

Statement by the Right Honourable Raila Odinga, Prime Minister of the Republic of Kenya, to the United Nations General Assembly

September 25, 2009

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary General,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure Mr. President, to congratulate you on the singular honour of your having been chosen for the Presidency of this 64th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. I would like to assure you of my delegation's fullest support as you undertake your momentous responsibility to unite member states in pursuing the common goal of a more humane, secure, united and prosperous world.

There was a time recently when this elusive goal finally appeared within reach, but multiple new challenges have coalesced to render the goal even more distant.

It is therefore most encouraging, Mr. President, that the world is turning to the United Nations to find a common, global path to resolving the most intractable difficulties facing humanity. There is a clear recognition emerging that together we can all rise; separately, we can only sink.

There was a time when the powerful disdained this institution's ability to be a unifying player. This is now changing, and in this regard I would like to commend the President of the United States, who holds a very special place in the hearts of Africans, Kenyans in particular, for having so eloquently on Wednesday indicated the centrality of the UN in charting common solutions.

In order to better equip the United Nations for meeting these challenges, Mr. President, we must continue to press for reform in the Organization. The Security Council in particular must be enlarged and made more democratic and representative of current day reality. Part of the enlargement must include permanent, veto-bearing seats for Africa.

The world can no longer continue to marginalize a continent which is home to nearly a billion people. This is wrong in principle but even more it is wrong in practice. We cannot find sustainable solutions to our challenges when such a large part of humanity is given so little voice and role in that quest for peace.

Mr. President,

The world is now acutely aware that the quest for peace begins with ensuring the survival of the planet. I would therefore like to thank Secretary General Ban Ki-moon for having convened the high level meeting on climate change, which has put this issue squarely onto the world's centre stage. There is no issue that clearly unites the population of the entire world as climate change does.

Regrettably, the far-sighted decision at the 2005 United Nations World Summit to explore the possibility of a more coherent institutional framework for International Environmental Governance (IED) has not borne any fruit. This is particularly unacceptable now when climate change is indeed the most pressing challenge of our times.

We therefore call for the upgrading of UNEP in Nairobi so that it can become the central environmental institution handling the numerous conventions.

We have noted with regret the emergence of multiple centres dealing with environmental issues. This dissipates their impact and sometimes even leads to contradictory actions. The UN Office in Nairobi should now be elevated to the same level UN offices in Geneva and Vienna to enable it to provide comprehensive support to all member states and organizations struggling to adjust to a new paradigm of a sustainable and dynamic green economy.

Without that, the lives of billions will be imperiled. Already, as the Secretary General pointed out on Wednesday, another 100 million people may fall below the poverty line this year from climate change setbacks. Markets may be bouncing back but incomes and jobs are not. These developments do not augur well for the future.

Mr. President,

I regret to say that my own country is emblematic of the woes unleashed by years of rampant excesses in the global and local mismanagement of our environment. The melting of the famed ice caps of Mt. Kenya and nearby Mt. Kilimanjaro, the destruction of vast swathes of our once beautiful forests, the drying of fast-flowing rivers, the intensifying cycles of drought and then the floods, the spread of Malaria to highland

regions as temperature rise -- these are all consequences of human action within and outside our borders. And so the solution also must also entail action on both fronts.

The greater challenge for us, I am afraid, is the external one. We, like the rest of Africa, produce only a tiny proportion of the emissions that are rapidly warming the planet and wreaking havoc in our capacity to produce adequate amounts of food and energy and husband sustainable water supplies. Our economies are in disarray. We are victims of the richer world's acts and omissions, and so we do need large amounts of money in assistance and private sector investment to reverse the course of events. The world must agree on concrete actions in Copenhagen.

But we in Kenya are not interested in playing the blame game or waiting for international action to materialize. We have already begun to take very tough political decisions to reverse the ravages. Our immediate goal is to fully restore our largest water tower, the famed Mau, as well as the other four towers, and are embarking on a huge reforestation drive to plant seven billion trees which will recreate the carbon-taming "sinks" that once made us self sufficient in food and energy.

We are also undertaking a crash programme designed to rapidly shift energy production to green technologies using assets that we are naturally rich in – wind and sun, but most important of all, geothermal energy, which could more than double our current energy production within four years.

For all of this, we are mobilizing local resources but we will need significant assistance and investment to succeed in our goal of self-sufficiency the green way. The rich nations have recognized that they have a self interest in promoting such green commitments in developing countries, but the mechanisms in place to support these need to be refined and made more effective in quickly releasing resources.

We therefore support British Prime Minister Gordon Brown's proposal for a \$100 billion facility, and at the same time, urge the \$20 billion pledged for enhanced food production by the G8 be speedily mobilized and disbursed.

Where we need assistance most immediately is for feeding the 10 million Kenyans who are now living in hunger and could face starvation shortly. Just last week, we declared this as a national disaster that would need 500 million dollars to rectify, out of which 250 million dollars would be mobilized from our own resources and the other 250 million dollars we are urgently appealing for from our donor partners.

Tens of thousands of livestock have died. This devastation is a result primarily of climate change. We have had droughts before but they now recur much more frequently and with greater severity. One drought year is difficult enough, but the rains have now failed us for four consecutive seasons. I appeal to our well wishers, which are many, to assist us in this dire emergency.

To mitigate suffering, we have done a massive mobilization, including of the military, in providing relief, and drilling boreholes and transporting water to areas in acute need.

Mr. President,

I am very proud to say, Mr. President, that despite the terrible post-election violence and the subsequent multiple reverses which made reconciliation and reconstruction so much harder, our people have shown an extraordinary maturity and resilience in rising to their unprecedented challenges. We were able to overcome the election bitterness with an Accord we signed with the help of the African Union and the Kofi Annan mediation, supported by the United Nations and Secretary General Ban ki-moon, who personally visited Kenya at the height of the crisis. Thank you Mr. Secretary General.

Mr. President,

Let me now turn to the one area where peace does not prevail and which is a source of immense concern to the entire international community – Somalia.

As its immediate neighbor, and with a large population of Kenyan Somalis, no country has done more to assist Somalia in overcoming its divisions and conflicts.

No one is keener therefore than we are to help defeat the forces of extremism in Somalia, which have so much sway because of the help of external elements. The continuing inflow of refugees, small arms and light weapons is the major source of insecurity in our country.

The latest setback from this insecurity is disruption through piracy of international trade in one of the busiest sea routes in the world. Despite the risk it exposes us to, Kenya has offered facilities for detention and prosecution of suspected pirates, as part of our international obligation to promote peace. We have also offered to host a United Nations-organized conference in Kenya on how to coordinate and more effectively deal with the scourge of piracy.

In return, we ask the international community to recognize our many sacrifices and assist us in dealing with our major refugee and security burdens.

IGAD and the African Union has recommended to the UN Security Council to impose a no fly zone and locate of airport and seaports held by insurgents to prevent arm inflows. Kenya fully supports this

position. It is now incumbent upon the United Nations Security Council to take decisive action to forestall further anarchy in Somalia.

To succeed in the quest for Somali peace, we must recognize that the present focus primarily on the use of force has not seen any curbing of extremism. Indeed, the security and humanitarian crises are worse than ever before.

We must therefore take a more comprehensive approach in tackling the extremists, which includes encouraging the Transitional Federal Government to more aggressively pursue its commitment to a much more inclusive political process to bring into the government ALL forces which eschew violence.

Such outreach to all moderates can only succeed with much greater international support. It is regrettable that many pledges made at the Brussels meeting have yet to be honoured. I call upon all those who have not honoured their pledges to do so immediately.

Mr. President,

Turning back to the global economic crisis, it is now recognized that one of its principal causes is the weakness of the international financial system. We should strengthen and promote effective multilateralism with the United Nations at the center. We need to reform the international financial governance institutions so that they can prevent crises and develop more effective and equitable responses to them.

Mr. President,

The ideals and principles of the United Nations are more than ever today the surest hope for a more prosperous and equitable world. Multilateralism in this globalized age is the only sure way to ensure that peace, development and unity prevail at a time when the world is riven with so many divisions.

We need a genuine partnership among all nations and peoples so that everyone feels he or she is a critical stakeholder in national and international decision making.

Within democratic nations, each person's vote is equal to the others, regardless of their power or wealth. That is the principle that must finally be applied to the workings of the entire international system.

THANK YOU.