



Statement

by H.E. Mr. Edward NALBANDIAN

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia

**at the General Debate
of the 64th Session of the UN General Assembly**

28 September 2009

New York

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to warmly welcome you, Dr. Treki, on your election as President of the 64th session of the General Assembly and express our readiness to work with you to achieve the ambitious agenda that is ahead of us during this session. I would also like to extend our thanks to the outgoing President, Mr. Brockmann for his hard work during the previous session.

Mr. President,

Each new session of the General Assembly provides an opportunity to share with each other our achievements and concerns, and join our efforts in moving the global agenda forward.

We are going through a truly challenging period.

This year we were all devastated by the impact of the financial crisis. The crisis did not leave a corner of the world or an economic sector untouched. Many countries in the world experienced unprecedented economic decline seriously challenging the hard-earned advancements and the prospects for reaching the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

Armenia was not void of the dramatic effects of the on-going financial crisis. However, the Armenian government did its best to safeguard the socially vulnerable. No cuts in the budget were made in the social sector.

Mr. President,

We believe that our endeavors must be guided, first and foremost, by the need to mitigate human costs of the crisis in order to avoid serious consequences on human security. We believe that an equitable global recovery requires full participation of all countries, irrespective of their size and level of development, in shaping appropriate responses to the crisis. And we have to come together here, in this universal body, to take decisions that help us overcome the past and build future because there are still painful gaps between our people's dreams and prospects.

United Nations funds, programs and agencies, in accordance with their respective mandates, have an important role to play in advancing development, in accordance with national strategies and priorities, to achieve the internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals.

We understand that these goals for which the deadline set is the year 2015, will require enormous efforts to achieve. The General Assembly will continue to address this issue during its sixty-fourth session, and Armenia is ready to contribute to the process of preparing for a high-level meeting in September 2010.

Mr. President,

We embarked on the process of UN reforms in order to reflect the present world in this fora and to enhance its capabilities and effectiveness in addressing modern challenges. Armenia commits itself to strengthening the institutional capacities of the United Nations, supports the UN reform processes and is ready to bring its contribution.

We were successful in agreeing on several vital decisions, creation of Peacebuilding Commission and Human Rights Council among others. We aspire to further advance the human rights protection in conformity with the obligations of member-states, and we see an honest discussion on outstanding issues and sharing of experience on how to overcome them within the Human Rights Council as a true path to success in this respect.

We regard the principles of Prevention of Genocide and Responsibility to Protect as the key principles, cornerstones of the overall human security system. In this respect we commend the report of the Secretary General on “Implementing the Responsibility to Protect”, which charts a course for the United Nations to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing through bolstering the capacities of the Organization.

As it is rightly stated, in the Report, genocides do not happen all of a sudden. The instigators propagate intolerance and hatred, setting grounds for violence. As survivors of genocide, we, Armenians welcome all efforts to prevent and combat racist and xenophobic attitudes. We have been and will be doing everything to provide for a continuous advocacy for prevention of genocide. The international community must be vigilant over the development of such situations and events, and demonstrate its ability to act timely to prevent future tragedies.

Mr. President,

We consider the goals of disarmament and non-proliferation major elements of global and regional security systems. We must shoulder the responsibility and work not only towards non-proliferation and elimination of nuclear weapons but also towards elimination of militaristic aspirations of some states. It is totally unacceptable when the threats to resolve the conflicts through military means are made on the highest level, and those are left unabated by the international community.

The NK peace process, which is mediated by the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group, is moving forward. The Presidents and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Armenia and Azerbaijan meet regularly to discuss the principles of a comprehensive resolution of the conflict. Armenia is convinced that in order to create an opportunity for progress in the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno Karabagh conflict, the parties should commit to refrain from steps that could hamper dialogue and the peace process.

On the international arena, Azerbaijan consistently misrepresents the essence of the Nagorno Karabagh problem, like two days ago in this forum, trying to smother ethnic cleansings and its policy of violence against the people of Nagorno Karabagh. The international community recalls the Azerbaijani open aggression, large-scale hostilities and war against Nagorno Karabagh, also with the help of mercenaries, closely linked to terrorist organizations. These ultimately claimed lives of tens of thousand of civilians.

We believe that there is a serious basis for the settlement of the Nagorno Karabagh problem, if the provisions contained in the Declaration signed by the Presidents of the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation on 2 November 2008, in Moscow, and also in the Declaration of the Foreign Ministers of the Co-Chair countries of the OSCE Minsk Group issued in Helsinki on 4 December 2008, and in the Declaration adopted by the Foreign Ministers of all 56 OSCE member states on 5 December 2008, are implemented. According to these documents, the parties must commit themselves to the peaceful settlement of the problem through negotiations,

based on “Madrid Principles” of the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group.

The Basic Principles, around which negotiations are held currently, are anchored on the benchmark codes of the international law as incorporated in the Charter of this Organization, the Helsinki Final Act and other relevant international documents. The international principles of Non-Use or Threat of Use of Force, the Self-Determination of Peoples and Territorial Integrity are equally viable. Some have long attempted to downplay the importance of the notion of self-determination of peoples as a second-rate principle in the system of international law, and inferior to that of “territorial integrity”. I have to disappoint the advocates of double standards: self-determination is an unconditional clause of the international law; it is about liberty, freedom of any people to choose its future and fate, and to defend its collective rights whenever those rights and that future are jeopardized. If self-determination was inferior to territorial integrity there would have been only 52 member states in the UN, instead of 192 present.

Mr. President,

Trust and accountability among neighboring states are guarantees for sustainable cooperation and durable security in the region. We, in the South Caucasus, have yet to report on that. Our region, in fact, is among the most sensitive hot spots on the world's political map overloaded with almost a full set of security threats and challenges. The region is devastated by conflicts and interstate tensions, dividing lines and economic blockade. Closed borders and ruptured ties have become the norm of life. However, a courageous act and a courageous response hold the promise of changing the situation to the better.

The process of the normalization of the Armenian-Turkish relations that started by the initiative of the President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan last September, known as “football diplomacy,” promises to bear fruit despite all difficulties.

Over the past year with the help of our Swiss mediators and other international partners we have advanced towards opening one of the last closed borders in Europe and normalization of our relations with NO preconditions. We wish to be confident that the necessary political will can eventually leave behind the mentality of the past, and we hope that the wisdom and courage will prevail to make the last decisive steps.

We have been most encouraged by the support of the international community. We are well aware of the fundamental and positive implications of the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations and of the opening of the border for the security and stability of the region.

Mr. President,

We must reinforce the bridges between UN member-states, working out mutually beneficial and comprehensive security and cooperation schemes. And our common objective should be the shaping of an environment that is safe and prosperous for all.

To meet the political, economic, environmental and social challenges, we have to put our efforts, resources and political determination together. Only together we can withstand these challenges and push ahead the international development agenda.

Thank you, Mr. President.