

UNITED NATIONS



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**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**ADDRESS TO JOINT SESSION OF THE SENATE  
AND CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES**

**Mexico City, 4 August 2008**

**Sr. Presidente del Senado,  
Distinguidos Senadores y Diputados,  
Excelencias,  
Señoras y señores,**

**Para mi es un gran honor estar aquí.**

**Quiero agradecerles la oportunidad de dar un mensaje al congreso.**

**In these halls and chambers, in this beautiful parliament building, you carry out some of Mexico's most important work. This is where you, the representatives of the Mexican people, translate their needs and aspirations into legislation. It is where you allocate funds that aim to improve their standards of living. It is a place where diverse points of view can be heard, where long-standing and emerging issues can be debated, and where you take the decisions that deliver progress to the nation.**

**As such, you provide a key link between law and life, and between the local and the national. But more so than ever before, most of the challenges we face have an international dimension. So you also provide a bridge between the local and the global.**

**This is a two-way street. Parliamentarians can bring to the international arena their unparalleled understanding of hopes and fears as they play out in the communities, homes and streets of their constituents. At the same time, you can bring to those men, women and young people a better sense of how global issues affect them, and how the work of the United Nations relates to them.**

**That role is more pivotal than ever. The world faces three critical challenges on which your engagement is essential: a climate crisis, a food crisis, and an emerging development emergency. Each by itself is a formidable threat. Yet they are deeply intertwined. We need a truly global response.**

**Climate change is not science fiction. It is real, and its impact is being felt already. Sea levels are on the rise, jeopardizing the coastal zones that are home to so much the world's population. Extreme weather – from drought to flooding – is damaging or destroying the crops of farmers across the globe. You felt the pain last year in Tabasco and Chiapas, and have felt it again recently as a result of uncommonly fierce hurricanes in Tamaulipas. I should stress that your neighbours in Texas have suffered from this latest storm as well; climate change cares little for borders. Other adverse effects lie in store in the near, not distant, future.**

**It is encouraging to know that Mexico has been so active in the fight against climate change. I understand that parliament itself is engaged in very lively discussions on reforming the energy sector. As I am sure those discussions are revealing, climate change is not only a burden; it is also an opportunity to put our societies on a more sustainable path – a path of growth that is also equitable and environmentally friendly.**

**The Bali Roadmap agreed last December represents important progress. Mexico's "Green Fund" proposal, made in Bali, has generated much expectation in Latin America and beyond. We look now to the meeting in Poznan, Poland, later this year, for concrete steps. Also by the end of this year, we must have a fully financed and operational Adaptation Fund, to help developing countries, which will have the hardest time coping with the fallout. We also need enlightened leadership, especially from the industrialized countries, based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. I will continue to work with leaders of all countries to ensure a successful agreement by the end of 2009.**

**We need to be equally determined in response to the food crisis. Prices have risen dramatically, already reversing some hard-won development advances. Soaring international prices have had an impact on consumers in Mexico, too. But I am pleased to note that Mexico has taken steps to address both short-term needs and long-term food production, in keeping with the recommendations adopted at the UN food summit last month in Rome. It is especially important to protect the most vulnerable from additional suffering, as I understand you have been striving to do.**

**For my part, I have been calling on world leaders to deliver the full range of immediate needs, including seeds and fertilizer for this year's planting cycle, especially for the world's 450 million small-scale farmers. Over the long term, we need to reverse years of underinvestment in agriculture and rural development and end subsidies in developed countries. Without such steps, another 100 million people could slide into hunger. Moreover, we could see a further increase in global migration, stagnating economic growth, and even instability in some of the most affected countries. Like you, I am disappointed that the tremendous efforts to conclude the seven-year-long Doha Round this year have not yielded the desired outcome. I hope the talks can be revitalized. A successful conclusion was and remains essential at a time when the world faces major development challenges.**

**The climate and food crises are hindering our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Progress in many countries is off track, particularly in Africa. It is noteworthy that Mexico has been able to set several “MDG plus” targets. I commend you on this achievement, and urge you to redouble action in those areas where that has not been possible, such as child malnutrition, maternal mortality, environmental sustainability and gender equality in political life. The latter should be of particular interest to you gathered here.**

**I know that in the Americas, entrenched inequality is as much a concern as extreme poverty. In recent decades, inequality in the region has risen within and among countries, and keeps rising. Yet it is not inevitable that, for example, the benefits of globalization in the Americas should be shared so narrowly. It is not automatic that there should be such extremes of “haves” and “have-nots”, or that powerful elites in many countries should command disproportionate shares of resources and wealth. These circumstances are in great part a result of policy choices.**

**This means that policy-making -- your efforts in this very chamber -- can address this predicament, and put in place measures that can create jobs, strengthen the coverage of social protection, and so on. This is a matter of social justice. But it is also essential for social cohesion in the region. People need to feel they have a stake in society – that they have equal opportunities, that their rights are recognized and protected, that they have a genuine chance to realize their full potential as individuals and productive members of their communities.**

**A successful effort against social exclusion would also help strengthen democracy in the region. The Americas have made great strides. At the same time, while meaningful elections are one measure of progress by which Latin America has fared well, there is also a need for the non-electoral aspects of democracy to establish deeper roots. We should be concerned when people say they would sacrifice democracy for economic and social progress, since it is possible to have both.**

**Strengthening the independence of the judiciary and protections for human rights would give citizens throughout the Americas a greater sense of participation. It would also go some way toward addressing the misgivings of some that democracy is not responding to the needs of the poor, and that the poor lack a voice while the powerful escape accountability. It seems highly appropriate to me to mark this year's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by reiterating our commitment to strengthening democracy and fighting against social inequality and poverty.**

**Freedom of the press must also be part of this picture. I am encouraged to know that the Mexican parliament signed a bill last year that effectively eliminated criminal penalties at the federal level for defamation. Journalists need this protection so that they can carry out their work without running the risk of being jailed. This is especially helpful for their efforts to report on corruption or other transnational threats.**

**I am thinking here of organized crime and trafficking in persons, arms and illegal drugs, which take a terrible toll in personal security and which can be a tremendous hindrance to development and the very functioning of a state. I know you and your neighbours are engaged on these challenges, and I welcome the fact that you have embraced a number of the UN conventions and frameworks that have been established for addressing them.**

**Finally, a major reason why I am in Mexico now is the International AIDS Conference, which I hope will be a great step forward in the fight against AIDS. It was an honor to attend yesterday's opening together with President Calderón.**

**It is a notable achievement that Mexico is the first country in Latin America to host an International AIDS Conference. In that regard, I commend Mexico for providing regional leadership in the response to this pandemic, which has been so devastating for so many people throughout the world and congratulate you for the policy that all antiretroviral medications are to be offered to all those in need free of charge.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**I know that Mexico is the 10<sup>th</sup> largest contributor to the UN budget. Mexico's contribution to the 3 pillars of the UN work - peace and security, development and human rights - is well recognized and expected to grow, commensurate with its emergence as an important middle income leader in international engagement.**

**Mexico's voice is already well respected across the international agenda. You are active in the G5, the OECD, the OAS, the Mesoamerican Project and, of course, the United Nations. And as a major emerging economy, your experience is of relevance to the rest of the world. Your current debates, both in the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, on the creation of a Mexican Development Cooperation Agency, situate you in the lead of South-South cooperation.**

**I look forward to having more Mexico in the UN, and more UN in Mexico. And I look forward to working with you to realize our shared goals. Thank you again for the privilege of appearing before you.**

***Muchas gracias.***