



# **The Permanent Mission of Iceland to the United Nations**

**Statement by  
H.E. Ambassador Gunnar Pálsson  
Permanent Representative**

**General Assembly**

**Report of the Secretary-General on  
the work of the Organization**

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Mr. President,

Allow me at the outset to thank the Secretary-General for his concise and valuable report on the work of the Organization.

The past year has been a grueling one for the world and for the United Nations. The global financial and economic crisis has affected the well-being of millions of people, threatening to set back the development efforts of the international community by several years.

At a time of dwindling national resources, the crisis is putting unprecedented strain on our multilateral system, raising questions about the effectiveness of our organization in dealing with some of its manifestations. But the primary lesson of the recent turmoil is hardly that we should now turn inward or fall back on our individual means. Quite the opposite, the need to cooperate within the existing framework of international institutions is now greater than ever. As the Secretary-General rightly observes, this is the “ultimate multilateral moment”.

Mr. President,

The world community must do its utmost to prevent the financial crisis from turning into a real development emergency. Extraordinary efforts will be needed to prevent the financial crisis from reversing the hard-won gains made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in areas like primary education, maternal health and the fight against hunger. I take this opportunity to compliment the Secretary-General for the initiative he is taking in introducing the Global Impact and Vulnerability Alert System (GIVAS).

Mr. President,

One of the risks associated with the current global crisis, is that it may undermine confidence in the international system, including the United Nations, at a time when we can least afford it. To prevent this from happening, we need, among other things, stronger and more representative international institutions, sound global regulatory frameworks and greater surveillance and supervision in the area of international finance.

But more is required in order to fashion the new multilateralism that the Secretary-General has called for in his report. We must also accelerate progress on a comprehensive United Nations reform. Key to this effort is the urgent need to improve the working methods of the Security Council and to widen its membership. A Security Council that is more representative of the world we live in, including the developing countries, will carry greater weight and authority.

As small states comprise a large share of the United Nations membership, any enlargement must also ensure that the interests of small states are fully taken into account.

The promotion of greater accountability and efficiency in the work of the Organization, as well as measures to render the wider United Nations system more coherent, coordinated and responsive, is another important facet of the process of reform. This includes strengthening the so-called gender architecture, long characterized by fragmentation and the lack of accountability. Iceland welcomes the General Assembly's unanimous decision to create a new and consolidated United Nations gender entity to be headed by an Under-Secretary General and urges the Secretary-General to move forward as expeditiously as possible.

However, to redeem the full potential of the United Nations we need more than structural improvements. We should also reform the way our organization reacts to global challenges of the highest order. The genocides of the 20<sup>th</sup> century show that too often the international community has failed in preventing or adequately responding to mass atrocities. By moving to operationalize the concept of the responsibility to protect, the Organization can now take deliberate steps to shore up the protection of basic human rights and the rule of law. My Delegation hopes that 64th United Nations General Assembly will work constructively towards that end.

Mr. President,

An extended economic crisis exacerbates the risks of conflict, the lack of food security and health care, while deteriorating living conditions in different parts of the world threaten to undermine the upholding of human rights. For this reason, Iceland fully subscribes to the Secretary-General's view that it is at this time imperative for the United Nations to make a special effort to promote respect for human rights.

Mr. President,

To ensure prosperity and peace for future generations, it is also essential that we take measures to safeguard the earth's ecosystem. While climate change may, in the words of the Secretary-General, be the defining challenge of our generation, the interlinkages between climate and other aspects of our ecosystem, including land-use, energy and oceans, should also be recognized.

Just as no country is shielded from the impacts of climate change, an effective solution to the problem will require the active cooperation of each and every

member of the United Nations. We must join hands and seek to conclude a legally binding agreement in Copenhagen. At the same time, a gradual but fundamental reorientation of energy policy should be seen as instrumental to preventing future climate change. Member states should work, among other things, to increase the share of renewable energy resources in world energy demand, aided not least by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), established in January of this year.

In connection with climate change, we must also consider the state of the oceans, instrumental in sustaining the world's social and economic development. A host of man-made environmental hazards, including pollution, overfishing and climate change, are threatening the productivity of our oceans. If we are to eradicate poverty and hunger, reduce child mortality and combat disease it is necessary that we prevent and reverse the degradation of the oceans.

Regrettably, there is currently no systematic effort to keep the state of the world's oceans under continuing review. This is why world leaders decided at the Johannesburg Summit seven years ago to launch a regular process under the United Nations for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, including socio-economic aspects. As the start-up phase of this valuable initiative has now been completed, Iceland supports the initiation of the first fully integrated assessment of the regular process to be completed by the year 2014.

Mr. President,

As the Secretary-General's report makes clear, the tasks before us have rarely been more demanding or diverse. This should not be a source of discouragement. Let's instead make the best possible use of the opportunity afforded by "the ultimate multilateral moment" to ensure a fruitful and productive session of the 64<sup>th</sup> United Nations General Assembly.