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President Bush Addresses The United Nations General Assembly

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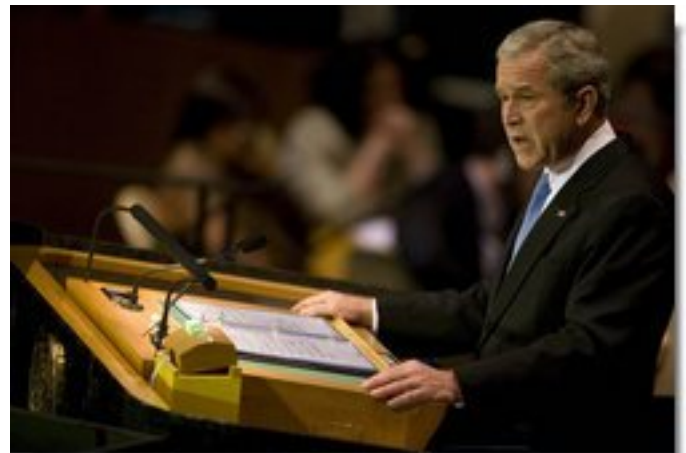
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9:57 A.M. EDT

PRESIDENT BUSH: Mr. Secretary General, Mr. President, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen: Thank you for the opportunity to address the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Sixty years ago, representatives from 16 nations gathered to begin deliberations on a new international bill of rights. The document they produced is called the Universal Declaration of Human Rights -- and it stands as a landmark achievement in the history of human liberty. It opens by recognizing "the inherent dignity" and the "equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family" as "the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world." And as we gather for this 62nd General Assembly, the standards of the Declaration must guide our work in this world.

Achieving the promise of the Declaration requires confronting long-term threats; it also requires answering the immediate needs of today. The nations in this chamber have our differences, yet there are some areas where we can all agree. When innocent people are trapped in a life of murder and fear, the Declaration is not being upheld. When millions of children starve to death or perish from a mosquito bite, we're not doing our duty in the world. When whole societies are cut off from the prosperity of the global economy, we're all worse off. Changing these underlying conditions is what the Declaration calls the work of "larger freedom" -- and it must be the work of every nation in this assembly.



This great institution must work for great purposes -- to free people from tyranny and violence, hunger

and disease, illiteracy and ignorance, and poverty and despair. Every member of the United Nations must join in this mission of liberation.

First, the mission of the United Nations requires liberating people from tyranny and violence. The first article of the Universal Declaration begins, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." The truth is denied by terrorists and extremists who kill the innocent with the aim of imposing their hateful vision on humanity. The followers of this violent ideology are a threat to civilized people everywhere. All civilized nations must work together to stop them -- by sharing intelligence about their networks, and choking their -- off their finances, and bringing to justice their operatives.

In the long run, the best way to defeat extremists is to defeat their dark ideology with a more hopeful vision -- the vision of liberty that founded this body. The United States salutes the nations that have recently taken strides toward liberty -- including Ukraine and Georgia and Kyrgyzstan and Mauritania and Liberia, Sierra Leone and Morocco. The Palestinian Territories have moderate leaders, mainstream leaders that are working to build free institutions that fight terror, and enforce the law, and respond to the needs of their people. The international community must support these leaders, so that we can advance the vision of two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, living side-by-side in peace and security.

Brave citizens in Lebanon and Afghanistan and Iraq have made the choice for democracy -- yet the extremists have responded by targeting them for murder. This is not a show of strength -- it is evidence of fear. And the extremists are doing everything in their power to bring down these young democracies. The people of Lebanon and Afghanistan and Iraq have asked for our help. And every civilized nation has a responsibility to stand with them.



Every civilized nation also has a responsibility to stand up for the people suffering under dictatorship. In Belarus, North Korea, Syria, and Iran, brutal regimes deny their people the fundamental rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration. Americans are outraged by the situation in Burma, where a military junta has imposed a 19-year reign of fear. Basic freedoms of speech, assembly, and worship are severely restricted. Ethnic minorities are persecuted. Forced child labor, human trafficking, and rape are common. The regime is holding more than 1,000 political prisoners -- including Aung San Suu Kyi, whose party was elected overwhelmingly by the Burmese people in 1990.

The ruling junta remains unyielding, yet the people's desire for freedom is unmistakable. This morning, I'm announcing a series of steps to help bring peaceful change to Burma. The United States will tighten economic sanctions on the leaders of the regime and their financial backers. We will impose an expanded visa ban on those responsible for the most egregious violations of human rights, as well as their family members. We'll continue to support the efforts of humanitarian groups working to alleviate suffering in Burma. And I urge the United Nations and all nations to use their diplomatic and economic leverage to help the Burmese people reclaim their freedom.

In Cuba, the long rule of a cruel dictator is nearing its end. The Cuban people are ready for their freedom. And as that nation enters a period of transition, the United Nations must insist on free speech, free assembly, and ultimately, free and competitive elections.

In Zimbabwe, ordinary citizens suffer under a tyrannical regime. The government has cracked down on peaceful calls for reform, and forced millions to flee their homeland. The behavior of the Mugabe regime is an assault on its people -- and an affront to the principles of the Universal Declaration. The United Nations must insist on change in Harare -- and must insist for the freedom of the people of Zimbabwe.

In Sudan, innocent civilians are suffering repression -- and in the Darfur region, many are losing their lives to genocide. America has responded with tough sanctions against those responsible for the violence. We've provided more than \$2 billion in humanitarian and peacekeeping aid. I look forward to attending a Security Council meeting that will focus on Darfur, chaired by the French President. I appreciate France's leadership in helping to stabilize Sudan's neighbors. And the United Nations must answer this challenge to conscience, and live up to its promise to promptly deploy peacekeeping forces to Darfur.

Second, the mission of the United Nations requires liberating people from hunger and disease. Article 25 of the Universal Declaration states: "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food and clothing and housing and medical care." Around the world, the United Nations is carrying out noble efforts to live up to these words.

Feeding the hungry has long been a special calling for my nation. Today, more than half the world's food assistance comes from America. We send emergency food stocks to starving people from camps in Sudan to slums in -- around the world. I've proposed an innovative initiative to alleviate hunger under which America would purchase the crops of local farmers in Africa and elsewhere, rather than shipping in food from the developed world. This would help build up local agriculture and break the cycle of famine in the developing world -- and I urge our United States Congress to support this initiative.

Many in this hall are bringing the spirit of generosity to fighting HIV/AIDS and malaria. Five years ago, in Sub-Saharan Africa, an AIDS diagnosis was widely considered a death sentence, and fewer than 50,000 people infected with the virus were receiving treatment. The world responded by creating the Global Fund, which is working with governments and the private sector to fight the disease around the world. The United States decided to take these steps a little further by launching the \$15 billion Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. Since 2003, this effort has helped bring cutting-edge medicines to more than a million people in sub-Sahara Africa. It's a good start. So earlier this year, I proposed to double our initial commitment to \$30 billion. By coming together, the world can turn the tide against HIV/AIDS -- once and for all.

Malaria is another common killer. In some countries, malaria takes as many lives as HIV/AIDS -- the vast majority of them children under the age of five years old. Every one of these deaths is unnecessary, because the disease is preventable and treatable. The world knows what it takes to stop malaria -- bed nets and indoor spraying and medicine to treat the disease. Two years ago, America

launched a \$1.2 billion malaria initiative. Other nations and the private sector are making vital contributions, as well. I call on every member state to maintain its focus, find new ways to join this cause, and bring us closer to the day when malaria deaths are no more.

Third, the mission of the United Nations requires liberating people from the chains of illiteracy and ignorance. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration states: "Everyone has the right to education." And when nations make the investments needed to educate their people, the whole world benefits. Better education unleashes the talent and potential of its citizens, and adds to the prosperity of all of us. Better education promotes better health and greater independence. Better education increases the strength of democracy, and weakens the appeal of violent ideologies. So the United States is joining with nations around the world to help them provide a better education for their people.

A good education starts with good teachers. In partnership with other nations, America has helped train more than 600,000 teachers and administrators. A good education requires good textbooks. So in partnership with other nations, America has distributed tens of millions of textbooks. A good education requires access to good schools. So in partnership with other nations, America is helping nations raise standards in their schools at home, and providing scholarships to help students come to schools in the United States. In all our education efforts, our nation is working to expand access for women and girls, so that the opportunity to get a decent education is open to all.

Finally, the mission of the United Nations requires liberating people from poverty and despair. Article 23 of the Universal Declaration states: "Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, [and] to just and favorable conditions of work." In the 21st century, this requires ensuring that people in poor countries have the same opportunity to benefit from the global economy that citizens of wealthy countries have.

The United Nations provides vital economic assistance designed to help developing nations grow their economies and reach their potential. The United States agrees with that position; we've dramatically increased our own development assistance -- and we're delivering that aid in innovative ways. We started the Millennium Challenge Account to reward nations that govern justly, fight corruption, invest in their people, and promote economic freedom. With this aid, we're reaching out to developing nations in partnership, not paternalism. And we're ensuring that our aid dollars reach those who need them -- and achieve results.

In the long run, the best way to lift people out of poverty is through trade and investment. A nation that is open and trading with the world will create economic rewards that far exceed anything they could get through foreign aid. During the 1990s, developing nations that significantly lowered tariffs saw their per capita income grow about three times faster than other developing countries. Open markets ignite growth, encourage investment, increase transparency, strengthen the rule of law, and help countries help themselves.

The international community now has an historic chance to open markets around the world by concluding a successful Doha Round of trade talks. A successful Doha outcome would mean real and substantial openings in agriculture, goods, and services -- and real and substantial reductions in trade-distorting subsidies. The world's largest trading nations, including major developing countries, have a

special responsibility to make the tough political decisions to reduce trade barriers. America has the will and flexibility to make those necessary decisions. Our negotiators are demonstrating that spirit in Geneva. I urge other leaders to direct their negotiators to do the same. And I'm optimistic that we can reach a good Doha agreement -- and seize this once-in-a-generation opportunity.

In the meantime, America will continue to pursue agreements that open trade and investment wherever we can. We recently signed free trade agreements with Peru, Colombia, Panama, and South Korea. These agreements embody the values of open markets -- transparent and fair regulation, respect for private property, and resolving disputes under international law rules. These are good agreements, and they're now ready for a congressional vote, and I urge the Congress to approve them as soon as possible.

As America works with the United Nations to alleviate immediate needs, we're also coming together to address longer-term challenges. Together, we're preparing for pandemics that could cause death and suffering on a global scale. Together, we're working to stop the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Together, we're confronting the challenges of energy security, and environmental quality, and climate change. I appreciate the discussions on climate change led by the Secretary General last night. I look forward to further discussions at the meeting of major economies in Washington later this week.

The goals I've outlined today cannot be achieved overnight -- and they cannot be achieved without reform in this vital institution. The United States is committed to a strong and vibrant United Nations. Yet the American people are disappointed by the failures of the Human Rights Council. This body has been silent on repression by regimes from Havana to Caracas to Pyongyang and Tehran -- while focusing its criticism excessively on Israel. To be credible on human rights in the world, the United Nations must reform its own Human Rights Council.

Some have also called for reform to the structure of the Security Council, including an expansion of its membership. The United States is open to this prospect. We believe that Japan is well-qualified for permanent membership on the Security Council, and that other nations should be considered, as well. The United States will listen to all good ideas, and we will support changes to the Security Council as part of broader U.N. reform. And in all we do, I call on member states to work for an institution that adheres to strict ethical standards, and lives up to the high principles of the Universal Declaration.

With the commitment and courage of this chamber, we can build a world where people are free to speak, assemble, and worship as they wish; a world where children in every nation grow up healthy, get a decent education, and look to the future with hope; a world where opportunity crosses every border. America will lead toward this vision where all are created equal, and free to pursue their dreams. This is the founding conviction of my country. It is the promise that established this body. And with our determination, it can be the future of our world.

Thank you, and God bless. (Applause.)

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