



Remarks

by

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President of the 68th Session of the United Nations

General Assembly

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**First Informal Meeting of the
General Committee at the 68th Session**

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

Welcome to this first informal meeting of the General Committee during the 68th session.

As you are aware, in accordance with the rules of procedure, the General Committee's principle objective is to assist the Assembly in carrying out its work.

In order to do so, our communication lines must be open and effective. In the context of the revitalizing the General Assembly, the Assembly has approved various measures designed to ensure that the General Committee is able to better fulfill its role, including the decision to meet more regularly. Most recently, at its 67th session, the General Assembly, stressed once again in resolution 67/297 the importance of [quote] "enhancing the role of the General Committee to support the work of the General Assembly."

I take this very seriously and in my June acceptance speech, I announced that I would hold regular meetings of the General Committee during the 68th session. My intention was and remains to update all of you and to receive your wisdom and counsel on how best to further the General Assembly's work. With this in mind, it is my distinct pleasure to convene today's meeting.

Excellencies,

Please allow me a moment to briefly recap some of the highlights from the main part of the 68th session, which included a number of notable firsts. In September, we saw the inauguration of the first High-level Political Forum, the first ever General Assembly High-level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament, and the first High-level Meeting on Disability and Development; we also adopted an important outcome document that is guiding us towards a universal and shared Post 2015 development agenda. The General Assembly adopted 260 resolutions and took 66 decisions, a number

of which covered new territory such as resolutions on the right to privacy, the safety of journalists and strengthening ECOSOC.

I would like to thank you all for your valuable support and dedication over the course of the session and in helping it to reach a successful conclusion. I appreciate the support of the Vice Presidents who have chaired many meetings on my behalf and count on your continued support.

During my time as President of the General Assembly, I have also had periodic meetings with the Secretary-General and the Presidents of the other principal organs, in particular the Security Council and the ECOSOC. These exchanges have been very beneficial and fruitful and I am grateful for the support and cooperation from the Secretary-General and others in this regard.

Distinguished Delegates,

The resumed part of the session has already begun with promise. Allow me to foremost draw your attention to my letter dated 14 January 2014 in which I advised the membership on the high-level events and thematic debates that I will convene in support of the on-going discussions on the post 2015 development agenda. These are:

- Thematic Debate on Water, Sanitation and Sustainable Energy, on 18-19 February;
- High-Level Event on the Role of Women, Young and Civil Society, on 6-7 March;
- Thematic Debate on Partnerships, on 9-10 April;
- Thematic Debate on Peaceful and Stable Societies, on 24-25 April;
- High-Level Event on North-South, South-South, and Triangular Cooperation and ICT for development, on 20-21 May;

- High-Level Event on Human Rights and Rule of Law, on 17-18 June.

The preparations for these events are well underway and my Advisors are working to finalize the remaining details. Additionally, last week I had the opportunity to meet with civil society and obtain their thoughts in advance of the six events, which was a highly useful exchange.

Let me also address some of the important mandated intergovernmental processes. I have appointed a number of facilitators, including the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to chair the Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council reform on my behalf, and the Permanent Representatives of Slovakia and Thailand to chair the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly.

Following the plenary debate and the first meeting of the IGN last year, Ambassador Tanin, as indicated in my letter of 15 January 2014, has expressed his availability to all Member States for consultations in regard to the establishment of a pragmatic and action-oriented outline for the current round of negotiations.

Concerning the Ad Hoc Working Group on GA revitalization, the co-Chairs have begun informal consultations and the Group will meet formally in March to [quote] "identify further ways to enhance the role, authority, effectiveness and efficiency of the Assembly, inter alia, by building on the progress achieved in past sessions of the Assembly as well as on previous resolutions, including evaluating the status of their implementation." [End quote]. A number of important new mandates will be part of deliberations under the four thematic clusters. To cite one example: the possibility of electing the non-permanent members of the Security Council and members of the Economic and Social Council earlier than October of each year, as is currently the practice.

I trust that all delegations will continue to extend their fullest support and cooperation to all appointed Chairs in order to advance the collective desire for a strengthened United Nations.

Pursuant to the Political declaration of the High-level Meeting of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases (resolution 66/2), informal consultations on the arrangements for a comprehensive review and assessment in 2014 of the progress achieved in the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases began earlier this month. The Permanent Representatives of Belgium and Jamaica, whom I have appointed to facilitate these consultations, will be guiding this process.

I have also asked the Permanent Representatives of Finland and Tunisia to undertake informal consultations to finalize the modalities for the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society pursuant to resolution 68/198.

For the informal consultations on the modalities of the High-Level Meeting to be held in September 2015 for the adoption of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, I have appointed the Permanent Representatives of Denmark and Papua New Guinea.

I have also appointed the Permanent Representative of Turkey to undertake informal consultations on the outcome of the Fourth Review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. In my letter dated 14 January of this year, I announced that the fourth review is to take place on 12-13 June this year.

Informal consultations, pursuant to resolution 68/204, on the arrangements for the follow-up on Financing for Development conference will commence under the guidance of the Permanent Representatives of Guyana and Norway.

Meanwhile, informal consultations on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system are currently ongoing. I would like to recall resolution 68/2 of 20 September 2013, in which the Assembly decided to extend

this intergovernmental process until the first half of February 2014, in order to finalize an outcome document regarding the intergovernmental process.

Following the conclusion of the informal consultations on the proclamation of an International Decade for People of African Descent during the main part of the session and the adoption of resolution 68/237, I have appointed the Permanent Representative of South Africa as a facilitator. He will continue consultations with a view to elaborating a programme for the International Decade to be finalized and adopted during the 68th session and not later than 30 June 2014.

I would also like to recall my letter dated 31 January 2014 by which I circulated to the membership a draft resolution regarding the establishment of the Nelson Rohlhlala Mandela Prize, as a tribute to outstanding achievement and contribution by individuals to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. In the same letter, I informed Member States that I have appointed the Permanent Representative of South Africa to undertake facilitations on this proposal and I count on your strong support.

Excellencies,

Let me also highlight a number of other events that will take place during the remainder of the 68th session:

1. A thematic debate to consider the role of culture and sustainable development in the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda;
2. The launch of the International year of Small Island Developing States later this month, and the Third International Conference on SIDS in Samoa in September;
3. A High-level thematic debate on Investment in Africa;

4. An interactive dialogue on the commemoration of International Mother Earth Day on 22 April 2014 to advance discussions on Harmony with Nature and sustainable development;
5. A series of four one-day structured dialogues to consider possible arrangements for a facilitation mechanism to promote the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies;
6. A special meeting during the commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; and
7. An informal interactive hearing in preparation for the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, scheduled for 22 September 2014.

This General Assembly will also have a critical role in ensuring the success of other major events that fall beyond the timeframe of the 68th session. Some have already been mentioned but I would like to add the special session of the General Assembly on the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014 and the Third World Conference on Disaster Reduction to take place in 2015, as well as the Third United Nations Conference on Sustainable Urban Development to take place in 2016.

I welcome and appreciate your personal participation at today's meeting. Please know that I intend to revive the practice from previous sessions of convening periodic informal meetings of the General Committee, open to all Member States, to hear topical briefings on current issues of interest to the membership. Ideas for such briefings could include presentations by senior Secretariat officials about items on the Assembly's agenda.

Thank you and the floor is now open for comments.
