



**STATEMENT OF GUATEMALA
GENERAL DEBATE
75th SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**HIS EXCELLENCY MISTER PEDRO BROLO VILA
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF GUATEMALA
NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 29, 2020.**

It is a great honor to address this General Assembly on the occasion of the Seventy Fifth Session of the United Nations General Assembly - **for the first time, as Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Guatemala, on behalf of President Alejandro Giammattei Falla.**

My country wishes to highlight the relevance of the central theme of our deliberations and recognizes the focus on **“the collective commitment with multilateralism in combatting COVID-19 through an effective collective action”**.

I join the expression of condolences to the families of all those who have lost a loved one due to the terrible consequences of COVID-19. I appreciate all health professionals and their staff who have worked tirelessly every day, from many months ago, as heroes and heroines, working with courage and commitment on the frontlines of this crisis.

This juncture has required us to build up urgent comprehensive responses, involves a joint work between governments, international cooperation and multilateral organizations, in order to coordinate capacities and use the resources adequately to combat this disease, trying to preserve the health, security and the right to food of all the population.

The Government of Guatemala recognizes that “No-one will be safe until everyone is safe” and therefore I would like to express the interest of my country in gaining immediate and fair access to the vaccine, stating our full availability to collaborate with the logistical process and the distribution of the vaccine in the countries of the region, particularly in Central America.

We are cognizant that by joining efforts we can find a solution against this virus and that we can count on global solidarity. We appreciate the support provided by the System’s agencies, international actors, and friendly countries during the Covid-19 crisis.

Mister President,

Given the challenges posed by COVID-19 and despite taking early preventive health measures, including the enactment of a State of Calamity and establishing a specific commission for the prevention of the Coronavirus, my country, Guatemala, was severely affected.

However, this has not been an obstacle for my government to continue working for the development of the country.

The areas that have been most affected are health, the economy, and food security, among others and in that context, we carried out plans to promote the social and economic reconstruction of our country, highlighting the importance of serving the most vulnerable.

In the health area, we found an abandoned system, forgotten for many years, compounded now by the effects of the current pandemic. This situation forced us to implement aggressive plans for recovery from day one. We have renovated existing hospitals and enabled 5 more in record time, located in different regions of the country. We have expanded the number of beds to more than 2000 in recent months, as well as the resources and capacities to provide timely medical care to the Guatemalan population.

I would like to acknowledge the invaluable support of multilateral cooperation and friendly countries who have prioritized assistance to the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare.

In the **economic field**, the Economic Rescue Law for families affected by Covid-19 was enacted, through which the Family Bond Fund was created, as a measure of social compensation aimed at mitigating the economic crisis within the national territory. Similarly, the Labor Protection Bonus was created, which supports companies with financial problems to keep their staff employed, giving the option of suspending them for the duration of the emergency, providing them with an economic contribution for three consecutive months, in order to ensure an economic income. In the case of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), we are promoting programs to grant soft loans to solve liquidity problems and avoid foreclosure.

Within **the context of food security**, a program of food support and prevention of Covid-19 was established, which includes the delivery of basic foodstuffs and essential supplies with cultural relevance, to vulnerable families or those living in risk areas. This pandemic exacerbated one of the most challenging problems, malnutrition.

Therefore, we are implementing the "Great National Crusade for Nutrition", as one of the most important plans to be carried out during my Government. This initiative aims to unite all sectors of the country in order to improve the nutritional condition of Guatemalan families, emphasizing the poorest and most marginalized areas, applying a comprehensive approach that responds to the multi-causal root problem. My administration will continue working in the fight against chronic malnutrition and will take all the actions necessary to contribute to food and nutritional security, and to reduce the rates of malnutrition in the country.

Currently, we are promoting our candidature to the World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Board for the period 2021-2023, from where we will surely be able to contribute to the promotion of food security and sustainable agriculture, the eradication of hunger and malnutrition, fundamental challenges for our region.

On the other hand, in terms of observance and promotion of human rights, we are in a phase of restructuring functions among the existing Ministries of State, with a view to addressing

compliance with the National Peace Accords on Firm and Lasting Peace, Human Rights and Social Conflict in an efficient, responsible and consistent manner with the Government's priorities. A thorough and detailed analysis of the international commitments made by the State of Guatemala was produced, in order to continue with an adequate follow-up to render reports and follow-up on the recommendations emanating from the human rights mechanisms of both in the United Nations System and the Inter-American System.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Guatemala is convinced that the work of the United Nations is vital for sustaining peace, the protection of human rights and the promotion of development, serving the most vulnerable. Given this, I would like to refer to several important points that we must consider:

Migrants today represent a significant part of the population that continues to suffer from abuse and unjustified discrimination due to their origin. Two years ago, Guatemala, together with other friendly states, launched the initiative of the "International Day of Family Remittances", which is commemorated every June 16 and reminds us the efforts of migrants, far from home and from their land, to help their families.

Due to our geographical location, we are a country of origin, transit, destination and return. We are deeply committed to the respect of human rights of migrants, particularly now that we are facing this pandemic. We urge the international community to avoid the criminalization of the migrant population, since their contribution is vital for the development of their communities.

Together with the United Nations agencies, we identified opportunities to address these challenges. That is why we are promoting an agreement with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to create a viable platform for dialogue and exchange of proposals that will allow for better care of the returned migrant population.

The lessons we have learned have helped us establish and improve health protocols for the care of the migrant population, fulfilling our responsibility of receiving our fellow citizens with dignity, while avoiding the spread of the pandemic.

We continue to witness how hatred, racism, discrimination, radicalization and its dire consequences such as terrorism continue to claim innocent lives. Guatemala, as a nation with a peaceful vocation, **will always encourage political dialogue to be strengthened to avoid any escalation of violence and seek a peaceful solution based on the exercise of constructive diplomacy, with full respect of International Law.**

To renew the purposes of the United Nations, in order to take effective measures to prevent and eliminate threats to the peace and suppress acts of aggression or other breaches of it, Guatemala calls on the United Nations Security Council, to act in a manner consistent with its

functions, including the responsible use of the right to veto, in order to avoid the aggravation of international crises. In this line, Guatemala supports the French-Mexican initiative to limit the use of the veto to cases of mass atrocities. It is important to continue the efforts to achieve the reforms of this Council.

The reform of the United Nations remains a fundamental issue. I want to be very emphatic on this issue, since we need a re-engineering and promote a better coordination within the entire System. We must work together to have a less bureaucratic Organization. We want the efforts of the Organization to directly impact the population in need, and invest in development, with existing human resources.

We understand that there are ongoing reforms in the Secretariat, however, the necessary reform for the United Nations continues to be a pending issue, and mistrust of multilateralism is proof of this. As a country we want to show the population that general debates and multilateral meetings are not empty speeches and pretty words. They are wishes for us to concert efforts for the communities.

We have the necessary human resources to work, we do not need UN cooperation to be focused on administrative issues or technical assistance. We are confident that we are under the same objective, to build walls of prosperity, that in times of crisis, work will be done to reactivate development, the economy, and employment, and that it translates into improving the living conditions for our citizens.

We must promote the strengthening of model that allows us to move from a cooperation structure to one of investment in which countries like ours can obtain our own capacities to reduce the gaps that today challenge our development. Today more than ever we are called upon to promote profound transformations. Therefore, a re-engineering of the work of this Organization is necessary.

Among the threats the world faces now, the use of nuclear weapons is one of the greatest risks to the existence of humanity. Guatemala reiterates its position in favor of a complete, irreversible and transparent nuclear disarmament within established timelines, and condemns any nuclear test or threat of the use of force with this type of weapon that puts the continuation of life on earth at risk. The early entry into force of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is of great relevance.

Mister President:

All the actions taken by global leadership will have an indisputable impact on the Sustainable Development Goals. Countries must take responsibility for our own development but must be framed in a common path.

Guatemala will be a member of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) under the motto: Inclusive development for all. This election represents an important commitment for my country towards the fulfillment of the 2030 Agenda.

From this perspective, we are going to expand mechanisms to face the devastating effects of climate change, which not only disproportionately affect developing countries, but is also a battle against time.

The confinement to which most of us have been subjected, has resulted in a respite for our common home, the Earth. Climate change is a reality to which we cannot close our eyes. We must work to revitalize our ecosystems, keep our water sources cleaner, clear of pollution.

Similarly, we will seek to be the voice and enhance the participation of indigenous peoples, taking into account that their ancient culture, traditions and ancestral wisdom are an essential to sustainable development; as well as people with disabilities whose talent, action and perseverance in the face of adversity are an example of struggle, for this reason we will be their voice so that their needs are heard.

Mister President,

Today before this Assembly, I reaffirm the commitment of my country, to resolve permanently and definitively, at the International Court of Justice, the territorial, insular and maritime differences that we maintain with Belize, a country with which we aspire to have a privileged relationship and a permanent dialogue for the peaceful solution of common problems.

We are convinced that its resolution will bring economic, social, and political benefits to both States, but above all, will bring development for the inhabitants of the adjacency zone. Simultaneously, as a State, we reaffirm our democratic vocation and full respect for international law.

On behalf of my country, today more than ever I would like to state my commitment to the United Nations, on its 75th anniversary, to multilateralism, to peace, with respect for human rights and sustainable development for present and future generations. Let's build more inclusive nations together, promoting prosperity and respect for our planet.

**Guatemala will not stop!
Many thanks!**