



# MISSIÓ PERMANENT DEL PRINCIPAT D'ANDORRA A LES NACIONS UNIDES

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*61EME SESSION DE L'ASSEMBLEE GENERALE DES NATIONS UNIES  
61A SESIÓN DE LA ASAMBLEA GENERAL DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS  
61ST SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS*

DISCOURS DE S.E. M. ALBERT PINTAT  
PRESIDENT DU GOUVERNEMENT DE LA PRINCIPAUTE D'ANDORRE

DISCURSO DEL EXCMO. SR. DON ALBERT PINTAT  
PRESIDENTE DEL GOBIERNO DEL PRINCIPADO DE ANDORRA

STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. ALBERT PINTAT  
PRESIDENT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF ANDORRA

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

A decade ago, it was said that with the end of the Cold War we had reached the “End of History.” Over the years, this view has been largely discredited. Much of the world, and especially the West, paid scant attention to the sense of injustice shared by many peoples and communities around the world.

What we have witnessed with a mixture of horror, sympathy, and unease over the last ten years has been the return of history. The fall of the Twin Towers, the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Lebanon and the terrorist attacks in London and Madrid have shaken the foundations of the secular state. These events have been said to represent a “clash of civilizations,” but I reject the reductive, indeed misleading division between North and South, East and West, Christians and Muslims.

The greatest achievements in the West were the result of a complex process of cultural exchange between East and West. The free trade of ideas fostered innovation and advances in understanding. We must therefore reject this notion of a mentality that conceives as an essential clash between “us” and “them”. I believe that we are living through a turbulent and bloody struggle between the forces of extremism on the one hand, present in both the East and in the West, and secular tolerance on the other, which is also this time fortunately manifest everywhere on Earth.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Andorra is an old country whose borders have remained unchanged since 1278. Our history is one of survival. We were in existence when the Cathars fled the might of the First Crusade to seek refuge in our mountain pastures. We survived the French Revolution, the Spanish Civil War and World War II – we were a harbour of peace.

History has taught us that power demands restraint. And our own experiences have taught us—the past few weeks have reinforced this costly lesson—that displays of military might, intended to shock and awe, cannot in themselves bring about the desired result.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Is it not paradoxical that at this moment when the need for civilized discussion between people is greater than ever, that this venerable institution is deemed inconsequential? We do, of course, need to continue the process of its reform. But as an idea this place embodies all our hopes. As a humanitarian agency, with a host of vital social programs, the work of the United Nations is inestimable. As a forum for rational discourse committed to reaching global understanding, its work is of the absolute necessity. This should be the forum in which we should try to understand and correctly interpret the crossroads at which we find ourselves. The United Nations signifies the world's moral conscience, the principle of equality, our solidarity, the protection of human rights, the protection of human dignity, as does it mark the path to development.

Violence and the rise of religious extremism have roiled the globe. We all are prey to the unease felt over the future of the secular state. But in one sense, the very idea of the nation-state lies at the heart of many of our problems. It encourages us to believe in the rhetoric of “us” against “them”, in exclusive identities and in outdated ethno-centric discourse. It obfuscates the growing division between rich and poor that transcends countries, nations, and continents. It neglects the fact that most people on this planet seek only that which will permit them to live in a dignified manner and be happy in their lives. Indeed, many states, especially those whose boundaries reflect a legacy of colonialism, are often constituted without regard to the religious or ethnic backgrounds of their inhabitants. The civil wars that currently are tearing apart some countries are just but one example of the enormous difficulties presented by the artificial construction of such states.

We must not forget that historically the West has never been a good example in terms of religious tolerance. On the contrary, one might cite the twelfth-century expulsion of the Jews from England. Or recall the forced conversion of Muslims after the fall of Granada in 1492, or the inquisition, or the persecution of the protestant Huguenots who fled France during the sixteenth century. Yet in the East—in Jerusalem or Teheran, for example—Muslims, Jews, and Christians coexisted into the early twentieth century. These great cosmopolitan centres flourished in an atmosphere of genuine religious tolerance.

The original meaning of the term secular described those religious orders that looked outwards, to the world at large. In the sixteenth century a new notion of tolerance signified a willingness to accept different Protestant sects in towns and cities in Northern Europe. But our modern-day understanding of tolerance, in which people of all religions might live together, required centuries. Curiously, those who see secularism as opposed to belief have forgotten this version of history. The notion of secularism has never been oppositional to religion. Rather, it denotes a mentality willing to contemplate uncertainty and imperfect knowledge. It does not confuse questions of faith with scientific questions or seek to disarm the individual's liberty of conscience

Secularism, therefore, recognizes the shared fallibility of the human race. Religious faith can be taught, but it cannot be imposed. It cannot lead to violence and has to co-exist with the secular state. Our common humanity requires us to respect each other through our diversity.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The genius of tolerance lies in the ability to listen, to truly listen and attempt to understand.

To listen, and learn is not an act of weakness! Indeed, it is the extremist's display of strength or desire for revenge that represents a fatal weakness. Again and again in the course of history, we can see that a mighty spirit precedes a fall. And recently we have stood by and witnessed in dismay the catastrophic results that ensue from the deployment of military might against determined guerilla warfare.

Most of today's ills have their roots in old and unresolved problems, but the rhetoric of violence which surrounds us polarizes us even further and undermines the possibility of finding a lasting solution. We have think of ourselves as one whole global community where we are all interdependent. In the Middle East, we recognize the need for Israel's security, as do we recognize the need for Palestine to become a viable state.

Andorra is located in a part of the world which has always been a place where different cultures have met and lived in shared prosperity: the Mediterranean. Today, this has become a new frontier filled with tension. As Europeans we must seek to revitalize the area, recalling its ancient history as a home to many civilizations and their corresponding values, from Rome to Byzantium, and Athens to Tangiers.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Andorra, like many small countries, long relied on its isolation for its survival. But in our global world, mountains can no longer protect us. International concerns press upon us. Today's world is heterogeneous, imperfect and lacking in a common vision: there are no easy solutions and questions cannot be viewed in monochrome. The Millenium goals that we debated here with such hope are in danger of receding into distant memory. Is this the fault of the United Nations ? Let us not turn our backs on the masses who are tired of suffering, who see the UN as being their only hope, but allow their voices to be heard and welcome them into the global community. The time has come for us to act on our promises.

We must recognize that collectively *we* are the United Nations. We represent humanity as a whole. We are betraying them if we do not seek to make the United Nations a more robust and efficient machine. If we continue blindly, caring only for our national self-interest, we betray their trust. Multilateralism, which we as a group embody in this august chamber, is the path that will lead to many of the solutions. The plight of the unfortunate should not fall on deaf ears. We should join together to solidify democratic institutions and processes and in so doing fight against poverty, war, disease, illiteracy and corruption. This should be our common cause. It is only through this joint effort that we will be able to raise our approach to a collectively ethical and morally correct level.

When people do not have enough to eat, when they are deprived of essential freedoms and justice, there is only one option left open to them: to seek a better life, by whichever means they can, leaving behind their native lands. We are currently witnessing mass migration from the poorer parts of the world to the richer, and all too often the journey is tragically cut short on the high seas. This weighs heavily on our conscience. Erecting barriers to prevent this process will never work – their desperation is too great. Millions of human beings are orphaned from their homelands, and we should have solutions to offer to them. There is no place where this issue is more pressing than in sub-Saharan Africa, where the high risk of death does not impede people from attempting to reach the shores of the old Continent, simply because their lives at home have become unbearable.

We require a concerted and global plan for migration. This can only be achieved if we act jointly through the United Nations, in accordance with our international obligations, and make efforts to provide the human and material resources that are necessary to face-up to the issue. In so doing we will better the lives of millions of people who quite justifiably feel cruelly disenfranchised from the human family. As Juan Goytisolo puts it : “ the world provides a home for those who are homeless”. The United Nations, for sure, should be their refuge.

In line with this Andorra stands ready to underline its commitment to the United Nations system and to development as a whole. Two days ago here in New York, we signed an

agreement with UNICEF to provide financing to the sum of one million euro over a five year period to assist children suffering from HIV/AIDS in Cameroon. Civil society in our small country is also playing its part; the Andorran UNICEF National Committee will contribute five hundred thousand euro to this project over the same period.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is true that our world today is a dangerous place. But there is still immense hope, and this spurs us on. There is no definitive answer to the problems that all our societies face, and it has to be said that our lives as human beings cannot be perfected. We have a duty, however, to continually ask questions and have the courage to overcome the problems of our age. Our ideas are the greatest advantage we have – they are the motors of progress. For us this means democracy, shared prosperity, tolerance, the rule of law, respect for human rights and the pursuit of freedom through the defense of fundamental human liberties. These are the best weapons we have to fight absolutism and inequity. It is here at the United Nations that our voices should be heard and we should be able to defend these principles.

Finally, I should like to show our gratitude to Mr Kofi Annan for his great work in the past ten long and complicated years. We salute and congratulate you in all that you have done to maintain and apply the principles enshrined in the United Nations charter. I speak for all Andorrans in expressing my esteem for him and his great efforts.

Thank you very much.