



URUGUAY

STATEMENT BY

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PRESIDENT OF URUGUAY

GENERAL DEBATE

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(Check against delivery)

Mr. President,

Heads of State and Government,

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I did four years ago, I once again extend the greetings of the people and the Government of the Republic of Uruguay to this Assembly, which is the most broadly representative body of today's world.

All of us who are here are aware of the contrasting realities of the present world; we are conscious that never before has humanity simultaneously been offered so many possibilities and faced so many threats as is the case today; we know that we cannot be indifferent to or shrink from these possibilities and threats; nor are we disposed to do so, but, what are we doing to dissipate the threats and take advantage of the opportunities presented by this reality?

Surely not everything we would like to or that we deem necessary, and perhaps not all that we are capable of.

Concerning this task, and as a founding member of this organization, the Republic of Uruguay once again reaffirms its unwavering respect for International Law, which is the greatest guarantee for the sovereignty of peoples and their peaceful coexistence.

We also reiterate:

1. Our firm rejection of the threat of the use of force, of its use, of terrorism, drug trafficking and any and all types of violence and discrimination.
2. Our determined support to a peaceful solution to conflicts, to the equal sovereignty of states, to non-intervention in the internal affairs of these states, to the self-determination of peoples, to international cooperation in economic and social matters, to multilateralism (that also includes free trade, because protectionism is to commerce as authoritarianism is to democracy ...)
3. Our steadfast commitment to the advancement and protection of human rights, because they constitute **the ethics of liberty and democracy**, and are aspects of the **dignity** that we need, much as we need the air we breathe almost without being conscious of it.
4. Our unwavering responsibility in the protection of the environment as a human right, and as a fundamental part in achieving truly sustainable development.

As **Americans**, we feel it is our ethic duty and political responsibility to reiterate in this global forum that:

1. We reject the breakdown of institutions in the Republic of Honduras and **we demand the immediate restoration of constitutional order, restoring to their posts the authorities, democratically elected by the Honduran people.**
2. ... And to persevere in the effort to integrate the American continent **without exclusions, or exceptions, or embargoes** (such the one imposed on Cuba), **without second class partners. We are all Americans. And equals.**

Mr. President,

Heads of State and Government, distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Without subsequent actions, postulates are sterile.

Uruguay is one of the main troop contributors to United Nations peacekeeping operations.

The difficulties around this peacekeeping system due to, among other factors, the growing demand for missions, their equally growing complexity and the effects of the global economic crisis on the funding for these operations, far from discouraging us, **stimulate us to bolster and coordinate efforts along with other Member States and the Secretary General to collaborate in stabilizing the areas affected by conflicts, the protection of the civilian population, institutional strengthening and the promotion of bases for economic and social development of affected countries.**

In adherence to our staunch rejection of terrorism, we encourage cooperation among States in the fight against it while **maintaining absolute respect for international law and human rights.**

Uruguay is among the countries that are signatories to the widest range of human rights conventions, and on the occasion of the Treaty Signing Ceremony for the present period, Uruguay will sign the Optional Protocol to the International Pact on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, thus becoming one of the first signatories to such an important international instrument.

Uruguay is also party to the main international conventions in the sphere of the environment and sustainable development.

As is well known, Uruguay receives significant investments that contribute to its industrial development, but it also exercises rigorous controls over their environmental quality, applying its internationally recognized regulations and demanding the use of the best available technologies, practicing effective control in the field of environmental impact.

Uruguay is also responsible, transparent and reliable as regards investment for sustainable development.

Mr. President,

Heads of State and Government, distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In these times of globalization, it is not only the economy that has to be globalized. **Peace, freedom, democracy, justice, dignity and the welfare of the people must be globalized as well.**

The countries represented here, each one according to its respective identity, are working towards this end.

And so does Uruguay. Faced with the impossibility of discussing the vast system of policies and actions that are part of this task, I will just mention two that Uruguayans wish to share with the international community, because they concern the needs, hopes, rights and responsibilities of all humanity.

Our country has taken on a firm commitment as regards tobacco control policies, both at the international level through the ratification of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, and at the national level through the implementation of policies for the improvement of the wellbeing of the population.

As of 2006, **Uruguay became the first smoke-free country in the Americas and the seventh in the world.**

It is no insignificant matter when you take into account that according to the World Health Organization, smoking is "*the leading avoidable cause of death worldwide*".

It is an epidemic that annually causes more than five million deaths in the world (more than one million in the Americas)

Five million a year ... this is more deaths than alcoholism, traffic accidents, AIDS, illegal drugs, murder and suicide combined!!

If the current trend continues, in the next 20 years, deaths caused by tobacco would double in the world and triple in our region.

Given that tobacco smoke does not only affect smokers¹, and that great achievements are usually a product of evolutionary processes that proceed in small steps, **our delegation at the United Nations sponsored and promoted the resolution adopted by this Assembly, whose implementation will allow us to have, at least in this sphere, a "smoke free United Nations"**

It is a partial but auspicious advance in the fight against this epidemic.

In May 2007, a year after becoming a smoke-free country, **Uruguay set out on the path to becoming a country with equal opportunity in access to information technologies.**

We are achieving this by means of the Ceibal Project, also known as "one laptop per child", that consists, precisely, in providing each student and teacher of our public primary school system with a computer with access to the Internet, all free of charge.

By the end of 2009 we will have provided an XO prototype to each of the 301,143 students and to 12,879 teachers in the country's 2,064 public elementary schools.

This includes students with learning, motor or visual disabilities, who receive computers especially designed for their needs.

Private schools are not excluded from this program and can take part by purchasing the prototype for a modest sum.

¹ Richard Doll: "Being in a room with a smoker for one hour a day is 100 times more likely to cause lung cancer than spending twenty years in a building containing asbestos." Richard Doll, English epidemiologist, 1985.

The Ceibal Project is completely funded by the Uruguayan State, who allocates funds not only for acquiring and preparing the prototypes, but also for their maintenance and the continuity of the program (which includes an information portal for students and teachers, interactive spaces, educational games and, soon, a television signal).

The Ceibal Project is much more than just handing over computers and, for this reason, is worth much more than its price.

Its true worth lies in developing intelligence, introducing deep changes in teaching and learning, and offering equal opportunities in access to information, starting in childhood (because equality is not a right for adults alone), and providing the knowledge indispensable for becoming a member of society and thus ensuring its proper functioning.

Mr. President,
Heads of State and Government, distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the beginning of this address, I stated that if the United Nation's reason for being is to improve what we are as human beings, the Organization must be capable of improving itself as a system.

But the United Nations is those who integrate it, **we, ourselves.**

Uruguay reaffirms its commitment to the United Nation's reform process.

The process that begun during the 2005 Summit, which involved the creation of two new structures within the Organization (the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission), should be completed with consideration for those subjects whose practical implementation is still pending or behind schedule with respect to the expected goals.

Mr. President,
Heads of state and Government, distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Michel de Montaigne taught us that **there is no greater destiny for human beings than taking care of the trade of being human.**

Almost five centuries later, it is fitting to remember the teachings of that great Renaissance humanist.

But it should not be remembered solely as something of the past: **we should assume it as a task of the present, put it into practice, or at least try.**

I believe there is no other option if we really want to survive as a species and to improve as human beings.

I also believe that if we make a responsible attempt, we shall achieve it.

With this conviction, disposition and confidence, I greet you on behalf of Uruguay.

Thank you very much.
