

Working with a Permanent Member

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has been Minister of Foreign Affairs since 2006. He is a graduate of Georgetown University, and achieved Masters degrees from the Sorbonne and Princeton. He was Consul-General in Paris, and later was Costa Rican Permanent Representative to the United Nations, becoming President of the Assembly of States Parties of the International Criminal Court. He was Co-Chairman of both the First Biennial Meeting of States on Small Arms and Light Weapons, and the XI and XII Commission on Sustainable Development.

Since January 1, when Costa Rica joined the United Nations Security Council as a Non-Permanent Member, we have approached the United Kingdom with a number of issues on which we believe we can work together. As a mere tourist – we were elected for the 2008-2009 period – we come with our own baggage of issues, seeking to promote or rescue some global goods that we believe are currently unattended or threatened. We hope to work hand in hand with the United Kingdom, and in the process benefit from the additional clout it has as a Permanent Member, in defending these global goods.

As a country that voluntarily abolished its army in 1948, Costa Rica is naturally concerned by the excessive military spending that continues to plague our planet. It is time for the donor community to reward those developing countries that have made verifiable and sustainable efforts to invest in their people, and to reconsider the continued official development assistance (ODA) that is given to those that mispend their budgets purchasing weapons and outfitting battalions. It is about ODA being provided not simply on the basis of poverty or indebtedness of a given state, but to countries where there is a proven willingness on the part of the state to invest in its people. Article 26 of the United Nations Charter indicates a way forward in reducing military spending and in fostering more social spending and more committed financing of what the international community has called the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Within that same spirit, Costa Rica has been advocating the adoption of the so-called Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), an effort to codify existing norms of international law to regulate the arms trade. The United Kingdom has been a committed partner in this venture, but we also look forward to working together in safeguarding the integrity of the disarmament and non-proliferation regimes. Costa Rica is currently presiding over two important bodies in this regard, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) Article 14 Conference and the 1540 Committee, but we stand for combating proliferation in its two vertices, horizontal and vertical, and have yet to see a true commitment from the declared nuclear powers vis-à-vis nuclear disarmament and vertical non-proliferation. The

approach by former Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett on these matters was most welcome, and we are hoping to see the United Kingdom travel down that route.

We have also been presiding over the Assembly of States Parties of the International Criminal Court and working to combat impunity for the most heinous crimes known to humanity. Costa Rica recently led the way in breaking the silence of the Security Council on Darfur. But as more situations on the agenda of the Security Council and the International Criminal Court overlap, we believe it is necessary to balance the imperatives of peace and justice, without mortgaging one to the benefit of the other. Cooperation between the Security Council, concerned with peace, and the International Criminal Court, concerned with justice, is a must in this regard.

Costa Rica is a small country, but one of the most diverse in fauna and flora. Over 27 percent of our territory is protected under the national park system, including three natural world heritage sites. We have been expanding our forest cover over the last 20 years, and last year, as part of a larger initiative called Peace with Nature, we committed ourselves to becoming the first carbon neutral country by 2021. The United Kingdom has already shown a keen interest in this initiative, but we would also appreciate additional support for our attempts to include market mechanisms to compensate for avoided deforestation within the post-Kyoto Protocol negotiations.

Finally, we are committed to the reform of the working methods of the Security Council. We are part of a determined group of small countries (Jordan, Liechtenstein, Singapore, Switzerland), thus our name, the Small Five (S5), that are seeking to work with the Permanent Five (P5) on increasing the transparency and legitimacy of the Council. The United Kingdom is without doubt the Permanent Member that has shown the most openness to discuss these reforms with us, although we have registered little progress so far.

We are but a tourist, on a two-year journey on the Security Council, traveling with our luggage and seeking to cover as much ground as possible. The guidance and assistance of a Permanent Member like the United Kingdom, with which we share common values and principles, and common objectives, would certainly ease our travel.

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