



Remarks

by

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Excellencies,
Secretary-General,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon.

We are now at the close of the 68th session of the General Assembly and this is the last time I will have the singular honour of addressing this assembly of nations as the President of the 68th session. As I look across this room, I am honoured to see many friends and colleagues with whom I have worked with over the years in this very Hall in a collaborative effort to address global challenges.

Those of you who know me well, know that I am a plain spoken man and so I will say it like it is- goodbye and good luck- that is it my farewell speech in a nutshell! Well, maybe not! Permit me to share a few more words with you as I prepare to hand over the gavel to my able successor, the President of the 69th session.

Today is a far cry from that day in June 2013, when I took a mere thirty-six (36) steps from my country's seat to the podium in the temporary General Assembly Hall – a hall that looks nothing like this newly restored, historic Hall to accept your acclamation as President of the 68th session of our General Assembly. But I am here to tell you that there was nothing temporary or makeshift about the memorable outcomes that we have as a collective whole achieved this session. It is indeed fortuitous – if not ironic – that as someone who was responsible for the budgetary negotiations of the Capital Master Plan in 2005, I would be the only PGA to have delivered his acceptance speech in the temporary GA Hall and his closing address in this newly refurbished one!

Ah yes! Timing as they say is EVERYTHING!

Excellencies,

To those of you who were never shy about reminding me that I may be the first PGA to have never presided over a session of our General Assembly in the “real” GA Hall, to never have

had the opportunity to gavel a GA decision therein, to never stand at this hallowed podium, the historical redoubt of Kings and Queens, Emirs and Sheikhas, Princes and Princesses, Governors, Prime Ministers, Ministers of all stripes, numerous celebrities, and of course my favourite kind of representatives – you the Permanent Representatives – and the occasional civil society representatives, I regret to inform that you were wrong. For here I stand before you in live and living colour on the very last day of my term as PGA 68. To you the CMP team, I say a heartfelt thank you for preventing me from becoming a footnote in the annals of the GA History and for preventing me from being the butt of GA-related jokes by saving my bacon.

So now that I have gotten the thanks part taken care of, the question remains: what exactly do I say in my farewell speech? I thought the best thing is to answer the one obvious question that is so often posed when one is about to leave an office such as this, namely: What exactly have you accomplished during the 68th session? The default position is always to cite the usual metrics used to measure success. There is, for example, the overall adoption of over 300 resolutions and 80 decisions, with the final ones being adopted this very afternoon, on a wide range of issues, including nuclear disarmament, rule of law at national and international levels, financing for development, the peaceful use of outer space, the right to privacy, the safety of journalists and peacekeeping missions budgets. Yes, indeed, this session was a busy one.

It has been said that “numbers never lie.” It is also true that they do not tell the whole story. But, as we all know, the “whole story” in the United Nations context is neither ever “whole” or really ever a “story,” due in part to the extremely complex and difficult times we live in, constantly plagued by the horrors of environmental degradation and ethnic hatred, challenged by the spread of infectious disease and ill-prepared to address the all-encompassing reach of global climate change.

These are indeed troubling times and they require resourceful, dedicated and focused responses. I am therefore grateful for your cooperation in focusing on perhaps the biggest generational challenge of our United Nations: crafting an inclusive, participatory, people-centered Post-2015 Development Agenda that has the eradication of extreme poverty as its overarching objective, and for helping me to “set the stage” for this collective endeavor.

Distinguished Delegates,

Far from being a call that fell on deaf ears, you wholeheartedly joined in the effort aimed at defining the parameters of this collective endeavor, the ultimate fruits of which will only be known in September 2015. You supported and actively contributed to the initial six High-level events and thematic debates aimed at elaborating crucial issues for consideration in the upcoming negotiations. We saw broad participation from a very wide spectrum of Civil Society, who were able to participate as stakeholders and partners through a process by which they nominated their own representatives to these events, which concluded with last week's stocktaking event.

These events and activities have yielded good results and there have been many accomplishments in which you can take justifiable pride. The progress we have made is owned and shared by you, the Member States, and all other stakeholders. It is my sense that we are indeed in a good place to begin the 69th session, to subsequently receive the Secretary-General's Synthesis Report and to begin to chart the way forward in your negotiations with high expectations.

As we usher in the 69th session, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) you have developed will form the main basis for whatever set of concise goals you agree to for the Post-2015 Development Agenda – an agenda that has the potential for transformative change and provides the instruments to eradicate poverty and bring lives of dignity to all human beings by building on the foundation and successes of the MDGs and breaking new ground in addressing pivotal development issues, as well as new and emerging challenges. The road to September 2015 will not be easy, and you have a long way to go before reaching agreement on a Post-2015 Development Agenda that will be inclusive, both in preparation and implementation.

I expect that we will continue to see broad participation among vulnerable groups and the prioritization of their needs. In this regard, the adoption of the S.A.M.O.A. Pathway at the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS), which took place earlier this month, gives SIDS a mandate to marshal support for their agenda within the context of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Similarly, the Least Developed Countries and the Landlocked Developing Countries, the latter of which will have a Conference dedicated

to their needs and priorities in November – these two groups of States also deserve our special consideration.

You also have a set of proposed options for an effective strategy to mobilize resources to achieve sustainable development. Further, you can expect that the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in July 2015 – the modalities of which were agreed at this session – will provide further strategic guidance on the financing of the new development agenda. And based on your four dialogues on a technology facilitation mechanism, you now have before you a summary of recommendations that I hope will assist you in your further consideration of this important mechanism.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In addition to the above, you have successfully completed the Fourth Biennial Review of the Global Counter Terrorism Strategy and saw the launch of the first ever UN Web Portal for victims of terrorism.

In social, humanitarian and cultural matters, we saw a number of important achievements to which I would like to draw your attention:

1. The High-Level Declaration that was the product of the High-level dialogue on migration and development;
2. The renewal of political commitment by the world's leaders to wrestle against the major health, social and economic threats posed by the NCDs and the resultant call for strengthened multi-sectoral approaches for their prevention and control;
3. We achieved consensus in negotiations on the resolution of strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system, bringing to satisfactory closure two years of protracted consultations;
4. Member States established the Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela Prize in tribute to the extraordinary life and legacy of one of the greatest statesmen and humanitarians the world will ever see. This prize will serve not just as a tangible reminder of Madiba's

service to humanity but as a potent inspiration to all who work tirelessly to improve human wellbeing and bravely confront human hatred, repression and violence.

5. We witnessed the unveiling of the winning design for the Permanent Memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. With the Assembly proclaiming 2015 – 2024, as the International Decade for People of African Descent, which is expected to be launched immediately after the General Debate of the 69th session, the descendants of the estimated 20 million Africans who were sold into slavery can now look to the UN for a reshaping of the narrative and consequences of that event and discover how new, constructive approaches can be used; and
6. Finally, we have “set the stage” for the adoption of the Outcome Document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, which will take place next week.

Excellencies,

One of my objectives during the 68th session was to make progress in revitalizing and reforming this institution of ours, and I am pleased that we were able to make some progress in this area, with the adoption of an ambitious new resolution on the revitalisation of the work of the General Assembly, the inauguration of the High-level Political Forum, a resolution on reforming and strengthening the Economic and Social Council, and the adoption of the mobility framework for UN staff. We now have new institutions that are intended to make the U.N. more relevant, more responsive and more effective.

While these accomplishments keep us on the path to reform – for reform we must – much remains to be done, particularly in the area of Security Council Reform. While it would be foolhardy to underestimate the challenges inherent in getting to a round of real negotiations on Security Council reform, it must not be a course of action from which we shy away. For if we are to arrive at an organization that is truly representative and fully reflective of its membership of the day – as opposed to that of decades past – we have to – sooner rather than later – seek to make it so. In this regard, I hope that you, the membership, will endeavour to build on the somewhat modest momentum achieved during this session and capitalize on the opportunities that the next and/or future sessions offer.

Excellencies,
Colleagues,

I have frequently observed that, a man (or woman) can be from an island but is never an island. And in an increasingly interconnected world, no man (or woman) who is engaged in a collective enterprise can truly say he/she walks alone. I would therefore like to thank you, the Member States, for all your support. I would also like to thank the Vice-Presidents of the 68th session, who have assisted me with the work of the session, and the various Chairs and Co-chairs who have taken up important issues and kept our agenda forward looking and on schedule; I thank too the many Facilitators and/or Co-facilitators, who have also assisted in this endeavour.

But let me take a moment to simply praise our Secretary-General, who has continued steadfastly to lead this Organisation with skill and dedication – and self-deprecating humour; with diminishing resources and an agenda that seems to expand exponentially; all against a backdrop of a world that is fraught with daily crises and seemingly intractable problems. I say to you, Sir, thank you and your entire office for the support extended to my team and from day one. I also wish to acknowledge the support my team and I have received from all the departments of the Secretariat, in particular the Department of Management, the Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), and the Department of Public Information (DPI). Through it all, one department, Department of General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM) and Under-Secretary General (USG) Gettu and his entire team, have contributed so much to making this session what it was and I would like to thank him and his team for the support rendered to me and my team.

To my own “dream” team, the men and women of the Office of PGA 68, whose professionalism, hard work and dedication is responsible for whatever successes were achieved this session – to each and every one of you – I say thank you very much.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In June 2013, when you elected me as PGA, I was deeply conscious of the honour and responsibilities you were giving me and I have tried with your help, to fulfil those responsibilities in an objective manner. It was a singular honour to serve you then and to

work with you over the past year on the challenges facing our United Nations. You have supported me over the course of my term and frankly, I simply could not have taken up this task, or survived over the last year without your support and cooperation, which I have highly valued and which has been in the finest traditions of the United Nations.

Now as I take leave of this post, I have no greater hope than that our work empowers today's young girls and boys to pursue their dreams and to make the difference they want to see in the world, a world that is finally gender neutral. We all have a part in making that happen – by making wise decisions and acting fairly to benefit those in need, and in ensuring that all people have justice and opportunity. In this is also the lesson that we must help every child achieve his or her full potential, on a planet that we all strive to protect. When this becomes the reality rather than the dream of succeeding generations, then we will have truly taken the jump to sustainable development.

Each of us must do our part to make this a reality. I have done mine, with your support. And now, today, as I pass the torch to my very able successor, H.E. Mr. Sam Kutesa, I wish him and his team great success in leading the 69th session. And I wish all of you the right balance of ambition and compromise, and the conviction and courage, to carry these accomplishments forward and to move us closer to the fulfilment of the precept of the UN's Charter [and I quote] “to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small.”

Thank you.
