also need to bridge, through dialogue and understanding, the growing divide between the Islamic and Western world. In particular, it is imperative to end racial and religious discrimination against Muslims and to prohibit the defamation of Islam. It is most disappointing to see personalities of high standing oblivious of Muslim sensitivities at these very critical moments.

Madam President, the greatest challenge to global security; to the campaign against terrorism; to the promotion of harmony among civilization; to the very credibility of the United Nations, is the cauldron of conflict that is the Middle East exemplified by the latest Israeli aggression against Lebanon. We hope that the resolution painstakingly brokered in the Security Council will lead to rapid and complete Israeli withdrawal and restoration of Lebanon's sovereignty over its entire territory.

The attack on Lebanon has far reaching implications for the Middle East. The ability and relevance of the moderate forces to bring about a just peace in the region has been put to a very severe test. The world must, however, still support them to address the festering problems of the region, comprehensively and fairly. It is time to end Israel's conflicts with all its neighbours. It is time, first and foremost, to end the tragedy of Palestine. There should be no doubt in anybody's mind that this is the core of the challenge, not only to tackle the Iraq

and Afghanistan problems, but also to deal with the menace of terrorism and extremism at the root.

The confrontation over Iran's nuclear programme threatens further instability in this already inflamed region. We are encouraged by the Iran and 5+1 negotiations and believe that this issue can be resolved peacefully in a manner that accommodates the legitimate rights and interests of all the parties involved. Resort to coercion and, worse, the use of force, could lead to grave consequences in region and globally.

Madam President, The dynamic economic performance of several developing countries, especially in Asia, has transformed the world's geo-economic map. Yet, most developing countries find that international trade and financial structures are weighted against them. With the Doha Round in the doldrums; new modalities must be found to utilize the full potential of trade and development. Similarly, the international financial system should ensure a more equitable share of international liquidity and investment for the developing countries.

Madam President, unless the activities of the United Nations accommodate the concerns and priorities of its general membership, this Organization risks losing its global moral authority. The General Assembly should reassert its Charter responsibilities, while the Security Council should be reformed to make the activities of the Council more democratic, transparent, inclusive and accountable to the general membership. The reform of the Security Council is of vital interest to every Member State and must therefore be adopted by consensus or the widest possible agreement.

This important session of the Assembly will elect the next Secretary General of the United Nations. Pakistan hopes that consensus will soon develop in the Security Council and this Assembly on a qualified candidate from Asia. Pakistan will extend its full support to the new Secretary-General, as we have done to Mr. Kofi Annan, to build a United Nations that can advance the world decisively towards the noble vision of preventing the scourge of war and promoting better standards of life for all peoples of world in freedom.

I thank you, Madam President.