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## PRESIDENT OF THE 64TH SESSION UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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### At the Opening of the General Debate

#### New York, 23 September 2009

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Heads of State and Government,  
Mr. Secretary-General,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me, for my country Libya, and its leadership to preside over the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly. I am humbled by the trust and confidence you have bestowed upon me. But first, I would like to commend His Excellency President Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann for his tireless efforts during the sixty-third session. I would like to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his support and cooperation. We are determined to work together for a more effective and strengthened organization that is responsive to the daunting challenges facing the world today.

The sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly is taking place at an important critical juncture. The international community is faced with multiple crises and enormous challenges. These include the challenges of international peace and security which continue to threaten peace in various parts of the world through protracted inter-states conflicts, civil wars, weapons of mass destruction, terrorism and organized transnational crimes. The challenge of environmental degradation and climate change, extreme poverty and deadly infectious disease, such as HIV AIDS, requires innovative and concerted actions. The set-backs to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, the economic, financial, food and energy crisis, disarmament and non-proliferation issues are all challenges that form the backdrop of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

Let us be clear about one important issue. These challenges can only be addressed through international cooperation among States. They can only be addressed through a well-functioning multi-lateral system. Multilateralism is the way forward to address global common-shared problems and it is also the only way to ensure effective and collective action.

The international community has learned from experience that transnational threats and the multiple crises facing the world today can only be addressed through responsible international cooperation. We learned also that unilateral actions can only exacerbate conflicts and delay the search for more sustainable solutions.

The United Nations is the embodiment of multilateralism. It is therefore the most legitimate forum for ensuring concerted global action. The General Assembly is the 'chief deliberative policy-making organ of the United Nations,' holding a global membership and universal legitimacy unmatched by any other organization.

I am very pleased to see consensus on the need to revitalize the United Nations to ensure that the organization is responding effectively to the emerging transnational threats and crises. Political will and leadership are critical to achieving this objective. An effective and credible rule-based multilateral system requires an energized and reformed United Nations.

It is in this context that I pledge to work with all Member States to facilitate consensus on a revitalized General Assembly, a more representative and reformed Security Council and other initiatives aimed at improving the effectiveness and management of the organization. As President of the General Assembly, I commit to work with all Member States to ensure effective responses to global crises: strengthening multilateralism and dialogue among civilizations for international peace, security and development.

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges to our shared planet. During this session, we therefore must intensify our efforts to confront the negative man-made effects on the climate system. No Member State, regardless of geography, development status or political creed, can afford to ignore this issue. Nor can any Member State solve this issue alone. The

peoples of the world are looking to the General Assembly for leadership. We must respond in unity and with resolve. Thus, let us cast our differences aside as we work towards a global climate change agreement in Copenhagen in December. As President of the General Assembly, I am deeply committed to this cause and pledge my readiness to work with the membership to achieve this goal.

Despite international consensus and many initiatives, progress has been mixed in efforts to promote durable peace and sustainable developments in Africa. The bulk of UN peacekeeping remains in Africa. However, greater focus on conflict prevention and resolution and a strengthened partnership with the African Union and sub-regional organizations are required. We need a more substantive, comprehensive and coherent approach to peace, security and development in Africa. The General Assembly can play an important role in this regard. The

General Debate provides an ideal forum for an exchange of views on these important issues.

I am very pleased that the General Assembly decided 'to convene in 2010, at the commencement of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly, a high-level plenary meeting of the Assembly, with the participation of Heads of State and Government'. This high-level meeting of the Assembly will be held just five years before the deadline for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally-agreed development goals. It will take place at a time of great insecurity in a global economy weakened by the financial crises and at a time when we are witnessing the erosion of the development gains made in previous decades, with a particular impact on the most vulnerable. This important event will be an opportunity to assess the progress made so far. It will be an opportunity to identify impediments to progress and to develop new ideas to ensure progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. Ensuring adequate preparations for this unique event will be a high priority for me during this session of the General Assembly.

Supporting post-conflict Peacebuilding will continue to be a major concern for Member States. The international community's record in this area is mixed. The establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission in 2006 was meant to fill a gap by giving the necessary attention to countries emerging from conflict by marshalling resources and coordinating international assistance. The founding resolution establishing the Peacebuilding Commission provided for a review after five years. I will work with Member States to develop and facilitate a process for this review; and I hope that new ideas will emerge on how to make this United Nations body more effective and responsive.

In 2005, our Heads of States and Government reiterated that the promotion and protection of human rights is one of the three principal purposes of this organization, and declared that human rights stood, alongside development and peace and security, as 'a pillar of the organization'. Let us commit to ensuring that the 'third pillar' is a pillar of stone, buttressed by the resources, respect and credibility, benefiting an institution dedicated to the cause of human dignity and justice. I will work with Member States to reaffirm our collective commitment to universality, non-selectivity, and the indivisible, interdependent and interrelated nature of all human rights: civil and political, economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development. Let us approach this pillar with humility, mindful of the fact that all Member States have human rights challenges. And let us embrace it with purpose, knowing that those challenges must be met, both for the cause of human rights itself, and for the benefit of peace and development.

During this session, we will be called upon to follow-up on the outcome of the Durban Review Conference, at a moment when the scourge of racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance challenge societies across the globe. We will be required to support the further development of the Human Rights Council and to begin to prepare ourselves for its five year review. If we do so with dedication to the cause, and in a spirit of principled, constructive engagement, I am confident that we will leave the 'third pillar' of human rights stronger than when we began.

The question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East have been on the agenda of the plenary of the General Assembly for many years. Despite many efforts, the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict remain unresolved and continue to constitute a serious threat to international peace and security. There is a universal recognition that with the rapidly deteriorating conditions in the occupied territories, the situation has become unsustainable. A comprehensive and lasting settlement is urgently needed. Despite the enormous challenges, new opportunities may be emerging, and the General Assembly with its mandates and international legitimacy must play its part in contributing constructively to realizing the objective of comprehensive peace in the region.

Mr. Secretary-General,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Every year frequent references are made by Heads of State and Government, both the most powerful and the smallest, on the importance of the rule of law in their national affairs. Yet, it is in striving for the rule of law within international affairs, the so-called rule of law at the international level, that this organization has a unique responsibility.

Strengthening the rule of law at the international level requires a shared vision. For me, this vision consists of an international system in which the exercise of power, not only by States but by others, including the organization itself, is subject to law. The Charter of the United Nations does this, in particular in managing the use of force by Member States. This General Assembly is, since its inception, the universal center for international standard setting in various fields of international law. Yet, the rule of law means little in the absence of accountability of law. In the face of violations of international law, there must be effective means of redress. Our international system will always be complex and multifaceted and means of ensuring such accountability of States, individuals and other actors, likewise. While the international community is constantly strengthening accountability mechanisms including means of dispute resolution, we have far to travel to fulfill this essential part of the vision. Accountability to law is not

enough for an international rule of law in harmony with all of our shared fundamental values. The law itself, even at the international law, must reinforce our common belief in the fundamental dignity of all human beings. Our vision must involve an international system of States, this organization and other actors subject to and effectively accountable to law, which resonates fully with the pursuits of justice and universal human rights.

Thank you.

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