

## **Complete text of address by Brazil's president to UN 58th Session of General Assembly**

This is the complete English translation of president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's address to the opening session of the 58th General Assembly of the United Nations, yesterday, September 23, 2003, in New York. (AB)

Let my first words before this World Parliament be of confidence in the human capacity to overcome challenges and to move towards higher forms of partnership, both within and among nations.

On behalf of the Brazilian people I reaffirm our belief in the United Nations. Its role in promoting peace and social justice remains irreplaceable.

I pay tribute to Secretary General Kofi Annan for the leadership he has shown in defense of a world united through respect for international law and solidarity among nations.

This Assembly convenes under the impact of the brutal attack on the United Nations Mission in Baghdad, which took the life of its head officer, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, our compatriot Sérgio Vieira de Mello. Sérgio's renowned competence was nurtured by the only weapons in which he believed: dialogue, persuasion, and, above all, concern for the most vulnerable.

On behalf of the United Nations he showed a tolerant, peace-loving and courageous humanism that mirrors Brazil's libertarian soul.

Sérgio's sacrifice, and that of his colleagues, must not be in vain. We can best honor his memory by redoubling our efforts to protect human dignity wherever it is threatened.

I warmly greet Mr. Julian Hunte, who has been elected President of this Assembly at a particularly grave moment in the history of the United Nations. The international community faces enormous political, economic and social challenges requiring an accelerated pace of reform. Only thus will our collective decisions and actions be truly respected and effective.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In my nine months as President of Brazil, I have conferred with leaders of all continents.

I have sensed in them a deep concern to defend and strengthen multilateral institutions. The improvement of the multilateral system is the necessary counterpart to democratic practice within Nations. Every nation that practices democracy must strive to ensure that in international affairs decision-making is equally open, transparent, legitimate and representative.

The tragedies that have befallen Iraq and the Middle East can only be overcome within a multilateral framework, one in which the United Nations is given a central role.

In Iraq, the prevailing climate of insecurity and growing tension makes national reconstruction an even more complex task. This impasse can only be overcome under the leadership of the United

Nations. Leadership not only in reestablishing acceptable security conditions, but equally in guiding the political process towards the restoration of Iraqi sovereignty, as soon as possible.

We must not shy away from our collective responsibilities. A war can perhaps be won single-handedly. But peace - lasting peace - cannot be secured without the support of all.

Mr. President,

Two years later, the images of the barbaric attack on September 11 still haunt us. There is a commendable willingness today to adopt more effective measures to deal with terrorism, weapons of mass destruction and organized crime. Unfortunately, there are also worrisome signs of an attempt to discredit our Organization and even to divest the United Nations of its political authority.

Let there be no ambiguity on this subject. No matter how invaluable its humanitarian work, the United Nations was conceived to do more than simply clear away the rubble of conflicts it was unable to prevent. Our central task is to preserve people from the scourge of war; to negotiate settlements inspired by the principles and objectives of the San Francisco Charter. Let us not place greater trust on military might than on the institutions we created with the light of Reason and the vision of History.

Reform of the United Nations has become an urgent task given the present risks to the international political order. The Security Council must be fully empowered to deal with crises and threats to peace. It must therefore be equipped with the tools for effective action. Above all, its decisions must be seen as legitimate by the Community of Nations as a whole. Its composition - in particular as concerns permanent membership - cannot remain unaltered almost 60 years on. It can no longer ignore the changing world. More specifically, it must take into account the emergence in the international scene of developing countries. They have become important actors that often exercise a critical role in ensuring the pacific settlement of disputes.

Brazil believes it has a useful contribution to make. It seeks not to advance an exclusive conception of international security - but rather to give expression to the perceptions and aspirations of a region that today is a hallmark of peaceful co-existence among its members and that is a force for international stability. Given the support received within South America and beyond, Brazil is encouraged to continue advocating for a Security Council that better reflects contemporary reality.

We also favor an Economic and Social Council capable of bringing about a fair and just economic order. It is crucial that the Economic and Social Council regain the role bestowed upon it by the founding fathers of the Organization. We wish to see the ECOSOC cooperate actively with the Security Council in preventing conflicts and in nation-building.

The General Assembly, in turn, must be strengthened politically so as to focus on priority issues and avoid duplication of efforts. The General Assembly has fulfilled a historically important role by convening major Conferences and other meetings on human rights, the environment, population, women's rights, racial discrimination, AIDS and social development. However, the General Assembly should not hesitate to take on its responsibilities for maintaining international peace and security. Our organization has shown that there are legal and political alternatives to a veto-induced

paralysis and to actions lacking multilateral endorsement.

Peace, security, development and social justice are indivisible.

Mr. President,

Brazil has endeavored to practice with utmost consistency the principles it stands for.

The new relationship we are forging with our South American neighbors is founded on mutual respect, friendship and cooperation.

We are moving beyond our shared history and geography to create a unique sense of kinship and partnership. In this context, our relationship with Argentina remains crucial.

South America is increasingly seen as a region of peace, democracy and development, which aspires to become a new outpost for growth in a stagnating world economy.

We are deepening the already significant ties with traditional partners in North America and Europe, but also seek to widen and diversify our international presence. Our relations with China and the Russian Federation have revealed unexpected complementarities.

We are proud to be the country with the second largest population of African descent in the world. In November, I will be traveling to five countries in Southern Africa to foster economic, political, social and cultural cooperation. With the same goal in mind, we will also host a summit meeting between South American countries and the Member States of the Arab League. With India and South Africa we have established a trilateral forum for political consultations and joint projects.

The protectionism practiced by rich countries unfairly penalizes efficient producers in developing countries. Today this is the greatest obstacle to launching a new era of economic and social progress. Brazil and its partners in the G-22 maintained during the WTO summit in Cancun that the crucial goal of effectively opening markets is achievable through pragmatic and mutually reinforcing negotiations that bring about an effective opening of markets. I reaffirm our willingness to travel along a path that converges towards solutions that benefit all countries, taking into account the interests of developing countries.

We are entirely in favor of free trade as long as we can all compete on a level playing field. Liberalization should not require countries to abandon the prerogative of formulating industrial, technological, social and environmental policy. In Brazil we are engaged in setting up a new framework that balances economic stability and social inclusion. From this standpoint, trade negotiations are not an end in themselves, but rather a means to foster development and overcome poverty.

International trade should be a tool not only for creating wealth but also for its distribution.

Mr. President,

I reaffirm before this truly universal Assembly the appeal I launched at the Davos and Porto Alegre Fora and at the Enlarged Summit of the G-8 in Evian. We must wage - both politically and materially - the only war from which we will all emerge victorious: the war against hunger and extreme poverty.

The eradication of hunger in the world is a moral and political imperative. And we all know that it is possible. What is truly required is political will.

I do not wish to dwell on signs of barbarism. I would rather acknowledge ethical and social progress, no matter how modest. Yet there is no dismissing the statistics that expose the terrible scourge of extreme poverty and hunger in the world. Hunger today touches a fourth of the world's population - including 300 million children. Daily, 24 thousand people fall victim to malnutrition-related diseases.

Nothing is more absurd or intolerable than the pervasiveness of hunger in the XXI century, the golden age of science and technology.

With each passing day human intelligence enlarges the horizons of the possible and achieves prodigious feats. Yet, hunger persists and, what is worse, it is spreading throughout various regions of the planet.

The more seem to approach the divine through our creative abilities, the more we betray our aspirations through our inability to respect and protect our fellow creatures. The more we celebrate God by generating riches, the more we hurt our ideals by not minimally sharing them.

What is the use of all our scientific and technological genius, of all the abundance and luxury that it has generated, if we do not put it to use, guaranteeing the most sacred of rights: the right to life?

I recall Pope Paul VI's penetrating warning, made 36 years ago but still surprisingly relevant: "the starving people of the world dramatically address their plea to the wealthy".

Hunger is an emergency and should be dealt with as such.

The eradication of hunger is a civilizational challenge which requires that we seek a shortcut to the future.

Will we act to eliminate hunger or will we forsake our credibility through omission?

We no longer have the right to allege that we were not home when they knocked at our door asking for solidarity.

We have no right to say to the famished that have waited for so long: wait for another century.

The true path to peace is to fight hunger and extreme poverty without truce, in a campaign of solidarity that unites the planet rather than by deepening the divisions and the hatred that inflames people and sows terror.

Despite the failure of systems that favor the generation of wealth without reducing extreme poverty, many people still persist in their short-sightedness and greed.

Since my inauguration as President of Brazil on January 1, significant progress has been made on the economic front. Stability is back and the groundwork for a renewed cycle of sustained growth has been laid. We will continue to work hard to balance public accounts and to reduce external vulnerability. We will spare no effort to increase exports, raise the savings rate, attract foreign investment and start growing again.

Yet at the same time we must strive to cope with the need for food, jobs and education and health services for millions of Brazilians living below the poverty line. We are committed to bringing about major social reform in the country.

Hunger is the most dramatic and urgent expression of a structural imbalance requiring correction through integrated policies that foster full citizenship. That is why I launched the "Zero Hunger" program in Brazil. It seeks to eradicate hunger and its root causes in the shortest possible time. It does so by promoting a major solidarity drive and a wide-ranging program bringing together government, civil society and the private sector. The results of combined emergency and structural measures are already benefiting four million individuals who were previously denied the basic right to a daily meal. The goal of the "Zero Hunger" Program is that, by the end of my term in office, no Brazilian will go hungry.

Mr. President,

The United Nations adopted the highly acclaimed Millennium Goals. The FAO has at its disposal outstanding technical and social expertise.

But we need to make a qualitative leap in the global endeavor to fight hunger.

That is why I proposed setting up a Global Fund to Fight Hunger and suggested means to make it operational.

Other proposals have been put forward, some already integrated into the United Nations' existing programs.

What has been lacking until now is the indispensable political will of us all, especially of those countries in a position to contribute most. Creating new funds is of no use if no resources are committed. The Millennium Goals are very worthy, but if we remain passive, if our collective behavior remains unchanged, these goals may never materialize - and the ensuing frustration will be immense.

More than ever good intentions must give rise to concrete gestures. We must put commitments into practice.

We must practice what we preach. With audacity and good sense. With our feet firmly on the

ground, yet boldly.

We must be innovative in both content and form, adopting new methods and solutions with intense social participation.

For this reason I am submitting for the consideration of this General Assembly the proposal for setting up, within the United Nations itself, a World Committee to Fight Hunger. It would be made up of Heads of State or Government from all continents with the purpose of unifying and operationalizing proposals.

We hope to attract donations from developed and developing countries according to their capacities, as well as from large private enterprises and non-governmental organizations.

Mr. President,

My life experience and political history have taught me to believe above all in the power of dialogue. I will never forget Gandhi's invaluable lesson: "when out of violence something good appears to result, this good is at best short-lived; while the evil that it produces is enduring". Democratic dialogue is the most efficient of all tools for change. The same determination that goes into my endeavors and those of my partners to make Brazilian society more just and humane, I will invest in the establishment of international partnerships that foster equitable development and a more peace-loving, tolerant and solidary world.

This century, so full of technological and material promise, must not be allowed to slide into political and spiritual decline. It is our obligation to mold, under the reinvigorated leadership of the United Nations, an international climate of peace and conciliation. True peace will bloom from democracy, from respect for international law, from the dismantling of deadly weapons arsenals and, above all, from the final eradication of hunger.

Mr. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We cannot afford to frustrate such high hopes.

The greatest and noblest challenge facing humanity is precisely that of becoming more humane.

It is time to call peace by its true name: social justice.

I am convinced that together we shall be able to grasp this historic opportunity to bring about justice.

Thank you.

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