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Fifty-seventh General Assembly  
Plenary  
50<sup>th</sup> Meeting (AM)

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY WELCOMES DECLARATION OF SOUTH AMERICA AS**

**ZONE OF PEACE AND COOPERATION**

**Support Also Expressed for Continuation of United Nations  
Guatemala Mission as Assembly Considers Situation in Central America**

The General Assembly today welcomed the Declaration of the Presidents of South America, adopted at their meeting in Guayaquil, Ecuador, on 27 July, in which they declared South America to be a zone of peace and cooperation.

Adopting without a vote a resolution on the South American Zone of Peace and Cooperation, the Assembly also urged States of other regions, particularly weapons-producing States, to cooperate decisively in combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons throughout South America.

In addition, the Assembly commended the decision of the States of South America to ban the use, or threat of use, of force among themselves, in keeping with the principles and relevant provisions of the Charters of the United Nations and the Organization of American States.

Introducing the text, Peru's representative said that the final aim of the Zone should be to free up resources to reduce the increasing poverty in South America, which was endangering democratic governments. It would serve to foster cooperation and confront terrorism, drug trafficking, organized crime and subversion against democracy, which were the main threats today to security in the subregion.

Cooperation for peace and the undertaking of common actions in the field of security, said Chile's representative, were essential to ensure positive progress towards



political, economic and social integration between the countries of South America and ultimately to promote their development and well-being.

Also this morning, the Assembly concluded its discussion of the situation in Central America, with speakers noting the progress made in that region in the past 20 years with regard to the consolidation of peace and democracy, respect for human rights and economic reforms. None of that would have been possible, they said, without the support of the international community and particularly the United Nations.

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Wide support was also expressed for the extension of the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA), whose role was vital in following up on the peace agreement in that country. Guatemala's representative said that although all participants in the peace process had reaffirmed their full support for the agreements, many tasks remained outstanding. MINUGUA's extension was therefore essential.

He fully realized the practical and financial difficulties involved in the extension of MINUGUA, but insisted, "it is the extension, not the perpetuation of MINUGUA that we are requesting". He fully accepted the idea of a gradual withdrawal, perhaps by the end of 2004, instead of 2003.

In other action, the Assembly decided to include an item on the role of the United Nations in promoting a new global human order in the agenda of its fifty-ninth session, as it adopted a resolution on that subject without a vote. It also noted with interest the proposal regarding a new global human order and called for further elaboration of the proposal.

Statements were also made by the representatives of Costa Rica (on behalf of the Central American Countries), Mexico, Colombia, Spain, El Salvador, United States, Ecuador, Brazil, Argentina, Guyana and Uruguay.

The Assembly will meet again at 10 a.m. on Friday, 15 November, to consider assistance in mine action.

### Background

The General Assembly met this morning to consider the situation in Central America, for which it had before it reports of the Secretary-General (documents A/57/384 and A/57/584), a note by the Secretary-General (document A/57/336) and a draft resolution (document A/57/L.20). It was also expected to discuss the role of the United Nations in promoting a new global human order and a related draft resolution (document A/57/L.10). Also on its agenda was the South American Zone of Peace and Cooperation and the related draft resolution A/57/L.10.

### Statements



BRUNO STAGNO (*Costa Rica*), speaking on behalf of the Central American countries, said that about 20 years ago, his region had been plunged into the deepest political, social and economic crises of its recent history. Various armed groups had tried to seize power. Innumerable violations of human rights had been committed and there had been hundreds of thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons.

Today, he continued, the situation could not be more different. Peace had been achieved and democracy consolidated. All of the nations in the region had undergone deep political and economic changes and fundamental rights were fully observed. Each of the countries there had a human rights defender. Nevertheless, the progress achieved would not have been possible without the support of the international community and the United Nations in particular.

In the last year, he said, the economies of the region had deteriorated because of an unfavourable economic environment and decreased exports. To guarantee the economic sustainability of the region, a number of trade agreements were being negotiated with countries outside the region, as well as measures to boost the Central American economic integration process. The region's Governments had also committed themselves to combating the traffic in small arms and were undertaking efforts in the environment field.

Unfortunately, Central America was highly vulnerable to natural disasters, he said, having been the victim of devastating hurricanes in the past year. Natural disasters had led to a huge toll in human life and material costs. The Governments of the region were taking measures to decrease the effects of natural disasters. Unquestionably, the situation in Central America had improved considerably in the last decade. He was confident that the countries of the region would continue to be able to count on the support of the international community and the members of the United Nations.

ADOLFO AGUILAR ZINSER (*Mexico*) said his country had solid geographical and cultural links with the Central American countries and with the region as a whole. Mexico had systematically supported efforts to achieve peace and reconciliation there. Within the context of regional cooperation, the Latin American Heads of State had adopted a declaration to foster the Mezo-American community of nations as a means of achieving higher levels of sustainable development for the region. Moreover, Mexico had initiated the Pueblo-Panama Plan to foster economic development with a regional focus, and had also actively participated in regional efforts to establish the Mezo-American biological corridor.

Armed conflict in Central America was a thing of the past, he said. However, sustained efforts were still necessary by governments and peoples, as well as the international community, to fulfil all the commitments of the peace agreements and to ensure that the root causes of conflict were done away with. In that context, the role of the United Nations had been fundamental. Much progress had been achieved but much remained to be done in achieving a strong and lasting peace in Guatemala, and Mexico was concerned with the human rights violation cited in the reports. The presence of the



United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) had been positive; it had brought certainty and confidence to the implementation of the peace agreements, which was broadly recognized by all political parties and the people of Guatemala. Therefore, Mexico supported the request of the Government of Guatemala that the mission be extended until the end of 2004.

Concerning the consolidation of peace in El Salvador, Mexico supported fulfilling all the relevant commitments in order for the United Nations to finish its verification mission by the end of the year. Mexico was also encouraged by the effort of Guatemala and Belize, within the Organization of American States, to find a solution to the territorial dispute between them. That was an example for the region, and showed that differences could be solved through negotiation.

ALFONSO VALDIVIESO ([Colombia](#)) said that United Nations contributions had led to important achievements, resulting in visible improvement in many parts of South America. He said that two decades had passed since the beginning of the peace process in Central America. Colombia was not involved in that process as a passive observer, but was profoundly interested in stimulating and supporting a firm and lasting peace.

He said it might seem paradoxical that a country involved for decades in its own internal conflict would be seeking formulas to reach peace in other latitudes. However, becoming involved in the process for the consolidation of peace enriched one's own vision of peace. He added that the continuation of the MINUGUA mandate in Guatemala was an essential element in achieving the objectives of peace there, and Colombia supported the extension of its mandate. Regarding El Salvador, he said that Colombia supported the actions that had brought the peace accords to completion, which signified an advance towards new levels of progress in that country.

JUAN LUIS FLORES ([Spain](#)) was pleased that the political and economic dialogue between the European Union and Central America continued to make progress. Spain, both as part of the European Union and in other forums, would continue to support objectives such as democracy and greater economic integration of the countries of Central America. The negotiating process in the territorial dispute between Guatemala and Belize and the tenth anniversary of the signing of the peace agreement in El Salvador gave much reason for hope. But the road was still long.

The continued deployment of MINUGUA was necessary to follow up on the peace agreement in Guatemala, he said. He noted with concern the deteriorating situation of human rights in that country in the past year, including persistent threats to those working for the defence of human rights, the growing environment of impunity, and the legal problems associated with the use of the death penalty.

MINUGUA's contribution, he continued, had been invaluable. Next year, the Mission should come up with a transition plan that would identify which institutions in Guatemala could take over the functions it performed. He supported the extension of MINUGUA's mandate, along with a gradual reduction of its staff.



VICTOR MANUEL LAGOS PIZZATI (El Salvador) said that the General Assembly's 1987 resolution, and that of the Security Council in 1989, had been the basis for greater United Nations involvement in Central American problems. The peoples and Governments of the region continued to face serious challenges, and Central America, with its limited resources and vulnerability to natural disasters, must be able to count on the continued support of the international community and the United Nations.

Addressing the specific situation in his country, he said that El Salvador had found itself immersed in an internal armed conflict during the 1980s, which constituted a lost decade in the nation's political, economic and social development process. However, after the 1992 peace agreement it had been stimulating for Salvadoran society to move from war to peace, to be back on the road to normal conditions and living free of fear and violence.

Upon the tenth anniversary of the peace agreement this year, the Government had concluded that its commitments and obligations had been fully met, he added. In that context, El Salvador was pleased by the Secretary-General's recognition that MINUGUA had reached the final stage of its verification mandate. Noting that final success had come out of the efficacious functioning of the fund for war victims, he admitted that not all problems had been solved, but that there had been a definite transformation in Salvadoran society.

GERT ROSENTHAL (Guatemala) said that the reports before the General Assembly painted a mixed picture, showing advances in some areas along with stagnation and even setback in others. That notwithstanding, Guatemala recognized shortfalls in implementation of the peace agreements and acknowledged that many aims were still a long way from being realized. However, this was not the time to apportion blame for the less than satisfactory overall picture in Central America, particularly in Guatemala. The Government of President Alfonso Portillo had acknowledged its share of the blame while noting that failings related less to lack of will than to its capacity to implement commitments.

The dynamic of the peace process had met resistance, he said, from different pressure groups that felt threatened by actions associated with the process. In certain circles, attitudes inimical to reconciliation persisted. To such negative factors must be added an economy badly hurt by external events, high unemployment and financial pressures on the public sector. All that made it difficult to cope with the financial implications of commitments undertaken.

Although all participants in the peace process had reaffirmed their full support for the agreements, many tasks remained outstanding. The extension of MINUGUA's mandate was therefore essential. He fully realized the practical and financial difficulties involved in the extension of MINUGUA. But "it is the extension, not the perpetuation of MINUGUA that we are requesting", he said. He fully accepted the idea of a gradual withdrawal, perhaps by the end of 2004, instead of 2003.

RICHARD BROWN (United States) said the United States had announced its intention to embark upon free-trade agreement negotiations with the region. When



concluded, the agreement would have “an enormous positive impact” on the region’s economic growth and development. The United States applauded the completion of the facilitation process between Belize and Guatemala on their centuries-old border dispute. However, he expressed concern about the remaining border disputes in the region, and urged Central American nations to resolve border issues for the greater good of the region.

Regarding Guatemala, he said that though there had been progress in the peace process that began in 1996, much more remained to be accomplished, especially in the human rights and military reform areas. The United States endorsed the recommendation that MINUGUA remain involved in monitoring progress through 2004.

He urged the nations of the region to participate fully in the Inter-American Convention on Corruption’s follow-up mechanism, reduce impunity, and hunt down corruption in their ranks. He also asked those nations to redouble their efforts in the fight against international criminal organizations and the illegal, illicit transfer of arms, drugs and human beings. Each country should sign and ratify the remaining international anti-terrorism treaties.

Following this morning’s statements on the issue, the Assembly decided to defer action on the draft resolution on the situation in Central America to a later date.

#### Action on Drafts: New Global Human Order

The Assembly adopted the draft resolution on the role of the United Nations in promoting a new global human order without a vote.

#### South American Zone of Peace and Cooperation

OSWALDO DE RIVERO (Peru), introducing the draft resolution on the South American Zone of Peace and Cooperation, said that the Zone differed from the zones of peace the non-aligned countries had declared during the cold war in order to spare given regions from the East-West conflict. Those zones of peace were designed to reject superpower disputes. The proposed South American Zone was designed to forestall all possibility of conflict among the South American democracies.

He said that in its initial stage, the Zone was aimed at increasing transparency and fostering trust in the areas of defence and security among the countries of South America, including the eradication of weapons of mass destruction, anti-personnel mines and the illicit trade in small and light weapons. Afterwards, there would be an effective and gradual limitation of defence expenditures followed by disarmament. It was not a geopolitical objective in itself.

Its final aim, he continued, should be to free up resources to reduce the increasing poverty in South America, which was endangering democratic governments. The Zone would also serve to foster cooperation and confront terrorism, drug trafficking, organized crime and subversion of democracy, which were the main threats to security



in the subregion today. He hoped the draft, which constituted a subregional contribution to international peace and security, would be adopted by consensus.

LUIS GALLEGOS CHIRIBOGA ([Ecuador](#)) said that the countries of South America were basing their international relations on the norms and principles they traditionally valued, such as defence of human rights, non-interference in internal affairs, and regional integration. More than 30 years ago, the Andean countries had begun the first subregional process of integration, which now covered all aspects of life and society. Following the Galapagos and Lima declarations, the Andean countries had committed themselves to peace, security and cooperation. They had oriented their external policies in line with each other, which underscored their decision to live in peace.

The Andean countries had also set up a free trade agreement with the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR). Moreover, the Brasilia communiqué and other agreements concerning the declaration of the South American Zone of Peace had laid the foundations for implementation of peace and cooperation in South America. In today's world, threats to peace and international security, as well as democratic instability and the defence of human rights, had taken on new aspects. Armed conflict between States occurred less, but new challenges such as international terrorism, drug trafficking, and social injustice needed to be confronted jointly by all members of the international community. The declaration of the South American peace zone expressed the firm determination to live in peace, to deal jointly with all threats to security, and to cooperate for the harmonious development of all peoples.

Briefly highlighting an issue of particular interest to his country, he said that four years ago, Ecuador and Peru had finalized the long negotiation process on the territorial dispute which had separated them since independence. Now the two countries cooperated, had growing trade and shared a mutual vision of the world and a commitment to international law.

LUIZ TUPY CALDAS DE MOURA ([Brazil](#)) said his country believed in democratic and human rights, which were "central pillars" for the South American peace process to move forward. It was acknowledged, he said, that the relation between infrastructure and development must be explored in the context of the principle of open regionalism, and must be conditioned by the results of the analysis of five basic principles: geoeconomic perspective; social sustainability; economic efficiency; environmental sustainability; and institutional development.

The declaration of South America as a zone of peace and cooperation gave a voice to its peoples' aspirations for a better future, he said. The Declaration reaffirmed the basic premises of his region in terms of disarmament and nonproliferation. It was the fruit of a broad and consistent process of dialogue between countries, in which an environment of confidence and stability could be constructed.

LUIS E. CAPPAGLI ([Argentina](#)) said the Guayaquil Declaration was one of the annexes to the Guayaquil Consensus adopted by South American Heads of State and Government. South American governments had been carrying out measures to consolidate an environment of trust, friendship and mutual productiveness. The



Declaration reflected a change in the way they had always understood international security. Security meant conditions which enabled the consolidation of democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental liberties and the opening up of commercial markets.

He said that that new concept of security and the various processes of subregional and regional integration had allowed the countries of South America to see their neighbours not as enemies or competitors but as friends and partners. The Zone of Peace of MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile, adopted in Ushuaia, Argentina, in 1998, constituted an important antecedent to the establishment of the South American Zone of Peace and Cooperation.

GEORGE TALBOT ([Guyana](#)) said the commitment to create a South American peace zone had been adopted in Guayaquil in June 2002. Furthermore, the use or threat of force between States had been banned, in keeping with the principles and provision of the United Nations Charter and the Charter of the Organization of American States. The adoption of that Declaration constituted an important milestone in the relations of South American countries; it was a historical decision taken in the best tradition of understanding and peaceful coexistence between the peoples of the region.

In implementing the Declaration, he said, the countries involved faced many common challenges, such as the deleterious impact of persistent poverty and inequality on society, transnational crime, the illicit trade in drugs, small arms and light weapons, and the threat of international terrorism. Those challenges threatened to undo hard-won freedoms and values and needed to be confronted with determination and resolve. They would be surmounted only through effective cooperation, and the leaders of the South American continent had made a commitment to creating the conditions necessary for success. Guyana stood ready to cooperate fully with all countries in the region and beyond to promote peace, security, development and the overall well-being of all the region's peoples.

JUAN GABRIEL VALDÉS ([Chile](#)) said that cooperation for peace and the undertaking of common actions in the field of security were essential to ensure positive progress towards political, economic and social integration between the countries of South America and ultimately to promote their development and well-being.

He said that his region had been firmly committed to peace and security, as reflected in numerous bilateral and subregional experiences in confidence-building and cooperation, such as the work done by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean -- at the joint request of the Governments of Argentina and Chile -- on a "Common Standardized Methodology for the Measurement of Defence Expenditures" between the two countries.

Regarding the commitment of South American States to prohibit all weapons of mass destruction, he said that Chile had done the same with regard to the complete eradication of anti-personnel mines. It had also committed itself to implementing the recommendations of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eliminate the Illicit Traffic in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.



SUSANA RIVERO (Uruguay) expressed firm support for the Declaration of the South American Zone of Peace and Cooperation. It was clear that development, confidence building and the full observance of international instruments for conventional and nuclear disarmament and the non-recourse to force were components of a zone of peace surpassing the frontiers of individual States. Yet the creation of that peace zone should not be the final objective, but the beginning of something more ambitious.

The geographic contiguity of the region, which had been a source of conflict, was now the factor that deepened unity and cooperation. The region stood out internationally because it had overcome its territorial disputes peacefully through negotiation. The common elements of the South American agenda included respect for democracy and human rights, both on an individual and a collective basis. They were necessary to speed up each country's development process. Efforts aimed at consolidating peace, security, cooperation and development were the pillars of a broader commitment. Having undertaken a dialogue on regional security, which included its humanitarian, social and economic aspects, Uruguay recognized that this was a natural process for true regional integration; the Declaration of Peace and Cooperation was a step forward on that road.

Uruguay did not believe that peace was the absence of conflict, but a situation that included security and freedom, he added. That was the sole context that would allow governments to meet their commitments.

ALFONSO VALDIVIESO (Colombia) said that the Guayaquil Declaration was one of the results of the Brasilia communiqué, adopted in September 2000, in which the heads of State and Government of South America agreed to wider and deeper regional cooperation and solidarity on fundamental issues, such as democracy, trade, illicit drugs and information technology. In the Declaration, their countries had proposed the construction of the South American Zone of Peace and Cooperation, based on a strengthening of their cooperation mechanisms in the areas of defence and security. It was now necessary to strengthen cooperation in the fields of intelligence, illicit arms and money laundering, as agreed in the Brasilia communiqué. Regional efforts were also needed to defeat drug trafficking, with shared responsibility among producing, transit and receiving countries.

His country celebrated the definitive solution to territorial disputes among the countries of the region. Their democratic stability and the integrity of their political and economic structures still faced grave threats, including from terrorism and poverty. Democracy in Latin America should be strengthened through the defence of the rule of law and human rights. The Zone was a firm commitment to fight threats to the security of South American countries and to the stability of the region.

Acting without a vote, the Assembly adopted the resolution on the South American Zone of Peace and Cooperation.

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